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MOVING THE SHOW CHOIR WORLD FORWARD

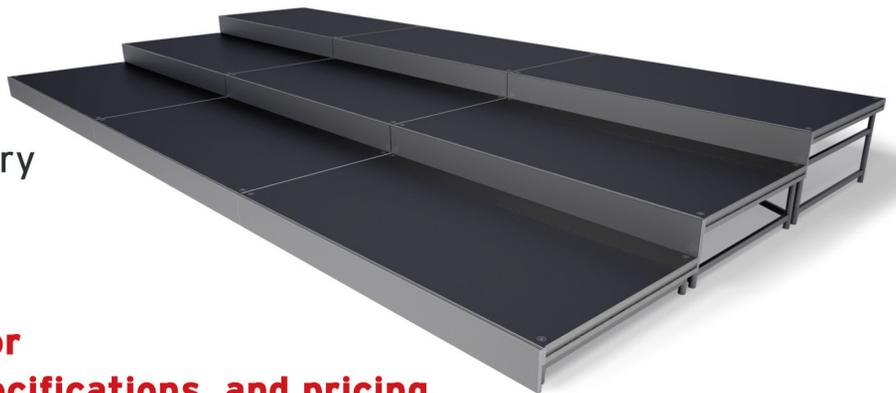


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"Orange Sensations" (2 Times) Wayne County HS (MS)
"Opening Knight" South Dearborn HS (IN)
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"Femmes Fatales" (3 Times) Plainfield HS (IN)
"Debut" (2 Times) Mills E. Godwin HS (VA)
"Class Act" Carmel Middle School (IN)
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"Sound Surge" (2 Times) Biloxi HS (MS)
"Impressions" Opelika HS (AL)
"Faces" & "Cavaliers" Crete-Monee (IL)
"(m)Pulse" Menchville HS (VA)
"Crimson Heat" & "Diamond Sensations" New Palestine HS (IN)
"Orange Sensations" (2 Times) Wayne County HS (MS)
"Treble Makers" Colonial Forge HS (VA)
"Show Cards" Colerain HS (OH)
"Premier Edition" (2 Times) East Noble HS (IN)
"Rhapsody" Northwest Ranking HS (MS)
"Central Attraction" Pearl River Central HS (MS)
"Femmes Fatales" (2 Times) Plainfield HS (IN)
"Knight Scene" Thomas Dale HS (VA)
"Harmony In Motion" (2 Times) Douglas Freeman HS (VA)

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MOVING THE SHOW CHOIR WORLD FORWARD: CREATING ORIGINAL MUSIC

by Jeffrey Bowen

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WHAT MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE OFFERS YOUR SHOW CHOIR

by Paul Brown

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editor's letter

It's that time of year when many people will be welcoming a new member to their family—the long-standing Christmas tradition, documented in countless videos, of a delighted child (or adult) meeting their new pet and falling in love instantly.

Over a decade ago, when my husband and I decided to get a pet, I wasn't entirely new to the process. I had owned dogs before, but they had always been "outside" dogs. While I had cared about them and for them, there was a clear line between pet and human. I knew many people had closer relationships with their animals, but I found myself baffled by people who allowed their pets inside the house without limitations; some allowed pets on their furniture or—gasp—even to sleep in their beds. They called their pets children or "fur-babies," and they dressed them up in holiday costumes. This breed of pet owner was something entirely different.

Then, we adopted a shelter dog the rescuers had already named: Styro. The volunteers on duty chose the name because he was found, as a newborn, stuck inside a Styrofoam cup inside of a dumpster and crying for help. According to their site, they wanted his name to serve as a reminder of man's cruelty. They also noted that he appeared to be part Chow (and part Lab), warning potential owners that Chows are renowned in the dog world for being intelligent but stubborn—often obeying orders only when they saw a good reason to obey. It sounded like he'd fit right in with us.

Though I wasn't on board with such a dark origin story, we kept the name because—as weird as this sounds—he looked like a Styro. Plus, I'd never heard the name before, and I liked his chance at living a unique life. We also liked the reminder that was built into the name, not one of human cruelty but one of redemption: Even the most helpless creature could start life (literally) in a dumpster but eventually lead a life of greatness...but I'm getting ahead of myself.

We started the process the way traditional "owners" do: Though he was an inside dog, we followed the rules of crate training, including leaving him in a cage whenever we left the house. After he managed to somehow destroy the flooring underneath the cage with his little puppy feet, we tried just keeping him in a closed bedroom or a closed-off living room, so he wouldn't feel trapped. Three doors, a couch, and a dresser later, we gave up and just let him have the run of the house, while we hoped for the best.

What we didn't understand at the time was that he wasn't being allowed to do his job and keep watch of the entire house. After we stopped imprisoning him, he never damaged another item in our home. Then, when we visited my husband's parents in Ohio, it was far too cold on the basement floor to keep him in his dog-bed, so I pulled him up to join us on the pull-out bed to keep him warm. Long story short, he's been in the bed ever since. When we adopted a sister for him, Doppler, a few years ago, she joined our lives, and we became the "Mommy" and "Daddy" to another fur-baby.

Now, we never take vacations if we can't bring our pets. They were Batman and Wonder Woman this past Halloween, and they'll be Santa and an elf this Christmas because Doppler wasn't a fan of her Christmas tree dress last year. They have their own Christmas stockings. For a beach trip this past summer, they enjoyed the water-view from the balcony, Doppler in her "Beach Life" tee, and Styro in his buttoned-up, Hawaiian-themed shirt.

Unless you are a convert, like I am now, you'll be reading this with skepticism. You may even be amused by the lunacy of someone treating their animals like little humans. When you cross over into this type of relationship with a pet, though, there really is a kind of magic that happens. No matter how lousy the day might be, when you come through the door, you are met with pure delight.

Though I already lean towards the sappy at this time of year, my heart is warmed to know there are so many students who will now be greeted at the end of a difficult day with unconditional love and support. They can face the academic and social demands of middle school, high school, or college with a loyal friend. Not only are they going to experience social and physical benefits from this relationship, but they have an adoring little being to care for—something that takes the focus off of self for a few moments, when life becomes nearly overwhelming, offering focused and gentle companionship in a chaotic and noisy world. Now *that*, is a life of greatness.



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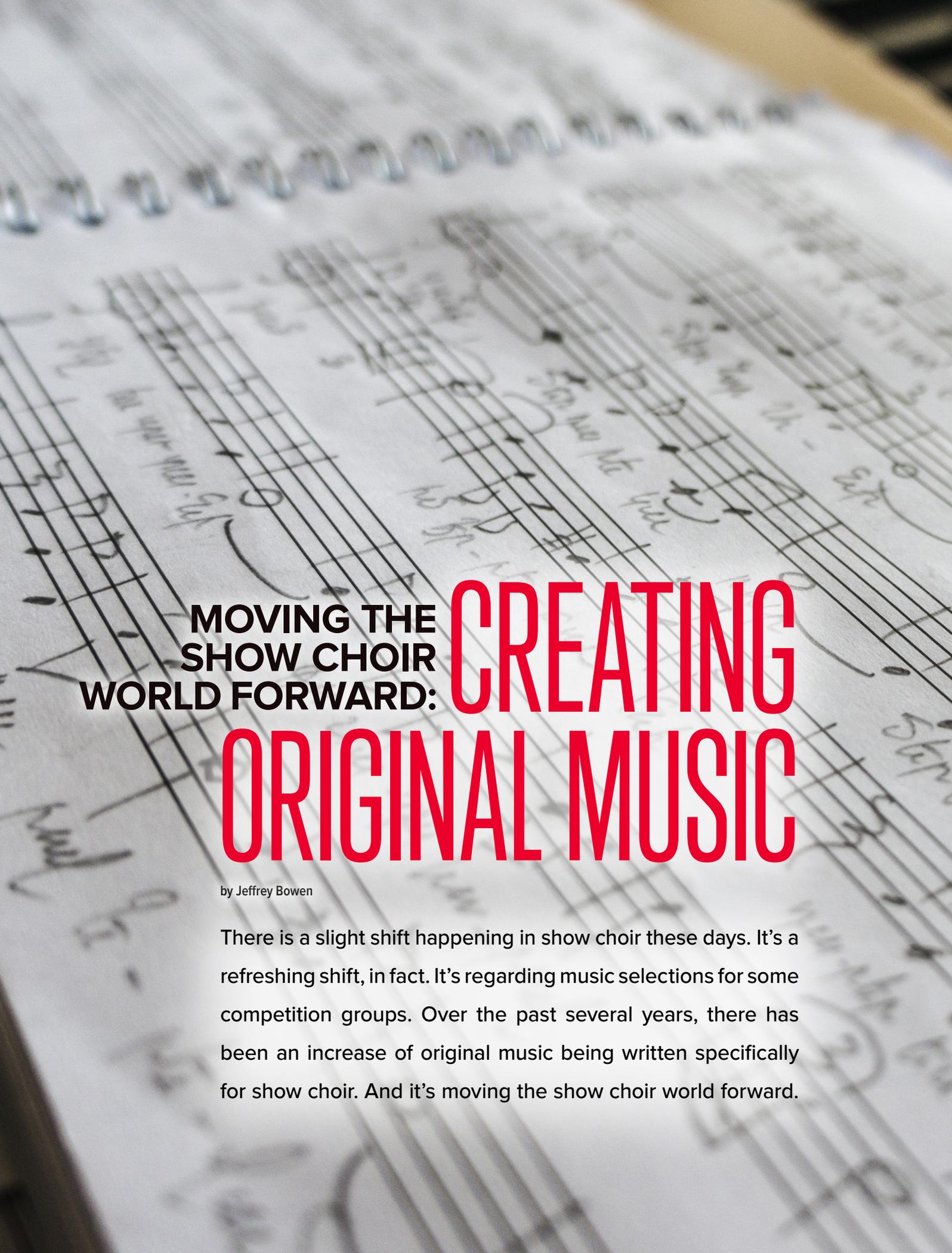
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A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a spiral-bound notebook. The pages are filled with handwritten musical notation, including staves with notes, clefs, and lyrics. The ink is dark, and the paper has a slightly aged, off-white tone. The spiral binding is visible at the top of the frame.

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Being a judge at several competitions a year in different parts of the country, there were opportunities when I would hear a wonderful piece of music performed and wonder, "What show is that from?" or "Who is the artist that recorded that song?"

When inquiring with the director, I was very pleased to discover that someone had written that song just for their group. A few years ago, I even saw a show where the music was predominantly original. It was so creative and entertaining!

Crafting Original Pieces

Over the years, I have offered creating original material for numerous directors, and what I discovered is that this concept is becoming more and more accepted.

Starting in 2006, I was selling about one original piece a year. At that time, I had created original arrangements for show choir and

advertised them to schools. By 2012, I was writing an original show for Crete-Monee High School in Illinois.

That was a first endeavor for writing an entire show. Later that year, a director needed an opener and could not get the licensing, so the offer was made to create something with the same theme and feel. I crafted a sample and the director liked it. I was thrilled.

Last school year provided the opportunity of writing four originals for various groups and this year, a whopping fourteen original pieces. The subjects of these vary greatly, including a Marie Antionette "let them eat cake" song, women super heroes, the attempt of rescuing Pinocchio, several for a sports themed show and all but two arrangements for a goddess show.

The biggest challenge was the latter, which included a great deal of research to ensure accuracy.



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There are still many show choir directors who are hesitant to jump on the originals bandwagon. That is a decision that I fully respect because that director knows their show, students and programming better than anyone.

Some directors still feel it's too risky and judges may not be impressed or may score them lower since they don't recognize the material. I have always maintained that judges will always encounter music they are not familiar with and should score based solely on the group's performance.

When a director does make the decision to use original music, they are making a win-win-win-win choice.

First, the director gets a piece of music created with their specifications, so the song fits their show exactly.



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Second, licensing is (or should be) included with each original piece, which helps keep the cost down.

Third, there are no restrictions when the arranger/director needs to email scores back and forth. This is exceptionally helpful when making edits.

Finally, the writer gets to add a songwriting credit to her or his repertoire. From a songwriter standpoint, this is your work, your creation, your product. This relationship also adds value to the director as well because they have another credible and valuable member on their team.

If you get approached with the opportunity of original material, you may wish to consider the possibility. And the possibilities are endless.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jeffrey Bowen is Chairman of Music Arrangement Services, Inc. Contact him at jeff@showchoirmusic.com.

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WHAT

MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

OFFERS YOUR SHOW CHOIR

by Paul Brown

If you're the leader of a Show Choir or practically any other organization that involves people and activities (school band, orchestra, choir, drama, or dance), then you know all too well about the myriad tasks that can come up as part of keeping that group and its activities running smoothly. There are two key factors that, when done efficiently, contribute to continued success (and less burnout): The first is communication, and the second is information access.

Clear, Efficient Communication

Clear, efficient communication both down and up the line is critical for getting things done and avoiding/preventing bottlenecks—and when something does go awry, efficient communication can help things recover quickly and get back on track. Having efficient access to needed information (in conjunction with good communication) helps to keep everyone and everything on schedule, and has the added benefit of reducing the number of emails and phone calls to/from the people involved in making something happen and—just as importantly—can also reduce expense.

Of course, as the leader, your primary responsibility to yourself is to delegate, so you don't have to do everything, and you hope your people are reliable. However, when you delegate, the keys of communication and information access become even more important. Task delegation is one thing, but what's the best way to keep all those plates spinning?

So Last Century...

Remember the Yellow Pad? Index Cards? Phone trees? Whiteboards? File cabinets? All these tools and more used to be all that were available to someone tasked with

organizing and pulling off a successful event or performance, and some people still utilize some of those tools in their daily lives! Once personal computers, software, and email started to become mainstream, many people graduated to spreadsheets and emails—again, what many people still use today. In fact, depending upon the size of the group and the task at hand, these tools can certainly still be used successfully.

However, technology continues to change, especially in what's referred to as "information technology." Thanks to improvements in infrastructure and machine/electronics design, internet connection speeds to our computers and wireless devices have increased dramatically. Does anyone remember the 14.4k modem? Now, you can download an entire TV show in just a few seconds. Additionally, you used to have to load a software product directly onto your computer, and that was the only place you could access it. Many modern computers (especially laptops) don't even have a disk drive in them.

A Changing World

These days, along with those increased connection speeds, there are cloud-based storage capabilities, as well as enhancements

to email—text messaging, mobile apps, and more—as well as cloud-based management software programs. These programs have the advantage of 24/7 access, to be able to enter or access data whenever it is most convenient. If there are mobile apps that complement computer access, so much the better!

There is one word of caution here though: A mobile app will typically not be as fully functional as a computer/keyboard for data entry. Finger-tapping numbers on a 2" (or less) wide-screen is not a recommended method for accurate data entry, regardless of 'autofill' technology. An app is fine for viewing information or making simple transactions, but can be very limiting for actual data entry. However, if your students and parents can pull up information they need on an app, that means fewer phone calls and emails to the treasurer, fundraiser manager, or director.

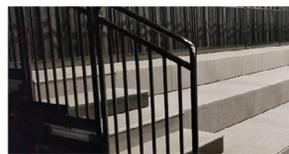
Using Management Software for Information Access

Why use management software for information access? Perhaps the better question is, "Why not?" Especially if it is cloud-based. Yes, a specific program might take some dedicated time to learn, and there is

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probably cost involved in purchasing—but the advantages of 24/7 feature access by you and the people you delegate tasks to can far outweigh the inefficiencies and possible delays resulting from not having the information that is needed at critical times, or from those aforementioned emails and phone calls from irritated parents.

The key to choosing the right software application requires you and your administrative helpers to have a fairly clear understanding ahead of time of what features are needed to help accomplish the tasks at hand. Before you start looking at management software, sit down as a group and talk about your performance, festival, fundraiser, etc., and try to anticipate critical tasks and schedules in a “brainstorming” session. Then you’ve at least got an idea of what features will be important in a software product.

Some suggested questions to begin your brainstorming with teammates are listed here:

Do you need email and/or texting? Are there sending limitations? Will you handle finances? Are student financials involved? Do you need bank ledger and budget tracking, regular reports, and audit trail? Do you need to restrict access depending upon the task delegated?

You’ll also want to ask if you need a calendar, with volunteer signups and automated reminders. Will you have assets/inventory/library/uniforms/costumes, and need to track assignments? Will you need easy data upload of those same items? If so, would a mobile app be useful?

Next, would your parents and students (or members) benefit from access from their side of the product, either by computer or mobile app? Do you need to share/distribute documents to your people? Online document access can save a lot of money and paper.

Finally, are you doing one or more fundraisers? Is there physical product, or just catalogs? The product should have features that enable easy tracking of all transactions, whether product or money-related.

All-In-One Software Changes Everything

Efficient communication tools and easy 24/7 access to information are both incredibly important to the success of your organization. If you are still using yellow pads or spreadsheets, or multiple internet resources, and struggle to keep everyone on the same page (whether helpers,

parents, or students), this is a strong option for you to relieve some of those headaches. Look into a cloud-based software system with email, text, and phone communication, as well as calendar/volunteer tool, task delegation, financial tracking, asset management, mobile apps, and access for teachers, students, parents, booster members in a one-stop shop. A product like this can be of great benefit to your organization, by helping the organization get things done with improved efficiency, better communication, and fewer headaches. The payback can come quickly, especially if you are tracking financials and asset assignments.

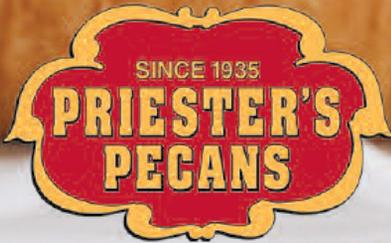
Come join us in this century. You will have a more successful program, and you will probably find yourself with more of that “personal time” that is so often elusive!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Paul Brown is the Director of Development of Dorian Business Systems. The Charms Office Assistant is the unquestioned leader in cloud-based organization, management, and communication for successful organizations. Learn more about Charms by visiting www.charmsoffice.com/about.asp, where you can also create a 60-day trial account.

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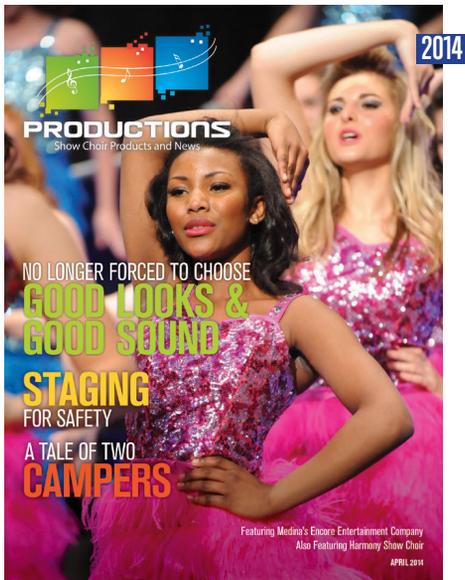
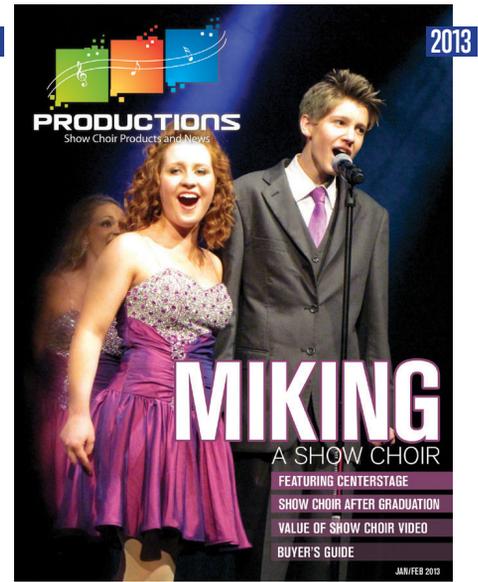
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