

NOTE TO PRESENTER: This script is intended to be used as a resource - not a definite script of what must be taught. As you prepare for teaching this class, if you find that the material is more than you can present in the allotted time, please use portions of the script that you find most relevant to the objectives and which will make it comfortable for you and the class. We highly encourage you to make this script your own.

WRITING RHYTHMS, BACKBEAT AND STOMP TIME

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II. Understanding Rhythms

- A. Notating rhythms
- B. Unique rhythms for barbershop singers

III. Terminology and feeling the rhythm

- A. Rhythmic Terminology Test – Discussion together
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V. Types of Structures, Rhythms and Devices in Barbershop Arrangements

- A. Elements of barbershop arrangements – Example 2, rhythm and lyrics
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CLOSING REMARKS

WRITING RHYTHMS, BACKBEAT AND STOMP TIME

I. INTRODUCTION

I think it is important to recognize and honor those who contribute their knowledge freely in our organization. So, I'd like to thank Joanie Adler and Nancy Bergman for their contributions to this class. Joanie was kind enough to send a syllabus of a previous class she taught on rhythms in Region 11 and Nancy agreed to share her class of the same title and some examples for us to use.

This class has been designed specifically for arrangers. Yet the topic needs to be understood and approached from the standpoint of the singer. So, today we, the arrangers, will be the singers! This afternoon, we will be looking at some of the structures, rhythms and devices used in writing barbershop arrangements. In years gone by, the arrangers left much of the style, interpretation, accuracy of rhythms and even key changes up to the singers. Nowadays, we have come to realize that it is our responsibility to communicate as fully as possible what we perceive to be those characteristics of our arrangements to the singers. It's our part of the mission of Sweet Adelines International to work toward the improvement of the "craft." Many of our singers don't have the benefit of highly skilled coaches to deliver interpretive plans. So, how will the average Sweet Adeline singer acquire this knowledge? It becomes the responsibility of the arranger to communicate an accurately-notated and fully-interpreted manuscript.

II. UNDERSTANDING RHYTHMS

We are a very small group of talented people with a wide variety of educational skills. Even though we are largely responsible for the availability of acceptable barbershop arrangements, we all have our own unique set of specialties. Notating rhythm is not always at the top of that list. We know what we want to hear, but we don't always notate it as accurately as we hear or feel it! **Example 1 has some unique rhythms that our singers would likely find in their repertoire, pg. 8.**

A good understanding of how to notate the rhythm you are hearing in your head is important to the final outcome. Even if the singers can't always accurately read the rhythms, the director or coach will be able to translate that rhythm to the singers, IF it is written properly.

III. TERMINOLOGY AND FEELING THE RHYTHM

First, let's begin with some definitions in preparation for our discussion. **Turn to the Rhythmic Terminology Test, pg. 7.** Take a moment to read the definitions A-J.

Rhythms can be built in several ways...changing the value of the notes, accenting chords or notes, accenting rests, ritarding, accelerating. If you're going to write rhythms, you must FEEL rhythms! Let's do something physical that will give us a sense of even rhythm. It's fun and you can pass it along to your chorus friends! Be aware that just because these are predictable even rhythms, they will have an element of challenge to them. This is a whole body activity that gets the brain involved with the movement.

(DEMONSTRATION and PARTICIPATION)

IV. BACKBEAT, STOMP AND SYNCOPATION

Backbeat

Backbeat is actually a form of syncopation. The accentuation of weak rather than strong beats is how it is identified. In other words, in 4/4 time, beats 2 and 4 would be accentuated rather than the strong 1 and 3 downbeats.

There is nothing creative I can offer about writing backbeat on paper. However, if you use a computerized notation software, there are settings that can emulate a heavy beat on beats 2 and 4 during playback of a 4/4 time song. Backbeat is something that is "felt" and can be instructed by notation of accents on chords, notes or rests that are to be stressed.

Generally, backbeat is not present during an entire song. But it can be present for an entire Chorus or Verse. Sometimes backbeat goes in and out of a song. The intro might have a backbeat, but it could also begin in the chorus and carry through the remainder of the song.

Example 1 has some backbeat notations we looked at before (pg. 8).

Stomp

Notating stomp can be done by written instruction (**Example 6, pg. 15**) OR it can be indicated in the arrangement by switching from 4/4 (or 2/2) to 12/8 time (**Example 6a, pg. 17**). Your manuscript could include a metric notation for the tempo which is usually exactly half of the tempo of the song preceding the stomp (e.g., 120bpm to 60bpm).

Syncopation

Syncopation is a variety of rhythms which are stressed in an unexpected way. Stress in syncopation can occur on a rest, on a backbeat, or any number of normally weak beats in a song. Syncopation is not a new musical feature. It was used by Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and many other classical composers. There is such a variety of rhythms that can be written in barbershop using syncopation. To name a few, there's backbeat (or off-beat), missed beat, suspension, and a variety of combinations too numerous to mention.

Just a notation tip here... 4/4 measures should be written in such a way as to make it easily discernable that the values are divided into two 2-beat segments per measure. This is not strictly enforced in manuscript notation, but generally adhered to when possible. **See Example 8, measures 8 on both options (pg. 19).**

V. TYPES OF STRUCTURES, RHYTHMS AND DEVICES IN BARBERSHOP ARRANGEMENTS

To quote the arranger's guide... "a song appropriate for a barbershop arrangement should offer some interpretive liberties." In other words, "the strict observance of the time value of each note is NOT the primary objective." Obviously, ballads are sung in an *ad lib* style which is seldom, if ever, notated in a way that denotes the final interpretation rhythmically or emotionally. That's the responsibility of the director or performer. But this non-observance of original note values holds its greatest meaning for upbeat songs in which written rhythms have already been established by the "melody." That doesn't necessarily mean that they are the only rhythms to be considered for interest, flavor, variety and forward motion. This is the "fun" in our barbershop arrangements.

Let's look at some of the arranging structures in barbershop.

Elements of Barbershop Arrangements

1. Melody
- 2. Rhythm**
3. Harmony and Harmonic Progressions
4. Lyrics
5. Form

Rhythm is our topic today. But we need to recognize that melody and lyrics relate directly to the choice of rhythms that must be written in our arrangements. A primary relationship of concern in writing rhythms is the "lyric." The lyric presents its own unique rhythm that can

be disturbed by introducing musical rhythms that don't match the lyrical rhythm! And the opposite also holds true: the "lyric" must match the notated rhythm. **Example 2 offers two options for us to sing and assess from the singers' point of view, pg. 9.**

Type of rhythmic tempos in barbershop

1. Even time (4/4; 2/2)
2. Swing Beat
3. March
4. Waltz
5. Ballad-style *ad lib*

Can you think of any other tempos we might use in our arrangements? We probably wouldn't use mambo, cha-cha, or any of the latin rhythms we love to dance to. But sometimes we throw in a calypso beat show tune or some other flavor for variety.

So, how do we select appropriate devices to use for unique rhythms...what are the tools? Some of the tools we can use to build unique rhythms are **backbeat, stomp and syncopation**. This subject spills over easily into manuscript notation and creative embellishments for barbershop singing. Let's take a look at some specific rhythmic devices available to us as barbershop arrangers. **Example 3** will offer us some opportunities to see a few of these structures in action, pg. 10. Let's see how many we can identify.

Creative rhythmic devices which can be used in writing arrangements

1. Syncopation
2. Backbeat
3. Stomp
4. Bell Chords
5. Swipes
6. Echoes
7. Patter
8. Polyrythms (two rhythms sung simultaneously)
9. Pause

Listen to the sound track from which this arrangement was created (**Example 4**). The original sheet music was not available. So, this sound file, plus a web page that gave chords and lyrics was used to create the final product.

Now, let's listen to the **sound file (on CD)** of the arrangement as we review our voice parts in **Example 3**. Follow your usual part (pg. 10).

- Can you identify the type of tempo used to compose this song?
- Can you make a quick assessment regarding the usability of this type of tempo for barbershop competition?
- What other forms of tempo or rhythms could be used to create a barbershop arrangement of this song?

As you can see, there are many things we can do to make a straight even-timed song interesting and singable for barbershop. But I believe what we have really been talking about is how do we get it on paper and across to our singers? That is the big question. It puts the burden of communication squarely on the shoulders of the arranger. If you are one of those gifted arrangers who has trouble notating accurate rhythms, find a friend who can interpret what you are hearing in your head onto paper for you. Sing it to her and she'll put those rhythms down on paper for you. Then you can finish everything else around those tricky sections.

If you have not been writing creative rhythms into your arrangements because you want to remain true to the originally composed song, know that this is not part of the objective in arranging creatively while honoring the intent of the composer. That statement (honoring the intent of the composer) is done through appropriate harmonies. Allow your creativity as an arranger to shine by altering rhythmical patterns that introduce fun and excitement in your arrangements.

CLOSING REMARKS

So, what have we learned today. I hope you go away with some inspiration to write creative rhythms into your arrangements AND to find a way to write them accurately for our singers!

Any comments or questions about writing rhythms, backbeat and stomp?

Rhythmic Terminology Test

Match the following terms with the best choice:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. _____ Accent | A – a section of a song where the tempo is cut exactly in half (<i>i.e.</i> , 120bpm to 60bpm) |
| 2. _____ Backbeat | B – the rate of speed of a piece |
| 3. _____ Beat | C – a constant unit of time in a song |
| 4. _____ Meter | D – to add emphasis to a note by changing its loudness, pitch or length or any combination of these |
| 5. _____ Rhythm | E – shifting of a normal accent by stressing the normally unaccented beats or parts of beats |
| 6. _____ Stomp | F – numbers at the beginning of a piece where the top number tells the beats per bar and the bottom number tells the kind of note getting one beat; or, cadence, beat, division of measures |
| 7. _____ Deadbeat | G – an accented beat that normally is not accented |
| 8. _____ Swing Beat | H – the variable length and accent given to a series of notes in a song |
| 9. _____ Syncopation | I – placed after a note, it adds half the value of the note to the note |
| 10. _____ Tempo | J – a unique rhythmic pattern of long and short notes, often in the style of “softshoe”. |
| 11. _____ The dot | |

Understanding Rhythms (Example 1)

Tenor Lead

(clap hands to notated rhythms)

Bari Bass

5 6 7 8

Syncopated Rhythms using Accents

9 10 11 12

On-beats stressed Off-beats stressed

13 14 15 16

Missed beat stressed Suspension stressed

Rhythmic/Lyric Relationships (Example 2)

Option 1

Musical score for Option 1, measures 1-4. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "I've got the rhy - thm, I've got the rhy - thm, I've got the rhy - thm, Oh, hear the beat". Measure 1 starts with a first ending bracket. Measure 4 ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final chord.

Option 2

Musical score for Option 2, measures 5-8. The score is in common time (C) with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "I've got the rhy - thm, Yes, I've got the rhy - thm, Oh, I've got the rhy - thm, Oh, hear the Beat!". Measure 5 starts with a first ending bracket. Measure 8 ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final chord.

Example 3 – screenshot from website

I Get The Blues When It Rains

Words by Marcy Klauber, Music by Harry Stoddard - 1929

Verse:-----	-----	-----	-----
G D7 Gdim G	C G Gdim D7	G Dm	E7
A7 D#7	D7	G	A7 D7
G D7 Gdim G	C G Gdim D7	G Dm	E7
A7	-	D7	-
D7 Fdim D7 Fdim	D7	G C D#7	G Dm E7
A7	- G# A7	-	D D7
Chorus:-----	-----	-----	-----
G Gdim G	C G Gdim	D7	- Fdim D7
- Fdim D7	- Gdim D7	G	- D G7
C D# C	Am Gdim	G C F9	G Dm E7
A7	D#7 A7	D7 G7	D7
G Gdim G	C G Gdim	D7	- Fdim D7
- Fdim D7	D D#	Em	G7
C D# C	D#7	G D7 G	G7 E7
A7	D7	G	- (D7 to chorus)

8-beat intro. Play 4-beats for each cell, reading from left to right.

Verse:

It was rain -ing, dear, when I met you
 You smiled, the sun shone through
 Then it rained a -gain and I lost you
 Just why I nev -er knew.
 Now ev -'ry time the storm clouds gath -er way up in the sky,
 I see them all and I re -call those hap -py days gone by:

Chorus:

I get the blues when it rains,
 The blues I can't lose when it rains
 Each lit -tle drop that falls on my win -dow pane
 Al -ways re -minds me of the trears I've shed in vain
 I sit and wait for the sun
 To shine down on me once a -gain
 It rained when I found you, It rained when I lost you,
 That's why I'm so blue when it rains.

Arranged by Jim Bottorff