

All About that Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass: The Instrumentalists' Guide to Conducting Choirs

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Keys to Success

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- + Building Vocal Technique
- + Rehearsal Strategies
- + Literature



Vocal Technique

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The Singer's Breath

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- + - Myth – "Singing with/from the Diaphragm"
 1. The brain sends a signal to the diaphragm to contract once inhalation begins.
 2. This process is similar to how the heart knows when to beat
- + How to engage the singers in a healthy, maximizing breath
 1. hot mashed potato breath (tuba breath)
 2. breathing gym
 3. Filling up a glass from bottom to top

Breath Management

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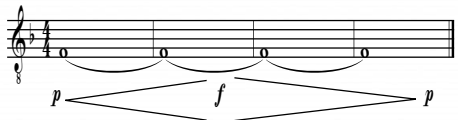
- + Avoid the use of the term breath control. Breath management/support fosters a understanding that is less likely to encourage your singers to use "muscle" in the production of tone.
- + Instrumentalist often buzz the mouthpiece to engage the breath. Buzzing can be just as effective for singers.

Application - Lip buzz or tongue trill throughout vocal range

Breath Management:

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As a clarinetist, long tones are a staple in the development of efficient breathing. *Messa di voce* is how we achieve this in the vocal area. Kinesthetic learning opportunity!



Messa di Voce extended

etc...

Benefits

- ✦ 1. builds stamina through increasing the duration of the sustained note.
- ✦ 2. tone builder!
- ✦ 3. differentiate instruction through kinesthetic learning
- ✦ 4. builds musicianship

Borrowing from the Brass

Unification of registers and working through the break
Do - Re - Do - So - La - So - Do

Rehearsal Strategies

- 1 The Warm - Up
2. Dealing with Words
- 3 But I Passed the Piano Proficiency

The Warm-up

- ✦ Engage the Voice
- ✦ Engage the Ear
- ✦ Rehearsal transition

Engage the Voice

- ✦ Just get the voice moving
 1. Five note "ee" exercise (onset)
 2. Happy-Go-Lucky
 - Men: falsetto to head voice,
 - Ladies: bringing head voice down (no belt)

Engage the Ear

✦ Sing descending solfège scale

1. Encourages vowels unification (how we are going to sing each vowel)
2. Helps improve La, fa, re (trouble spots)
3. Tackles the increase in weight of voice

Engage the Ear

✦ Sing an ascending scale

Bop Exercise

(Borrowed from the marching band)

Do, do-re, do-re-mi, do-re-mi-fa, etc...

1. Helps eliminate the American 'r'
2. Encourages intervallic integrity and singers will sing in tune with themselves better

Engage the Ear

✦ Audiation

One of the most effective tools for training singers to listen with the minds ear.

Application – The National Anthem

Rehearsal Prep

- ### ✦ Modeling – using your voice to demonstrate concepts to be addressed during the piece to foster the transference of these ideas to new pieces. i.e. focus on consonants

Tenor: A wake the happy a wake the singing A wake my voice a wake my soul
 Bass: A wake the happy a wake the singing A wake my voice a wake my soul
 T: and sing
 B:

Dealing with Words

✦ Vocal onset

1. starting and ending notes
2. consonants and vowels
 - Unification (magnet fist/steel lips exercise)
 - Modification (depends on range and tessitura)
 - open vs. closing

Foreign Language

- ### ✦ Get acquainted with International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): Joan Wall – Diction for Singers
- ### ✦ Know the translation or modern equivalent if in old English. It can save you some embarrassment. (Il Bianco il dolce cigno or any Shakespeare text i.e. aunt)

Foreign Language

- ✦ Emotional connection to the piece.

1. *Gloria*
Do - na - no - bis pa - cem, pa - cem. Do - na -
no - bis pa - cem. Do - na - no - bis pa - cem.
2. Do - na - no - bis pa - cem. Do - na - no - bis pa - cem.
3. Do - na - no - bis pa - cem. Do - na - no - bis pa - cem.
Do - na - no - bis pa - cem.

Survival Tips for the Piano “Proficient” Teacher

- ✦ the “add a part” technique
- ✦ music learning aides (technology aides)
 - create tracks in Garage Band
 - search for YouTube tracks
 - <http://www.cyberbass.com/>
- ✦ simplifying piano parts (chording)

Selecting Literature



Things to Consider

- ✦ Diversity of literature
- ✦ Do you like it or does it interest you?
- ✦ What will the students learn/how will they grow?
- ✦ What is the text and what potential issues could arise from singing this text (quality, religion, content etc...)
- ✦ Range/tessitura/voicing

Fast Facts

Range vs. Tessitura

Cheat Sheet

Voicing – what voice types are utilized

SATB – Traditional ranges

Unison – More difficult to sing but useful for developing choral intonation, balance and development of tone.

SAB – The B stand for baritone and is usually too low for young males.

The tendency is to put all of the boys on the B part. Singing S or A could be stigmatizing for your male singers

Three Part Mixed – limited ranges for all parts, labeled Part 1, 2, 3 which makes it less stigmatizing when placing singers on parts.

SA – could be adapted for us with mixed gender unchanged voices or with a few modifications (key, octave) could be used for inexperienced male choruses

TTB – most commonly used voicing for 3 part ensembles. The T2 part can work well for your baritone

TBB – not as common and should be avoided for middle level choirs. The B1 part can be too low for baritone voices.

Locating Lit.

- ✦ CPDL – Choral Public Domain
- ✦ YouTube channels
- ✦ ACDA repertoire pages
- ✦ Look at all resources – Large companies, smaller companies (Music Spoke) and self publishing composers
- ✦ Literature that you could use to combine band and choral ensembles

* Shape note tunes (Billings – When Jesus Wept)

* late Renaissance/early Baroque motets (Gabrieli, Hassler, Monteverdi)

* Renaissance (Vecchi, Morley, Dowland – Come Again Sweet Love Doth Now Invite, Hanaqachap – earliest published polyphonic vocal work in the New World

Other resources for success:

Comprehensive source –
Phillips, K. (2015). Directing the choral music program.

Score Prep/Rehearsal Planning –
Real World Strategies for Success - Sandra Snow

Foundations of Choral Conducting – Kevin Fenton

Changing Voice
Finding Ophelia's Voice, Opening Ophelia's Heart – Lynne Gackle (Women)

Strategies for Teaching Junior High and Middle School Male Singers: Master Teachers
Speak. – Terry Barnham

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Vocal ranges cheat sheet

This is a great tool when you're selecting repertoire, preparing scores or auditioning singers.

It's sometimes easy to forget exactly what constitutes "high" and "low" for a particular voice part, and very useful to have a reminder to hand.

