

What is the ACP?

A description of the Arranger Certification Program

Arrangers are a critical part of our Sweet Adelines lives. Without arrangers, there would be no music for us to sing. But how do you learn to become one of those special people who can arrange barbershop music? Some of our regions have had active arranger education programs developed by experienced arrangers in those regions, but other regions have had no arranger education available, for various reasons.

Four years ago, at the direction of the International Board of Directors (IBOD), a task force was formed to study the feasibility of developing an arranger education program that would be available to members in all regions around the world. This task force envisioned a program similar in structure to the Director Certification Program (DCP), which has been successfully training our directors for several decades.

A second task force was appointed to develop the curriculum for this program, and as of May 1, 2019, the Arranger Certification Program (ACP) went live. The focus of the new ACP is to develop strong contestable arrangements because once those skills have been mastered, the arranger can use them to arrange other types of music, too. As of this writing, we have over 55 members worldwide who are enrolled in this exciting new program. How wonderful!

The Beginning Level ACP consists of nine modules for independent study of arranging. Each module is followed by a test which is proctored by the Regional ACP Coordinator (RACPC) in your region, or the RACPC's designate. Once you have passed all nine modules with a score of 80% or higher, you have successfully completed the Beginning Level ACP. For those with some background and experience in arranging, there is a method in place to challenge the Beginning Level by passing Modules 2, 8, and 9, with a score of 80% or higher. We have a remote testing program in place for those who are interested.

Once you have completed the Beginning Level, you have the option to register for the Intermediate Level ACP for more in-depth study and practice in arranging. This level is a cohort group consisting of 5-6 applicants and two Certified Music Arrangers (CMA) or Master Music Arrangers (MMA) as the facilitators. There are five activities in this level, each with two parts — studying and analyzing, and arranging practice. This group meets via video conference at a date and time mutually agreed upon by those in the group to study, discuss, and work together. Between meetings, participants work independently on the assigned materials.

As of this writing, we have our first Intermediate Level group working its way through the five activities. All five participants have successfully completed the Beginning Level ACP: Jeanne Elmuccio, Region #1; Sheryl Neal, Region #5; Wendy Hofmann, Region #5; Jan Meyer, Region #9, and Linda Olding, Region #16. The facilitators are Jean Flinn, CMA, and Judy Vidal, CMA. Together, these seven women are blazing a trail into a newly-created cohort approach to arranger education! We anticipate that this Intermediate Level will take about a year to complete, although since this is the first group to go through the curriculum, the time may vary.

This group has appropriately named itself ACT ONE, and its members have already learned the value of working with a group, where they can hear and see what other people are doing with the lesson material. They have been dividing each activity into two separate meetings, one for the studying and analyzing section, and one for the arranging section. From the facilitators, the members are learning WHY things in a barbershop arrangement have to be a certain way. Among other things, they are learning skills that help them create not only strong arrangements, but neat, legible computer manuscript.

This program enables aspiring arrangers to improve through interactive activity, which helps them blossom into creating better arrangements. Jean and Judy say that the participants are encouraged to move forward by setting their own deadlines, which is motivation for everyone to keep up with the group!

Following successful completion of the Intermediate Level ACP, participants will have earned the title of Approved Arranger and may then apply for the Advanced Level, which consists of an ACP scholarship for up to two years of individual mentoring from a CMA/MMA. Following that, you may apply for CMA status if you wish.

The Intermediate Level ACP fills the gap between Beginning Level arranging and the Advanced Level. The ACP has something for anyone who has interest in arranging at almost any level. Your favorite singers are waiting for the exciting new arrangements you will create! 🎵

Kay Bromert (Kansas City Chorus) is a Certified Music Arranger and moderator of the Arranger Certification Program Committee.

For more information, visit www.sweetadelines.com/education/acp or contact the Education Department at education@sweetadelines.com.