

USING THE LRA CHORAL WARM-UPS TO BUILD YOUR BOYS' SECTIONS

revised 6/14/14

Stage One:

1. Have your altos stand near the tenors since they will be singing the same part.
2. Ignore the descant soprano part and have *all* of the sopranos sing the melody (usually designated as "mezzo-soprano").
3. Even though there is a real bass part, for now have all the basses sing the melody one octave lower than the sopranos.
4. Have the countertenors (unchanged boys) sing the melody at the actual pitch the sopranos are using, but place them near the basses.

WHY THIS WORKS.

NOW YOU HAVE EVERYONE SIGNING A FAMILIAR, QUICKLY-LEARNED MELODY EXCEPT THE TENORS AND ALTOS. While you work on teaching the harmony to the tenors and altos, the basses – who know the melody already - can tell if they are in tune while figuring out what their “new” voices are supposed to sound like. Plus they are supported by lots and lots of girls singing the same the part. And the countertenors, joining the basses at the octave, are standing right beside the most physically mature guys in the middle school. They will love this.

Stage Two:

While keeping sopranos, altos, countertenors, and tenors on the parts they learned in Stage One, begin teaching the basses the “real” bass part that is in the score of the Warm-up.

IF YOU SKIP TO THIS STEP TOO SOON and have the basses sing the “real” bass part before they are ready, they will be dealing with learning an unfamiliar harmony AND trying to find their “new notes” in their throats at the same time. This is far too much to process, and they will probably approximate the pitches and either hold back on volume (because of insecurity) or else they will not learn to sing in tune very well. ***Like the wobbly legs of a newborn calf, newly changed basses have the anatomical structures in place to sing bass, but have only brief experience using these pitches, and only as their speaking voices.*** So let them practice on a melody with a ***very narrow range*** until they get stronger.

Stage Three (optional):

Since the mezzo soprano melody is in a pretty low range (which is necessary to help the basses), it's nice to turn some of the girls loose on the descant soprano part if there is one. This accomplishes three things: (a) gives you a four part sound; (b) teaches girls to sing harmony who might otherwise prefer soprano because they are a little lazy about leaving the familiar melody; and (c) puts them up into a higher part of their range.