



HOSTING A VIRTUAL REHEARSAL USING FACEBOOK OR ZOOM

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Around the world, we are being asked to practice social distancing, making it impossible for Sweet Adelines choruses and quartets to rehearse in person. Several choruses in our organization have already tried “virtual rehearsals” with much success! Not only can virtual rehearsals be productive, they provide an opportunity for us to stay connected to each other. In this day and age, we have many options for online meetings and education. Below are a few suggestions of apps to use, helpful hints, and ideas to get started rehearsing in a new and different world.

FACEBOOK

Private Facebook groups allow the sharing of posts, videos, files, photos among only members of the group. Information can be shared, and rehearsals can be conducted via Facebook Live video, broadcasting to all members of the group in real time. If you choose, the video can be archived at the conclusion of the meeting so members can watch the rehearsal at a later time. Limitations of Facebook for rehearsals: a maximum of two people can present in a Facebook Live video; Facebook Live allows members of the group only to watch and comment; members cannot see each other.

ZOOM

Zoom (zoom.us) is a free software program that allows up to 100 participants for a 40-minute (maximum) meeting. A paid subscription (\$14.99 USD monthly) allows up to 100 participants for a 24-hour (maximum) meeting. The software will allow more participants and additional features for a higher price. Zoom allows all participants to be heard and seen. There is also an option to record the session to your computer or to the cloud, but it does not have a free archival or Watch Party service like Facebook groups. The paid subscription is only required by the host. It's free for everyone attending a Zoom meeting to download and use! See accompanying document about how to set up and attend a Zoom meeting.

USEFUL FEATURES OF ZOOM

Screen Share: From the meeting window, click on “Share Screen”, and it will allow you to share your iPhone, iPad, your entire desktop, or a specific window/application on your screen. Ways you can use Screen Share:

- Play videos
- Display sheet music
- PowerPoint presentations
- White board that you can write on!
- Display anything on your own computer screen

Breakout Rooms: Zoom has a “Breakout Rooms” feature that needs to be turned on from the host’s account under “Settings” before it can be used. Once this is enabled and your meeting has started, click on “Breakout Rooms” in the bottom right corner of the screen. You can assign people to Breakout Rooms or let Zoom automatically assign people to a breakout room. This can be done after the meeting has started or assignments can be made when the meeting is initially scheduled.

Messages can be broadcast to the breakout rooms (e.g. “there are 5 minutes left”), and the message will scroll across the screen in each breakout room. Once you click “End Breakout Rooms”, each room will receive a 60-second countdown. After this time, the room will automatically close and everyone will be returned to the main room. This feature is ideal for section rehearsals or small group visual work.

IDEAS FOR VIRTUAL REHARSALS USING FACEBOOK OR BASIC ZOOM FEATURES

1. Vocal warm ups: one presenter leads a warm up while members sing (while muted).
2. Physical warmups: the person doing physical warmups plays the music on their end.
3. Teach a new song: use learning tracks and have members sing along. Teach the song in sections, highlighting potential problem areas, breath marks, octaves, etc. Be sure to note where to start the recording for each section of the song so you don’t have to search for the right spot each time you start. Have the four part and part dominant recordings pulled up and ready to play to avoid down time. The beauty of this is that everyone can sing each time since everyone is on mute.
4. Teach a new skill in a workshop format.
5. Review previous rehearsals: talk about specific instructions, and invite members to make notes on their music. You may want to use the Share Screen feature to put the music up on the screen.
6. Live PVI’s: have a brave person sing, and offer personal vocal coaching as a learning opportunity for everyone. The same could be done for visual performance!
7. Use the “white board” feature to appeal to visual learners.
8. Play videos of your chorus from rehearsal, contest, or a performance. Ask them to notice what’s going well and what can be improved.
9. Play videos of your chorus warming up (find a video of a time that a coach did a warm up that worked well, or any warm up that was effective for your chorus), so the chorus can warm up together along with that video.
10. Play videos of other choruses at different levels. Talk about the differences between each performance.

11. Play videos of non-barbershop groups and discuss strategies and skills that we can use from other genres.
12. Pull up the music of one of your songs (using Share Screen), and make markings (octaves, crashes, character words, rubs, dynamics, textures, descriptive words, etc.) Ask the chorus to follow along and mark their music with you.
13. Present a session (or four!) on the judging categories. The Judging Category Description Book can be found in the Members Only Section of www.sweetadelines.com.
14. Section rehearsals: as part of rehearsal, or even outside of regular rehearsal time, encourage virtual section rehearsals. Section rehearsals can be conducted by Zoom using breakout rooms or separate meetings (if you want to have everyone speaking and participating) or live videos in your private Facebook group (if you only want 1 or 2 speaking, with the rest commenting).
15. Find ways to bring in rehearsal “norms”: ask for good news, have social time after rehearsal is done, or any other things you do on a regular basis that can be done virtually.

HELPFUL NOTES AND TIPS FOR ZOOM REHEARSALS

1. Do trial runs. Run a short meeting with a few members to figure out how to use any features you may want to try.
2. Have chorus members do trial runs. Set up a few short meeting times prior to your first rehearsal so that members can figure out how to join a meeting, use the mute button, and discover where the chat box is and how to use it.
3. Encourage members to wear headphones to eliminate feedback. It’s imperative that the host (or whoever is speaking/sharing audio or video) wears headphones to avoid feedback and delays.
4. One of the great things about Zoom is that everyone can be seen and heard. This can also be chaotic if there are several members trying to talk at once. It’s best for participants to be on “mute” for the bulk of the rehearsal. If they want to make a comment, encourage them to ask a question in the Chat Box.
5. It is virtually impossible for all singers to sing at the same time when mics are open because of internet delays. Each member can and should be encourage to mute themselves. The host has the option to “mute all” with the click of one button. Make the default that participants are muted. Before each segment of rehearsal where you’re asking people to sing, the host can click on “mute all” to ensure that no one was left unmuted.
6. If you click “Share Computer Sound” at the bottom of the window, any sound coming out of your computer speakers will be broadcast directly to the participants (in a higher quality than if you were to play music in the room through your microphone).

7. When you play videos with audio, it is best to not speak at the same time as this can affect playback.
8. If there are parts of rehearsal that require discussion, encourage people to use the chat window. The presenter may recognize the person who asked the question, and they can then unmute themselves only to make a comment.
9. Help members find the Gallery View and Speaker View. It would be best for their screen to be in Speaker View for visual work. Other times, they may prefer to see the faces of their fellow chorus mates.
10. Invite another person to host with you. They will have control of the “mute all” button and other features so that you can focus on presenting rather than managing the meeting.
11. Schedule and open the meeting/rehearsal 30 minutes before rehearsal actually starts so that members can visit during the gathering time. Encourage members to sign in no later than a few minutes before the starting time.

CONCLUSION

Virtual rehearsals and using technology for this purpose are new to many, including our leaders! Do a trial ahead of time with a few members to ensure YOU are ready to work through all of the elements of rehearsal. It takes a lot of advance planning to run a virtual rehearsal. So much of what we do as directors at rehearsal is listening to the music, then offering feedback to improve the sound. When we don't have the luxury of hearing our singers all together, we have to get creative. Share the workload — invite others to be presenters so the director does not have to be “on” the entire time. Don't try too many new features at once, but don't be afraid to branch out when you get more comfortable with the technology.

Make lemonade out of lemons! Our members are at home, looking for distractions and/or ways to keep busy. Provide tools and opportunities that will allow them to rehearse at home — things like a pitch track, chorus recordings, learning tracks for a new song, choreography videos, non-Sweet Adeline educational videos, etc. Publish these via email or in your Facebook group and challenge members to use these tools. The suggestions listed above are intended provide a launch pad for virtual rehearsals, but don't let that stop your exploration and creativity. The possibilities are endless!

Providing opportunities to sing and to connect with each other is an important part of our chorus life. Virtual rehearsals do just that — provide a musical respite in addition to vital social interaction. Even during this time of isolation, we can stay connected until we are able to create harmony together in person.