



EXPRESSING YOUR ENSEMBLE IDENTITY: LEADING WITH AUTHENTICITY & INCLUSION

**PRESENTED BY ANNA CHELAK,
VP OF ARTISTIC OPERATIONS, SIRENS OF GOTHAM**

Think of a memorable performance
when you were in the audience.

What made it so memorable?



The best artistic choices are those
that deepen our connection
with the audience.

What choices are available to us?



OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPRESS OUR ENSEMBLE IDENTITY & CULTURE

- Music choices
- Coach choices
- Marketing and branding choices
- Costuming and staging choices

2012-2013



2013-2017



2017



“A true connection with an audience
is made when...the singer is able to
perform beyond the plan.”

THE PATH TO POWERFUL PERFORMANCE ARTISTRY

- Establish a strong ensemble identity & culture
- Unleash your creativity
- Enjoy the process!

ESTABLISH A STRONG ENSEMBLE IDENTITY & CULTURE

MEMBERSHIP ENTHUSIASM

*What keeps people
coming back?*

ARTISTIC VISION

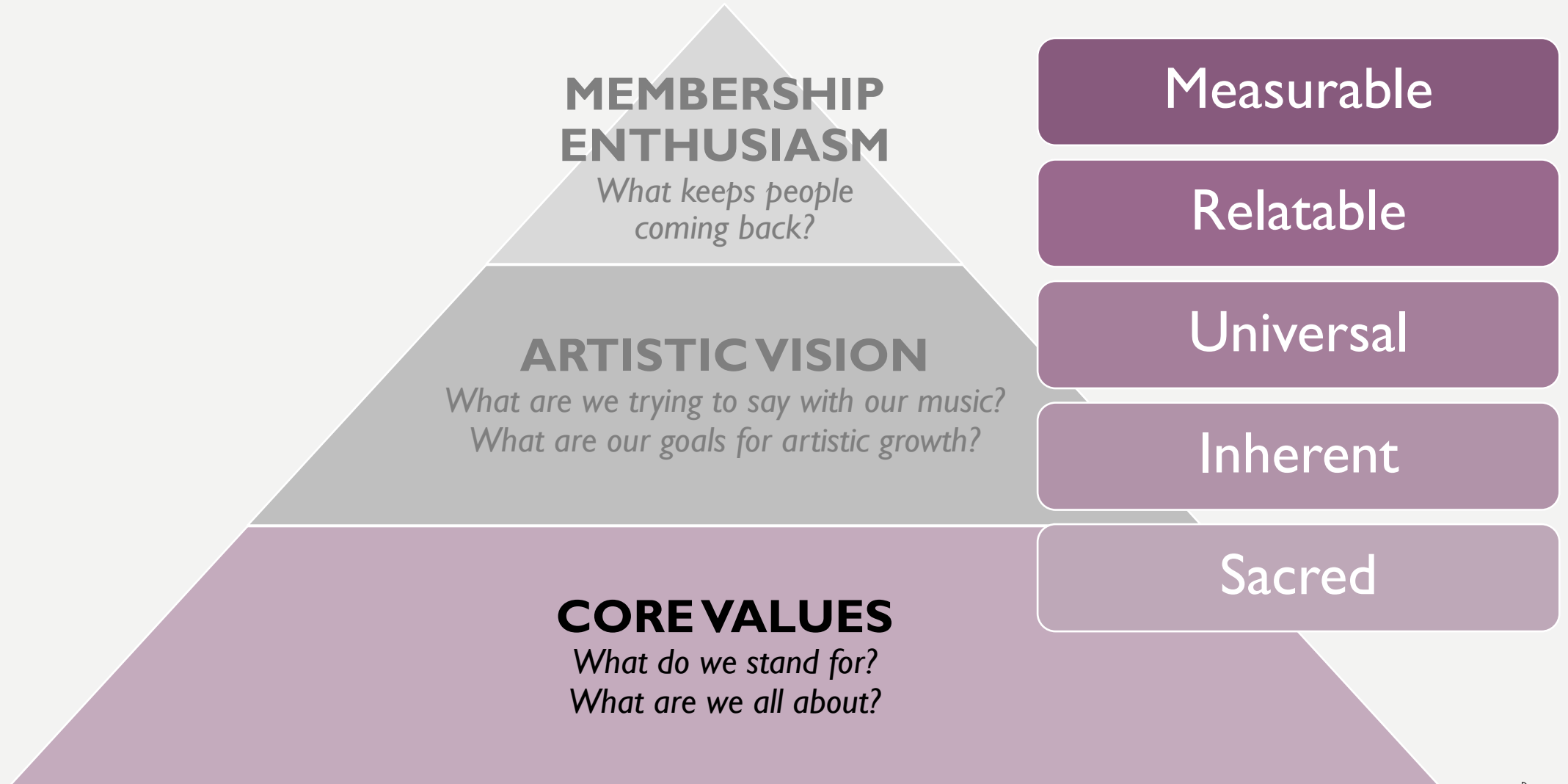
*What are we trying to say with our music?
What are our goals for artistic growth?*

CORE VALUES

*What do we stand for?
What are we all about?*



WHAT DO STRONG CORE VALUES LOOK LIKE?



EXAMPLE: SIRENS OF GOTHAM CORE VALUES

JOY

For Sirens of Gotham, valuing joy is about allowing ourselves to be present and passionate in our ambitions--not laborious or intense. We share a deep emotional connection to music: **we sing because it makes us happy**, we are passionate about music and the role it plays in our lives, we choose to **express ourselves artistically because we want to share our stories with others in a way that leaves them changed**. We take pride and joy in our work and accomplishments, and this brings us together all the more.

AUTHENTICITY

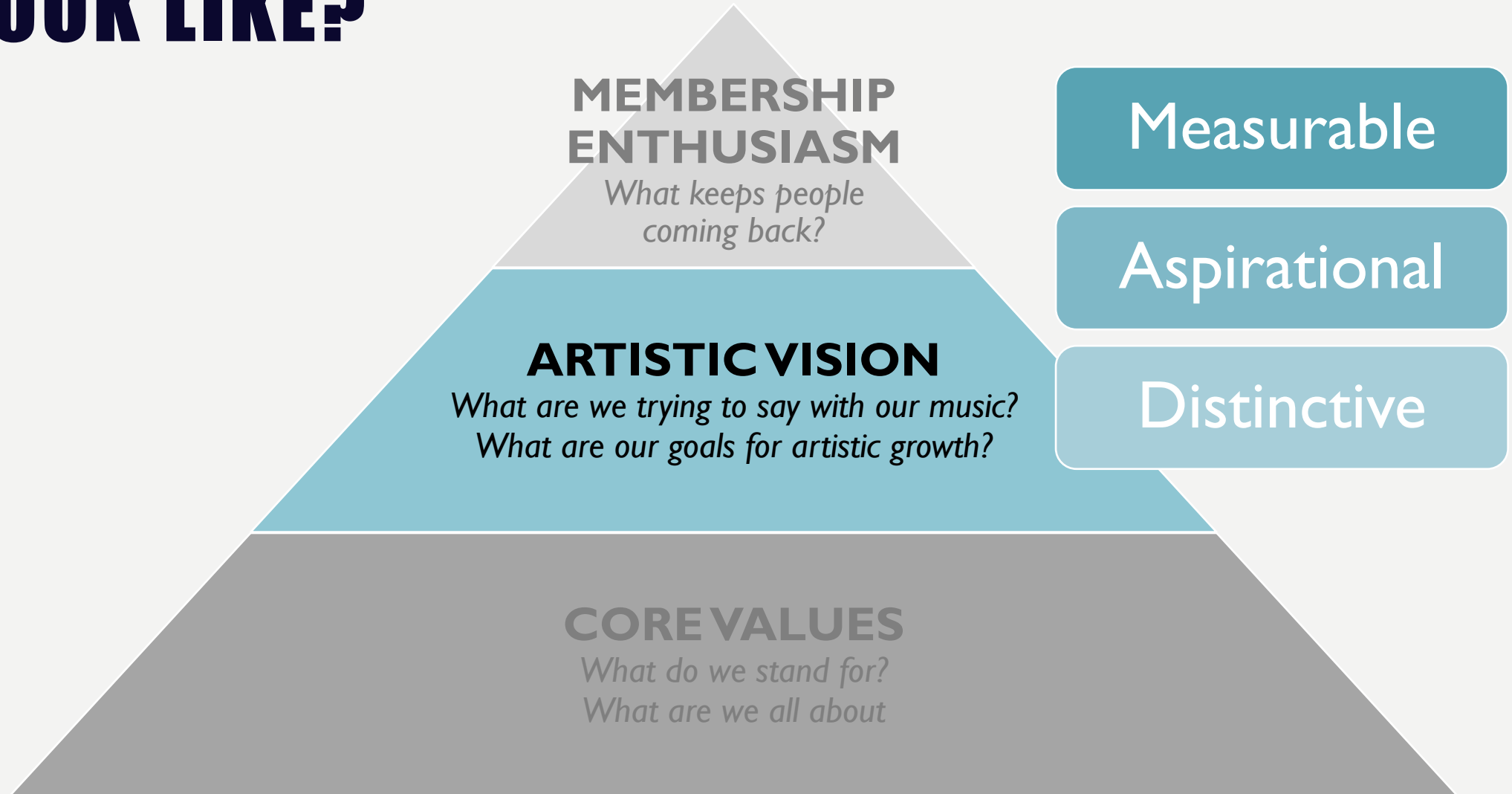
For Sirens of Gotham, valuing authenticity means that we are never contrived or cookie cutter in performance, management, or the community. We seek to find meaning in our music and endeavor to choose **music that inspires and speaks to us**. We value open, honest, and transparent perspectives in the chorus, and **each member is encouraged to be their own unique self**. We celebrate diversity and promote inclusion. We don't apologize for who we are and always **represent ourselves truthfully to our audience and our community**.

AMBITION

For Sirens of Gotham, valuing ambition means that we always **strive to grow, improve, and achieve**. An ambitious Siren is hard-working, prepared, dedicated, and never finished, because they are always searching for ways to **elevate their craft and take the chorus to new heights**.



WHAT DOES A STRONG ARTISTIC VISION LOOK LIKE?



EXAMPLE: ARTISTIC VISION FOR HARMONY CLASSIC APPEARANCE

A true manifestation of Sirens' Core Values, this set is meant to empower people to be who they are.

To inspire them to stand tall, dream big, dare to think different and follow their own path.

It's about not only dreaming of, but *creating* a world in which everyone can be who they want to be.

"Somewhere inside all of us is the power to change the world." – Roald Dahl

"Individuality is freedom—lived." – John Dos Passos

STORY ARC BY SONG

- I now know I'm here to do something incredible, and I need to find out on my own.
- The world tried to tell me how to be and not be, but that holds you back. I say don't be afraid to be you.
- Imagine a world where we loved, accepted, and celebrated each other for who we are. A world that lifted you up instead of tearing you down.
- "Self-love cannot flourish in isolation." Let's celebrate our worth and lift one another up.



WHAT DOES MEMBERSHIP ENTHUSIASM LOOK LIKE?



UNITY

**MEMBERSHIP
ENTHUSIASM**

*What keeps people
coming back?*

ARTISTIC VISION

*What are we trying to say with our music?
What are our goals for artistic growth?*

CORE VALUES

*What do we stand for?
What do we want people to walk away knowing about who we are?*





UNITY

MEMBERSHIP
ENTHUSIASM

*What keeps people
coming back?*

ENSEMBLE UNITY COMES FROM UNITY OF PURPOSE

ARTISTIC VISION

*What are we trying to do? What are our goals
for a specific year?*

CORE VALUES

What do we stand for?

What do we want people to walk away knowing about who we are?



CONVEYING UNITY ONSTAGE

“In the execution phase, **unity is evident when the musical message is clearly delivered by the ensemble with uniform energy and physical display.** Clarity in purpose, intent and musical message evident in the body language and facial expressions assist with taking the plan off paper **to create a performance that connects with the audience.”**

DEBUNKING THE MYTH OF UNIFORMITY

“In Sweet Adelines International, the performing group, whether it be chorus or quartet, **performs as a single entity.** Just as the individual voices and voice parts come together to create 4-part harmony and a unified musical product, the visual aspects must be presented in a unified fashion in order for communication to be successfully achieved. **Unity does not, however, require that all performers appear as clones of each other within the performing unit.** Our ensembles consist of performers of all abilities, shapes, colors, sizes and sensibilities. All of our members are encouraged to bring their own unique selves to the stage to contribute to the overall visual picture. **Audience connection is enhanced when performers eliminate visual distractions which might take away from the main focus,** which is the visual communication of the performance.”

DISRUPTING IMPLICIT BIAS: LET'S REFRAME HOW WE THINK ABOUT UNITY

INSTEAD OF...

- Prioritizing uniformity
- Focusing on “earning points” or replicating “what works”
- Playing it safe

TRY...

- Prioritizing authenticity, comfort, and ease (Membership Enthusiasm)
- Focusing on honest delivery of the story (Artistic Vision)
- Playing to the unique strengths of your ensemble (Core Values)

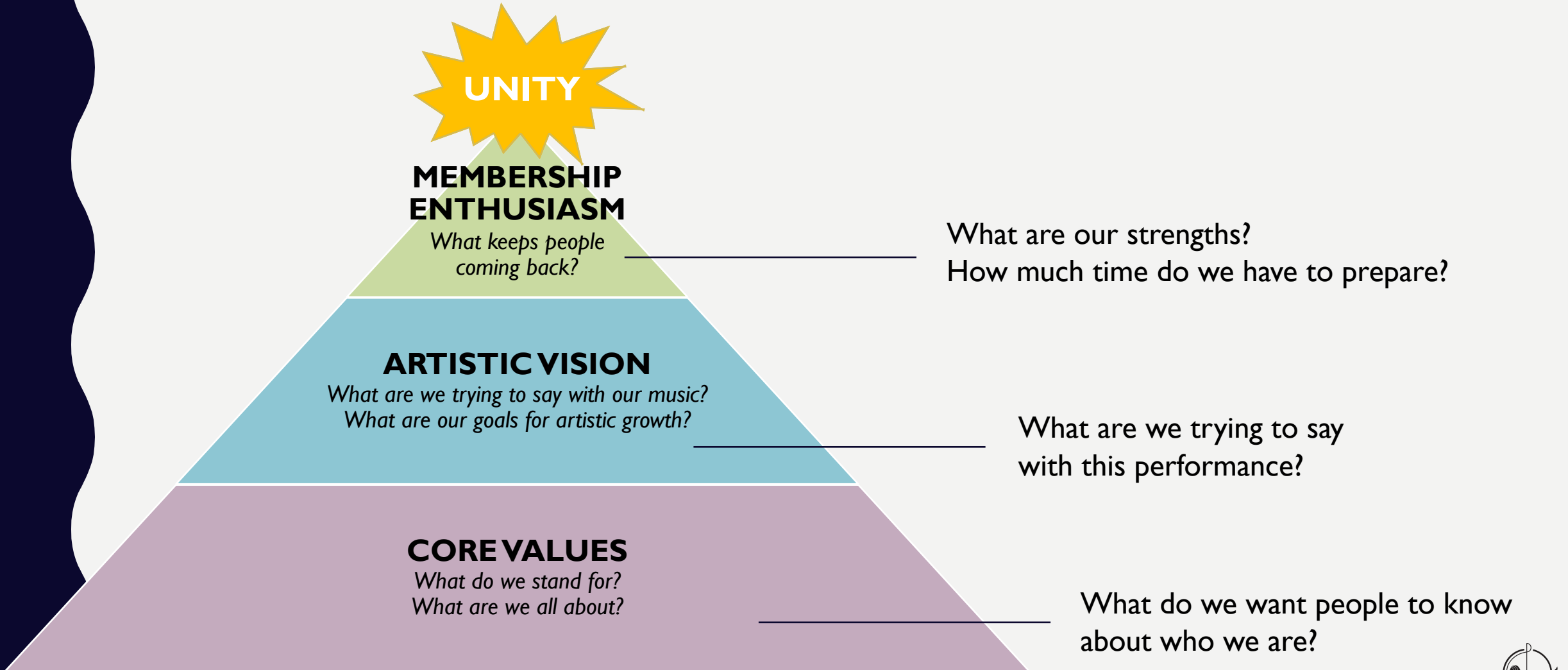


BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EFFECTIVE VISUAL ARTISTRY

- ✓ Establish a strong ensemble identity
- Unleash your creativity
- Enjoy the process!



TRANSLATING YOUR ENSEMBLE IDENTITY INTO A PERFORMANCE

















BUILDING YOUR VISUAL PLAN

Brainstorm multiple
ideas & options

Develop a proposal that
brings it to life

Implement!



BRAINSTORM IDEAS

DEFINE THE ELEMENTS:

- First, identify the big artistic pillars
 - Character
 - The space and the place (“read the room”)
 - Level of uniformity
 - Choreography strengths and rehearsal time
 - Formality
 - Colors
- Second, refine the elements of cohesion
 - Fabric textures and embellishments (sequins, lace, embroidery)
 - Grooming (makeup, hair)
 - Accessories (jewelry, shoes)

PRESSURE TEST THE IDEA:

- Does it enhance the musical message?
- Does it give our singers the opportunity to shine with confidence and comfort?
- Is it driven by the Core Values, Artistic Vision, and Membership Enthusiasm?

PROVIDE MULTIPLE OPTIONS:

Especially if you’re originating the visual ideas, it pays to have multiple viable options to present to your Director / team / ensemble



DEVELOP A PROPOSAL

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Idea: Shades of Blue

Insight: According to the Summer 2018 Empowerment Package color survey, nearly 75% ranked cobalt blue in their top 5 color choices. 60% put it in their top 3.

Insight: Blue pops on stage!

Insight: Blue = rain, water, fluidity

Insight: Blue = at peace with the journey, being “almost there”

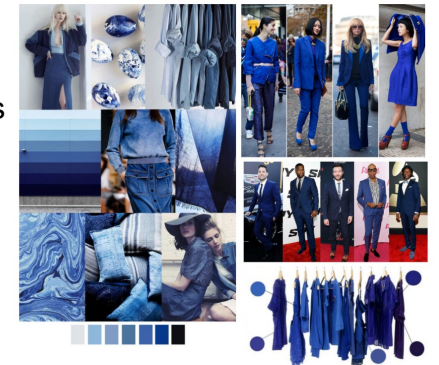
“Blue is considered beneficial to the mind and body. It slows human metabolism and produces a calming effect. Blue is strongly associated with tranquility and calmness. In heraldry, blue is used to symbolize piety and sincerity.”

BRING IT TO LIFE

The Look: Elevated Casual in a Serene Palette of Blues

Blue like the rain, fluid and always changing, but blue like you're at peace with the journey, of being “almost there.”

“Blue is considered beneficial to the mind and body. It slows human metabolism and produces a calming effect. Blue is strongly associated with tranquility and calmness. In heraldry, blue is used to symbolize sincerity.”



Elevated Casual in a Serene Palette of Blues

NOTE: Aim to combine multiple shades of blue with your look via multiple clothing pieces & accessories!

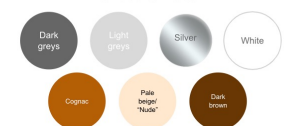
Colors to Wear



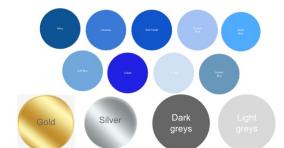
(complementary, like in stockings, socks, or shirts layered underneath blue)



Shoes & Belts



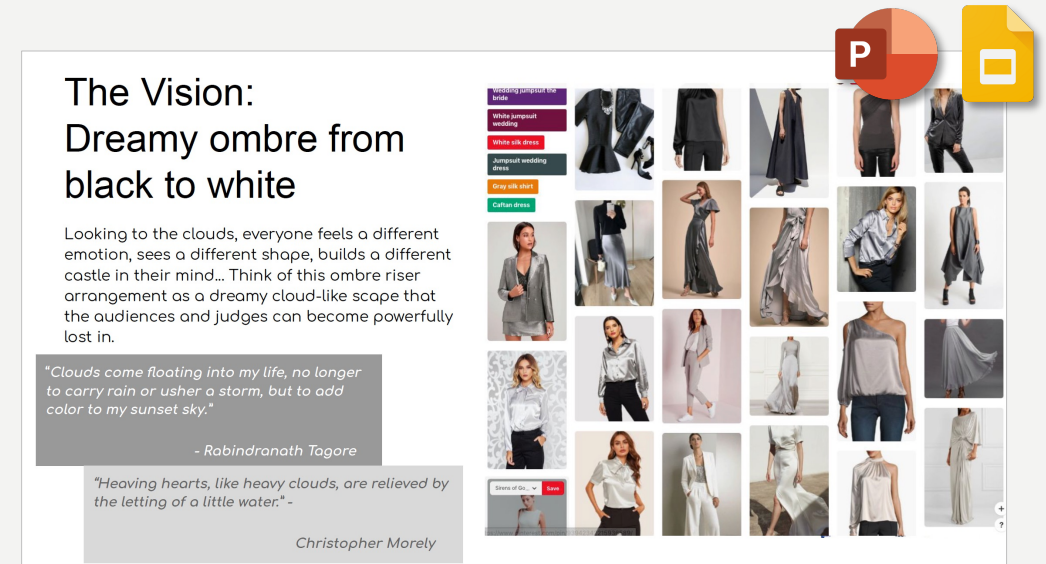
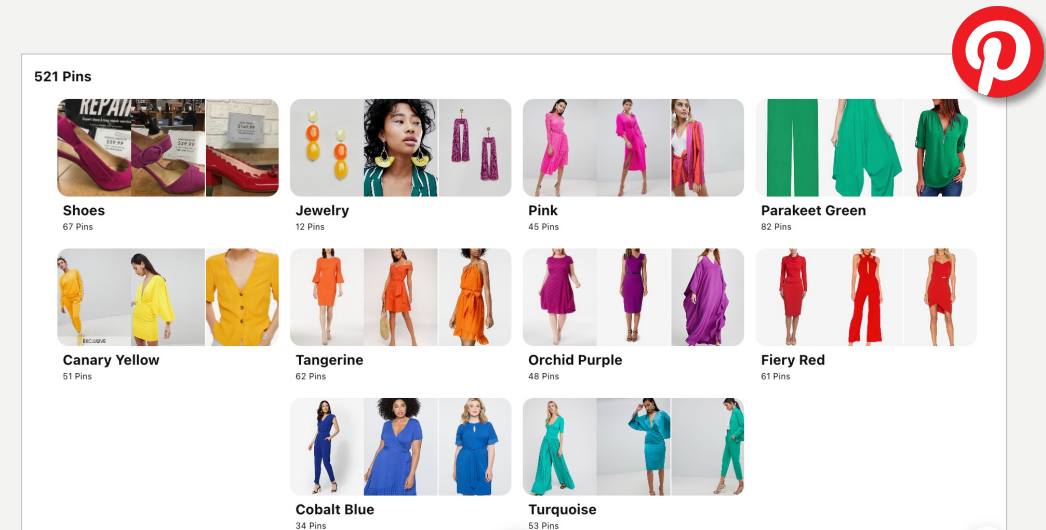
Jewelry



IMPLEMENT!

BE SPECIFIC

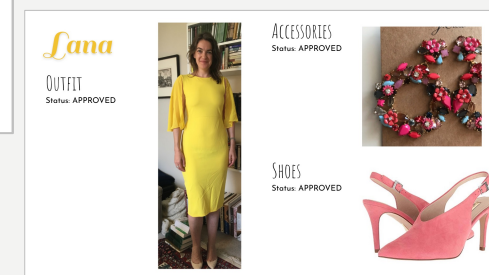
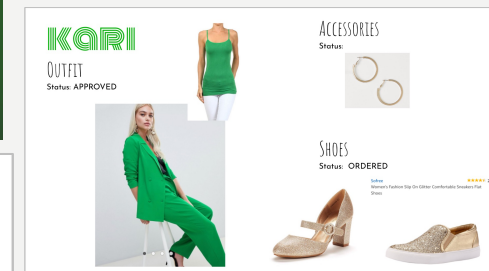
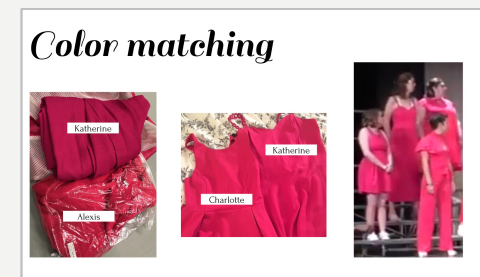
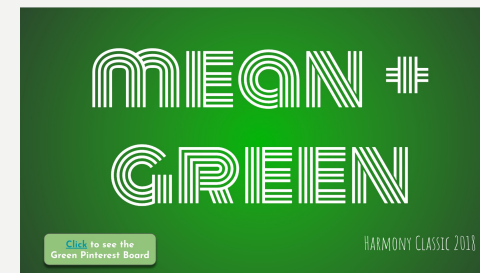
- Explain the idea in more ways than one by using words *and* pictures
 - Define style and level of formality using a scenario for when you would wear it
 - Representation matters! (in both language and images)
- Use tools like Pinterest, PowerPoint, and Google Slides to create vision boards, style guides, and instructional resources
 - Easy to share and update
 - Great way to get the ensemble inspired and excited, which promotes enthusiasm!



IMPLEMENT!

SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS

- Establish timelines and check-in procedures early
- Patience and understanding are key
- Involve the chorus and build a strong team
- Seek to be cost-conscious and sustainable
 - Promote sharing, thrifting, or second-hand shopping on Poshmark, ThredUp, etc.
 - Angel Funds or Chorus Scholarships



Example: For Sirens of Gotham's 2018 Harmony Classic package, after a grand reveal of the overall set idea, we appointed Color Captains to help unify the shade and tone of each section as well as promote a sense of support and teamwork!



Updated at retreat March 17, 2019



Gracie- Needs new blazer

Meredith- change to silver boot
(or heeled option in contrast color)
Wants to change to dress

Alex- Needs lighter top (try
Kiara's denim top?)

Sara- either wear cobalt dress, or
Kiara's peasant top with jeans?



Danielle- needs wow jewelry

Kari- change to nude tights? No?

Packer- offered to change
necklace, will send pics

Hilary- Is looking for jewelry



EVALUATE, REFINE, & KEEP TRACK

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EFFECTIVE VISUAL ARTISTRY

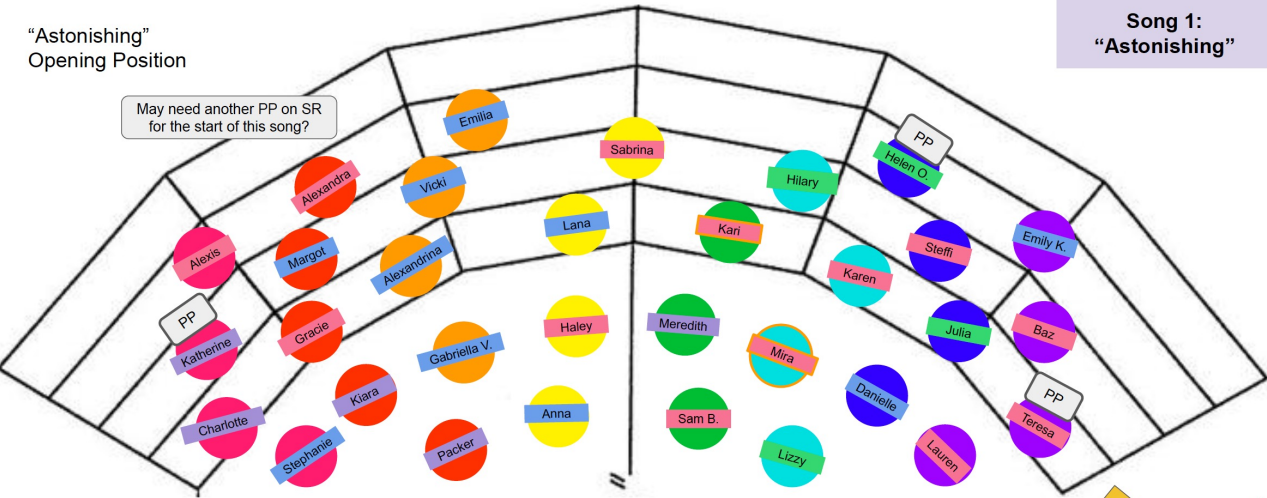
- ✓ Establish a strong ensemble identity
- ✓ Unleash your creativity
- Enjoy the process!



“Astonishing”
Opening Position

Song 1:
“Astonishing”

May need another PP on SR
for the start of this song?



“Is there more?”

CHOREO SUMMARY

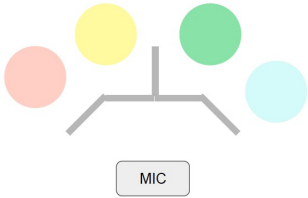
Chorus begins in stillness, out to the distance, quartet 2-3 paces back from the mic in a small arch, FR is 1-2 paces out from the risers

All sing in unison “I thought home was all I’d ever want, my attic all I’d ever need.”

Quartet steps up to mic as the basses come in on their “Doo doo”, energetic, with purpose! Chorus begins walking on Bass entrance “Doo”

“Where am I?”

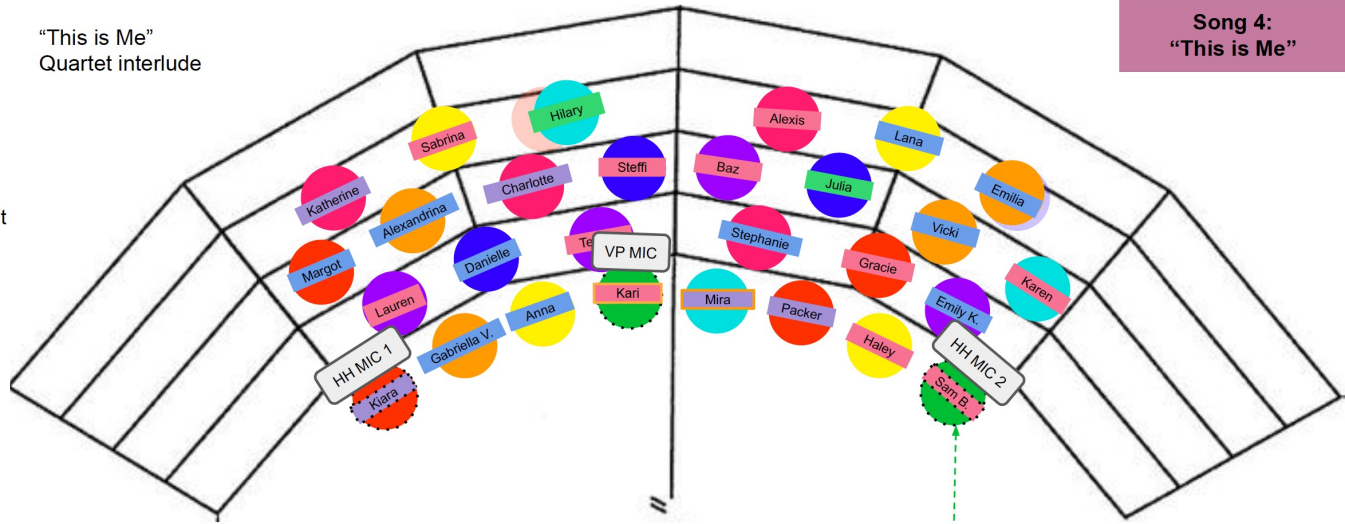
Chorus walking with confusion at first, that changes into a compelled urgency on “I only know I’m meant for something more”



Song starts out to a distance.... Singing out but not TO a person... focus out at nothing specific. Talking with yourself.

“This is Me”
Quartet interlude

Song 4:
“This is Me”



CHOREO SUMMARY

Stillness



COSTUME COLOR CHECK-IN (8/25)









SWEET ADELINES INTERNATIONAL



**REMEMBER:
POWERFUL ARTISTRY
BEGINS WITH
STRONG ENSEMBLE
IDENTITY**

- Ensemble activities should be informed by strong sense of ensemble identity
- Embrace who you are in every way—this is not the place to hide!
- It's about the journey, not the destination—what you discover along the way is what matters most



THANK YOU!