

Sibelius 6 – A Tool for Choral Assessment

Edited by Joan Catoni Conlon, with text by Torquato Tasso, Claudio Monteverdi wrote a beautiful madrigal called *Ecco Mormorar L'Onde*. It is scored for SSATB and my auditioned A Cappella Choir will perform it this spring.

Ridge High School's A Cappella Choir meets as a credited course, zero-period on Monday nights from 7-8:30p. After three years of participation, students are eligible for Honors credit. Twice a year, I create learning CD's for their music using *PhotoScore Ultimate* and *Sibelius 6*. I also include solid recordings of all repertoire on their CD. Five student Section Leaders are responsible for one-hour sectionals each week for eight weeks. This permits us to come together on Monday nights without the extra responsibility of teaching notes.

This ensemble is tested individually on their music. In the past, I would announce the sections that would be tested and use rehearsal time to hear every member of the group. While it served the purpose of testing, this process ultimately chewed through a full rehearsal.

Last fall, I assigned testing outside of school to be recorded and submitted via YouTube. We created an account with a private password and students coordinated their schedules to meet with their quartet/quintet to sing and submit their testing assignments.

This spring, I am trying yet another approach to testing. Because I can mute a line through Sibelius, I have provided *Music minus One* tracks for each student (similar to the recording they hear when they audition for All-State or Region II Chorus). The first assignment was the above-mentioned madrigal.

In order to assess and grade them, I reduced the required pages of the score by 50% and cut and pasted each section onto a single sheet of paper. Once copied, I highlighted the voice part of the student I was about to observe.

With trusty red pen in hand, I was able to circle and mark improper pronunciation (their first assignment was pronunciation-only for testing), bad entrances, wrong pitches and faulty rhythms. There is space for me to comment, make suggestions and praise. I can monitor breath support and vocal technique as I watch them "perform". I think they prefer this type of testing although I have yet to gather information for a consensus.

While the learning curve of Sibelius 6 may be steep, I have found it very helpful as an aid to the accurate assessment of the members of my select choir. I think you may as well.

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