



# QUARTET REPAIR FOR DUMMIES

By Sandi Wright

## If you don't read music

- Does anyone in your group read music? Can they help?
- Purchase a learning track with your part predominant
- Have someone plunk out your part on the piano
- Learn to read music.

## Out of tune chords

- Freeze chords to make sure each chord locks
- Duet two parts at a time with two listening
- Trio three parts with one part listening
- Identify throaty and pinched tones. Too many woofers or too many tweeters will cause chords to be out of tune
- Check to make sure the vowels are matched.

## Flatting

- Find out where it is happening
- Sound the pitch pipe while you sing
- Discover who has the key note
- Are you singing with a free and easy tone?
- Are you supporting your tone (and each other)?
- Sing your part alone into your tape recorder when you're all alone in your room with the doors closed and towels shoved into the door crack – then listen to it while checking the pitch frequently. Don't cry. Fix it.

## Balance issues

- Finding where you are in the cone
  - Above the lead
  - Below the lead
  - Are you the lead?
- Where are you in the chord?
  - Fifth? Seventh? Third? Octave?
- Do we need more bass, or more baritone?
- Vibrato and why it doesn't work in barbershop
- Finding the "ring" and why it's so important.

## Synchronization

- Listen with your "outside" ears
- All sing unison with the lead
- Sing the song on one chord
- Are the rhythms correct? Is it two/four or one/three?
- Turning those diphthongs together
- Flapping jaws and over enunciating
- Stylization and scooping is dangerous to the ensemble.

## Breath management

- Support vs. lack of support
- Learning how to breathe from your diaphragm
- Bend over, and sing to your toes
- Be free. Sing your arms
- Noise breaths are not effective breaths
- It's okay to add a breath to the phrase plan.

## General Repair Techniques

- Learn your music at home so you can rehearse the phrase plan and character as a quartet.
- Sing in a circle. Watch and match vowels, finish phrases, observe facial expressions, and lift phrases.
- Tape your rehearsal so you know exactly how you sound to other people.
- Rehearse recovery. Don't stop after every mistake.
- Have the lead sing the melody of the ballad while the other three parts "ooh" their part in the background – Great for getting an idea of the way the lead feels the phrase plan.

## Using technology

- MP3 players are your friends
  - They are easy to email or convert to CD
  - Small and easy to use
  - Hears what the audience hears.
- Using video (like camcorders & Flips)
  - Can be used for checking posture, facial expression and vowel matching
  - It sees you the way others see you.