

Choosing Contest Music

When choosing contest songs, it is advisable to match the song to the skill level of the chorus or quartet singers.

Know your chorus or quartet

You need to know these facts about each singer/section:

- Full range
- Comfortable notes (tessitura)
- Bad notes (passaggio/register changes)
- Breathing capabilities
- Tempo/rhythm capabilities - can they sing backbeat? Can they sing a driving tempo?
- Ability to match and ring works; know the strong/weak vowel choices
- What is the image/attitude/personality?

Analyze the music

Things to note in arrangements that could affect performance:

- Notes outside of the performers comfort zone
- Note that cross over the register breaks and the frequency of these notes
- Jumpy part lines
- Rangy, open chord structure (two-octave spread)
- Melody contains difficult intervals
- Melody shifts to another part
- Odd intervals in all parts
- Many accidentals
- Chromatic passages
- Key changes - how sing-able and how many
- Tonal center not present for more than several measures
- Fast rhythm
- Backbeat/syncopation
- No place to breathe
- Lots of short vowels
- Lots of hard, percussive consonants
- Wordy sections
- Baritone high/lead low for extended passages
- Parallel motion
- Close interval relationships that require advanced tuning skills
- No natural dynamic (emotion) plan
- Topic not appealing