

# Alfred Choral Builders

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## DEVELOPING TECHNIQUE THROUGH **Jazz/Pop Styles**

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## INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL WARM-UPS

This book is designed to assist choral groups in the rehearsal and performance practices of Jazz and Pop styles. Although styles may at times overlap, we've tried to make a clear distinction between the following styles in Jazz/Pop choral literature: Broadway Two-Beat, Ballad, Rock, and Swing (including both up-tempo and regular swing).

For each style we've included stylistic considerations, suggestions for vocal production, choral warm-ups, and rehearsal techniques. We've also included a brief musical work, called a Performance Exercise, in each style. Transfer what you've learned about each style into your performance of the Performance Exercise. Later, you can transfer what you've learned to the rehearsal and performance of other works in that style. The Performance Exercises can be used not only as teaching tools, but also as "stand alone" selections for performance.

Regardless of what style you are singing in the choral jazz/pop idiom, you should remember the following basic suggestions:

1. Always strive for a well-supported tone by taking a full, deep breath before each entrance or phrase you sing.

2. There should be no tension or tightening of the throat area. From the shoulders up everything should be relaxed. You can check this from time to time by rolling your head while singing.

3. Always form vowels vertically. That is, the corners of the mouth should be "in" as if all vowels have a bit of "oo" in them. The jaws should drop freely for "aw" and "oh" vowels. (For "ah," think "aw" for better blend and vowel consistency.)

4. Vibrato must be controlled. There may be times when a piece should be sung without vibrato (a straight tone) or with delayed vibrato (see Jazz Ballad). Other times vibrato can be sung freely (see Broadway Two-Beat). In any case, *you* control the vibrato. Don't let it control you.

5. Diction: sing it as you speak it. Regardless of tempo or style, your listeners must always understand the text. Stress or accent the important words in each phrase and the important syllables in each word.

6. Enjoy the text and music you are singing. Always let your facial expressions reflect the message you are singing. Don't be a "statue with moving lips." Reflect the music in your face and body. Get into it and enjoy!

Remember, a singer's knowledge of choral styles will contribute to a good performance.

## General Warm-up Techniques:

There are generally three reasons for warm-ups, regardless of style:

1. To get the voices flexible and in tune.
2. To make sure all choir members are singing vowels consistently.
3. To achieve blend (a combination of consistent vowel production and balance between parts).

This first warm-up allows you to bring the “head voice” (the singing voice) down, rather than pushing the “chest voice” (the speaking voice) up. Start by singing “noo.” Then sing it again, adding “naw.”

C D $\flat$

noo noo noo noo noo noo noo noo noo etc.  
noo naw noo naw doo ba doo ba doo

The next warm-up improves vocal flexibility as the voice first comes down and then goes back up. Pronounce “ba” like “baw” and try to sing this with very little, if any, vibrato. Decrescendo as you come down and crescendo as you go up.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

doo ba doo ba doo ba doo ba doo ba doo ba doo ba doo

After singing this as a group, divide into four parts, having each part enter as the previous group begins the second measure. Make sure you can hear the chords produced on each beat. You can hold any chord, adjusting and improving your intonation and blend.

This next warm-up introduces jazz harmonies. Tune each chord before going on, and pay particular attention to the alto part, which has the “color” tones of each chord. For a shorter version, omit measures 3-6. Try this warm-up in different keys.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8

no noo naw noo no noo naw noo no noo naw noo no noo naw noo

## BROADWAY TWO-BEAT STYLE

### Stylistic Considerations:

The Broadway Two-Beat style is the typical style for “openers,” and “up-tempo closers” such as *Another Op'nin', Another Show*, *There's No Business Like Show Business*, and *Applause*. This style is characterized by the following:

1. The meter is usually cut time.
2. It is sung with a “straight” (duple) rather than a “swing” (triplet) feel. If your group uses a rhythm section, the bass will play on beats 1 and 3 and the drummer will play the “back beat” on beats 2 and 4.
3. The text generally dictates the tempo. However, the metronome marking is typically between ♩ = 104 to ♩ = 138.

### Vocal Production:

Sing with a free vibrato. In vocal production, the Broadway Two-Beat style is very similar to classical singing. The same style your choir uses for a Classical piece of choral music would apply to the Broadway Two-Beat style. Make sure you take a full breath before each phrase and support your tone. Try to sing with a sound that will project to “the back of the hall” without belting or straining. Accents (which are usually on beats 1 and 3 unless the text is syncopated) will help carry the sound without having to sing too loudly. Pay close attention to consonants, and emphasize the important words to make your performance musically exciting.

### Warm-up:

After doing the General Warm-ups on page 3, practice this warm-up going up and/or down chromatically. End the warm-up in the same key your performance piece begins. So, if the piece you're performing begins in the key of C (like *We're Gonna Put On A Show*), end the warm-up in C.

**Brightly**

doot doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

## Rehearsal Techniques for the Performance Exercise: *WE'RE GONNA PUT ON A SHOW*

1. Look over the form. Ladies start and men answer at measure 13. Two-part singing at measures 21 and 53. Measure 61 is similar to measure 29, but the rhythms are extended.

2. Sing through the piece slowly. Try it at about ♩ = 96.

3. Sing measures 21-28 on the syllable “doo,” then sing it with the words.

4. Rehearse the parts at measure 29.

5. Pay special attention to the dynamics at measure 37. *Sfz* at measure 61 means *sforzando*: a crisp, forceful vocal accent followed by an immediate drop in volume on the same pitch. As is the case here, the immediate drop in volume is often followed by a crescendo.

6. Stress the appropriate words and syllables in the text, for example:

Ó-pen the door, let the áu-di-ence ín.

We're gon-na put on a shów.

7. Work on the transition between the unison pickup in measure 76 and the final chord in measure 77, making sure you don't over-sing that final chord.

8. As you rehearse each section, be sure to keep it within the context of the entire piece.

## Broadway Two-Beat choral works from the Alfred Choral Designs Catalog:

I DON'T CARE (arr. Althouse), SATB, 3-part, 2-part

TURN THE LIGHTS ON! (Albrecht), 3-part, 2-part

# WE'RE GONNA PUT ON A SHOW

Words and Music by  
JAY ALTHOUSE

Bright 2-beat (♩ = ca. 132+)

Piano introduction in 2/4 time. The right hand plays chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a simple bass line. The tempo is marked as 'Bright 2-beat (♩ = ca. 132+)'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The introduction consists of four measures with the following chords: Dm7, F/G, G7, and C. The first measure starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The piece ends with a repeat sign and a fermata over the final chord.

5

Vocal line starting at measure 5. The melody is marked *f unis.* The lyrics are: "O - pen the door, — let the au - di - ence in. — We're gon - na put —". The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment consists of whole notes in the right hand and rests in the left hand.

Piano accompaniment for the vocal line. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a simple bass line. The chords are C, E7, and Am. The piece is marked *f unis.*

10

13

Vocal line starting at measure 10. The melody is marked *f unis.* The lyrics are: "— on a show. — O - pen the cur - tain and". The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment consists of whole notes in the right hand and rests in the left hand.

Piano accompaniment for the vocal line. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a simple bass line. The chords are Gm7, C9, and F. The piece is marked *f unis.*

## ROCK STYLE

### Stylistic Considerations:

“Rock” or “Rock and Roll” has been a part of the music scene since the 1950’s when it began with such personalities as Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Little Richard. And it’s still alive and well today! However, it wasn’t until the 1970’s, with the advent of show and swing choirs, that arrangers began arranging rock numbers for choir.

Although there are rock tunes written with a “shuffle” beat (which is an underlying swing feel), most rock selections have a driving duple (straight eighth note) rhythm with heavy back beats on 2 and 4, usually played on the snare drum by the drummer. Often you will hear a continuous eighth-note pattern played on the ride cymbal. This style is also characterized by the bass player (or the pianist’s left hand) playing a dotted quarter-eighth note pattern. The music is invariably in 4/4 time.

Another rock style which developed in the late 1960’s is the “funk” style. In this style, the tempo may be a bit slower, and the drummer plays a back beat on beat 3 of each measure rather than on 2 and 4 as in straight rock. The eighth notes remain even and are never swung. The Performance Exercise *They Called It Rock And Roll* incorporates both of these elements with a funk style at the beginning and measures 17-25 performed in the traditional rock style.

### Vocal Production:

The tendency when singing in this style is to over-sing or sing without using good vocal technique. Singers we hear on radio and videos often sing with poor vocal technique and though it would be easy to imitate their styles, you should not necessarily imitate their vocal technique. Rock style can be done best when proper vocal technique is employed while using vocal inflections to produce the characteristic rock sound. The following suggestions should help achieve the correct stylistic sound and keep the vocal instrument healthy.

1. Make sure a deep, full breath precedes each entrance and that the throat is relaxed. Even though the rock style demands a lot of energy, do not let the throat area become tight from a lack of breath support.

2. Use very little vibrato, except occasionally at the ends of phrases. The rock style, when performed correctly, should sound completely different from Broadway or Classical styles.

3. For the most part, give heavy accents to the downbeats. This will help give the rock style its energetic sound. When a final word of a phrase is on an upbeat, those words should be accented and followed by a natural crescendo until the cutoff. Examples in *They Called It Rock and Roll* are the words “beat” (m. 10), “street” (m. 12), and “roll” (m. 25).

- 4 Overemphasize the consonants for rhythmic excitement.

- 5 Make sure all cutoffs are executed crisply. Most of the time, cutoffs will be on a downbeat.

**Warm-up:**

This warm-up can be started higher or lower. Move chromatically up and/or down and finish in the key of the piece you are performing.

The musical score is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. It features a chromatic ascent in the melody and bass line. The lyrics are 'doo doo doo doot' in the Treble clef and 'doot doot doo doot' in the Bass clef.

### Rehearsal Techniques for the Performance Exercise: *THEY CALLED IT ROCK AND ROLL*

1. Sing all the way through on “doo.” Try to make entrances and cutoffs clear even though you are sight reading.

2. Rehearse measures 17-27 with the text.

3. Rehearse the “oo” parts at measure 30 through the first ending.

4. Rehearse from the beginning with the words and try to communicate the enthusiasm of the text.

5. Strive to differentiate stylistically between the “funk” sections (m. 1-16 and 26 to the end) and the “rock” section (m. 17-25). Then reverse the two styles, singing in a “rock” style measures 1-16 and 26 to the end, and in a “funk” style measures 17-25. It works!

### Rock choral works from the Alfred Choral Designs Catalog:

GETTIN' READY FOR CHRISTMAS (Althouse, Albrecht), 3-part, 2-part/SSA

LOOK AT US NOW (McPheeters), 3-part, 2-part

ON THE ROOF (Bell, arr. Althouse), SATB, 3-part, 2-part

READY FOR SATURDAY NIGHT (Althouse), SATB, 3-part

RIDE WITH THE TIDE (Althouse), 3-part, 2-part

ROCK 'N' ROLL PARTY TONIGHT (Althouse), SATB, 3-part, 2-part/SSA

SEE THE LIGHT (Rothenberg), SATB, 3-part, 2-part

SQUEEZIN' DOWN THE CHIMNEY (Althouse), 3-part, 2-part



# THEY CALLED IT ROCK AND ROLL

Words and Music by  
JAY ALTHOUSE

Rock (♩ = ca. 132)

F Gm7/F Fm7 Gm7/F F  
(Second time play R.H. up one octave)

The piano introduction consists of two systems of music. The first system is in 4/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The right hand (RH) plays a series of chords and moving lines, while the left hand (LH) plays a steady eighth-note bass line. The second system continues the piece, with the RH playing a more active melodic line. The dynamic marking *mf* is present.

9

*mf unis.*

1. Play a funk-y blues with a danc - in' beat. That was how they played it down on  
 2. Can't you feel the rhy - thm a' mov-in' your feet? Can't you see the peo - ple danc - in'

The bass line for the first vocal system consists of three measures of whole notes, all of which are rests.

The piano accompaniment for the first vocal system consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features four measures of chords: F, Gm7/F, Fm7, and Gm7/F. The second system continues the bass line from the previous system.

12

Ba - sin Street, Add a lit - tle coun - try, a bass and a drum.  
 in the street? From New York to Mo - town, and on to L. A. —

*mf unis.*

The bass line for the second vocal system consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with four measures of chords: F, Gm7/F, Fm7, and Gm7/F. The second system continues the bass line from the previous system.

The piano accompaniment for the second vocal system consists of two systems. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, with four measures of chords: F, Gm7/F, Fm7, and Gm7/F. The second system continues the bass line from the previous system.