

Choral Strategies: Fostering Efficient Vocal Technique and Musicianship through Warm-Ups

LMEA Conference - November 21, 2015

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AN ESSENTIAL VOICE BUILDING SEQUENCE:

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|--|---|
| I. Relax/Energize – focus of attention | VII. Repertoire specific |
| II. Alignment (not “posture”) | VIII. Falsetto exploration/Register consistency |
| III. Breathing/Spaciousness | IX. Range extension (both high and low) |
| IV. Initial phonation (not always note-specific) | X. Vowel Purity/Consistency (intonation) |
| V. Resonance (not always “placement”) | XI. Musicianship |
| VI. Onset of Tone | XII. Sight-Singing |

In between the categories above, a yawn/sigh may be inserted to alleviate tension.

CHOOSING KEYS:

Use a combination of chord qualities (major, minor, modal, pentatonic)

For phonation - begin low and change direction with tension or discomfort - D Major

For resonance - use a descending pattern (notice the choir's use of chest voice)

Onset/repertoire – chest-voice prone choirs should avoid patterns that ascend

Falsetto exploration/Register consistency -

– begin with a chord or triad based on F4 then descend, add air through the passaggio

Vowel purity/consistency – mid-range pitch

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Limit piano use unless accompaniment can be valuable as a support to beginning singers or very large ensembles.

Vocally model often and with great specificity.

Conduct during warm-ups and encourage kinesthetic movement from singers.

An /u/ vowel will encourage head voice and /a/ vowel, chest voice.

An /i/ vowel will encourage resonance (if efficiently produced).

Encourage all singers to sing in their entire range.

RESOURCES - WARM-UPS/VOCAL TECHNIQUE:

Conable, Barbara. *The Structures and Movement of Breathing: A Primer for Choirs and Choruses*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2000.

Haasemann, Frauke and James Mark Jordan. *Group Vocal Technique*. Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw, 1991. - Includes book, video, warm-up cards

Hemsley, Thomas. *Singing & Imagination: A Human Approach to a Great Musical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Horstmann, Sabine. *Evoking Sound: The Choral Warm-Up*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009. - Exercises, accompaniments, and an DVD.

Jordan, James. *Evoking Sound: The Choral Warm-Up*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005.

Jordan, James. *Evoking Sound: Fundamentals of Choral Conducting* (2nd Edition). Chicago: GIA Publications, 2009.

McCoy, Scott. *Your Voice: An Inside View*. Inside View Press, 2004.

Miller, Richard. *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning, 1986.

Vocal Pedagogy in the Choral Rehearsal

Common Issues and Some Possible Solutions

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ISSUE	VOCAL SYMPTOMS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	OPTIONAL SOLUTIONS
Honk	Post nasality Dark Blurred diction High notes flat Lacks “ring” Spread	-Soft palate in low position -Nose now prime resonator	-Beginning of yawn -“hung-ah” started nasal but “ah” in mouth causes soft palate to raise. -Use back consonant “g” and “k” -Ding-ding-ding -“d”, “t”, “l” with energy
Fast, Vibrato with edgy sound	Very fast vibrato Over bright High energy level Edgy	-Psychological- person can be hypertensive -Possible high larynx -Tension in extrinsic muscles of throat around larynx -Vocal folds not approximating efficiently -Support is from throat muscles and not the diaphragm	-Direct attention away from the throat to support in upper abdominal region -Beginning of yawn -Loose jaw -Exercises on dark vowels -Stress depth, darker, richer tone -Speak in dramatic fashion -Sing more inside of oneself
“Toothy” or “Smiley”	-Over-bright -Articulation exaggerated -Very precise diction -Appears happy all of the time	-Pulling lips into exaggerated smile -Horizontal instead of vertical space in mouth and pharynx -Possibly a high larynx -Tension in the jaw	-Beginning of yawn -Deep, darker, richer tone -More oral space -Relax mouth – work for “dumb” look with jaw and tongue as inactive as possible -Use of dark vowels -Dramatic speech -Sing more inside oneself
Edge on Sound or Tightness	-Throatiness -Edgy quality -Close to “twang” but not the same	-Extrinsic muscles of throat are tight -Chin may possibly be pulled in against the larynx -Horizontal rather than vertical concept of oral and pharynx space -jaw and tongue tension	-Beginning of yawn -Freedom of lips -Darker vowels -Dramatic speech -Lower jaw as pitch ascends -Use of vocal fry -Roll head to loosen neck -Encourage “breathiness”
“Muffled” sound	-Vocal sound very dark -Muffled	-Larynx is too low -Lips may cover teeth too much -Lack of breath flow	-Encourage pleasant smile -Work to free the lips -Use patter songs -Fast articulatory exercises -Use of bright vowels
“Twang”	-Edge on the quality of tone with pre-nasal sound	-Tightness in larynx -Conductive resonance transferred to nose bone -High larynx -Tightness in constrictor muscles of pharynx -Too little mouth opening -“Jutted” jaw	-Beginning of yawn -Sighing the onset or use of aspirate “h” or breathiness to initiate -Work of loose jaw -Dramatic speech -Darker, deeper, richer tone
“Breathy”	-Tone not solid -Breathiness of tone -“Teenage” sound	-Cords do not close sufficiently -Inefficient use of breath – ‘seeping’ -Vocal health issues	-Vocalize on bright vowels -Better posture: More support, “Quiet” chest -More emotional involvement -Dramatic speech
Depressed larynx	-Very dark -Has efficient sound as opposed to breathiness -Presence of “ring” -“Pushed”	-Larynx too low -Throat is forcibly held open -Sometimes accompanied by “trumpet lips” -Tongue can be in back of throat -Can also have soft palate down	-Sing more “forward” -Vocalize on brighter vowels -Introduce opposite fault “twang” -Say “angry hangman” -Vocal click -Use consonants z, m, d, t, n, v before bright vowels -Sing “hillbilly”
Depressed larynx with breathiness	-Very breathy -“Pushed” quality -Some post nasality “honk”	-Larynx too low -Air is leaking through the vocal folds -“Pushing” the voice	-Work for point, ring, vibrancy, and vitality -Work with bright vowels -Use a pleasant smile -Use d, m, n before vowels -Ding-ding-ding (ming/ning)
“Necktie tenor”	-Tight sound -Piercing -Too bright -Driven or pushed	-Very high larynx -Vertical rather than horizontal space in mouth and pharynx -Extrinsic muscle tension -Jaw tension -Tongue Tension	-Place singer in a lower range until freedom is gained -Beginning of yawn -Work for free jaw -“Sigh” attack -Work for efficient posture -Dramatic speech -Use of darker vowels -Depth, richer, darker