

There's Something About Tagging

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It's fun, builds skills and most of all, brings a beautiful "few seconds of blissful harmony."

For Sirens of Gotham, tag singing is something we rely on not only as a way to socialize with other barbershop singers or share music with our loved ones, but as a learning tool for developing ear training skills, part independence, performance style, and barbershop technique.

Many Sweet Adelines are familiar with tagging and probably love it as much as we do. However, if you are educating new members, guests or a community group you're singing to, here's a tagging description we like:

"Barbershop tag singing is surely one of the grandest traditions arising from the field of vocal harmony. A tag is a short passage consisting of an arrangement's ending, or coda, which is taught and sung in sessions of informal chord ringing. The tag allows four singers to quickly blend their voices in a few seconds of blissful harmony without the burden of learning an entire song." — David Wright, introduction, *Classic Tags*

Our "Tag Culture"

Tag singing has been a great way for Sirens to create a safe space for learning and enforcing our music-learning standards. We use tags in our vocal warm-ups and ear-training skill work. We've added it to our chorus audition process, and have even leveraged it as a tool for applying new performance and singing techniques, like character physicality, quartet rapport and part balance.

Traditional Tag Etiquette

- Know and be able to teach all four parts
- Parts are learned by ear, no sheet music
- Only four sing; each has one part
- If you are outside the foursome, wait your turn to join
- Don't hum or sing along

How We Tag

We believe it's more important to get people tagging than how they do it. We've found that there are lots of singers who love to tag, but the traditional tagging rules don't work for them. Here are some of the ways we've made it work for us:

In Rehearsal

- Get in a big circle.
- Teach the first part. Everyone sings it!
- Teach the second part. Everyone sings it! Chorus is split in half to duct. Reverse the split, and then sing again.
- Teach the third part. Everyone sings it! Split in three to

trio. (Sometimes just that, sometimes rotate until each third has trio-ed on every part. Remember, make it your own/ whatever you need that evening.)

- Teach the fourth part. Everyone sings it! Again, scramble the singing. We usually have everyone sing through on her chorus part once. Then we have people pick whatever they want, and yes, sometimes its way out of balance, but still valuable and fun!
- Then the tag leader says, ok, quartet, go! Four people come into the middle, claim their parts and sing through. We do that several times.

Host Tag Parties at Regional/International Events

- Put together tag sheets (both easy and advanced) for singers who are visual learners. This enables them to sing with like-minded folks or mix in with people who don't want to use the paper. After a few reps, they put down the paper and start listening and having fun with the ear training and ensemble alignment parts of tag singing.
- Allow people to double on parts. Many of us relish singing in quartets, but SA is filled with tons of awesome chorus singers who aren't as comfortable singing alone. By allowing people to double, you get less confident singers to become comfortable with their part. As things progress, you can encourage smaller and smaller groups to try.
- Build tag leaders. So many people are afraid of not being able to remember all four parts. We ask Sirens to try and learn one tag they can teach to others. But, if they have trouble, we encourage them to work in pairs or quartets so they can still teach tags.
- Totally extra — for fun! Have stickers people can take with them to show they were at a tag party or a photo booth area where people could document the tag experiences.
- Have regular afterglows to encourage tag singing.
- It's a great activity for guest nights.
- We find it's great for mingling with our brother chorus, Voices of Gotham.
- It's ideal for encouraging quartetting and musical growth in a comfortable, low-stakes, fun setting!

The Final Chord

Tagging, like the rest of this wonderful barbershop "hobby," should be fun! Reach out to ask questions about ways you can get more tagging in your life, and remember to always look for the ways you can make it your own. 🎵



Tag Along

Sing with the Sirens on these videos: www.facebook.com/SirensOfGotham/videos

Easy to Teach

Sweet Adelines, no doubt, have books of favored tags. Here are two easy-to-teach tags that Anna and Alexis suggest trying, if you haven't.

Foolish Over You (Each Time I Fall In Love) It's fun because of a nice baritone/lead duet on the final tenor and bass post. It

also features some common qualities of each voice part and as such is a great learning tool.

Back In My Hometown (Val Hicks, 1962) It's fun because of juicy peeling harmonies, suspensions with fun timing and an awesome spread/old school-feeling final chord. Plus, tenors can do a dramatic slide up to the last note!