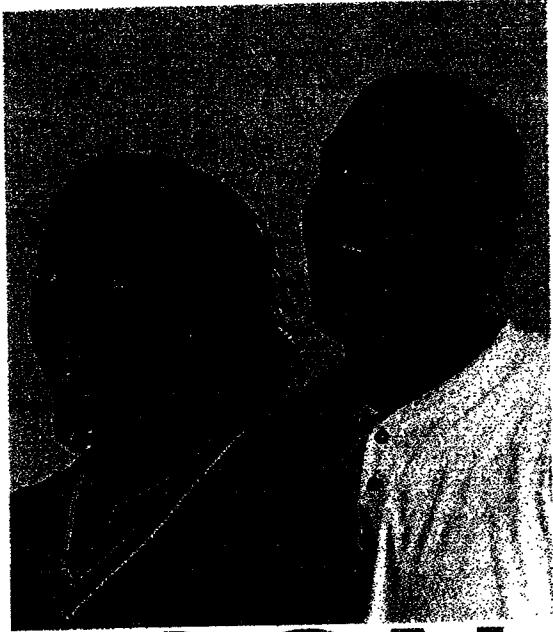


**ACADEMIC
DEVELOPMENT:
JOURNAL
ARTICLE
SYNOPSIS AND
DISCUSSION**

Briggs, Robert (2000). Vocal Warm-Ups: From the Sublime to the Ridiculous. *Teaching Music*, 7(5), 36-39.



PHOTOS BY JIM KIRBY

VOCAL WARM-UPS:

From
the
Sublime
to the
Ridiculous



These exercises should be as varied as the members of the choir themselves.

Conductors of choirs of various levels, talents, and ages, as well as voice teachers and coaches, often spend a good deal of time looking for warm-up materials that achieve the goal of awakening and preparing voices while not becoming boring. They also try to locate materials that enhance the musicality of the group and individual singers.

Probably, no warm-up at all is better than a ritualistic redrubbing of vowels and scales. But, rather than repeating drab vocalization exercises, I recommend basing your warm-ups on musical elements and focusing on ways to awaken not only the voice but also the mind and the breathing mechanism. Using warm-ups that call for careful articulation will make the exercises even more of a wake-up call.

Perhaps a better term for *warm-up exercise* might be *activation exercise* because this term relates to engaging the singer's physical and mental powers to sing choral music. You probably will convey more accurate information to your singers if you say, "Let's do some exercises to activate our voices and brain power," rather than "Okay, now we have to do warm-up exercises." This last statement, when offered by the conductor, is often received with weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth—and that's before the exercises start!

With these ideas in mind, I would like to suggest some contrasting activation exercises that are wonderfully stimulating and range from the sublime to the ridiculous. In between the sublime and the ridiculous exercises are some middle-ground exercises that are meaningful, enjoyable to sing, and enhance musicality. Try all of these exercises with your groups—your singers will give you some wonderful sounds and, perhaps, a few strange looks.

THE FIRST CATEGORY OF ACTIVATION exercises, *the sublime*, incorporates the use of plainchant melodies. Examples of these exercises are provided in Figure 1. These exercises are not as accessible to very young singers as they are to experienced voices, but all singers can find these exercises stimulating and satisfying.

Plainchant melodies work very well as exercises because:

- They usually consist of small (usually five-note) ranges.
- The melodies are historically significant and provide the instructor with an opportunity to help the students discover something about music (especially vocal music) history.
- Ear training is enhanced through the employment of modal scales.
- The melodies sound best when sung unaccompanied, but can also be accompanied by simple chords.
- The melodies transpose easily up or down half or whole steps, as do common vocalization exercises.
- The melodies can be sung on any vowel sound.
- When using the Latin text, the vowels are pure and intonation is enhanced.
- You, or your students, can easily make up your own texts for the melodies.
- The melodies can be used as phrase construction exercises by building to the highest note and then coming down in volume to the end of the melody.
- They can be sung in polyphonic (organum) settings. Try having some of your best singers sing a fourth or fifth above the melody—see how it improves ear training and corrects intonation problems.
- The melodies are musically satisfying and often have the effect of energizing the soul. (Plainchant recordings are often sold in the New Age section of music stores,

although these very old tunes are anything but New Age. However, they are included in that category because of the soothing and energizing benefits they provide to the listener.)

- The melodies are not under copyright and are accessible through most music libraries and some church archives. Published sources are included in the Plainchant Resources sidebar.

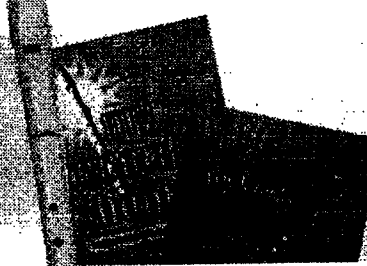
THE SECOND GROUP OF ACTIVATION exercises, *the middle ground*, seems at first glance to be more traditional and scale-like, but is based on the four-note scale rather than the five-note scale. Some conductors may be surprised at how difficult it is for their singers to stop on the fourth scale degree rather than culminating with the sound of the fifth. Figure 2 provides three examples of this type of activation exercise.

In the middle-ground exercises, the lowered fifth degree is incorporated to enhance intonation and is often repeated to give the singers the challenge of singing the lowered fifth-scale degree on the same pitch each time. It often takes a great deal of work to get the singers to perform 1-5-1-5-1 without accidentally singing 1-5-1-6-1, or some variation thereof.

THE THIRD GROUP OF EXERCISES, *the ridiculous*, incorporates the use of tongue twisters sung to simple melodies or scale patterns and requires careful articulation (see Figure 3). These exercises work terrifically with singers of any age because:

- They are challenging to learn and fun to sing.
- They are great for articulation and awakening the brain.
- They can be a source of testing material for young singers.
- They are fun to compose—a conductor can let students write them

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Figure 1. Vocal Exercises Based on Plainchant

Ubi Caritas

U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - mor - De - us i - bi est.
(Where there is charity and love, God is there.)

Puer Natus

Puer na - tus est - no - bis Al - le - li - ia.
(A boy is born to us, Alleluia.)

Modern interp. uses an ff.

Tantum Ergo

Tan - tum er - go sa - cra - men - tum. A - men - .
(So great is this sacrament. Amen.)

Figure 2. Vocal Exercises Based on the Four-note Scale

Various vowel sounds, such as oo or loo, legato, and slow tempo.

Faster tempo, marcato or staccato.

Slower tempo, legato

Figure 3. Vocal Exercises Aiding Articulation

Jane got the jani and the jel - ly joy - ful - ly.

Are our oars oak? Are our oars oak?

Dip - py. do - pey dogs dug dirt down on Den - ton Dud - ley.

Plainchant Resources

Bryden, John R., and David G. Hughes. *An Index of Gregorian Chant*. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.

Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire, Volume 1, Sacred Latin Texts*. Corvallis, OR: Earth Songs, 1988.

Davison, Archibald T., and Willi Appel. *Historical Anthology of Music: Oriental, Medieval, and Renaissance Music*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.

Each teacher or conductor should have a plethora of vocal exercises to avoid boredom in striving for success.

and have the choir sing them.

- They unify the group by giving it a common goal.

You may want to begin having the choir sing "bubble gum" on each of the 1-3-5-3-1 scale degrees, increasing or decreasing by half steps. Try also varying the tempi. When the singers feel pretty confident (smug), have them try "double-bubble gum" in the same pattern. Chances are, you will hear a few "buggle-burns" when you first use this exercise.

In their constant search for activation exercises, voice and choral teachers should aim for freshness,

imagination, and musical enhancement. Exercises should be as varied as the members of the choir themselves. Each teacher or conductor should have a plethora of vocal exercises to avoid boredom in striving for success. I have had much success with these exercises and hope that you find them creative, invigorating, fun, and helpful in preparing and teaching your singers.

By Robert Briggs, instructor of choral music at Rigby High School in Rigby, Idaho.

Academic Development – Article 1

Briggs, Robert (2000). Vocal Warm-ups: From the Sublime to the Ridiculous. Teaching Music. 7(5), 36-39.

I believe that Briggs is correct when he states that the process of teaching vocal warm-ups can often become monotonous. It is important to remember, however, that children of all ages like routine. It gives them a sense of emotional security which is important especially at the beginning of a rehearsal. A routine series of warm-ups is an aid to classroom management because the routine calms the students down and because they know what is expected of them.

Briggs' objection, however, is well-founded. Although classroom routines are important to establish at the beginning of the school year, students' attention wane can if the vocalises become mere drills and critical thinking is hindered. Briggs suggests replacing the word "warm-up exercise" with the term "activation exercise." When, after an initial *activation exercise* sequence has been established, vocal warm-ups should become more varied. The teacher should begin by modifying a single exercise and ensure that all the students have understood the change. Different activation exercises can be added as the old ones are temporarily cast off.

Briggs recommends the use of plainchants as activation exercises. I find that some of his suggestions have great value. The interdisciplinary aspect of using Gregorian melodies as activation exercises provides a unique benefit. With well-prepared lesson plans, the teacher can teach a bit of history as is it related to choral music, as well as some Latin.

Briggs gives some examples in the Lydian and Phrygian modes. This type of

learning is not easily achieved with traditional tonal exercises and is therefore beneficial to students. Briggs states “the melodies sound best when sung unaccompanied, but can also be accompanied by simple chords.” Accompanying the melodies with chords is a notion that I can only grudgingly advocate. The reason for teaching the modes is about far more than producing pleasant sounds. The piano is tuned in equal temperament. Modal music corresponds to the beautiful proportional curve of the harmonic series. Every mode has a unique pattern of intervals. Using a piano which is tuned in equal temperament practically defeats the purpose of singing plainchant. If the chorus vacillates from the starting pitch (usually going flat), a single pitch, perhaps in octaves, should be all that is necessary to reestablish intonation. If this is not sufficient, a single *minor* chord may be played. Playing a minor chord is acceptable for the purposes of retuning because the difference between the natural interval and the tempered interval is only two cents (i.e. 2/100ths of a half-tone). If the teacher plays a major chord, however, the difference between modal and tonal climbs to fourteen cents, too far from acoustical perfection for use in plainchant or Renaissance singing. If the chorus is just learning to sing plainchant, I would only play octaves, perfect fifths, and minor triads, for the purpose of retuning. Even then, I would try to play as sparsely as possible.

I also agree with Briggs statement regarding singing plainchant melodies in parallel organum. The pitfall with using plainchant melodies as activation exercises might be that some students will consider them boring. One remedy for this situation might be to bring in a television set and a videotape recorder and play about thirty seconds from the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. In it, penitent 12th-century monks walk around chanting “Pie Jesu Domine, Dona Eis Requiem,” and then slam their heads with

wooden boards. The hilarity of the scene will most likely motivate students to at least give it a try.

Briggs suggests that the teacher or the students invent text to fit the melody. I remember trying this teaching technique using a lively tonal song with elementary school children in Vienna. I was overjoyed as they wracked their brains, aligning the three mental objects: words, rhythm, and pitches. With high school students, I might play a snippet of the P.D.Q. Bach CD *Hansel and Gretel and Ted and Alice* as a motivator. Musicologist/comedian Peter Schickele elides some traditional Latin text with English words, for example, “Et in terra chicken pox Romana.” or “Keemo Sabe watch’em what you say’um.” Playing a bit of the recording might encourage students to try Briggs’ idea.

Briggs claims that the melodies “often have the effect of energizing the soul.” While I am in favor of using plainchant melodies in chorus class, as a teacher, I must be careful never to violate the separation between Church and State if I teach in a public school.

Another group of activation exercises is based on a four-note scale. On the first line of Figure 2, the teacher may use an interval training technique to help students correctly calculate the distance between the low G and the E. This technique is called “association.” For example, the interval of a major sixth can be understood by using a familiar tune like “My Bonny Lies over the Ocean.” Some teachers disapprove of this technique on the grounds that learning the interval is tied to a particular context and is not transferable to other musical settings. I beg to differ. I believe that having students learn intervals by association can be very beneficial in learning the archetype or exemplary form of the interval. I also believe that these ear-training activation exercises must be

taught without reading any notated music. The “association” technique must be understood as merely a stepping-stone to having a conception of a pure interval in a student’s mind. After a time, a certain aural/kinesthetic memory develops to the point where reliance on the original model is no longer necessary. It is unclear to me how Briggs intends for the last line in Figure 2 to be taught. What verbal instruction does he give the students if they miss the tritone? As for the “1-5-1-5-1” pattern, he isolates the problem very well but offers no apparent solution.

Were I in Briggs’ scenario, I would discuss the “diabolus in musica” concept from the medieval period. I would then illustrate by playing contrasting examples: “Here comes the bride” (perfect fourth), “Maria” (tritone) and “Star Wars” or “Ben Hur” (perfect fifth). The teacher can first have the students recognize the intervals with a little game by asking the students to raise their hands. The teacher plays a tritone on the piano and then says “Raise your hands if you thought that was ‘Here comes the bride,’” and so on. The next step is to actually have them produce the intervals with the voice. The teacher takes one of the SATB sections at a time and challenges them to sing “Ben Hur” starting on C. The students will be listening critically to their peers! Finally, the teacher can ask for volunteers to sing a given interval alone before the other students.

The third group, the “ridiculous” activation exercises looks like a lot of fun. The trick to sing “Jane got the jam” is to accent each strong beat, then sing the other beats lightly. Part of the difficulty with “Are our oars oak?” resides in the fact the word “our” is a diphthong, yet it is written over a single quarter-note. When they have puzzled the problem out a bit, I can let them in on my little trick: notate the second beat as a sixteenth followed by a dotted eighth. The “a” in “oars” is silent, so it is visually deceptive.

“Dippy dopey dogs” is a real tongue-twister. Its secret lies in singing it lightly. The activation exercises on “bubble gum” and “double-bubble gum” are very cute indeed and will probably make for a learning a truly fun experience. The teacher might also try alternating these exercises with some tongue-twister passages from some real vocal literature, for example, the “Matter-Patter” trio from Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Ruddigore*.

In sum, I can adopt a number of useful suggestions from this article. I can substitute the phrase “activation exercises” when I would otherwise say “warm-ups.” I had an opportunity to reflect upon why and how I will use plainchant in my class. The article encouraged me to consider just how I intend to bring ear-training activities into the body of my performance class. Finally, the article has provided me with three excellent vocal exercises which aid in the enunciation of text.

Maintaining Vocal Health

Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle said, "Although nature has gifted us all with voices, correct singing is the result of art and study." Everyone owns a musical instrument that is not made in a factory and cannot be purchased in a store. Unfortunately, few realize what a special gift this instrument—the voice—is or have any idea of how to take care of it.

A common misunderstanding of the voice is epitomized in the story about the guest choral conductor who had worked with a group of high school singers. After the performance, a mother thanked him for the wonderful experience it had given her son—and especially for leaving him hoarse (and quiet) for the rest of the weekend!

Although a youthful quality in young persons' voices is something very special, it is possible that this director expected to hear the kind of choral sound that would come from a group of adults. It is true that in high school athletics, competitors are expected to give their all. But do choral directors know that the vocal cords develop on a different schedule than arm or leg muscles? The body hasn't finished growing, on average, until about age twenty-one.

We all receive false impressions of what natural voice quality is like by listening to radio, television, recordings, and the amplified sounds in

movies and Broadway shows. Many performers in these media, in fact, have very short careers because they overuse their voices. The important thing for conductors to know is what a voice can do naturally—not what it can be "made" to do.

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A CHORAL DIRECTOR WORKING with singers might be compared to a coach working with athletes. Just as a coach should know how to throw a ball, so anyone working with voices should know something about his or her own voice, as well as what constitutes healthy singing. In fact, choral directors actually act as singing teachers, since very few students receive private voice lessons.

Unfortunately, not all singing teachers are aware of some of the important principles that need to be kept in mind for voice training.

Part of the problem is that there are no set standards or regulations for determining who is qualified to give individual voice lessons. Even many

of the best teachers just assume that teaching voice is primarily an art and hope for good luck with naturally talented students.

Presented below are a few basic principles that any voice teacher should be aware of. These principles are based on research as to what is healthy for the voice and on my experience teaching voice since 1932. If you can follow them as you continue developing your own voice, you will be able to use them to help any student who wants to learn how to sing.

- Before you sing, start with stretching exercises to relax your whole body. You will find that your muscles can be tense anywhere, from the feet up. Wherever you sense tension, find and use an exercise that will relieve it. Simply using your intuition and imagination to observe tension and performing relaxation exercises to relieve it can be a help.

- Because your body is the instrument, proper alignment (posture) is essential. The various parts of the body cannot interact freely if posture is not given attention, and if the posture is good, the rib cage will be comfortable when it is elevated in singing.

- As the breath is taken in, you should feel an expansion in the area between the bottom of the ribs and the belt line. The area below the belt line remains firm. This type of breathing, often called abdominal breathing, may have been lost and will have to be relearned. You can see how naturally it occurs in a sleeping baby.

- When singing, just let the air flow out naturally without pushing. Although the vocal folds adjust automatically to your preparation for singing a particular pitch, a flow of air actually activates them (B. Wyke, "Neurological Aspects of Phonatory Control Systems in the Larynx," in *Care of the Professional Voice, Part II*, 1979). An easy flow of air will draw the folds into a vibration that is known as the Bernoulli effect (J. Van der Berg, "On the

Resistance and the Bernoulli Effects of the Human Larynx," *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, no. 29, 1957). When working with students, you can demonstrate that just letting the air flow out naturally is all that is needed by having them form an easy hissing sound and letting the air flow do the work: "Hissssssss."

- Another easy way to initiate a sound is to vibrate the lips in what is called a "lip roll." If a lip roll cannot be accomplished, perhaps the rolled "r" can be used. If that doesn't work, try sliding a sustained "s" into a soft "z": "Ssssszzzzz." Slide these sounds in a downward inflection. A "Prrr" with the lips or a "Trrrr" with the tongue may also be practiced lightly.

- Vocalizing from the bottom of the scale up is one of the most damaging practices in vocal training (J. S. Rubin et al., *Special Considerations for the Professional Voice User*, 1995; H. H. Curtis, *Voice Building and Tone Placing*, 1973). Especially in early practice, start tones from above and let them flow downward in a pattern of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 or 8, 5, 3, 1, in an easy, medium range. Let the second scale be a half step lower and continue in a descending sequence to a comfortably low note. Then start again a bit higher than the first time and repeat the exercise. Use an "m" hum or "Hoo" or "Huh" when you teach beginners. Any vowels that are easy to sing without face or jaw tension can be used.

- To sing higher notes, it is necessary to use a set of throat muscles called the cricothyroids, which are not brought into play in ordinary conversation (Ingo R. Titze, *Principles of Voice Production*, 1994). While no one can hear his or her own voice the way it sounds to someone else, everyone has a quality of voice identified with speaking that covers about the lower third of the range, and every healthy voice has the potential to sing in the upper two-thirds of his or her range. To discover the quality of voice found in the cricothyroids, it

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is necessary to lighten up the vocal production. Because the upper part of the voice will seem strange at first and the high notes will sound very weak, singers may mistakenly try to make these notes sound like the lower speaking-quality tones. It is important to remember that high notes have a different quality than low notes in all musical instruments, including the voice. Remember, if it feels easy, it is probably right.

■ To allow the upper and lower parts of the voice to mix or combine, it is necessary to let the larynx rest in a low position without pulling it down (J. Sundberg, "The Acoustics of the Singing Voice," *Scientific American*, March 1977). When an easy breath is taken, the larynx has a tendency to lower naturally. Try to let it stay there in all singing. Use the voice in a light, easy manner in the beginning. In time and with practice, it will grow to its natural potential.

■ In ascending passages, all weight should be taken out of the voice. Scale patterns of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 or 8, 5, 3, 1, 3, 5, 8, 5, 3, 1 can be introduced to gradually ascend the scale. Going up the scale might be compared to a roller coaster going over the second rise on its own momentum, with no extra push or force.

TEN MINUTES OF VOCAL EXERCISES at the beginning of each rehearsal can work wonders, and your students will prosper if you can understand the above principles and learn the techniques associated with them as they apply to your own voice. Vocalizing with a light quality is best for all age groups, and a good choral rehearsal exercises the brain as much as it does the voice. New music can be read through very lightly at first to establish pitches, rhythms, and tempos, as well as diction. Singing that observes the music's dynamics can then follow in a natural manner (O. L. Brown, *Discover Your Voice: How to*

Develop Healthy Voice Habits, 1996). Teaching using this approach all the way from grade school up through high school and college should produce a sizable pool of talent for choral groups, as well as a number of voices to choose from for solo parts.

Trust your common sense in working with your own voice and in training others. Remember, if something isn't easy for you, it probably isn't right for students. It is better to do too little than to do too much. Also bear in mind that

voice development progresses at different rates, depending on the age and the individual, and that voices vary in potential size, range, and quality. In the entire world, no two people are exactly alike, and each comes from different backgrounds and experiences.

All sorts of bad sounds can be made on almost any musical instrument without damage to the instrument itself. With the human voice, however, every time sounds are being practiced, habits are being formed that can be either good or bad. If the sounds are not easy to produce, the chances are they are harmful. Excess volume can damage any voice, as well as displease the ear. Voices need time to grow. Be patient, and both you and your students will be rewarded by having developed healthy voice habits.

By following the basic principles presented above, you can train your choir singers without straining their

voices or making them hoarse. Abuse of the voice in the early years can affect the health of the larynx in later life. And, while many high school athletes may push themselves as they struggle for success, I sincerely doubt that any choral conductor wants his or her choir to work so hard that it sounds like a cheering squad. ■

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By Oren L. Brown, voice faculty emeritus at the Juilliard School, private voice teacher in New York City, and faculty member at the Voice Foundation.

Academic Development – Article 2

Brown, Owen (1999). Maintaining Vocal Health. Teaching Music, 6(5), 33-35.

This is an excellent article. Owen Brown has been teaching voice since 1932. He provides the reader with information regarding the care of the voice in language which is direct and easy for teachers to understand. His teachings affirm and emphasize the academic work I did in my vocal pedagogy class.

Brown's slant to the article is that academic achievement in chorus class differs fundamentally from academic achievement in athletics. Brown points out the high school singers can suffer from hoarseness from incorrect singing. He makes known the fact that physical development in young people is not completed until the age of roughly twenty-one. The choral director is often the only source of reliable information on vocal health since most students do not take private voice lessons and there are no standardized qualifications for voice instructors. Stretching exercises and attention proper posture must always be a part of the curriculum. Brown uses simple phrases which can be repeated verbatim to students regarding breath management, for example: "You should feel an expansion in the area between the bottom of the ribs and the belt line," and "Just let the air flow out naturally without pushing." Practical exercises such as hissing and lip rolling are recommended.

While many voice teachers teach vocal arpeggios starting from the bottom up. Brown recommends placing the notes high and letting the notes "flow downward in a pattern or 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 or 8, 5, 3, 1." It is necessary to sing more lightly when ascending into the upper register. The procedure is also used to achieve a smooth blending of the vocal registers. In general, Brown advocates singing with little weight in the voice. This

method avoids pushing or forcing. Finally, Brown stresses the connection between the mind and the body to ensure that only good habits are formed. Sensible use of the voice in adolescence will preserve the health of the vocal mechanism in later life.

I think that it is to Brown's credit that in this article he distills an enormous amount of literature on vocal technique and pedagogy into three pages. In order to be both succinct and thorough, he gives numerous additional sources of information to which the diligent teacher can refer.

I cannot agree more strongly with his emphasis on not overusing the voice. Indeed, I believe that Brown would take issue with some of the solos indicated in the NYSSMA Manual (July, 2003) for Soprano 1, grade 6. Arias from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are appropriate for advanced high school students. Opera excerpts from the late nineteenth century are questionable. I believe that some members of the NYSSMA Vocal Solos Committee have only considered the range requirements in assessing the level of difficulty, without taking into account the *weight* of the voice necessary to produce those tones. While Mozart's "Una Donna a Quindici Anni" from *Così Fan Tutte* may be a good audition piece for All-State candidate, Puccini's "Musetta's Waltz" from *La Bohème* is certainly not.¹ I studied opera conducting at the Conservatorio "Giuseppe Verdi" in Milan, Italy from 1985 until 1988. Several voice teachers there lamented the fact that too many of their colleagues are starting their students on heavy repertory at an early age.

Brown's comments concerning lip rolls and tongue trills match perfectly with the sound advice given by Charlotte Adams in her videotape *Daily Workout for a Beautiful*

¹ New York State School Music Association. NYSSMA Manual: A Resource Suitable for Contests and Evaluation Festivals. 27th ed. Webster: New York State School Music Association, 2003.

Voice. Adams adds that this exercise should be done while opening the eyes widely and lifting the eyebrows to help place the sound in the head. Although Adams works with an all-female choir in the video, she remarks that her method works for male voices as well.²

Brown's firm stand on beginning vocal exercises from the top down is reiterated by Henry Leck who says "Don't be afraid to begin a vocalise up above the break."³ Brown's vocal concept also coincides with Leck's on the subject of register blending. Brown discusses the function of the larynx and Leck shows footage of laryngeal videostroboscopy at different stages of the boy's changing voice. Leck also conducts interviews with his students. All students agree that starting the exercises above the register break is very beneficial.

Finally, Brown reminds us that developing healthy vocal habits begin in elementary school and extend through the college years. Again, with regard to male voices, choral educators on the university level will be grateful for students' sound vocal preparation. Jerry Blackstone, director of the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club maintains "When, during those early teen years a young man's voice begins changing, please encourage them to keep singing, hear them sing often, and place them in sections where the range of the parts are comfortable. Keep them singing in head voice, as well as in their new chest voice. We usually don't *lose* the head voice, we just add low notes. So give your singers opportunities to utilize their entire range. Be creative in finding repertoire that includes parts comfortable for both changed and unchanged voices."⁴

This article provided me with some stock phrases concerning breath management.

² Archibeque, Charlene ed. Daily Workout for a Beautiful Voice. Presenter Charlotte Adams. Videocassette. Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 1991.

³ Leck, Henry, teacher. The Boys Changing Voice: Take the High Road. Videocassette. Hal Leonard, 2001.

⁴ Blackstone, Jerry, teacher. Working with Male Voices: Developing Vocal Technique in the Choral Rehearsal. Videocassette. Santa Barbara Music Publishing, 1998.

It also changed the way I now think about the role of arpeggios in choral activation exercises. In addition, it made consider the repertoire I will want my students to prepare for their NYSSMA auditions, and it caused me to confirm Brown's statements with comments made by other well-known choral educators.

Armstrong, Matthew (2001). Adjudicated Sight-reading for the Choral Ensemble: An Incentive for Musical Literacy. *Choral Journal*, 41(10), 21-30.

Adjudicated Sight-Reading for the Choral Ensemble: An Incentive for Musical Literacy

by Matthew Armstrong

In the spring of 1992, following a two-year trial period, choral sight-reading officially became a required part of the Ohio Music Education Association's (OMEA) district and state-level adjudicated events. The move was an incentive on a statewide scale to improve the overall quality of choral music instruction in Ohio. The OMEA publication, *Triad*, offered a series of articles that outlined specific sight-reading requirements and suggestions for preparation.¹ Nearly ten years later, the sight-reading process in Ohio continues to be controversial. Some directors feel it has strengthened the overall musicianship of their choral ensembles. Others have dropped out of the adjudications process in response to frustration at failing to develop a rehearsal strategy that leads to sight-reading mastery.

Ironically, there seems to be no significant correlation between choral groups that perform rehearsed numbers at a high level of mastery and those that sight-read well. A three-year review of final ratings from state-level OMEA adjudicated events (1996-98) indicates that, in a number of cases, choirs that received superior ratings for their performance on the floor (rehearsed numbers) received only average ratings in sight-reading.

Although choral directors generally agree that the teaching of sight-reading is important, many disagree as to the best way to teach it.² Directors commonly rely on rote approaches to introduce new choral literature: students are asked to recite

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Circle Rating of this Performance The Ohio Plan of Adjudication: The five-rating plan will be used.

- I Rating I — An outstanding sight-reading with very few technical errors or recovery problems
- II Rating II — An unusual reading in many respects, but not worthy of the highest rating due to minor defects in technique, ineffective interpretation, or improper part-singing
- III Rating III — An acceptable reading showing accomplishments and marked promise, but lacking essential qualities
- IV Rating IV — An inadequate sight-reading effort showing many technical errors in rhythmic and interval accuracy
- V Rating V — A sight-reading effort indicating deficiencies in most of the essential factors in the fundamentals of sight-reading. This rating should be used only when the group cannot complete a single read-through.

The Ohio Plan of Adjudication

text; notes and rhythms are pounded out one part at a time and then pieced back together; musical elements are added; and with repeated drilling, the piece is learned. This approach may result in a polished performance, but there is some question as to how effectively it fosters the musical literacy of the individual student.³ Students should be able to apply previously acquired musical knowledge to the learning of new literature and add to that body of knowledge with the guidance of the director. The adjudicated sight reading forum offers choral directors the opportunity to benefit from the comments of experienced professionals in assessing the musical literacy of their choral ensemble(s).⁴

I participated in the OMEA adjudications process as an Ohio music educator and adjudicator from 1990 to 1995. In my current role as a teacher-training professional, I have an ongoing interest in discovering strategies that will improve the quality of choral music instruction. This article explores the value of adjudicated choral sight-reading as an incentive for teaching musical literacy.

Sight-Reading in Choral Music Education

Teaching children to sight-sing was at the heart of the music education curriculum in the United States until the early twentieth century. When Lowell Mason first initiated his campaign to bring music into the public schools in 1838, the principal rationale was to improve the overall ability of the nation's children to sing.⁵ *The Normal Music Course*, written by John W. Tufts and first published in 1883, contains "a series of exercises, studies, and songs, defining and illustrating the art of sight-reading; progressively arranged from the first conception and production of tones to the most advanced choral practice."⁶ The exercises progress from simple, one-line melodies to part

songs that stress patriotic and devotional themes. In addition to focusing on producing good tone quality and developing a sense of key center and tonal function through the use of solfa, the series stresses teaching basic music theory as well. Intervallic and key requirements become more challenging as the series advances. A review of the preface to the series gives some interesting insight into the importance placed on vocal music reading at that time:

The effort has been made . . . to apply and to exemplify the universal principles of sound pedagogy. Grateful acknowledgment is here made of the generous favor with which the "Normal Music Course" has been received by the public, and the cordial and continuous support of the large and constantly increasing number of distinguished educators and directors of music who have made it the basis of their work in the schools.⁷

With the emergence of the child-centered approach to education in the 1930s, music reading was considered secondary to musical enjoyment.⁸

With the emergence of the child-centered approach to education in the 1930s, music reading was considered secondary to musical enjoyment.⁸ The time taken to teach "the basics" was replaced by rote learning, a method seen as a more direct route to musical pleasure. The record player became more prevalent as a teaching aid in schools. The excitement of "dropping the needle" and singing along made the singing experience more fun. Since children had traditionally been well-

versed in the basics, music educators assumed that students would still process the information in a musically literate way. Over time, however, the lack of attention to good reading skills and proper ear training would take its toll.

Another factor contributing to the erosion of good sight-singing skills was the surge in popularity of instrumental music following World War I, attributed chiefly to John Philip Sousa and the desire for each community to have its own military-style band. General music curricula were adjusted to emphasize letter names for pitches rather than mnemonic cues such as solfa syllables that focused on key centers and tonal relationships.⁹

As the call for educational reform was sounded in the 1990s, a stronger emphasis was placed on learner outcomes, forcing music educators to take a closer look at the effectiveness of their teaching methods. A comprehensive curricular design that leads to musical literacy has become the standard.¹⁰ At the secondary level, exploring ways in which high school mu-

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sicians process unfamiliar music literature has become a means for addressing this call for standards. What has emerged is an awareness that instrumentalists and vocalists experience music reading in significantly different ways.

Choral directors are always thrilled to find a significant number of instrumentalists in their singing groups. The general assumption is that instrumentalists are proficient readers. In contrast, directors tend to assume that singers do not read well. Why is this? Can information be gained from this knowledge that will facilitate the overall reading ability of the choral ensemble?

The theoretical answer lies in the process the instrumentalist goes through to produce a given melodic line: through manipulation of a key, the instrumentalist makes an immediate connection between notes on the page, the sound of pitch, and the movement of melodic intervals.¹¹ As a result, a visual, aural, and kinesthetic connection is made simultaneously. Basic learning theory supports the idea that learning takes place more effectively when sensory perceptions are combined.¹² By comparison, singers have no key to manipulate. Therefore, the connection process is a less tangible one. The pitch must first be identified within the singer's mind, then reproduced by way of the vocal mechanism, an unstable instrument, continually developing, subject to general physical and mental condition, and often intonationally inaccurate.¹³ In addition, the way in which instrumental parts are conventionally notated allows players to focus on one line of notes at a time. By comparison, choral singers are asked to read a score where numerous melodic lines are present on the page and where text and expression markings are often slightly removed from notes, requiring the performer to shift eye focus constantly.¹⁴ The combination of these challenges makes the job of the singer a less exact science, impeding the kind of immediate sensory feedback that is regularly experienced by an instrumentalist. Trying to overcome these obstacles can become a source of frustration for the student and the director. Whereas rote drilling may provide a temporary "fix," long-term gains are usually minimal.¹⁵

By applying the knowledge gained

from their instrumental experiences, singers who have had an instrumental background can often provide a level of self-assessment that enhances their sight-reading abilities and enables them to read at a higher level of competence. For choral students who have not had this background, the role of the choral director becomes vital. Taking advantage of the skills of musically experienced students, directors can devise strategies that allow

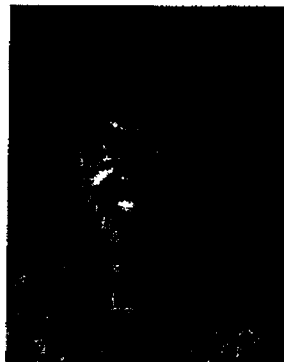
stronger singers to help weaker ones and encourage all singers to function more independently. Ultimately, our goal as music educators should be to provide our students with the skills to achieve musical literacy.¹⁶ As students become musically literate, they develop more positive attitudes toward music and themselves as musicians. They become more actively involved in the learning process and eager to add to their musical knowledge. It is

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hoped they gain a lifelong appreciation of music that will accompany them long after they are no longer under our influence as educators. Teaching students to sight-read effectively is a major step toward achieving musical literacy.

A Closer Look at Choral Rehearsal Techniques in Ohio

Two studies by Ohio choral directors have been undertaken to investigate the techniques used for teaching choral sight-reading. In 1984, Gary Guzy found many choral programs were performance-driven, leading many directors to choose rehearsal techniques focusing on learning

literature quickly and efficiently, in lieu of those that would develop sound theoretical knowledge. Expression markings, time signatures, and note values were most frequently emphasized, since they related most directly to performance preparation. In analyzing approaches to reading rhythm, Guzy determined that directors most often chose to speak lyrics in rhythm, a rote approach ineffective in reinforcing rhythmic literacy (accurate counting, awareness of note values, etc.). Techniques that would effectively reinforce rhythmic literacy (count singing, note counting, and Kodály/Orff rhythmic syllables) were seldom employed. In analyzing approaches to reading pitch, Guzy found that directors most often chose to sing notes on a neutral syllable, again, a rote approach that would not effectively teach students to recognize pitch relationships, but instead would focus on "getting the notes learned." Techniques that facilitate an understanding of pitch relationships (numbers, letter names, solfa) were used by some directors, but infrequently.¹⁷

In evaluating activities that combine sensory perceptions to improve sight-reading skills, Guzy noted that choral directors rarely used written work (rhythmic or melodic dictation) to test for aural comprehension, rarely employed Curwen handsigns, or conducting patterns as kinesthetic manipulatives, and rarely read a new piece without the aid of a piano.¹⁸ A small number of directors previewed unfamiliar music to identify rhythmic and tonal patterns, an analytical technique that would certainly facilitate musical literacy if used regularly and effectively. Guzy also emphasized the importance of encouraging students to use their inner hearing to rehearse music mentally, even when their individual part is not singing.¹⁹

In terms of sight-reading material, most directors reported that they used music being prepared for performance for this purpose, though few presented methods, materials, and musical elements in a way that provided a well-structured sequence of sight-reading instruction. Even though many were not incorporating sight-reading into their regular rehearsal routine, the average director felt that effective sight-reading instruction was important to the success of a high

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school choral program. Ineffective previous instruction of students in the elementary and middle school grades, various abilities among students in choral groups, and pressures to perform were cited as reasons for falling short of maintaining a focus on reading skills.²⁰

In 1994, Martin Sunderland observed six randomly selected choral ensembles from the state of Ohio whose OMEA ratings indicated different levels of sight-reading proficiency to determine characteristics that might be related to sight-reading skill. Like Guzy, Sunderland concluded that, whereas most choral directors consider music-reading skills important, few devote the necessary rehearsal time to developing those skills.²¹ He observed predominantly rote techniques led by "note-pounding" from the piano for the teaching of new literature.²²

Sunderland identified those ensembles that sight-read with high levels of proficiency as having the following characteristics: 1) the ensembles contained significant numbers of students who in-

Like Guzy, Sunderland concluded that, whereas most choral directors consider music-reading skills important, few devote the necessary rehearsal time to developing those skills.²¹

formed works from a variety of styles and musical periods; 4) the ensembles spent less time on daily opening exercises and more time on rehearsing music literature; 5) the groups were engaged in more SATB rehearsal segments with few sectional rehearsal segments and minimal teacher instruction; 6) group members indicated a stronger preference for classical music; 7) students indicated that, when learning new music, they tend to look more at notes than words; 8) students talked less in rehearsals; and 9) students tended to be more focused on the score, even when their individual part was tacit.²³

In comparison, ensembles that demonstrated low levels of sight-reading proficiency had these characteristics: 1) students entered high school with little previous experience in music reading; 2) ensembles had minimal performances and performed primarily pop tunes; 3) the ensembles spent longer periods of time drilling warm-up exercises; 4) students indicated a preference for learning music

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by hearing their individual part played on the piano; 5) group members indicated a stronger preference for popular music as heard on the radio; 6) students indicated that, when learning new music, they tended to look more at words than notes; and 7) students were rarely focused on the score during rehearsal and engaged in talking when another part was being rehearsed.²⁴

Sunderland stressed that the most important factor in developing the sight-reading ability of the choral ensemble is the commitment and skill of the director. He found that the influence of school principals was negligible when it came to promoting the teaching of musical literacy, basically due to their lack of musical understanding. The support, or lack of support, by administrators was most

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affected by the performance quality of the ensemble and the public's reaction to it. Sunderland supports the continuation of adjudicated sight-reading for choral ensembles as an external influence that motivates and rewards directors and students for developing proficient musical skills.²⁵

Implications

The results of these two studies reflect my experience as a music educator and adjudicator. School and community expectations often dictate the performance demands of a music program, and directors resort to rote techniques to meet the demand quickly and efficiently. We inhibit the musical development of our students, however, and in part limit their future success when we fail to maintain a focus on musical literacy. The demand for choral groups to perform will not go away and, indeed, the application of skills through performance should be a primary objective in a quality choral curriculum. A rehearsal approach that leads to the mastery of literature while facilitating musical literacy is needed.

One cannot ignore the importance of laying a proper musical foundation in the elementary and junior high grades to foster the musical development of students. By the time they reach high school, choral students should: 1) be able to look at a piece of music and identify basic musical symbols; 2) be able to articulate the meaning of these symbols and how they are used in context; 3) have a rudimentary understanding of where a particular piece of music fits in a historical context and be able to identify general stylistic characteristics of a given period; 4) be able to

recognize melodic and rhythmic patterns in a piece of music and accurately perform these with minimal assistance; and 5) be able to talk intelligently about the text of a piece and describe the overall effect created by the synthesis of words and music. In short, effective sight-reading techniques should teach students to do basic score analysis, a practice that, with proper application and reinforcement, will facilitate the learning of new literature and lead to musical literacy.

Applying the Knowledge

At right is a design of techniques to assist choral directors in facilitating the discovery process and adding to the musical knowledge base of their students as new choral literature is introduced.

Intervallic and Rhythmic Warm-up Drills

As part of daily choral warm-ups, directors are encouraged to drill students in exercises that develop a sense of intervallic awareness and rhythmic accuracy. Ideally, these exercises should be linked to the literature being taught. The exercises should be done in small chunks for a period of time not to exceed three to five minutes per day.

Intervallic awareness can be developed through the use of solfa techniques. A large scale version of a solfa chart, as shown in Figure 1, should be placed prominently in the front of the room. The director (or a selected student) should randomly point to syllables while students sing them. Begin simply with familiar intervals (Do, Mi, Sol, La). The difficulty level should be gradually increased to include chromatic intervals. With practice, students will develop a sense of tonal memory that can be transferred to any given piece of choral literature.

Another effective exercise that develops intervallic awareness and rhythmic accuracy combines solfa and count-singing as shown in Figure 2. Performance symbols are placed under the melodic line.

The count-singing technique can be linked to any passage within a given piece of literature and may be performed with or without pitch. The solfa symbols allow students to identify the melodic line, focusing on key center and tonal relation-

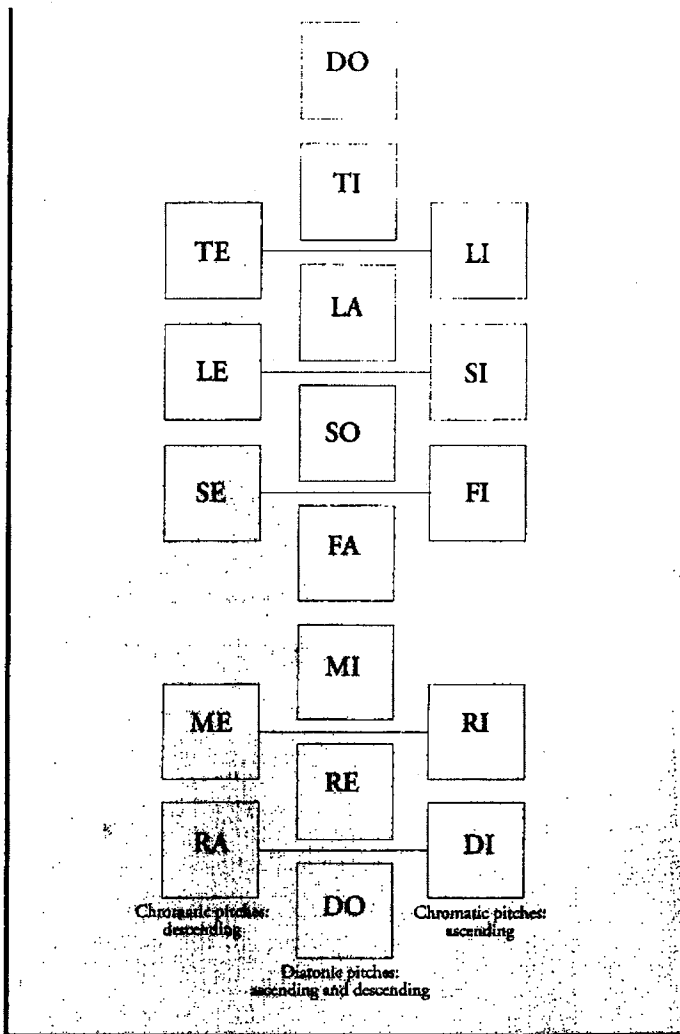


Figure 1. Solfa Chart. Source: Adapted from Grant Newman, *Teaching Children Music* (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1989), 317.

Figure 2.

ships. Students will find this challenging at first, but with repeated practice, it will improve their intervalic/rhythmic accuracy. Again, the key to success is to begin simply and gradually increase the level of difficulty. With each of these exercises, the director should explain and reinforce the mental process in which students need to engage in order to achieve success, encouraging the development of inner hearing.

Discovery Time

As a new piece of choral literature is introduced, students should be challenged to discover important musical information contained in the score. Directors are encouraged to facilitate these discovery sessions with the group. This is a time when students can be paired together, stronger musicians with weaker ones, to assist one another in the discovery process. Students should have pencils ready and be encouraged to write any information that will assist them in learning the piece directly in the score. Directors may also wish to have students complete a

As a new piece of choral literature is introduced, students should be challenged to discover important musical information contained in the score.

discovery worksheet as the new piece is discussed.

The discovery process should include, but is certainly not limited to, the following steps:



- Ask students to analyze pertinent information contained on the first page of the score. Questions could include: a) What key is the piece

in? Encourage students to look at the key signature and the opening chord. Is it major or minor? On what solfa syllable does each part enter? Does the piece modulate or shift tonalities at any point? b) What is the time signature of the piece? Is the meter consistent throughout? What is the tempo marking? How will this tempo affect the movement of rhythm in their individual parts? c) Ask students to identify the composer of the piece and the author of the poetry. This is an opportunity to supply pertinent facts, not only about the composer and poet, but also about the historical context in which the piece fits and stylistic characteristics of the period.

- Pair students and give them three to five minutes to analyze a portion (one or two phrases) of their individual vocal line, looking for intervalic relationships, tricky

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rhythmic or melodic passages, repeated tones or sequences, etc. Encourage them to look at the texture of the piece and determine how their part relates to the others. Call upon a representative from each section to share the information they have discovered.

- Count-sing the portion of the piece that has just been analyzed, the first time with the piano, the second time without. After the first reading, ask students to take a few seconds to identify and correct problem spots before the second reading. A third reading may be done with solfa syllables to emphasize melodic line, key center, and tonal relationships. To prepare students for this step, the solfege exercises performed in the warm-up drill should be designed to include similar intervals.

- Have students read the text for the portion of the piece that has just been sung and ask them to convey its meaning. If the text is in a foreign language, this is an opportunity to share the translation.

- Sing the passage with text (with or without piano).

The entire process should take a maximum of fifteen to twenty minutes. At this point, it is recommended that the piece be put aside and the rehearsal continued. In subsequent rehearsals, the discovery information presented in this lesson can be reviewed and a new portion of the piece introduced. As students begin to gain a sense of the whole, encourage them to discover the form of the piece, the overall meaning of the text, and any pertinent stylistic characteristics. It is important for this process that students be actively engaged in singing as much as possible, and teacher talk kept to a minimum. The more students are actively involved in the discovery process, the more meaning they will derive from it.

Once students become comfortable with this process, directors may wish to administer some type of individual assessment. Singing exams or dictation exer-

cises can be used to determine individual levels of mastery and identify which specific areas of concentration should receive more focus.

As students gain mastery of this technique, their ability to sight-read successfully in the adjudicated situation will increase. Students will feel more confident about their ability to analyze and understand how a given piece of music is constructed. By applying these skills, we will produce choirs with higher levels of musical literacy, able to synthesize words and music in a musically sensitive way.

Conclusion

With proper guidance and instruction, the challenges of teaching the choral singer to sight-read effectively can be met. By including choral sight reading as a part of the adjudications process, we afford ourselves as choral directors an incentive to remain accountable, and provide ourselves and our students an opportunity to benefit from the expertise of other experienced choral musicians. This study revealed a need for teacher training programs to emphasize choral techniques that promote musical literacy and focus less on rote teaching.

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Just as public education affords every student the opportunity to achieve literacy in other academic subjects, each should have the opportunity to achieve musical literacy as well. Music educators must take this responsibility seriously and continue to discover new ways to introduce students to the joy of music. By producing musically literate young people, we will create a society more deeply rooted in humanity, more culturally aware, and more artistically appreciative.

Notes

¹ The large-group adjudicated choral events now include a two-step procedure: a) Choral groups continue the traditional process of performing three prepared numbers in an open performance area, one of which must be chosen from a required list. A panel of three adjudicators gives written and recorded comments and awards a rating of I-V (I=high, V=low). b) Upon completion of this portion of the event, groups are ushered to a private sight-reading area, where sight-reading materials are distributed. Directors are given five minutes to study the score and give instructions to the ensemble. The group then does two readings of the piece: the first with piano, the second without. Directors are given the

opportunity to make additional comments in between the two readings. For the sight-reading portion of the event, one adjudicator prepares written comments and awards a rating of I-V. Sight-reading materials are commissioned by OMEA and held under tight security to assure fairness. Groups enter the event in a classification from AA (most difficult) to C (least difficult) based on ability and determined by the director. The final rating is an average of those awarded by all four adjudicators. Ohio Music Education Association, O.M.E.A. Rules and Regulations, 13th Ed., (O.M.E.A.: 1994).

² David M. Bell, "In Search of Waldo: The Muse of Choral Sight Singing," *O.M.E.A. Triad* 59, no. 3 (December 1991-January 1992), 32.

³ David Bauguess, "A Catalyst for Better Choirs," *O.M.E.A. Triad* 58, no. 2 (November 1990), 37.

⁴ Steven M. Demorest and William V. May, "Sight Singing Instruction in the Choral Ensemble: Factors Related to Individual Performance," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 43, no. 2 (Summer 1995), 157.

⁵ Bell, 32.

⁶ John W. Tufts and H. E. Holt, *The Normal Music Course: A Series of Exercises, Studies, and Songs, Defining and Illustrating the*

Art of Sight Reading, 2nd ed., First Reader (Boston: Silver Burdett, 1898), 1.

⁷ Tufts and Holt, *The Normal Music Course*, New Ed., Second Reader (Boston: Silver Burdett, 1901), 4.

⁸ Bell, 32.

⁹ Bell, 37.

¹⁰ Mary Ellen Junda, "Developing Readiness for Music Reading," *Music Educators Journal* 81, no. 2 (September 1994), 37.

¹¹ Samuel D. Miller, "Literacy for the Beginning and Intermediate High School Choir," *Choral Journal* 20, no. 7 (March 1980), 11.

¹² Patricia Shehan-Campbell and Carol Scott-Kassner, *Music in Childhood* (New York: Schirmer, 1995), 26.

¹³ Miller, 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Rose Dwiggin Daniels, "Relationships among Selected Factors and the Sight Reading Ability of High School Mixed Choirs," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 34, no. 4 (Winter 1986), 280.

¹⁶ Bauguess, 37.

¹⁷ Gary Guzy, "Techniques for Developing Sight Reading Skills as used by High School Choral Directors in Ohio," (M.M. thesis, Bowling Green State University, 1984), 71-75.

¹⁸ Guzy, 77-79.

¹⁹ Shehan-Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 49-58. The concept of inner hearing is emphasized in the teaching techniques of Kodály, Dalcroze, and Gordon.

²⁰ Guzy, 80-84.

²¹ Martin R. Sunderland, "A Description of Selected Ohio Secondary Choral Ensembles With Particular Attention to Sight Reading Skills," (D.M.E. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1994), 200.

²² *Ibid.*, 201.

²³ Sunderland, 212-216.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Sunderland, 204-214.



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Academic Development – Article 3

Armstrong, Matthew (2001). Adjudicated Sight-Reading for the Choral Ensemble: An Incentive for Musical Literacy. Choral Journal, 41(10), 23-30.

Armstrong's article asks "Is it valuable to have adjudicated sight-reading events at the district and statewide levels?" Rating studies from the Ohio Music Education Association reported that there was little difference in the performance of groups which had instruction in sight-reading from 1996-1998. So why bother to teach musical literacy?

The article gives a brief history the role of sight-reading in choral music education. Educators in the nineteenth-century gave great attention to music theory instruction in choral music classes. The 1930's saw a shift in attitudes toward the value of sight-reading. The use of solfege syllable gave way to the use of letter names to designate pitches and rote learning became the norm. Although educators began to reexamine their methods in the 1990's, in general, the students who both played instruments and sang were responsible for the quality of the performances. The poor readers rode on the coattails of their classmates. Research studies by Gary Guzy (1984) and Martin Sutherland (1994) both concluded that while the development of sight-reading skills was considered to be valuable, few choral directors were willing to commit the time necessary.

Armstrong believes that a solid grounding in understanding standard notation must be taught in elementary and middle schools in order produce musically literate high school students. He recommends that three to five minutes be dedicated to sight-reading at each rehearsal using the French (chromatic) system of solfege as exercise material. He

combines this method with count-singing technique. Armstrong also advocates collaborative learning by grouping students in pairs, the “stronger musicians with weaker ones” (28). The article concludes with a repetition of the injunction to provide students with a good foundation in musical literacy.

I agree with Armstrong that adjudicated events in sight-reading are valuable for student’s musical development. Armstrong’s goals are left too ill-defined. I believe that the ability of students to sight-read develops what Howard Gardner calls, “musical intelligence.” Armstrong acknowledges that rote learning is not transferable to new pieces. He should have also mentioned the unique cognitive benefits of sight-reading. He also fails to discuss the emotional impact of the adjudication process on the individual and the group. Adjudication makes choral singing a competitive endeavor, but with insightful teacher intervention, it can also be viewed as a motivation toward individual self-improvement and as a booster of team spirit.

Schools in urban areas often don’t have reliable feeder programs on which teachers can rely. How does a high school choral teacher impart long-lasting reading skills when the foundations in elementary school are weak or non-existent? A major flaw in the article is that Armstrong totally evades the question of time-management. How often does his chorus class meet? Once per week? Three times per week? Does he have male and female sectional rehearsals?

Ideally, I would like to have my chorus meet five days per week. For example, Men’s sectionals would meet on Mondays and Wednesdays. Women’s sectionals would also meet Mondays and Wednesdays, but at a different period. Tuesdays and Thursdays would be sight-reading for both men and women. I would have the entire mixed chorus

on Fridays working on only warm-ups and repertoire. This article has helped me bring my views regarding scheduling into focus.

Armstrong's article takes a one-size-fits all approach to sight-reading without even beginning to examine the role of early childhood experiences in music. Edward E. Gordon states that after the age of nine music aptitude stabilizes.¹ If a child has learned Kodaly/Orff rhythmic syllables and Curwen hand signals, perhaps Armstrong's chromatic solfege system makes sense. But what does a teacher do if a proper musical foundation has not been laid? If a student arrives in chorus class for the first time *after* the age of nine, solfege studies may only be of limited value. Music aptitude stabilization also affects teachers. Teachers who have been raised on a fixed-do system of solfege may have difficulty adjusting to a movable-do system.

Reading this article has benefited me because it forced me to review and re-evaluate various sight-singing methods. An example of a sight-reading method that uses a movable-do system is Audrey Snyder's *The Sight-Singer: A Practical Sight-Singing Course for Unison for Treble Voices*. The illustrations in the book confirm that it is designed for children, which is developmentally appropriate.² In addition, using the movable-do system does not help students secure a kinesthetic knowledge of tonal placement within the body. Stanley Arkis and Herman Schuckman use both letter names and a fixed-do system.³ And some students arrive in ninth grade whose only exposure to music has been gangsta rap. David Bauguess addresses the problem of the task of a

¹ Haasemann, Frauke and James M. Jordan. *Group Vocal Technique*. Chapel Hill, Hinshaw Music, Inc., 1991.

² Snyder, Audrey. *The Sight-Singer, Volume 1: A Practical Sight-Singing Course for Unison or Two-Part Treble Voices*. Miami: CPP/Belwin, 1993.

³ Arkis, Stanley and Herman Schuckman. *An Introduction to Sight-Reading: A Structured Approach to Reading Music*. New York, Carl Fischer, 1967.

chorus director who has students who read music and newcomers who cannot. He uses a movable-do system and his method comes with an accompanying CD which gives aural examples.⁴ Many sight-singing methods lack the theory necessary for a complete understand of notation. Sandy Feldstein's *Practical Theory Complete* rounds out the picture.⁵ The most comprehensive choral method of which I know is *Essential Musicianship* by Emily Crocker and John Leavitt. This all-in-one course combines vocal technique, theory, sight-reading, and songs. The authors manage to evade favoring any single solfege system by giving them all in an appendix in the back of the book. I think this is a great method and it is structured around the National Standards for Art Education. The disadvantage is that the approach can lack intensive drilling (not necessarily a dirty word) and the students may wind up becoming jacks-of-all-trades and masters of none.⁶

In reference to Figure 2 on page 27, Armstrong seems to be deficient in his knowledge of music history. The phrase "key center and tonal relationships" is incorrect since the passage in Figure 2 is written in the transposed first *mode*. In addition, Armstrong fails to cite the piece (which is the alto line of "O Magnum Mysterium" by Tomás Luis de Victoria). Armstrong also transposed the music a minor third higher.

Armstrong would have the students doing a lot of analysis during chorus time. As previously mentioned, I would prefer to do theory and ear-training on days where there is no repertoire singing.

⁴ Bagues, David. Sight Singing Made Simple: An Audio Course for Group or Self Study. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1995.

⁵ Feldstein, Sandy. Practical Theory Complete: A Self-Instruction Music Theory Course. USA: Alfred Publishing, 1982.

⁶ Crocker, Emily and John Leavitt. Essential Musicianship: A Comprehensive Choral Method, Book One, Teacher Edition. Milwaukee, Hal Leonard, 1999.

In summation, I found my reaction to this article to be most remarkable. While I heartily endorse his emphasis on the importance of music-reading skills, I disagree with his proposed method and, moreover, I see serious flaws in the way he addresses the issue of rehearsal time-management.

COMMONSENSE TRAINING FOR CHANGING MALE VOICES

Young men can be trained to sing during their adolescent years with great success through phonation techniques and vocal exercises.

BY CHRISTOPHER D. WHITE AND DONA K. WHITE

Recruiting, retaining, and training male singers are perhaps the most challenging tasks that public school choral teachers face. Music educators often discover that, when students first begin to make elective choices in middle or junior high school, fewer males than females select choir. In high school, teachers continue to be concerned that male participation in choir remains less than female participation. The male disenchantment with singing arises from several related factors: sociological perceptions about music and singing, the male's psychological and physiological development during puberty, and inappropriate choral literature and training. To keep young men interested in singing, teachers may benefit from an examination of the physiology of the male voice change, the psychology of the adolescent male, the unique physical properties of the male singing voice, and specific vocal exercises.

The Physiology of the Male Voice Change

As the human body grows and matures, the muscles and cartilage of

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When singing, an adolescent boy can change vowels as his voice descends and thus disguise the break.

the larynx change in position, size, strength, and texture; accordingly, the singing voice changes in range, power, and tone. At birth, the larynx is high in the neck; then, in the first five years of life, the larynx descends to the level of the seventh cervical vertebra. Thereafter, the child's vocal folds do not significantly change; they remain approximately six to eight millimeters in length for males and females until puberty. The infant's singing voice phonates most sounds at pitches near C⁵ (C above middle C). From age four to seven, the child's speaking voice drops, while the singing voice extends one octave from C⁴ up to C⁵. At this stage of development, the singing voice produces a light natural

tone in a forward placement without a change in register. From age seven to ten, the child's speaking voice does not change in pitch; however, the singing voice increases in clarity and agility. The range extends from C⁴ to E⁵. Further, the older child's singing voice sustains tone in one of two registers: the head register or the chest register.¹

At the onset of puberty—between ages nine-and-a-half and fourteen—physiological changes occur in the organs, muscles, cartilage, and bones that support the phonatory process. The epiglottis grows, flattens, and ascends. The neck usually lengthens. The chest cavity grows larger, especially in males. As the skeletal structure of the head grows, the resonating cavities

increase in size and change in shape. More important, the larynx grows at different rates and in different directions according to gender. The male larynx grows primarily in the anterior-posterior (front-to-back) direction, leading to the angular projection of the thyroid cartilage, the Adam's apple, a visible indication of the impending voice change (see figure 1). In fact, the male's vocal folds lengthen four to eight millimeters. In contrast, the female's larynx increases more in height than in width, thus at this point becoming distinctly different in acoustic function and sound.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The most obvious attribute of the changing male voice is the emergence of two very distinct registers.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The Psychology of Prepubescent and Adolescent Males

In general, young children are curious about the world around them—given proper reinforcement, they remain enthusiastic about learning and eager to try new activities. With regard to music, the child's attitude, preferences, and appreciation are influenced by family members (parents or older siblings), television, and exposure to music at school.

At puberty, a young male enters a process of self-discovery—he begins to identify and value masculine attributes. Accordingly, he selects male role models: fathers, older brothers, coaches, teachers, youth pastors, and, of course, prominent sports or entertainment figures. For example, a middle school boy will probably put pictures of males (e.g., John Elway, Michael

Jordan, or Bruce Lee) on the walls of his bedroom. Further, the adolescent male associates with peer groups that share common values and interests. In social settings, he often adopts his peer groups' collective opinion rather than professing his own. For example, though the young man may inwardly enjoy singing, when he sits with his buddies at school or at church, he will not sing if the group believes it is not masculine or "cool"! Finally and most important, the rate and nature of physiological change, combined with the growing sexual awareness that occurs at the onset of puberty, cause the young male to be self-conscious and uncertain. His self-concept frequently suffers from his physical inability to meet the performance or appearance standards set by his role models and peer group. Likewise, he may have skills or talent in areas—such as music, art, or scholarship—that are not prized by his friends. As a result, he loses his self-confidence,

eagerness to explore the world around him, and the wide-eyed innocence that so characterized his learning attitude as a child.

The Physical Properties of the Male Singing Voice

During puberty, the speaking voice of the young male drops approximately one octave. According to Robert T. Sataloff and Joseph R. Spiegel, two physicians who frequently write for the *National Association of Teachers of Singing Journal*, the singing voice may change in one of four ways:

1. The voice drops to a full register in the bass range very quickly, leaving no treble range. This voice may experience difficulty singing in the head register.
2. The voice lowers gradually one or two pitches at a time while retaining the treble range. As the chest register becomes stronger, a distinct break emerges between the chest and head registers.

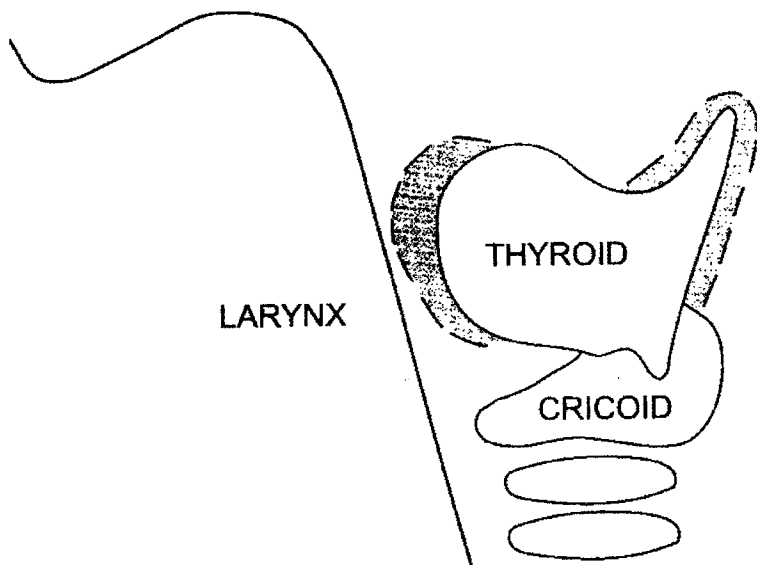
Velvety ^{test} imperfect

Key to Phonetic Symbols for Vocal Training

Symbol	Sound	Word Example
[u], [ʊ]	ū	"yup"
[a], [j[a], h[a]	ah	"ha-ha"
[æ]	a	"yak"
[e], [j[e], h[e]	ä	"Yale" or "yes"
[ɛ]	ë	"hale"
[i]	ë	"yet"
[o]	oh	"yield"
[ɔ]	o	"yoyo"
[u], [j[u]	oo	"yacht"
[j]	y	"you"
		"yes"

Note: Symbols used are taken from the International Phonetic Alphabet. For further reference, see Joan Wall, *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers* (Dallas: Pst ... Inc., 1989), or William V. May and Craig Tolin, *Pronunciation Guide for Choral Literature* (Reston, VA: MENC, 1987).

Figure 1. Anterior-Posterior Growth of the Male Larynx



3. The voice retains the treble range using a head register and is capable of singing several pitches in the bass range; however, the voice is incapable of singing in the middle range between the bass and treble. Essentially, this voice has a hole in the range; sadly, the respective individual is often classified as “tone-deaf” because he cannot match pitch in midrange.

4. The voice retains the young treble quality and, at the same time, is capable of singing comfortably in a full register with baritone quality and range. This rare voice can be remarkable in the ringing quality of the high range, the ease of transition to the low range, and the absence of register breaks.²

Despite the nature of the change, the young male is still capable of free, natural singing throughout puberty, provided he receives encouragement, good training, and the opportunity to sing appropriate literature.

Perhaps the most obvious attribute of the changing or changed male voice

is the emergence of two very distinct registers. The lower voice, or chest register, is characterized by a full-bodied tone. The upper voice, or head register, is characterized by a lighter tone that employs more nasal pharynx—or facial mask—for effective resonance. Of course, between the two areas is the break, or *passaggio*, a snap or bump in the flow of the sound as the voice crosses the registers.³

Another remarkable, and somewhat unknown, characteristic of the changing or changed male voice is the contrast in physical acoustics or resonating properties of the two registers. In 1983, Stephen Bolster wrote an insightful article in *Choral Journal*, in which he discussed the acoustics of vowels. In the article, he stated several fundamental principles:

- Vowels have a fixed pitch. The length and shape of each vowel's connected resonating cavities determine a pitch or formant.

- When singing for optimum resonance, the singer must adjust the vowel

according to the pitch being sung—the harmonic overtones of the vowel must align to strengthen the harmonic overtones of the pitch being sung.

- Vowel modification varies according to gender. For the most ringing, pitch-centered tone, women must open the vowels at the top of their range and close progressively as they descend. Conversely, men must open the vowels at the bottom of their range and close progressively as they ascend.⁴ (In other words, in terms of vowel modification, men and women are upside down from each other.)

Bolster concluded that, when the vowel is modified according to these principles, “it will sound more like the intended vowel than the pure vowel.”⁵

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The larynx grows at different rates and in different directions according to gender.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

As every parent or middle-school teacher knows, adolescent males often encounter coordination problems resulting from sudden physical growth during and immediately following puberty. Many experience difficulty in normal physical activities (e.g., walking, running, and hand-eye coordination). Yet, in choir, they must try to balance greater subglottic air pressure (resulting from an enlarged chest cavity) with a lengthening larynx and increased head resonance. Further, due to peer-group attitudes—and the fact that they generally carry forty-pound backpacks full of textbooks—they sit or stand with a slouching, poor posture. Thus, in addition to the challenge of coordinating innumerable muscle groups in a growing physical body, they must overcome the inhibiting habit of poor body position.

To positively shape a young man's attitude, a choral teacher must demonstrate that singing is a worthwhile activity, appropriate for both men and women. To begin, the teacher should structure the choral curriculum to provide gender-specific ensembles, especially during the critical time of early middle school. In other words, he or she should organize male choruses (with mixed SATB voicing) for grades six and seven. The advantages are many:

- In warm-ups, the teacher can focus on training the changing or changed male voices.

- In an all-male setting, young men are less self-conscious and, thus, more easily persuaded to sing.

- More important, the teacher can work to establish a peer group within the ensemble in which singing is readily accepted as a male trait. Thus, the young men's attitudes may become more positive and their behavior more disciplined.

Second, the choral teacher should provide appropriate male role models that sing. In middle school rehearsals, the teacher can use older volunteers, such as brothers, parents, alumni, colleagues, pastors, and youth-choir directors, to demonstrate the use of the head voice and the proper performance of vocalizations. Further, both high school and middle school choral teachers might invite men's glee clubs, barbershop quartets, or male soloists to perform periodically in concert with, or for, the choir.

Finally, the teacher can provide frequent and unique performing opportunities for the young men in the choir, for example, a father-son performance of two selections during a school concert.⁶ The teacher could also organize or participate in a men's choir festival with the schools or colleges in the region.

To train the male voice during and after the voice change, the choral teacher should use a series of descending vocal exercises. First, the teacher should prompt the discovery of the head voice by using sighs and sirens. Then, following the theory of vowel formants, singers can be trained to begin a sigh high in the head voice on

Figure 2. Vocal Sighs for the Changing Male Voice

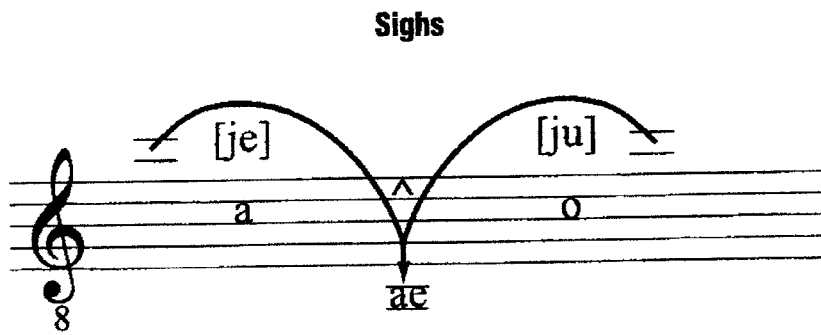


Figure 3. Vocalises for the Changing Male Voice

Vocalise Number 1



*(Continue as low as possible without crossing into chest register.)

Vocalise Number 2



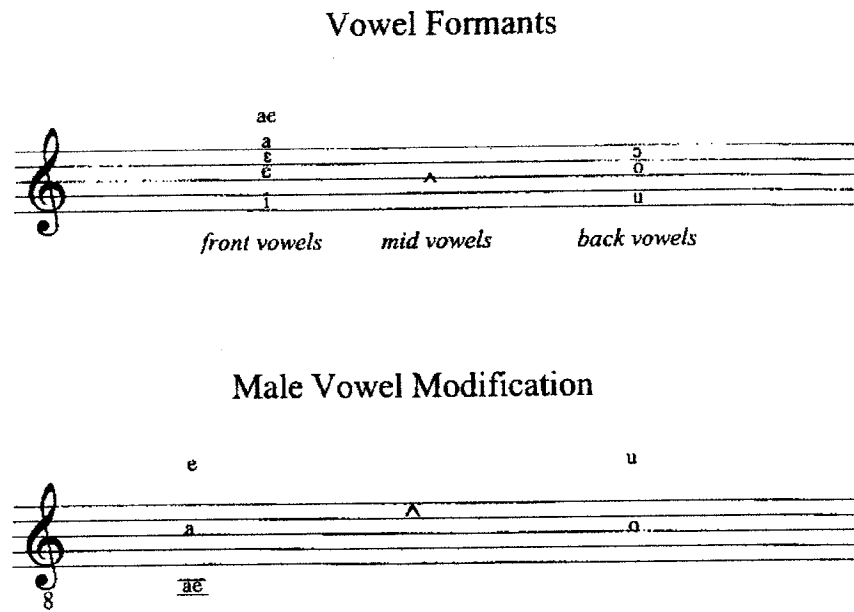
*(Continue to arpeggiate major chords, descending chromatically to G major.)

an [e] vowel (as in the word "fame"), shift to [ɪ] (as in "fun") as they cross the *passaggio*, and then modify again to an [a] (as in "farm") and eventually to an [æ] (as in "fat") at the bottom of the range (see figure 2 for vocal sighs). By carefully and appropriately changing the vowels as the voice descends, singers can completely disguise the break. A shorthand list of symbols and sounds for the International Phonetic Alphabet, which is used throughout this discussion, is included in the Key to Phonetic Symbols sidebar.

At the same time, the choral teacher can use a five-step vocalise on [je] (as in "Yale" or "yea"), beginning high in the head register and descending by half-steps with each performance (see figure 3, vocalise 1). The teacher should take the exercise as low as the young men can sing without crossing the *passaggio*. During the exercise, the men should be encouraged to focus on nasal-pharynx resonance.

After the men master the sigh and the technique of disguising the break, the teacher can introduce the most critical and defining exercise of the training: performing an arpeggio, an exercise of three descending leaps separated by rests (see figure 3, vocalise 2). The exercise should begin high in the head voice and descend by half steps with each performance. During the rests between leaps, the singers should change vowels according to whether the first pitch of the leap is above, in the middle, or below the *passaggio*. For example, if the singers begin on C⁵ (in the male head voice), the director should tell the singers to perform the first descending leap to a G⁴ on [je], the second from G⁴ to an E⁴ on [jɛ], and the last leap from E⁴ to C⁴—crossing the *passaggio*—on [jʌ] (as in "yup"). As the sequence of performances moves down by half-steps, the singers learn to change the vowels accordingly. For example, when the exercise begins on G⁴ (still in the head voice), the first leap would be on [je], the second leap from D⁴ across the break would be on [jʌ], and the final leap from B³ to G³ in the chest voice on [ja] (as in "yard"). Of course, for proper blending of the registers, each leap needs a tone similar in quality and volume.

Figure 4. Vowel Formats and Male Vowel Modifications



As the singers begin to master the technique of blending the registers, the choral teacher diminishes the time of the rests between the leaps (the time at which the singers change vowels). Eventually, the singers will be able to connect the intervals (still changing vowels as they have been trained) and sing across the *passaggio* without pause. Thus, they will blend the registers in such a way that no listener can define the exact point at which the singers crossed from head to chest voice.

With regard to warm-up exercises and the performance of the music, the choral teacher must take into account the differences in gender when it comes to vowel modification and efficient resonance. When warming up the voice in the upper range, the teacher should not require the same vowels for men and women. For example, when using an ascending arpeggio, the men should sing on [he] (as in "hay"), while the women sing [ha] (as in "hard"). Further, when working for a uniform vowel between all sections, the teacher should not require the same vertical mouth opening from men and women. If the pitch is high, the women will need to open more than the men. Conversely, as the pitch descends, the men will need to

open more than the women (see figure 4 for male modification of vowel formants). The teacher will discover that, as Bolster noted, the corporate sound of the vowel is pure and ringing and, in fact, better blended.

Summary

In summary, problems in recruiting and retaining males in choir arise from several sources. First and foremost, males experience a radical change in their voice that changes its pitch and resonating properties. They experience coordination or balance problems that hinder their ability to sing correctly. Finally, they identify with males and adopt male role models; consequently, they often embrace values that devalue or disparage artistic talent and participation in music activities.

To positively address these issues, the choral teacher needs an effective psychological and physiological approach. Through the use of male role models, gender-specific ensembles, and creative performing opportunities, young men can experience singing in choir as a rewarding, masculine activity. Further, if the teacher understands the physiological development and distinctive acoustical prop-

continued on page 53

Commonsense Training

continued from page 43

erties of the male voice, the singers will be trained accordingly, emphasizing the blending of registers and proper vowel modification for efficient resonance. As a result, the teacher will soon develop a strong male choir or male sections in a mixed choir that sing comfortably and confidently with a rich, ringing tone.

Notes

1. For further reference, see Meredith Bunch, *Dynamics of the Singing Voice* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1982); Helen Kemp, "Understanding and Developing the Child's Singing Voice," *Children Singing His Praise*, ed. Donald Rotermund (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1985); Frederick J. Swanson, *The Male Singing Voice, Ages Eight to Eighteen* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Igram Press, 1977); Graham F. Welch, "Children's Singing: A Developmental Continuum of Ability," *Journal of Research in Singing and Applied Vocal Pedagogy* 9, no. 2: 49-52.

2. Robert T. Saraloff and Joseph R. Spiegel, "The Young Voice," *National Association of Teachers of Singing Journal* 45, no. 3 (Jan./Feb. 1989): 35-37.

3. It is interesting to note that, when the male sings in the chest register, he can place his hand on his chest and feel sympathetic vibrations; however, when he crosses above the break as the voice ascends to the head register, the vibrations in the chest vanish.

4. Stephen Bolster, "The Fixed Formant Theory and Its Implications for Choral Blend and Choral Diction," *Choral Journal* 23, no. 6 (1983): 27-33.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

6. If you are interested in this father-son performance, I have several recommendations. For students living in single-parent families or with fathers who are not available, pastors, neighbors, older brothers, or fellow teachers may serve as substitutes. Maintain a list of men who are willing to serve as a surrogate father in the performance. If the music is selected carefully and distributed early with a cassette tape, only two or three rehearsals are necessary—plan three rehearsals and ask the adults to attend two of the three. Schedule these rehearsals before school or early on Saturday mornings. Most important, tell the young men in the choir that each must help his father learn his part. By the way, at our schools when we initiated this father-son performance during a holiday concert, I found that it quickly became an expected tradition—the men and the audience loved it. ■

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Academic Development – Article 4

White, C., and White, D. (2001). Commonsense Training for Changing Male Voices. Music Educators Journal, (87) 6, 39-43; 53.

White and White address some issues concerning teachers of male middle school and junior high school students: the way a boy's voice changes during puberty, the corresponding emotional changes, and strategies to help choral teachers advance their students. The body of the article begins with some facts about the physiological changes. A discussion of the psychological aspects begins with the importance of role models to help ease the boy's sense of discomfort with his new voice. The teacher must also be conscious of a boy's relationship to his same sex peers and his overall self-confidence. The authors buttress their opinions with medical information from the *National Association of Teachers of Singing Journal* and an article by Stephen Bolster regarding vowel modification which appeared in the publication *Choral Journal*. White and White's primary recommendation is for the teacher to establish separate choral groups for boys and girls. Another recommendation is to bring in members of the community to show young men that singing is an activity which adult males do. A further suggestion is that father-and-sons perform duets at school concerts. Teachers should train the male voice by first using sighs and sirens as vocal exercises. Finally, the article illustrates two vocalises which are designed to help students negotiate the register break between head voice and chest voice.

This is generally a very good article on an important topic in choral studies and it is supported by research. I feel the authors should have mentioned that the voice change can extend into the high school years. In addition, the article fails to address procedural issues for voice *testing*. Should the students be tested individually or in small groups?

What should the teacher say if the voice “cracks” during testing?

Although I agree that the creation of gender-specific ensembles are an excellent way to encourage more boys to become involved in singing, perhaps some attention ought to have been paid to the ways in which teachers can approach administrators to argue for the creation of a separate course. In Terry J. Barham’s book, *Strategies for Teaching Junior high and Middle School Male Singers*, Kathy Bhat of North Kirkwood Middle School in Missouri is quoted as saying “The boys are much more relaxed without the girls present.”¹ Although most middle school chorus teachers would agree that separate ensemble should be created for boys and girls, other educators believe that both sexes should understand the boy’s voice change is a perfectly natural process.

I enjoyed the suggestion for providing male role models as motivators to encourage boys to sing. The article could have been improved by discussing the impact of having a male choral teacher versus a female chorus teacher. What strategies can a female chorus teacher use to recruit boys into her ensemble?

Perhaps more importantly, the language of the article refers twice to the term “training” the voice as opposed to “educating the student.” There is, however, a short passage which discusses the role of the student as a teacher to his father. I found this remark to be very positive. When a student takes on the role of a teacher, it forces him to think critically about how he wishes to communicate his new-found knowledge of singing. Unfortunately, this remark was relegated to a footnote.

In the discussion of vowel sounds, the authors could have directed teachers to have the students experiment with crossing the *passaggio* on different vowels and have

¹ Barham, Terry J. *Strategies for Teaching Junior High and Middle School Male Singers: Master Teachers Speak*. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Music. 2001.

them examine the effects on register blending by critical listening. Instead, White and White resort to the usual teacher-directed model of obeying directions in a passive way. While I find White and White's advice concerning separate vowel modifications for different genders to be correct, the article as a whole seems to be disconnected. I thought this article was supposed to be about male chorus singers. The passage about women's voices, while interesting, seems to lack cohesion with the rest of the text.

With regard to Sataloff and Spiegel's taxonomy of the voice change, some educators would vehemently disagree with the statement that when the bass voice drops suddenly from the treble range, the singer cannot produce a tone in falsetto. Similarly, their statement "the voice is incapable of singing in the middle ranges between bass and treble" would be hotly disputed by Henry Leck.² Leck would agree, however, with White and White's statement that "the young male is still capable of free, natural singing throughout puberty, provided he receives encouragement, good training, and the opportunity to sing appropriate literature. (41)" The article would have been improved if the authors had provided some guides to this literature.

I found this article to be beneficial to my development in that it gave me some specific vocal exercises for the changing voice. When I have parent-teacher conferences, I will make a note of which fathers like to sing and possibly program duets or quartets on concert night.

² Leck, Henry. The Boys Changing Voice: Take the High Road. Videocassette. Hal Leonard, 2001.

ENHANCING LEARNING IN THE CHORAL REHEARSAL

During the choral rehearsal, activities such as comparison/contrast discussions and completion of worksheets can help students understand more and sing better.

BY LYNN A. CORBIN

A great variety of systems are available for introducing music to singers, and these systems are effective in different ways. Warm-ups, sight-reading, music history, music theory, and stylistic elements can be integrated efficiently into an intermediate or high-school choral rehearsal, bringing meaning and purpose to what may appear to be unconnected activities. This article is intended to encourage choral directors to do a bit more rehearsal planning and to consider the broader and deeper purposes of students' experiences in music. Like anything else, once one gets the hang of it, the time needed for planning decreases.

The typical vocal warm-up may consist of some variation of a five-tone scale or a broken triad/arpeggio, long tones, tongue twisters, and tuning. Why are these particular activities usually selected? Do they relate to the music of the day's rehearsal? General vocal development and pitch control are certainly valid objectives, but warm-up exercises can accomplish more than one purpose.

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Photo by Mark Regan

Students can give outstanding performances when they are confident as musicians.

A useful question for teachers is, "Am I teaching songs, or am I teaching music?" If we consider the implementation of most state curricula and the National Standards for Music Education, too often we don't get past "Sing alone and with others a varied repertoire of music." The pressures of concerts, festivals, and competitions notwithstanding, we can do more. It takes somewhat more time, considerably more thought, and probably more marketing, because the students may initially resist. But if they can see the relevance of the task and become

proficient in a variety of musical skills, less time will be spent in pounding out notes and re-pounding out notes, and more music learning will occur on all fronts. And what else are we teaching in music class? Self-confidence, teamwork, music appreciation, and performance skills should be by-products of any ensemble experience. The self-confidence that students have when they feel independent as musicians is well worth the effort.

A surprisingly large number of music-learning activities can be integrated into one rehearsal. What fol-

sample worksheets and a commentary on these additional activities. They do not take an excessive amount of time away from actual singing, and they provide the students with opportunities to “dig in” and understand more about what they are doing.

The Rehearsal

Any known work can serve to begin the rehearsal with the students singing rather than the teacher talking. The assumption here is that the students have already studied Mozart’s “Ave Verum.” It happens to be generally in the same form as two new pieces, Palestrina’s “Sicut Cervus” and Morley’s “April Is in My Mistress’ Face,” and it will be revisited following the reading of the new pieces. As part of singing and reviewing, the singers will be asked to identify legato articulation and long arched phrases. Because the Mozart piece is in Latin, the same diction rules can be reinforced and applied in the Palestrina piece.

The basic model for the rehearsal is given in the Sample Lesson Plan for a Concert Choir sidebar. In this model, the students become responsible for discovering musical information and applying the information in context.

Warm-Ups. These can be any actions that establish deep breathing, good posture, relaxation of the vocal mechanism, and expansion of the range. They could include stretching, deep breathing, a sustained hissing exercise, yawning, sighing, or whooping. A handout containing vocal exercises that are customized to the pieces being learned can be distributed (see figure 1, Vocal warm-ups). Each exercise can be found in at least one of the three target pieces. Some match exactly in terms of intervals and/or rhythms, some match except for the resolution, and one exercise uses only the text from one of the pieces. Encourage students to look for the patterns in all of the voice parts, not just their own, and to look for rhythms as well as interval relationships. In addition to the vocal warm-ups, each student should have in hand the three pieces that the choir is learning and three composer worksheets (see figure 2, Composer worksheet).

Figure 1. Vocal warm-ups

Figure 1 displays seven vocal warm-up exercises, each on a separate staff. The exercises are as follows:

- Exercise 1: mi mi mi re do fa fa fa sol mi
- Exercise 2: do do re do
- Exercise 3: do fa do sol do
- Exercise 4: ve rum cor pus san gui ne
- Exercise 5: may meemah moh moo
- Exercise 6: sol fa mi fa sol mi
- Exercise 7: do do do mi do do do may

Comments on the Lesson. The keyboard should be used to reinforce, not to lead (eventually, in music such as this, students should not need the keyboard). If we are honest with ourselves, we admit that we can hear the choir better when the piano is not playing. The neutral syllable “loh” reinforces the legato style, and the vowel is effective in developing a resonant tone.

If the director provides contrasting descriptions on the worksheets and during the discussion, the students can begin making the distinctions necessary to become knowledgeable about music. The definitions and descriptions can be arbitrary to suit particular purposes (as long as they are not incorrect), and they will likely need to be fairly simplistic in the beginning. Understanding the concept or term is more important than recitation of elegant definitions.

If the purpose is for everyone to learn this information, then allowing adjustments on the worksheets reinforces correct responses and avoids feelings of failure. If the worksheets are serving as assessment tools, then the adjustments might be better made after the sheets are returned to the students.

“*Sicut Cervus.*” A typical scenario might be to start the choir singing after announcing the new piece, “*Sicut*

Cervus,” and presenting the starting pitches. Maybe the director would present some background information about Palestrina (found in notes from the score or some other source).

If measures 1–23 of “*Sicut Cervus*” do not fall apart and time is available, go ahead into the next section. This is a judgment call, but singing the first half again should allow for better accuracy and retention the next time. Singing the entire piece would be highly desirable, but it might be more important to move on to the second piece. If the students can sing the Palestrina piece with minimum difficulties, then it will not frustrate them to sing it again. On the other hand, if they are struggling, leave the piece and move on. Build success into your rehearsals so students feel good about what they are accomplishing. Hollow praise does not work, but a sense of mastering the material is an intrinsic reward that will only strengthen your singers’ attitudes and reinforce their learning.

Some additional questions on “*Sicut Cervus*” might be the following:

- Which part should be the loudest? Why? (All should be equal with new entrances emphasized and primary motives brought out by each part as they occur.)

Figure 2. Composer worksheet

Title: _____
 Composer _____ (b. _____ d. _____):

1. Is this piece

- _____ 20th century/Contemporary?
 _____ 19th century/Romantic?
 _____ 18th century/Classical?
 _____ 17th century/Baroque?
 _____ 16th century/Renaissance?

2. How did you know when it was written? (information on handout, information in score, familiar with the composer, noticed the "echo" style and imitation)

3. Which vocal part has the melody most of the time?

- _____ soprano _____ alto _____ tenor _____ bass

4. What helped you decide?

5. What is the form of the piece?

- _____ Verse/refrain AB (verses with a repeated "chorus")
 _____ Strophic A (verses all using the same melody, like a hymn)
 _____ Motet A (several phrases, sometimes all different, sometimes using the same texts and melodies many times)
 _____ Rounded binary (song form: idea, new idea, repeat first idea)
 _____ Madrigal A (several phrases, sometimes all different, sometimes using the same texts and melodies many times)

6. What helped you decide?

7. What is the texture of the piece?

- _____ Polyphonic: one or more independent melodies intertwined, often employing imitation (like a round or canon)
 _____ Monophonic: one melody performed without accompaniment (like a solo voice all alone)
 _____ Homophonic: one main theme/melody with harmonic accompaniment in some places (like a country song)

8. What helped you decide?

■ How can we make the audience hear the important statements of the major melodic motives? (These statements should be stronger/louder than the other parts as they occur.)

■ Why aren't there any tempo or expression markings? (Composers in this time didn't use them. The performance rules were understood by the performers. A future topic could investigate whether the "rules" are effective, and what effects alternative dynamics or tempi have on the piece.)

■ How fast should this piece go? Why do you think so? (Relatively slowly—about 60mm. It would be too busy at a fast tempo, and the parts would become distorted.)

■ Look at the first entrances. Who enters on *do*? Who enters on *sol*? (*do*: tenors/sopranos; *sol*: altos/basses)

■ Is the piece accompanied? (This is probably a throwaway question, but some students may not be able to figure this out, and it would allow another avenue for learning to read a score.)

How long has this taken? If we allow two minutes to look at the score, two minutes to answer the written questions, and two minutes to do the rest, that equals six. And what has been accomplished? The students have a sense of the style of the piece, and they know several of the melodic patterns, the entrances that need to be brought out, and the piece's approximate tempo.

"April Is in My Mistress' Face." With the introduction of the Morley piece, we get to the heart of the lesson: the comparison of the pieces. While a visual analysis should elicit answers such as imitation, polyphony/homophony, repetition (Morley to Palestrina), the big difference to notice will probably be the language: English. The use of the neutral syllable "pah" is intended to reinforce the nonlegato articulation needed for singing Morley's "April Is in My Mistress' Face" successfully. The faster tempo and more active part writing require cleaner articulation that the plosive consonant will generate.

On the Composer Worksheet (figure 2), the questions are virtually the same for each piece. This establishes a pattern of analysis that can be used many times and, eventually, the students may not need the assistance of a worksheet. Notice that the texture definitions recur, but in different order. Notice, too, that the definition for "madrigal" is roughly the same as that of "motet." While not 100 percent accurate, this definition is not incorrect, and it allows students to compare the two songs easily. Adding the rest of the information about sacred and secular uses and text sources then becomes an enhancement rather than a source of confusion.

Here are some additional questions for "April Is in My Mistress' Face":

■ Which vocal part has the main melody most of the time? What helped you decide? (Sopranos tend to have it more frequently. But all parts have primary melodic content at various points.)

■ Is this piece similar to or different from Mozart and Palestrina? What particular characteristics are most obvious? (Like the Mozart, it is homophonic in some places; and like the Palestrina, it is polyphonic and imitative in

Sample Lesson Plan for a Concert Choir

Objectives

1. Meet National Standards

- Standard 1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Standard 5: Reading and notating music
- Standard 6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Standard 9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

2. Support selected objectives of your state music education curriculum for choral music 9–12, e.g., critical analysis and aesthetic understanding, by recognizing the relationship of text to musical elements in the repertoire, such as rhythm, melody, harmony, form, tempo, dynamics, phrase, and tonality. (Look at your state's objectives to determine what is appropriate for your situation.)

Other selected state objectives may include:

- Historical and cultural context: Demonstrates knowledge of composers of selected class repertoire and the historical/cultural context of works being performed.
- Artistic skills and knowledge: creating, performing, producing: sings with clear vowel sounds, proper diction, and appropriate tone quality; demonstrates proficiency in sight-reading at the expected competency level; knowledge of form in repertoire, and knowledge of music vocabulary necessary for study, rehearsal, and performance of music; and identifies the characteristics of performance styles of music being rehearsed and performed.

3. Students will:

- correctly match the warm-up exercises to the appropriate piece.
- identify two of the pieces as "motets."
- compare legato and nonlegato styles and perform each style as appropriate for each piece.
- determine effective dynamics and tempi for each piece based on discussion and analysis.
- compare and contrast essential musical qualities of each piece to determine similarities of style and form.
- describe and compare the relationship(s) of the accompaniment(s) to the melody and text.

Prior Knowledge and Experience

The students have already studied Mozart's "Ave Verum."

Materials

1. Repertoire

- "Sicut Cervus" by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
- "April Is in My Mistress' Face" by Thomas Morley
- "Ave Verum" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Note: Many commercial music publishers have produced annotated and edited versions of these pieces. They are also available as public domain music at http://freemusicnow.com/choral_sidebar.htm and <http://cpdl.snaptel.com>.

- 2. Vocal exercise warm-ups sheet for each singer (figure 1)
- 3. Composer worksheets—one worksheet per composer for each singer (figure 2)

Procedure

1. Distribute the warm-up exercises and the worksheets for each composer.
2. Do a run-through of "Ave Verum."
3. "Sicut Cervus" by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
 - a. Direct students to the Palestrina piece. Have them match the warm-up exercises with patterns found in all of the voice parts in the score and circle them. (Note: For exercises 2 and 5, all parts have the patterns.)
 - b. Ask the students to answer questions 1–4 on the composer worksheet, identify which vocal part has the melody most of the time, and state what helped them to decide. (Explain that no single part has the melody continuously and that every voice sings it sometimes.) Have them identify staggered entrances that look the same, repeated text, and intertwined parts.
 - c. Sing the piece with or without keyboard doubling to measure 23, using "Ioh."

continued on next page

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- d. Direct the students to questions 5–9 on the composer worksheet. Discuss their answers.
 - e. Sing the piece again to measure 23. If there is enough time, sing the entire piece.
4. "April Is in My Mistress' Face" by Thomas Morley
- a. Direct students to the Morley piece. Have them match the warm-up exercises with patterns found in all of the voice parts in the score and circle them. (Note: The patterns in exercises 1, 3, 6, and 7 are not in every part.)
 - b. Ask the students to answer questions 1–4 on the composer worksheet, identify which vocal part has the melody most of the time, and state what helped them to decide. (Explain that no single part has the melody continuously and that every voice sings it sometimes.) Have them identify staggered entrances that look the same, repeated text, and intertwined parts.
 - c. Sing the piece with or without keyboard doubling using "pah."
 - d. Direct the students to questions 5–9 on the composer worksheet. Discuss their answers.
 - e. Sing the piece again. If there is enough time, sing it a third time.
5. "Ave Verum" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- a. Direct students to the Mozart piece. Have them match the warm-up exercises with patterns found in all of the voice parts in the score and circle them. Discuss the piece's style, expression, and articulation. Reinforce diction.
 - b. Ask the students to answer questions 1–4 on the composer worksheet, identify which vocal part has the melody most of the time, and state what helped them to decide. (Explain that no single part has the melody continuously and that every voice sings it sometimes.) Have them identify staggered entrances that look the same, repeated text, and intertwined parts.
 - c. Sing the piece with or without keyboard doubling using "pah."
 - d. Direct the students to questions 5–9 on the composer worksheet. Discuss their answers. (Note: The question about accompaniment will have more meaning now, as this is clearly an accompanied homophonic motet.)
 - e. Sing the piece again.

other places. There are imitative/restated texts and melodies in Palestrina and chordal passages in Mozart.)

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Understanding the concept or term is more important than recitation of elegant definitions.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

"Ave Verum." Because the Mozart piece was previously studied in the term and the students are presumably somewhat familiar with it, it should be possible to move through the

Mozart worksheet fairly quickly. Furthermore, singing it can probably be repeated fewer times during this lesson than is necessary for the Palestrina and Morley pieces.

Here are some additional questions for "Ave Verum":

- Which part should predominate/be the loudest? (Sopranos, most of the time.)

- When should a different part take over? (Measures 30–37, "esto nobis." The male and female parts echo the two short passages. To allow the text to dominate, the female part should decrescendo at the long note while the men crescendo and vice versa. Otherwise, the soprano part should dominate in the rest of the piece.)

- How close is the accompaniment to the vocal parts? (The accompaniment doubles all parts, but also contains additional pitches to fill in the harmony and give a fuller sound.)

Expansion Activities

Students can be asked to provide a more detailed comparison/contrast of all three composers. The comparisons and descriptions that result from this

exercise can provide the opportunity to pull everything together.

Ask the class which pieces were composed at approximately the same time. Have them tell you what similarities and differences they may have noticed. These could include imitation, syncopation, simple rhythms, motet/madrigal form, shortness or length, repeated or through-composed lyrics, phrases of different lengths, the use of Latin or English, tempos, styles, and sacred or secular moods. If you wanted to do a formal assessment of the students' learning, you could make a three-column chart with the name of each composer at the top.

The following activities allow students to apply their learning in additional ways and to manipulate the tools of music to make decisions about effective presentation:

- After students have sung the pieces at least two times, have them compose a warm-up that addresses something they are having trouble with.

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Choral Rehearsal

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■ Have students combine two or more of the warm-ups into a 2-4 part polyphonic exercise. Allow them to adjust for rhythmic discrepancies.

■ Allow students to experiment with stylistic aspects by making decisions about tempi, articulation, expression, dynamics, and so forth. Discuss the results in terms of their effectiveness and appropriateness.

Optimizing the Lesson-Plan Pattern

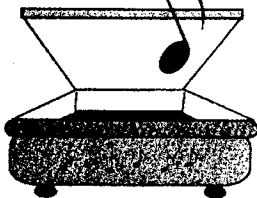
Once the pattern is established (as shown in the Sample Lesson Plan for Concert Choir sidebar), incorporating additional concepts using this format should be easy. As the objectives for the year are developed, literature can be selected that addresses them in different ways. Finding additional ways to analyze the same pieces prevents the staleness of frequent repetition and may encourage deeper interest by the students.

It is extremely important to balance the amount of thinking and analyzing that occurs in a choral classroom with the amount of singing. These questions and activities are designed to take minimal time away from singing while helping students learn more about what they are doing. We all hear about choirs that cannot read music. We all know that there is no magic pill to give the singers that will turn them into fantastic sight-readers. The activities described in this article allow students to take more responsibility for their own musicianship. Recognizing musical patterns is the foundation of good sight singing. Comparing and describing certain aspects of music is part of being a musician. The nonsinging activities should not in any way be seen as irrelevant to making music. The music is the ultimate product, but performing it with understanding is the ultimate goal. ■

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Academic Development – Article 5

Corbin, Lynn. Enhancing Learning in the Choral Rehearsal. Music Educators Journal, 88(2), 34-38; 60.

In this article, Lynn A. Corbin expresses the view that numerous educational objectives can be met by comparing different works within the same rehearsal. Corbin uses three pieces as examples: Mozart's "Ave Verum," Palestrina's "Sicut Cervis," and Morley's "April is in My Mistress' Face." She also demonstrates the way in which her sample lesson plan meets four of the nine National Standards for Music Education.

Corbin makes it known that the students already know the Mozart piece well. The sample lesson begins with some physical exercises. Then Corbin hands out a vocal warm-up sheet containing seven lines of music, each line consisting of three measures (Figure 1). She has the students engage in a kind of "treasure hunt" game. The goal of the exercise is to match the measures of the short excerpt with locations in the actual repertoire pieces.

In the next part of the lesson, the first piece considered is the Palestrina. "Composer worksheets" are distributed ((Figure 2). The first four questions on the composer worksheet deal with determining the period, style, and principle vocal line of the music and then students are asked how they arrived at the answers. Then the students begin to sight-read the piece singing the neutral syllable "loh" instead of the Latin text. The remaining four questions on the composer worksheet have to do with determining the form and texture of the work. Again, students are asked to justify their responses with logical reasons. The first section of the piece is sung again.

This process is repeated for the Morley. The process begins with the treasure hunt for the excerpt. Then the students answer questions 1-4 on the composer worksheet. After

that comes the sight-singing phase, but this time the neutral syllable selected is “pah.” Following that, the students complete the second composer worksheet and the answers are discussed. This section is also repeated.

The entire process is repeated again for the familiar Mozart, using “pah” as the neutral syllable.

Corbin then poses some additional critical thinking questions concerning major melodic motives, tempo, dynamics and other expressive devices. Finally, she includes some expansion activities in which the works of all three composers are compared and contrasted against each other. With a note of caution to balance the time on analysis with the time on singing, she gives emphasis to her view that understanding the structure of music leads to performing it with understanding.

I feel that the thrust of Corbin’s argument is well taken. As a choral music educator, I want to avoid restricting my teaching to narrow-minded performance goals. I wish to view, rather, the combined exertions of both the mind and the voice as a total development of aesthetic insight and critical thinking. I also believe that the caveat regarding time management is unrealistic. It was not apparent to me that Corbin’s statements were the product of actual field experiences which she could support with direct quotations from some of her students.

Nevertheless, I think her suggestions would work if the teacher treats the lesson plan as a unit, spreading the sight-reading and historical background work over the course of a week or two. The amount of previous preparation in deciphering musical notation and terminology remains unanswered.

In addition, it might be difficult to implement these suggestions with students who

have had no previous experience with vocal literature. Palestrina's "Sicut Cervus," for example, is a NYSSMA Level 5 piece.¹ That may be repertoire which is better suited for an auditioned chamber ensemble.

On the positive side, with adequate preparation, critical think questions regarding the absence of dynamic makings in older music (although some editions have dynamics indications inserted the editor), metronomic designations, the determination the principal melodic line, musical terminology, and historical performance practice should silence any criticism of those who opine "music study is a pleasant diversion in a student's day, but dispensable if funding runs short."

The article can be of use to me in my future work as a choral director. Because I feel that these worksheets may be too advanced for beginning students, I would prefer to start a general chorus class with an all-around textbook, such as *Essential Musicianship* by Emily Crocker and John Leavitt.² I currently own Volume 1, both teacher and student editions. This article encouraged me to purchase Volume 2 and Volume 3. With such a solid musical foundation, my students will be able to profit from Corbin's worksheets and the discussions they draw forth.

¹ New York State School Music Association. NYSSMA Manual: A Resource Suitable for Contests and Evaluation Festivals. 27th ed. Webster: New York State School Music Association, 2003. 402.

² Crocker, Emily and John Leavitt. Essential Musicianship: A Comprehensive Choral Method, Book One. Teacher Edition. Milwaukee, Hal Leonard, 1999.