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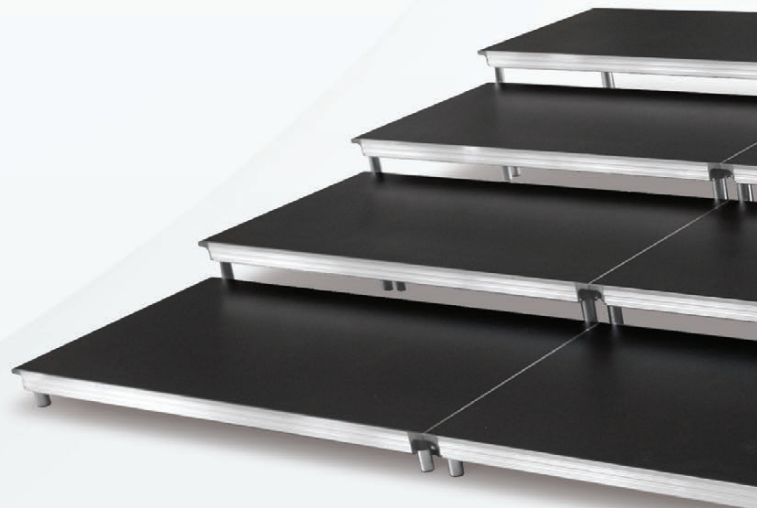
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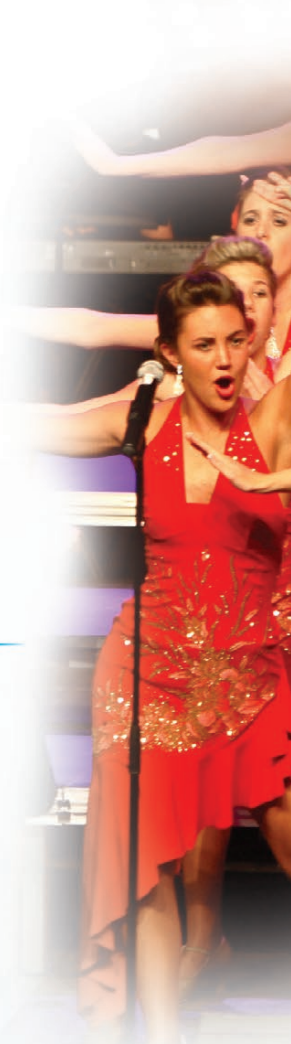
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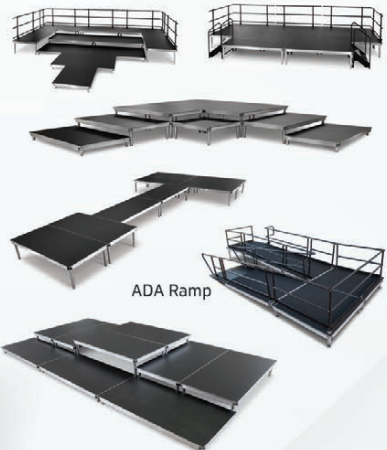
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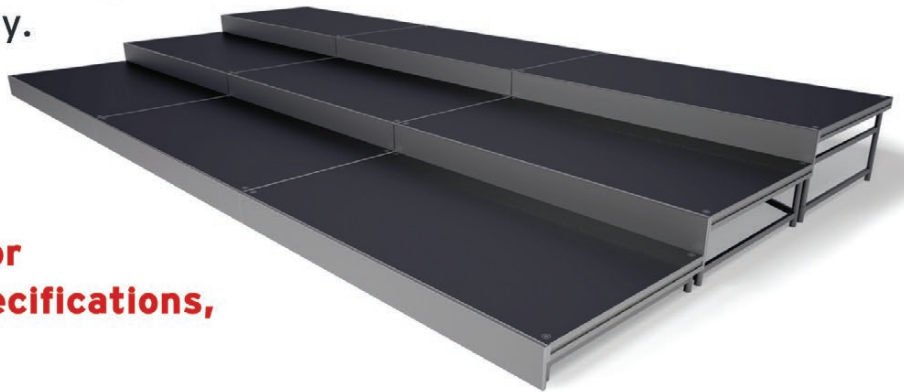
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READING BETWEEN THE RISERS: HOW STAGING IMPACTS STORYTELLING

by Cassidy Clevenger

When we think about show choir, many keywords are likely to pop into our heads: glitz, showmanship, production, and sequins. Far less commonly, someone may associate show choir with words such as *dark* and *political*.

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“DAY-OF” SHOWBAND COMPETITION TIPS

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You’ve been rehearsing for months, but to really take it to the next level you’ve got to be focused on competition day. There are five things your band can do to turn in their best performance yet.



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Photo courtesy John Burroughs / Powerhouse



READING BETWEEN THE RISERS

How Staging Impacts Storytelling

by Cassidy Clevenger

When we think about show choir, many keywords are likely to pop into our heads: glitz, showmanship, production, and sequins. Less commonly, someone may associate show choir with words such as *dark* and *political*.



Photo courtesy John Burroughs / Powerhouse

Powerhouse show choir at John Burroughs High School told the gritty, real-world story of the Haitian Revolution, and explored various layers to visual storytelling, including unique staging and historically accurate costuming.

Having a Base of Energy and Creativity

When creating a show, many players can either actively or passively influence the outcome of a production. In the case of Powerhouse, Artistic Director Jen Oundjian is one of the strongest assets at John Burroughs. According to Director Brendan Jennings, Oundjian is one of the most creative people he personally knows in the field. Oundjian has a passion for bringing historical realism to her productions; her goal is to honor the people who once lived in the era and earnestly portray their experiences.

Additionally, in a less direct fashion, students also contribute to the influence of a show. In general, each set of students will come with their own set of collective ambitions; for instance, some years the students are more zesty and cheerful, others are deeply competitive and driven by a desire for success.

In regards to Powerhouse's 2019 competition group, the students were artists first

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and foremost—they were willing to take on a dark, stirring topic that may have been seen as too controversial for other groups. As Jennings noted, one of the reasons he loves working with high school students is the raw energy they bring to the world. Across his classes, his students are consistently eager to learn, try new things, and embrace the type of dedication required to be a part of Powerhouse.

The Story

When developing the theme for their 2019 competition piece, originally Oundjian and Jennings planned on covering a story about the origins of Voodoo. However, in her research, Oundjian learned about the history of Haiti's slavery rebellion of the late 17th century. The Haitian Revolution was the first—and only—successful slave uprising to date.

After some heavy consideration, the two directors decided the best way to honor this part of history was to depict it as accurately as show choir permits. Oundjian prides herself on developing historically appropriate costume and sets, within the confines of what is expected of theatrical, musical productions.

When entering a new space, Jennings may or may not be given accurate specs and capabilities of a space until he and students arrive. In these instances, they must adapt staging and blocking virtually instantly. John Burroughs makes a concerted effort to train their students to be able to perform professionally and adapt to circumstances quickly.

Considerations and Controversies

John Burroughs is a multicultural school, comprised mostly of Caucasian, Latino, and mixed-race students; African Americans are a small minority at the school, and there were currently no Haitian students involved in the performance. Jennings noted that some of the students voiced feeling a little uncomfortable, because they were fearful of wrongly appropriating someone else's culture.

Though Oundjian and Jennings had already made several efforts to be as respectful as possible to the history and heritage of Haiti, they listened to their students' concerns. In

turn, they had a Powerhouse alum and their mother come to one of the practices one day to teach the team more about Haitian culture. The mother and former student were thrilled with the show and were impressed by Powerhouse's depiction of this major aspect of history.

How to Use Staging to Enhance the Story

In the opening sequence, though the Priestess does not perform directly with the rest of the group, the directors still wanted her on stage, visible, and faintly participating in the number.

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The team wanted to create a sense of economic and power divide between the Priestess and the rest of the performers.

In order to portray this message, they built a two-story tower for her to reside in during the opening number. They used staging and blocking to further the theme of inequality in the story.

Realities of Challenging Venues

Not every venue is going to allow for such extravagant props—in all honesty, some venues don't even have enough space to fit all the students. Jennings and Powerhouse travel, not just for competitions, but also private events.

When entering a new space, Jennings may or may not be given accurate specs and capabilities of a space until he and students arrive. In these instances, they must adapt staging and blocking virtually instantly.

John Burroughs makes a concerted effort to train their students to be able to perform professionally and adapt to circumstances quickly.

The reality is that many venues do not realize how much prep is required for a production, and some clients expect performers to be able to perform in any setting. Albeit irksome, those who work in entertainment have learned this about the culture; this is why Jennings and Oundjian strive to teach their students to practice a duality of professionalism and craft dedication.

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Notes from the Expert

When considering a set design, it is easy to get swept away by either an idea or an aspiration, and it can be difficult to balance themes, finances, and capabilities, all while trying to create a show that is competition-ready. Jennings provided some insights on what the difference is between a good and bad design.

A bad show, in short, rests heavily on gimmicks. For instance, when making song selections, it is not uncommon for directors to become too heavy-handed in their messaging. Perhaps the song's lyrics fit the era or overt message, but the covert messages and character arc are muddled. The question directors should always consider when designing a show is this: "How does this progress the story?"

Jennings explains that the music, set, costumes, and mood should work in unison to create a cohesive story, without altering the motivations of the character. Similarly, some schools become too fixated on choosing songs that are new or popular, but don't perpetuate any greater message. Novelty is a powerful tool and should be used with intention.

On the other hand, a good design will give the audience enough room to make their own decisions about the point of a production. As a general rule, audiences would prefer to make their own assumptions than be spoon-fed a message. Exceptional designs will use all elements of a production to impact the audience emotionally though subtle nuance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Cassidy Clevenger is a Samford University alum. She is currently in graduate school at Samford in the MSW program, while working as a staff writer for Flaherty Media.

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“DAY-OF” SHOWBAND COMPETITION TIPS

by Garrett Breeze

You’ve been rehearsing for months, but to really take it to the next level you’ve got to be focused on competition day. There are five things your band can do to turn in their best performance yet.



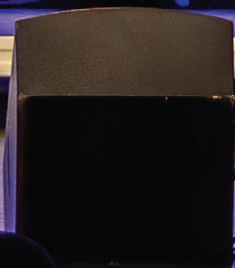
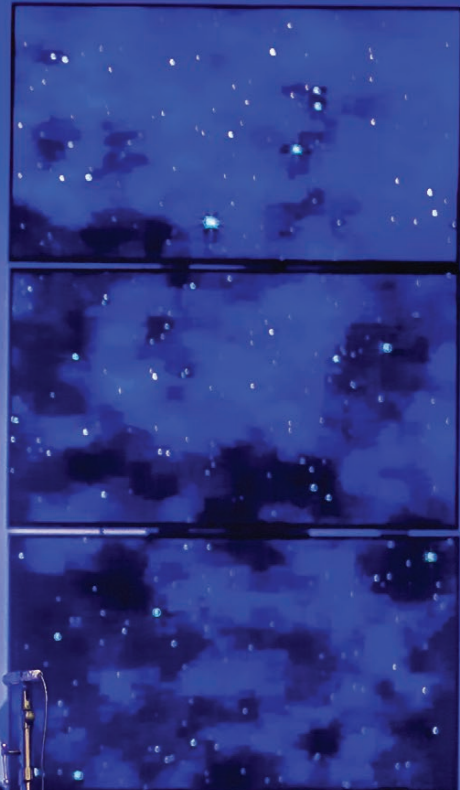




Photo by Stephen Stair Photography / Vestavia Hills Singers

Listening to Other Groups First

First, listen to other groups before you perform. One of the reasons show choir is such great preparation for a professional career in music is that you learn how to take your show on the road and re-create it in different environments.

Bands especially have to learn how to adjust their performance to fit the acoustics of the venue. Gyms are going to make things sound muddy, and so will stages with heavy curtains. Smaller rooms or stages with sound shells make it more likely that the band will cover the vocals.

Bigger venues require more effort to be loud and really nail the dance breaks. The location of floor mics, stage mics, and ceiling mics are all factors that can make or break a performance.

Make sure your band has the chance to listen to other groups before they perform to get a sense of the room. Have band members sit in different spots in the audience and observe how the sound changes depending on where you're sitting. If you hear multiple groups having the same problem, you can take steps to make sure it doesn't happen to you.

Setting Up For Success

Secondly, the way your band sets up has almost as much impact on your sound as the room itself. Sets and props sometimes get in the way, but the drummer should always be as close to center stage as possible, so there's no delay between what stage right and stage left hears.

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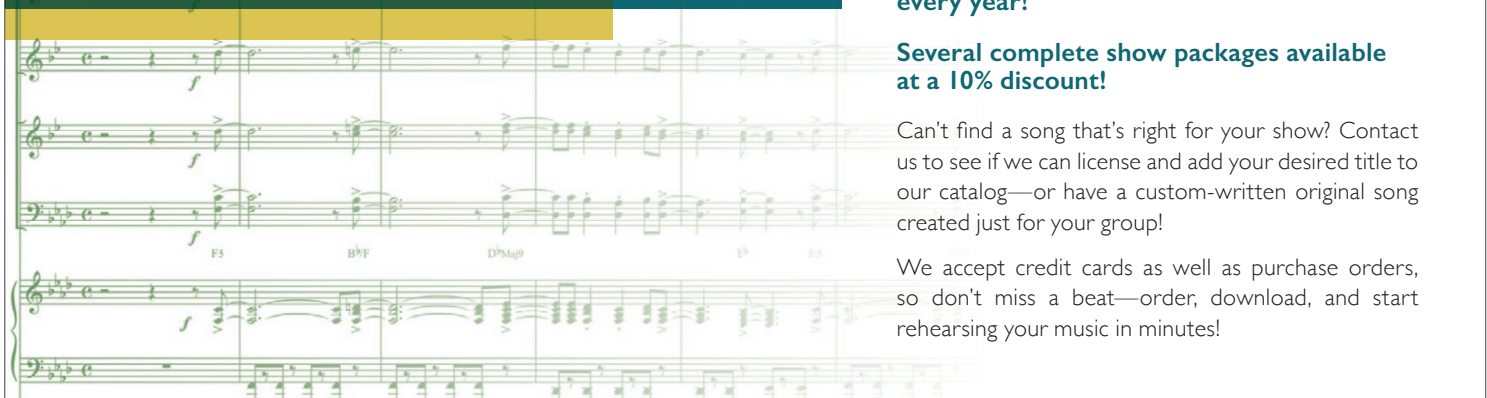
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Always have someone you trust at the sound board. The audio engineer (or “sound guy”) is the most important person at a show choir competition, yet they are often the least understood.

The bass player should always be next to the drummer, and the horns should always be facing out toward the audience (taking care to avoid playing directly into stage microphones, of course). Don’t spread out more than you need to—the closer the band is to each other, the more in sync they’ll be.

If you are forced to set up on the side, for whatever reason, make sure that all instruments and amps are pointed in the same direction, to avoid individual instruments sticking out.

Making Good Use of Warm-Up Time

Next, one of the best things you can do is make setup and strike assignments for the band and crew, so you don’t have to worry about how you’re getting everything on stage. Instead, you can focus on the upcoming performance.

Those first few minutes on stage while the choir is still setting up is valuable time for the band to be tuning, checking levels, testing monitors, and playing through things to get a feel for the stage. You don’t want to give the show away, of course, but that doesn’t mean you can’t play at all.

Setup time is a great opportunity for individuals to do some last-minute spot checks and make sure everything is working correctly for the top of the show.

Having Someone Trusted at Sound Board

Additionally, always have someone you trust at the sound board. The audio engineer (or “sound guy”) is the most important person at a show choir competition, yet they are often the least understood.

All groups should have a director or assistant at the sound board during their performance to make sure that technical problems don’t get in the way of a good show. Here are some things they can do during the show:

- If you give the sound guy a heads-up on which solo mics are to be used, they can adjust the volume depending on which soloist is singing. (A solo that’s too loud can cover up the choir’s sound, and a soloist not using proper mic technique might need a boost at the sound board to be heard.)
- Depending on the setup, the engineer may be able to adjust the volume of ceiling or stage microphones. Sometimes this is useful if a certain mic is consistently picking up individuals, or if some mics pick up the band more than others, causing balance problems.
- If your band is using an instrument that has been provided by the venue (such as an acoustic piano), the engineer may be able to adjust the volume of that instrument.

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- If there is a problem with the monitors (speakers used on stage for the performers to hear themselves), this should be communicated to the engineer.
- Most importantly, (if permitted) this person should be in constant communication with the band director to make sure balance issues between the band and choir are addressed as quickly as possible. Many competitions provide headsets or walkie-talkies specifically for this purpose.

Conducting Dynamics, Not Tempo

Finally, the single biggest challenge showbands face during a performance is effective dynamics. Yet most conductors on stage don't do anything other than keep the beat. The fact is this: If the rhythm section is doing its job, the conductor should not need to do very much conducting at all, leaving them free to focus on communicating dynamics and expression.

The conductor is almost like a sound mixer, constantly listening and making sure each instrument in the band is tucked into the mix where it needs to be. Furthermore, if you as the conductor are animated and expressive, that enthusiasm will rub off on your band, resulting in a more exciting and expressive musical performance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Garrett Breeze arranges for many of the top show choirs in the country. He is a sought-after clinician and adjudicator for showbands and has previously been band director for North Central High School “Descants” and Belmont University “Company.” For more tips on working with show choir bands, sign up for his mailing list at breezetunes.com.



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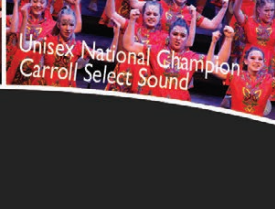


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Need a great show choir fundraising idea? Earning up to 50% profit, you can sell from our brochure and also online with your webpage link with free shipping! Prizes include iTunes or Wal-Mart gift cards. Some of the benefits of our program include 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.

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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!

SCHOOL SPIRIT COFFEE

www.schoolspiritcoffee.com

School Spirit Coffee uses only the highest quality Arabica Beans from Central and South America. All coffee products are roasted specifically to your order at our Roastery, Creative Coffees, and guaranteed to be roasted fresh within days of delivery! Since 2005, School Spirit Coffee has been providing a quality product with private label packaging at a great price to help raise funds for school groups and civic organizations.

The idea for School Spirit Coffee came to owner Debbie Hohman as a result of her school spirit and frustration with typical fundraisers. As an active booster mom for fifteen years, with two wonderful daughters, Debbie has helped organize and sell all the typical fundraising products—candy, nuts, wrapping paper, candles and the list goes on and on. Because of the high cost and low quality, often the items were difficult (or embarrassing) to sell to family and friends. If you are looking for an easy fundraiser that incorporates great products with your private label at a competitive price, give us a call at 800-570-1443 or submit a request form from the contact page of our website. We would appreciate the opportunity to help you have a fantastic fundraiser.



Photo by Stephen Stair Photography / Vestavia Hills Singers

PRIESTER'S PECANS

www.priesters.com

Priester's Pecans is a family-owned company specializing in delicious, old-fashioned, farm-fresh gifts like pecan desserts, pecan candies, cakes, and bulk pecans. As we have served as pecan suppliers and candy makers for over 7 decades, our Gourmet Pecan Pieces, Gift Tins, and Candies have delighted countless families.

It is our pledge to you that we will only ship the newest, freshest crop of pecans available to you and your gift recipients. At Priester's Pecans, we want you to be satisfied with every purchase. If any item does not completely delight you, we will be glad to honor our 100% Satisfaction Guarantee. Our ordering process is user-friendly, fast & efficient. We have organized our fundraising program into as few steps as possible, so you can spend more time raising funds and less time with forms and paperwork.

The advantages of Priester's Fundraising Program are significant. Pecans are versatile; you can use them as ingredients to cook and bake with, as a snack item, as a topping on desserts, ice cream and breakfast foods.

Additionally, pecans last, unlike fruit or other perishable food items; if stored in the proper environment pecans can be kept a year or longer. Pecans are also affordable to the consumer and profitable to the fundraiser. Priester's name recognition is second to none, and we have a 100% satisfaction money-back guarantee.

Priester's makes it easy with our "No Hassle Fundraising Program" so fundraising has never been easier, more fun, or as profitable. Call us at 800-277-3226 or visit our website today to get started!

SCHERMER'S PECANS

www.schermerpecans.com

Harvested from Georgia orchards that have been in our family for over 70 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.

Then, choose from 5 candied flavors, glazed, dark chocolate, chocolate, cinnamon glazed and caramel clusters. You can get fresh and natural pecans available in 16 ounce halves, 16 ounce extra-large, and medium pieces, or 12 and 16 ounce small and medium pieces. You can pre-sell or have cases on hand to sell. Profits range from \$2.25-\$3.45 per bag / \$55-\$75 per case.

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.

More about the 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 manner.

ARRANGERS



BREEZE TUNES

www.breezetunes.com

Garrett Breeze is a media composer and arranger living in Nashville, TN. He is known primarily as an arranger for many of the top competitive show choirs throughout the United States and travels regularly in that role as a clinician and adjudicator. In addition to his choral work, Garrett frequently writes for high profile media projects including film, television, video games, and corporate media. He holds a bachelor's degree in Media Music from Brigham Young University and a master's degree in Commercial Composition and Arranging from Belmont University.

We are proud to have supplied music arrangements to more than 110 choirs throughout the United States and Canada, contributing to over 86 championship wins to date! Breeze Tunes Productions specializes in creating high-quality, competitive arrangements tailored to fit your choir's show design, skill level, and budget! You can search our full catalog of previously arranged titles from our site. To order a new custom arrangement, license a previously arranged title, or to book Garrett for a clinic or workshop with your choir, you can just fill out the contact form on the site, and he will respond within 24 hours: <https://breezetunes.com/contact>.

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 35 states and 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.

SHOWCHOIRSTOCK.COM

www.showchoirstock.com

ShowChoirStock.com—the only website that sells nothing but show choir arrangements you can purchase and use immediately!

We sell high quality stock arrangements at affordable prices that DON'T need any further licensing! That's right—you'll never have to go through the extra hassle and expense of using a third party company in order to perform the music you buy from ShowChoirStock.com.

Professionally produced rehearsal tracks for every chart! Dozens of brand new arrangements every year! Several complete show packages available at a 10% discount!

Can't find a song that's right for your show? Contact us to see if we can license and add your desired title to our catalog—or have a custom-written original song created just for your group!

We accept credit cards as well as purchase orders, so don't miss a beat—order, download, and start rehearsing your music in minutes!

ShowChoirStock.com—the only online catalog just for show choir!



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.

productionsmag.com

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.

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 20 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. For over 20 years, we have planned 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.

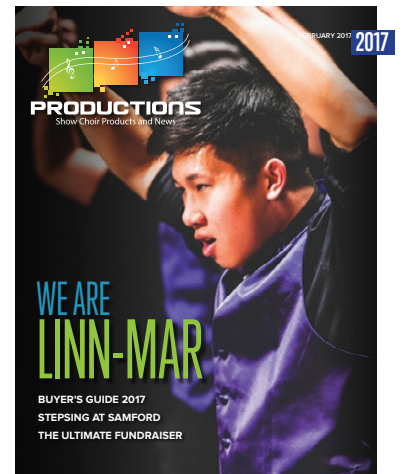
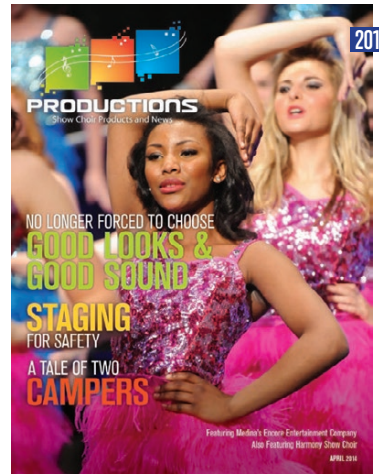
THE FREE SHOW CHOIR MAGAZINE



Sharing product and service information on all aspects of show choir, all issues of *Productions* are available online in our archives. If you aren't yet a subscriber, visit productionsmag.com/subscribe.

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Dutch Mill Bulbs originated fundraising-with-flower bulbs over 50 years ago. Our fall and spring fundraising programs offer easy-to-sell and easy-to-grow varieties of bulbs and bare root perennials. We've helped tens of thousands of groups exceed their fundraising goals with our guaranteed-to-grow product and "no hidden cost" flower bulb fundraising programs.

Dutch Mill Bulbs is the perfect fundraiser for your group. Schools, PTA's, PTO's, sports and athletic teams, cheerleaders, dance ensembles, booster clubs, academic clubs, marching bands, concert bands, choral groups, drama clubs, libraries, choirs, community groups, churches, and scouts – to name but a few – have all successfully raised funds by "going green" with our eco-friendly, economically priced no-risk fundraising programs. Since its inception, Dutch Mill Bulbs has been recognized for outstanding service, value, quality and reliability. You can count on us for your most successful fundraiser ever!





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