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This **Survival Kit** is designed as follow-up to the **CircleSongs: The Method** workshop. It's a review of how to create and organize musical ideas into CircleSongs, and a workbook of exercises for you and your choir.

The first half of this booklet is *information*, and the second half is *application*. PART I – III covers CircleSinging theory and music theory. The second half, PART IV – V, contains CircleSinging exercises that apply the theory in PART I – III. The notated examples of CircleSongs and rhythmic patterns do not include repeat signs, though they should be repeated indefinitely when sung.

The key to building a good CircleSong is organization. In fact, CircleSinging is more a matter of *organizing a few ideas* than it is about *creating many ideas*. Therefore, the focus of this booklet will be on how to organize your ideas into musical structures that provide both space and support for improvisation.

PART I CIRCLESINGING GUIDELINES

Circle Roles and Environment

The “Circle” is the group of singers, and the “Leader” is whoever is teaching, guiding, and creating the CircleSong. Ultimately, the Leader can be any designated member of the choir. This allows for a continual flow of creativity and exchange of roles between *leading* the Circle, and *supporting* the Circle.

CircleSongs are created by the Leader and rendered by the Circle. The Leader is the creative architect and musical director, but can also delegate tasks to members of the Circle.

CircleSinging requires a communal commitment to the development of each individual’s skills and creativity. The members of the Circle support the Leader’s musical growth by serving as the “instrument” that renders his or her ideas, and those in the Circle grow as they learn to listen and become sensitive to the constantly changing music.

CircleSinging also requires *flexibility*, because the experience blurs the boundaries between the sections of the choir and their associated roles. Sections will often cross ranges, tenors and basses may be required to sing in their head voice, and the Leader may call upon someone to improvise a solo or to create another part and teach that part to their section.

Circle Protocols

- 1) *Listen* when the Leader is exploring and defining an idea. The members of the Circle need to be attentive so they hear every note and nuance of that idea before they sing it.
- 2) *Maintain eye contact* with the Leader and the Circle. Eye contact is essential to the communication of each new idea, variation, change of leadership, and so on.
- 3) *Sing continually* until the Leader gives the cue to stop. Each part and any new parts still to be composed are dependant on all the other parts.
- 4) *Use the repetition* to refine the dynamic, harmonic, and rhythmic aspects of any given part.

Notes for the Leader

- 1) *During the process of Exploration, take your time.* Don’t let the pressure of a “waiting choir” press you to deliver parts before they are clearly defined.
- 2) *During the process of Exploration, make it clear with your body language that you’re still exploring.* Once you’ve defined your part and are ready to teach it, make eye contact and open your body language to the group of people you want to direct.
- 3) *Always externalize the beat in your body* (by tapping, snapping, or stepping) so that the singers can **see** the rhythmic pulse as well as hear it.
- 4) *When teaching a part, maintain eye contact and conduct the part.* The brain learns music faster when the eyes see movement that corresponds with the onset of the sound.

PART II BUILDING A CIRCLESONG

The Components

Any single piece of music is comprised of a number of musical *Components*. The following five Components of music represent five types, or categories, of musical ideas, each of which plays a role in creating rhythm, melody, and harmony.

<u>Traditional Name</u>	<u>Functional Name</u>
Ostinato, Ground Rhythm	Motor
Figured Bass, Bassline	Anchor
Motif	Hook
Melody	Dialogue
Harmony	Color

The functional names keep the focus on the purpose each idea serves in the music.

Motor – a simple rhythmic engine that provides a reference for the pulse and subdivisions of a piece. It’s typically a short, simple, and clear repeating rhythmic pattern on one or a few pitches.

Anchor – a recurring melodic and rhythmic pattern that outlines the tonal structure and defines the meter of a piece. It’s typically voiced in the lowest Layer, like a typical Bass part would be.

Hook – a succinct, distinctive, and memorable melodic fragment that often becomes an identifying signature for a piece of music.

Dialogue – a complete melodic sentence that becomes the storyline or “theme” of the piece.

Color – Harmony, the sonic quality that emerges when two or more pitches sound simultaneously. *Color* supplies a lot of the “mood” or “feeling” of a piece and provides a harmonic context for the other Components.

The notated CircleSong below is one example of how the Components can be orchestrated throughout the choir. The left-hand labels indicate the “Layer” of music (roughly corresponding to traditional SATB), Layer 1 being the highest. The difference between a Layer and a traditional choral part (like Soprano) is that a Layer is more of a reference to a range in the tessitura than to a fixed group of people. (Note: The notation “4-2 @120” refers to the *Metric Structure*. See PART IV.)

Circle I

4-2 @ 120

The musical score for "Circle I" is written for four layers (L1, L2, L3, L4) in 4/2 time at 120 bpm. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The lyrics are as follows:

- L1:** Du Woh | Sa va va weh | Sa va du wah | du weh
- L2:** (rest) | (rest) | (rest) | zeh um Sa va du weh
- L3:** du ma deh um | du ma deh um | du ma deh um | du ma deh um
- L4:** dmbm du eh | dmbm du eh | dmbm du eh | dmbm du eh

Functional labels on the right side of the score:

- Dialogue:** L1
- Hook:** L2
- Motor:** L3
- Anchor:** L4

Components in the Layers

Any Component can go in any Layer, but some Components work better in some Layers than in others. For example, the Anchor is almost exclusively a function of the lowest Layer, because western music typically defines tonality from the bottom-up. Melodic ideas – Dialogue and Hook – are typically found in the higher Layers because there’s greater clarity in the upper range. Color (harmony) is something that will emerge by itself as Components come together. But it can also be intentionally created for a specific Component, i.e., “harmonize a part.” In the diagram below it’s abbreviated as “Harm.”

Here are some typical configurations of how the Components could be allocated to the choir. For example, *Circle 1* is configuration #1.

1	2	3	4
L1 Dialogue L2 Hook L3 Motor L4 Anchor	L1 Dialogue L2 Dialogue Harm L3 Motor L4 Anchor	L1 Dialogue L2 Dialogue Harm L3 Dialogue Harm L4 Anchor	L1 Dialogue L2 Dialogue Harm L3 Dialogue Harm L4 Dialogue Harm
5	6	7	8
L1 Dialogue L2 Motor Harm L3 Motor L4 Anchor	L1 Dialogue L2 Motor Harm L3 Motor L4 Motor Harm	L1 Dialogue L2 Anchor Harm L3 Anchor Harm L4 Anchor	L1 Hook Harm L2 Hook L3 Anchor Harm L4 Anchor
9	10	11	12
L1 Hook Harm L2 Hook L3 Hook Harm L4 Anchor	L1 Hook Harm L2 Hook L3 Hook Harm L4 Hook Harm	L1 Motor Harm L2 Motor L3 Dialogue L4 Dialogue Harm	L1 Motor Harm L2 Motor L3 Anchor Harm L4 Anchor

Assembling the Components

This booklet will focus on one of the easiest methods of building a CircleSong: *Foundation First*. This means to first build a structure of rhythm and harmony that will support the creation of the melodic elements, similar to how a builder first lays a foundation that will support the building of the rest of the house. This rhythmic and harmonic foundation is provided by the Motor and Anchor. After this comes the rest of the musical “building”, the melodic elements. The idea here is to create an accompaniment for improvisation; the Motor and Anchor provide that accompaniment.

The procedure for *Foundation First* would look like this, if we were to build configuration # 3 (above):

1. Create Motor
2. Create Anchor
3. Create Dialogue
4. Delete Motor
5. Harmonize Dialogue

The Motor is often deleted at some later point in the process, much in the same way the wooden frame for the foundation of a house is torn away after the foundation dries. Once the Motor is out of the way, there’s room to create other Components or harmonize existing ones.

Foundation First is only one of many ways to build a CircleSong, but it’s the easiest, and is recommended to those new to the process.