

**ASU - Instrumentation/Arranging**  
**Fall 1999**  
**Dr. Crist**

**Six Steps in Planning the Choral Arrangement**  
From Arthur E. Ostrander's *Contemporary Choral Arranging*

**I. Initial Considerations**

- A. Who will sing the arrangement?
  - 1. What are their vocal ranges?
  - 2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the group in terms of range, rhythm, pitch, voice independence.
- B. Musical source
  - 1. Is the text suitable for the group?
  - 2. Are the vocal demands suitable for the group?

**II. Detailed Study of the Musical Source.**

- A. Text
  - 1. Who is talking?
  - 2. To whom is he/she talking?
  - 3. Where and under what circumstances is he/she talking?
  - 4. What is the overriding message?
  - 5. What emotions are being expressed?
  - 6. Do any of the above change from verse to verse?
- B. Melodic Form - Three Main Types:
  - 1. Sectional (AABA or ABA) - Each section has a separate line of text and are each eight measures in length. The material of B contrasts A.
  - 2. Strophic - a single melody is repeated several times as the verses.
  - 3. Strophic with Refrain - a refrain that repeats text and melody follows each strophe.
- C. Pitch and Rhythmic Organization - May have a strong effect on texture and accompaniment.
  - 1. Melody
    - a) How wide is the range?
    - b) Is the melody essentially conjunct or disjunct?
    - c) Is there a perceivable contour?
  - 2. Rhythm
    - a) What is the appropriate tempo?
    - b) Is there a preponderance of slower or faster rhythmic values?
    - c) Is there rhythmic continuity?
    - d) Are there continual breaks in the rhythmic flow?

**III. Planning the Form - the overall form will be governed primarily by the form of the source material.**

- A. Sectional Form (AABA)
  - 1. The body of the arrangement may simply contain all four sections of the source material.
  - 2. In a moderate to fast tempo the entire AABA or final BA may be repeated with contrasting treatment.
- B. Strophic
  - 1. You do not have to include all the verses.
- C. Strophic with Refrain
  - 1. All verses do not need to be included
  - 2. Variety may be introduced by skipping an occasional refrain and linking two verses.

#### **IV. The Contribution of Musical Elements to Form Delineation.**

- A. Texture - the most important element of change in a choral arrangement.
  - 1. Use one texture for every 4-8 measures in a slow tempo (8-16 measures in a fast tempo).
  - 2. Begin with simple textures and lead to more complex ones.
- B. Accompaniment
  - 1. Provides contrast in mood, key, tempo, meter, or style.
  - 2. The accompaniment does not change as frequently as the choral texture.
- C. Dynamics
  - 1. Used less frequently than texture and accompaniment.
  - 2. Reflects changes in mood and text.
- D. Key
  - 1. Used infrequently.
  - 2. For a "lift," modulate up a 2nd or 3rd for the final section.
- E. Tempo
  - 1. Used infrequently.
  - 2. The text may suggest a tempo change.

#### **V. Application of Musical Elements to Specific Forms.**

- A. Sectional (AABA)
  - 1. Texture
    - a) A different texture distinguishes each section (simple to more complex).
    - b) The original texture may be repeated at the end.
  - 2. Accompaniment
    - a) The opening A sections stay the same.
    - b) B contrasts.
    - c) If BA repeats, AABA may use a similar accompaniment throughout with the repeated BA changed.
  - 3. Dynamics
    - a) Reflect the mood of the text.
  - 4. Key
    - a) If BA is repeated, the final A section may be in a new key.
  - 5. Tempo
    - a) If BA is repeated, a new tempo may be used.
- B. Sectional
  - 1. Texture
    - a) Change texture for each verse (simple to complex).
    - b) The first texture may be restated at the end.
  - 2. Accompaniment
    - a) A single accompaniment pattern may be used for the first few verses.
    - b) The later verses may have a separate accompaniment.
  - 3. Dynamics
    - a) Reflects the mood of the text.
    - b) May change for each verse
  - 4. Key
    - a) Use with the final verse to create a climax.
  - 5. Tempo
    - a) Last verse or a verse that has a text that needs particular highlighting may involve tempo change.

### C. Sectional with Refrain

#### 1. Texture

- a) Change for each verse (simple to complex). The refrain will have the same texture as the verse which precedes it.
- b) The final refrain may have some change to signal climax and conclusion.

#### 2. Accompaniment

- a) Verses and refrains have the same accompaniment.
- b) Verses may be grouped with same accompaniment.

#### 3. Dynamics

- a) Reflect the mood of the text.
- b) The refrain has one dynamic throughout.

#### 4. Key

- a) The final verse and refrain may be in a different key.
- b) The final refrain only may be in a different key.

#### 5. Tempo

- a) The final verse and refrain may be in a different tempo.
- b) The final refrain only may be in a different tempo.

### VI. Adding Introductions and Endings

1. Add after the body of the arrangement is completed.
2. Determine the role of the introduction and ending. How do they contribute to the form of the arrangement's body.
3. Derive the material from the choral or accompanimental material from within the body of the arrangement.