

Hello Choir Parents!

We are writing to you to address a topic that comes up in our department this time of year:

Auditions.

This week we finished up choir auditions for next fall, as well as show choir auditions. Students should be receiving audition results via email over the weekend.

This time of year can be stressful for students, and we thought it might be helpful to provide some guidance in helping our students through this process.

One of the questions we often receive about auditions is, "How do you go about choosing students for your ensembles?"

We take a number of things into account when selecting students for ensembles, including:

1) Appropriate skill level

One of our main objectives is to place students in the ensemble that is most appropriate to their skill level. While we want to challenge them, placing them in an ensemble that they are not prepared for will only cause frustration and impede their progress as a musician. Take as an example, in math: if a student is at the level of pre-algebra, placing them in a calculus course would not be productive. While students may not like to hear that they aren't ready for something, it's important that they know that we have their best interests at heart.

2) Vocal development

Just as some students get their growth spurt before others, students' voices develop at different times and at different rates. Some students are more ready vocally to sing music that is more technically challenging sooner than others. To try to sing literature that is too challenging too soon can actually impede vocal development.

3) Larger body of work

While the actual audition (and, more specifically, the preparation for the audition) is important, just as important is a student's larger body of work. Over the course of the year, we as directors have the opportunity to continually evaluate students on the above topics, as well as a number of other skills and characteristics, including:

- work ethic
- ability to focus and remain on task
- ability to work with others and to problem solve
- having a positive attitude and encouraging others
- leading through service and setting a good example for others

While musical/performance skills are important, these other characteristics and skills listed above are vital to becoming a successful ensemble member.

4) Ensemble considerations

When putting together ensembles there are many factors to consider, including total number of members and the balance of different sections. For instance, if you have 28 sopranos/altos and 12 tenors/basses together in the same ensemble, it's going to really be difficult to balance out the sound of the choir.

In show choir, one of the goals is to have an even number of guys and girls, so that everyone has a partner for partner dancing. And you are limited to a certain number of singers, because at some point, you run out of room on stage!

One of the realities that we are currently dealing with is the smaller class sizes that are coming up from the middle schools. One of our goals for our department is to ensure the viability and the sustainability of all of our ensembles. We certainly will not hold back students if we feel that they are ready to move on to a different ensemble. However, we also owe it to all of our students to place them in ensembles where they can progress as musicians and be successful, and this can require a certain minimum of singers per section.

We share these things with you so that we might shed some light on our perspective of auditions (we HATE this time of year), and also with the hope that this information might be helpful as you have conversations with your young singers at home.

We have been in their shoes many times--going through the stress of auditions, and many times not having them turn out the way we would like. We want to emphasize that we want only the best for our students, and that we go through this process with the goal of being as supportive and objective as we can. It's important to us that the students understand that if they aren't selected for the ensemble they wanted, it is in no way personal--we still care for them greatly, value their work as artists and are excited to work with them--but rather this is our assessment of their current skill level, and our attempt to put them in the environment where they have the best chance to be successful.

This sometimes means that students are disappointed, that they may not be in the same ensemble as their best friend, and they may even question their participation in our department.

These are instances where we as directors hope we can use this process to teach our students about things like grit, and persistence, and perseverance, and work ethic. They are going to run into a LOT of situations in life where they feel like things do not go their way. We've all been there! But where they may see "failure", we see opportunity. We hope to use this opportunity to teach them that how they respond to adversity in life is one of the things that will define them. Dealing with adversity can be hard, but it can also make reaching our goals so much more rewarding when it happens.

We will be sharing a shortened version of this with all of our students, with the hope that they gain some understanding of the process. We hope that you as parents find this information helpful, and we encourage you to contact us if you have any further questions. Thank you for all that you do, we feel very blessed to get to work with your sons and daughters every day!

Hello Choir Students!

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2) Vocal development

Just as some students get their growth spurt before others, students' voices develop at different times and at different rates. Some students are more ready vocally to sing music that is more technically challenging sooner than others. To try to sing literature that is too challenging too soon can actually stall vocal development.

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We hope that this information helps you to gain some understanding of the process, and we encourage you to contact us if you have any further questions. Thank you for all that you do, we feel very blessed to get to work with you every day!