

Total Vocal Seminars

By Deke Sharon of The House Jacks

For the past ten years, Total Vocal has organized and presented some of the world's largest a cappella conventions and seminars, including the International A Cappella Summit (for professional and scholastic groups), Spring Thing (for college singers and groups), and Harmony High (for High school directors, singers, and ensembles).

In addition to these public events, we've held numerous private workshops and seminars in Europe and North America.

About the Presenter

The House Jack's (A Rock Band Without Instruments) Deke Sharon founded and is the current manager of Total Vocal. He leads the Ultimate A Cappella Arranging Service, produces cappella events, publishes songbooks, and teaches seminars and private lessons, known as Total Vocal. To find out about more of where and when you can receive seminars, contact Deke Sharon's representative, Neon Entertainment at (716)-634- 5998 or info@neon-entertainment.com. For more information also go to the website totalvocal.com and continue to read on to learn about the classes and techniques and more about Total Vocal.

We custom tailor all our seminars and workshops to the specific needs, interests and demographic of the attendees. We've worked with choral conductors, pop stars, high school singers, recreational vocalists, college music majors, fans, and everything in between. You tell us who's coming, and we'll make sure our presentations are interesting and informative for everyone involved.

When you choose to sponsor a Total Vocal seminar, you have your choice of the topics below. We suggest that every event include at least 1 hour of Masterclass, as it's a perfect catalyst for discussion in a variety of the workshop topics, and proves to be extremely entertaining as well as informative.

Masterclasses:

(1-3 hours in 1 hour segments)

Our most popular workshop format is the Masterclass, which we include in each of our events. In it, a group performs for all the attendees, and then our clinician works 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. We can work with more than one group in a masterclass session, provided we have a minimum of 1/2 hour with each group.

Seminar Topics:

(1/2 to 2 hours each)

We offer a wide variety of seminar topics that address the musical and non-musical aspects of a cappella. Feel free to choose a combination of any of these topics, and we'll work with you to put them in a cohesive order, and choose the most appropriate lengths for each:

Contemporary A Cappella Arranging in 10 Steps:

Contemporary a cappella has been around for over a decade, resulting in 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.

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.

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.

Development of Style:

So 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. Before you know it other groups will be singing your songs!

Performance Presentation:

A vocal music performance is about 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 both your and the audiences enjoyment of a concert.

Composition:

Many people write music, but few do it with an understanding of the strengths and challenges of an a cappella group. 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 a 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.

Singing Games:

Sometimes used as warm-ups, 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.

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.

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 your ear and your voice. In this seminar you'll learn the fundamentals of improvising pop songs, how to sing a "circle song," and how to improvise a piece of music without any rules or boundaries.

Producing an Album:

From pre production to recording to mixing, to mastering and manufacturing, learn how to make a professional vocal music recording.

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.

A Cappella Promo Kit:

It doesn't matter how talented your group is: without the proper press kit and audio (or video) demo, you won't be able to get gigs or media recognition. Follow these specific guidelines and you'll have a kit 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 barbershop music through doo-wop, and comparing both styles to the contemporary sound.

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 symbols, shakers, and wood blocks.

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.

Close Harmony Blend:

As singers, we all want the best blend possible. But how? By looking at the 4 elements of sound (pitch, duration, loudness and timbre), discover how you can improve your group's blend.

Competition Tips:

The International Collegiate A Cappella Competition. The Harmony Sweepstakes. It seems that one of the best ways to make a name for yourself in the a cappella community is to compete. Find out what many groups before you learned the hard way: how to put on a great performance during a competition.

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.