Choral Warm-Ups

The following outline suggests an order for a well-designed vocal warm-up for choir. The warm-ups listed below each category are not a complete set of warm-ups for that category, but are merely examples of warm-ups designed to achieve each goal. Also, please note that many of these warm-ups actually achieve several goals at once. For example, while “bumblebee” works towards flexibility, it also works to extend the vocal range upward. Rather than pulling from each category daily, I often design a warm-up sequence based on what we will be working on in class that day (i.e., more vowel shapes and choral blend warm-ups when we will be working on a piece like “The Lord Bless You and Keep You”) or focus warm-ups on a technique I would like to spotlight (i.e., more breathing exercises on days I would like to focus on breathing technique).

1) Releasing tension, getting the breath moving
   a. Physical stretching, especially of the upper body
   b. Massaging neck, jaw, face
   c. Breathing and releasing on “ts” or “sh” over an increasing number of beats
2) Vocalizing downward first (to bring head voice down), often using a “semi-occluded” exercise
   a. Lip trills
   b. Hum and chew
   c. Sing-ah 5------5-4-3-2-1
   d. “Oo” 5-6-5-4-3-2-1 or same pattern using “zz” or “vv”
3) Vowel shapes
   a. Bee-beh-bah-boh-boo 5-5-5-5-5-4-3-2-1
   b. Mee-meh-mah-moh-moo (with hand gestures) 5-5-5-5-5-4-3-2-1
   c. Oo-ee-eh-ee-oo-ee-eh-ah 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1
4) Extending the range upward
   a. “Yah” or “Yoh” staccato 1-3-5-3-1
   b. Staccato/legato 1-3-5-8-5-3-1-3-5-8-5-3-1
   c. I love to sing 1-3-5-8-5-3-1
   d. Zing a zing a zah 5-5-5-5-8-5-3-1
   e. Dribble, dribble, shoot (ha, ha, ha) 1-1-8, 1-1-8
   f. Yoop, yoop, yoop, yoop, yoop-ti… 1-1-1-1-15151655876543212345-4-333-5-8
   g. Zee-eh, zee-oh, zee-ah, ah, ah, ah 1-3-1-5-3-8-5-3-1
5) Vocal Flexibility
   a. Hee hee hee 555556565-444445454-333334343-222223232-111112121
   b. Dee 1-2-3-2-1 (then same pattern with chromatics in between)
   c. Bumblebee 1-3-2-4-3-5-4-6-5-7-6-8-7-9-8 8-6-7-5-6-4-5-3-4-2-3-1-2-7-1
6) Diction
   a. Many mumbling mice
   b. Mommy made me mash my M&Ms, I cried 1-2-3-4-5-3-2-1-5-1
   c. Diction is done with the tip of the tongue and the teeth
      (starting notes: men-A, altos-C, sop-F)
7) Choral balance, blend, intonation, ear training, and independence of parts
   a. Solfege major scale
   b. Do-re-do…
   c. Diverging major scale (men start on high do, women on low do)
   d. Solfege scale, holding a chord on downward scale Example: (S1-ti, S2-so, A-fa, Men-re, so) and resolving (S1-do, S2-so, A-mi, Men-do)
   e. Minor second, minor second…