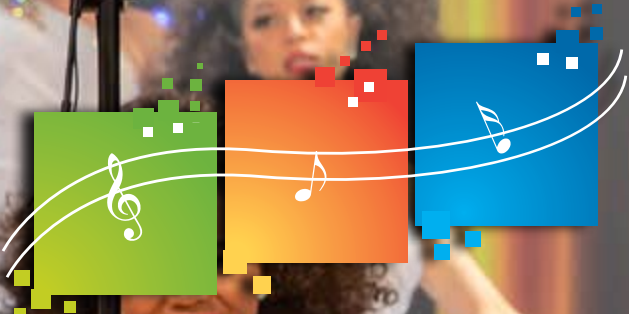


AUGUST 2026



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Show Choir Products and News

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CREATING A SHOW
CHOIR COSTUME
PROGRAM THAT
RESPECTS EVERY BODY,
EVERY PERFORMER,
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NEWSLETTER

With over 220 members, the National Association for Show Choir (NASC) has set an audacious goal: to unite the show choir community in identifying common objectives, finding solutions to shared challenges, and championing the art of show choir. We recently celebrated our first anniversary on Facebook.

The NASC held its inaugural, virtual meeting last September with approximately 30 members in attendance. While the number of attendees has dropped at subsequent meetings, they are filled with intriguing conversations and connected members from coast to coast.

Why does it matter? Since 2015, show choir programs in the United States have significantly declined by over 800. Music educators are quick to blame the pandemic for the decline, but blaming ourselves for becoming insular would be more appropriate. In July, I had the opportunity to collaborate with some of the best directors, choreographers, arrangers, and costume designers in the show choir world at Showchoir Camps of America. The week's experiences were incredible, but everyone left camp and returned to their respective cubicles once it was over.

Show choir pockets have become more common throughout the U.S., which makes it difficult for show choir programs to attend and host competitions. Show choir will flourish when we start advocating, educating, and inspiring current and future music educators outside our program through consistent collaboration. In most cases, show choir directors are the only choral music educators at their school, limiting opportunities to collaborate with someone who understands what we do. NASC provides a safe platform for monthly collaboration among music educators throughout the United States.

The short-term goal for NASC is to identify a common meeting time for monthly meetings and bring in compelling guest speakers who will appeal to a large audience. A longer-term goal is to have NASC representatives from each state advocate for show choir at state and regional music educator conferences.

This is essential to reinvigorating the show choir community in schools. Too often, show choir is considered taboo. NASC wants to shatter the stigma surrounding show choirs by continuing to educate vocal associations, music educators, and administrations how these dynamic programs not only foster students' creativity, teamwork, and self-confidence but also ignite a sense of community spirit, drawing audiences together to celebrate the arts and support young talent.

The National Association for Show Choirs' mission is to advocate, educate, and inspire current and future music educators to progress show choir throughout the United States.

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editor's letter

The First Day, All Over Again

There is something magical about the first day of a new show choir season. It starts before anyone sings a note. There is the shuffle of feet in the hallway. The nervous laughter. The new members trying to figure out where to stand without looking like they are trying to figure out where to stand. Directors are smiling, organizing, encouraging—and quietly wondering if they remembered everything they need for the next nine months.

And then it happens. The music starts. Suddenly, a group of individual students begins to become a choir. For our newest members, this is the first step into a world they may have watched from the audience or admired from the sidelines. They are about to discover the friendships, inside jokes, rehearsals, competitions, costumes, bus rides, late nights and unforgettable moments that make show choir so much more than a class or activity. But standing in that same room are the seniors.

For them, this is the last first day. That phrase hits differently. They have been through the nerves, the victories, the disappointments, the long rehearsals and probably at least one costume malfunction they would prefer we never discuss. They know the routines. They know the traditions. They know where the snacks disappear during rehearsal.

And yet, this first day is different because they know it is their last. That makes this season incredibly special. There is also something wonderfully exciting about this time of year for directors. Right now, the show exists mostly in your imagination. You can hear the music in your head. You can picture the costumes. You can see the choreography before anyone has learned the first eight counts.

But soon, that vision will begin taking shape. A song becomes an arrangement. An arrangement becomes choreography. Choreography becomes a performance. Costumes, lighting, staging, sound and storytelling all begin coming together. And somewhere along the way, the chaos starts looking like a show. That is the joy of a new season.

Every year brings a new beginning, even for those who have done this for decades. New students bring new energy. Returning students bring experience. Seniors bring leadership—and a reminder that these seasons pass far too quickly. So, as another show choir year begins, take a moment to enjoy the noise, the nerves, the laughter and even the occasional wrong note.

The first day only happens once. Unless you're a show choir director. Then, somehow, it happens every year—and we wouldn't have it any other way. Here's to a new season, new voices and a new show waiting to come to life.

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PHOTOS COURTESY AMANDA CURREN PHOTOGRAPHY



REMAKING SHOW CHOIR FOR COLLEGE

**Inside Randolph-
Macon's LUXE
Program**

by Rosalind Fournier



PHOTO COURTESY AMANDA CURREN PHOTOGRAPHY

In high schools across the country, show choir is booming. In colleges, it's almost nonexistent.

At Randolph-Macon College, Adam Pulver is determined to change that. "If an institution of higher education is looking to grow their arts in any capacity—vocal, dance, band, musical theatre—they should start a show choir," says Pulver, who was recruited by the college in 2018 to create a show choir program from scratch.

Pulver, who previously launched and directed a show choir at a university in Illinois, is happy to challenge the status quo. He's eager to show that students they can have it both ways, earning a degree while still enjoying the activity they love.

And students are responding. Some come to Randolph-Macon specifically because they want to keep performing;

others discover LUXE after they arrive and realize how much they've missed the stage. For many, the chance to stay connected to show choir becomes a defining part of their college experience.

Ashlynn Kenney says high school show choir played such a big role in her life that she knew she wanted to keep performing in college. "The main attraction of Randolph-Macon for me was show choir," she says. "And I ended up falling in love with the school."

Others find LUXE later. Ryon Britt began his college career at another school but quickly realized how much he missed performing. After meeting Pulver at high school competitions and clinics, he recognized an opportunity to change course. "I felt like I really needed musical theatre as part of who I am," he says. "I finally came, and it was honestly the best thing I could have done."

A Valuable Recruitment Tool

Their stories, and countless others like them, help prove an essential hypothesis: that show choir not only offers a much needed creative outlet for its participants and a cultural touchstone for the community—it's a valuable recruitment tool for Randolph Macon. Pulver sees it as a win for the students and for the university. "The business side of my job is to bring in high-quality talent, high quality human beings who have hearts of gold and want to keep performing while they can until they go into their chosen career path," he says. "And it is a retention tool for high caliber students to stay at the university."

LUXE is currently 50-60 students strong, including the singer/dancers, band members, and tech crew. Pulver has never taken attendance. "They all choose to be here," he says. "They want to be here, they all walk hard, and they all have this similar mindset. I love the passion, love the excitement, love the interest of the students."

They put on two big shows a year—an annual Christmas show and a spring show that tends to be a little edgier, taking full advantage of creative license. Pulver describes the Christmas show as a crowd-pleaser—who doesn't love a Christmas show?—that in the wrong hands risks being safe and predictable. He works hard to make sure that doesn't happen.

"It gives me a unique challenge: how do I do Christmas differently?", Pulver says. "So this year, our Christmas show is 'A LUXE Hallmark Special' where we are making fun of the most overdone Hallmark tropes you can think of, and it is hysterical. The students are going to have so much fun."

Pulver has ideas about the spring show, too, as yet unrevealed. "Since we have a Christmas show, the students always like the opposite of that, something darker, eerie, and creepy

with a little anger and vengeance, though that has been shifting lately," he says. Beyond the theme itself, Pulver thinks carefully about how each show comes together. He doesn't build them in isolation. "I write some crazy cool shows, but I don't always do it alone. Sometimes the students help me design shows and develop ideas, because that gives them an experience

Their stories, and countless others like them, help prove an essential hypothesis: that show choir not only offers a much needed creative outlet for its participants and a cultural touchstone for the community

they might not have had. And so then for my future music educators, potentially arrangers, or you name it, I'm giving them an opportunity as well as guidance so they learn from it."

Pulver also makes a point of providing support when possible to high-school students by judging competitions, leading clinics, and working with programs throughout Virginia and across the country. Clinics in particular give him a chance to get to meet the aspiring performers and watch them develop in their skills. "I hope to inspire them," he says. "You could also say I'm recruiting students, but for me, I'm just excited to see them grow."

More Than Performers

Talking with Pulver in his impeccably decorated office on campus, it's clear he still feels awe at the privilege of running



PHOTO COURTESY AMANDA CURREN PHOTOGRAPHY

a funded program fully integrated into an esteemed college like Randolph Macon.

Part of that rootedness includes the fact that LUXE does not travel, which Pulver sees as more of a plus than a limitation. The choir always has the home auditorium advantage, enabling them to create more elaborate sets, incorporate more technology, and control details in ways that would be the envy of a high school director on a tough competition day. (Competition is also off the table for now, given the scarcity of similar collegiate programs.)

“What high school show choir does — it’s like putting on a traveling Broadway show. I am enamored of them,” Pulver says. “But for what we do, when you come and see it, it’s just ‘wow.’ I have a few secrets up my sleeve, and we can only do it here. And if I’m going to bring everyone here to see the show, I’m going to give them an experience.”

Pulver says he never tires of talking about his students, and the pride he shows in them is mutual. They describe his focus on details that can border on obsessiveness—until everything finally clicks. For Nathan Adkins, one of the biggest surprises was Pulver’s dismissal of hierarchy. “One of the culture shocks coming from high school is that Mr. A doesn’t do ‘captains,’” he says. “In high school you’ll have dance captains and vocal captains, and we don’t have that in LUXE. He makes a point of saying that everybody is a captain when they feel comfortable enough in a piece of choreography or a piece of vocals to lead the group, because everybody has different strengths. That’s one of the many examples of him trying to tailor one program to 60 individual students all at the same time. And I think that is what makes us so strong as a group.”

For Emily Dixon, the strength comes from the bonds among the members—including Pulver himself. “I personally didn’t have a very good experience with show choir in high school,” she says. “But when I came and auditioned here, and

saw how the students interacted with one another, it made me fall in love with the program. We definitely have our moments, but what family doesn't? What's different about this program is that Mr. A focuses on show choir, but he also focuses on you as a person. He pushes us to be the best performers and people that we can be."



PHOTO COURTESY AMANDA CURREN PHOTOGRAPHY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rosalind Fournier is a freelance writer/editor in Homewood, Alabama where she lives with her husband and kids. She loves to read and looks forward to March Madness every year, though her bracket is usually a disaster.

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FIT IS THE HEART OF A GREAT COSTUME

**Creating a Show Choir Costume
Program That Respects Every Body,
Every Performer, and Every Story**

by Ed Bauer



PHOTO BY VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SINGERS

There are few moments in show choir quite like the first full-costume rehearsal. The music is familiar. The choreography has been rehearsed hundreds of times. Then the students walk onto the stage in their costumes, and suddenly the show looks different.

That moment can be exciting—but it can also be surprisingly emotional.

For some students, putting on a performance costume is the first time they have ever worn something designed to put them completely in the spotlight. A costume can make a performer feel powerful, confident, and transformed. It can also make a student feel self-conscious if it does not fit correctly, does not move comfortably, or makes them feel as

though their body is being judged.

That is why experienced show choir programs understand that costuming is about much more than selecting a color, style, or theme. It is about outfitting an entire group of individual performers with dignity, practicality, and confidence.

There Is No Standard Show Choir Body

A show choir may have 20 performers or 60. Regardless of the size, there is one thing every group has in common: the students will come in different shapes, heights, and proportions.

Some will have long torsos. Some will have shorter torsos. Some will need

a different inseam than another student wearing the same size. Some will prefer more coverage. Others may be perfectly comfortable with a more fitted costume.

None of those differences should be treated as unusual.

The goal should not be to make every performer look like the same person. The goal is to make the ensemble look unified while allowing every performer to feel comfortable being themselves.

That begins with changing the way fittings are approached.

A fitting should never become a public discussion about a student's body. Measurements, sizing concerns, and alterations should be handled privately and professionally. A student should never feel that they're holding up the group because they need a different size.

An experienced costume team learns quickly that the number on a garment tag is far less important than the way the garment fits and functions.

Fit Is About More Than Appearance

When evaluating a costume, ask practical questions.

Can the performer breathe comfortably?

Can they sing without restriction?

Can they raise their arms?

Can they bend, jump, kick, turn and dance?

Can they sit or kneel if the choreography requires it?

Does the costume remain secure during movement?

Does anything pinch, rub or pull?

And perhaps most importantly: Does the performer feel comfortable

wearing it?

A costume that looks beautiful while a student is standing still but restricts movement during choreography is not a successful costume.

Show choir is an athletic activity as well as a musical and theatrical one. Performers are asked to sing, dance, move through formations, execute choreography and maintain facial expression and character—all while wearing the clothing selected for the production.

An experienced costume team learns quickly that the number on a garment tag is far less important than the way the garment fits and functions.

That makes functionality inseparable from fit.

Aim for Cohesion, Not Sameness

Uniformity is important visually, but identical garments do not necessarily create a uniform appearance.

Sometimes the best way to make a group look cohesive is to use the same basic costume design with individualized alterations.

One student may need a hem shortened. Another may need additional length. Someone else may need a different cut or a small adjustment to a waistband or shoulder.



PHOTO BY VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SINGERS

Don't look at alterations as inconveniences—they are key to producing a professional-looking show.

A good costume supplier will understand that group orders frequently require different sizes, alterations, and sometimes different garment configurations. Before placing a large order, ask about sizing samples, return policies, customization and the availability of replacement pieces.

And never assume that the sample costume will work simply because it looks good on one performer.

Put the costume on several different body types before committing to a large

order whenever possible.

Think About Coverage and Confidence

One of the most delicate areas of show choir costuming is determining how much skin is appropriate for a particular production.

The answer should never be based solely on what is currently fashionable.

Consider the age of the performers, the choreography, the venue, the audience, the lighting, and the story being told. Most importantly, consider whether the costume allows the student to concentrate on performing rather than worrying about whether something is

going to move, ride up or expose more than intended.

Confidence is part of performance quality.

A student who spends an entire song wondering whether their costume is secure cannot give the same performance as a student who trusts what they are wearing.

That does not mean every costume needs to be conservative. It means every costume needs to be intentional.

If a particular design requires a performer to continually adjust it, pull it into place or compensate for it

during choreography, the design needs another look.

Listen to the Students

The adults choosing costumes may have years of experience, but the students are the ones who will be wearing them.

That makes their feedback valuable.

There is a difference between allowing students to dictate a costume design and giving them a safe opportunity to explain how a costume feels.

A student might say, “I can’t lift my arms comfortably.”

Another might say, “I don’t feel secure in this top.”

Someone else might simply say, “I don’t feel like myself in this.”

Those comments deserve consideration.

The answer should not automatically be, “That’s just how the costume is.”

Instead, ask whether an alteration, different undergarment, additional layer, different size, or modified version can solve the problem without compromising the overall design.

Be Particularly Thoughtful About Adolescents

Show choir performers are often teenagers, which means they are still growing and changing.

A costume that fits beautifully in September may not fit the same way in January.

That makes early ordering and fittings important—but it also makes flexibility important.

Avoid purchasing costumes so early that there is no practical way to accommodate changes in the performers. Keep a small contingency budget for



PHOTO BY VESTAVIA HILLS HIGH SINGERS

alterations and replacement pieces.

It is also worth remembering that students may be more sensitive about their bodies than they let adults know.

A casual comment made during a fitting can stay with a teenager for a long time.

Comments such as “You need to lose weight for this costume,” “That doesn’t look good on you,” or “We need to hide that” have no place in a healthy costume process.

The conversation should be about the garment—not the worth or appearance of the person wearing it.

Instead of saying, “That doesn’t work on your body,” say, “Let’s find a cut that gives you the movement and coverage you need.”

The distinction is significant.



Undergarments and Support Matter, Too

Costume planning should include what goes underneath the costume.

Depending on the design, performers may need specific undergarments, dance shorts, camisoles, tights, supportive garments or other base layers.

Those items should be considered before the final costume is approved.

A costume can fit perfectly on its own and still fail once the performer adds the necessary underlayers.

Make sure students know what will be required well before competition day. Families should have time to purchase appropriate items, and directors and boosters should have time to determine whether the combination works.

The Best Costumes Disappear

Perhaps the greatest compliment a costume can receive is that nobody notices it.

The audience should notice the performer.

The costume should support the performer.

It should help create the character, establish the era, reinforce the color palette and make the choreography visually stronger. But it should never become a source of distraction or embarrassment.

When the costume fits correctly, moves naturally and gives the performer confidence, something important happens: the student forgets about the clothing and becomes absorbed in the performance. That is the goal.

A Culture of Respect Starts in the Costume Room

The costume room can become one of the most positive spaces in a show choir program when everyone involved understands the responsibility that comes with it.

Directors set the tone. Boosters reinforce it. Costume volunteers model it. Students learn from it.

The message should be simple: Every performer belongs on this stage, and every performer deserves a costume that allows them to perform at their best.

A successful show choir costume program does not try to make every body look identical. It creates a unified visual picture while respecting the individual people inside those costumes.

After all, show choir is ultimately about people.

The costumes are important. The choreography is important. The music is important.

But when the lights come up, it is the students who tell the story.

They deserve to feel confident enough to tell it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. He was introduced to Show Choir by his daughter and he is forever grateful to her for this wonderful gift.







WHEN THE COSTUME BECOMES PART OF THE STORY

**Designing Show Choir Costumes
for Storytelling, Competition...and
the Reality of a Quick Change**

by Ed Bauer



PHOTO BY CASTLE SHOW CHOIR

Every experienced show choir booster eventually learns the same lesson: a costume that looks fantastic on a hanger may be a terrible show choir costume.

It may take too long to put on. It may restrict movement. It may photograph beautifully but disappear under stage lighting. It may require six snaps, three hooks and a zipper to remove. Or it may have so many accessories that the backstage crew needs a flowchart to get everyone changed before the next number.

When logistics take over, the story gets lost.

The best costume is the one that works in every way for your production.

When your performer emerges in it at just the right moment, suddenly the audience understands something about the character, the setting, the emotion or the transformation taking place on stage—sometimes before a single word is sung.

That is the power of thoughtful costuming.

Start With the Story, Not the Costume

One of the biggest mistakes a show choir can make is falling in love with a costume before deciding what the costume needs to accomplish.

The process should begin with the

production.

What is the story?

What characters or worlds are being introduced?

What changes during the show?

What is the emotional journey?

Once those questions have been answered, costumes become another storytelling tool.

Color can establish mood. Silhouette can establish time period. Texture can establish character. Accessories can identify a role or group. A change from muted colors to brighter colors can communicate transformation without the audience needing to be told what is happening.

A costume should have a reason to be there.

Costumes Create Visual Continuity

A show choir production can contain several musical styles, but the audience still needs to feel that they are watching one production.

Costumes can help create that continuity.

Perhaps the opening number establishes a basic color palette. A later number introduces a new layer. Another number removes that layer and reveals something completely different underneath.

The costumes do not necessarily have to match from song to song. In fact, they often shouldn't.

They do, however, need to belong to the same visual world.

This is where color becomes particularly important.

A production can use one dominant color throughout while changing the



PHOTO BY CASTLE SHOW CHOIR

silhouette and texture. It can use complementary colors to divide groups. It can move from dark to light as the story develops.

The important thing is that the costume changes communicate something.

What Judges Actually See

Competition costuming can be confusing because there is no single universal show choir score sheet.

Some competitions incorporate visual production, show production, overall impression, or similar categories. Others may have more specific visual or costume considerations. FAME, for example, describes its adjudication structure around vocal production, visual production, show production, and music production.

That distinction matters.

A director or booster should not assume that a judge simply awards a certain number of points because a costume is attractive.

Instead, think about what the costume contributes to the total performance.

Does it support the concept?

Does it enhance visual production?

Does it complement choreography?

Does it help establish character?

Does it create clean, unified stage pictures?

Does it distract from the performers?

Does it function reliably?

These are the questions that matter.

Competition judging varies considerably from one event to another, and experienced directors know that the same costume might be addressed under different categories on different score sheets. Research into show choir adjudication has also found that scoring practices and rubrics vary across



competitions, reinforcing the importance of understanding the specific competition's criteria rather than assuming every event judges costumes the same way.

The Difference Between Pretty and Effective

Remember: the costume serves the show, not the other way around.

Imagine a ballad about loss performed in elaborate, sparkling costumes that compete with the emotion of the music. Or imagine a high-energy dance number performed in heavy garments that restrict movement.

The costume may be attractive.

It simply is not helping the story.

The strongest costume designs are not necessarily the most expensive or elaborate. They are the ones that make sense.

That is an important lesson for booster organizations working within a budget.

A \$200 costume that works beautifully for the production is a better investment than a \$500 costume that looks spectacular in a photograph but fails on stage.

Test the Costume Under Stage Conditions

Costumes should be evaluated under actual performance conditions.

Stage lighting can change everything.

Colors that look distinct in a fitting room can blend together under certain lights. Black can lose detail. Metallics can become extremely bright. Certain fabrics may reflect light in unexpected ways.

Movement changes the picture, too.

Have students perform choreography in the costume before the final decision

is made.

Watch from the audience.

Look for hems, straps, waistbands and accessories that shift.

Watch what happens when performers jump, turn, kneel or lift their arms.

If the costume becomes a distraction during rehearsal, it will become a bigger distraction under competition pressure.

The Quick Change Is a Production Number

This is where seasoned show choir boosters tend to become very serious.

A quick change is not a costume change.

It is a choreographed backstage operation.

The students have to know exactly what comes off, what goes on, where each piece goes, and who is helping whom. The costume crew has to know where every garment and accessory is located. The performers have to be able to make the change under pressure.

And everyone needs to know what happens when something goes wrong.

Because eventually, something will go wrong.

A zipper will catch.

A snap will refuse to cooperate.

An earring will disappear.

A shoe will be in the wrong bag.

Someone will walk into the wings with the wrong jacket.

The best quick-change systems are designed with those possibilities in mind.

Design for Speed from

the Beginning

Quick changes should be considered before the costume is purchased.

Ask:

Can the garment be removed quickly?

Can it be put on without assistance?

Are closures easy to operate?

Can students identify the front and back immediately?

Can the costume be layered?

Can an accessory create the appearance of a completely new costume?

Can a jacket, skirt, vest or overskirt transform the look without requiring a full change?



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Layering is one of the smartest tools available to show choir programs.

A basic foundation costume can become a completely different look by adding or removing one major piece.

That saves time, reduces backstage traffic and reduces the number of things that can go wrong.

Practice the Change Like Choreography

Do not wait until competition day.

Time it.

Then time it again.

Have the students practice the change during rehearsal.

Eventually, stop treating it as a special event and make it part of the show.

Students should know exactly where

they go when they leave the stage. They should know where their next costume is located. They should know who is responsible for helping them.

The costume crew should have a system.

Garments should be organized by performer whenever possible. Accessories should be attached or grouped together. Shoes should be clearly identified. Backup pieces should be available for items that are particularly vulnerable to failure.

And never underestimate the importance of labeling.

When dozens of nearly identical costume pieces are lying backstage, “I think that’s mine” is not a production plan.

Accessories Are Powerful—and Dangerous

Hats, gloves, jewelry, scarves, belts, jackets and other accessories can transform a costume.

They can also destroy a quick change.

Every accessory should earn its place.

If a piece contributes significantly to the story, keep it. If it exists only because someone thought it looked cute, reconsider it.

Accessories also need to be tested with choreography.

A long necklace can become a hazard. A loose bracelet can interfere with movement. A hat that looks wonderful standing still may fly off during a turn.

The audience sees the entire picture.

The costume crew sees every individual problem.

That is why both perspectives are necessary.

Costume Changes Can Tell the Story

Some of the most effective costume changes are not simply practical transitions between songs.

They are storytelling moments.

A character may begin in a uniform and gradually remove pieces as they gain independence.

A group may begin in neutral colors and reveal vibrant colors underneath.

A formal costume may transform into a more casual look as the story moves from restraint to freedom.

A jacket may be removed at exactly the moment the music explodes.

When a costume change is synchronized with music, lighting and choreography, it can become one of the most memorable moments in the



PHOTO BY CASTLE SHOW CHOIR

production.

That is when costuming stops being wardrobe and becomes theatrical design.

Don't Forget the Audience

Costumes must work from the back of the auditorium, not just from the costume room.

A tiny detail that looks wonderful from six feet away may be completely invisible from 100 feet away.

Ask whether the major visual choices can be read from the audience.

Large color blocks, silhouettes and strong contrasts often communicate better than tiny decorative details.

This is especially important for competition.

Judges are watching from a distance, often while taking notes and evaluating many different elements simultaneously. A clear visual concept is easier to read than a costume design filled with small details that disappear from the stage.

Budget with the Entire Production in Mind

Costumes are only one part of a show's budget.

Before committing to a design, consider alterations, shoes, undergarments, accessories, replacement pieces,

shipping, storage and quick-change supplies.

A costume that requires a \$40 accessory for every performer may actually cost considerably more than its initial price suggests.

Experienced boosters also think about longevity.

Can pieces be reused?

Can basic garments become the foundation for another production?

Can jackets, vests or skirts be purchased separately and incorporated into future shows?



PHOTO BY CASTLE SHOW CHOIR

Can the costume department maintain an inventory of useful pieces?

Building a costume closet can become one of the smartest long-term investments a show choir program makes.

The Costume Should Never Outperform the Student

There is a temptation in competitive show choir to keep adding.

More sparkle.

More embellishment.

More layers.

More accessories.

More color.

More drama.

But more is not always better.

The purpose of a costume is to help the performer communicate.

If the audience remembers the costume but cannot remember the character, the emotion or the music, something has gone wrong.

The student should remain the star.

The Booster's Perspective

For many booster parents, costuming

is one of those jobs that starts with a simple volunteer opportunity and quickly becomes a major production.

Someone measures the students.

Someone orders the garments.

Someone tracks the sizes.

Someone makes alterations.

Someone labels everything.

Someone organizes the racks.

Someone carries garment bags through a hotel.

Someone stands backstage with a sewing kit, safety pins, stain remover and a level of nervousness that rivals the performers.

That work matters.

The best costume volunteers understand that they are not simply dressing students.

They are supporting the production.

They are protecting the director's creative vision.

They are helping performers feel confident.

And on competition day, they are part of the team making sure that the show can happen exactly as rehearsed.

The Final Test

Before approving any costume package, ask five questions:

Does it tell the story?

Does it look cohesive from the audience?

Does it allow every performer to move and sing comfortably?

Does it support the choreography?

And can the students actually get in and out of it when the show demands a quick change?

If the answer to all five is yes, you probably have a winner.

The finest show choir costumes are not simply the ones that receive compliments in the lobby.

They are the ones that make the audience understand the story.

They make choreography look bigger.

They give performers confidence.

They survive competition day.



PHOTO BY CASTLE SHOW CHOIR

And when the final note rings out, they have done their job so well that the audience remembers the performance—not the costume malfunction that almost happened backstage.

That is the mark of great show choir costuming.

It looks effortless from the audience.

But every seasoned booster knows how much work went into making it look that way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. He was introduced to Show Choir by his daughter and he is forever grateful to her for this wonderful gift.



THE 2026 BACK-TO-SCHOOL GUIDE

PHOTOS COURTESY AMANDA CURREN PHOTOGRAPHY

No more waiting—it's SHOWTIME! Our powerhouse guide packs everything you need: fundraising hacks, costume magic, killer staging, music mastery, and cutting-edge tech. Rise above, wow your crowd, and make your choir unforgettable.

COSTUME PROVIDERS

CREATIVE COSTUMING & DESIGN

www.creative-costuming.com

Creative Costuming & Design was founded in 1992 as a true passion project for husband and wife team Kevin and Noreen Roberts, who once performed in drum corps, band and color guard themselves. What began in the living room of their Huntington Beach, California home has grown into one of the design industry's leading distributors of custom costumes. Our company's passion to deliver the best design and costumes to every customer remains the same as it was that summer of 1992. It's that dedication to design and function that has seen the company expand to serve a diverse clientele, including color guards, drum and wind ensembles, marching bands, choruses, equestrian, ice skaters, actors, dance teams, and, of course, show choirs. Our vast design collection ranges from Dramatic or Soft & Pretty to Futuristic and everything in between. Customers can choose designs directly from the site, designs with custom changes, or fully custom designs. Creative Costuming & Designs is dedicated to all groups and levels of competition. Our goal is to make each performer look and feel like a champion. Thank you for allowing us the privilege of helping your performance shine.

DORNINK

www.dorninkshowchoir.com

Dornink, a custom design fashion house in Des Moines, Iowa, can create your show choir costumes to perfectly complement your set. Choose from our many styles or design your own and let us make your vision a reality. Dornink styles can be customized to fit your set and your budget. Dornink has over twenty-three years of experience creating show choir costumes for schools through the Des Moines and surrounding areas. Founder Faythe Dornink began custom sewing costumes for her daughters in show choir in 1992 when she realized their need for a unique look. Since then, designer and daughter Sarah Dornink, educated and trained in New York, has joined the business. Sarah and Faythe will personally work with you to custom design your costumes and create the perfect set. Work with our design team to custom design the perfect look. Whether you're looking for show choir or theatrical costumes, we can design and create just about any style. Be inspired by the many fabric selections on our fabric page. And if you don't see what you're looking for, just ask! Let Dornink set your group apart from the rest. Dornink can design and create the look you need. Our design team is always sourcing new fabrics, styles, and the latest trends to keep your group looking amazing on stage.



HAUS OF LANOUE AND GAIL MCGINNIS PRODUCTIONS

www.gailmproductions.com

Haus of Lanoue and Gail McGinnis Productions provides premier costume designs tailor fit for show choirs and performing groups. With an understanding that no two clients—and no two shows—are alike, we specialize in creating costume needs to meet any budget, any theme, and the unique vision of any director. Always abreast of the latest trends in show-choir styles, we offer a wide variety of unique fabrics, custom-made beaded and sequined dresses, and creative costumes to fit the ever-changing show choir world. We have an extensive line of men's suits and creative custom jackets. The design process is different for each client. Some directors choose designs exactly as presented on our website, while some like what they see but want to customize the color or fabric. Still others come in with little more than an idea, and it's our job to bring it to fruition—from classic show-choir styles to highly detailed theatrical costumes, period costumes, and cutting-edge, fashion-forward looks. Having been music educators ourselves, we're always thinking beyond a great look to consider functionality and practicality, all the unseen factors that go into producing a show. We're proud to have earned the trust of directors who come back to us year after year for costumes that always hit the right note.

MUSIC ARRANGEMENT

MUSIC ARRANGEMENT SERVICES

www.showchoirmusic.com

In the late 1980's, Jeffrey Bowen began arranging for competition show choirs as extra work. During the 1990's, the arranging grew into full-time work and was established as Music Arrangement Services. In 2012, the company became incorporated as Music Arrangement Services, Inc. with the same concept of providing high-quality competition arrangements as well as ensuring the legal licensing of each and every title. Arrangements have been purchased by schools in over thirty-five states, several European countries, and Australia. Music Arrangement Services, Inc. provides quality Show Choir arrangements to competition Show Choirs all over the country. With hundreds of titles to its credit, directors will be able to see the wide variety of styles created to make your show choir sound the best! Music Arrangement Services, Inc. can assist in all licensing and arrangement permissions to ensure the legality of making copies for your rehearsals! Currently, there are hundreds of titles on file that have been created over the decades, including original pieces by Jeffrey Bowen that have been purchased by show choirs around the country.



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FUNDRAISING PARTNER BUSINESSES

CHESTNUT HILL CANDLE COMPANY

www.chestnuthillcandle.com

What started as a hobby for Dave and Missy Severs in 2001 blossomed into a passion-fueled business after countless trials and triumphs. Our candles quickly gained popularity, propelling us to launch our website in 2002 and open a retail store a year later. In 2020, we proudly opened our flagship location in Chester. We've become experts in fundraising for schools and organizations, distributing our candles across the globe, from the United States to our distributors in Italy, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Germany. With 18 seasonal fragrances to choose from, up to \$5 profit per candle sold, online and catalog sales available, individually packed orders, and free delivery, we're proud to offer a fundraising program that's quick, easy, and profitable for your organization. You'll also have the confidence of selling a premium name brand product known for quality. As a family-owned and operated venture, we're honored to work alongside our two daughters, infusing every candle—each one made with natural soy wax and pure cotton wicks—with love and dedication. Whether you've been a part of our story from the beginning or just stumbled upon us today, we're immensely grateful for your support and for joining us on this adventure.

DUTCH MILL BULBS

www.dutchmillbulbs.com

For over half a century, Dutch Mill Bulbs has been committed to providing our customers with the best available bulbs and rooted perennials. We work only with reputable growers who share our dedication to quality and service. We look forward to an opportunity to earn your business. Dutch Mill Bulbs was established in 1960 with a company vision based on several criteria. First, we were committed to a unique fundraising idea that was environmentally responsible and available year-round, offering spring and fall flower bulb fundraising programs. Secondly, we would provide no-risk spring and fall

flower bulb fundraising programs. Next, we would provide low cost, easy-to-sell, guaranteed to grow and bloom pre-packaged flower bulbs and bare root perennials. Finally, we have committed ourselves to superior responsiveness to customer needs as well as continuous improvement. We've been so successful for so long because we not only stand behind our products with a no-nonsense guarantee, but we also stand behind our customers, offering unmatched service and support. Contact us toll free at 800-533-8824 or visit our site to get started on your next fundraiser!

FUN PASTA

www.funpastafundraising.com

Need a great show choir fundraising idea? Earning up to 50% profit, you can sell from our brochure and also online with your webpage link with free shipping! Prizes include iTunes or Wal-Mart gift cards. Some of the benefits of our program include the following: One-of-a-kind products, made in the USA, affordable price points, healthy and fun, long shelf life, easy distribution—no melting or refrigeration—Online Leader Dashboard, and Auto Alert Marketing Tool for sellers. Fun Pasta Fundraising is both new and unique—a chance to sell Pasta in “fun shapes” like musical notes, sports, holidays, and more. Our fundraising program is simple and effective—the #1 Brochure Sales + Online Sales. Your participants will sell from a colorful brochure and also share an online web page link with out-of-town friends and families. You can earn 50% profit with your



total brochure sales over \$4,000, earn 40% profit with your total brochure sales less than \$4,000. All online sales earn 40% profit, and you can earn Bonus Cash Prizes based on total gross sales!

JOSE MADRID SALSA

www.josemadridsalsa.com

Jose Madrid Salsa has made its name from the meticulous crafting of gourmet salsa, rooted in our original family recipes. We prioritize high-quality ingredients, resulting in a superior product that sets us apart from the rest and lives up to the standards of our namesake, family patriarch Jose Madrid. Jose Madrid Salsa has worked with groups as a fundraising company for more than 18 years. It's a fulfilling journey where our growth aligns with the accomplishment of shared goals. We make fundraising easy, fun, fast, and profitable, offering 50% profit to your group! You can choose from online sales, community fundraising, or both! We provide ordering instructions you can send to friends, family, co-workers and put on your social media. They will be able to choose from all 28 of our flavors—from Original Mild to Black Bean and Corn Pablano, Mango Habanero, and Spanish Verde XX Hot. There's truly something for everyone. Customers can pick as many jars as they like, and we will ship them directly to their home or office. Upon the completion of your fundraiser, we will send you a check for \$4.00 per jar ordered. We look forward to partnering with you!

MAYSHINE® FUNDRAISING

www.mayshinefr.com

Looking for a delicious and easy show choir fundraiser? Mayshine® offers a variety of proven fundraising programs featuring products supporters will actually be excited to buy! Choose from favorites like Butter Braid® Pastries, Wooden Spoon® Cookie Dough, Joyful Traditions® Cake Rolls, Bella Napoli Frozen Pizzas, Croissant Crowns, and Rada Cutlery.

Mayshine makes fundraising simple with high per-item profit, traditional, online and hybrid selling options, short turnaround times, simple pricing and order forms, an online Group Leader Portal, fundraising tools,



local representatives, and easy pre-sorted delivery. Your local fundraising professional helps guide your group from start to finish, making this a great option for show choirs looking to raise money without adding a lot of extra work.

From hand-braided pastries made with real butter to premium cookie dough, cake rolls, pizza, pastries, and American-made cutlery, Mayshine gives your students plenty of products that are easy to share with family, friends, and supporters. Great products + simple selling + strong fundraising support = a bright choice for your show choir!

SCHERMER'S PECANS

www.schermerpecans.com

Harvested from Georgia orchards that have been in our family for over seventy years, our pecans are always hand selected and fresh shelled. We take pride in our pecans from start to finish; we plant and care for the trees, shell the pecans, and candy the delicious varieties. Schermer's Pecans offers a healthy and delicious option, a fundraiser you can feel good about! In a nutshell, here's how it works: First, call, email, or download our easy app to sign up. We offer free shipping in the continental USA, no money up front with approved credit, and 30 days to pay. We will mail you printed order forms to use for selling, or—to make it even easier—you can use our new app to set up your sellers with a link they can share with friends and family on social media or for door-to-door selling.

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Our app, “Orchard,” is an innovative fundraising platform that is changing the way your organization can raise money. With its mobile platform, Orchard allows fundraising organizations to present, order, and track their fundraising sales and shipments in real-time online. Orchard is built to elevate fundraising activity and results in an easier and engaging experience.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

MANHASSET SPECIALTY STANDS

www.manhasset-specialty.com

The Manhasset Specialty Company began in 1935, when inventor and musician Otto Lagervall, dissatisfied with the quality of the existing music stands and their inherent problems and shortcomings, set out to develop a better music stand. He succeeded in developing the initial Manhasset® music stands. Over the years, new stands and various accessory products have been added to the Manhasset® line, and countless improvements have been made to the manufacturing processes. Today at Manhasset, we continue working to research and develop new and unique products to fit the needs of musicians of all ages, as well as to improve upon what has always been the finest quality line of music stands available. The Manhasset Specialty Company is an “Employee Owned” business—all of us care about the company and our products and take

great pride in what we produce. We value very highly our company’s reputation and are strongly committed to continuing our “Tradition of Exceptional Quality.” From our full line of music stands to our innovative accessories that answer our customers’ needs, at Manhasset we are continuing in our efforts to bring you the very best.

STAGERIGHT

www.StageRight.com

Bringing over twenty-five years of innovative solutions and products, StageRight stands at the forefront in platform design and application. We have products and services that can be applied to meet the design intent of any space. We welcome the input of the designer and end user, so that the end result exceeds expectations in both aesthetics and functionality. Our sturdy and durable materials offer you a solid investment that will continue to exceed your needs for years to come. Let us know how we can help you solve the challenges of the ever changing environment. Please contact us for design consultation, budgeting and specifications. A solution is only a phone call or click away. StageRight can offer unlimited choir riser configurations and can arrange different layouts—show-choir, jazz platform, seated choral, or band risers—which can all use the same components. With an endless array of products, StageRight can help you convert any classroom, hall, theater, auditorium or gymnasium—for a performance to remember.



WENGER

www.wengercorp.com

Wenger Corporation provides innovative, high-quality products and solutions for music and theatre education, performing arts, and athletic equipment storage and transport. For more than sixty years, Wenger has been listening to what our customers need and then designing and manufacturing innovative, durable, and functional products to meet those needs. Wenger pioneered sound isolation in practice rooms and now offers modular rooms with virtual acoustic technology (VAE) and built-in digital recording/playback. Products include pre-engineered acoustical doors, sound-isolating music practice rooms, acoustical shells, instrument and equipment storage cabinets, audience seating, portable stage platforms and staging systems, tiered risers, music furniture, and more. No other company meets and exceeds the product needs of the music education, performing arts, and athletic markets like Wenger. Our expertise, design capability, and level of service are unmatched in the industry.

FAME/SHOW CHOIR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

www.fameproductions.com

For over twenty years, FAME has produced national show choir competitions and today is the clear leader in producing professional level events for the nation’s best show choirs. Three essential philosophies are woven into the foundation of each of our events: encourage innovation, inspire creativity, and reward excellence. The Show Choir National Championship Series was developed to provide a “true” national champion! Six qualifying events take place in Hollywood, Orlando (two weekends), New York, Chicago, and Branson. The top three mixed and top two single-gender show choirs from each world class division at each event will be invited to participate in the National Show Choir Finals the last weekend in April. In addition, qualified groups that have not competed at one of the qualifying events may apply to compete at

the Show Choir National Finals. Learn more about the upcoming events by visiting www.showchoirs.org.

PEAK PERFORMANCE TOURS

www.peakgrouptravel.com

Performance tours can be really stressful if not properly planned. Your group deserves an inspiring, performance- filled adventure with comfortable and dynamic performance spaces we have pre-screened. PPT has been helping schools plan comprehensive performance tours by reducing the stress and amping up the FUN for over twenty years. Planning a group tour can be overwhelming, but Peak Performance Tours will guide you every step of the way, from concept to completion, in co-designing the right program based on your performance and entertainment goals. Whether you want to participate in a music festival, perform publicly, or participate in a workshop, Peak can provide you with a proposal for destinations in the USA and beyond. We have experience planning trips for clients with groups of all styles and size. From a live street performance to a Broadway workshop, these tours are designed to give you and your group a broad range of personal and local performance opportunities. Contact us today for your customized performance tour by calling 215-598-8690 or 800-220-0165.





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