

# Painting a Performance

A good performance should be artistic and sensitive. The audience should feel a connection with the performers, so let's compare performing barbershop harmony to painting.

Think of an artist. He has a paintbrush and paint. There are a several ways he can apply that paint. He could **slap** it on, **brush** it on, or **sprinkle** it on. Which do you think would produce the smoothest work? The obvious answer is to brush it on. So when we apply this analogy to our voice. We want to brush it on smoothly. When you sing, it is up to YOU to apply the appropriate brushing technique to your performance. The Director will adjust his directing technique to encourage this "brushing" concept. Pick up an imaginary paintbrush and "paint" the words as you sing any barbershop song.

So, practice/rehearse using the paintbrush method, and your body will incorporate that smooth singing technique into your performance. The result of smoother singing will be evident from the initial tone. If you paint the note, it will stretch out the sound (no initial shaking) to its full due. The audience doesn't have to wait until the third or fourth note to appreciate the harmony.

While rehearsing, be lively . . . put yourself into it . . . don't be afraid to use your whole body to paint.

There are often difficult intervals in a song. As we take these intervals (in practice) we should play the "key note" and then play the transitional note. This will give the part involved a preview of their target note. If you must strain to reach the interval (and come up short,) just don't sing it!"

When you're painting, do you use the same amount of pressure throughout the entire stroke? Or, do you require more pressure at the end of the stroke to paint evenly? Obviously you need more pressure at the end. So, when singing, you must apply more pressure to your brush as you sing long notes or as you approach the ends of phrases.

Music that is "felt," is more enjoyable for an audience. So when rehearsing: Go All Out! . . . put your feelings into your brushwork! Good performers know how to make their audience feel the music. To sing with artistry, you must be able to sing with feeling, but with no visible effort. (The craft is not evident.)

Why do we connect with an audience? Music is a collection of organized sounds that creates feelings of tension and release. Sometimes it's Dynamic Tension, sometimes its Rhythmic Tension, and sometimes its Harmonic Tension.

While you're singing, keep applying those strokes of paint. Never - NEVER - let the brush stand still! Because when it stands still, you stop singing with tension and release. But, if you keep stroking it, it becomes music, not notes; lyrics, as opposed to words; the chord progressions you can feel, rather than just chords; there are pulses, rather than just swipes.

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These things are necessary to improve your performance. There are many other things you must learn to reach the "Artistic, A level." But as you apply these exercises, you will find that you have the overall context of feeling that makes it easier to sing on pitch, you're going to be able to "feel the pitch" rather than think it. It's going to be easier to sing in sync, because you will feel the pulse of the song.