

Singing Smart Baritone

All four parts singing in the BBS style are required to master a number of skills in common. Among those skills are:

- accuracy
- synchronization...which would include
 - well-defined rhythms
 - complete understanding of the phrasing and its internal rhythms
 - rhythmic breathing
- balance and coning
- the ability to create and maintain overtone quality (ring) in the sound
- resonance appropriate to the ensemble sound, including
 - the ability to manage a register break without disturbing the horizontal flow of the vocal line
 - the ability to smoothly execute the vocal color plan (textures)
 - well-formed and matched word sounds

Having achieved all of the above, baritones are still left with some unique challenges.

The baritone is the only harmony part with a distinctly *special relationship to the lead*. These two parts share exactly the same range and are the entire middle of every chord (with the exception of tenor below lead). That knowledge leads us to the need for sharing the exact same singing space as the lead. Many baritones believe that they share the responsibility for the depth of the ensemble sound with the basses. Actually, this responsibility is shared by the bass and whichever of the two middle parts is lower.

The baritone, like all the harmony parts, should strive to *sing her vocal line with melodic confidence*. She should always be aware of unusual intervals, whether large, ascending, bizarre (frequently heralded by accidentals) or any combination of these circumstances. If these unusual demands are not made a smooth part of the baritone's vocal line, there can easily be a loss of horizontal flow and singing space, frequently resulting in synchronization errors and tuning errors.

The baritone should *know the lead part almost as well as her own*. This will result in an increased ability to weave her sound with the lead into a solid unit that then becomes much easier to balance and cone.

The baritone needs to be *alert for opportunities to enhance the vocal relationship with each of the other parts*. She should look for:

- **major seconds:** these should be sung with a vocal approach that varies with the part she is paired with, matching the vowel, volume and singing space of that part
- **successive chords where the bari and lead swap the same notes** back and forth (e.g.: “Somewhere Over the Rainbow”). Each of the chords (lead/bari) in this kind of vocal line should sound/tune exactly the same.
- **opportunities to use her register break** (assuming she has one) **to advantage**, allowing the natural lightness of head register to assist in balance/coning issues when above the lead and at all time resisting the urge to take chest register inappropriately above her register break

The ideal baritone:

- has a head register that equals her chest register in strength, flexibility and resonance
- maintains vocal flexibility under all circumstances
- realizes the need for constant vocal energy
- knows that she plays an important part in the successful execution of all artistic aspects of any and every song
- is a fearless harmony singer who wouldn't trade places with any other part!