OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2026

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A PLANNING RESOURCE FOR DIRECTORS, BOOSTERS, AND SHOW CHOIR FAMILIES

BEYOND THE RISERS
THE ART OF SHOW CHOIR STAGING

SMARTER STAGING
HOW TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING SHOW CHOIR PERFORMANCE

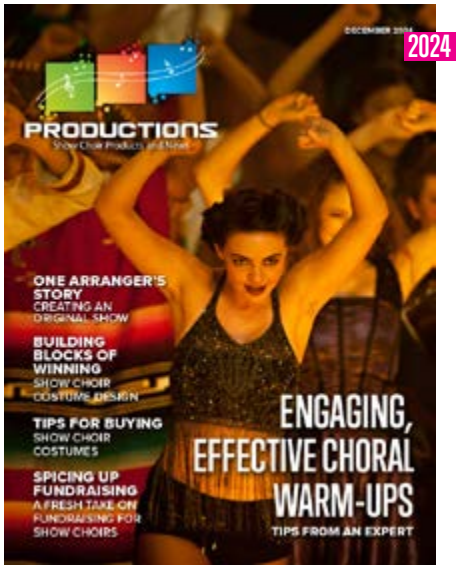
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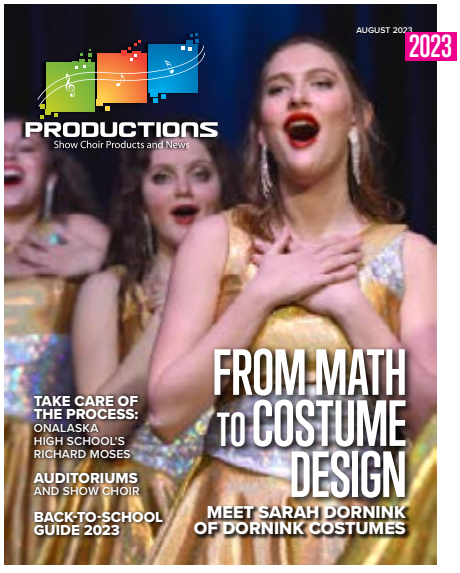
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editor's letter

Dear Readers,

If your rehearsal calendar is filling up, your costume racks are getting crowded, and you've started dreaming in eight-counts, congratulations! Competition season is right around the corner. That means the planning, fundraising, choreography, music selection, and countless little details are finally beginning to come together. And now the fun begins!

Of course, by "fun" I mean the kind that involves a few late nights, a missing costume piece, a prop that mysteriously disappears, and at least one student asking, "What time do we leave Saturday?" approximately 47 times. Would we trade it for anything? Not a chance.

Getting ready for competition season takes an incredible amount of work, and we know that producing a memorable show is about much more than teaching songs and choreography. It takes costumes, sound and lighting, travel, staging, props, and all those behind-the-scenes details that audiences never see. Unfortunately, most of those things don't pay for themselves. That is where fundraising becomes such an important part of the picture.

Whether you are organizing a major fundraising campaign or looking for a few fresh ideas to help meet your budget, *Productions* is here to help. We want to connect you with companies, products, and resources that can make your job easier and help your program thrive. Our goal is to bring you ideas you can put to work, not add to your already lengthy to-do list.

This month, we are looking at one of the most exciting pieces of the performance puzzle: staging! The right staging can transform a good show into a spectacular one, giving your performers new ways to create visual impact, improve sightlines, and bring your creative vision to life. We are also exploring new products and technology that can help directors plan, organize, and execute their productions more effectively. From innovative equipment to digital tools that help manage formations and rehearsals, there are more options available than ever before.

As you head into the busiest part of the year, remember that you don't have to figure everything out alone. *Productions* is committed to helping you discover new ideas, connect with industry resources, and find solutions that work for your students and your budget.

So take a deep breath, check that packing list one more time, and enjoy the excitement building in your rehearsal room. The hard work is paying off, the performances are getting closer, and soon all those hours of preparation will turn into moments your students will remember for years.

Here's to full buses, working props, successful fundraisers, and performances that bring the house down—for all the right reasons!

Happy competition season!

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YOUR SEASON STARTS HERE

A Planning Resource for Directors, Boosters, and Show Choir Families

by Ed Bauer

From regional invitationals to national championships, the right competition calendar can help your choir make the most of every performance, every trip, and every dollar raised.

The lights go down. The opening notes hit. The first formation snaps into place, and months of rehearsals, choreography, costume fittings, and fundraising finally come together on stage.

For show choir directors, that moment is the payoff. But getting there takes much more than learning the music.

Choosing competitions, coordinating travel, managing budgets, preparing costumes, arranging transportation, and keeping students and families informed can make the show choir season feel like a production of its own. That's why *Productions* is bringing directors and booster organizations a working guide to the 2026–2027 U.S. show choir competition season.

Whether your group is preparing for its first invitational or building a schedule around major championship events, planning early can



PHOTO COURTESY OF LOS ALAMITOS HIGH SCHOOL

make the difference between a season that runs smoothly and one that leaves everyone scrambling.

Start with the Calendar

Show choir competitions take place across the country throughout the school year, with many events concentrated between January and March. Fall festivals and early-season events provide opportunities to evaluate a new show, while winter and spring competitions bring increasingly busy schedules for directors, performers, and their support teams.

Several events worth investigating for the 2026–2027 season include:

- **Perry Show Choir Festival** — Perry, Ohio
- **Waukee Star Struck** — Waukee, Iowa
- **Ball State Mid-America Show Choir Championship** — Muncie, Indiana
- **Albertville Diamond Classic** — Albertville, Alabama
- **Oak Mountain King of the Mountain Invitational** — Birmingham, Alabama
- **Churubusco Show Choir Invitational** — Churubusco, Indiana
- **L.D. Bell HEB Show Choir Invitational** — Hurst, Texas
- **Noblesville Indiana Show Choir Championships** — Noblesville, Indiana
- **FAME national events** — including events in Branson, Missouri

This list is a starting point, not a complete national schedule.



Competition dates, registration deadlines, divisions, and availability should be confirmed directly with event organizers before making travel arrangements. For additional listings, directors can consult Show Choir Community's event calendar and Carmen Forte's competition schedules.

Build a Schedule That Works for Your Choir

The biggest competition isn't always the best competition for every group.

Before committing to an event, directors should consider the choir's experience level, travel distance, performance goals, and available budget. Some groups benefit from nearby invitationals that limit overnight expenses. Others may choose a destination event that offers a broader competitive field or an opportunity to perform for new audiences.

It is also worth checking the details that can get overlooked in the excitement of registration. Are middle school, prep, treble, or mixed groups eligible? Are there separate divisions? What are the entry deadlines and cancellation policies? Does the event offer feedback, workshops, or other educational opportunities?

A well-planned schedule balances ambition with practicality, leaving enough time for rehearsal, academic responsibilities, recovery after travel, and the everyday demands of a school year.

The Booster Club: Behind Every Great Performance

Ask any experienced director, and they'll tell you that a successful show choir season depends on a team.

Booster organizations frequently help coordinate travel, raise funds, manage volunteer schedules, organize meals, assist with costumes, and communicate with families. Their work allows directors to concentrate on music, choreography, student development, and performance quality.

For boosters, competition planning begins well before the bus pulls out of the parking lot.

Create a season budget that accounts for entry fees, transportation, lodging, meals, costumes, props, and unexpected expenses. Establish fundraising goals early and communicate the purpose of each fundraiser to families. When possible, secure travel arrangements and group accommodations well in advance, particularly for events that draw choirs from several states.

A shared calendar, a clearly assigned volunteer team, and a reliable communication plan can prevent last-minute confusion and help families understand what each competition requires.

Don’t Forget the Production Behind the Performance

Show choir is a performing art, but it is also a substantial production effort. Costumes, footwear, choreography, music licensing, staging, lighting, sound, and travel all contribute to what audiences experience on stage.

Directors and boosters can use the competition season as an opportunity to evaluate what is working and where additional resources could improve



PHOTO COURTESY OF LOS ALAMITOS HIGH SCHOOL

future performances. Does the group need more durable costumes? Would better staging equipment improve transitions? Could updated sound or lighting technology make rehearsals more effective? Are travel and storage systems creating unnecessary work?

These decisions don't always require a major purchase. Sometimes the most valuable improvement is a better process, a more reliable supplier, or a plan that allows the program to spread costs across multiple seasons.

The goal is to support students and staff while making the most of the resources available to the program.

Make This Your Season-Long Resource

A competition directory is most valuable when it is more than a list of names and dates. It should help directors compare events, find registration information, contact organizers, and make informed decisions for their groups.

For the 2026–2027 season, begin with the event listings and contact information available through Show Choir Community. Then visit each competition's official website to confirm current



dates, eligibility requirements, fees, deadlines, and event contacts.

Keep in mind that schedules can change. Confirm details with the host before booking transportation or lodging, and revisit event pages as the season approaches.

At *Productions*, our goal is to help the people who make these programs possible spend less time searching for information and more time creating memorable performances.

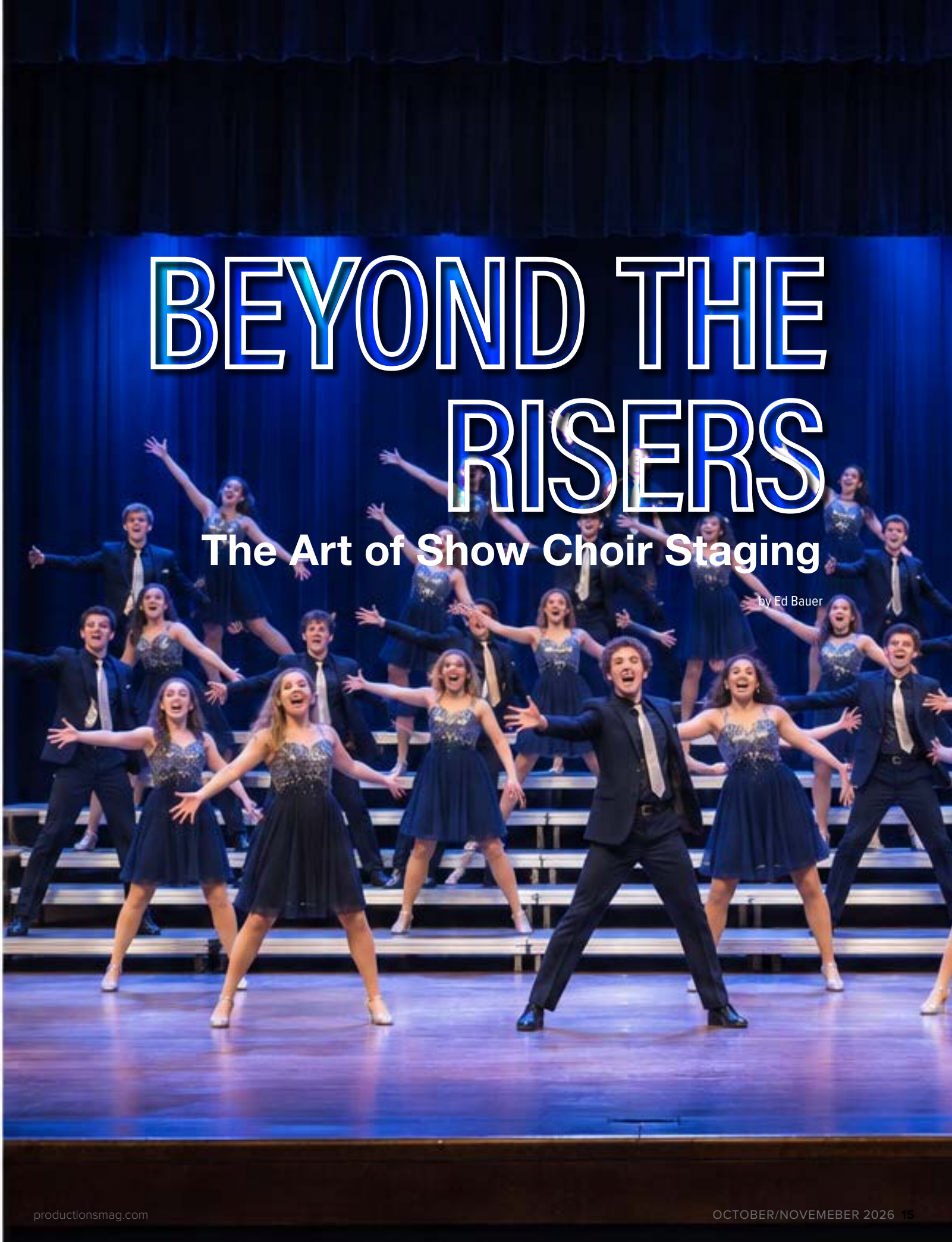
Because a great show choir season isn't built on one spectacular moment. It's built on hundreds of well-informed decisions, a dedicated team, and students who are ready when the curtain rises.

Here's to a successful 2026–2027 season. We'll see you in the audience!

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.







BEYOND THE RISERS

The Art of Show Choir Staging

by Ed Bauer





The audience sees the finished performance: a perfectly timed entrance, a dramatic formation change, a soloist stepping into the spotlight, and a wall of singers hitting the final chord as if every movement were effortless. What the audience doesn't see is the planning behind it all. Before the first note is sung, someone has considered sightlines, platform heights, traffic patterns, spacing, transitions, safety, and how to get 40 or 50 performers from one formation to the next without creating a human traffic jam.

Welcome to the increasingly sophisticated world of show choir staging, where the stage is no longer simply a collection of risers. It is a performance environment, a choreographic instrument, and—in the hands of a creative director—a storytelling tool.

The Stage Is Part of the Story

Traditional tiered risers remain a staple of show choir, and for good reason. They provide visibility, establish vertical dimension, and allow large ensembles to present a unified musical picture. But contemporary productions increasingly treat staging as something more dynamic than a stationary backdrop for choreography.

Platforms at varying heights can create visual depth. Movable units can establish new settings between songs. Steps, decks, and strategically arranged levels can frame featured performers, separate musical sections, or give a finale the scale it deserves. Even a

relatively simple arrangement can look dramatically different when the director considers how the audience's eye moves across the stage.

The key is intentionality. More platforms do not automatically create a better production, just as more complicated choreography does not guarantee a more memorable performance.

A useful question for directors is not, "What staging can we add?" but rather, "What does this moment need the audience to see?"

A ballad may benefit from a clean, uncluttered arrangement that emphasizes faces and emotional connection. An upbeat opener might call for multiple levels and strong diagonals that communicate energy before the first lyric. A theatrical number may need a central playing area with carefully controlled entrances and exits.

When staging supports the music and the narrative, the result feels cohesive. When it exists only to impress, it can become another thing the performers must navigate.

Modular Staging: Flexibility Is the New Advantage

What if your physical staging could adapt to different productions?

Modular platforms allow a program to configure its stage around the needs of a particular show rather than committing to one permanent arrangement. Depending on the system, units may be combined into wider decks, arranged at different heights, or stored and transported between venues.

For schools that perform in their own auditoriums, travel to competitions, or share facilities with other programs, flexibility can be especially valuable. A configuration designed for a large home-stage performance may need to be simplified for a smaller competition venue. Portable components can help



the production team adapt, provided the equipment is designed for the intended use and the venue's rules are followed.

When staging supports the music and the narrative, the result feels cohesive. When it exists only to impress, it can become another thing the performers must navigate.

Before purchasing, directors and administrators should consider load ratings, platform stability, nonslip surfaces, locking mechanisms, access steps, handrails where required, setup time, storage needs, transport weight,



and compatibility between components. They should also confirm that the system can accommodate the number of performers and the types of movement planned.

A platform is not simply a box at a certain height. It is part of a working environment occupied by students who may be singing, dancing, changing direction, and moving in low light. Safe access and predictable movement must take priority over a dramatic visual effect.

The most cost-effective staging solution is not necessarily the least expensive system. It is the one that can be used reliably across multiple productions, transported and stored efficiently, and maintained without excessive labor or repeated replacement purchases.

The Hidden Choreography: Transitions

A show choir can execute its choreography beautifully and still lose momentum during a transition. A riser move takes too long. A prop is in the wrong place. A performer cannot find an open pathway. A group crosses behind the wrong formation, and the audience notices the pause.

These moments deserve the same planning attention as the songs themselves. A transition that feels smooth to performers may look crowded or disorganized from the seats. In some cases, the best solution is to remove a move altogether. If a platform shift does not improve the storytelling or musical impact enough to justify its complexity, a simpler arrangement may produce a stronger performance.

A well-designed transition should feel inevitable. The audience should remain engaged with the story, not wonder why everyone is carrying furniture.

Designing for the Audience—and the Performers

Modern staging decisions should account for more than the view from the center of the auditorium. Directors need to consider students sitting or standing at different elevations, audience members seated toward the sides, lighting angles, camera positions, and the practical needs of performers moving through the space.

Sightline checks can reveal whether a platform blocks faces or whether a featured performer disappears behind a taller singer. A phone recording from several audience positions can provide a quick preliminary assessment, although it cannot replace an in-person check of the full performance space.

Accessibility matters, too. Directors should plan safe, practical participation and access routes for performers with differing mobility needs, while ensuring that pathways, steps, and platform arrangements are appropriate for the individual students and the venue.

Recording and communication technology should also be used thoughtfully. Shared videos, student information, and cloud-based documents need to follow school privacy policies. Recording students should be handled with appropriate permissions, and access to rehearsal materials should be limited to the people who need them.

The goal is a stage that supports the entire ensemble—not merely the most visually dramatic members of it.

Measure the Value Beyond Opening Night

For school administrators and program leaders, staging is an investment in equipment, storage, staff time,



transportation, and maintenance. Programs can evaluate staging purchases by considering how many productions use the equipment, how much setup labor it requires, how well it travels, and whether it can serve other school events.

A modular platform system may support choir performances, theatrical productions, award ceremonies, and assemblies, provided each use falls within the equipment's specifications.

The most memorable moment in a show choir performance happens when the staging, music, choreography, lighting, and performers work together so naturally that the audience forgets how much planning made it possible.

That is the real promise of smarter staging: fewer preventable problems behind the curtain, more time to refine the performance, and a stage that does more than hold the singers.

It helps tell their story.

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.







SMARTER STAGING

HOW TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING SHOW CHOIR PERFORMANCE

BY ED BAUER



As show choir programs continue to explore new production possibilities, technology is changing not only what audiences see but also how directors design, teach, organize, and execute their shows. The biggest shift may be that staging decisions once made with graph paper, tape measures, and trial and error can now be explored digitally long before students step into the rehearsal room.

From Graph Paper to a Digital Stage

For years, directors have mapped formations with paper diagrams, numbered squares, floor tape, and plenty of shouted reminders. Those methods still have value, particularly when teaching students to understand spacing and movement. But digital tools can make the planning process faster, clearer, and easier to revise.

Modern tools can help directors evaluate staging concepts, anticipate logistical challenges, coordinate production elements, and visualize how a show may function in performance. Rather than waiting until rehearsal, directors can identify potential concerns earlier in the planning process. It creates an opportunity to explore ideas, compare options, and solve problems before investing valuable rehearsal time.

That's not to say every school needs sophisticated modeling software. A carefully labeled digital floor plan can be enormously useful on its own. The best tool is the one the director and staff will actually use and update when the plan changes.

Apps That Give Directors More Rehearsal Time

The most useful technology is often the kind that solves small problems repeatedly. Show choir directors juggle music, choreography, costumes, props, competition schedules, student communication, and the logistics of getting an entire production ready for performance. Staging apps and digital planning tools can help bring those moving pieces together.

Here are several practical ways to put them to work.

Formation and choreography planning. Tools such as Stage Write and other dance-notation or blocking applications can help directors document formations, movement pathways, and transitions. Rather than relying entirely on memory or handwritten notes, a director can maintain a visual record of each section of a number and communicate changes more consistently.

Video-based instruction. Shared



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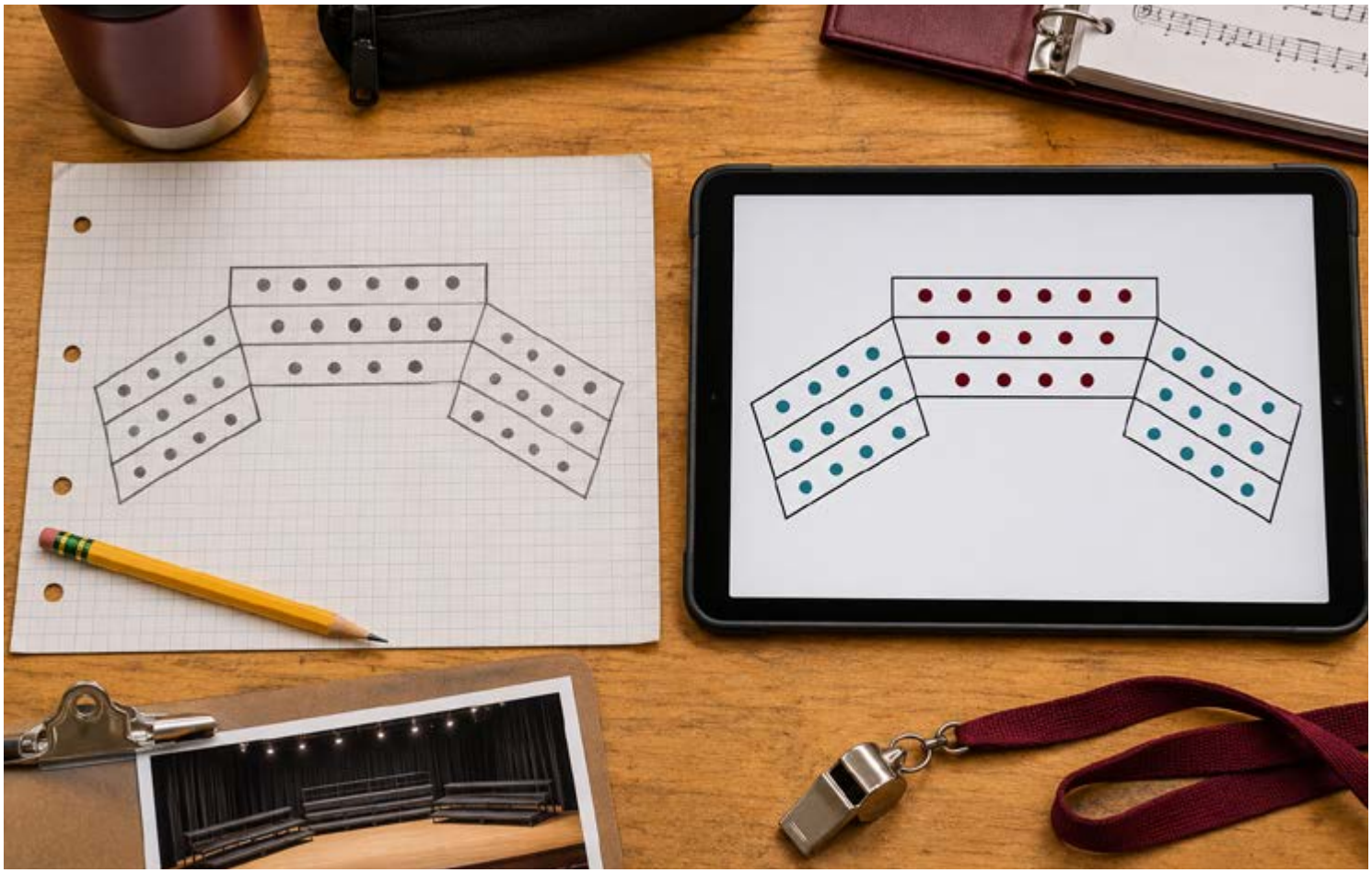






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video folders and rehearsal platforms let students review choreography outside rehearsal. Directors can post demonstration videos, slow down difficult sequences, and organize material by song or section. Students who need another look at a transition can revisit it without requiring the entire ensemble to repeat the passage.

Digital floor plans. General-purpose tools such as Google Slides, diagrams, drawing applications, and spreadsheets can create reusable stage maps. A director might color-code voice parts, label platform levels, number positions, and save a separate diagram for every formation. When a performer is absent or a soloist is reassigned, the map can be revised and redistributed.

Audio and timing references. Rehearsal recordings, playback tools, and carefully prepared cue tracks help students connect movement to specific musical moments. Directors can identify the count or lyric that triggers a transition and give the ensemble a consistent reference point.

The real benefit is continuity. If an assistant director teaches a section, a student leader reviews choreography, or a substitute supervises rehearsal, the plan remains accessible instead of living exclusively in the head of one person.

Technology does not eliminate the need for a director's judgment. It helps that judgment reach more people with fewer opportunities for misunderstanding.

Augmented Reality, AI, and the Next Generation of Staging

Emerging technologies offer another intriguing possibility: allowing directors to preview a production in a virtual environment before building it in the real one.

Three-dimensional modeling and virtual-reality tools can help production teams examine stage layouts, compare platform configurations, and consider how scenery occupies a performance space. Augmented-reality applications may also help users visualize objects or proposed layouts in a real environment.

Artificial intelligence may become another useful tool in the planning process. However, these tools should be viewed as assistants, not automatic choreographers.

A computer-generated formation may look balanced on a screen while proving awkward for the actual performers. It cannot reliably account for every student's mobility, costume, movement ability, confidence, or the nuances of a particular musical phrase without accurate information and human review.

AI-generated ideas also need to be checked for originality, licensing, and suitability for the school's production. And no digital mockup replaces a physical safety inspection of the actual platforms and equipment.

The opportunity is not to let technology direct the show. It is to give directors more ways to explore ideas, communicate expectations, and spend their limited rehearsal time on the human side of performance.

Technology does not eliminate the need for a director's judgment. It helps that judgment reach more people with fewer opportunities for misunderstanding.

The Hidden Choreography: Transitions

A show choir can execute its choreography beautifully and still lose momentum during a transition. A riser move takes too long. A prop is in the wrong place. A performer cannot find an open pathway. A group crosses behind the wrong formation, and the audience notices the pause.

Directors can use digital stage plots to map entrances and exits, mark prop locations, assign transition responsibilities, and document which platforms must remain clear. A simple transition chart can list the starting formation, ending formation, performers who move, equipment that changes position, and the musical cue that signals the action.

Video can make the process even more effective. Recording a transition during rehearsal allows the director to review traffic patterns, identify unnecessary movement, and see the stage from an audience perspective. A transition that feels smooth to performers may look crowded or disorganized from the seats.

Measure the Value Beyond Opening Night

For school administrators and program leaders, staging is an investment in



equipment, storage, staff time, transportation, and maintenance. Technology can help make that investment more productive by documenting configurations, tracking inventory, and preserving plans from one season to the next.

A digital staging library can include platform dimensions, set up diagrams, photographs, equipment checklists, venue-specific layouts, and notes about what worked. The next production team does not have to start from scratch. They can build on previous experience, avoid repeating mistakes, and identify which equipment earns its place in the inventory.

Programs can evaluate software purchases by evaluating if it earns the cost of investment. Does it save time, improve communication, or makes planning substantially more reliable? Directors should begin with a specific problem rather than buying an app simply because it promises to do everything.

The Best Technology Still Serves the Music

Show choir staging has always required a blend of creativity and logistics. What is changing is the number of tools available to help directors bring those two sides together.

Digital formation maps can clarify movement. Video can extend rehearsal beyond the room. Shared planning platforms can keep staff and students working from the same information. Three-dimensional visualization and emerging AI tools can help teams explore possibilities before committing time and money to them.

The tools will keep evolving, but

the mission remains the same: creating a performance that feels effortless to the audience, even though countless hours of planning made it possible. Technology simply gives directors more ways to focus that effort where it matters most—turning preparation into performance and ideas into something that feels a little like magic.



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.

2026–2027

SHOW CHOIR COMPETITION CALENDAR

Plan your season. Find your stage. Make every performance count.

FALL 2026

October 24	Perry Show Choir Festival	Perry, Ohio
November 7	Chippewa Falls Supershow	Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin
November 7	Neosho Show Choir Festival	Neosho, Missouri
November 14	Ada Music Feast	Ada, Ohio

JANUARY 2027

January 9	Cedar Rapids Xavier Xtravaganza	Cedar Rapids, Iowa
January 15–16	Waukee Star Struck	Waukee, Iowa
January 22–23	Ball State Mid-America Show Choir Championship	Muncie, Indiana
January 29–30	Sauk Prairie Music Show Choir Invitational	Wisconsin

FEBRUARY 2027

February 5–6	Albertville Diamond Classic	Albertville, Alabama
February 5–6	Fishers Silver Spotlight Invitational	Fishers, Indiana
February 12–13	Oak Mountain King of the Mountain Invitational	Birmingham, Alabama
February 18–20	L.D. Bell HEB Show Choir Invitational	Hurst, Texas
February 19–20	Homewood South Central Classic	Homewood, Alabama
February 26–27	Auburn Show Choir Showdown	Auburn, Alabama

MARCH–APRIL 2027

March 5–6	Churubusco Show Choir Invitational	Churubusco, Indiana
March 5–6	Jasper Foothills Classic	Jasper, Alabama
March 20	Noblesville Indiana Show Choir Championships	Noblesville, Indiana
April 10	FAME event in Branson	Branson, Missouri

KEEP THIS CALENDAR HANDY

Visit the *Productions Magazine* Show Choir Competition Directory for additional events, organizer contact information, and updates throughout the season.

Vendor Directory – Productions Magazine

Please confirm event dates, entry deadlines, and eligibility with organizers before making travel arrangements. Calendar information is subject to change.

DIRECTORS & BOOSTERS:

HELP US BUILD THE NATIONAL SHOW CHOIR DIRECTORY!

Your competition could be the next one on our list.

Show choir season brings together talented students, dedicated directors, hardworking boosters, and communities across the country. *Productions Magazine* wants to help connect them with a more complete, useful national competition directory.

We're inviting show choir programs to help us keep our **2026–2027 Show Choir Competition Directory** current throughout the season.

PLEASE SHARE

New competitions
Events missing from our directory, including local invitationals and regional festivals.

Updated dates
Confirmed dates, schedule changes, registration deadlines, and entry availability.

Event contacts
Public email addresses, phone numbers, and names of competition coordinators.

Competition details
Host school, city and state, eligible divisions, official event website, and registration link.

Whether you're hosting a major championship or organizing a local invitational, **we want to hear from you!**

HELP US KEEP THE SHOW CHOIR COMMUNITY CONNECTED

Submit your competition information to *Productions Magazine*.

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ed@productionsmag.com

Online directory
Vendor Directory – Productions Magazine

Let's make it easier for every director and booster to find the right competition, plan the season, and give their performers more opportunities to shine.

Productions Magazine
Your resource for the people and programs behind the performance.



CREATES DARK CLOUD OVER SHOW CHOIR

Over the last few months there has been a movement in show choir that seeks to educate directors and boosters more fully about copyright protections, as well as promote a service developed to presumably make applying for custom licensing a more fluid and simple process.





In fact, *Productions Magazine* offered space in two of our previous issues for these protections to be explained and the process to be highlighted ("Copyright for Show Choirs" in October 2014 and "YouTube and Show Choir Music," in November 2014). We would encourage you to read those stories if you have not yet, as there is some useful information about the workings of licensing and copyright law. We were happy to feature Tresóna whose licensing exchange was labeled as a "joint venture" between Tresóna and Hal Leonard. Even the Hal Leonard site forwarded all requests for show choir licensing to the Tresóna Licensing Exchange.

Soon after these stories ran, we were shocked to hear from many of our readers reporting distressing stories of the methods being used to procure payments on these song rights, whether they were in ongoing shows or from shows used in the past. Directors were reporting receiving bills from a company they had never heard of, which—when ignored—soon turned to demands that were sent to their principals and school districts. Some were being fined significant fees for alleged non-compliance (one example of which was a $150 song fee listed at almost $2,000 a song, once late fees were assessed). Some boosters and directors even reported disturbances being created at their public show choir events, all by this same Tresóna representative.

Certainly, some show choirs are not

having a problem with the licensing system they must use to access Hal Leonard music, and that's great. Obviously, the system works for some, and we hope it continues to go smoothly for anyone not experiencing problems.

However, many other choirs may soon be getting the same types of correspondence that have been stunning directors and administrators over the last few months: calls that music teachers should be fired for alleged violations, threats of lawsuits against music programs and schools, and talk of arrangers being blacklisted. All of this is happening even as some schools and programs are still trying to get their bearings, working to understand what seems to be a gray area in copyright compliance law.

Any choir that is fully compliant with copyright law is presumably not at risk: of course, that would only include choirs that secure permissions for every bar of music used—any recognizable sliver of a song—including special licensing for every change when music has to be adjusted for the skillsets of the group or individual parts within the group. Reportedly, the show choir community is being told to comply with one man's interpretation of the law, even as that interpretation is being questioned.

The Conflict

A popular analogy has sprung up about this interesting surge in copyright compliance and show choir laws, one referenced several times in interviews with directors, boosters, small music publishers, and arrangers. To some, this feels like directors and arrangers have been driving 57 in a 55 speed zone— in other words, some did not consider that behavior to be breaking the law at all, while others recognized they perhaps weren't strictly obeying the letter of the law; either way, no one seemed concerned with pulling them over. Then, abruptly, 55 really meant 55. Not only were people in trouble for speeding right now, but they also were caught speeding on YouTube two years ago. Additionally, they must now immediately pay the man who pulled them over, and he may be assessing additional fines, if the car they are driving looks flashy and expensive.

Ultimately, after years of operating within the status quo, several schools and programs suddenly found themselves under siege. Many had long harbored the assumption that Educational Fair Use protected them from securing permissions in the same way, say, producers and show runners would. The way things had been done for decades in show choir had a "new normal" apparently, and they were being told to get with the program or risk everything they had worked for. Some might say that's not the way to do business.

If you have followed the postings that the Tresóna representative started in the public forum on the highly popular website showchoir.com, you are familiar with some of the reactions to Tresóna's statements. Some posters derided the scare tactics being used against music directors and the strong-arming of school administrators.

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Doubts were raised about a company of murky origins that was simultaneously contacting these aggrieved parties, identifying itself as "Copyright Control & Compliance," urging the besieged

directors to pay the fees or face the consequences. Five schools identified by the licensing representative were not eligible for "A Revised Grade Period —A Copyright Peace Offering from Tresóna" posted in the Showchoir.com community, but he offered this "amnesty" gesture to everyone else. Otherwise, it seemed clear that the deadline was approaching, and more choirs would certainly be next.

In another posting, this same representative mentioned a deal he had offered one school: "Pay for the approximate 96 licenses for the music that your school infringed over the last two years and make a $20,000 donation to a 501c3 foundation that provides music lessons to underprivileged kids. That choir director and school refused this offer, and now it is the hands of attorneys." Interestingly, what he fails to mention is that he is on the board of a charity that fits that precise description. In addition to sharing a tax document from that school in this public forum, he also posted this: "That choir director and school could have written that check in 10 minutes."

Moving Forward

Though a few have said they will try to avoid Hal Leonard completely, I believe that would be a shame, as Hal Leonard has long supported schools and music programs. Surely, there are other ways to move forward. First, arm yourself with knowledge. Learn all there is to know about current copyright law, especially as it may likely be shifting and changing over the next few years; talk to other directors and talk to arrangers who have faced these problems. Secondly, be transparent with your administrators about the shifts happening in the world of copyright compliance and what it means to the program.

In the same series of postings alluded to before, the Tresóna representative noted: "I would say that we are a nation of laws, and for the literal handful of schools involved, it is a teaching moment and an important one. This moment says that no one has the right to take the property (intellectual or physical) of someone else without asking permission, that no one, not even an educator of our youth has this right, and that there are consequences for our actions."

This is where he and I agree: We are a nation of laws, and this is a teaching moment. Perhaps the lesson to be taught and learned should be how to go about enforcing those laws. Regardless of legal standing, no one has the moral right to bully and demean hard-working educators and administrators, not even someone who would appear to have the weight of powerful corporations behind him and lawyers eager to sue public schools.

Ethically speaking, no one should threaten your job or require you to donate to the charity of his choosing, all to make the specter of a lawsuit disappear. To some degree, you can choose who you do business with, and you can encourage people who line their pockets on the artistry of others to police their behavior in your schools and your auditoriums. Because there certainly should be consequences for our actions, we should choose wisely who we do business with, as should music publishers.

Recommendations

First and most importantly, take steps to ensure your choir is fully compliant with copyright law and that you have secured the permissions you need. Educate yourself, and protect yourself and your school. Draw on the expertise of any parents who may have experience in this area, and make sure that your team—from your administrators to your boosters, parents, and arrangers—is on the same page.

Secondly, if you receive a bill or other communication that you did not expect, especially if that bill raises red flags for you, request a full accounting from the music publisher of the rates/fees/penalties being assigned to your school for music used. If there is a threat made of litigation, inquire if the party making the threat has any legal standing to file suit against you—in other words, would the person making the claims against you be able to file suit against you as the plaintiff? One of the key pieces of information uncovered by one school during this siege was that the person threatening litigation was not a rights holder and would have no basis for a lawsuit. Of course, please don't misunderstand: If you violate copyright law you could be sued by the actual rights holders of the songs; however, a third party would not bring suit against you on behalf of rights holders.

This is particularly important when hefty late fees and penalties have been assigned by a third party. Though Tresóna's representative posted on Showchoir.com that 100% of fines collected were paid out to rights holders and their representatives, an accounting of that money should be encouraged if not required.

Finally, I would strongly urge you to immediately turn over any correspondence to your district lawyers, and let them sort it out. Some educators and administrators have been hesitant to do this, choosing to pay whatever sums have been demanded, rather than involve lawyers and the potential problems that could entail for them at a personal level. Yet, other impacted schools have reported that bringing in their district lawyers has been highly effective.

Ironically, the schools that can least afford their music programs to bleed thousands of dollars are also the ones least likely to investigate and allow attorneys to take over. Don't let fear shut down a music program.

NASC 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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