

SINGSTRONG CHICAGO: ARRANGING WITH FACE

(or "What we wish we knew when we started arranging.")

- **The Basics**
 - Music Theory
 - Understanding chords and voice leading
 - Knowledge of rhythms
 - Effective use of color notes
 - Musical Instincts
 - Inspiration
 - Improvisation
 - Software
 - Sibelius (\$600 or \$20/mo)
 - Sibelius First (\$120)
 - Finale (\$600)
 - Noteflight (Free!)
 - MuseScore (Free!)

- **Before You Start:**
 - Choose the right song (Arranging for the soul of the group)
 - Does the song fit the style, mission, and culture of your group?
 - Is the group open to learning it?
 - Do you have a soloist in mind?
 - Beyond ability to sing the song (range), do they have the potential to emotionally connect with the song?
 - Are they in line with your vision of your arrangement?
 - How does this compute with your groups audition process?
 - Is the song musically interesting
 - Melody/harmony
 - Chord progression
 - Rhythms
 - Peaks and valleys
 - In your mind, is the song Acappellacable®?
 - Can it work for *singers*
 - If the process of translating it from instruments to voices loses the feel of the original, is that your intention, or does your arrangement support it.
 - Know your singers!
 - What is your alto 2/bass's (or bass section's) lowest comfortable/audible pitch?
 - Will your low alto 2/bass be amplified?
 - How high do your tenors/sopranos sing falsetto/head voice? What is the timbre up there?
 - How high do your tenors/baritones/altos sing in chest voice? What is the timbre up there?
 - How does your members' range affect dynamics?

- **How will you approach the song? [Choose Your Own Adventure]**
 - “Literal” Approach
 - Pompeii and Uptown Funk
 - Listen to the song a million times.
 - Have the song to reference while you arrange
 - In iTunes, Command-Option-M for mini player
 - For the most part, match the tempo, form, chord progression, rhythms, etc. of the original.
 - Example... Face - Pompeii and Uptown Funk
 - Real song audio vs. Face version
 - Your main limitation is the number of voices you have to work with. Prioritize the most important features of the song to include in your arrangement.
 - “Interpretive” Approach
 - Choose a song you’re already very familiar with
 - ...then PUT IT AWAY
 - Recreate the song from the ground up
 - Be flexible with tempo, feel, chord structure, harmonies, key. etc.
 - You can always go back and change it if you don’t like it.
 - An “easy” way to reinterpret a song is to do a mash-up/medley (Sounds of Silence/Hey You)
 - Don’t get carried away, and try to have the songs make sense *together*. Some connecting threads beyond chord progression.
 - Reinvent the song! (The House of the Rising Sun)
 - Drastically change a song by changing the meter, style, tempo, format, feel (straight/swing).
 - Make sure it’s intentional, and your arrangement supports your intentions.
 - What's your plan -- A Cappella Group vs. Vocal Band style
 - A Cappella is closer to choral
 - Can be amplified or unamplified
 - May or may not use vocal percussion
 - Ooo, Oh, Ah, shoo doop, Bop, (jazz scat syllables) repeating/echoing text from the song, etc.
 - Straight No Chaser, The Real Group, Take 6, Swingle Singers
 - Vocal Band: Emulating rock instruments (not necessarily mimicking or simulating)
 - Always amplified
 - Hard consonant or glottal onset are more prominent in your arrangement
 - More playful and extreme with tone, timbre, and color of the voice
 - Order of importance in the arrangement and the mix... Solo (and harmonies), rhythm section (VP/Bass), background parts.
 - Face, Home Free, House Jacks, The Exchange, Urban Method

- **Tips!**

- Consider solo auditions *before* the arrangement is complete so you'll know who you're arranging for on all parts.
- Consider bringing an incomplete first draft into your group while still in progress (one verse, one chorus, and/or sections you're not sure about) to see what's working and what's not.
- Consider recording all parts of the arrangement yourself in GarageBand to hear what's working.
 - A great tool to get a sense of the feel of a song (better than notation software playback)
 - Some arrangers choose to arrange strictly by recording themselves instead of notating the parts.
- Don't be afraid to change keys from the original to fit the soloist.
- Early in the learning process of a new arrangement, encourage your group to have an open and receptive attitude to your initial vision.
 - If it's not working, adapt, react, re-adapt, and act. (or cut your losses)
- Your syllable selection might be a great "plan A", but stay open to other ideas, and be open to experimenting in rehearsals
- Notate the melody so you can see/hear how the melody line informs the chords you're using.
- Consider distributing practice tracks to your group members days before a rehearsal to encourage preparation and minimize note-plunking (unless you're a school... then please learn how to sight read!)

- **Finishing Touches**

- Rehearsal marks at obvious seams (in Sibelius, Command-R)
- Slurs on sustained vowels over multiple pitches
- Intuitive grouping of 8th/16th notes
- Make the score readable for your ensemble
 - Formatting (play with margins for paper vs. iPad)
 - Staff size (In Sibelius, no smaller than 5.0)
 - Tempo marking, rhythmic feel
 - Dynamics

www.facevocalband.com

www.stephenrossmusic.com

PRESENTERS:

Stephen Ross

Aside from singing counter-tenor with Face for the last twelve years, Stephen has also been one of Face's predominant arrangers and songwriters. Stephen started singing in the Colorado Children's Chorale in 4th grade and continued performing in choirs throughout high school. He received his degree in Music Education with a Vocal Emphasis from the University of Colorado, where he founded the a cappella group *BufferZone* where he was the president and music director for four years.

He is the former choir director and Fine Arts Department Chairperson at Skyline High School in Longmont, CO, where he began his teaching career in 2003 and left after the spring of 2015 to pursue Face full time. Stephen has conducted multiple honor choirs and adjudicated choral, jazz, and a cappella festivals throughout the state.

Stephen enjoys spending time with his lovely wife Jenny and his two daughters. For more information on his arrangements, check out his music site at www.stephenrossmusic.com.

Ryan Driver

Driver started singing at an early age and continued throughout high school and college, and was the president of the University of Colorado's *In the Buff*. He joined an early incarnation of Face in 2003, but took a hiatus from Face in 2004 to tour the east coast full-time with Washington DC-based vocal group *Almost Recess*. Upon his return in 2005, Driver took on the role of business manager, arranger, and power-tenor. He has twice won Best Arrangement awards at the Harmony Sweepstakes international a cappella competition.

Outside of Face, Driver works as a sound engineer in Denver with Sonic Audio Productions, where he records and produces many local college and professional a cappella groups.

Face

Face is an internationally acclaimed all-vocal rock band from Boulder, Colorado who have been captivating audiences for nearly fifteen years with their infectious energy punctuated by an endearing love of performance. "Blending modern popular tunes with complex harmonies, brilliant beat-box rhythms and superb singing...Face take their audience on a musical journey, and it's fantastic fun." (*FringeReview.co.uk*)

Performing over 100 shows per year around the world, the band has also competed on the hit NBC series "The Sing-Off," headlined at Edinburgh, Scotland's prestigious Festival Fringe, as well as Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas, and has opened for legendary performers such as Jon Bon Jovi, Manhattan Transfer, Culture Club & Boy George, Home Free, The Real Group, Rick Springfield, and Robin Thicke.

Critics and fans world-wide rave about Face's stage presence and performance as much as they do the music. "[Face] communicates with a directness and warmth – perhaps America at its best." (*Norbottens Kuriren*, Sweden) "An instant connection – twinkling eyes suggesting a mischievous love of what was about to happen." (*FringeReview.co.uk*) "A true American heartland sound." (*Recorded A Cappella Review Board*)