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Preface

The first *Innocent Sounds~Building Choral Tone and Artistry in Your Children's Choir~A Personal Journey* was written over a ten-year period and published in 1999. The purpose of the book was to share my knowledge of the young voice both chorally and vocally from the time I had my first children's choir at the age of fourteen to the present.

My entire life has been devoted to the healthy training of voices of every age, but particularly the young singers, ages 5-18, who have come to me at varying stages of growth and vocal capability. I love to build the voice with a solid and comprehensive technique that is filled with common sense, musical knowledge, and confidence. To that end, I have developed a specific method of training that, when followed by either an experienced or inexperienced teacher, will remain with the student throughout his/her entire life.

Since my first printed observations in *Innocent Sounds*, I have come to realize there is more for me to share with music professionals in the field. A five-year old needs a different approach to singing than an adolescent singer, and the changing, more mature male voice needs different training and supervision than the maturing woman's voice. The techniques and goals often parallel each other, but it is often the approach that is different.

I have studied and taught voices of all shapes, sizes, and ages with great success in my voice studio, choirs, and Opera Company. Many of the techniques are the same, because "good singing is simply good singing". The thrust of these books is to explore and train the total voice with both boys and girls, bringing them to vocal fruition as adult singers.

This has been a journey of great joy, creativity, and experimentation. This series of three books are devoted to you and how *you can become a better observer and supervisor of the voice rather than a teacher of the voice*. By following these suggestions you will become a masterful teacher and conductor. By purchasing these books, you are about to join my journey, a journey that has been both exciting and successful. This trip requires you to listen, watch, and be mindful of your student's vocal needs. You should begin your travels by developing your own vocal skills. Once that is accomplished, the travel plan I have in mind will be exciting—a wonderful journey you will not want to miss as you learn to properly develop and supervise your students singing, building them into flourishing singers and artists.

My "Musical Philosophy" in the first edition of *Innocent Sounds* has not changed. Fine, thoughtful teaching is simply fine, thoughtful teaching. Imagination and the willingness to discover a vocal solution must always be at the heart of your teaching journey. I have yet to meet a student whom I could not teach to sing, including people that are hearing-impaired. The one thing I have recently discovered is that a conductor's arrogance can get in the way of fine teaching and music making. A good sense of self with a healthy ego and a real knowledge of your students will change your teaching style for years to come. By being a music teacher, you have already developed an artistic legacy. If you put your students and great literature at the hallmark of your teaching, you are about to become a successful traveler.

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WHY TRAIN THE YOUNG SINGER?



“The sound of children’s voices, when trained correctly and artistically, speaks directly to the human soul.”

~ Jean Ashworth Bartle



The Reasons for Training Young Singers

Training young singers is artistically important, universally powerful, and tremendously gratifying. Audiences love to see and hear children sing, particularly when they look endearing and perform with artistic charm; there simply is no other sound like it. It is exciting for a conductor to lead a carefully trained children’s choir because it provides a unique artistic and emotional music experience.

Educating children to sing properly extends far beyond the boundaries of learning music, simple entertainment, and good feeling. The music-making process is part of “life’s lessons,” something we have to do to be a complete person. Singing challenging music strikes into the very core of human nature.

Singing and Great Literature

Singing actively involves and exposes young singers to great literature, particularly when learning established music of our historic past, fine contemporary music, or great folk music. Poems and stories of recognized writers from every culture and period of world history have been set to music. When singing great texts we learn about:

- other cultures
- foreign languages
- religion and philosophy
- imagination and humor
- historic events
- myths and legends

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The secondary value of singing great texts is crucial. Just as important is the quantity of material that composers choose to set. Adults must encourage children, in a positive way, to explore as much fine literature as their curiosity will permit. You will find yourself spending hours searching for fine music editions that utilize worthwhile texts.

Singing and Character Development

There is absolutely no doubt that character development is one of the key by-products of singing and choral performance. Children who learn to perform correctly and sing artistically in a fine music organization find themselves in situations that build character as well. Music helps develop these character traits:

- self-confidence
- inner discipline
- concentration
- persistence
- team work
- respect for others

The benefits of singing, when taught at a high level with great expectations and fine choral literature, cannot be measured. The end result is as varied as the people who experience the music-making process. Collectively, the advantages can be observed in steady achievements across all areas of learning throughout a person's entire life.

Transferring Music Making Skills To Other Disciplines

When children make music an important part of their lives, they begin to gain satisfaction, self-esteem, and confidence. They instinctively transfer these qualities to other avenues of learning:

- academia
- leadership roles
- employment opportunities
- other artistic disciplines

By learning to read musical scores that use quality texts set by composers of all periods, a child's cognitive abilities and social skills improve. In general, children who participate in a high-level choral program venture into and excel at multiple levels of academia, both individually and as team players.

Singing Great Repertoire And Higher Education

Most young people trained in a children's choir go on to schools of higher learning, many becoming leaders of their generation. More than thirty years of teaching experience have taught me that performing music expands a child's intellect. Alumni of fine singing programs enter a vast array of academic subjects: archeology, theology,

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HOW CHILDREN LEARN TO SING



*“Education does not begin with specialist boxes filled with facts to be memorized.
It should be child-centered and start from the needs of the individual.”*

~ John Paynter & Peter Aston, “Sound and Silence”



The Child’s Vocal and Artistic Potential

Children can be taught to realize that their vocal potential and artistic abilities are limitless, that everyone can learn to support, project, and sing artistically with a beautiful tone. They should be encouraged and given the opportunity to sing correctly in a safe and natural environment, exploring the fullest potentials of their voices in a thoughtful and artistic manner while they are young and willing to be experimental.

Your first responsibility, if you want to develop independent singing, is to understand how children learn to sing. The second is to learn pedagogical techniques that will encourage the students to concentrate on building individual creative, responsive, and artistic singing skills.

The Four “I”s Of Singing Pedagogy

Many singers are taught to sing through the use of physiological dialogue, terms that focus on the physical aspects of vocal technique rather than on the singer’s innate intelligence and inborn resources. This type of instruction often occurs with the advanced singer, but it is not an effective method with children. The physical concepts that must be projected are much too confusing and technical. Successful singing instruction is best accomplished by drawing on the child’s natural intelligence, encouraging children to create, recreate, or conjure up images that will assist in fine singing. The more the instructor understands and respects the child’s innate intelligence and natural abilities, the easier it will be to develop a pedagogical technique that is both

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WHY “DOO”? HEADTONE SINGING WITH CHILDREN



“The tone of the young singing voice is compelling in its clarity, magnetic in its purity; the young singing voice is a uniquely versatile instrument unlike any other.”

~ Doreen Rao

The Proper Singing Range for Children

Children speak and sing correctly by nature. What is the normal speaking and singing range for children? The answer can be found on the school playground where children are speaking or calling to their friends in a high voice. This is true of both boys and girls. Children play and shout to their friends in the range that is the most comfortable for them. A trained ear can immediately hear that the voices are high and clear, carrying long distances without necessarily shouting. These pitches heard on the playground are the pitches the conductor must encourage the child to rediscover in the classroom.

All too often children sing out of tune, with a shouting vocal quality. Children under these circumstances have been allowed to sing on their cords, forcing their voice instead of singing on their air, in an unnatural range, by teachers who do not understand the child's normal speaking and singing voice. These children are singing in what is called the chest- and mid-range of their vocal spectrum, rather than the head-range where they would feel more comfortable. When high pitches are sung with the chest voice, they have a shouted, almost strained quality about them. When a child says, “I can't sing that high,” it simply means the singer is using the chest voice to produce the higher pitch. As the chest voice is exercised above the mid-range and into the head range, it becomes increasingly difficult to produce the notes.

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Most children are able to sing in the head voice easily. The instructor should simply encourage and teach them to do so. It must be pointed out that children who are allowed to sing in the chest-and-mid-range over an extended period of time cannot realize their full vocal potential! They are simply unaware of their vocal ability in the upper tessitura. Children can be brought to find and develop their head voices through simple exercises. Once the head voice is discovered, the teacher can help children understand that singing in the chest range with a shouting vocal quality makes it impossible to sing in tune or with any clarity or true carrying power.

Children learn to sing by imitating what they hear. If a child imitates a favorite rock singer, a revered parent with a low, raspy voice, or a teacher who teaches singing with a poor vocal quality or wobble, he or she can become vocally confused. It is important that the child hears and emulates good vocal models. The choral director must develop a relaxed vocal technique for the young singer to imitate, a voice that sounds rounded and beautiful, unaffected and totally at ease. This clear, crystal-like sound can be best imitated on the syllable "DOO" on d2, which is the best note for building a beautiful natural focus.

The Male Teacher as a Vocal Model

The imitation issue poses special problems when men are involved in the singing process. Men simply do not sing in a child's range unless they are singing in falsetto. It is important that the male teacher be able to sing in falsetto to insure pitch accuracy.

Under most circumstances, however, it is recommended that the male instructor sing in his natural range. Children will imitate the tone quality and natural ease of the voice, imitating the relative pitch rather than the actual pitch. If tone production or pitch disorientation is a problem, select a singer in the choir who already has a beautiful head tone. Use that singer as the vocal role model for the other children. As more singers gain the ability to achieve the vocal tone you want, enlarge your vocal tone force until the entire choir makes the choral sound you desire.

The Definition of Headtone Singing

Headtone singing in children can be defined as vocal tones sung on their air, tones that sound perfectly clear, relaxed, and in tune. When properly focused, the voice sounds like a piece of beautiful crystal—totally at ease and quite pure, as if a light shines through it. Most children cannot produce this relaxed and crystal-like tone unless they are singing above the break of the voice that falls at approximately b1. The following chart defines the child's three vocal ranges. The octave number refers to historic theory practices.

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HEALTHY SINGING: PROPER VOCAL MAINTENANCE



*“Voices are not made for music, music is made for voices.
Serve the music.”*

~ Margaret Hillis



A Healthy Approach to Natural Singing

The voice is a delicate instrument that until maturity is easily damaged if not properly supervised. The vocal cord or fold is a muscle, and just as young muscles and bones can be injured in an intense athletic program, so can the vocal muscles be abused and permanently damaged in an intense singing program.

Vocally Abusive Situations to Avoid

- over-singing in the cold night air, at a party, or on a school bus
- constantly talking over noise or excessive screaming on the playground
- cheerleading or other yelling conditions
- singing at full voice in an extended rehearsal when the voice feels tired or the singer is fighting a cold
- singing on a constant basis in an improper range

The Concept of Vocal Maintenance Versus Vocal Instruction

Voice teachers have argued the pros and cons of formally training the pre-adolescent and adolescent girl's voice as well as boy's voices through the change. Yet young singers of all ages, both boys and girls, are performing in all venues of amateur and professional life as soloists or members of an ensemble. There are a growing number of fine children's choirs world-wide that perform advanced choral literature. Both solo and ensemble singing require healthy, accomplished vocal skills, making the teaching of singing mandatory.

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Before plunging into the training of children's voices, conceptualize voice teaching as vocal maintenance rather than vocal instruction. As a pedagogical concept, the teacher becomes the supervisor of the voice rather than the teacher of the voice. Understanding the semantic differences between these two concepts is critical in becoming a successful instructor of young singers.

Instruction must be approached carefully, with a knowledgeable professional observing and developing advanced supervisory skills. Properly supervised, children at all levels of ability will make quick vocal improvement, whereas children who are improperly or poorly supervised perpetuate habits which can lead to a lifetime of vocal hardship.

The ideal environment for supervising and fostering healthy singing is in a group situation, where a careful balance can be drawn between group instruction and brief one-on-one encounters with each student. What you see and hear while the students sing will determine the instruction process. Interchange the four I's of vocal pedagogy with imitation and demonstration games as the critical technique to use in the supervision process. Develop your own singing and demonstration skills, building a healthy voice and a relaxed teaching style that will allow you to easily communicate to students of all ages.

Children should be encouraged to develop their vocal potential as early as interest is shown, usually at the same time they begin to read. View the supervision of children's singing as an adventure with everyone's voice as different as their body shape and age. Your ability to observe and build on these differences will make you a powerful and successful supervisor of young singers.



Young singers gain tremendous confidence when performing in high profile situations. Encourage disciplined, relaxed singing that is vocally building.

Analyzing Children in an Artistic Singing Experience

As an educator determined to take on the challenge of training young voices, you must understand and be able to analyze students who often involve themselves in a quality singing experience. Learning to correctly evaluate and categorize each student will insure healthy vocal progress.

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BREATHING EXERCISES



“The voice and musical feeling of children is so excellent that they can perform artistically anything that fits their physical and emotional development, however difficult the task.”

~ Zoltan Kodaly



Correct Breathing: A Unique Teaching Opportunity

Introducing and teaching correct breathing skills is one of the easiest and healthiest activities you can do with your choir. The instructions can be simple, the exercises easy to execute by everyone. The more playful and imaginative you can make the experience of proper breathing, the better. Physically learning how to take deep breaths and exhaling the air slowly will help with the choir's phrase shapes and each individual's vocal control. These exercises will also help with other activities such as swimming, dancing, playing a wind instrument.



1. While executing these exercises, the children will learn how to take complete, deep breaths that help everyone feel alert and vibrant.
2. While doing the exercises, the conductor has the opportunity to observe each student individually. As you supervise the exercises, watch for unnecessary tension, poor posture, and breathing habits that might restrict the voice. If a child tenses his shoulders or neck, juts the head out in an awkward position, breathes with lip or tongue tension, or breathes with the shoulders and head, this is the time to gently help the chorister become more aware of good and bad breathing habits.

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3. These exercises will build each chorister's body awareness, while discovering under-utilized muscles. This can all be done without the pressure of singing. All of these exercises build a conscientious, focused environment that works on group dynamics and individual success. Taking a deep breath is the basis for fine singing.

As you work these exercises in a group setting, your observations skills must be at their best. Work with demonstration games versus one-on-one instruction. Begin the session by using some of the breath images and exercises described in Chapter 2, pages 36-38.

Getting Started: Learning to Breathe Correctly

Good breath support begins with a deep, relaxed breath. Most children take a shallow, upper chest breath that often involves their shoulders and head, contributing to vocal tension.

EXERCISE 1

The Stand-Up Exercise

Have the children take the proper position for singing in a standing position. Remind them to keep their shoulders relaxed, carefully balanced over their hips, with the hands dangling comfortably at their sides.

Teaching Suggestions

1. Have them practice taking a natural deep breath through the nose and mouth, and then exhale by blowing a steady, even stream of air slowly against their index finger.
2. Emphasize the importance of keeping the shoulders in a relaxed position. The children need to remember to "think out, not up." Gaped, shallow breaths are inappropriate and can cause vocal tension. Practice taking deep breaths a number of times, exhaling slowly.
3. Working this exercise in a mirrored room where the students can see themselves is the ideal. When mirrors aren't available, the partner game can be tremendously helpful in building deep breathing habits in your students.



The students should face each other and form a gentle fist with one hand. As they each breathe, the partners check their friend's diaphragm. Encourage them to put their index finger in front of their mouth, checking to make sure they are singing with constant air.

6

VOCAL EXERCISES



*"I had sung like a bird all through my childhood; but when my voice broke,
I at once fell into the error unmasked by Alexander
of trying to gain my end before I had studied the means."*

~ George Bernard Shaw

The Most Important Factor in Training a Chorus: The Warm-Up

In a rehearsal, there are many elements that are critical to the development of a successful ensemble of singers. Among those elements are fine imaging and imitation techniques developed through the child's intelligence and ability to draw on his/her own inner discipline. Beyond these developed characteristics, the teacher's ability to bring vocal relaxation and fine-tuned breathing skills into the rehearsal continue to enhance the child's vocal growth.

The next and most important step in the teaching process is to determine how the choir will vocally warm up. The relaxation and breath phonating exercises are important to the voice's ability to "wake up." In vocal instruction, your choice of warm-ups will determine your success. You must select exercises that develop their singing techniques, helping them explore the full potential of the voice.

Most conductors use the legato descending scale with pure vowels to warm-up their choir. These exercises are important and should be integrated into the first 10-15 minute regime. Teaching children to sing with vocal agility and flexibility is critical to individual vocal development. Selecting flexibility exercises that begin on middle C will develop the students' awareness of relative pitch as they learn to sing quick notes with better intonation. They simply learn to "throw their voices away."

When I began working with children, I sat down and thought about how I wanted my choir to sound and what exercises I might use to accomplish that sound.

Vocal Qualities I Wanted to Develop in My Children's Choir

- ▶ Encourage a bright, warm sound that fills and resonates on the front of the face.
- ▶ Build a ringing, crystal-like tone quality; a front spin that would be unique to me.
- ▶ The chorus with well-articulated diction and beautiful vowel shapes will always be admired and enjoyed.
- ▶ Create a tone quality that is connected to the air; with tone production that sounds effortless.
- ▶ A group of singers should be trained to sing naturally and encouraged to develop their full vocal potential.
- ▶ A choir with a tone quality filled with energy, that explores the power of each individual rather than developing a choir of homogenized singers, is always preferred.
- ▶ Develop a group of individuals who have good vocal technique—singers who can sing various styles and periods of music with flexibility and vocal agility.

As a result of the vocal criteria listed above, I created the following exercises to be used with children in my community chorus, public school chorus or classroom, and church choir. As I continued to explore the voice and fine choral singing, I soon discovered that many of these exercises created for children worked with my adult choruses in a community, church, and college environment as well.

EXERCISE 1

The Zee-Ah Exercise

Continue Building the Vocal Acoustic

(Sing on the front of the face, on the teeth with a forward, long Z sound with pure vowels.)

(Sing with a bounced-like tone quality.)

The musical score for 'The Zee-Ah Exercise' is written in 4/4 time. The vocal line consists of two phrases: 'Zee! Zee, Ah!' and 'Zee! Zee, Ah!'. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords in the bass and treble staves.

(Vocalize to at least to a2 and beyond.)

7

THE OUT-OF-TUNE OR UNCERTAIN SINGER



"If you can speak, then you can sing."

~ Emma Lou Dimmock

The out-of-tune or uncertain singer in a choir or music classroom is probably the largest single dilemma facing the choral director or music educator. In my early years of teaching, I was constantly frustrated by the fact that half of the children in my classroom couldn't make a perfect unison. A handful of children were unable to match pitches at all. Being an idealist, I went about the daunting task of working to get everyone to sing in tune or at least be able to experience the success of matching pitches.

As I learned how to teach children to sing in tune, I distinctly remember feeling grateful if one note or phrase sounded pure and beautifully focused. At that time, I really didn't totally understand the process of getting a group of children to make a perfect, unison sound. After years of conscientious study and thousands of children later, the mystery has finally been resolved in my own mind. Today, I can truly say there is not a child I can't teach to sing in tune, including people with 50-60% hearing loss. This is a very bold statement, but something all choral professionals need to understand.

The Cause of Pitch Disorientation

1. Many children have problems matching pitches because they are emulating a role model who speaks with a raspy, low voice. Their admiration for this person is displayed by imitating the person's tone quality.
2. Inexperience and lack of confidence often contribute to this problem. Limited public experience or feelings of extreme shyness often lead to an unwillingness to make an effort to sing in tune.

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3. Some children have extreme vocal tension. They often use the muscles of their neck, placing pressure on their vocal cords when they speak. This tension is often transferred to the singing experience. They often sound raspy or throaty. They can sing in tune in the lower tessitura, but can't match pitches in the upper range.
4. A few children will have problems matching pitches because they are vocally lazy. Often children in this category have low attention spans or feel lethargic. They almost feel totally unmotivated.
5. Hearing impairments can be the most difficult area to overcome, but also the most interesting. Children with hearing aids and some children with severe hearing loss can be taught to sing.
6. The inability to inner-hear is the most common reason for a child's inability to sing the correct pitch. They simply do not understand or correctly feel the vibrations in the inner ear.
7. Some children have sung for many years in the wrong range, usually with the chest voice. They phonate by shout singing. They generally cannot sing in tune in the upper tessitura, and some have damaged their vocal cords. I call this the "Annie Syndrome."
8. Occasionally, a child will come to the rehearsal or classroom with little experience in music. They simply don't understand the music making process.
9. Physical impairments beyond a hearing disability are rare, but do occur. Some physical impairments include:
 - bowed cords
 - arthritis in the vocal cord
 - mental retardation
 - speaking impediments

Techniques for Developing In Tune Singing

Teaching children to sing perfectly in tune takes courage, patience, and the ability to properly evaluate each child's pitch-matching capability. Gentle persistence must be an intricate part of your teaching style while working on this sensitive issue. There are some basic techniques that can be used for the more routine problems, techniques that will quickly resolve uncertain singing.

TECHNIQUE 1

Let's Whoop!

1. This is the most basic and invaluable technique you can use. I discovered its importance early in my teaching career, using it with children to help

8

CONSONANTS AND VOWELS AND HOW THEY RELATE TO TONE BUILDING



"No two voices produce the same sound because no two human bodies are exactly alike."

~ Lloyd Pfautsch

Much has been written about the importance of well-articulated consonants and pure, evenly shaped vowels as part of the total artistic impression. These two elements in choral singing go far beyond literary understanding and vocal beauty; they are actually key ingredients in helping children learn how to sing with a natural, uniform resonance. Books or resources on how to properly execute consonants and vowels in frequently sung languages, including English, can be found in Chapter 2, page 43.

This chapter is devoted to the selection of music that builds fine diction and uniformly shaped vowels. Selecting music where both skills can be emphasized will directly improve a choir's tone quality. Choosing music for pedagogical reasons may be a new concept, but one you should seriously consider.

Diction and Tone Building

It is critical to a choir's development that some music be selected for the sole purpose of teaching diction. (A diction builder must be in the folder at all times.) This is true in relation to both tone and the communication of the text. I learned early on in the teaching process that well-enunciated beginning, middle, and ending consonants are directly related to the child's air, vocal focus, and tone quality. You must be aware that certain pieces are better for achieving this goal than others.

1. Well-articulated diction affects tone production. Children's voices begin to ring as they learn to sing properly enunciated words on their air. Each child in the choir must be encouraged to articulate words evenly.

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2. When children enunciate clearly, thinking of singing the words right on the front of their teeth, their focus quickly improves, giving them more power to control their dynamics.
3. Hard and soft consonants and word alliterations build uniform singing. Teach the children to enunciate evenly, singing the repeated consonants or words with consistent force.
4. Learn to take deep breaths, and use that breath to send the consonants out into the room.
5. Diction also assists with pitch accuracy. Students who sing flat generally do not use enough air and usually do not enunciate their words clearly.
6. Chiffed (crisp) consonants that alternate with soft consonants assist the young singer in opening the mouth. The music examples in this chapter are primary vehicles for teaching the singing of consonants and how they can help with tone production and vocal focus.
7. Articulated hard and soft consonants, when properly pronounced, assist in a natural position for the tongue, jaw, and mouth.
8. Emphasis on properly executed consonants in foreign languages is equally beneficial.

Young singers have a tendency to sing with a clear, pure tone when they are singing right on their teeth, on the front of the face, with good, clean, well-articulated diction. Singing consonants before the beat also helps with vocal clarity and placement. Succinct diction improves rhythmic accuracy and results in a more precise artistic performance. Criteria for the selection of music that will improve your choir's tone quality through diction must be carefully thought out.

Criteria for the Selection of Choral Literature: Building Diction

1. The piece should have beginning consonants that can be easily sung before the beat.
2. Select music where consonants can be clearly connected to the vowels.
3. Music that has a lot of "T"s and "S"s will help build consistent enunciated consonants, assisting the child to sing forward on the teeth.
4. Texts that have a number of "T"s, "D"s, "K"s, and "S"s as final consonants will develop a choir's ability to sing phrases accurately.
5. Text alliterations are ideal for building well executed, even consonants.
6. Choose music in the upper tessitura where soft consonants can also be emphasized.

9

VOCAL ACOUSTICS: ADVANCING HEADTONE TECHNIQUES THROUGH “DOO” AND MORE



“Voice training in an amateur choir is of special importance.”

~ Wilhelm Ehmann

Vocal acoustics is one of the most important concepts to understand if you want to advance the tone production of your chorus. I discovered the importance of this concept while working with a group of children who sang with a “wimpy” unfocused tone quality or sang with a shouted tone quality in order to project. Both tone productions sounded unsupported and out of tune. I determined that I could not live with this cacophony of sound and went about solving this serious problem.

Trained to play the flute in secondary school and college, I quickly applied my knowledge of tone production and resonance in the flute to the tone production of the child’s voice. I had already determined that most children had very little understanding of their vocal potential or power; they simply had no idea about how to fill their face with sound and then sing that sound into a room. After experimenting with blowing over glass bottles in a general music classroom, I realized that the best solution to this acoustical problem was to create techniques and exercises that would develop the tone quality I wanted.

Tone Production Observations

I began resolving this problem by listening to children’s (boy’s) choirs in a live situation and on recordings. Through this process, I made a variety of conclusions.

1. Some children’s (boy’s) choirs sing with more power than others.
2. Many choirs sing with a beautiful tone quality that is perfectly shaped, but lacks excitement and brilliance. The tone doesn’t ring on the face.

3. Often conductors solve the power/resonance issue by allowing a shouting tone production that always sounds out of tune.
4. The most successful choirs are highly auditioned, selecting children who can already sing with a pure, focused sound.

Vocal Acoustics

Definition of Vocal Acoustics

Vocal acoustics can be taught to everyone and is defined as a ringing tone production that is focused in the face, but can brilliantly resound throughout the entire room. It is a tone quality that must be properly supported. The singer must be encouraged to fill the entire head with sound, making all the bones in the face vibrate. I like to call this type of singing using all of your “boneductors.” Many children sing with a flat, lethargic sound or a shouting, belting tone quality I call “the Annie syndrome.” These types of tone production will not help the student learn to use the acoustics of the room.



Learn to sing a buzzing “DOO” that vibrates throughout the entire face.

Teaching Vocal Acoustics

The concept of vocal acoustics is something that must be taught. As the students begin to understand the power and color of their voice, the entire tone quality and tuning of your choir improves immediately.

EXERCISE 1

Understanding the Concept of Boneductors

Understanding how to make the bones in your head vibrate is probably the most important aspect of vocal acoustics to teach your singers.

1. The children must learn to fill their head with sound, making the bones vibrate.
2. As they sing, they must learn to support their tone with fast air that fills the head.
3. Use the coke bottle image, imitating a tone that sounds full and round.
4. Encourage the use of fingers and hands on the head and in the air.

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DEVELOPING MUSICAL ACCURACY: THE “DOO” ODYSSEY CONTINUES



“The more I study listening, the more convinced I am that those who know how to listen are the exceptions”

~ Alfred Tomatis, M.D.



Developing musical accuracy is a critical aspect of building a fine children’s chorus that is both artistic and well educated. Learning to sing accurately can be taught just as well as vocal techniques. You insure musical accuracy by developing fine listening skills while teaching a working knowledge of theory and score notation through the use of fine choral literature. Some of the concepts or materials to consider:

1. Teach music theory by analyzing the various scores. Determine correlations as well as differences to advance the student’s knowledge.
2. Develop advanced listening skills by accurately analyzing and executing difficult intervals and phrase shapes. Choose music of various styles and periods.
3. Determine theoretic guidelines for your choir that build in difficulty with each experience.
4. Use a steady diet of Baroque music to secure accurate melismatic singing.
5. Find contemporary scores with advanced intervallic and metric relationships that will develop inner hearing and rhythmic skills.
6. Locate or edit canons that contain articulation and dynamic indications that will train the children to sing the canonic layers accurately and with assurance.

Most teachers see their children’s choir once or twice a week. This holds true for classroom teachers as well. Because of time constraints, teaching theory by using the

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score becomes an extremely important concept to adopt. My children (once they are able to read) always have a score in their hands either at rehearsal or in the classroom. When you choose not to use music scores, you have missed a tremendous teaching opportunity. I like to explain to the students that scores contain a unique musical shorthand. The more they know about and are able to read this shorthand, the better musicians they will become.

Teaching Music Shorthand

You can make a musical game out of the score. Ask the children to find and identify the following:

- the composer's name
(*period, dates, etc.*)
- the title
(*melodic source, nationality, etc.*)
- staff basics
(*names of lines, spaces, ledgers, etc.*)
- clef sign and meter
(*divisions of twos or threes, etc.*)
- key signature
(*major, minor, modal, etc.*)
- tempo marking
- music terminology
- foreign terms
(*Italian, etc.*)
- note values
- rhythmic relationships
(*even or uneven*)
- articulation marks
- dynamic indications
- the music map
(*repeats, etc.*)
- lyrics
(*foreign language pronunciation*)
- interval relationships
- harmonic structure
(*chords, etc.*)

Theory Guidelines

A Program That Is Musically Developing

My children's choir has, as part of its regular program, a week long summer music experience and performance where children learn choral repertoire for the season, foreign language diction, and theory and sight singing skills in individual classes. Over the years, my professional staff has developed the following guidelines for the beginning to advanced music student in theory and sight singing.

Guidelines for the Training Chorus

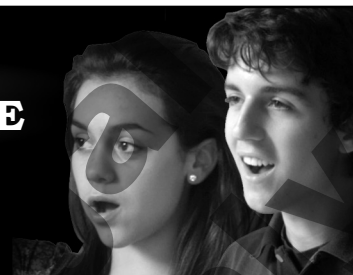
Beginning Theory

Learn to identify the basic contents of a musical score

- title
- composer's name

11

SELECTING REPERTOIRE TO BUILD TONE



“Che bella cosa—The Beautiful Song!”

~ Giovanni Carlo Maria Clari

Selecting repertoire that evolves around tone building is one of the most important concepts to adopt when starting a children’s choir. Your repertoire decisions will determine the quality of the color of your choral sound. Choosing repertoire that lies in the mid to upper range of the voice is critical to building a beautiful choral tone in children (See the Range Chart on page 49 to better understand the child’s normal range.) Conductors who choose music in the chest-or-mid-range of the child’s natural voice will find themselves experiencing constant pitch and focus problems. You may later discover that this type of literature has been vocally damaging or encouraged poor singing habits.

There is a solid body of music useful to build the tone of children’s choirs. All of this music should be evaluated using three important criteria.

- ▶ tessitura
- ▶ vowels
- ▶ consonants

Tessitura

1. The tone quality and style of tone production changes in the child’s voice in the various registers, just as it does with adults.
2. When children sing music below b1, children sing with a breathy, unfocused tone quality. In order to project in this tessitura, they have a tendency to over sing.

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3. In the lower tessitura (those notes below middle C) singing is more problematic. In order to produce a tone in this range, children have a tendency to sing on the chest.
4. In the upper tessitura (those notes between b1 and g2), children with good breath control learn to sing with a ringing tone quality. At first, notes in this tessitura may sound shrill, but by encouraging good vocal technique, the sound will quickly change to a pure, crystal-like tone.
5. When getting started, select music composed in the upper and middle tessitura.
6. Avoid melodies that lie in one range (high or low) that can become vocally relentless.

Vowels

1. Music that has repeated vowels of the same shape will help build a natural, relaxed tone quality that rings into the room.
2. The singing of pure vowels will help children sing with a focused tone quality that sounds perfectly in tune.
3. With the beginning student, select texts that contain vowel shapes that are more forward in sound like "EE" and "OO".
4. When selecting music that has notes in the upper tessitura, choose texts with yawned vowels like "AH", "OH", or "AW".
5. The "AY" vowel is the most problematic because of the second vowel shape—the "EE" sound. It must be enunciated at the very end.
6. With all vowels, diphthongs (the second vowel shape) should be sung at the last moment. This will improve the choir's intonation.

Consonants

1. Well-enunciated consonants are like tonal bullets, plummeting the vocal tone forward onto the front of the face where it will have a ringing quality.
2. Select texts that have long consonants that can be enunciated on the teeth.
3. Search for scores that have texts with numerous consonant alliterations.
4. Evaluate the melodic setting of the text. It is important to select music where the more difficult intervals can be supported by the well-articulated consonants. Choose pieces where consonants can be sung before the beat.
5. Pick music where the upper notes have long or hard consonants. This will help the children to "throw these higher pitches away!"

12

HOW TO CHOOSE CHORAL REPERTOIRE IS IT PEDAGOGICALLY VALUABLE?



"The voice is the most natural instrument that exists, and vocal music is how music history began."

~ Joan Kennedy

The selection of choral literature is the most important decision you will make as a conductor. If you choose repertory that children can teach themselves, then you are not educating your students. When you select fine music of our historic past or contemporary literature of high quality that challenges the young singer, you are artistically feeding yourself and your students. To teach music for children to appear cute or entertaining should not be your goal; to educate and challenge should be your goal. Children really don't know what they like until they have been exposed to all types of music. Your taste in music, what you believe in introducing to them, will have a tremendous impact on their musical tastes. A full palette of music that is well written is critical to the success of your program.

Years ago I took the path of teaching children to understand and perform classical music of all periods in its original language. Once the teaching of most of the major literature was accomplished, and the benefits of exposing children and their families to cultivated literature was established, I moved to fine folk materials (including nursery rhymes and ethnic music from all over the world) and well-written contemporary literature that continues to develop artistic singing. I have never regretted this decision. The seeds that have been sown over the past thirty years are flowering all over the world. This rich legacy of singing fine music will hopefully pass on from generation to generation as the benefits for singing this type of music become more confirmed. Teaching great music will help in promoting a promising future for serious music making.

The Motivations for Choosing Choral Literature

Motivation 1

I Like the Piece!

This is probably the most common reason for selecting music. When choosing music you love, you feel a total commitment to teaching the score more effectively with passion and forethought.

1. Consciously think about why you like this piece. This will enable you to convey your passion in the instruction process.
2. Determine what about this piece will draw children into the total music experience.
3. What can you teach your students about music reading, theory, and the total understanding of the score that will make this a pedagogical vehicle as well?
4. Does the composer, the period, or the text have significant importance? Think about how you can broaden a child's understanding of the "world stage" as you train him/her to sing artistically.
5. Study the score and determine what theoretic elements might build a child's understanding of music and how it is constructed. Explanation of the various score elements will help them grow to understand the composer's intent and how they might better artistically interpret the music.
6. If the composer is alive and lives in or visits your region, invite him or her to a rehearsal or performance. It is important that children have an opportunity to interact with the music's creator.

Motivation 2

It Was Recommended by Another Choral Professional

This is an ideal way to select music. Recommendations by respected conductors usually mean that this particular edition or piece works well with a children's choir.

1. Take recommendations from conductors who have had a lot of experience in the field.
2. Even though the piece has been recommended, evaluate it for tessitura and pedagogical value. Use the same criteria for evaluation as you would a new work.
3. Ask questions of the conductor about possible pitfalls or teaching suggestions that will help in the preparation and teaching of the score. Each conductor sees and hears something different in the music. The sharing of these insights will help you develop your own artistic interpretation.

13

SCORE SELECTION HOW TO EVALUATE, EDIT, AND ADAPT ESTABLISHED AND NEW WORKS



“In a serious edition of a historical work, what I think is needed, preferably separated from the notes themselves, is as much interpretive information as is practical. This information should reflect the latest study but not unduly intrude on the performer’s creative turf.”

~ Donald Teeters

One of the most staggering exercises facing the choral professional is the selection of scores. Choosing the right piece from the reams of choral music being published is an overwhelming task, particularly when selecting music for treble voices. The market is virtually “bursting” with good and bad editions of music of varying style and quality. The music store, once an oasis for the conductor looking for the “right” piece, has become a perplexing place for the choral professional who faces the daunting task of wading through hundreds of publications to find one good piece of music.

The publishing industry is printing an enormous quantity of music with the intent of keeping this music of varying quality in print for five years. The quantity and quality of music varies from publisher to publisher; therefore, it is important to select music from a group of established and reliable houses that specialize in music for treble voices. Below is my list of favorite publishing houses.

Publishers of Treble-Voiced Music

Boosey and Hawkes (distributed in the U.S. by Hal Leonard) (England & USA)

www.boosey.com

+44 20 7054 7200

Breitkopf and Hartel (Germany)

www.breitkopf.com

+44 13 03 87 00 37 (UK Sales)

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www.carus-verlag.com
+49 711-797 330-0

Chester Music and Novello & Company (England)

www.chesternovello.com
44 (0)20 7612 7400

Chorister's Guild (USA)

www.choristersguild.org
1-800-CHORISTER (246-7478)

Colla Voce Music (USA)

www.collavoce.com
(317) 466-0624

ECS Publishing (E. C. Schirmer Music Company, Galaxy Music, Highgate Press, Ione Press)
(USA)

www.ecspublishing.com
617.236.1935

Éditions Durand-Salabert-Eschig (France)

www.durand-salabert-eschig.com
+33 (0)1 53 24 80 01

Faber Music Limited (England)

www.fabermusic.com
+44 (0)20 7833 7900

Gordon V. Thompson Music (Warner/Chappell Music) (USA)

www.warnerchappell.com
310-441-8600

G. Schirmer, Inc. (USA)

www.schirmer.com
212-254-2100

Hal Leonard (represents Boosey and Hawkes and G. Schirmer) (USA)

www.halleonard.com
414-774-3630

Hinshaw Music, Inc. (USA)

www.hinshawmusic.com
(919) 933-1691

Lawson-Gould Music Publishers, Inc. (Alfred Music) (USA)

www.alfred.com
(818) 892-2452

MorningStar Music Publishers (USA)

www.morningstarmusic.com
636-305-0100

Music 70 Music Publishers (Alfred Music) (USA) (USA)

www.alfred.com
(818) 892-2452