

our classrooms the historical significance of these composers, and the socio-economic reasons that inspired their writings. (See Below)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e49ef526b594c4c6ca3db0c/t/5f5539f636732345b4dfef5d/1599420945355/Black-Choral-Composers-Blake-Morgan.pdf>

I'm sure you would agree that teaching music through a pandemic has been both challenging and humbling. It has also given us a greater perspective on life as we fought to find the silver linings, while not knowing when or where our next performance would be. In full transparency, some of us weren't sure another virtual choral year was even fathomable. We have now reentered the classroom, with all those beautiful, partially covered faces looking to us to lead. It's now our responsibility to use as many tools and resources as possible to teach, inspire, build, cultivate, and unify with our hearts as well as continue to move the choral conversation forward.

### ***From your Four Year College R&R Chair: Erin Freeman***

The other day I saw a meme that captured my entire ethos this semester. A man is sitting at a table. To his left are multiple sized jars of lemonade. To his right is an unruly pile of lemons, with more lemons pelting him at rapid speed. He has his head on the table in defeat, allowing the lemons to continuously hit him on his head, shoulders, back, and arms. He has no more energy to catch and squeeze them, no more sugar to add, and no more jars in which to pour his homemade concoction.

I feel his pain—we all do. Since March 2020, we have caught the lemons midair, sometimes deftly, usually awkwardly, and turned them into something somewhat drinkable. Can't meet in person? Okay, let's invent a new form of choir called ZoomHearsal! Can't perform for people? Okay, let's get all dressed up, perform for an empty auditorium, and livestream for our families at home. Budget cut? Okay, let's learn GarageBand, Adobe Premiere, QuickTime, and Camtasia ourselves and create some palatable videos to give our singers some inspiration and motivation. Let's cheerlead, compromise, and pivot. Oh, how we'll pivot. And we'll do it with enough enthusiasm to mask our fear, anger, and dread.

At our best, we'll consider how all these new skills and outlooks can make the choral ensemble better in the future. At our most vulnerable, we'll break down sobbing on Zoom in front of our entire ensemble while singing "My Way" with alternate lyrics. (That may or may not have happened last year, and I think it was recorded!)

And now, we're just tired. Out of ideas, hit with random bits of news that threaten to derail our precarious plans at any moment. The lemons keep coming, and we, as choral leaders, are out of sugar and jars.

So, what can we do? Last semester, my mantra was "People First, Content Second, and Technology Third." This year, I'm still trying to live by those words, but given the inability to feel secure in any long-range planning I'm pivoting (yet again) to a secondary modus operandi: "The little things matter." Without confidence that a performance will actually manifest and with the novelty of meaningful videos

and Zoom games wearing off, I'm focusing on exposing my students to those valuable little things that ultimately create the magic of choral singing. Here is my list of techniques that I'm hoping my students learn this semester.

1. Overtones – How to produce and hear those mysterious and magical choral byproducts
2. Chord Tuning – What is the true trick to tuning a chord?
3. Count Singing – The key to life (and rhythmic accuracy, energizing long notes, singing in tune, and building vertical awareness)!
4. Solfege – More than just learning the notes of a scale, but understanding the function of the Ti, matching vowels, and building chords
5. Active and Targeted Listening – How to be mindful of the parts around you in an intentional way
6. Silent Practicing – How to approach and learn music without always having to sing full volume (or at all)
7. Correct Nomenclature – How to talk about music in a way that is mindful of our continued awareness of justice and equity in music
8. Speaking – How to ask a question or give instructions in a clear, focused manner (page number first, then system, then measure number, etc.)
9. Professionalism – How to write an email to your professor!
10. Co-Leading – Who is truly the leader in the ensemble? How can you lead from your position in the ensemble? How can you truly share the role with your colleagues?

Each time I'm able to address even one of these in rehearsal, I have an internal celebration. I feel powerful and triumphant; perhaps even more powerful than standing on a podium in a concert. I feel like I'm giving them the tools they need to catch a few of those lemons that are coming our way and in the future make a delicious choral elixir of their own.

To my colleagues across the Commonwealth: hang in there!!! You don't need to create over-the-top performance experiences every semester. Our students need you to teach them the little things, so that they can eventually make a big impact. And . . . if you can't make any more lemonade, there's always a martini with a twist!

