

# Showmanship & Choreography

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*One of the major differences in style between choral music and barbershop is the inclusion of physical movement to the performance. It is important to remember that barbershop has more roots in the stage than the concert hall.*

## Choreography

Choreography should be relevant, vocally supportive (or at least not detractive) and naturally expressive (not mechanical). Having a visual plan is simply ensuring that what is seen enhances the musical product and is entertaining rather than distracting from the music. This includes having a visual focus for the students (there's nothing more distracting than watching wandering eyes during a performance) which may change depending on physical directional references – look and gesture up to an imagined moon for example.

Facial expression is more important than choreography.

Physical freedom during singing is vital for vocal freedom and emotional involvement. The freedom of sound you hear from a true Gospel Choir is due in a large part to the fact that they move freely and constantly throughout their songs.

## Showmanship

Showmanship is about identifying with the character of the song's 'voice' and putting across that character and message to the audience. Most people are highly visual in the way they take in information, and visually matching / enhancing the music is an important part of the barbershop artform. As with Opera and Broadway, barbershop is a dramatic musical form - this is why we have choruses not choirs, and directors not conductors.

Involve your Theatre Arts teachers in this process. Older students can contribute on the costuming side ('character' or 'classic' costuming) especially if you have a textiles program in your school. Dance teachers may also be helpful to you. The more fun the students have, the better they will sing. The more they move their bodies, achieving a poised, relaxed physiology while singing, the better their vocal production will be – breathing will be better and therefore the sound will be better supported.

Teaching your students to see more deeply into the music is one of the great joys of teaching. Taking a more active role in the music rather than simply taking mechanical direction from you as a conductor is a huge leap of musical and artistic maturity. Your students will feel the rewards.