



EVERYTHING  
YOU WANTED  
TO KNOW  
ABOUT  
SESSION  
CHOIRS

*(But were afraid to ask)*

[www.vocalsunlimited.co.uk](http://www.vocalsunlimited.co.uk)

# CONTENTS

1

*Early Choral Music*

2

*Musical Theatre*

3

*Gospel*

4

*Pop/Rock Choir*

5

*Jazz Choir*

# EARLY CHORAL MUSIC

The UK has a world-beating reputation for traditional choral singing.

From child choristers to semi permanent and permanent members of Westminster Abbey & St Pauls Cathedral, the London film session scene attracts this type of singer.

The sound, which we often, colloquially describe as “churchy” can also be described as “pure”, “ethereal” and “warm”.

The most used sound is one with little or no vibrato which is particularly effective for sound effect/mood music on reflective and touching scenes in films. With the singers in our early music team being classically trained, they can also add varying amounts of vibrato to the voice to produce more of an “opera chorus” sound which creates a more dramatic sound - ideal for high energy, action sequences in films.

## COMPOSERS

From a composer’s/scoring point of view the early music sound works well with a broad vocal range from super-high sopranos to exceptionally low-voiced Bases. The “space” in this scoring can very much help with creating an epic soundscape.

# EARLY CHORAL MUSIC

From a technical, vocal point of view, the voice adopts a lower larynx position, something that is particularly accessible for British singers.

Anatomically, the north American voice has a naturally higher-larynxed position which results in a more “twangy” sound - not as easy to achieve the authentic Early Music Sound.

At Vocals Unlimited we have the best practitioners of this style with an extensive background working with the worlds best early music specialists.

The ideal size of choir for this genre would be between 32 and 40 (Soprano, Alto , Tenor and Bass - usually evenly split but variations can work).

For some projects we have worked with choirs of between 60 and 100 which, unsurprisingly creates and awe-inspiring, epic sound.

## CHILDRENS CHOIR

We are occasionally asked for a children’s choir. In this scenario we would contract an existing specialist, school choir (usually from a music school) and we recommend adding in a few of our regular adult, soprano team to help homogenise the sound and secure the accuracies of harmonies. We have several singers who can emulate the “treble” sound convincingly and we find that this is the best solution to this brief.

# MUSICAL THEATRE

**Musical Theatre (or Broadway chorus) sound is what Vocals Unlimited prides itself on being the go-to team for.**

My background is as a singer-actor in some of the most Iconic West End Shows and, subsequently, as a vocal coach to the leading stars of the most prolific shows of our generation over the past 20 years. (Les Miserables, Phantom of the Opera, Hairspray, Jersey Boys, Miss Saigon)

Apart from the obvious usage of a Musical Theatre Choir (film adaptations of Musicals), the acting background of these singers allows a more “robust/characterful” product with a more powerful “edge” to the sound which many composers prefer.

We are proud to have on our books all the music sight reading musical theatre performers in this area.

For musical scoring, the Musical Theatre voices work best around their natural “speech pitch”. Most MT singers have a large vocal range which allows for a lot of flexibility but, stylistically the sound works best without very low basses and not too much very high soprano setting. The middle of the voice is best suited for this style.

The ideal size of choir for this genre would usually be between 24 and 32 singers (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Baritone - not always in an even split - sometimes these scores work better with more on the middle range voices). This number is based on a typical West End/Broadway chorus size.

Great examples of Musical Theatre projects that our team have worked on for film are “**Mary Poppins Returns**”, “**Shrek**”, “**Moulin Rouge**” and “**Mamma Mia**”

# GOSPEL CHOIR

The “Gospel” sound is a much-used sound for additional vocals on films. There is often some confusion over the term “Gospel”.

Historically it can refer to singers from Black/Afro-Caribbean communities but, as the popularity has increased, so has the diversity of ethnicities within this music. There is a difference between a Gospel Choir and Gospel Singers:-

**A Gospel Choir** makes a cohesive, thrilling sound with the vocal setting usually being quite high in each singer’s voice. There is a lot of similarity with Musical Theatre singing (through personality) and pop singing (with a certain amount of bending in and out of notes) but the sound is unmistakably unique.

**A Gospel SINGER**, on the other hand tends to be much more “freestyle” in their delivery and allowing ad-libs is fundamental to this music. This area of singing doesn’t necessarily need to be purely soloist work - small groups of free-styling singers together can make a particularly thrilling sound which can be emotionally effective in the right setting.

To hear examples of our team at work on film scores with Gospel elements listen to “Six Underground”, “Black Widow” and “Shrek 2”

The ideal size of choir for this genre is usually between 16 and 24 singers (usually Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Baritone)

# JAZZ CHOIR

The most recognisable use of a Jazz Ensemble Choir would be anything with an intricate close harmony sound.

Many of our team at Vocals Unlimited have vast experience with world-class groups such as **The Swingle Singers**.

These artists are absolute masters at vocal dexterity and the accuracy of blend and feel is quite remarkable.

Our team is particularly skilled at being what has become known as a “sound effect choir”.

The award winning “This is What a Honda feels like” campaign featured many of our singers who have gone on to perform at specialist events all over the world, creating soundscapes for events from product launches to the opening of Terminal 5 at Heathrow!

One of the most recognisable uses of the Jazz Choir quality was in the hit TV series “Glee” in their incidental music.

The standard size of a Jazz Choir is 8 singers (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass - evenly split) with each singer on a different line resulting in 8 part, close-harmony.

## ETHNIC SPECIALITIES

The most recognisable international specialties are Bulgarian and Arabic vocals. At Vocals Unlimited we can supply most voice types including Bulgarian, Arabic, Indian, Flamenco and Celtic. We are always happy to source even more unusual specialties to fit a composer’s brief.



# THANK YOU!

I hope you found this guide helpful.  
Discussing each choir and being specific about the  
differing styles can save a lot of time in the studio

I am committed to creating the perfect sound to your  
vision for your score!

Here at Vocals Unlimited alongside the choirs in this  
guide, we also have the most impressive lead/solo voices  
the country has to offer in each genre.

Tom Pearce.

[www.vocalsunlimited.co.uk](http://www.vocalsunlimited.co.uk)





VOCALS  
unlimited

# WAYS TO WORK WITH US

In the studio

Remote recording

Solo Voices

[www.vocalsunlimited.co.uk](http://www.vocalsunlimited.co.uk)