

W o r s h i p M u s i c M i n i s t r y

T R A I N I N G C O U R S E

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Hearing Harmonies

- ◇ Harmonies add lots of fullness to a song
- ◇ Harmonies give various voice types something to sing along with in the congregation.
- ◇ Some people seem to have a natural ability that allows them to hear harmony parts better than others.
- ◇ Just because it is not automatic for a person to hear harmonies, does not mean that they cannot learn to sing harmony parts.
- ◇ To many people that are not 'naturals' at singing harmonies it seems like some kind of mysterious gift that has nothing to do with thinking, but rather just emerges from a person with no effort. Something like the gift of speaking in tongues.
- ◇ The goal of this teaching is to help take some of the mystery out of harmony singing in order to help people get started or improve their ability.
- ◇ There are two basic approaches to harmony singing. Both are appropriate at different times.

Two approaches to harmony singing

- ◇ I will use basketball defense strategy to explain the two different types of harmony singing.

'Zone' defense

- ◇ In 'zone' defense each person on the team has an area of the court that they 'guard'.
- ◇ A defender guards anyone from the other team who comes into their area.
- ◇ If two or more people from the other team come into one area, then nearby defenders slide over to help guard those other people.
- ◇ This defensive technique requires much less energy expenditure because you do not spend your time running all over the court.

'Man to Man' defense

- ◇ In 'man to man' defense each player on the team is paired with another player on the opposite team.
- ◇ You follow the person who is assigned to you anywhere they go on the court.
- ◇ This defensive technique uses a lot of energy, but makes sure every person gets 'guarded'.

'Zone defense' harmony singing

- ◇ This approach to harmony singing uses the concept of zone defense in basket ball as a parallel concept.
- ◇ Each person (or section) takes one 'zone' of notes.
- ◇ For ANY chord that is played, there will always be a note within 3 or 4 steps that fits the chord.
 - ◇ This is true because even the most simple chord type, a triad has a 4th as it's largest interval (distance between notes).
- ◇ Assign each section (tenor & alto) a range of 3 to 4 notes.
- ◇ Find what note the melody (or lead) starts on.
- ◇ Think of a zone around that melody note as being one note above and one note below.
- ◇ One section's zone will be the next 3 notes above the 'lead zone'.
- ◇ The other section's zone will be the 3 notes below the 'lead zone'.
- ◇ You can flip the octave of either of these zones to suit a male voice or female voice.
 - ◇ Ex 1: ◇ Lead zone = C, D, E (near middle 'C')
 - ◇ Tenor zone = G, A, B (just below middle 'C')

- ◇ Alto zone = F, G, A (just above the 'lead zone')
- ◇ Ex 2:
 - ◇ Lead zone = C, D, E, (near middle 'C')
 - ◇ Alto zone = F, G, A (just above the 'lead zone')
 - ◇ 2nd Soprano zone = B, C, D (near treble 'C')
- ◇ Ex 3:
 - ◇ Lead zone = A, B, C (near treble 'C') (female lead)
 - ◇ Alto lead = E, F, G (just below 'lead zone')
 - ◇ Tenor zone = B, C, D (near middle 'C')
- ◇ Some of the zones will overlap, as you can see in these examples.
 - ◇ That's OK, because for each chord, each part will be choosing a different chord tone.
 - ◇ Each part needs to be somewhat aware of it's neighboring part so that they don't choose the same chord tone.
 - ◇ Ex:
 - ◇ Tenor zone = B, C, D
 - ◇ Alto zone = E, F, G
 - ◇ On a 'C' chord the altos sing 'E'
 - ◇ The tenors would sing the note 'C'
 - ◇ The altos could instead choose to sing 'G'
 - ◇ The tenors could then choose to sing 'E' and come above their zone by one note.
- ◇ These zones are simply guidelines. At times a part may come out of the zone above or below by a step or two.
- ◇ When singing harmonies in this way it is not necessary to be thinking about what the actual note names are that you are singing.
- ◇ It is helpful when starting a song or a section to define the 'zones' so that each part can hear what notes they should be 'hovering' around. This does not mean that the singers need to know these note names unless it is helpful to them.
- ◇ When moving to a new chord, there are three options:
 - ◇ Stay on the same note
 - ◇ Move up a note
 - ◇ Move down a note
- ◇ As you get more experience, your ear may lead you instinctively to what note will match with the sound of the chord.
- ◇ However, if you are not sure what note to sing next, simply guess one of the three options (same, up, or down)
- ◇ If it doesn't sound good, then just act like you meant to sing that note, and move up or down from there.
 - ◇ It will sound like a passing tone (a thing that composers commonly use), and the next one is very likely to fit.
 - ◇ This works because ...
 - ◇ People will instinctively move up or down in steps that are diatonic to the key.
 - ◇ They have to work harder to sing a note that is not in the key than they do to sing a note that IS in the key (diatonic).
 - ◇ If they just sang a note that did not work, then it must have been in between chord tones.
 - ◇ Since most chord intervals are thirds, then it is most likely that if they move up or down within the key, they will hit a chord tone next.
 - ◇ If that one doesn't work either, then keep moving that same direction (pretending like you meant it to sound that way) and the next note is sure to fit.
- ◇ This idea of singing 'wrong' notes on the way to the 'right' note, need not bother you.
 - ◇ We do this all the time when we sing the melody of songs.