



Choir Virtual Learning

Women's Choir/Balance and Blend

April 29, 2020



Lesson: April 29, 2020

Objective/Learning Target: Students will understand the differences between balance and blend and be able to identify those qualities through listening examples.

Bell Work:

1. Describe in your own words what you feel a balanced choir would sound like.
2. What do you think it means to have quality blend in a choir?
3. Do you recall comments made by your director during rehearsal in regards to balance and blend?

What we know...

We have already visited about intonation and timbre in a past lesson. Timbre, or quality of sound, can be bright, dark, light, or even strident. It is important for each singer to have the same idea about tone production in order to have a unified sound. That directly impacts the intonation of the ensemble.

Making Connections

Let's think about different levels of the choir starting from smallest to largest in order to understand balance and blend.

1. Individual singers represent the smallest part of the ensemble. Their sound directly impacts how they blend and balance with those around them.
2. The sections are the next tier of the ensemble. Traditionally we have 3 sections in women's choirs, but sometimes those sections divide into more sections. Each section must have a unified sound to contribute to the final piece...the choir.
3. The choir as a whole is the largest element. The balance and blend of all the sections together must be pure in order to achieve the best sound.

What impacts balance?

Many things can impact the balance of an ensemble.

1. Numbers- Sheer numbers of people in a section can throw off the balance. If you have 20 altos and 2 sopranos, you won't have a balanced sound.
2. Strength of singers- You could have 20 altos that are not strong singers and two operatic sopranos that blow them away. You have to have an equal amount of strong singers in each section.
3. Tone Quality- Each section must produce the same quality of tone equally throughout the entire range. In a women's choir, we like to hear all sections sounding exactly the same in unison singing, such as scales, so that all members of the choir have the same idea about tone production.
4. The music- Balance doesn't always just refer to the singers, but the music tells us what parts should be prominent and when. Who has the melody? Are you balanced with the piano? Do the other parts understand what part should be prominent and when?

What impacts blend?

Blend is impacted by several things as well.

1. Individual singers must blend with those around them.
2. The entire section must blend together.
3. Sections must all blend together as a whole.
4. Tone must be properly produced by all members so no voice or section is sticking out.

What do you hear?

On a scale from 1-5, 1 being the best, rate these two ensembles on their balance and blend.

Truth-Andrea Ramsay

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXAgTLoNKXI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zl-NuIAr9S8>

Let's try one more

Songbird-Sarah Quartel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjQe4c4jRTY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhzra3JP93k>

Thoughts?

What are your thoughts as you've listened?

1. What was the hardest part about listening for balance and blend?
2. Could you hear at various points different sections and individuals working to balance their sounds with different melodic lines?
3. What are some improvements that the choirs could make overall in the areas of balance and blend?
4. What are some things they did really well to contribute to quality balance and blend?

Extra Practice

Find two recordings of one of your favorite pieces from choir and judge each group on balance and blend.



Lesson Reflection

Let's reflect on what we learned today.

1. What elements impact balance and blend?
2. What are some things to listen for while you are judging balance and blend?
3. What are some tips that you could tell your choir if you were the director to help with balance and blend?

Thank you!

