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comprehensive sourcebook for both new and  
experienced directors...

# Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide



Lewis Gordon

Here are tested suggestions and solutions to  
help you establish and develop a quality choral music  
program in any school, church or community setting.



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# Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide

by Lewis Gordon

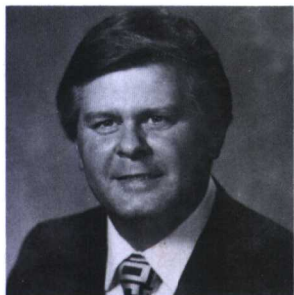
What really distinguishes a first-rate choral program is the motivation and skill of individual chorus members, and the ability of their conductor to lead them. With the practical strategies and expert guidance you'll find in this book, you will be able to inspire and guide your group through one successful performance after another.

Here you'll discover how to set goals for your choral group, establish rapport among your members, and inspire individuals to sing their best. You'll find suggestions to help you conduct productive rehearsals, establish a pleasing repertoire, use your budget more wisely, raise money more effectively, use publicity to benefit your group, and much more. And the suggestions for evaluating your program enable you to quickly pinpoint and correct any problems your singers may have.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr. Lewis Gordon studied choral conducting at the Juilliard School and in 1980 completed his Doctorate of Musical Arts at Temple University. With 30 years of experience in choral directing, he is currently a member of the Fine Arts faculty at Saint Joseph's University and is the Choral Director at Villanova University. Dr. Gordon is also the author of *The Choral Director's Complete Handbook* (Parker Publishing Co.).

Choral Director's

# **CHORAL DIRECTOR'S REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE**

**Lewis Gordon**

**PARKER PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
West Nyack, New York 10995

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# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The purpose of the *Choral Director's Rehearsal and Performance Guide* is to give you practical suggestions and solutions for establishing and developing a quality choral program in any school, church, or community setting. It provides a unique compendium of concepts and ideas for planning, organizing, executing, and evaluating rehearsal and performance activities.

Included is basic as well as more advanced information for all choral directors. New directors will find guidelines and procedures presented in a logical sequence—to assist them in building their first choral program from preliminary planning to guiding singers through performances. More seasoned leaders will find advanced conducting techniques as well as insights based on thirty years of personal experience and dialogue with successful conductors.

The *Guide* deals with some of the more challenging issues facing today's vocal ensemble leaders, including:

- How can you size up your choral situation in terms of the group itself, the rehearsal facility, the repertoire, and funding? Chapter 1, "Surveying the Choral Program," discusses these and other considerations.
- What role should popular taste and public entertainment play in the selection of repertoire? Chapter 2, "Laying the Foundation," offers perspectives.
- What kind of reputation do you have as a businessperson? Chapter 3, "Managing the Program," details specifics for establishing and managing your choral program.
- Do you use proper body posture when conducting? Chapter 4, "Establishing Rudiments of Conducting," outlines the components of correct posture as well as the basic conducting patterns.
- What skills are needed to combine chorus with orchestra? Chapter 5, "Developing Expressive Conducting Techniques," provides suggestions for working with instrumentalists.
- Do your rehearsals follow a logical sequence? Find out about rehearsal preparation, execution, and culmination in Chapter 6, "Conducting Rehearsals."
- How do you motivate your choral groups in both rehearsals and

performances? Guidelines are given in Chapter 7, “Motivating the Ensemble.”

- What skills do you need to achieve a superior choral sound? Chapter 8, “Working With Singers,” acquaints you with the mechanics of singing and offers exercises for working with groups and individuals.
- How do you get an amateur choir to perform an avant garde work with conviction? Concepts are discussed in Chapter 9, “Developing Authentic Style.”
- How do you “teach music” varying widely from “serious” to “light”? Strategies based on recent research are presented in Chapter 10, “Learning Music.”
- How do you begin the refinement process that’s needed for a concert performance? Chapter 11, “Polishing and Interpreting Music,” offers suggestions for improving choral diction, coordinating the ensemble, and developing expressivity.
- What technical resources should you consider for having the best possible choral performance? Chapter 12, “Preparing for Performance,” suggests guidelines.
- Does concert performance success equate with overall choral program success? Chapter 13, “Evaluating the Choral Program and Its Participants,” suggests methods for assessment.

In short, the *Choral Director’s Rehearsal and Performance Guide* provides a comprehensive source of ideas and concepts necessary to bring your choral program up to maximum effectiveness. Checklists and charts are provided for direct access to important topics. Examples, illustrations, and situations based on actual experiences are included for clarification. I hope all this information will help you and your choral groups have one successful performance after another!

**Lewis Gordon**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Lewis Gordon is Professor of Fine and Performing Arts at Saint Joseph's University. He is also choral director at Villanova University, whose ensembles he has lead in performances throughout the eastern United States and in Ireland.

Previously he taught music at Mount Union College in Ohio where his Concert Choir was selected to perform several world premieres at the 1981 College Music Society National Convention.

From 1977 to 1980, Lewis Gordon was choral director at Stockton State College in New Jersey. While there he toured Poland with the Stockton Chorale under the auspices of the Friendship Ambassadors Foundation.

Dr. Gordon is a graduate of The Juilliard School where he studied choral conducting with Abraham Kaplan and voice with Jennie Tourel. In 1980 he completed his Doctorate of Musical Arts at Temple University.

Lewis Gordon is author of *Choral Director's Complete Handbook*, published by Parker Publishing Company. He is also a tenor soloist, performing actively in concerts and recitals.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

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# **SURVEYING THE CHORAL PROGRAM**

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A surveyor inspects a tract of land to determine its location, boundaries, and features. Choral directors also need to “get a lay of the land” when establishing and developing their vocal programs. Quite often it’s even a good idea to conduct a “self survey,” to weigh one’s own strengths and weaknesses against a new or existing choral position.

The profession of choral directing can be a risky business. It’s one thing to possess musical talent and skill; it’s quite another to be really *effective* within a given situation. Vocal ensembles, like their directors, have distinct personalities. Some traits are changeable; others “come with the territory.” Here are two important points to keep in mind when considering a new choral position.

- Regardless of differences between the director and the group, there must be a basis for compatibility if success is to occur.
- When a conductor grabs at an opportunity without regard to compatibility, choice may be doomed to failure.

### **DIRECTOR, KNOW THYSELF!**

The following statements were made by two eminently successful choral directors:

I have never heard in any rehearsal such snafued enunciation or such careless, perverse, and dispirited rhythm.<sup>1</sup>

Under no circumstances should the conductor display any impatience even when things do not go as well as they should.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Shaw letter quoted in Joseph A. Mussulman, *Dear People . . . Robert Shaw* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Kurt Thomas, *The Choral Conductor*, English adaptation by Alfred Mann and William H. Reese. (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1971), p. 76.