

Northwest Girlchoir – AMABILE – 2022-2023 Goals and Expectations

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MUSIC EDUCATION

The Amabile curriculum emphasizes varying approaches to learning pieces, guided by cultural and historic appropriateness:

- melodic approach – intensive study of the notes on the page as a starting point
 - expand note-reading and solfege (do re mi...) knowledge in major, minor, and modal keys
 - introduce altered tone solfege (fi si te...) so as to achieve fluency for even the most difficult music
- rhythmic approach – intensive study of the rhythms on the page as a starting point
 - expand rhythm reading knowledge to apply to all note values (and combinations) at the sixteenth-note level and higher
 - say/sing/clap/tap various rhythmic combinations complementing/enhancing secondary rhythms
 - speak texts rhythmically without the benefit of pitch
- rote approach – learning aurally, without “paper music”
 - learn a song as a given culture or musical historical period would dictate
 - employ a “call-and-response” style of learning a song

Rhythmic and solfege skills will be expanded upon and evaluated with Amabile’s Monthly Challenges. Monthly Challenges are designed to (1) apply abstract musical concepts to our Amabile-specific repertoire, (2) teach choristers independent responsibility and execution, and (3) allow for direct chorister-to-conductor interactions and trust-building. Monthly Challenges are primarily attempted during Amabile rehearsals.

In addition, Amabile focuses more specifically on vocal tone and the voice change experienced by singers assigned female at birth.* In this way, singers learn:

- to accurately match pitch with the piano and fellow choristers
- the fundamentals of healthy voice use, stages of the voice change, and how to navigate that change
- how to sing with a supported, full sound using body and breath

**If your singer was assigned male at birth but identifies as female or nonbinary, please let me know and I will guide them differently through these conversations as there are distinct differences in their vocal tract changes*

Finally, Amabile singers spend time on artistry and personal connection to the music they explore:

- sing phrases with artistic musical shape (stress/release, build/relax, etc.)
- use dynamics and diction to better convey the story and affect (emotion) of the piece
- learn about a composer’s craft and speculate regarding musical choices within a composition
- study and explore texts, historical periods, and world cultures connected to the repertoire we sing

PERFORMANCE PREPARATION

Amabile is asked to perform in more concerts than the younger choir levels. The responsibilities of a successful performance are placed more squarely on the choristers’ shoulders, with the understanding that each singer’s decisions affect the entire choir – in rehearsal and in performance. Active listening, careful watching, and an awareness of self and others is crucial in building public performance skills for choristers.

While concerts can be exhilarating for performers, it’s important to note that they are not the sole reason to explore and learn musical repertoire. The process of learning and singing together is a fundamental focus of Northwest Girlchoir; the concert is a time to share what we have learned and to practice presenting ourselves in a public space.

COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP

Being part of Northwest Girlchoir requires a commitment from both the singer and their family. Regular attendance at rehearsals and performances are crucial elements in building a community of musicians and performers. Singers and artistic staff are co-creators in the weekly process, and regular, age-appropriate practice is essential. When a singer commits to Northwest Girlchoir, the singer and family join a legacy of

choral excellence and commit to the “team” of singers in that choir. Each voice matters, and each rehearsal is filled with learning opportunities that cannot be replicated or easily “made up” when absent.

An important leadership and accountability skill is introduced in Amabile: singers are expected to take home their music folder and to have it with them at each rehearsal. Families are strongly advised to help the singer design a system wherein the folder will reliably come with the singer to rehearsal. Some families have designated tote bags for this, others place the folders in the family car that will travel to rehearsal when leaving for school in the morning. Coming prepared to each rehearsal with folder, music, pencil, and water bottle (with a lid, no glass) are important skills for singers to develop at this age and stage, but these are skills that will initially require support from the family.