

Chanticleer, Youth, and the Choral Art

TEACHER NOTES

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the role of education in a professional performing organization.
- Develop ways to sustain educational initiatives in an arts organization.
- Analyze survey data and suggest improvements to educational programs.

Topics For Discussion

Education at Chanticleer

Chanticleer is a GRAMMY® award-winning all-male vocal ensemble. Like many arts organizations, it endeavors to use its roster of artistic talent to teach the next generation of performers and listeners, who will hopefully sustain the choral art. Education efforts have been chiefly directed at high school students. The case explains that Chanticleer would provide master classes and workshops by request before a more dedicated education program emerged under the leadership of President and General Director Christine Bullin, beginning in 1999.

- The Singing in the Schools (SITS) program dominated Chanticleer's educational efforts from 1986 to around 2000. How did opportunities emerge for instruction? What could students expect from a workshop with Chanticleer? How did members of the ensemble interact with students? Who led these educational sessions? Ask students to evaluate the success of SITS, from what can be gathered in the case.
- What steps did Christine take at Chanticleer to institutionalize education? Ask students to articulate why they think education was a priority under her watch.
- In 2000, Chanticleer launched the inaugural Bay Area Youth Choral Festival, an annual daylong event organized by Chanticleer's director of education. The festival was by invitation only and featured some of the strongest choral programs in the Bay Area. What was the format of the festival and in what ways did it echo formats found in SITS?
 - ♦ The selection process for the Youth Choral Festival was competitive in some ways and even-handed in others. Solicit student comments on how Chanticleer arranged the annual invitations to choirs and their directors.

- ♦ Especially at the high school level, many choral festivals feature adjudication of performances. How did Chanticleer's Music Director, Joseph Jennings, work to avoid this? What effect can readers of this case study anticipate from his philosophy?

Extending Education Programs

The arrival of Ben Johns as Chanticleer's director of education in 2006 brought the office to even higher levels and solidified the organization's commitment to youth and the choral art. He recommended the idea of a nationalized Youth Choral Festival to begin in 2010 and take place every five years. He further organized the LAB Choir and Skills/LAB for Chanticleer during his tenure.

- The first National Youth Choral Festival attracted some 400 students from around the country in commemoration of a decade of Chanticleer's youth choral festivals. How did the format of this four-day festival differ from the youth choral festivals only featuring select Bay Area choirs?
 - ♦ While invitations to choirs for the Bay Area Youth Choral Festival were annual and "by invitation only," the National Youth Choral Festival was to be presented every five years and open to all young singers nationwide. Ask students about the implications of the timing and the nature of the invitations. Did Chanticleer strike a good balance in these areas?
 - ♦ Although a fee or tuition structure was not broached in the case as it relates to the Bay Area Youth Choral Festival or its national equivalent, invite students to propose ways of arranging fees according to Christine Bullin's general philosophy of supporting education within Chanticleer. Is it reasonable to expect that a festival might pay for itself in the future?
- For the 2010 National Youth Choral Festival, Ben Johns recruited some high school age singers to assist as a test choir for choral directing workshops offered as part of the festival. This "Lab Choir," incidentally sharing the initials of Chanticleer's founder Louis A. Botto, would have a life after the festival as a regular training group of outstanding local young singers. Singers were drawn from Bay Area high school programs with which Chanticleer already had strong relationships.
 - ♦ What were the goals of the LAB Choir and how was the schedule arranged to accommodate student participants? How was the LAB Choir deployed in the community?
 - ♦ What was the cost structure of the LAB Choir program? How was it consonant with Christine's view of how education fit into Chanticleer's operating budget? Discuss with students other ways of sustaining support for the LAB Choir and the education office more generally at Chanticleer.
 - ♦ Ben directed the LAB Choir in his tenure as director of education. Presumably, a future director of education would not be able to direct a choir at this level. Should conducting the choir be a job requirement of the director of education? What other options are available for these responsibilities?

- Riding on the success of the LAB Choir, Ben recommended a one-week summer camp-type program, which would become known as Skills/LAB. Targeting young singers, Skills/LAB was open to anyone between the age of 14 and 20 who had interest in the choral art. What was the impetus for Skills/LAB, and what further barriers to entry were removed by Chanticleer in this one-week arrangement? How was Skills/LAB structured relative to other workshops presented in the case? Debate the merits of this program versus others in Chanticleer's portfolio at this point.

Survey Data and Educational Improvements

As Chanticleer's president and general director, Christine was intent on discovering what the education programs offered the organization in return. She readily valued the social benefits of training young singers, but remained curious as to how the growth of the LAB Choir and Skills/LAB could ultimately benefit Chanticleer. These and other education programs generated minimal revenue for the organization and were therefore almost entirely supported by grants and individual donors. As grantors continue to press arts organizations to prove outcomes for their investment, ways of measuring program effectiveness have become essential. Ben organized a survey that took place over the course of four years as a step toward capturing the value of the programs in place at Chanticleer.

- **Appendix 1** reveals selected questions and answers from the 357 respondents to the survey on master classes, which includes Youth Choral Festivals. What is the balance of quantitative and qualitative data shown? Apart from basic demographic data, what questions could supplement the survey? What feedback from students is most helpful to the director of education? To the president and general director?
- **Appendix 2** similarly shows select material from the 207 responses received from LAB participants, whether LAB Choir or Skills/LAB. Again, solicit questions that could be added to this survey to strengthen it. What feedback from those surveyed is actionable for the director of education and for the president and general director?
- What kinds of measures could students devise if neither of these surveys had been proposed?
- The case concludes with Ben scheduling his annual summer meeting with Christine, which will include discussing the results of the four-year survey. Ask students to develop an outline of key survey results and their implications for the education programs in the Chanticleer portfolio going forward. Explore ways of consolidating raw material of this sort and presenting it for boards of directors, granting agencies, or donors. What of the quantitative and extensive qualitative feedback is most valuable to reveal?
- Invite students to return to Christine's fundamental questions about young singers who encounter Chanticleer's programs. Do they continue to sing? Are they more likely to become lifelong supporters of the arts? Are they more likely to donate to Chanticleer to sustain the art that provided them instruction? What can be done to make inroads on these questions?