Choral Techniques for the Band & Orchestral Conductor

Conductor's Art Presentation
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Pronouns: she/her/hers

Rehearsing Singers...What are the priorities?

- Breath
- The Warm-Up
- Intonation
- Diction: Vowels/Consonants
- Preparing The Score - Cues & Releases, Articulation, Dynamics
- Seating/Placement of Singers
- Pacing in the Rehearsal
- The Rehearsal: Fixing Problems With
  - Rhythm
  - Pitch
  - Intonation
  - Balance

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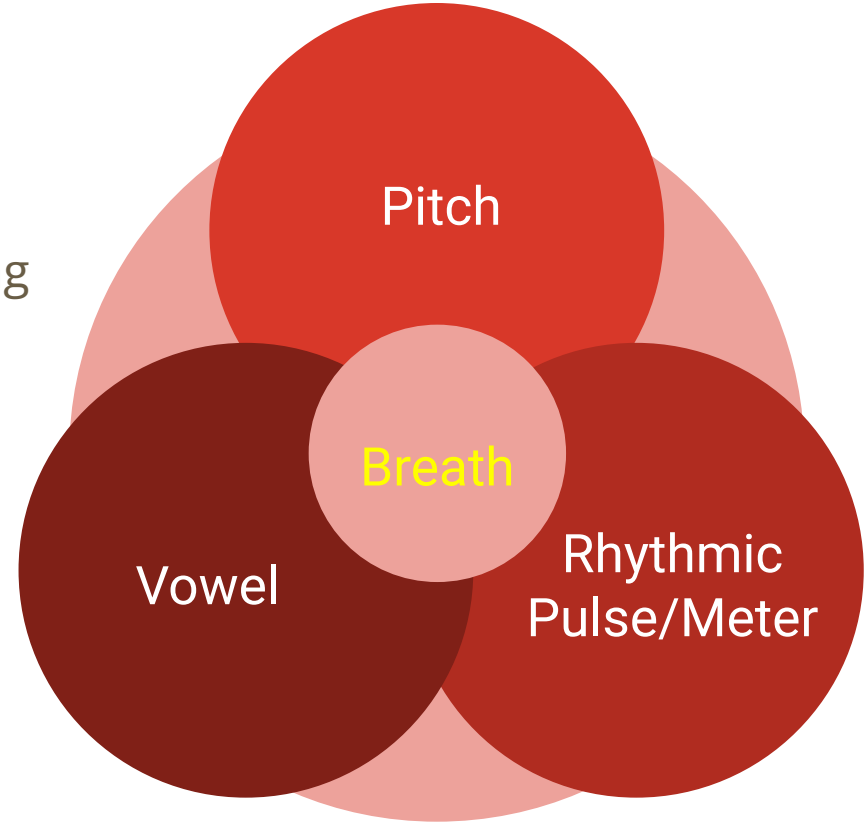
Breath

- Breath in conducting

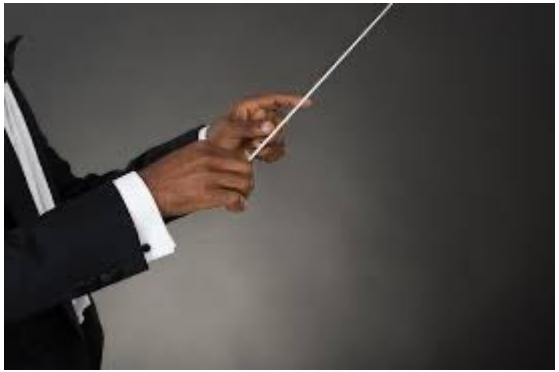
  is ESSENTIAL

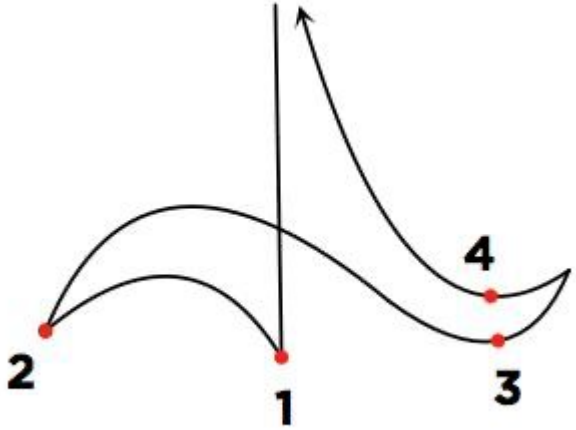
- Breath for singers

  is ESSENTIAL

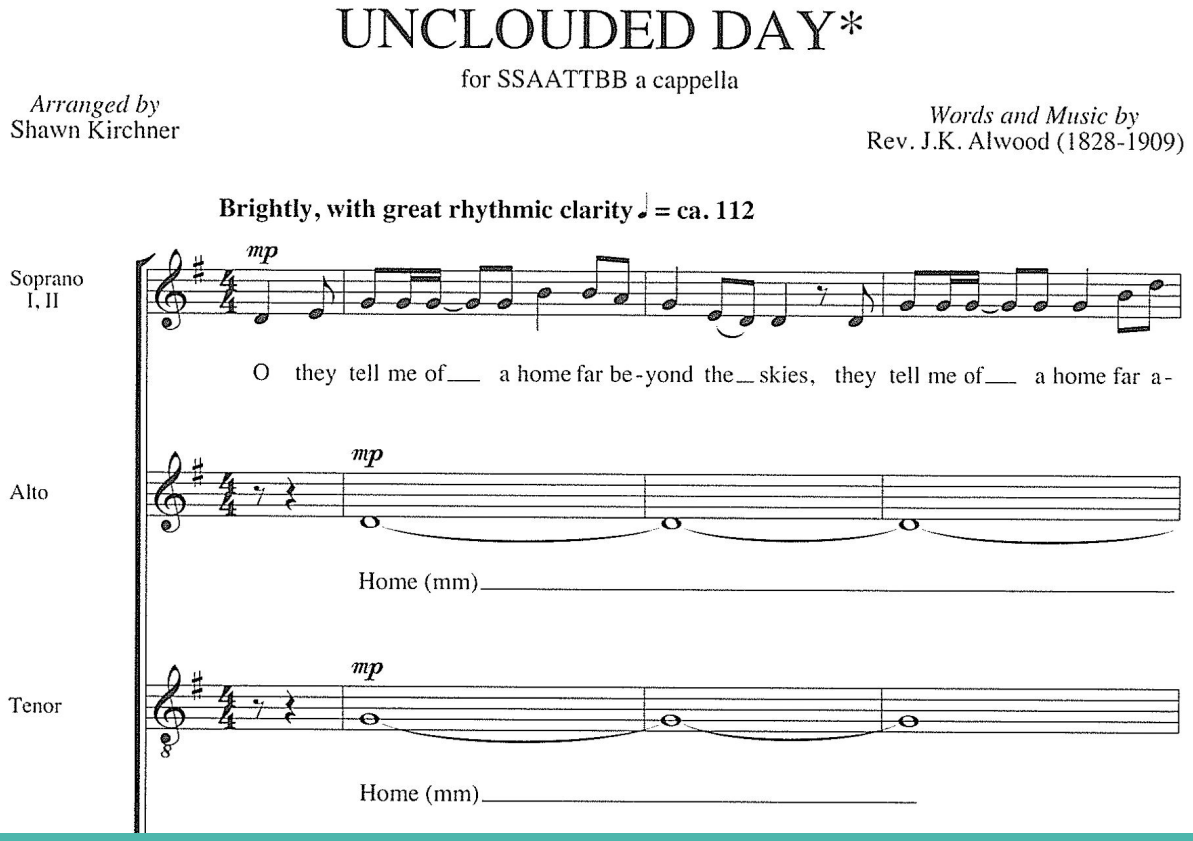


Informed Breath = Informed Gesture

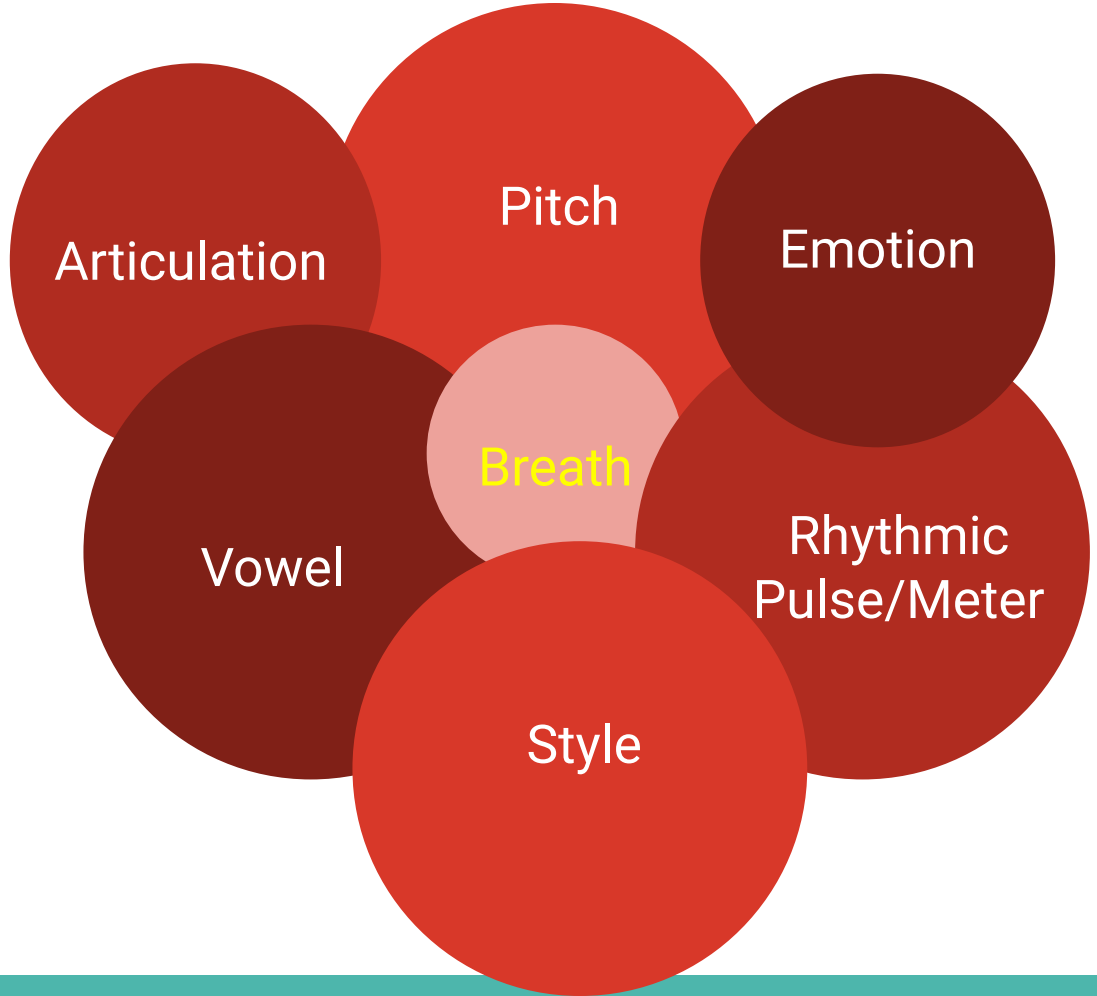




Gesture of Syncopation



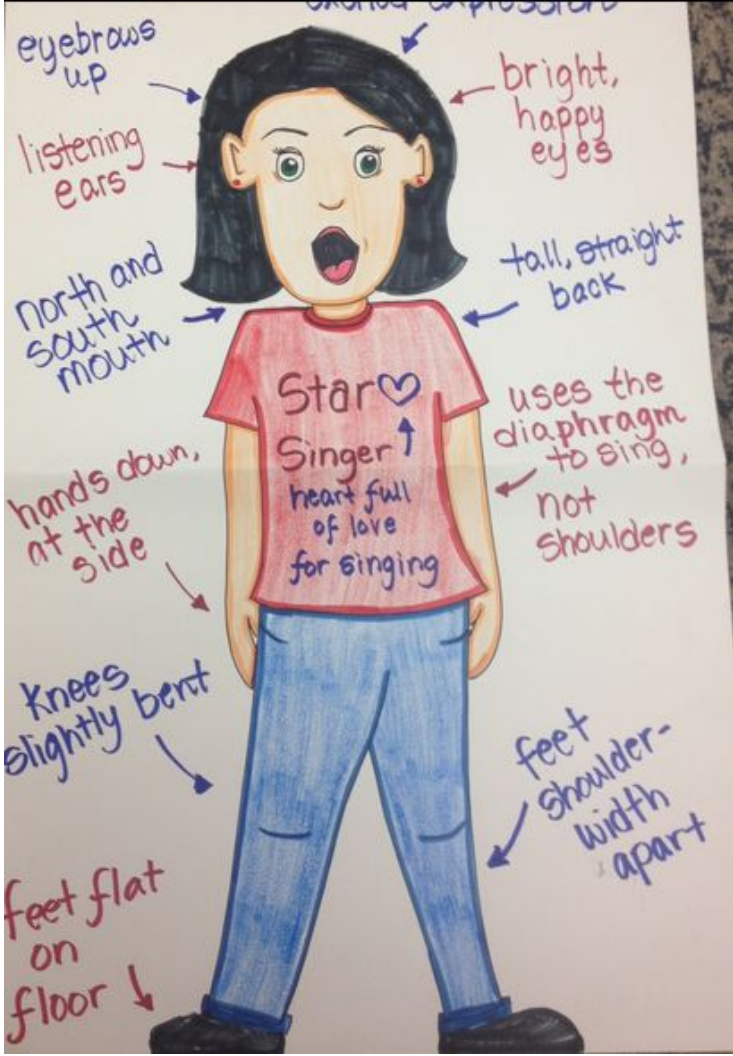
Breath


Articulation
Pitch
Emotion
Breath
Vowel
Rhythmic
Pulse/Meter
Style

The Warm-Up

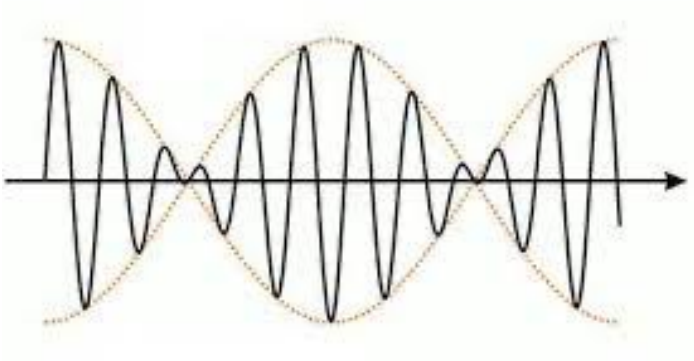
BARE NECESSITIES

- Awaken body and mobilize
- Inhalation and Exhalation Connected
- Find Head Voice and High Range (Vocal dexterity)
- Phonation
- Establish a Sense of Community



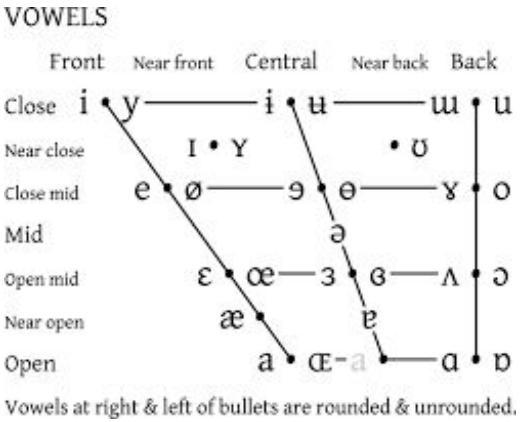
Intonation Rehearsal Techniques

- Warm-ups for intonation
  - Sing a Major scale on solfege together (vary this between major, three minor scales, chromatic scale)
  - Do - re - do - mi - do - fa - do - sol etc. Ascending and descending
  - Sharpen and lower pitch over a series of 12 beats
- Isolate chords that are not in tune
- Build pitches in chord from lowest pitch to highest pitch. Listen for beats
- Use a brighter vowel



Diction: Vowels & Consonants

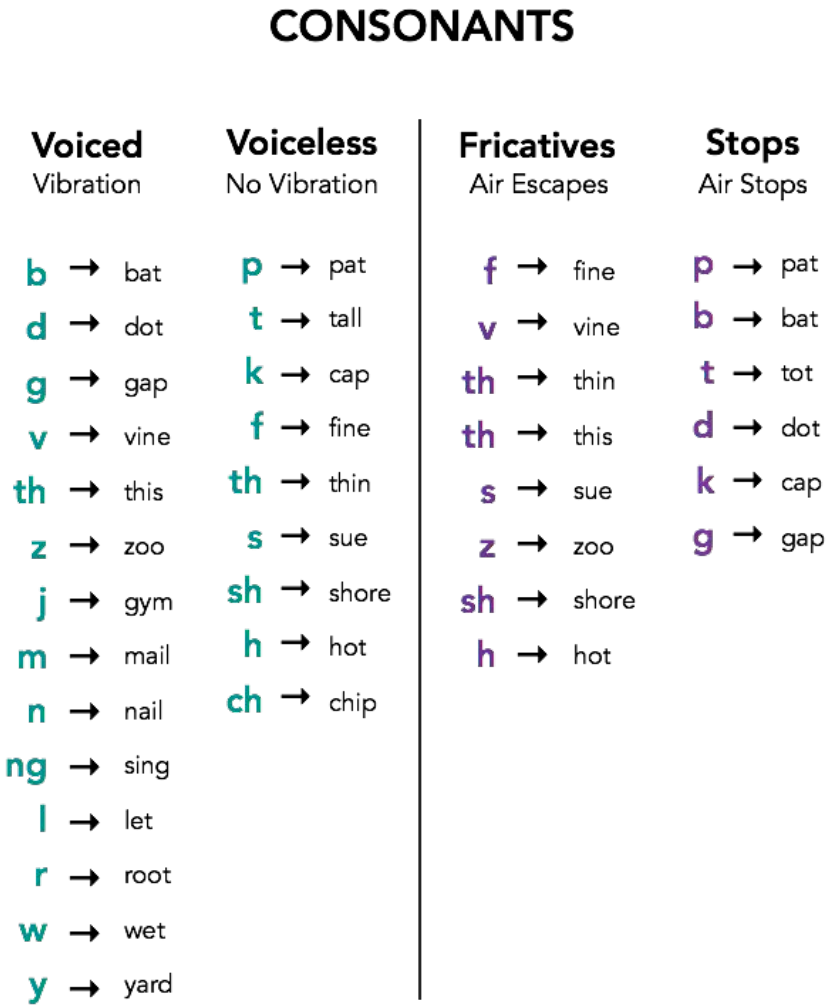
- Know the pronunciation of the text
- Speak through each word - know the vowel you want
- Warm-up for vowels: build a chord and over a series of beats move from bright to dark and visa versa
- Don’t forget the diphthongs!



Research Gate - International Phonetic Alphabet

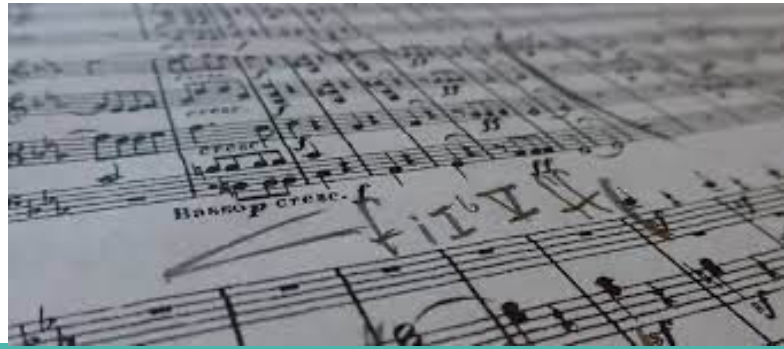
Consonants

- Decide How Much & When for Each
  - Voiced
  - Voiceless
  - Fricatives
  - Stops
- Consider adding shadow vowels
  - Add a vowel after the ENDING consonant
    - And
    - Harp
    - Vine
    - Eleison



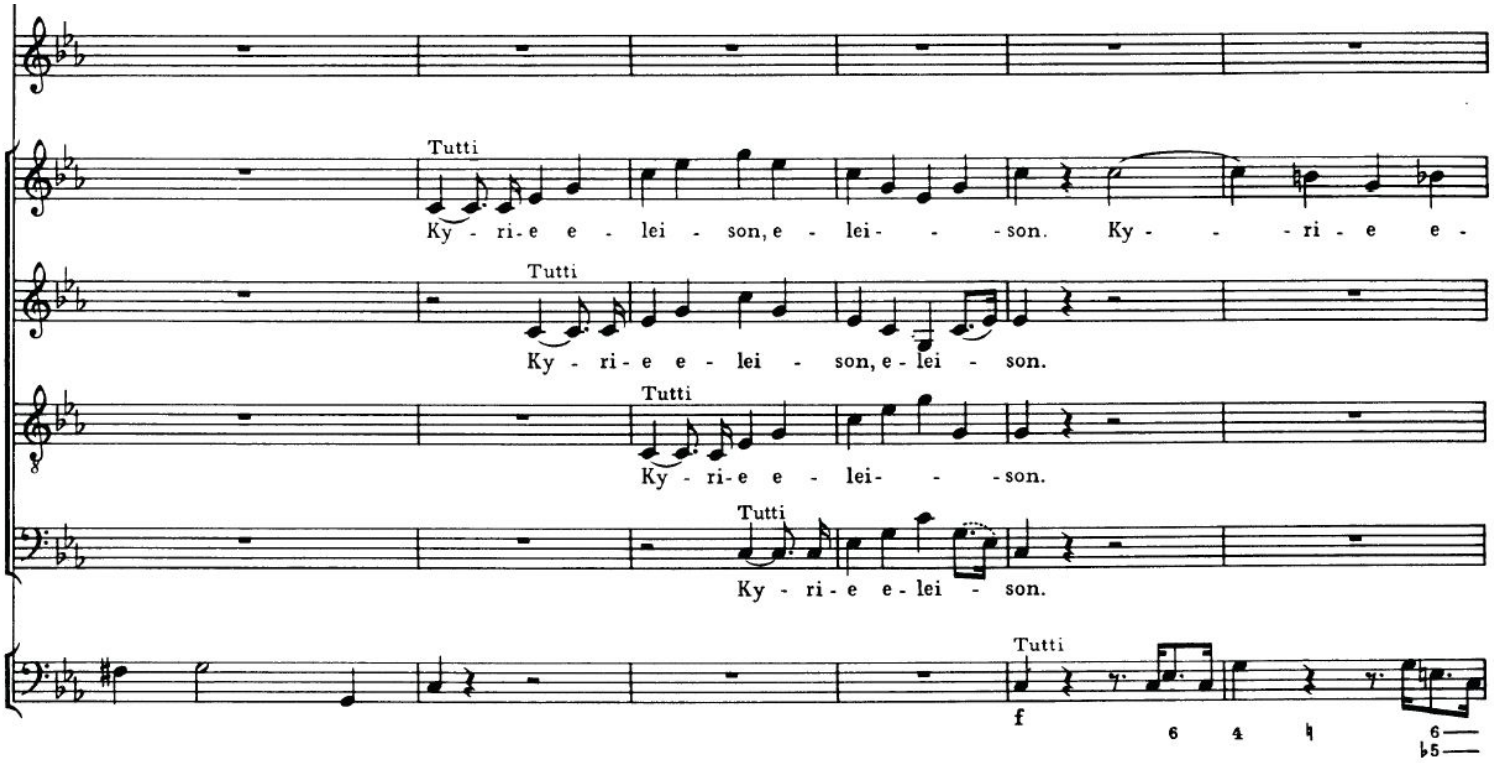
Preparing the Score for the Singer

- An annotated score informs the singers of your musical ideas
- Consider a breath at every punctuation mark
- Add: Measure Numbers, Breaths, Articulation, Dynamics
- Singers very often only do what they see on the page!
- Practice your gesture WITH breath for the singers entrances



- Consider all punctuation
- What is duration of the breath?

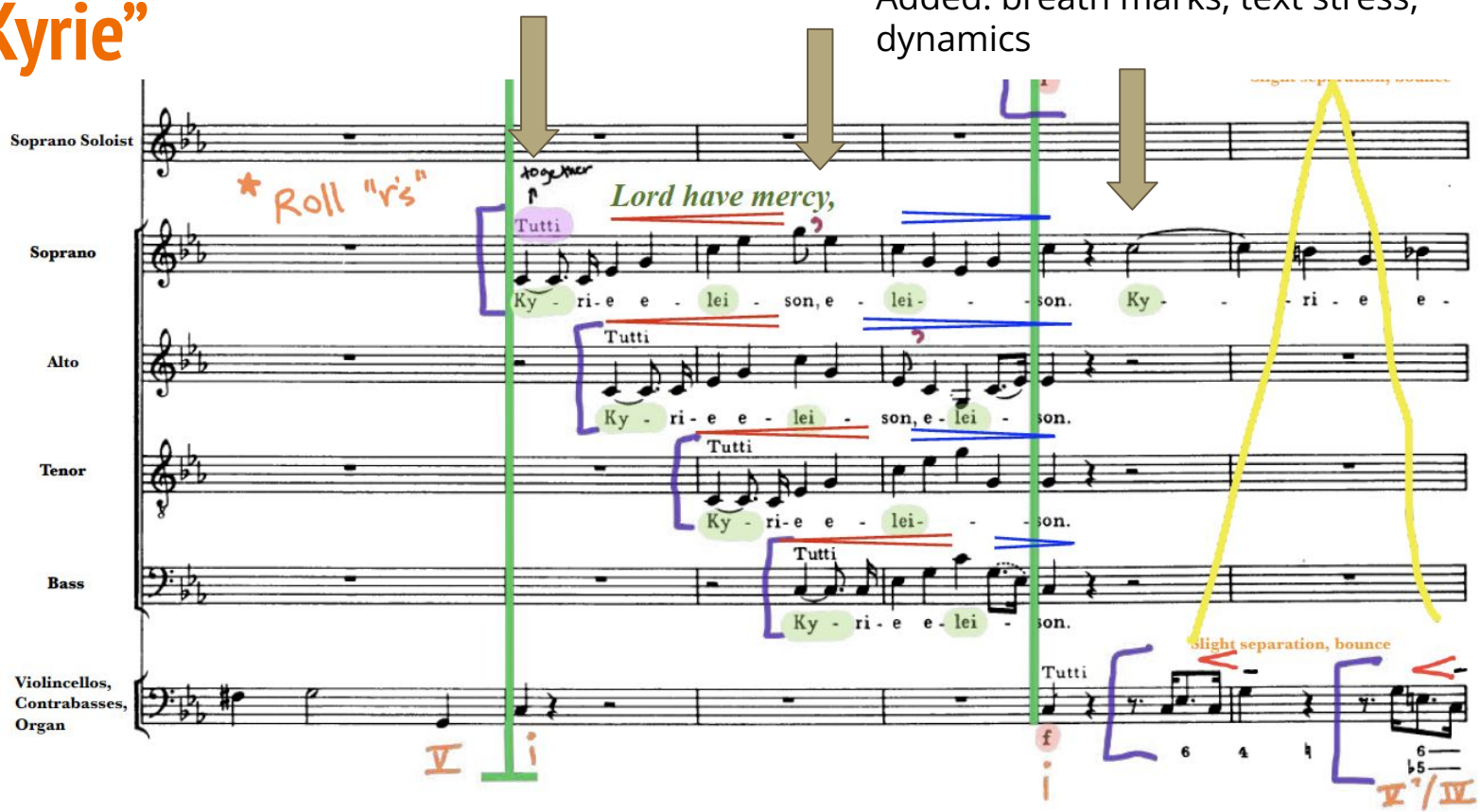
To breathe or not to breathe?
W. A. Mozart *c minor mass* "Kyrie"



W. A. Mozart - *c minor mass*

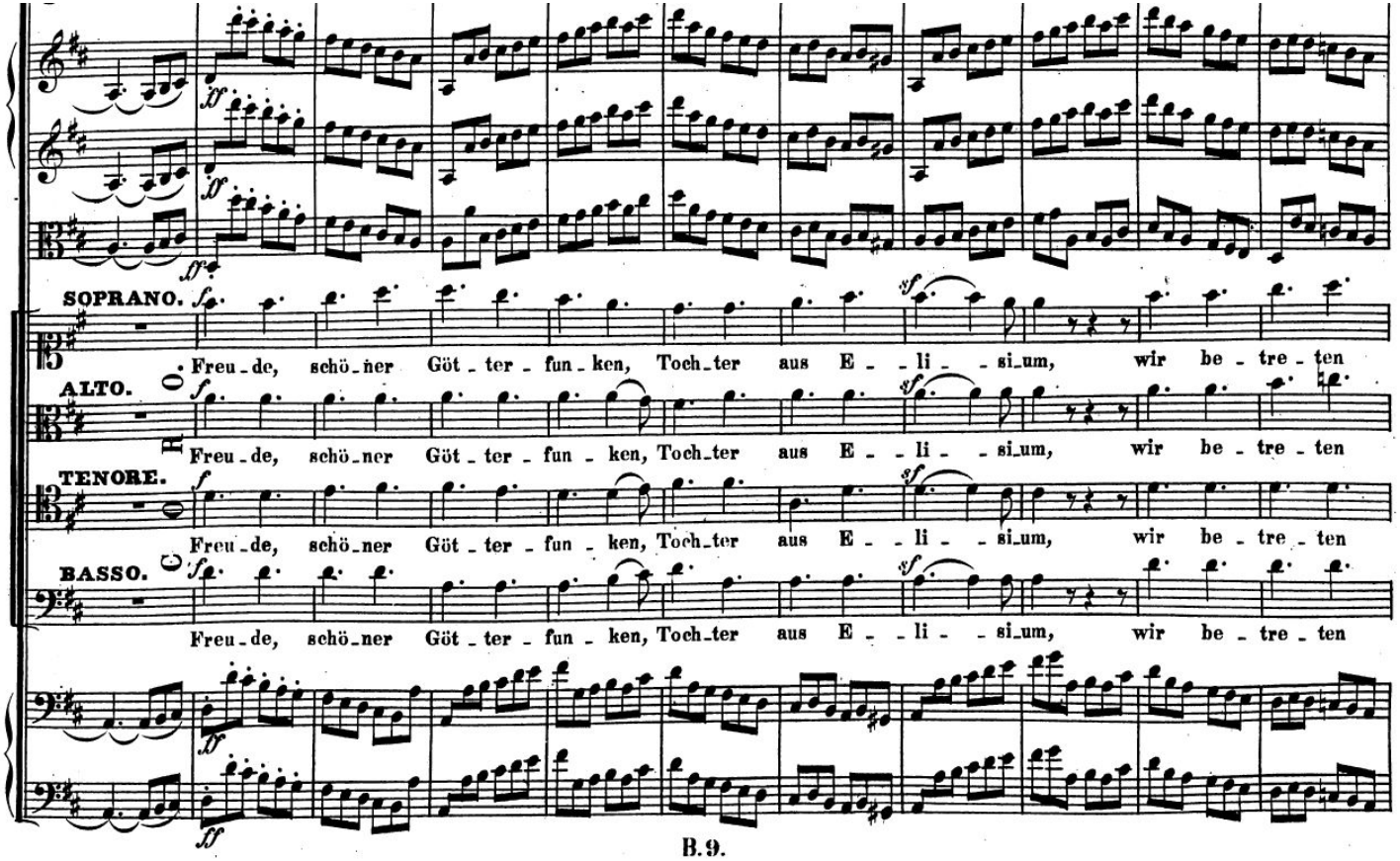
“Kyrie”

Added: breath marks, text stress, dynamics

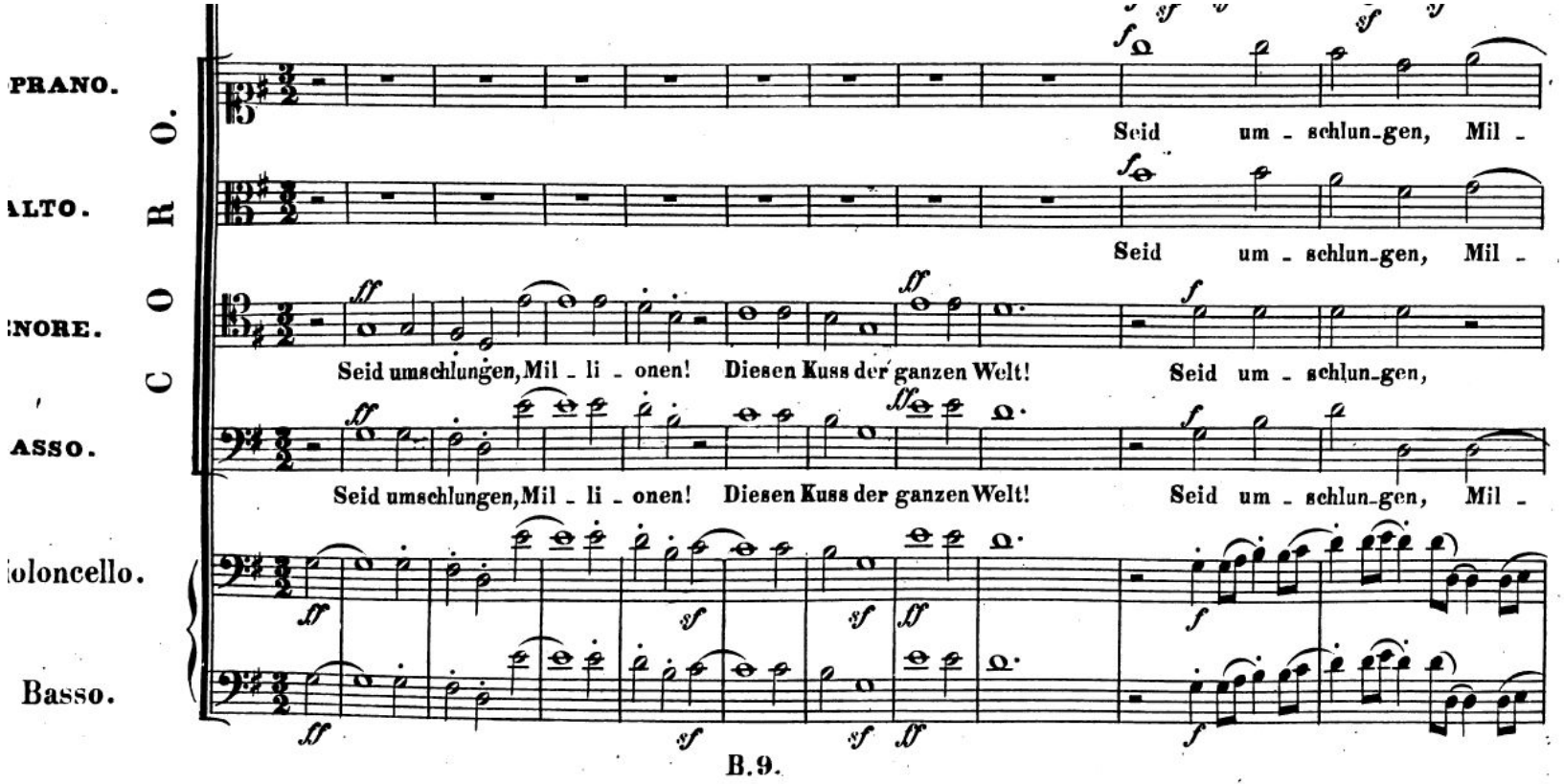


This work has a special challenge: “Eleison”

Beethoven Symphony No. 9 - 4th movement



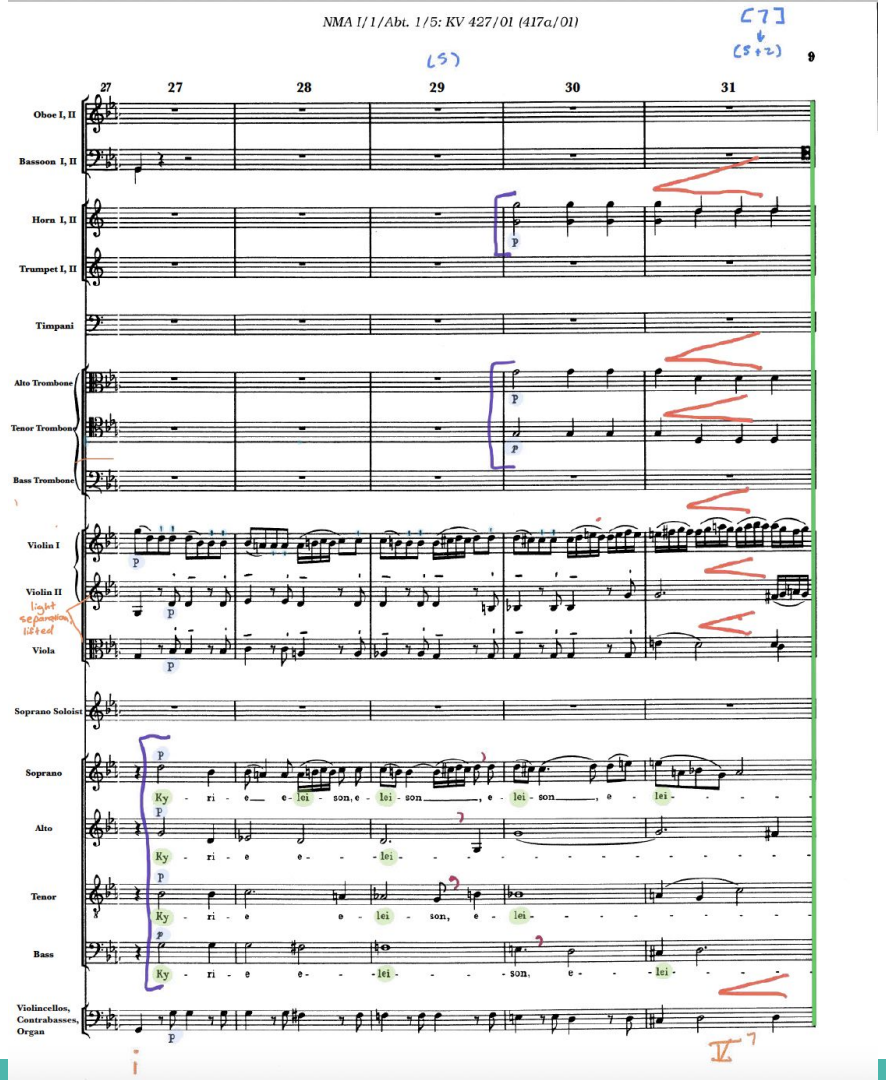
Beethoven Symphony No. 9 - 4th movement



Mozart *c minor mass* “Kyrie” m. 27=31

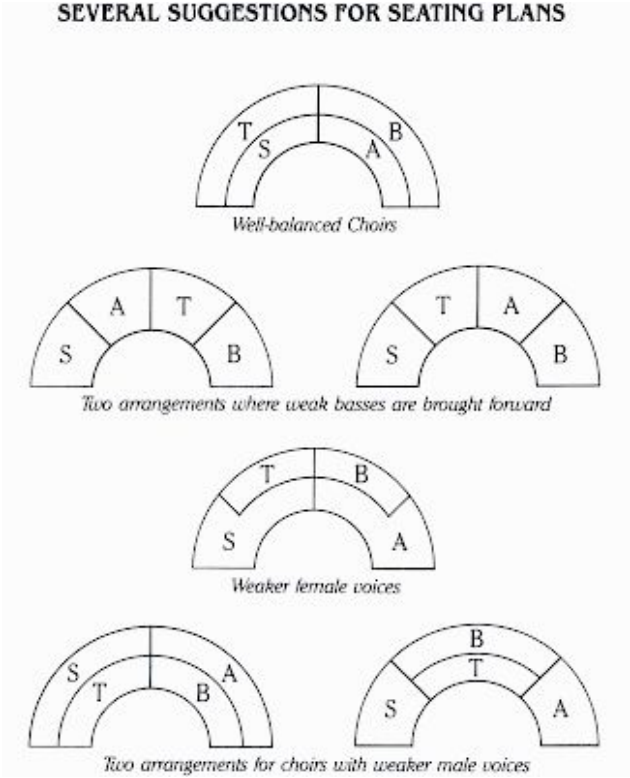
Bare necessities for singers:

- Breath or no-breath at all punctuation marks
- Underline text stress
- Write in pronunciation
- Extra: Mark peak of each phrase, articulation, reinforce or add dynamics



Seating

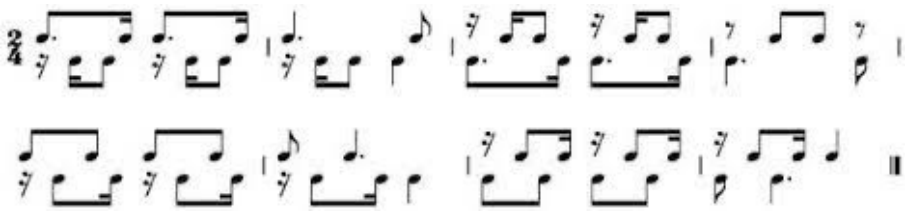
- Speak to your chorus master about seating
- Considering pairing voices with instrument groups
- SATB
- SBTA
- STBA



Pacing

- Singers always need to be given their starting pitches
  - Roll the pitches from the bottom up
  - If there is not pianist have your concertmaster give the root of the chord or the bass note
- Think of your singers like a brass section
  - Take a 10 minute break every 60-80 minutes
  - Consider having sopranos/tenors sing down the octave if you will rehearse a section more than 3x
- Keep all singers active even when isolating certain sections
- Movement is very helpful.
  - Keep meter on their body while waiting to sing
  - Whisper text while others sing and add movement to reinforce articulation

Rhythm Rehearsal Techniques



- Isolate parts
- Rehearse text *staccato*
- Rehearse under or over performance tempo
- Whisper text in rhythm
- Find placement of consonants AHEAD of the beat
- Sing on only vowels
- ½ of singers speaking meter vs. ½ of singers isolating rhythm

Pitch Rehearsal Techniques

- Isolate parts - Sopranos alone, then altos alone, etc.
- Tutti sing the difficult part (all sing the alto line)
- Hold - *fermata* - on difficult pitches
- Have the section struggling sing their phrase A CAPPELLA / WITHOUT the piano

QR code - Score Study Example

Ask for help!

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