





IMPROVE YOUR ORGANIZATION

with Chorus Management Tools

by Jacob Levine

The beginning of a new season is an exciting time. That is, unless you're the poor sap who gets handed the stack of audition forms and has to copy everything into Excel. The data entry required for this two-step process (paper forms + Excel) is tedious and highly inefficient. You have to manually copy a large amount of data, you have to decipher messy handwriting, and you're basically guaranteed to have some errors. Fortunately, there's an easier way: go digital!

Using a chorus management tool will radically change your organization for the better. What are you waiting for?

The Secret To Simplifying Data Entry For The New Season

There are tons of fantastic free tools out there that can help you simplify data collection into a one-step process. Skip the paper altogether and have singers enter their info directly into a digital form that will automatically generate a spreadsheet. Then, the data can easily be copied from that spreadsheet into your membership roster in Excel or Access, or imported into chorus management software.

Collecting Data Online

Probably the simplest and easiest way to do this is to send new singers an online form. My favorite tools for this are Google Forms and Survey Monkey, but there are tons of others out there.

Collecting Data in Person

Your chorus may like to collect data in person, either at auditions or at the first

rehearsal. If you have internet access in the space, you can always create an online form, as mentioned above, and pull it up on a laptop or mobile device.

If you don't have internet access in the space, you can collect data offline using one of the many free form-builder apps available on mobile devices. I've been impressed by what I've seen so far with Device Magic's Mobile Forms, but if you have the time and patience, try out a few to see which you like the best.

7 Ways Chorus Management Software Will Radically Improve Your Life

Collecting information about new members is a major pain, but it's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the data management challenges faced by choruses.

Here's a very typical scenario: a new singer joins your organization. That singer needs to get added to the membership roster. Oh, and also the spreadsheet for

attendance. And did I mention the dues spreadsheet? That doesn't even count the email list for the weekly newsletter.

For most choruses, none of these functions are integrated, making them all the more painful to manage. But it doesn't have to be this way. There are a handful of chorus management tools out there designed specifically to help with the administrative challenges faced by choruses.

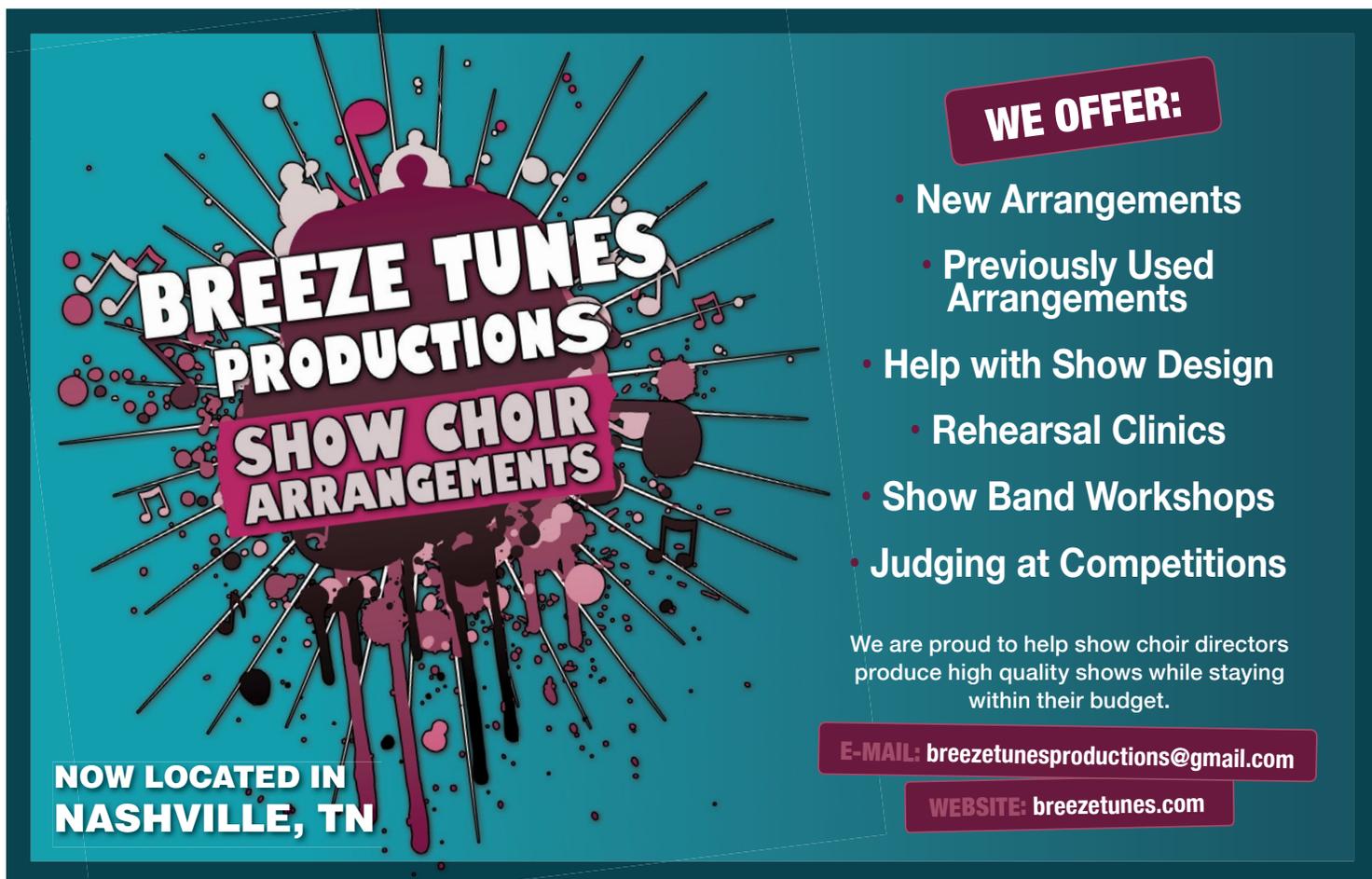
Here are 7 key reasons your chorus should consider using such a tool:

1) Eliminate duplicate data entry

Using an integrated system means the removal of a lot of duplicate data entry. When a new singer gets added to the database, she'll automatically get added to the appropriate email lists. If her contact information changes, she can update it herself in a single place and the change propagates everywhere. The list of similar benefits is long.

2) Save time

Eliminating data entry means your team will save a lot of time. As a result, they can focus on things that will actually grow your organization, rather than managing data.



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3) Make life easier for singers

Singers need access to a lot of information: the calendar, rehearsal tracks, contact information, etc. Life gets much easier when everything can be found in a single place.

4) Remove bottlenecks

Some choruses do put much of that information on a members' only page on their website. That can be really valuable, but typically all changes have to be made by a webmaster. A chorus management tool can allow less tech savvy people to easily make changes directly. Your artistic director, for example, could upload rehearsal tracks himself.

5) Smoother turnover

Turnover is constant in choruses. When everything is run from spreadsheets or custom built tools, new leaders have to learn the idiosyncrasies of their predecessors' systems or design something new from scratch. Either way, it's typically a bumpy ride.

A chorus management tool can help keep things standardized, smoothing normally chaotic transitions.

6) Support

Speaking of turnover, after transitions, leaders often don't have access to the people who originally designed their current systems. If they have questions or get confused, this can be especially frustrating. If they're using a chorus management tool, however, they have access to that company's team, meaning faster and more reliable support.

7) Constant improvements

If your organization has a system cobbled together by volunteers, improvements and bug fixes are completely dependent on their time and availability. If you use a vendor, however, you can and should expect to see improvements and fixes on a regular basis.

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Jacob Levine is the founder of Chorus Connection, the easiest way to manage every aspect of your chorus in one place. A lifelong choir geek and tech geek, he loves marrying his passions to help choruses run more efficiently. Learn more at www.chorusconnection.com!

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