

Deke Sharon Workshops

All workshops can be custom tailored to the specific needs, interests and demographics of the attendees.

Masterclasses:

(length varies depending on number of groups and songs)

The most popular workshop format is the Masterclass, in which a group performs for all the attendees, and then I work with the group.

All styles and levels of groups are welcome to perform as part of the masterclass, as the topics covered relate to groups and singers universally, and I often ask a group to sing a song that isn't working well for them, so we can dig in and see what the challenges are and how to overcome them.

Usually 20-30 minutes per group is best.

Seminar Topics:

(usually approx. 1 hour each)

History of A Cappella, 1900-Present: From the earliest recording of vocal harmony to Pentatonix a look (and listen to) the styles and traditions that have shaped contemporary a cappella current sound and style, including doo wop, gospel, South African mbube, vocal jazz and more (this seminar requires audio playback: speakers and an 1/8th inch cable)

The Heart of Vocal Harmony: From my book of the same name, this process, drawing upon diverse fields such as psychology and theater, teaches directors and singers how to get vocal harmony groups of all ages and sizes to perform each song in their repertoire with genuine unified emotion.

Singing Instruments: 10 years ago, a cappella singing was mostly “bum” and “doo.” Now, people sound like drums, guitars, horns, and a myriad of other instruments. Learn how to use one or many voices to sound like instruments and work them into your arrangements. Very popular, can be combined with:

Beginning Vocal Percussion: One of the most notable elements of contemporary a cappella, vocal percussion has become an essential element in presenting a dynamic, current sound with nothing but voices. Learn the fundamentals of this skill, weaving together bass drum, snare and high hat to provide a compelling groove, and begin to explore some additional sounds like cymbals, shakers, and wood blocks.

Expert Level Music Director's Toolkit: My best tips, for music directors who are ready to take their group's sound to the next level. Learn how to harness the physics of sound to build your toolkit, make your group's vocal textures sound more instrumental, increase success with tuning, blend and rhythmic accuracy, turn a wooden choral melody into a smooth pop phrase, and so on.

Close Harmony Blend/Improving Tuning: As singers, we all want the best blend possible. But how? By looking at the physics of the four dimensions that define all sound (pitch, duration, loudness and timbre), learn how to hear what is hindering the alignment of each harmony, and how to improve your group's blend. From an understanding of the fundamental elements of sound and how they combine and align into a perfectly tuned chord through a series of exercises, learn how you and your group can maximize your sound without compromising the energy and impact of your performance.

Contemporary A Cappella Arranging in 10 Steps: Contemporary a cappella has been around for thirty years, bringing a dynamic and rhythmic sound and style that differentiates it from barbershop, doo wop, close harmony, and other a cappella styles. Learn how to create a great contemporary a cappella arrangement using a tried and true 10 step formula.

Advanced A Cappella Arranging: There are few places in the world to study music arranging, and even fewer that offer any instruction on arranging a cappella. This seminar will offer ideas and discussion topics to further develop the skills of advanced a cappella arrangers, as well as provide direct feedback on attendee arrangements (can be combined with Arranging Critique)

Arranging Mashups: Popularized in the Pitch Perfect film franchise, mashups are more than medleys, as the songs are interwoven, requiring careful consideration of tempo, key, theme, melodic shape, etc. Learn how some of your favorite mashups were built, and learn how to create them yourself from scratch, even when seemingly impossible.

Arranging Critique: This is an opportunity for arrangers of all levels to bring a copy of their arrangement to be sung by the seminar attendees and then discussed and critiqued in an open forum.

Singing Games and Improvisation: Vocal music isn't all about arrangements and vocal parts; Most world cultures have a tradition of a cappella singing that relies on nothing but one's ear and voice. Learn the fundamentals of improvising pop songs, how to sing a "circle song," and how to improvise music without any rules or boundaries.

Sometimes used as warmups, sometimes used to help build focus or musical precision, sometimes used to help build confidence in improvisation, this seminar teaches a number of different singing games that can be enjoyed by all ages.

Development of Style: You've sung the standards and know many other group's biggest songs. Now what? Learn how to take your group's unique strengths and interests and build them into a style that's all your own. We'll address musical style as well as visual and performance style.

Managing Rehearsals: The nitty gritty issues that sometimes make you crazy: teaching notes vs. using learning tracks, how many songs per rehearsal, attendance management, sectionals vs. group rehearsal, number of rehearsals (regular and before major gigs), how much warm-up time, what kinds of warm-ups, when do you allow mistakes to happen and when do you stop and fix them, rehearsal discipline (use of other leaders as "enforcers" for rehearsal discipline, and balancing fun and musicality.

Performance Presentation: A great vocal music performance is about so much more than just singing. How do you greet the audience? What are you wearing? How do you move during songs? How's your show paced? This seminar will address the aspects of performing on stage besides singing and will increase your and the audience's enjoyment of every concert.

Composition: Many people write music, but few do it with an understanding of the strengths and challenges of an a cappella ensemble. Learn the fundamentals of songwriting, and how to craft a piece of music that will make the most of your "instrument:" the human voice.

Music Direction: The role of director is the most important and influential within any a cappella group. It combines elements of musician, leader, organizer, consensus builder and conductor. Learn techniques and tips that will help you maximize your rehearsal time and minimize friction between singers.

Group Dynamics: The loudmouth. The quiet one. The organizer. The flake. Using materials and techniques developed for the corporate world, learn how groups interact, and how your ensemble can understand each other, minimize friction, and work together in harmony to create harmony.

A Cappella Business and Management: We all wish we could just sing, have concerts fall in our laps and money show up in our bank account. This seminar will cover a wide range of topics that will help you streamline your business and focus on your craft, including legal structure of your group, leadership, division of responsibilities, benefits and problems having an agent and/or manager, etc.

Starting A Group: There's no need to learn the hard way! From conceptualization through your first performance, we can tell you the best way to find members, run auditions, structure your group, build a quick repertoire, and start performing. For all ages and levels including scholastic groups, pro groups and community choirs.

Producing an Album: Nowadays people are making chart-topping and award-winning recordings on their laptop in their own homes. From pre-production to recording, editing (tuning and rhythmic alignment), mixing, mastering, and manufacturing, learn how to make a professional vocal music recording.

A Cappella Promotional Kit: It doesn't matter how talented your group is: without the proper press materials and audio/video demos, you won't be able to get gigs or media recognition. Follow these specific guidelines and you'll have a set of materials that will impress even the most jaded promoter or newspaper editor.

Introduction to Contemporary A Cappella: What is "Contemporary A Cappella," and where did it come from? Learn about the current scene by tracing the roots of pop a cappella from chant and madrigals through a dizzying array of traditions including barbershop and doo-wop, with a look at how all previous styles have influenced the contemporary sound.

Solo Delivery: Singing a solo is more than just technique. It involves an understanding of the material, emotional commitment, the support of your ensemble. Bring the lyrics for a solo to this workshop, and we'll analyze, discuss, and practice being "in the moment" when you sing.

Sound Check & Basic Tech: Too often a great a cappella group's performance is hindered by imperfect amplification. Learn the basics of microphones, monitors, sound boards and EQ's, and how to avoid the most common pitfalls and have a productive sound check, resulting in a great amplified performance.

Competition Tips: From the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella and The Harmony Sweepstakes to local festivals, one of the best ways to make a name for your group is to compete. Find out what many groups before you learned the hard way: how to put on a great performance during a competition, gain new fans, and make the most of your experience.

Singing by the Numbers: Wanna learn how to sing a cappella harmony without any sheet music? Using the diatonic scale ("do-re-mi"), learn how to use your ear and some very basic music theory to create interesting background parts to a wide variety of popular songs.

Staging and Movement: Learn the basic principles of how you should position your singers on stage to maximize their tuning, rhythmic unity and connection with the audience, as well as the core principles of great a cappella choreography like you've seen in Pitch Perfect and The Sing Off.

Vocal Technique for A Cappella Singers: Yes, there are some principles that hold regardless of the style of music you are singing, but there are some things that apply specifically to an a cappella ensemble. Learn best techniques for singing off-mic, on-mic, and when you want to sound like an instrument.

Careers in A Cappella: There are dozens of job opportunities, both part and full time, for lovers of a cappella that will keep them engaged in the a cappella community, either singing or behind the scenes. Hear a list of these careers, what they entail, and words of wisdom from the biggest names in vocal harmony (taken from my book "So You Want To Sing A Cappella").

The Future of A Cappella: What are the biggest trends? Where are the biggest growth markets? In which fields can young professional members of the community find job opportunities? This discussion of the 30,000 foot view of the domestic and global vocal music scene, from prehistoric times beyond the present, is intended both for well-informed insiders and casual fans.

Introduction to Pop and Jazz Choirs: a look at the sound and style of what makes a choir different from small ensemble, with video/audio and sheet music examples from groups around the world.

Question and Answer: Often the last seminar of the day, this session is an open question and answer period that gives attendees an opportunity to raise issues and topics that are of interest to their group, or that tie together multiple concepts that were raised earlier in the day.

For more information, contact:

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