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Penguin Players Music Director Digital Binder

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Abstract

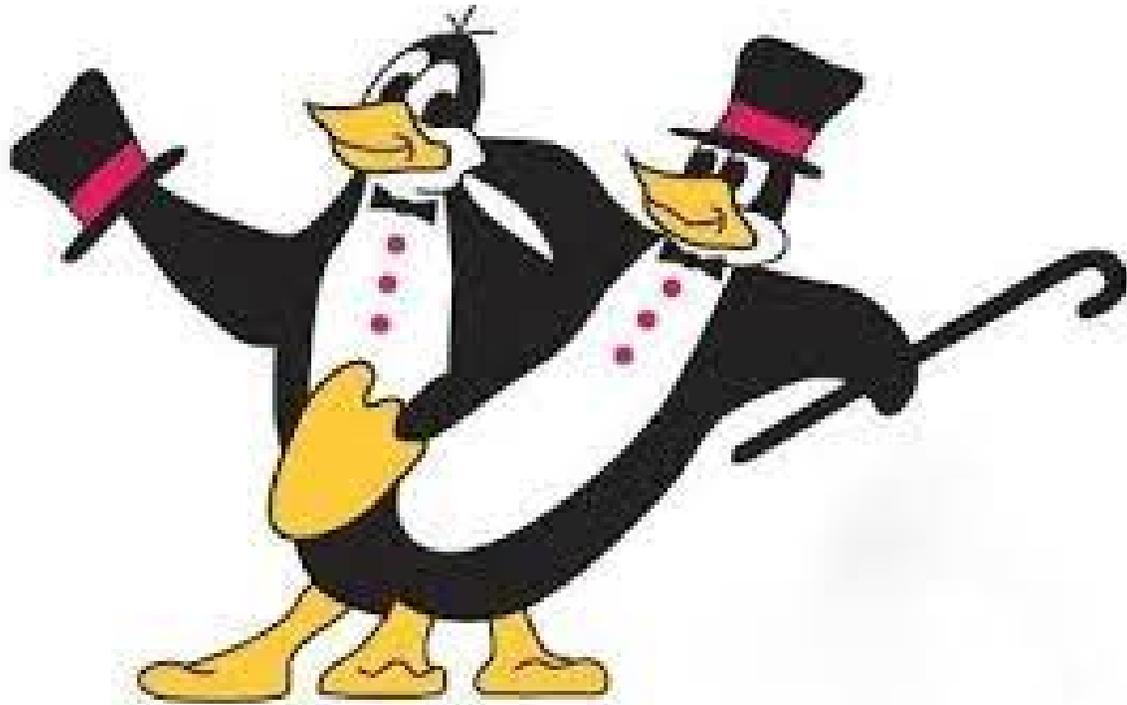
I worked with the Penguin Players here at Northern Illinois University as their head music director this semester. Penguin Players is a group on campus that puts on a musical with adults with disabilities as the stars. These artists are paired one-on-one with a mentor (usually a special education major) who helps them to learn their lines, songs, and dances. During the show the mentors are on stage with the artists but take a back seat to let the artists step into the spotlight. My job for the show is to teach everyone the songs they perform throughout the show. This includes full ensemble pieces, small group pieces, and solos. I've been the music director for the past three years and decided to make a "how to" binder to encapsulate all I've learned in my time with these wonderful people. The binder includes everything a music director would need to know from changing the music, to rehearsal techniques, to individual tips on the artists themselves. Penguin Players has been an absolutely wonderful experience that has taught me so much about teaching, myself, and others.

Reflection

I have learned so much about myself in my time with the Penguin Players here at NIU. Having worked with them for the past three years I have had the opportunity to get to know the artists very well and have gotten a really good grasp on how to effectively be the music director. For my last show this semester, I thought it would be a good idea to record all of the knowledge I have about the program so that the new music directors wouldn't have to start from scratch. That idea led to this project: a digital "how to" binder that covers everything I know about how to be the music director.

It was an interesting semester to do this because it's our first semester back in person post-covid lock down. After the year online, everyone in Penguin Players found ourselves asking "How did this used to go?". It took a little while for it all to come back but it's just like riding a bike and as soon as we did something I was able to remember and write it all down. I included everything I could think of from microphones, to rehearsal techniques, to random tips and tricks that I've picked up. Most of the artists are the same with a few exceptions here and there so I thought it would be a good idea to write a paragraph about each one. I also added example videos of things like warm ups that just make more sense if you see it rather than read about it. I chose to write the binder as if I were having a conversation with the new music director because I want it to be changeable. There is no perfect way to be the music director and I want the next ones to change it to fit their personality.

Penguin Players has truly changed my life. It's made me a better teacher and a better person. There is no one more patient to practice your teaching on. There is no group as loving, accepting, and forgiving of mistakes. This was my way of giving back all of what they gave me. By leaving all I've learned for the new music director I'm ensuring that all the hard work I've done with the group isn't lost. I will never ever forget the time I've spent with the NIU Penguin Players and they will forever have a place in my heart. Once a penguin, always a penguin.



Penguin Players Music Director

By: Nina Caliendo

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Before You Start

Congratulations! You're the music director for Penguin Players which is an incredible and exciting opportunity. Everything in this binder is a suggestion based on what I've learned over the six semesters I spent working with Penguin Payers. It's up to you to make music director your own and figure out what works best for you. There's no set in stone rules about how to be a good music director. This binder is just here so you don't have to start from scratch so take what you like and change what you don't. Good luck and have so much fun!

Before you dive in there will be a few things you need to take care of. Either before the semester begins or right at the beginning Barb and Joe King (the producers and creators of Penguin Players) will call for a creative team meeting to choose the show. Your job when they ask you to look at the shows is to look through the music. Some important things to ask about/check for include...

- ❖ Practice Tracks (recordings of the music with singing)
 - Practice tracks are incredibly important to allow the artists a chance to practice without you
 - Some artists cannot read so they learn their songs/lines by listening to them
- ❖ Performance Tracks (recordings of the music without singing)
 - If the show does not have performance tracks you will need to find someone to play piano for the show
 - Performance tracks give the artists consistency in something that will be the same every time and are ideal
- ❖ Number of Songs
 - Be realistic with the time you have and how fast you can get work done
 - Typically shoot for 2-3 full ensemble songs and 2-4 solos/small group songs
 - The number of songs you can get done well is also affected by how hard the music is....you can edit it but not everything can be changed
 - You can cut songs but make sure a cut wouldn't affect the plot
- ❖ Cast Members
 - Most of the artists stay the same with some fluctuation between semesters
 - Think about the artists Barb and Joe say are signed up for the semester...are there enough people to fill the roles that need to sing?

Creative Team

The creative team is essential to your success. You need to have a good relationship with the people on the creative team because the show runs best if you communicate. Included on the team is a director (they may or may not have an assistant) and a choreographer (they may or may not have an assistant). Remember, you are all working on the same show towards the same goal! Make decisions together, ask for help, learn from how they do things.

Everyone is on the same time crunch and everyone's part of the show is equally important

The Director: They are in charge of putting the scene work together. They go through the entire show and help each mentor-artist pairing with where to move on stage and how to say a line. They also work with Barb and Joe to edit the script to fit the artists available. This can include anything from adding/subtracting a character, cutting lines, changing the gender, splitting a character into two people, etc.

The Choreographer: They are in charge of teaching the artists the dances. You will need to work with them to let them know which songs need a dance (if there's a 50 measure dance break they need to be able to plan for that) and which songs could be done without one. You will also need to work closely with them when the dance and singing has to be put together. It is a musical after all, they dance and sing at the same time.

The Kings: Barb and Joe are the producers and the reason anything gets done. They created Penguin Players based on Penguin Project for their son Daniel when he aged out of Penguin Project. They may come and sit in on your rehearsals and give suggestions (i.e. telling the ensemble to SING LOUDER). They are a wonderful asset and having a good relationship with them is crucial to getting what you need done. They can get you what you need to make the show work!

Assistant Music Director

The assistant music director position is an option. You do not have to have one but if you know you have a busy schedule, won't be there the next semester, are graduating soon, or just need the help they can be a wonderful asset. The goal should always be to teach them and give them the opportunity to learn.

I have found the most success by having them shadow for a few rehearsals then asking them if they feel comfortable jumping in on leading warm ups. Usually while they're shadowing or if we're in a large group and I'm teaching I have them stand in the large group to sing with the artists (having a good pitch in their ear helps them adjust). I also frequently ask if they have suggestions for the artists or any comments on what we just sang. From there, we're typically at a place in the show where we need to get some smaller songs learned. Ask them if they are comfortable taking an individual or group of people to learn their parts to a song (make sure you ask at least a rehearsal in advance so they have time to prepare). That way you can get two things done at once.

During the show, the assistants can either be just helping backstage or you can talk to Barb and Joe about getting them an extra microphone to give the group songs an extra boost.

Recruiting

Recruiting is the bread and butter of a really good show. Being on the creative team means you are way more than just the music director. You are an advocate for Penguin as well which means finding more people to join in on the experience.

You can find people anywhere! Think about the other organizations you're a part of and which people stand out then invite them to join you whether that be as a mentor or as your assistant. If you're looking for an assistant it's always a good idea to talk to Dr. D'Alexander and Dr. Doherty. If you can try and go talk to the intro to music education class or music education convo to find someone.

One of the really cool things about recruiting is most of the time all you have to do is get them in the door. If you can get them to a rehearsal odds are they'll fall in love and never leave if they can help it.

If you're in marching band and recruiting from there, ask them to fill out a continuous conflict form so that they don't have to leave early on Thursdays. Having to leave early for Thursday night rehearsal takes mentors away for an entire segment of rehearsal. Dr. Bough has been flexible in the past but make sure to talk to him about it beforehand so you can both be on the same page.

The Rehearsals Before Casting

The rehearsals you have before auditions and the cast announcement are meant to be this really fun bonding experience. The artists will be super happy to see everybody after the break and can't wait to start on a new show. There will possibly be some returning mentors but there will also be a lot of new faces. During this time you can keep recruiting; bring in as many people as possible because you'll need as many mentors as there are artists as well as swings (mentors that can jump in with an artist if someone has to leave early or is out sick). The creative runs games during these rehearsals and some of the favorites are explained below but feel free to bring in any other games you can come up with.

for circle games try to make sure everyone gets a turn before moving on

- ❖ Honey Will You Smile For Me?
 - The person in the middle attempts to make someone in the circle smile by saying "Honey will you smile for me?" in any way they can think of. The person being asked to smile has to respond with "Honey, I love you, but I just can't smile" with a straight face to avoid being it
 - Cierra is AMAZING at not smiling...we affectionately say that making her smile is for expert mode players or the whole cast at once
- ❖ Simon Says
 - If Simon says to do something they have to do it, if he doesn't say and they do they're out
 - If it gets down to just a couple people you can do a lightning round where the commands happen super fast
 - Do a few rounds of this so that those who get out early get another chance
 - Have those who get out help you call out the people who should get out
- ❖ Freeze Dance
 - Dance until the music stops if they move they're out
 - You can let them pick the songs or pick a theme for the songs
 - Remind them they have to dance big and no clumps of people so you can't see what's happening
 - Do a few rounds of this so that those who get out early get another chance
 - Have those who get out help you call out the people who should get out
- ❖ Monkey See Monkey Do
 - One person is sent out of the room to be the guesser. The people left form a circle and choose one person to be "it". That person makes different movements while the other people mimic them. The person who left the room is invited back and they have three chances to guess who is starting the moves.
 - Moves can be anything from, clapping, swaying, noodle arms, etc.

- ❖ Speed Dating
 - This one is a must do before choosing mentor-artist pairings
 - Have the artists sit in a circle on the stage facing outwards while the mentors form a circle around them facing inwards. Give them a list of things to learn about each other/talk about and set the timer for about 3 minutes. After that three minutes the mentor circle rotates by one person and the cycle repeats until every artist has met every mentor.
 - If there are more mentors than artists or vice versa have them buddy up and be a group of three
- ❖ Lip Sync Battle
 - This is a good music run activity
 - Split everyone into two or three groups. Have them choose an appropriate song to come up with a fun lip sync and small dance (if they want) to fit the song. Give them about 10-15 minutes to work on it with their group (they might get done early). Every group gets a chance to perform and then you can ask Joe to judge for a winner.
 - They can just do part of a song
 - You can put a theme on it like Disney if you want
- ❖ Jiggalo
 - Have everyone stand in a circle up on the stage with one person in the middle. The person in the middle sings “My hands are high, my feet are low, and this is how I jiggalo” *they do a dance they come up with* and everyone responds “Their hands are high, their feet are low, and this is how they jiggalo”. While the person in the middle picks someone new for the middle everyone sings “Jiggalo jig jig alo jiggalo jig jig alo”
- ❖ GeoGuessr
 - <https://www.geoguessr.com/>
 - They LOVE this! We started doing it when we were online for a semester

Auditions

Auditions are really a formality. Most of the artists have been a part of Penguin Players for so long Barb, Joe, and the creative team knows them and their abilities so well they've already cast the show in their head. They are still helpful because someone may surprise you in a part you didn't peg them for originally. Normally there's a sheet for casting / mentor-pairing ideas where you can take notes. You won't be able to see their dancing and acting auditions so make sure you talk to the rest of the creative team about what you didn't see.

Before auditions it's important you go through the songlist and figure out what characters have solos. I usually keep a list of all the songs with who sings them and ideas for how it can be changed if necessary. For example, if there aren't enough female artists who can have a vocal solo, ask if you can change a character's gender to make it work.

Auditions are set up to run in a rotation of three. Typically by then we have an idea of who we want for mentor-artist pairings and the creative team can come up with a temporary pairing list for auditions to see who works together well. From there the pairs are split into groups of three and they rotate through an acting, dance, and music audition. There are two really good ways to run music auditions in my opinion.

- ❖ Teach the chorus of a full ensemble song
 - Find the first song you plan to work on with the full group and choose a short section of it to teach them. Work through it all together until they and you feel comfortable then find somewhere where they can sing the part for you away from the large group.
 - Artists can choose to sing on their own or with their mentor for the day
 - You can also sing with them to help their confidence it's up to you and the artist
 - Make sure you have a lyric sheet printed for everyone to look off of
 - This gives you an idea of how fast each artist can learn music
 - This option takes more time which is good because the dance and acting auditions also take a lot of time
 - Everyone already has the chorus learned for the first song you go through
- ❖ Have them sing a simple song
 - Sing something like Happy Birthday as a group a few times and change the pitch you start on to work for different vocal ranges (a high one and a lower one). After they feel comfortable, find somewhere where they can sing it for you away from the large group.
 - Artists can choose to sing on their own or with their mentor for the day
 - You can also sing with them to help their confidence it's up to you and the artist
 - Ask them if they want a high or low pitch in their individual auditions
 - A lot faster but doesn't take up nearly as much time as the other auditions so you'll have time to kill

Casting / Mentor-Artist Pairings

Creating the cast list and the mentor-artist pairings is a job you share with Barb, Joe, and the whole creative team. The music directors main concern about casting is which characters sing. As previously mentioned you should have created a list of which characters sing which songs. From there, you can figure out your side of the cast list. Think about which artists can handle a solo whether that be a full length song or just a snippet (snippets can be sung with the mentor if need be). If you don't have enough women or men to fill the amount of singing parts you need, talk to the creative team, Barb, and Joe about whether or not you can change the character's gender **pssst* they usually can*. Your other option at this point if you don't have the right people you need is to consider cutting songs or changing who's singing (a different individual or making it multiple people). All of these options work but you need to check with everyone else to see if it makes sense for the story line.

As for mentor-artist pairings, this is also an all hands on deck job. The people on the creative team know the artists better than the mentors and know what kind of people each artist works with best. That being said, based on all the interactions you've watched them have it's pretty easy to make a pairing list. You can also take into consideration what the mentors or artists want but you should always take their requests with a grain of salt. Use your best judgement and you can't go wrong as almost all pairings are the best of friends by the end of the show!

Casting / mentor-artist pairing announcements typically happen a week or two into the semester. The earlier you can get that done the more time you'll have to work on the show! After a drumroll for every reveal, each artist finds out their part (the director will read a description), gets their mentor, get their script, come up for a high five from the creative team, and take a picture with their new mentor. It's a super fun day that usually ends in a pizza party!

Schedule Creation

After the cast has been announced and you've started working on the show the director should make a calendar on google docs. They will break up even time between acting, music, and dance for every rehearsal up until the show. Typically the last week to week and a half is just run-throughs. Your job is to plan out what songs you want to do when. The first thing you have to think about is how fast each song can be learned based on the length, how hard it is, and who's in the song.

- ❖ Full Ensemble
 - Depending on how long it is it typically takes 2-3 rehearsals
- ❖ Small Group
 - Depending on who's in the group, if they listened to it before-hand, and how long it is this can take anywhere from 1-3 rehearsals
- ❖ Solo / Duet
 - Typically 1 rehearsal, maybe 2

I like to start with the full ensemble songs to get everyone involved for the first few rehearsals. Oftentimes the opener and the finale will be very similar making it easy to pick up later. You do not have to work in show order. Start with the ones you know will take a lot of time and bring in the easier ones later. Make sure to leave enough time to run and clean everything towards the end. Everything NEEDS to be learned by Thanksgiving break but try your hardest to have a two week buffer before Thanksgiving to run and clean everything. That way you're not scrambling to make it sound good at the end.

This is when having an assistant is great because you can be in two places at once. If you have a solo and a small group song that don't have overlapping characters you can split them up and get two things done at the same time. Again, always tell your assistant in advance so they have time to prep!

Take advantage of when the director doesn't need characters in a scene! If someone who has a solo or a group of people who have a song aren't on stage during blocking time.....STEAL THEM! Work on their song and get ahead. Ahead is oh so much better than behind.

Warm Ups

Warm ups can be super fun! There are a few we do regularly that all the artists know and love but feel free to add in whatever ones you know that they'd like. It's really nice to include warm ups that have something you need to work on in them. For example if I want to work on their diction I'll do the ABCs or Follow the Yellow Brick Road. Once the semester gets crazy and you need all of your time to just make it through the songs it's okay to forgo warmups. They're good but not nearly as important as getting the work you need done.

Going through warm ups, choose a direction you want them to change pitches in and go up or down a half step on "lu lu" to get them to follow you. There are also body motions for most of the warm ups. Remind them to sing it in their most comfortable octave and that if the group goes higher or lower than is comfortable they should stop.

Link To Example Video: <https://youtu.be/4UxfOMTnHA>

- ❖ Ya-ya-ya-ya-ya
 - So Fa Mi Re Do
 - Hands on cheeks to open the jaw
 - You can point your finger out in a downward motion to get the vocal contour you want
- ❖ Zing-a-mama (x4) Zing, Zing, Zing
 - So - Zing-a-mama, Fa - Zing-a-mama, Mi - Zing-a-mama, Re Zing-a-mama, Do - Zing, So - Zing, Do - Zing
 - Bounce up and down on toes for the end Do So Do
- ❖ Two Angels and a Whale
 - Angels - loud high vocal sirens on "whoow" - make a circle motion above your head with your finger
 - Whales - low "huh" - jump down and squat (it kind of looks like a sumo wrestler)
 - Great for interaction! - ask them for a different combination of angels and whales
- ❖ Follow the Yellow Brick Road
 - Do - Fol, Re - low, Mi - the, Fa - Yel, Mi- low, Re - Brick, Do - Road
 - Step and sway in time with the music
 - Great for diction - instead of "lu lu" to change pitch I like to say "What're you saying"
- ❖ ABCs.
 - Do - A, Re - B, Mi - C, Fa - D, So - E, Fa - F, Mi - G, Re - H, Do - I ... Do - X, So - Y, Do - Z
 - Slight sway side to side (optional)
 - Great for diction really over exaggerate the letters

Rehearsal Techniques

Rehearsals are where you really get your chance to connect with the artists and mentors and bond with them. If you're planning on being a teacher in any capacity this is also an opportunity to work on your personal teaching style. The artists and mentors are a very forgiving audience so if you mess up it's no big deal. Falling down and messing up is necessary for learning; it shows us what not to do for next time. So experiment and find what works for you! Here are a few things that worked for me...

❖ Piano

- You don't always want to have them singing with the recording for two reasons
 - It doesn't allow them to learn independently from the tracks
 - It's really hard to hear them singing over the practice track
- Play the vocal line on piano in octaves
 - Remind them that they should sing in the octave that is comfortable for them
 - If you're singing in one octave it gives them the chance to hear it in their octave

❖ New Music

- Play the full practice track for them so they get it in their head
- Go phrase by phrase with you demonstrating (piano and voice) then them singing with you, repeat the phrase at least twice before moving on
- Glue phrases together as you go so they get a sense of transitions
- Make sure you lay out singing on some reps to hear better how they do without you

❖ Review

- For early review use a similar procedure to learning new music but faster and in bigger sections to remind them of what happens in the piece
 - Sing through the whole thing with you and the piano
 - Make sure you're counting the rests to bring them in
 - Sing through with the practice track
 - Challenge them to sing it with the performance track with your help
 - Make sure you lay out singing on some reps to hear better how they do without you
- For later review work in the theater (further instructions in tips and tricks)
 - You can use the keyboard stored backstage
 - Put the lyrics on the projector until you're testing memory
 - Test their memory and challenge them to mark the dances as they go

❖ Breaking it Down

- Clap and Speak
 - You clap and say the phrase in the rhythm of the music then invite the artist to say the phrase with you

- Repeat getting faster until they have it then re-add the melody
 - most of the time artist who have issues getting out the phrase will do better once they're memorized and not reading off the page
- ❖ Checking What They Learned
- Fist to Five
 - Ask them to hold up their fingers on a scale of one to five, five being perfect and one being "oh dear, please help me"
 - Stop Singing
 - Let them sing while you just play the piano instead of singing with them for an easier time hearing them
 - Ask Around
 - Ask any other creative team member in the room what they thought

Full Group Rehearsals

Full group rehearsals are really fun. You'll typically only need to have these for 1-3 songs. The key to full group rehearsals is your pacing. You won't have to stop for individuals most of the time because they're paired off one-on-one with their mentors, however, it is important for you to set a pace that works for everyone. It's a balancing act but try not to go too fast for the people that take more time or too slow for the people that get it quickly. It helps to stop frequently to ask if people need to go over a section again or if they have questions. This is when fist to five comes in handy. If a lot of people have 1, 2, or 3 fingers held up, run the section again.

Repetition is your very best friend. No one is hurt by repetition. For the people that have an easier time with the music, challenge them to sing it in character or to start working on memorization. It's also a good idea to do slower repetitions and build up to the real tempo as well. If any artist asks you to go back, do it; it's good practice for everyone in the room.

It's harder to keep everyone on track during full group rehearsals because everyone's excited and wants to talk. Finding the balance of connecting with them by joking around and keeping them on track is something you'll figure out with practice. If they get a little off track it's okay but after a couple comments try and pull them back to the rehearsal. If you have an artist that is consistently getting the group off track, talk to their mentor about helping them stay focused. You can also say that you're happy to talk about certain things later.

Typically full ensemble songs will have a dance to them. Make sure you're starting to put the songs with the dances early enough that they have time to get the hang of it. During dance rehearsals you can suggest they try to sing it if they feel comfortable and during singing rehearsals you can encourage them to mark the dances (do it small) to get a feel for it. When you and the choreographer feel comfortable putting it together for real, have them do it on stage and rep it a couple times. It's really helpful to do a few reps with the practice track before asking them to do it with the performance track.

Small Group Rehearsals

Small group rehearsals and how they run really depends on the artists that are in the song you're working on. That being said, the amount of rehearsal time you need for them also varies based on how many people are in the group. Make sure to have people who sing together stand next to each other during the rehearsal so they have the best chance of hearing their part and coming in correctly as well.

If you're doing a song that's just a few people in unison, treat it exactly like a large group rehearsal with more individualized help. Since there's less people there there's more of a chance to go back to help people. If it's a song composed of small solos, treat it a bit more like an individual rehearsal and go line by line. They can start off singing with you and/or their mentor to begin with before deciding if they're going to do it on their own. Most of them should be doing the solo on their own by the show. It's important to work on transitions during these rehearsals so that they all know their entrances.

Talk with the director and choreographer to figure out what makes the most sense for the song as far as adding a dance or blocking. If there's a long dance break they need to know as soon as possible to account for it. If they choose not to do a dance but to do blocking instead try and find time as soon as possible to add it. Keep in mind that sometimes the song goes out the window for a minute when you add new things like blocking or dancing. Remind them, especially if they have solos, that if they can't sing and do the blocking they can stop for a second to sing.

Individual Rehearsals

Individual rehearsals are a good chance to really bond with the artists. These rehearsals and how they run are completely based on the artist that has the solo. Generally, go line by line like the other rehearsals but you can also take more time to work on pitch here and there as well as adding character ideas. Encouragement and repetition is the key just like it is for all of the different kinds of rehearsals but the more excited you are about their singing the better they'll feel and the more confident they'll sing. Remind them that you'll be in the front row so if they forget the lyrics or get off you'll be right up front mouthing the lyrics to get them back on. If you have individual questions about how to teach certain artists well there's a section called "Individual Artists" that has tips and observations about each artist I've met.

Sheet Music / Lyric Sheet

Most of the artists and mentors do not read music. I tried to teach reading notation a few times when we had enough time to do so. For some people it was super helpful and for some it was just an added layer of confusion. Because of that, I landed on the lyric sheet and sheet music packet I hand out for each song now.

If you have the time to go over the basics of how to read music try and keep it to ‘if the notes go up then your voice gets higher and if the notes go down your voice gets lower’. You can also talk to them about some dynamic markings or whatever else you want; just remember to keep it simple and be prepared to go over it several times as they learn best by rote.

❖ Lyric Sheet

- Title and who’s singing at the top of the page
- Write out the lyrics
- Let them know they can highlight their parts to make it easier to know when to come in

❖ Vocal Score

- Attach the vocal score behind the lyric sheet
- Make sure the changes you want to be made are on the page you copy for them
- Some shows don’t come with a vocal score they come with a full piano score instead
 - If that happens, use musescore, noteflight, or finale to write out just the vocal line so it’s not too confusing to look at

Before you pass them out to everyone, stape the lyric sheet and vocal scores together and three-hole-punch them so they can put it in their binders. If they’re not able to be put into their binder the artists will lose them and you’ll be printing out copies FOREVER. Let them know what page of the script the song happens on so they can put it in their binder in the context of the show. Printing get’s expensive so talk to Barb and Joe about sending them what you want printed beforehand or you can work something out with them where they put money on your onecard for printing.

Changing the Music to Fit the Artist

The point of Penguin Players is showcasing these individuals in a way that reflects their talents and strengths. If they're struggling with the music or you look at it before handing it out and realize there's a really tricky section that's just not worth it, find a way to make it work. Keep in mind to keep track of what you change and communicate it to everyone that needs to know (the mentor, artist, assistant music directors, possibly the director/choreographer). If you change a lot then you'll need to record a practice track for them to listen to with the updated solution. There are a few different reasons to change the music and ways to go about it that I've come up with.

❖ Word Change

- If there's a word that an artist is having a hard time saying just change it to something that retains the meaning and fits in the song

❖ Shorten the Line

- If an artist is having a hard time getting all the words out in time or is stumbling too much just cut out sentences or words to make it fit.
- Keep in mind that the performance track is fixed and it won't speed up or slow down to catch the artist so think about timing when using this method
- Make sure that the shortened version retains the meaning and fits the song as well

❖ Cut

- Sometimes in the music there's a really long dance break that no one has time to choreograph or an awkward middle section of music where there's supposed to be a break for dialogue. If that's the case and you don't want that part of the music in there cut it from the practice and performance track
- If you don't know how to do this it's okay just ask around and find someone who does or who is willing to teach you how
- A good platform that allows you to slow down, speed up, or edit tracks is audacity
 - <https://www.audacityteam.org/>

❖ Add Characters / Mentor

- Sometimes the artist just needs a little back up. If there's a part where it says it should be a solo and you know that artist isn't the strongest solo singer add either their mentor or a group of characters that make sense to sing with them
- Mentors can be added and presented as a choice to the artist at any time
 - Give them a deadline to decide if they're on their own or singing with a mentor for the show
- If you want them to sing in a group that needs to be a decision you make before handing out the music. You don't want them to feel like you took their solo away because that's just not fair. Make a choice beforehand and stick to it!

Individual Artists

All of the artists are amazing and capable individuals who you'll get the chance to know. Here are a few pointers for helping them with their singing as well as what I've noticed to be their strengths! Some artists are only there for certain semesters or take breaks from Penguin but most of them stay and come back.

Daniel King - Daniel is super fun to work with and is also the King's son so he has a lot of help with his lines/songs at home with his parents. He is a fantastic singer and can handle a solo! He can't read so ask him to listen to his songs before starting to teach them. When you're teaching him it's really helpful to use the aforementioned clapping and speaking lyrics in time before adding melody. This helps him get the lyrics in his head and memorized. Emotions when singing are a good goal to work on with him as well. You can bond with him by talking about Mamma Mia or James Bond.

Daniel Barnes - Daniel is a sweet guy. He is not as verbal as some other artists and usually has a smaller role. He stutters so it's hard for him to get through lines or solos in time. If he's singing try and keep him with a group or with his mentor. If he has a solo (I've seen him do one and he can) be prepared to change it or slow it down so he has the chance to get through it and work on it a lot with him.

Garett - Garett is a character. He is very enthusiastic and can handle a solo well. When working with him be prepared to redirect him to keep him on task as he likes to get off topic. Sometimes he gets hard on himself. Just give him the chance to take a break, reassure him that it's okay to make mistakes, and find ways to help him succeed and gain confidence by backtracking steps. If he's having problems remembering the lyrics, mouth the words to him or let him use his lyric sheet one more time. The more repetitions he gets the more confident he feels.

Libby - Libby is the SASS QUEEN. She usually has the sassy or comedic roles. She doesn't sing on her own very much but she could handle a smaller solo line in a song. Joking around with her is the best way to get to know her. She doesn't usually ask for too much help with the singing.

Laura - Laura is a sweetheart. She's very quiet and takes some time to get her lines out. She can handle a very short solo line in a song if you cut it down to give her time to get it out. If it's a fast line, change it to just the most important word and she'll do great!

Sean - Sean is a goofball and a ham. He can handle solo lines in songs but has a hard time getting them in time. He does much better once memorized so encourage him to stop reading and just know the songs. He benefits a lot from the rhythm / lyric clapping method with lots of

encouragement. He can get very dramatic with his acting and singing so if you need a good vibrato on the end of a note just ask (you may not have to...he'll just read your mind and do it). Jas - Jas is super fun. She is not as verbal as some of the other artists and usually has a smaller role. She does best when she sings in a group and is always trying her best and super happy to be at penguin. Her enthusiasm during singing is amazing!

Will - Will is very eager and kind. He can handle a solo very well. He takes all comments and constructive criticism to heart so if you catch him doing well point it out. If you're addressing the whole group about singing louder, remind them to only sing as loud as is safe and comfortable because Will will push himself too hard and pass out if he's not careful. It helps to have a conversation with him and his mentor to remind him that not every comment is directed at him and to self regulate his efforts.

Cierra - Cierra is also a sass queen and a super cool person. She can handle a big part and a solo. Encourage her to sing out and to incorporate emotion into her singing. Joking around with her and engaging in her sarcasm is the best way to get good results out of her. Sometimes even a well timed look does the trick to get her to sing louder or with a smile on her face.

Rebecca - Rebecca is very nice. She's a bit newer to Penguin Players but has done Penguin Project before. She needs a lot of encouragement as she is very shy and very nervous even in rehearsals. The other artists do a great job of cheering her on and you can help her by singing with her and reassuring her that it's okay and she's doing a good job.

Jasmine - Jas is very fun and loving. She's hard to understand so she normally has smaller roles. Try to keep her singing with a group as much as possible. Her energy is almost always there so that's a great thing to compliment her on and use as an example for the rest of the group. Talking to her about penguin is usually a great place to start to get to know her

Shari - Shari is so cool. She is **THE MOST MOTIVATED** out of everyone in Penguin Players. She can handle any solo or part you throw at her and is an awesome singer. Her solos never fail to bring the house down. She will learn her song and lines before you even get to her song. Encourage her along the way as she might get frustrated with little mistakes but you can trust her to be right on the money.

Scott - Scott is a tik tok dude. He is really funny and can handle moderate parts and some solo singing parts. Repetition is the key with Scott! Encourage him to add more inflection to his voice and emotion.

Ben - Ben is an awesome guy. He usually has smaller to moderate parts and can handle some small line solos. He likes to do accents with his roles. Joking around with him is a good way to bond.

Jenny - Jenny is a really hard worker. She learns her lines very early and tries very hard with everything. Sometimes it gets too much for her but just encourage her to keep going and remind her that she's doing a great job.

Jacob - Jacob is a really cool guy. He can handle a big part and solo and will do an amazing job. He doesn't need much special help when learning his songs; just help him find the right facial expressions to help sell his character. You can bond with him by talking about video games or Star Wars.

Tech Week

Tech week can be really stressful and it can feel like there's no way the show is going to happen or be good. Take a deep breath. It's going to be okay even if tech week makes it feel like it's not. There's this wonderful, mystical thing called "Penguin Magic" and it's real. It's when against all odds we come through with an amazing show seemingly out of nowhere. It's not out of nowhere though, because you and the rest of the creative team did an amazing job preparing the artists for the actual performance. That extra kick of adrenaline at show time does do wonders.

During tech week you'll want to do full runs of the show. Typically the Tuesday you'll work act one and the Thursday you'll work act two. On Friday there will be a longer rehearsal so you can have a dress rehearsal. Friday is when the microphones, costumes, and lights all come together and everyone gets a feel for how the show is really going to go.

Your job during tech week is to just help in whatever way you can. If you notice something weird, say something. Sit in the very front row of the auditorium and cue entrances and mouth the words at them (enunciate and smile REALLY BIG) so if they forget they have a safety net. You can also remind them to smile from there as well. If you're having issues hearing them remind them that the "deaf, blind, *insert adjective of what you need* Grandma" is sitting in the last row and desperately wants to understand what's happening. You can also go sit or stand in the back of the auditorium to see if you can hear them. In addition to all of that, at this point you can yell out corrections while things are happening. If you have something bigger you want to talk about, write it down and say it during notes (after the run the creative team gets a chance to give suggestions, corrections, etc.)

If there's time, pull people to work on individual trouble spots or ask for the chance to fix some funky stuff in bigger songs as well. It's all a balancing act and one little wrong thing in the music does not trump issues with the overall show. If they're making it through and not falling apart that's a huge victory. Fix what you can but accept what you can't change for what it is. Remember this is supposed to be fun!

During the Show

Congratulations! It's show day and you made it! It's a long day so grab some coffee to get your energy up. The first thing you're going to have to do is help set up whatever still needs to get done. Once costumes are on you're going to want to start putting on microphones to get ready for sound check. You may or may not have time to run a few more small sections, songs, or dances in the morning.

Closer to show time the cast will go into the dance studio to hang out while people start coming into the auditorium. Before the first show it's good to get a vocal warm up in. After that throw a dance party to get them hyped up!

SHOWTIME!!! You and the other creative team members will sit in the very front row and help direct them through the show. I've found it's incredibly helpful to mouth the words and cue entrances. It even helps to demonstrate how they should act during the song and to point at your face to get them to smile if they're not.

After the first show you'll get some lunch at a potluck provided by the parents. If there's something that went a little wonky you have a little bit of time to run it once more. After they've eaten, gotten back into costume, and put their microphones back on everyone comes back to the dance studio. This time, everyone sits in a big circle to go around and answer the question: "What does Penguin mean to you?" or "What was your favorite part about this semester in Penguin?". This is a very emotional time so make sure to bring the tissues.

Have fun! Penguin magic is real and everything you've done to get the cast to this point was worth it. The show will be great no matter what. Hiccups happen but as long as everyone is having fun you've succeeded. Take it all in and just enjoy the atmosphere and watch these amazing people do what they do best: perform.

Microphones

Microphones will be provided by Barb and Joe starting on the Friday of tech week. Here are a few things to remember about the microphones.

❖ Putting them on

- The wire should be plugged into the mic pack with the button facing forward, but check the prongs before putting it in.
 - Never force it! The prongs are fragile
- The pack should always be on their back and on the inside of wherever you hang it for safety meaning the clip is on the outside. The pack should be facing the body.
 - Men - typically on their belt or pants
 - Women - typically on their bra, tanktop, or pants
- The wire should be under their clothes and come up out of their neckline.
- Put the microphone on their right side (mentors stand on the left, this way you can't hear them feeding lines)
- Hook the wire over their right ear and tape it twice (cheek and neck)
 - Keep extra mic tape backstage in case it comes off during the show

❖ Battery Life

- To conserve battery life turn the microphones off if they're not using them until the show
- **DO NOT TURN THEM OFF MANUALLY DURING THE SHOW**
 - The sound guy will turn them on and off for you

❖ Mic Check

- Make sure you have a list of who is on which number mic and give it to the sound guy
- Have them each count to ten or say some lines to get a good volume for the microphone

❖ Who Gets Miced

- All artists
- Backstage music directors
- A mentor who sings really well (not necessary but helpful)
- The music director and mentors who sing well should sing only have their mics turned on for parts where everyone is singing

Tips and Tricks

- ❖ Rehearsing in the dance studio
 - I like to use the dance studio for learning new music or smaller group rehearsals
 - There's an upright piano in there that you can use
 - The speaker system requires a dongle if you have an iPhone
- ❖ Rehearsing in the theatre
 - Good for review and memory work
 - Backstage there is a closet (Barb and Joe have a key) with a keyboard in it. It's loud enough on its own without an amp if you just plug it in.
 - You can play music through the theatre's audio system (practice tracks first then make your way to performance tracks)
 - Put the lyric sheet up on the projector screen so they can stand without having to hold their binders
- ❖ Attention getter
 - If you can hear me clap once.....If you can hear me clap twice.....etc. (They respond great)
- ❖ Extra rehearsals
 - If an artist is struggling and you think it would be helpful for them to have extra time with you can ask them to come early or stay a little late to work with you
 - They may ask you for extra help as well
 - Set up a time where their mentor can come as well
 - Let Barb and Joe know so they can send an email to the artist's parents about the extra rehearsal
- ❖ Sound Guy
 - If Barb and Joe ask you to find the sound guy ask one of the recording majors
 - Give them a binder that has the script and star what to play when
 - For each song let him know who's mics have to be on
 - Give them the list of who's on what microphone
 - Make sure they have access to all of the songs
 - If any of them are edited give them the most current version
 - Don't forget to tell them about Don't Stop at the very end of the show
- ❖ Masks
 - Hopefully you never have to work with masks again but the pandemic isn't going anywhere anytime soon so masks are part of the job now
 - They're super hard to hear when you're singing to help them and you're wearing a mask so drop out sometimes so you can just listen
 - Ask Barb and Joe to get the clear masks as soon as possible so that you can see who's singing and who's not - it also helps them read your lips

❖ Meltdowns

- Typically creative team knows the artists better than the mentors especially towards the beginning of the semester
- If you see an artist leave part of the rehearsal looking upset give it a couple seconds then follow them out
- Ask what's going on and if there's anything you can do to help
- Sometimes they're just trying to see what they can get away with or they saw another artist leave so try and encourage them to get back to rehearsal as soon as possible

❖ Social Media

- It's up to you whether you want to let artists follow you on social media
- Some artists will want to talk to you all day everyday so keep that in mind before adding them back

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