

# Foreword

Every choral concert has characteristics that are unique. Those concerts that are highly acclaimed are likely to feature an excellent conductor and to take place in a special location. In addition, these successful concerts will show evidence of much strategic planning.

Concert planning begins with the choice of literature. The music chosen will be the semester's curriculum, or, for the non-school group, the season's repertoire. Either way, the choices made will be the substance of many weeks of work. The concert, often being the driving force that dictates literature choice, must be carefully conceived. Ideally, its design will afford the opportunity for literature to be performed that has artistic merit, lasting value, a challenge appropriate for the ability level of the singers, and last but not least, audience appeal.

When planning a choral concert of several compositions, one needs to consider the "complete picture," the way the compositions fit together, much like a picture puzzle. The program should have form, various colors that complement each other, and above all a sense of style.

Science enters the picture when we consider acoustics as they apply to our specific concert needs. The physical structure of a venue, coupled with its acoustics, play a huge role in making or breaking a concert.

It is a science unto itself to figure out how to collect and keep track of repertoire. The filing cabinet, as storage unit, presents challenges: first to collect music to fill it; next to decide on a way to organize it; and finally to create a way to efficiently utilize it as a resource.

Planning a choral concert is not a simple thing. It is hoped that this book will guide, and make easier, the process from beginning to end.

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## About the Author

Barbara Harlow has directed choirs at all levels, elementary through college. At a junior high school, her teaching assignment included two choirs; at a high school, five; and at a community college, three. During her thirteen-year tenure at Santa Barbara City College, her choirs presented concerts at the Santa Barbara Mission and two Catholic churches; at three Protestant churches and the Unitarian Society; in two school auditoriums, and at the college campus center. Her choirs performed at numerous social occasions in various banquet halls in the greater Santa Barbara area. And her Chamber Singers toured to Mexico, Europe, Canada, and throughout California.

A four-year scholarship recipient and *cum laude* graduate of the University of Southern California, she has a master's degree in composition from California State University at Fullerton. She is the author of a textbook for community college voice classes, *You, the Singer* published by Hinshaw Music, and *How to Get Your Choral Composition Published*, a publication of Santa Barbara Music Publishing. She sang professionally with the Roger Wagner Chorale, and in addition to conducting choirs, has taught voice, piano, guitar, and music theory. In 1990, after taking an early retirement from teaching, she established Santa Barbara Music Publishing.

Below is a review of one of her many Santa Barbara choral concerts:

The Christmas season arrived in Santa Barbara a bit early last night with the first of two presentations of a "Christmas Carol Dinner Concert," by the Santa Barbara City College Chamber Singers, at the Montecito Country Club.

This is the first time the group has done a dinner concert off campus, and as director Barbara Harlow told last night's thrilled and uplifted audience at the close of the program, she chose the main dining room at the country club because it is "one of the best sounding rooms in the city."

The 22 members of the Chamber Singers were in wonderful voice, providing a rich, emotional experience that brought tears to the eyes of several in the audience. The acoustics are wonderful, and the singers took full advantage of the cozy, candlelit room, singing from a balcony, or standing in a group, or scattered all around the room, surrounding the audience with beautiful sounds. Unfortunately, all tickets have been sold for tonight's second and final performance.

*Bob Barber, Santa Barbara Newspress*