

40 WARM-UPS THAT WORK...AND WHY!

Improving Vocal Technique through the Warm-up

Conference Session Proposal

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40 WARM-UPS: ABSTRACT

Because many students have no music teacher beside their choral director, their musical and vocal limitations are our responsibility. The vocal warm-up, in addition to helping singers meet the immediate demands of the repertoire for our next concert, should systematically build the vocal skill set of our singers over time.

Rather than defaulting to favorite warm-ups we've used in the past, or forsaking the warm-up entirely, directors should improve their understanding of the voice, how it functions, and can be trained. As this understanding develops, it allows us to be discerning as we choose materials for warm-ups. We can augment our favorite warm-ups with others that achieve different pedagogical ends appropriate to the literature we're studying and the individuals in the ensembles we direct. We will understand how to sequence our warm-ups to maximize their effectiveness. We'll know how, when faced with a vocal challenge, to create a warm-up to 'fix' the problem by addressing the technique deficiency that is its cause.

ALL WARM-UP SESSIONS SHOULD ADDRESS...IN THIS ORDER!!!

1) FOCUS/READINESS TO SING- Before voices can be prepared to rehearse and perform, singers need to let go of the distractions of their day. Begin each rehearsal with exercises that facilitate focus and concentration. Depending on the day, I will do varying amounts of focus exercises.

Principles and Examples-

- 1) It is essential that everyone participate. Talking, movement or distractions of any kind are extremely detrimental to focus and the singers who are otherwise engaged most need the exercises.
- 2) Physical canons are great focus warm-ups. Try them at one, two and three beats behind. Insist on silence! Physical canons are rhythmic execution of any gesture; clapping, snapping, patting, reaching etc. Start at one beat, then two and finally 4 beats behind the 'leader'.
- 3) Do what I do... vary things slightly so they have to watch, focus and concentrate to be successful. Key to this readiness exercise simultaneous execution. Change quickly, starting with gross motor movements and becoming increasingly subtle as singer's engagement increases.
- 4) Breath and be aware... low, deep breaths w/concentration are great focusers...ask "How do you feel?"

2) POSTURE- The proper alignment of the body is the foundation upon which good choral tone and artistry are built. Improper alignment is the sickness that manifests many symptoms including intonation problems, lack of tonal vitality, breath management issues and a host of others. Once the group is focused, our next task is to deconstruct poor posture and purposefully realign the body. This should be revisited, as necessary, throughout the rehearsal; changing positions, standing to sitting, risers to chairs, shift your weight, etc. whenever singers need an alignment reset.

Principles and examples-

- 1) Relaxation and movement are keys to finding and maintaining good singing posture. Release the head forward and up.
- 2) Use movement and imagery, stretches and metaphors to put off bad habits and acquire new ones. Torso

twists, all stretches, shake it out, stir the water in a hot tub, roll your shoulders, massage.

3) Language that makes manipulating posture purposeful can be counterproductive, leading to tension and problems. Instead, use language like 'allow' or 'relax into' or 'release'. 'Allow your head to balance on the top of your spine so it feels weightless.'

4) We need to find ways helps singers find and maintain a balanced and energized posture without using words with negative connotations like 'stand up straight'. Ex. Sumo steps, Raggedy Ann & Andy, Jumping Jacks, Stand like a champion. Confident but not proud. "Imagine you are a puppet with a string attached to the top of the head, lifting the body and elongating the spine." Reach for the sky, (Pick fruit, reach for a \$20.00 bill, etc) drop and release the arms away from your spine.

3) BREATH- After focus is achieved and vital posture is in place, every warm-up should include activities to accomplish skillful control of breath management. Remember, problems with intonation, vibrato, tone color, vocal tension and a myriad of other issues are most often only symptoms of a deficiency in the fundamental vocal technique. Properly functioning breath, like alignment, will prevent many vocal technique issues from occurring. Breathing warm-ups teach coordination of the phases of the breath cycle: inhalation, onset, phrase duration and release.

Principles and examples-

1) **You can't look thin** and breathe well for singing. Inhalation is In, Down and Out and as the air moves, the pleura must get out of the way...your stomach goes out. Imagine filling an inner tube. Ribs high, tummy relaxes down and, back wide. Show me with your hands. Imagine breathing through a 'belt full of noses' or a straw in your navel. While we often hyper-inhale during warm-ups, in practice "more support" is counter-productive causing tension. Rather, breath pacing and efficiency should be the aim. Arms embrace a beach ball.

2) **Panting** is great for activating muscles and awareness of the muscles of exhalation. (tongue out is optional...) Imitate a steam locomotive pulling out of the station. Pant like an elephant...like the Lion that chased the elephant...like the Chihuahua that chased the lion. Breathe in for 2 out for 4, in 2 out 8, in 2 out 12; Again on a hiss.

3) **Healthy inhalation**, whether through the nose or mouth, is silent. Smell a rose (turkey dinner, fresh baked cookies). A Nose breath will relax and reset the voice (strive for a 'cool' sensation in the throat), while a mouth breath is faster. Breathe in for 8 counts, exhale on an s, sh, f, etc. There are 100 variations of this. Remember, don't close the glottis when the breath is 'suspended' between inhalation and exhalation. Hold your index finger 2", 4" 6", 8", in front of your lips. Your goal is to feel the breath. Blow out five candles with five puffs of air...renew and repeat. One of my favorites: bend over at the waist and relax totally...breathe out, breathe in over a slow eight count as you slowly come back to noble posture.

3) **Onset** is the efficient coordination of the muscles of exhalation and the approximation (adduction) of the vocal folds. Imagine the tone is suspended on a fountain of water. It is often very helpful to imagine air having direction and/or a destination. Point to where the phrase is going, turn all your air into tone, sing it like you mean it without being louder. Any exercise that promotes a balanced onset is a breath exercise.

4) **Breath release** is the moment when muscles of exhalation surrender to the muscles of inhalation and the vocal folds abduct (come apart). The skillful release: is relaxed, healthy and artful, allows swift breath renewal, promotes a balance onset at the beginning of the next phrase. EVERY vocalise is a breath release exercise.

4) VOCAL FOLDS- A primary concern of the choral professional must be the facilitation of relaxed, natural function of the vocal folds. The challenge of this task is heightened by the years of singing experience our singers bring to class (read bad habits). Their own manipulation to achieve a perceived ideal and our own prejudices can cause singers to manipulate and introduce tension into their vocal production. The ideal is found in a dynamic equilibrium in the musculature of the larynx. Once freedom and efficient function have been achieved, we color the sound through vowel and placement. Beautiful singing needs little more.

Principles and examples-

1) Start breathy and work towards closer approximation. It is easier (and less damaging to voices) to move from hypo function of the vocal folds to proper function. Remember, DO NO HARM to voices!

- 2) Larynx position should be neutral. Released, relaxed singing begins with no manipulation of the larynx. To 'find the larynx,' place a finger gently on the Adam's apple and swallow. As singers phonate, make sure they are neither lifting nor depressing the voice box. The larynx is connected (muscles) to the tongue, so be especially aware of the potential to depress the larynx singing 'ah, uh and oh.'
- 3) Lip trills. Their use in vocal warm-ups is almost endless. They create the sensation of support (appoggio) without the problem of too much tension (glottal stroke) on unprepared vocal folds. Use lip trills with glissandos (especially good for connecting vocal registers), range extension exercises (arpeggios and scales of an octave or ninth), breath intensity and the sensation of support, approximation and elimination of breathy, unsupported singing, etc. Keep those lips buzzing and use lots of air!
- 4) Use the **Yawn sigh** to diagnose breath volume issues
- 5) Balanced Onset: If a 'soft' onset is airy and a 'hard' onset is a glottal stroke, we're striving for something in between the majority of the time. That said, we begin vocalizations with a wide spectrum of intensities. Bowling ball or a feather. Have the singers place a hand, palm up at the level of the navel. The other hand is above the first, palm down. Imagine the onset is related to the weight of an object in the hand; a feather, a ping-pong ball, a soft ball, a bowling ball. This can be easily transferred to repertoire, ex. "Give me a softball attack." Thanks to Tim Seelig for this one!
- 5) Hum. The hum, and other sung consonants including n and ng are excellent as an initial vocal fold warm-up. A personal favorite is 132435421. Have half the choir sustain the tonic and this becomes an excellent intonation exercise. Alternatively, have a sub-group hold the dominant from the onset, or after they arrive. With the hands in front of the epigastrium, fingers locked and palms toward the floor, 'push' down as you sing an ascending vocalise.

5) REGISTRATION, CONNECTING THE MECHANISMS/RANGE DEVELOPMENT- A professional singing voice has been trained to dynamically adjust the heavy and light mechanism to create the appearance of a unified sound throughout the registers. This is illusion, as all mature voices have registers in which sound is created using functionally distinct methods in each register. One jewel in the crown of our vocal instruction is teaching our singers the dynamic adjustments necessary to connect what are variously called lifts, passages, mechanism, breaks, etc. so the voice is totally free and flexible to achieve artistic and expressive ends. Further, skilled singers can and should use a variety of tone colors throughout the range. **Avoid overuse of repertoire that has extreme registers, timbres and dynamics.** Singing high and/or loud for any extended period is problematic. Add singing with tone appropriate to an R & B, gospel or spiritual style and the potential for vocal trauma is high, especially in younger singers.

Principles and examples-

- 1) Work from the top down. This is especially critical for adolescents and particularly young men. Keeping the head voice (light mechanism, falsetto) free and usable is essential to their vocal development and the continued flexible use of the upper voice once vocal maturity has been attained. Further, you will DO NO HARM by bringing the light mechanism down and you can easily cause physical injury or at best dysfunction by forcing the heavy mechanism too high. Vocalize high to low, staying in the 'head voice' as long as possible...all 'breaks' are magically fixed...
- 2) Sirens, train whistles, bird calls, sighs all are good for connecting registers. Portamento exercises, both ascending and descending are wonderful registration exercises. Lip trills. Utilize a glissando, from open vowels on the bottom to closed vowels on the top, ex. Ah to oo, to strengthen these areas and facilitate the dynamic adjustment of the mechanism.
- 3) Avoid saying 'breaks', 'cracks' and other negative terms to describe the places where the vocal gears must shift. They should be called, more accurately: shifts, lifts, transitions and other unloaded words. Again, work from head voice down or from low to high and back down in the same vocalise.
- 4) Point down to the ground when singing a high pitch (can't tell you why it works, but it does...) Chin neutral (or very slightly lowered), sing through the vocal mechanism (middle of the neck) not at the front.
- 5) Relaxation, lots of 'support' and volumes above mezzo forte are essential when doing high register extension exercises. Relaxation, a neutral larynx position, a bright placement and low volume are essential in the extreme low register.

6) ARTFUL SINGING AND ALL THAT OTHER STUFF- *Messa di voce*, dynamics, articulation and artistry can and should be taught in the warm-up but are best experienced in the repertoire. I've included many specific exercises to develop artistic choral singing. That said, choral artistry best is achieved when text and the musical setting connect with the human spirits performing musical works with feeling and honest intent.

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Dr. Frank Eychaner Bio

Dr. Frank F. Eychaner is the Director of Choral Studies at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin. Eychaner has taught at the high school, community college and university levels. Choirs under Eychaner's direction performed at ACDA and NAfME conventions, including Colorado and Utah in 2013 and the Colorado and Southwest Division convention in 2014. Eychaner has presented sessions at dozens of state, regional and national conferences. Eychaner conducted the 2014 Kentucky Jr. High Allstate choir. He will headline the 2015 Missouri ACDA summer convention and will conduct the Korean International Honor Choir in 2016.

First Things First: Mental Readiness

1. Rhythmic Perception



1) The director claps one measure of rhythm and the chorus repeats the exact pattern.

2) The director continues with new patterns, becoming increasingly complex.

Extensions: 2) Clap two or four measure patterns. 3) Have an additional leader clap patterns for half of the choir. 4) Walk/step quarter notes or half notes in place. 5) Clap rhythms from the repertoire

2. Do what I do...

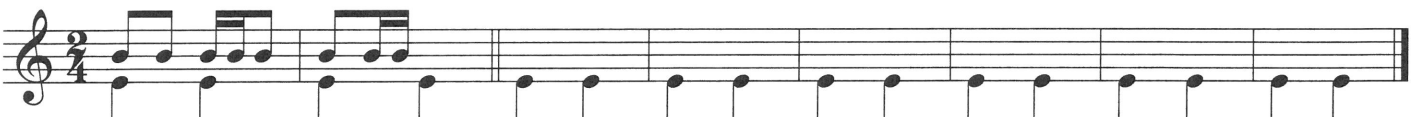
The director assumes physical postures and asks the choir to do the same as if looking in a mirror. Leg lifts, stretches, low breaths, all are options. Repeat gestures like clapping, stepping, snapping in rhythm. **Extensions:** 1) use this to teach the choreography to a show choir piece or dance steps from a musical. 2) suddenly stop to see who is following (this is a great way to stop talking and other distractions. Begin again immediately. 3) reinforce silence and focus.

3. Physical cannons

Just like a vocal cannon, ask the choir to 'echo' what the director does, first one beat apart, then two and finally four. Have a student lead this activity. Include breathing, posture readiness, stretching and any 'physical readiness/posture exercises as part of the cannon.

4. Clap rhythmic patterns that are projected on the screen.

This is a great tool for developing literacy. With the pattern projected, step the pulse. Clap the printed rhythm and simultaneously count-sing the rhythm. (Fill in your own and improvise others).



5. Focus- Get the choir quiet and standing using good posture. Have the singers close their eyes and 'focus' on a key word: relax, breath, text, spin, etc. This can also be a time to introduce a word that is the pedagogical focus for the lesson or rehearsal. Continue the time of 'focus' and accompany it with low breathing and relaxation.

6. Echo- Make sounds and ask the choir to 'echo' them back. Any sound that could be used as a pedagogical tool is an option. Ideally, these sounds are presented in a rhythmic pattern that doesn't leave room for laughing, talking or other distractions. It can be helpful to offer suggestions on how to appropriately 'perform' the sounds and what connection they have to the repertoire being studied.

1) Sirens, bird calls, dog barks, etc.

2) The 'choo choo' of a train with an accompanying accelerando

3) Plosive, fricatives, or sibilant consonants in a specific rhythm

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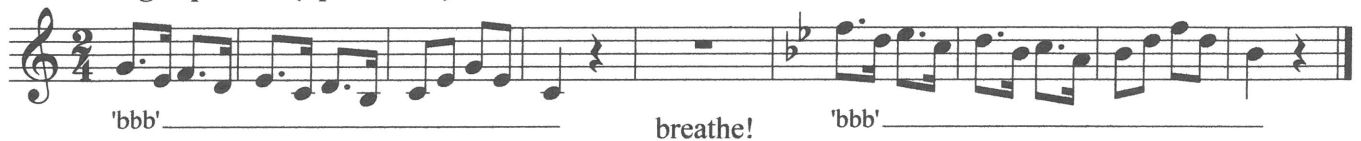
Dr. Frank F. Eychaner

Peer Gynt (Edvard Grieg)- Initial Vocalization



- 1) Begin the vocal warm-up with a low to mid range exercise
- 2) Other options include a lip buzz, any voiced liquid or voiced fricative consonant [n, l, z, f, v]
- 3) All 'm' or hums should have a pencil sized hole between the lips, the tongue touching the bottom front teeth and the space of an ah without the tongue depressing the larynx.

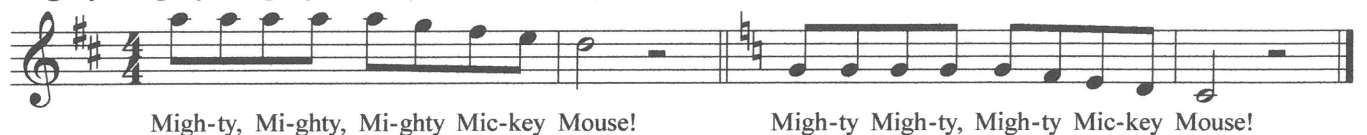
Descending Lip Trills (lip bubbles)



Lip bubbles, also called lip buzzes or lip trills, are an incredible tool for teaching many things we value as vocal educators (See *Lip Trills* pedagogical gesture). First, the lip trill creates a strong sense of forward resonance and placement in the masque. Second, because of the air pressure behind the 'buzzing' lips, range extension is made much easier. Third, the 'buzzing' lips create a wonderful feeling of resistance consistent with the appoggio of supported breath.

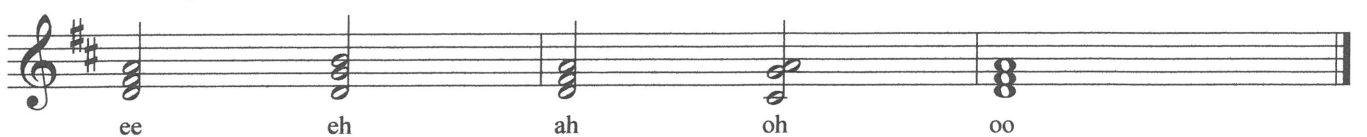
- 1) Feel the resonance move forward and higher as pitch ascends
- 2) Feel the air speed increase and the air column narrow as pitch ascends.
- 3) There will be an increase in the 'ping' quality of sound as the pitch ascends
- 4) Place the hands at the jaw line and push the fleshy part of the cheeks forward and up slightly to thicken the lips. This will require the singer to move more air, a good thing! (*Lip Trills* pedagogical gesture)

Mighty, Mighty, Mighty Mickey Mouse- Range Extension High and Head Voice (Men)



- 1) The 'm' allows the vocal folds to adduct (come together) without lots of pressure, avoiding a glottal stroke while creating subglottic pressure at the moment of onset.
- 2) Invite singers to sing with a heroic 'mickey mouse' falsetto (epic...but still falsetto...)
- 3) Keep the light quality of the falsetto in the voice as singers descend through the passages.
- 4) Perform at a *forte* volume and decrescendo. Point across the room and imagine the sound as 'away' or 'there'. Perform with the *Away* pedagogical gesture.
- 5) This is an excellent vocalise for connecting the falsetto to modal register for young men's voices

Show Me a Sign!- Pure Vowels and Intonation Improvisation



- 1) Using pure vowels coupled with gesture (see *Pure Latin Vowels* pedagogical gestures) instruct singers to choose a note of each successive chord in the designated rhythm in their low to mid register.
- 2) Encourage singers to improvise a different melodic line on each repetition
- 3) Focus attention on integrity of vowel shapes and crisp transitions between them
- 4) Rearrange the order of vowels from closed to open, open to closed.

Guh- Neutral Larynx Position

- 1) A neutral larynx (natural, relaxed position) that is neither raised or depressed is essential to relaxed, vibrant phonation in all registers
- 2) Accompany the exercise with a **Larynx Check** gesture wherein singers put a fingertip lightly on the adams apple (laryngeal prominence) to make sure there is minimal depression or raising. This simple kinesthetic exercise creates an instant awareness of larynx position where note existed before. Larynx manipulation is associated with tongue (glossis) tension.
- 3) Avoid numerous repetitions/high range as the glottal stroke of 'g' is fatiguing and easily over done.

Bee-ee, Bee-ee- Range Extension High

Up to key of C



Put the pointer finger of each hand in front of your eyes and imagining squishing a bug on the wall (or your friend's head...) 'Squish' your chosen target each time you sing 'Bee'. (See **Bee-ee** gesture)

- 1) The abdominal pressure initiated by the plosive creates the appoggio (often called support) needed to move air through the adducted vocal folds in the high range. Move lots of air and 'explode' the Bee.
- 2) Encourage fun. A spirit of play short circuits the 'caution' and reserve many singers manifest when approaching the high register.
- 3) This is published in *The Perfect Blend* by Tim Seeling. Used with permission. Thanks Tim!

Compression of Appoggio-

♩ = 60 legato

Vocalize up to Bb



- 1) Use an initial consonant as in judge, (insert a d before the j). Use a neutral uh (schwa) vowel.
- 2) Feel a pulse in the epigastrium on each pitch. The voiced fricative dj (like the bubble, b and g) creates the dynamic muscle support (compression) of air that provides the fuel for fine singing in any style.
- 3) The exercise also facilitates breath management when performed at a slow tempo
- 4) The voiced 'dj' moves air, facilitating phonation in the upper register

The Silver Bullet Warm-up (or the closest thing there is...)

Place the fingertips of both hands on the jawline spread from the mandible to the chin. (See **Lip Trills**)

- 1) This exercise was first introduced to me by a proponent of Speech Level Singing.
- 2) The bubble/lip trill creates resonance balance (bright and dark, chiaro and scura)
- 3) The lip buzz acts dynamically to adjust chest/mixed/head voice, facilitating effortless register transitions.
- 4) The compression behind the buzzing lips creates the appoggio feeling of support making extensive upper register notes positively easy...even for beginners.
- 5) Air speed and focus should increase as the exercise ascends.
- 6) This exercise is great for assisting all voices in accessing and strengthening the head voice.

Flexibility- Articulation Trainer

Flex - i-bil-i ty, flex i-bil-i-ty, sing with light and short notes. Flex - i-bil-i ty,

flex i-bil-i-ty, Sing with ea-sy flow-ing breath. Yah ah ah, yah ah ah, yah ha hah ha

ha ha ha. Yah ah ah, yah ah ah, yah ha hah ha ha ha ha.

- 1) When singing 'Flexibility,' make small inward circles with both hands at the waist line as if you were splashing water up and on to your face. (See *Splashing Water* gesture)
- 2) For each staccato note, tap the index finger in the downward or upward facing palm of your other hand. Imagine you are testing a pan to see if it is hot enough to fry an egg. (See the *Staccato* gesture illustration)
- 3) For tenuto notes, move hands left to right, palms toward the floor as if you were smoothing the sheets on a bed. (See the *Legato* gesture illustration)
- 4) For the word 'yah' make a *Siren* gesture from the back of the head forward or *Splashing Water* gesture
- 5) The source for this exercise is *Building Beautiful Voices* by Kenneth Jennings, formerly of St. Olaf. The accompanying physical gestures become conducting gestures that singers can easily recall and perform when these articulations are encountered in the repertoire. Having performed them, singers can immediately reproduce them when their director models the gesture later from the podium.

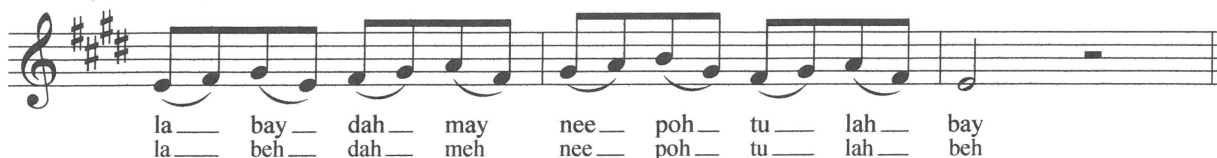
Wee oh- Range Extension Low

Wee oh wee oh wee oh wee oh wee. Breath for a full measure before repeating in a new key.

- 1) Perform the warm-up slowly and very legato.
- 2) Singers should perform a 'larynx check' (fingertip placed lightly on the adams apple) to insure neutral position of the larynx. (See *Larynx Check* gesture)
- 3) Insure posture (specifically head position) is released forward and up. Don't allow neck shortening or chin lowering. These introduce tension into the vocal tract.
- 4) Tongue should remain relaxed and on the floor of the mouth lightly touching the bottom front teeth.
- 5) Encourage gestures and visualizations including *Stir the Waters*, *Above the Hands*, *In Front of the Hands* or the *Fountain*
- 6) Use lots of air. Invite singers to put their palm 4-6 inches from their mouth and 'feel the warm air'.
- 7) Higher voices can sing the modified version (below) in harmony as the exercise descends
- 8) Key to lower range extension is relaxation and forward focus. No woofy dark sounds! They don't project or create overtones and are frequently the result of glossis tension or laryngeal lowering.
- 9) Use the 'ee' gesture to insure pitch stays integrity throughout the exercise (See *i Latin Vowels* gesture)

Wee Oh- Range Extension Low (Accompaniment for Higher Voices)

Zee zoh zee zoh zee zoh zee zoh zee

La Bay Da May- Consonants and Vowels

- 1) This exercise combines different classes of consonants including nasals, liquids, voiced and unvoiced plosives with alternating open and closed vowels. When performing, go slowly enough to insure intentionally performed consonants with clear and quickly achieved target vowels.
- 2) Replacing 'bay' with 'beh'. Perform with *Pure Latin Vowels* gestures
- 3) Artistically crescendo to the highest note and decrescendo to the conclusion
- 4) Make the liquid 'l' and nasal 'm' and 'n' as short as possible so the vowel is sung on the beat.

Bella Signora- Range Extension High

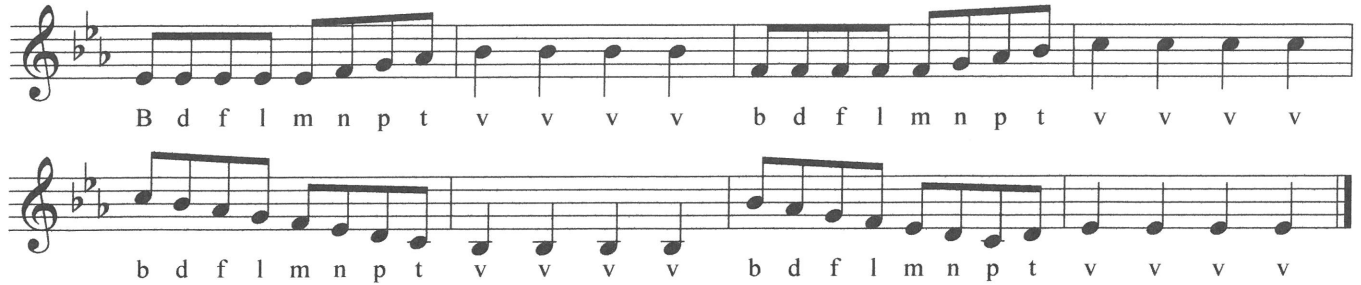
- 1) Bella signora is Italian for 'beautiful lady'.
- 2) Imagine singing to the 'beautiful lady' from across an Italian square.
- 3) Ladies should modify 'no' to an open 'nya' above the clef.
- 4) Have singers shake their hands lightly (jazz hands) at their sides or in front of their face to facilitate a free vibrato on top and bottom. Alternatively, use the *String Vibrato* or *Fountain* gesture (see illustrations)
- 5) Crescendo with tone, breath and volume. On 'ra' use the *Energy Ball* gesture to facilitate vibrato

Shaw ah Octaves- Range Extension High

- 1) Throw your bowling ball down the lane and follow through with your arm as you gliss from the bottom to the top note then back down. The gliss should be approximately a quarter note in duration.
- 2) The sound should be very supported. Imagine the sound propelling the ball to the 10 pin.
- 3) Use the *Energy Ball* gesture on the final 'ah'. The *Energy Ball* can then be used from the podium
- 4) Men should go into a well supported falsetto when needed. Women imagine the breath down and out.
- 5) Vocalize higher than the repertoire demands...then revisit the vocalise if singers struggle with tone quality during a 'high' phrase or note in the music.
- 6) This was published in *The Perfect Blend* by Tim Seeling. Used with permission. Thanks Tim!

M ee M eh- Resonance Balancing

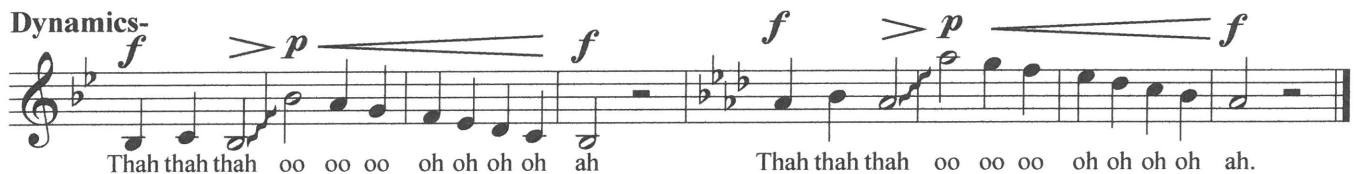
- 1) Perform at quarter = 60, very legato with equal volume on the continuant as the vowel.
- 2) Find the vowel target quickly with resonance equaling that of the consonant.
- 3) Try the vocalise with different initial voiced fricatives (v, z) or liquids (m, n) or l.
- 4) Change the vowels from open to closed, closed to open, etc.
- 5) The goal is consistent volume and resonance (tone color) on all vowels and voiced consonants

B D F L M N P T V V V V...- Consonants

- 1) This fun exercise adapts a consonant pattern in another popular warm-up. Use **Flicking** gesture on 'v'
- 2) Work to increase the speed without sacrificing the clarity of the consonant execution
- 3) Sing a continuous legato without stopping the breath or the voice on any consonant.

Solfège Canon-

- 1) Repeat until you have ascended to the octave Do by adding another solfège syllable at the top each time.
- 2) After descending to the final Do begin again on the high do and add a syllable below each time until you ascend to the last high Do after singing low do again.
- 3) This can be performed as a multiple voice canon at one, two, four or any number of different beats.
- 4) Keep the beat steady and pitch very clear to hear some very tall chords when performed in 4 or more voices. Never sacrifice tone quality or healthy vocal production. Always reinforce great singing.

Dynamics-

Begin with a robust, rich and open ah with a spinning vibrato. Make the glissando very smooth with no audible transition between chest, modal and head registers.

- 1) Make the dynamic contrasts large. Perform at a slow tempo and make the glissando a full beat long.
- 2) Sing with the same support at the piano dynamics as you use on the forte.
- 3) For a REAL challenge, sing a closed vowel forte on the bottom and an open vowel piano on the top!
- 4) The initial 'th' helps move air. Any unvoiced fricative will work. Try starting with a 'm' or 'n' or 'z'.

Messa di voce- 'Placing the Voice'

- 1) Messa di voce is universally considered an advanced vocal technique. It involves a gradual crescendo and decrescendo while sustaining a single pitch. When properly performed, the only thing that should change is the volume- not the pitch, intonation, vowel, vibrato, timbre etc.
- 2) Should be performed at Quarter = 60.
- 3) Generally, the crescendo is easier to perform than the decrescendo. Be careful of the decrescendo happening quickly. It can be useful to 'imagine the ribs continuing to expand and lift through the exercise.'
- 4) Vary by starting the exercise and increasing the vibrato as you crescendo. Reverse as you decrescendo.
- 5) Any vowel will work but try beginning with a hum or th 'ng' of sing. These help singers maintain support at the softest dynamics. Begin with closed vowels and go to open vowels. Insure forte singing is supported.

Resonance Balancing- (Impostazione)

1.m _____ m

2.m _____ m

3.m _____ ee eh

4.ah(closed) _____ ah (open) _____ closed _____ ee open

1) Establish the 'noble' posture; breathe through the nose as though inhaling the fragrance of a rose and hum the pattern in several keys of easy range. Be certain that the hum is produced without tension in the tongue, the velum (soft palette), or the jaw. Strum the lips lightly and quickly a few times with the forefinger. Unless a distinct "Mum-mum-mum" results, the proper neutral posture of the articulatory mechanism is not present.

2) 'm...ah' The hum on the triad is followed without interruption by the ah. Also try ee or aye.

3) 'm, ee, eh, ah...' The goal of this exercise is to maintain a consistent resonance that couples and balances both mouth and pharynx resonance allowing sensation in all parts of the vocal tract on all vowels.

4) 'ah' (Closed) means to gently close the nostrils with the fingers and (open) means releasing the same. The singer must be certain that no change in timbre occurs when the nostrils are released in mid-phrase. Resonance sensations, either with jaw open or closed, or with nostrils occluded or free, remain the same.

5) Replace the 'm' with 'n' or 'sing'.

Coordinated Vocal Onset and Release #1

(Any vowel) _____

Coordinated Vocal Onset and Release #2

(any vowel) _____

The coordinated onset is a result of the dynamic coordination of the engagement of supporting muscles with vocal fold adduction. The balanced onset is the happy medium between a breathy onset and the glottal attack of the hard onset. No specific vowel has been indicated but front vowels (ee, aye, eh) should be preferred to the back vowels (awe, oh, and oo as in hood or oo as in school).

1) Strict rhythmic adherence is important and the final note must be given full rhythmic value.

2) At each onset, the singer should produce a vibrant tone, avoiding any straight tone quality, maintaining vibrancy throughout the duration of the pitch, no matter how brief.

3) Breath renewal is indicated by a comma in the exercise. Each release must be clean and crisp.

4) The momentary silence between each release and new onset should be absolute.

5) Any noise resulting from the intake of breath indicates unwanted involvement of the vocal folds or tract. Silent breath renewal is a must.

6) If singers experience difficulty, a sibilant or fricative consonant can be added before each pitch. An inserted H, first aspirated and then silent, is excellent.

7) Consider utilizing the *Staccato* pedagogical gesture on each pitch.

Ku Ku Ku- Intelligible Consonants

ku ku ku ku ku oh ah ku ku ku ku ku oh ah ku ku ku ku ku oh ah ku ku ku ku ku oh ah ku.

gi gi gi gi gi geh gah

ta ta ta ta teh oh tee

deh deh deh deh deh doh dee

Choral ensembles are often criticized for giving more attention to vowels than consonants resulting in beautiful performances that cannot be understood. In each exercise, make sure the initial plosive consonant, k g t or d, is clearly exploded. This reinforces the discipline of performing consonants cleanly and intently.

- 1) Do the exercise in one breath.
- 2) Deliberately explode/voice each initial consonant.
- 3) Keep the resonance consistent throughout the exercise.
- 4) The G and K are ideal for raising the singer's awareness of the soft palette because the tongue raises to the roof of the mouth and 'stops' the air between the tongue and the soft palette. Thus it is useful for reducing nasality in the tone.
- 5) Increase the speed as the ensemble masters the exercise. The faster the tempo, the lighter you must sing.

Meow, Meow- Eliminating Breathy Singing

Meow meow meow meow meow meow meow meow meow meow meow meow meow.

This exercise is very fun. It also is an essential tool to combat breathy and/or overly dark singing. Try it to improve the focus of the tone with your middle school or early high school women. This can also be used very effectively with older singers who default to a very back/dark/dramatic sound. If the musical style demands a bright, forward placement or a connected/on the breath sound with plenty of core, 'Meow, Meow' is for your choir.

- 1) Make the sound as bright and forward as possible. This correlates to completely adducted vocal folds.
- 2) Brush the cheeks forward and upwards with the finger tips or thumbs. (See *Cheek Brush* pedagogical gesture). This helps singers experience masque singing

Balanced Onset Basics-

'Balanced Onset' simply means that the vocal folds adduct (come together) at the same time the muscles of exhalation engage. If the exhalation muscles engage early, air is lost (hypofunction) and the tone will likely be breathy. If the exhalation muscles engage late, that is after the vocal folds are held together tightly (hyperfunction), the resulting subglottic pressure causes a 'glottal stroke' or 'hard onset'. A hard onset, causes minor hemorrhaging on the edges of the vocal cord and over time will contribute to nodules and/or scarring. Balanced onset is a skill of master singers in all styles.

- 1) The first two measures can be performed on any vowel with or without a preceding consonant.
- 2) Proceed to measures 3 and four only when a vital tone can be established on each quarter note of ms. 1-2, only proceed to ms. 5-6 when 3-4 can be performed consistently.
- 3) Do this exercise with all vowels preceded first by plosives, then by liquids, then by fricatives and finally with only vowels.

Flexibility and Range extension-

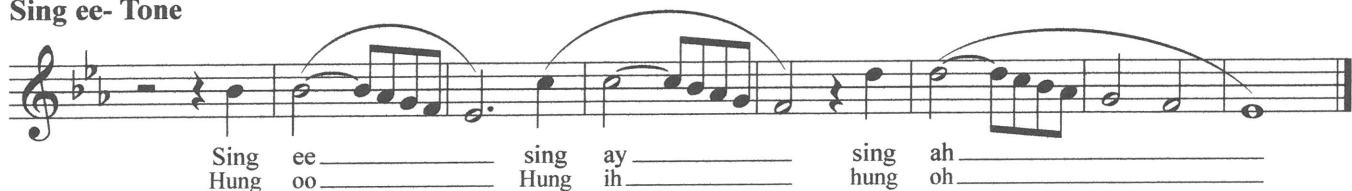
Do the exercise on a pure vowel. Articulate each note cleanly and staccato. This is an exercise for advanced singers. Start slowly and only increase speed as the musicians can effectively coordinate vocal onset with a well supported and resonant sound. There are 110 variations of this exercise.

- 1) Start by inserting an unvoiced plosive consonant; k, p, t before a closed vowel
- 2) Second, replace the unvoiced plosive with its voice partner, k with g, p with b, t with d.
- 3) Next, only do the consonant every beat (no subdivisions) then only downbeats.
- 4) Next, replace the consonant with a silent 'H'; on each note, then each beat, then only on each downbeat.
- 5) Finally, only 'think' the h on the downbeat.

Ah, Poor Bird- Round

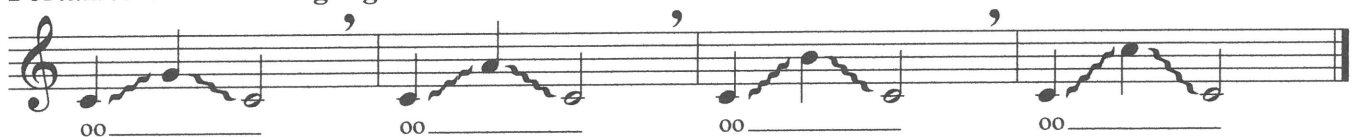
Rounds can and should be used by choirs of all levels. 'Ah, poor bird' is essentially legato. Have groups of singers or sections enter at each number or even every two beats.

- 1) To work on breath management, have the ensemble sing the song in two breaths, then one.
- 2) Dynamics! crescendo to sorrows and then release to night. Have students 'conduct' the dynamics.
- 3) Work on legato by elongating vowels then placing consonants deliberately.
- 4) Couple with 'Rose, Rose, Rose' and 'Hey, ho, nobody home' (search on the internet...)

Sing ee- Tone

This is one of the favorite exercises of my soprano section. They tell me it creates a great focus to their sound (the ng of 'sing') and the descending line invites a freely spinning vibrato.

- 1) On the word 'Sing' and 'Hung', go immediately to the nasal continuant 'ng'
- 2) Shake the hands at the side of the face or in front of the naval. (*Fountain, Energy Ball*) Alternatively, play vibrato on your epigastrium as if you were a cello player. (*String Player Vibrato*)
- 3) The exercise can work at many tempos.

Portamento- Connecting registers

Portamento vocalises are well suited to helping young singers (and mature singers) connect the registers of the voice without changing timbre or audible register shifts. Perform slowly at qtr = 60.

- 1) Choose any vowel. Consider beginning with a voiced fricative consonant like 'th' as in the or a 'v'. This will insure that there is sufficient air moving over the vocal folds to facilitate transition between registers.
- 2) Sing every note between the pitches. Also, slide for the entire duration of the quarter note, ideally coupling the exercise with some kind of circular motion of the arms. Walk to insure tempo integrity.
- 3) Move the exercise up and down to cross all registers of the voice. Keys from D up to Ab are ideal but we must use our ears and knowledge to know what is appropriate for each age group and choir.

Vocal Jazz Choirs- Style through warm-ups

CMaj7 Am7 D7 G7 C6 Ab7

Fah doo bah dit n day fah doo bah dit n day Fah dah bah dit n doo bay ah bah doo way it n doo vah aht!

Warm-ups serve to build vocal technique, teach style, articulation, and ready the body and the mind for singing in the choral ensemble. In the vocal jazz ensemble, rehearsal should begin with vocal warm-ups that teach concepts germane to vocal jazz. The above examples is only a beginning. When performed with swung eighth notes warm-ups teach style and introduce a repertoire of Scat syllables that singers can use in performing the jazz literature.

Rhythm players should play in the style of the warm-up. Bass Players walk lines. Piano player Comp various patterns and improvise melodic materials in the right hand. Play the chord(s) implied by each exercise. Through this 'Warm-up', they will develop experience with the fundamental concepts of scales and chord in a practical playing context.

Extend the vocal jazz warm-ups by adapting them to Minor, Mixolydian, Dorian, Blues, or whole-tone scales. Modulate up or down by whole steps and half-steps. Experiment with a variety of scat syllables and varied articulations. alter rhythmic values. Tweak the extensions and the changes the Rhythm Section plays. Experiment!

Scales that Swing- Style and Scat syllables

da ba da ba da ba etc.
Bid - dle oot n' bid - dle oot n'
doo vah doo way oo vah doo way

Sing scales, major, minor, blues, etc., with syllables that would be credible in a jazz club. Steal ideas from Ella, Elling and Torme. Change the scale patterns to facilitate syllabic groups of two, three and/or alternating triplets and swung eighths. Get creative!

Za Za- Range Extension Low

Za za za za za breathe for a full measure between repetitions

- 1) Perform the exercise slowly and very legato. Sing every note of the glissando between fifth and root.
- 2) Singers should perform a 'larynx check' (fingertip placed lightly on the adams apple) to insure neutral position of the larynx. (See *Larynx Check* gesture)
- 3) Insure posture (specifically head position) is released forward and up. Don't allow neck shortening or chin lowering. These introduce tension into the vocal tract.
- 4) Tongue should remain relaxed on the floor of the mouth with the tongue lightly touching the front teeth.
- 5) Use the 'ee' gesture to insure pitch stays up and in tune (See *i Pure Latin Vowels* gesture)
- 6) Use lots of air. Invite singers to put their palm 4-6 inches from their mouth and 'feel the warm air'.
- 7) Higher voices can sing this modified version (below) in harmony.
- 8) Key to lower range is extension is relaxation, consistent breath support. No woofy dark sounds! They don't project or create overtones.
- 9) Encourage gestures and visualizations including *Stir the Waters, Above the Hands, In Front of the Hands*

I'm Sighing- Registration

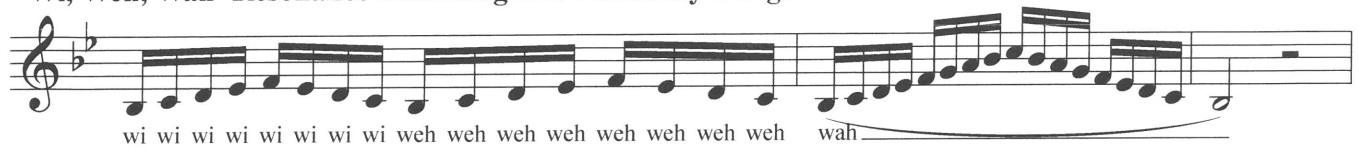
- 1) Perform the exercise slowly and very legato. Sing every note of the glissando.
- 2) Couple gesture with this exercise that models the thinning of the vocal chords during ascending lines, and lengthening/thickening during descent.
- 3) Use as light a vocal production as possible.
- 4) Support is essential. If tension or unsupported singing exists, do the exercise on a lip buzz or tongue trill.
- 5) This is an excellent vocalise for the men's voices.
- 6) Slide up on 'a' and only briefly phonate the 'm' of 'I'm' on the top note. Use the *I'm Sighing* pedagogical gesture.

Salmon- Flexibility and Freedom

- 1) Use the *Fountain* or *Salmon* gesture to accompany this agility exercise.
- 2) Vary the exercise by putting a fermata on the last pitch and insuring there is vibrato and release.
- 3) Speed up the vocalise, becoming softer and lighter as you do.
- 4) Free and versatile articulation is the goal.

Mastery- Flexibility, Vibrancy, Onset and Release

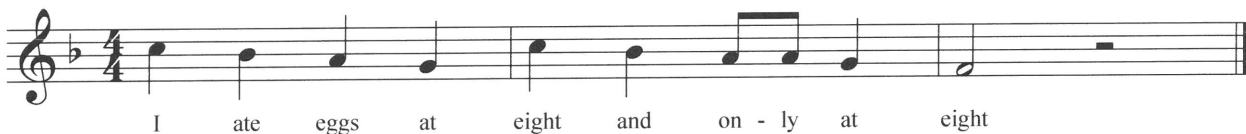
- 1) This gem allow four important vocal techniques to be performed simultaneously.
- 2) Allow literal space between each staccato quarter note. The release/silence should be an eighth note in duration. The onset and release (silence) that follows is a sophisticated demonstration of the technique needed for artful singing.
- 3) Couple the exercise with a gesture that encourages freedom, spin and vibrato. The *Salmon*, *Energy ball* or *Fountain* work well on the sixteenth notes. Use the *Staccato* or *Flick* gesture on the quarter notes.
- 4) The exercise must be done in strict tempo. Have singers 'snap' the release/space between staccato pitches to demonstrate their understanding of the articulation.
- 5) Vocal production becomes softer and lighter as the exercise speeds up.

Wi, Weh, Wah- Resonance Balancing and Flexibility/Range

- 1) Perform the exercise a quarter = 76 and eventually go as fast a quarter = 104
- 2) Pinch the nostrils closed on 'wi' and make the sound as forward and bright as possible.
- 3) Release the nostrils on 'weh' but keep the sound forward and as 'pingy' as possible.
- 4) On the legato 'wah' add maximum space without losing the 'bright'/'pingy' quality of the narrow forward vowels. The result should be a great balance of bright and dark...chiaroscuro.
- 5) This is an exceptional exercise for singers that have a swallowed production.

Fixing a tight onset

- 1) Perform the first four eighth notes with no pitch on an 'f' with a strong abdominal punch.
- 2) Sing the 'v' of 'vi' with a strong articulation and much breath support
- 3) Encourage vibrato and forward placement of the sustained final note
- 4) This exercise can be used as an upper range extension. This is especially effective for men.
- 5) Consider a gesture that punches the staccato 'f' and transitions to a palm out and up on the 'vi'

Balanced Glottal Onset-

- 1) Each word requires a new onset to clarify the text. It should not sound like "I yay tay gza tay tan donly ya tate."
- 2) Start slowly with a clear separation between each word. Only speed up with the choir or individual can clearly execute the words with a relaxed onset
- 3) Avoid a breathy onset resulting in an anemic tone as well as a hard onset that can cause trauma to the vocal folds
- 4) Insist on a rhythmically precise and energized 't'
- 5) Avoid too many repetitions of this exercise and perform only in modest registers.

Warm-ups that work and Why!

Ensemble Intonation and Ear Training

Chord Building/Ear Training Exercises

Soprano

Why
Loo
Nah

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Ma ma made me mash my M & M's

4 Minor iv add 6

S

A

T

B

8 I V/IV IV V7 I

S

A

T

B

11 I iv ii7 V7 I

S

A

T

B

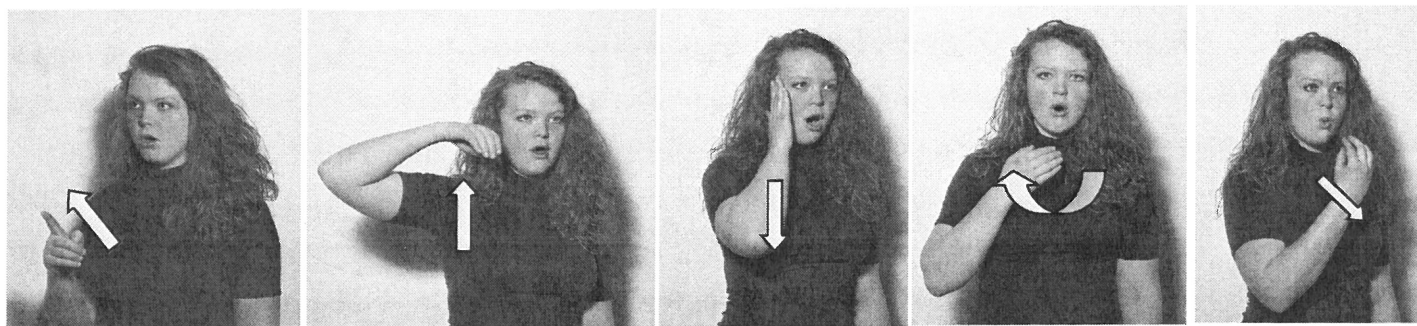
These intonation warm-ups can be used to teach a wide variety of choral concepts from vowel purity to dynamics to balancing chord members.

- 1) Change who sings the individual lines
- 2) Change vowel/consonant combinations
- 3) Add dynamic or tempo elements.
- 4) Adjust range and tone to match the repertoire to be rehearsed.
- 5) Add 'lyrics' to the chord progressions that come from repertoire or that targets specific challenges.
- 6) Take chord progressions from repertoire (especially difficult key changes) and turn them into a 'warm-up'.

PEDAGOGICAL GESTURES IN WARM-UPS AND REHEARSAL

I couple nearly everything we do in rehearsal with physical gestures that are introduced in the warm-up. These gestures are experienced with an ideal sound in the warm-up coupled with performing the gesture. In the context of the rehearsal or performance, this gesture is used by the conductor to remind the ensemble of the 'ideal'. This is a powerful teaching tool!

Pure Latin Vowels



[i] as in 'seen'

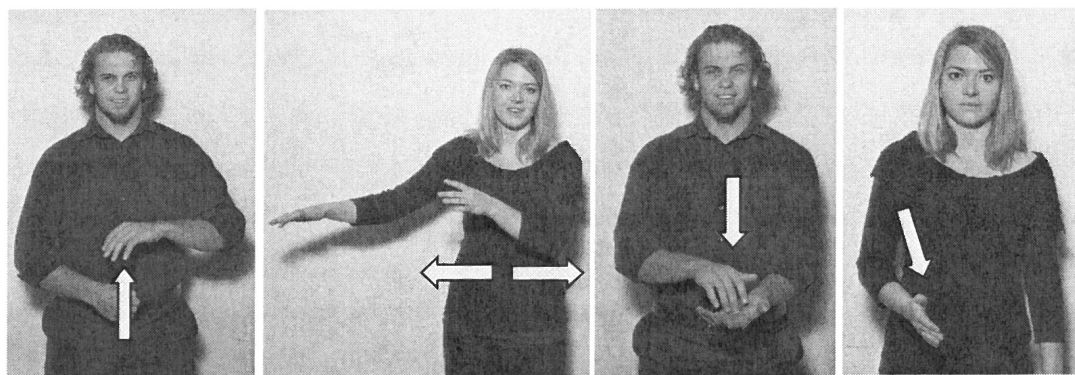
[ɛ] as in 'men'

[ɑ] as in 'father'

[o] as in 'pillow'

[ʊ] as in 'spoon'

Articulations



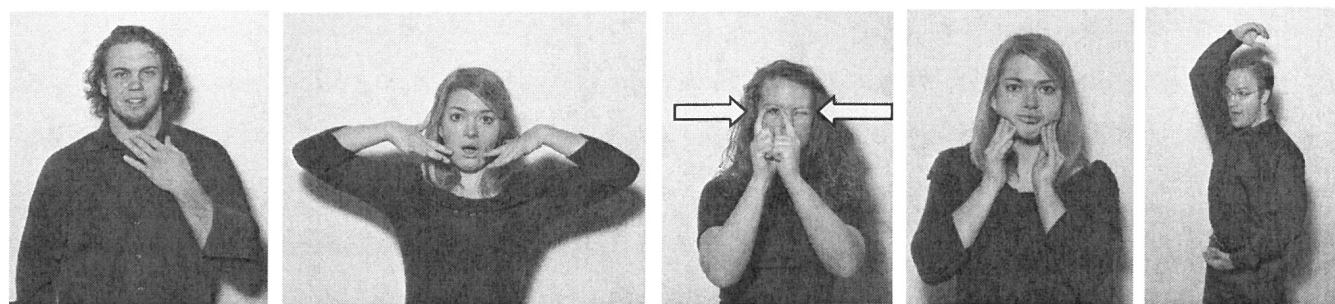
Accent

Legato

Staccato

Slash/Marcato

General Pedagogical Gestures



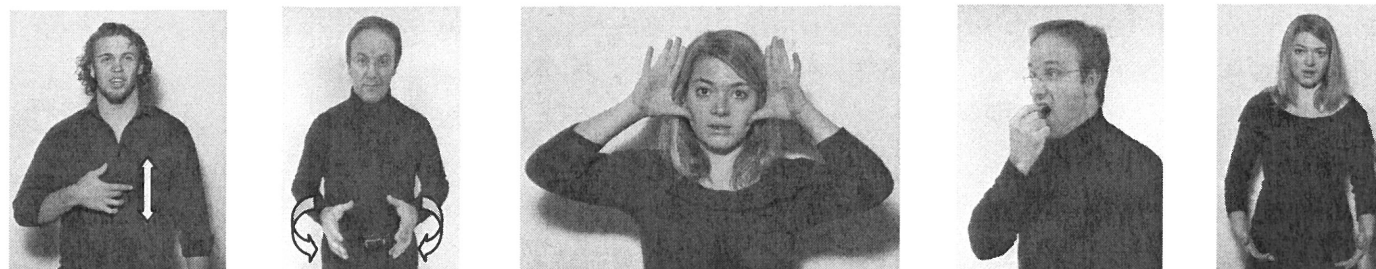
Larynx Check

Above the Hands

'Bee-ee gesture'

'Silver Bullet' Lip trills

Tone Umbrella



String Vibrato

Energy Ball

In Front of the Hands

Tap your teeth

Fill the Barrel