

# Tips for Memorizing Music

Jane Ramseyer Miller

Before trying to memorize a piece think about how you pick up and process information. Are you an auditory learner (you can hear a song on the radio and soon sing along without much thought to the words or tune)? Or are you more of a visual learner (you learn faster by looking at the words, creating an outline or visualizing the page in your mind)? Most of us use a combination of both techniques but may have a preference toward one of the other.

- Choose a time to concentrate on memorization. Don't just assume it will happen automatically because you are singing or listening to these songs every week.
- Especially if you are an auditory learner bring a tape recorder to rehearsals and use it! Watch for the following pitfalls with this method...
- Taping Pitfalls: Especially if the tape is made early in the season it may contain rough cut-offs, irregular breathing, harsh vowel sounds. Listen to the tape WITH your marked music so that you can compensate for these areas. You will be a great help to your section in rehearsals if you are aware of the problem areas and are able sing and lead your section through them. Gradually move away from looking at the music but concentrate on remembering those problem spots.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. It will do little good for you to bring a tape recorder to rehearsal if the recording picks up all your own wrong notes! If you are feeling shaky on a song ask someone in your section (that seems to have the notes down) to sing near your recorder. Also record problem lines in sectional rehearsals where others can help.
- Create a lyric outline of the song (vs 1, chorus, vs. 2, bridge, etc.). Write down a 1-2 word cue for each section. As long as you are able to begin the sentence or section you will likely be able to end it. You may even want to bring your cues or outlines to rehearsal and sing from them rather than the music.
- Write down all the words by memory. Then concentrate on the verses or sections where you got stuck.
- Or, write all the words on an erasable chalk or white board. Practice singing or speaking through the piece multiple times while gradually erasing the ends of sentences until you are left with only a cue word for each section.
- Pay attention to rhyme! Not all songs use rhyme, but many do. This is a great help to keep you on track with the lyrics.
- You can create a song outline for the notes too. For example, try diagramming the up and down of musical lines, musical lines that repeat, problem intervals with arrows, etc. Just the process of creating the outline will help you understand and remember the piece as a whole.
- Ask your section leader for help in finding a "memorizing buddy" within your section. Find a time to meet together weekly to concentrate on memorization.
- Plan a memorizing sectional. After you've conquered the notes plan a sectional to concentrate on memorization as a group.

Don't try all these ideas at once! Experiment and choose the ones that work for you.

---

Jane Ramseyer Miller, Artistic Director  
ArtisticDirector@ovmc.org

One Voice Mixed Chorus  
651-298-1954

*(please include this contact information if copying or using the information above)*