



PRAISE & WORSHIP FOR CONTEMPORARY CHOIR

REHEARSAL GUIDE

by Dennis Allen

“SPEAK LIFE”

Each year it seems like there is at least one song in our SonPower collection that is especially rhythmic and requires concentrated rehearsal. This song is fun to sing and it has a powerful message. Spend time “speaking the lyrics” before you add the music. Listen carefully to the demo for style suggestions, especially in how to sing the “ohs” in meas. 21-24 and other similar spots.

“THE LION AND THE LAMB”

Work on crisp execution of the dotted eighth/sixteenth rhythm combinations throughout this piece. Speak the rhythms as a group before adding the music. The Bridge, beginning in meas. 37, could be a boring repeat of the same six words; however, adding dynamic growth and energy throughout the eight-measure repeat will make this a great setup to the final chorus beginning in meas. 48.

“PRAISE GOD”

A cappella singing is one of a student choir’s best resources. You can get a starting pitch and sing anywhere you are—no track or instruments needed! So, I encourage you to have several *a cappella* pieces prepared. On this song, you need to add a gospel style to your vocals, paying attention to dynamics throughout. Each vocal part (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) should concentrate on holding all notes to their full value. This will help support other sections that may have a contrasting part.

“GREAT ARE YOU, LORD”

Many choirs do not spend enough time on dynamics. This is a critical aspect of this song because the soft sections lead in definite progression into the louder sections. Spend time rehearsing this. Also focus on holding out notes for their full value. It will make your singing more connected and smooth.

“FIX MY EYES”

This song has such a great message! So, ensuring the words are sung crystal clear is very important. Because of the variety of rhythms, combined with a quick tempo, the choir should speak the rhythms before adding the melody notes. Once you get the rhythms locked in, add the music. Rests in music are often just as important as the notes. This is especially true on the “oh, oh” sections. Listen carefully to the demo and match the style you hear.

“ONE STEP AWAY”

Listen to the demo for stylistic suggestions about how to approach this song as a choir. Once again, the rests in between the notes are important to this style. There are a lot of words in the verses and choruses, and, with the quicker tempo, you will need to practice *a cappella* a good bit to make sure the words are clear. I love the message of this song!

“THE RIVER”

This song is really fun to sing! On the verses, hold out the half notes for their full value. On the pre-chorus, meas. 11-18, change your style of singing to match the “dance feel” of the music. Now you are ready to lift your singing volume at the chorus, beginning in meas. 18. As you sing the “whoa” parts, starting in meas. 45, don’t yell them, just add extra “attitude” to your vocal sound to match the energy of the music.

“TRUST IN YOU”

With its simpler rhythms, this song will not be hard to learn. The key to this arrangement is controlling dynamics. There is a lyric progression, at first describing how life is sometimes difficult. But then when you arrive at the chorus, meas. 21, the lyrics make a pledge that “I will trust in You,” even if things continue to be tough in my life. So the volume, energy, and passion of your vocals need to slowly grow, with the chorus being the target for full release. This is especially true as you begin the key change chorus in meas. 60. Let it erupt in praise to our faithful God!

“JESUS, BE NEAR TO ME”

with “I Need Thee Every Hour”

Don’t let the subtle mixed meter in the verses confuse you. Simply use the dotted quarter rests as a time to take a breath; it is a natural part of the phrase. Once again, make sure you hold the dotted quarter notes their full value. It will make your singing less choppy. There are subtle dynamic and tempo changes that need your attention in rehearsal. Dynamics are especially critical to the emotional impact of the song.

“MIGHTY REDEEMER”

Once you learn the basic sections of this song, you should have little problem with notes and rhythms. Focus on adding the musical energy and emotion needed to make your presentation come alive. Dynamic contrast is once again the name of the game. Work to have your softer sections express “hushed energy,” and then your louder sections can explode with joy.

“NO LONGER SLAVES”

Notice that this arrangement does not get to a *forte* (loud) dynamic marking until meas. 46. So, as you work through the opening sections, make sure your softer singing is still filled with energy and crisp enunciation of the words. The rhythm combination of sixteenth/eighth/sixteenth is found throughout this song. Sing *a cappella* with your group to make sure this rhythm is cleanly sung.

“SOUL ON FIRE”

This song has rather straightforward rhythms and music, so rehearsal should focus on dynamics between the sections and energetic singing on the opening verses and choruses. At the Bridge, smooth out the singing style beginning in meas. 40, building to a mid-level chorus at meas. 56, heading to a full chorus at meas. 64.