

How effective are practice tapes?

0 Definitions

I am interested in the *effectiveness* of different kinds of practice tape. I say that one practice tape A is more *effective* than practice tape B if A helps you learn the music faster than does B.

Some choir directors present their chors with what I call a *uniform* practice tape, that is a tape of a performance in which all voice parts are equally balanced. By contrast the Choraline group sells what I call an *enhanced* practice tape, one in which one voice is played louder than the three others. Their success with this product suggests that the enhanced tape is the more effective. This applies to the pieces for which Choraline have already created these enhanced practice tapes. Even so thes tapes have to be paid for so immediately we ask

Does the benefit of the Choraline practice tape outweigh the cost of buying it?

In our case, we are singing pieces which are not covered by Choraline. The question is therefore whether it is worthwhile creating enhanced practice tapes for these pieces.

2 A pragmatic approach

I propose that we give each singer two practice tapes for each new piece of music, a uniform one and an enhanced one. Then let them use whichever they find the more helpful. Later on we may want to find out if one is more popular than the other.

3 Economics

I know that the enhanced practice tape costs more to produce than the uniform one. If we find that singers prefer the enhanced version then we have an economic question to answer, namely

*Does the benefit of the enhanced type
outweigh the cost of producing it?*

As often happens the benefits accrue to one group and the cost is paid by another group. Here the benefits accrue to the individual singers whereas the cost is paid by the maker of the enhanced tape. Still in our case the enhanced tape can be made free by a volunteer (me).

4 Summary

We've described an informal study to find whether it is worthwhile to create enhanced practice tapes. The study needs a volunteer technician to create the enhanced practice tapes and volunteer singers to use them.