



The Tuning C.D.

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A State of the Art Intonation Training Tool
www.TheTuningCD.com

CHOIR

PURPOSE: This *Instruction for Choir* document was created for those who have purchased The Tuning C.D. and wish to better their choir's intonation and balance. There are many ways to use The Tuning C.D. with a large ensemble. In this document we hope to inspire ensemble directors to not only use The Tuning C.D. to better their ensemble's intonation and balance, but also for ensemble directors to create their own instructional techniques should unique needs arise.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Turn on the c.d. player or mp3 device, but turn down the volume.
2. Play track #1, concert C.
3. Turn the volume back up to a reasonable dynamic in which the ensemble may blend with The Tuning C.D.
4. Have the ensemble sing the pitch C (the comfortably lowest possible) for eight to ten seconds using no vibrato on the syllable "EE." As the ensemble sings this note, listen to The Tuning C.D. If you cannot hear The Tuning C.D., the ensemble must sing softer, or you must turn up the volume. As the ensemble sings the pitch C, they must listen carefully to The Tuning C.D. They may hear waves, or beats. This means the ensemble is singing out of tune. Tell the ensemble to hum the note this time. Now once again, tell the ensemble to again sing the note on the syllable "EE" and listen carefully to The Tuning C.D. in order to make adjustments, if needed, to get rid of the beats. Also, feel free to split the ensemble into two or three groups. Have these smaller groups perform one at a time with The Tuning C.D. while the other group or groups listen attentively. Repeat the above process several times (at least 5 to 8 times) until each smaller group has comfortably gotten rid of most beats. This is a very challenging, yet important step, so take your time. If you are able to eliminate most beats in the ensemble, go on to step 5. Optional: try using darker syllables like "oo," "oh," "ah," etc...
5. Now try the above process with a second pitch, G, a perfect 5th above. Hold the second pitch, G, for eight seconds. Be sure to have the ensemble focus on listening to The Tuning C.D. and check for beats. Repeat the above process of humming and/or breaking into smaller groups until you have comfortably minimized all beats. When you have eliminated most beats, go to step 6.
6. Have the choir sing and hold the first C (the comfortably lowest possible) for 8 to 10 seconds, getting rid of most beats and then slur into the second note G, a perfect 5th above, and hold this G for 8 to 10 seconds getting rid of most beats. Again, be sure to hold these notes long enough to get rid of most beats. Do not switch notes until you have gotten rid of most beats. Do this step several times until comfortable. Remind your choir members not to use vibrato at any time. Also, feel free to have the choir hum and/or split into groups.
7. Now reverse step 6. Sing and hold the second pitch, G a perfect 5th above C, for 8 to 10 seconds and then slur into the first C holding this C for 8 to 10 seconds and getting rid of most beats. Be sure your choir members are listening to and blending with The Tuning C.D. Did they make adjustments to get rid of the beats for either note?

If so, what did they do? Did you ask them? Keep those adjustments in mind. Repeat this process until most beats are comfortably gone. Again, feel free to have the choir hum and/or split into groups.

8. Now repeat steps 6 through 7, but replace the note G with the following notes in order: C (octave above), F, E, D, B, and finally A. Again, spend plenty of time in this beginning phase. This will train your choir's ears to begin hearing more keenly "in tune."

9. Use this routine in all twelve keys, perhaps a different key each day. Also, this routine may be used before rehearsing a work in a particular key. For example: if your first work to be rehearsed is in the key of F, use the above exercise in F (track 6) for just 1 to 2 minutes. Then begin your rehearsal on this work. Before rehearsing a second work, use The Tuning C.D. again and be sure to run the above exercise in the corresponding key for the second work. Over time, the ensemble will make noticeable intonation and balance improvements. It is well worth the time and effort and you will be a much happier choir director!

HELPFUL HINTS: (1) The Tuning C.D. may be used as a warm-up device when a piano is not available. (2) The Tuning C.D. is very handy for tuning challenging chords within the context of a particular work of the ensemble's repertoire. (3) Be aware of the arrangement of the stereo or p.a. system speakers in your rehearsal room. It may be most advantageous to have a powerful speaker in each of the four corners of the room. (4) Plan on using The Tuning C.D. for roughly 10 minutes on the first few days with your choir. Soon, simply spend 5 minutes per day warming up your ensemble with The Tuning C.D. Then after a while, simply pick a new key every rehearsal to warm-up with...taking less than 3 minutes per rehearsal.

CODA: Here are other helpful exercises after rehearsing steps 1 through 9 above:

- Use The Tuning C.D. to begin every rehearsal. Believe me...it gets their attention! If your rehearsal begins at 3:30 p.m., turn on The Tuning C.D. at 3:30 p.m. so the students begin on time and receive a solid intonation/vocal stretch warm-up routine before working on ensemble repertoire.
- While the above steps 1 through 9 are designed pedagogically for intonation (least challenging interval to sing/hear/perform in tune to the most challenging), try using very slow ascending and descending major scales or interval studies (do, mi, re, fa, etc.) holding each note for 8 to 10 seconds to be sure the choir is blending and minimalizing beats. Perhaps hold and repeat the top note of the scale or interval study.
- Try dividing the choir into two, three or more parts. Assign each group a different interval: group 1 sings the tonic, group 2 sings the perfect fifth, group 3 sings the major third, group 4 the major seventh, etc... Each group enters on cue: group one first, group two second, etc... Then have the groups switch notes. Be sure each group blends with The Tuning C.D. and minimalizes beats. Perform this exercise with and without The Tuning C.D. Also, try transposing this exercise in different keys and see how they respond!
- Allow students to individually use The Tuning C.D. during rehearsal. Call on three to five students to perform solo on a specific interval (Major 3rd, Perfect 4th, etc...) while the other students are listening. Perfect intervals (tonics, fifths and fourths) may be selected for less advanced students while major and minor intervals (seconds, thirds, sixths and sevenths) may be used for more advanced students. Engage your other students. Ask them if a particular note was performed in tune with The Tuning C.D. If not, was it sharp or flat? Ask them what can this student do to fix their intonation?

- Select one voice per section (one soprano, one alto, one tenor, etc...) to perform a slowly ascending major scale with The Tuning C.D. Ask the students not performing to identify which notes sound out of tune. Also ask of them (1) which note sounded most in tune and (2) which note sounded least in tune. Ask these students what can be done to fix any intonation issues.
 - Ask the same students to perform a slowly ascending major scale with The Tuning C.D. After these students have finished, ask the same students to perform the same scale at the same tempo, but without The Tuning C.D. Ask your non-performing students again (1) which note sounded most in tune and (2) which note sounded least in tune. Also, ask them which voice was the loudest, or seemed to lead the group. Was it a soprano, bass or tenor? Try this scale again, but have one specific voice purposefully take the dynamic lead. All other voices should perform more softly and blend with this specific leading voice. Now have another specific voice purposefully take the dynamic lead. This exercise will help your students not only to listen for pitch, but for balance. Enjoy!
- Have a specific, but flexible, tuning regimen that you use every day so students know what to expect.
- Use The Tuning C.D. to tune the choir at rehearsals and concerts if a pitch pipe or keyboard is not handy. Have your technology/sound person gradually turn the volume of The Tuning C.D. up before tuning and down after tuning so the audience is not surprised by any sudden sounds.
- What exercises have you thought of with The Tuning C.D. to help your ensemble?