

# Dear Director,



“Dear Director” is a part-time writer for the River City Sound Chorus. She resides in “Lovely Lake Zurich”. While caring for her children and hubby, she also cares tremendously for each and every chorus member. Her column is intended to address common concerns and issues about One-on-One Evaluations in a humorous and non-threatening way. The characters are entirely fictional and any resemblance to real chorus members is purely coincidental. (However, the Dear Director, Joan Boutilier is a real person ... the infamous director of River City Sound!)



**Dear Director,**

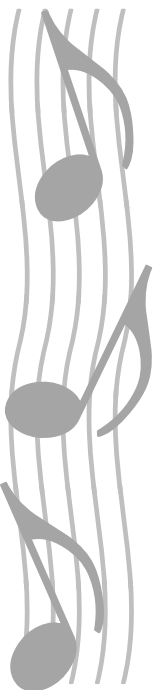
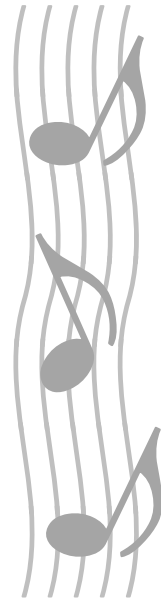
*Yikes! I signed up for a time to evaluate on January 27<sup>th</sup>, but I just found out that I won "Two Tickets to Georgia" for me and my hubby from WBBS radio station for that night! What do I do?*

*Helpless Betty in Belvidere*

**Dear Betty Honey,**

*Never fear! The most important rule to remember in this case is to speak with your section leader so she can help you arrange to evaluate at another time. But also keeping in mind the evaluation deadlines, dear. We'll soon be learning more new music, so don't delay! And please practice your songs while you have "Georgia On Your mind".*

*Your Understanding Dear Director in Lake Zurich*



**Dear Director,**

*I, too, signed up for an evaluation time on January 27<sup>th</sup>. I just heard that my friend Betty from Belvidere, must miss the evaluation that night. May I reschedule my appointment too, please? I was planning on watching American Idol on TV, it IS Wednesday after all. accompanied by Hot Teddy, I mean TODDY to ward off the sniffles that I feel coming already. You KNOW how my voice sounds when I am sniffing especially after coming to chorus the night before! In fact, "I Feel A Sneeze Coming On" already!*

*Slightly Sniffing in Shirland*

**Dear Sniffler,**

*NO! Take two Tylenol, tell Ted to take a hike, TIVO the TV show and "Take Another Guess" before asking Dear Director this kind of question in the future.*

*Your Not-So-Understanding Director in STORMY Lake Zurich*

**Dear Director,**

I get SO scared before I evaluate! In fact, sometimes I get so nervous that my vibrato wobbles, my teeth chatter and my knees knock while I'm singing ... it's almost as if "I Feel The Earth Move Under My Feet"! Just thinking about this makes my body break out in a cold sweat! I believe in this worthwhile program, but how can I control my nerves?!

**"All Shook Up" in Seward**

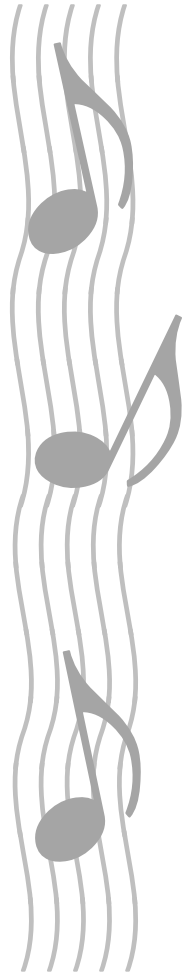
**Dear Shaky One,**

Dear Director knows this is easier said than done, dear, but please try to keep this all in perspective. First of all, nerves are normal. Shaking is normal. Vibrato is normal. It all sounds and feels worse to you than it does to the people listening. And remember, dear, that the people listening had to do exactly what you did, but in front of me, the Dear Dreaded Director, you know, so nobody is more empathetic than they are.

A well-known red-headed 3-time Queen of Harmony taught us, dear, that preparation is the name of the game for warding off those nasty nerves. Use all the tools your section leader and director have provided to you for learning your music before you evaluate. You have Dear Director's curiosity peaked, though dear. Are the nerves caused partly because you didn't get around to practicing your music before your evaluation session? Dear Director does realize that occasionally life gets in the way of our hobby, but where there's a will there's a way, as they say.

Finally, keep in mind that 40+ other people are doing what you're doing and when we're all done with this part of our preparation we'll be "Swingin' on a Star" in Seattle!

**Your Empathetic Director in Calm Lake Zurich**



**Dear Director,**

When I sing for evaluation, I get all "WGLY" inside and out. "My old friends tell me I'm not grieving" but it sure feels like I have something to cry about. This must not be good for my mental health! By the way, in a chorus of 40 women, do the judges actually hear JUST me anyway? You can trust me to know my notes and words, honestly, so how about if I tape on the risers sometime before we go to Seattle? In fact, I'd be more than happy to evaluate myself and report my perfection to my section leader.

**Going Crazy in Cherry Valley**

**Oh Dear Crazy Girl!**

Thank you for giving me the best chuckle Dear Director has had in months! You ARE just joking, right dear? Do you really want DD to answer your silly question? Trust, dear? Perfection? Even I, the most perfectly crazy Dear Director, makes note mistakes! I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. In fact, even members with shiny hats make mistakes. It's also true that wrong notes CAN be heard, dear ... have you ever heard the expression "muddy" or "noisy", or to coin a recent judgey phrase, "stinky chords"? If not, just ask one of the ladies who stand next to you to explain these terms. Oh, speaking of those gentle ladies standing next to you? If you ask them the questions you just asked of me? You'll find that "After the Laughter Comes Tears".

**Still Laughin' in Lake Zurich**

*(with potentially one less member on contest stage in Seattle)*

**Dear Director,**

I have been a model chorus member. I learn my music, I sign up for "evaluations" -- even though that word is "drivin' me crazy" -- I keep my appointments, I follow up by taping again and correcting my notes, I keep in touch with my section leader when schedule conflicts occur, but I am STILL making a few musical mistakes. The harder I try, the worse it seems to be getting. What if I don't pass my songs? Can I still sing at Regional? International? Sweet III? Help! I'm working very hard, but the pressure is just so great!

**Passionate Polly from Pecatonica**

**Dear Practically Perfect Polly,**

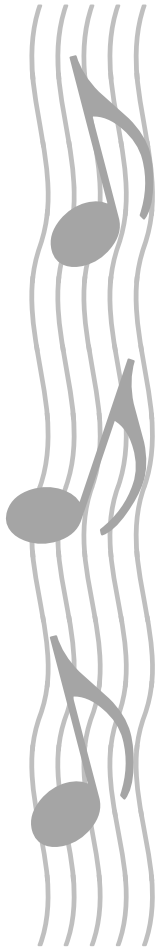
You ARE a model chorus member. DD is confident that you are doing all the right things and it sounds like you are still making progress! Please be reassured that Dear Director has never asked someone not to sing with the chorus because of one or two wrong notes. Continue working with your section leader and "Chances Are" you'll be happy with the results of your efforts. To answer your questions about singing on a show or in a contest, here is a checklist which Dear Director considers when deciding on who qualifies to perform.

Did the singer:

1. prepare her music?
2. set up an evaluation date?
3. attend her evaluation?
4. do follow-up evaluations, if necessary?
5. sing songs with a high degree of note/word/breath accuracy, so as not to be a liability to the sound?
6. pass a visual evaluation

Hope this makes sense to you, but if not, please speak with your section leader.

**Your Pleased Director--Person in Sunny Lake Zurich**



**Dear Director,**

A little bird told me -- her name is Polly -- that the last time we evaluated she was STILL working on some notes on her contest uptune past the deadline. What's with that? I have a rough life and feel like I have to "Climb Every Mountain" to pass MY songs.

**Irritated in Irene**

**Dear Ms. Irritation,**

Go have a cuppa "Java Jive" and mind your own bees wax!

**Livid DD in Lake Zurich**

**Dear Director,**

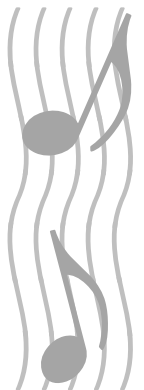
Evaluation? What evaluation? Dates? What dates? Section Leader? "Miss Otis Regrets" that she don't know nothin' 'bout no evaluations!

**Head Wrapped in a Blanket, but I Mean Well in Winnebago**

**Dear JAWJABBUNWUN,**

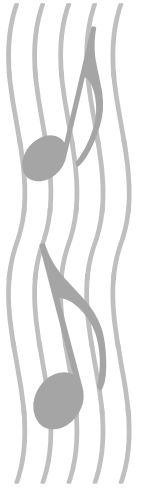
First of all, that's a most unusual name, dear! Did you inherit this name (and personality trait) from a family member? May I borrow it for vocal warm ups sometime?

Now, dear, to answer you question ... WHAT CHORUS DO YOU SING WITH?!!???!  
Ahemmmmm. Excuuuse me, Dear Director is befuddled and beside herself!



Dear confused member, please do your Dear Director a large, most helpful favor. Keep in touch with one of the following newsy things: e-mail, Yahoo Group, Harmon-E-News, chorus business meetings, your telephone and answering machine, or hook up with someone like "Irritated in Irene" who seems to know the inner happenings of everyone in the chorus. Or may I even suggest that you "Sit Right Down and Write Yourself a Letter" right now with all the dates, phone numbers, and your calendar next to you.

*Your Director (remember who that is, dear?)  
in Lake Zurich (that's near Chicago, dear!)*



**Dear Director,**

Last time I evaluated I felt I really had my notes, words and breaths nailed down! When I sang in my quartet, I had only 2 note errors in the contest uptune. I sang them again for my section leader on a tape the following week and I still couldn't get them right! I'm pretty sure I would have passed more quickly if only I could have sung for Easy Anna, rather than Picky Petunia. Nothing against Petunia, but she does have a reputation as being stricter than ANY of the other section leaders in the whole chorus! Plus, she and I had a teeny weeny disagreement about 10 years ago and I think she still holds that against me. PLUS, I swear that I only "bent" the pitch on one of those notes ... couldn't she tell what I meant to sing? It seems like "It Don't Mean A Thing" to her that I pass! PLEASE give me Easy Anna this time!!!

**Wishing to Switch in South Beloit**

**Dear Switcher Wisher,**

I'd like to say "your wish is my command", but that is usually not possible, dear. Everyone has her favorite section leader, just as everyone has her own preferences for dentists, but the fact remains that both section leaders and dentists occasionally must deliver a little pain in order to keep us all in good health! Rest assured that your section leader has been selected not only for her music ear, but for her people skills, even though she may not feel like "My Buddy" at times. Also, she and all section leaders have been trained by myself, your DD, before evaluation begins so that there is as much consistency as possible within our team.

However, don't despair! Problems do occasionally arise and can be resolved by a simple discussion with your section leader. All section leaders are encouraged to speak to myself, your DD, if issues arise. Let me also add that in the past, my experience has been that often, but not always, by the time the concern goes all the way thru the chain, the notes in question could have been fixed by the singer by simple "homework", dear. Everyone is encouraged to keep their eye on the music for the good of the sound of the chorus! By the way, dear, PP is not Karnac the Great, and she can only evaluate what she hears, not what you intended to sing! I have heard that Picky Petunia is often quite compassionate and will do everything she can to offer assistance while cleaning up those pesky pitch problems!

**Your Pitch Protector and Dear Director in Lovely Lake Zurich**

