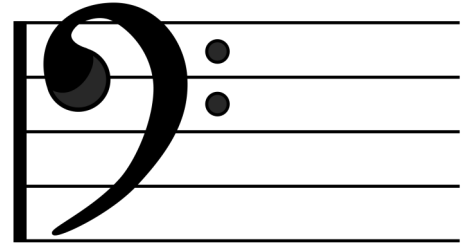


SINGING SMART BASS — Sue Melvin

“Basses are the stunning lower Lead section.”

—Joe Connelly



Sweet Adelines International Judging Category Description Book:

- 1) *“The Bass voice must be able to sing with authority, for she provides the foundation for the barbershop sound.” but must also have “a mellow, melodic quality...”*
 - SING:
 - ◊ With melodic authority vs. ‘making bass’.
 - ◊ Knowing your part cold so your vocal line can remain melodic (vs. note-to-note)
 - ◊ Like a Lead — Let your part line flow along like the Leads do theirs.
 - EXERCISES:
 - ◊ Learn /sing the Lead part first.
 - ◊ Sing your part an octave higher
- 2) *“She must be capable of sufficient volume and projection on the lowest tones so that her sound is not obscured by the higher voice parts.” and “...sing with more depth and volume as she descends in pitch.”*
 - Common misconception: “Depth and volume” does not mean heaviness or muscled sound.
 - Maintain frontal clarity to and the Bass sound will be heard more clearly, as well as have more lock& ring.
 - Lift/weightlessness in descending vocal lines and intervals
 - Use air and maintain space on the lows
 - EXERCISES:
 - ◊ EE on downward scale, then switch to other vowels to establish placement muscle memory
 - ◊ Sing ‘above the hand’
 - ◊ Bubble or VV or EE, then words (and repeat) to establish muscle memory of tone
- 3) *“Conversely, the upper part of the bass range requires use of the head register for proper resonance.”*
 - Lighten up as we go up vs. pushing the chest voice
 - Maintain frontal clarity as you ascend
- 4) *“Her vocal quality must compliment that of the lead voice.”*
 - ‘Borrow’ the Lead sound
 - Know the Lead part, dynamic plan, and where the song and story are going
 - Maintain frontal clarity like the Leads do

Resonance:

- Keep the sound 3-dimensional at all times (tall/back space, full/breadth, frontal)
- Common resonance issues:
 - ◊ If nasal, all resonators are not open
 - ◊ If dark, frontal resonance not being used
 - ◊ If wimpy, breadth of sound not being used.

Tuning:

- Sing on top of the air / always on the top side of the note.
- Keepers of the key!
- Know when you’re on the Key Note / Root

Tempo and rhythm responsibilities:

- Relentless tempo, regardless of part line jumps/challenges
- Understanding of downbeat and backbeat

Warming up the instrument:

- Warming up the highs automatically warms up the lows.
- Work to extend your range — Basses should maintain a sing-able range of at least two octaves
- Strive to maintain the overtone space in the voice at all times.

