

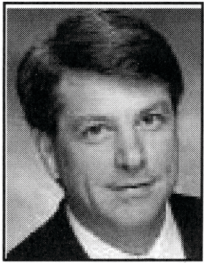
**ACDA**  
SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION

*Common Interests,*

*Common Goals....*

*Common Times*

Spring 6 • VOL. 25, NO. 6



## Making the Vocal Development Period More Than a Warm-up: Are You Prepared?

Alan McClung, R&S Chair  
Youth & Student Services

Traditionally, a choir rehearsal begins with vocal warm-ups. In reality, this time should be more than a warm-up, it should be a time devoted to the skills that are specifically related to vocal development. For young singers to experience appropriate vocal progress, it is important that choral music teachers be comfortable and confident teaching voice in the group setting. The opportunity to demonstrate that level of comfort and confidence occurs early in our teaching careers. One of the first, up-front assignments required of a student teacher in the secondary choral music classroom is to lead the choir in vocal development/warm-ups. This initial experience offers the student teacher an opportunity to demonstrate a variety of traits and skills. Examples include teaching personality, vocal pedagogy skills, vocal modeling skills, piano proficiency skills, pacing skills, and the ability to sequence learning events in a knowing and meaningful manner. To plan an effective vocal development/warm-up period, it is helpful to articulate the pedagogical ordering, the logical sequence of learning events. To enhance vocal and musicianship skills, each event should have an objective that specifies strategies, activities, and exercises.

### I. Relaxation, Body Alignment, and Posture Awareness:

To respond to the physical requirements of correct and healthy singing, it is essential to prepare the body. A good place to begin includes stretching, lengthening, and relaxing activities.

Are you prepared to . . .

- Create a list of ten physical activities that you would use to prepare the body for the rigors of singing? Write each activity on a note-card and place the cards in a logical, hierarchical order. Be sure that you can justify the order and the benefit of each activity.

### II. Breath Awareness, Activation, and Management

The tension-free sequence required for breathing when singing is different from ordinary breathing.

Are you prepared to . . .

- describe the relationship between singing and the following body parts: mouth, nose, pharyngeal muscles, trachea, twenty-four ribs, intercostals mus-

## More Than a Warm-up...continued

cles, diaphragm, and lungs?

- create a list on note-cards, activities that you would be prepared to use to teach students how to manage the singer's breath?

### III. Generating a Healthy Resonant Tone

Beautiful vocal tone is the combined product of efficient vocal-fold vibration and sympathetic vibration of the vocal tract.

Are you prepared to . . .

- Describe the relationship of a singer's resonance and the following parts of the vocal tract: trachea, pharynx, larynx, nasal and sinus cavities, soft palate, velum, uvula, hard palate, tongue, jaw, teeth, lips?

- Describe the relationship of vocal register and passagio to the various voice ranges?

- Describe how various vowels impact tone quality?

- Identify the vowel that is most suited to teach young singers the feeling of a lifted soft pallet? The first pitched vocal exercise should be constructed using this vowel.

- Identify the vowels that are difficult for young singers to produce? Can you describe why certain vowels are difficult for young singers to produce with a healthy resonant tone?

- Describe the impact of the choice of consonants on the healthy tone production?

- Describe the benefits of bringing the upper register down into the lower register through the use of five-note descending pitch patterns (sol-fa-mi-re-do)?

- Explain how various kinesthetic motions can be used to compliment vocal exercises and increase understanding? List examples.

- Notate on flashcards a set of specific, sequential, resonance-related exercises that you could use to help students learn to produce a healthy tone? Place the cards in a logical, hierarchical order. Be prepared to justify the order and the benefit of each activity. Be sure to identify the appropriate pitch on which each exercise should begin.

### IV. Musicianship Skills

During the vocal development period students should have activities and exercises that help them transfer and apply specific vocal skills to musicianship skills.

*continued on page 9*

## More Than a Warm-up...cont. from page 6

Are you prepared to . . .

- Use conducting gesture to reinforce the connections between gesture and musical qualities? Examples include dynamics, phrase structure, legato, staccato, and marcato. List kinesthetic motions that can be used to enhance understanding.
- Use scale singing to develop intonation skills? Examples: major, minor, and chromatic including the various intervals sung a cappella and tuned to tonic pitch (do) and performed in variety of configured rounds.
- Use sequential pattern singing to develop insight into harmonic implications? Example: (do-mi-so, re-fa-la, mi-so-ti, fa-la-do' . . .). Such pattern singing can evolve into chord identification recognition and singing: I ii iii IV V vi viio I.
- Use changing chord structures to develop intonation awareness. Example: Assign major tonic chord pitches (do mi sol do') to sections. The third drops a half-step to create a minor chord, other parts drop the half-step to reestablish a major chord.

### References

Albrecht, Sally K. (ed.). *The Choral Warm-Up Collection: A Sourcebook of 167 Choral Warm-Ups Contributed by 51 Choral Directors*. Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 2003.

Brandvik, Paul. "Choral Tone." In *Up Front!* Webb, Guy, (Ed.). Boston, MA: E. C. Schirmer, 1994

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

Ehmann, Wilhelm and Fauke Haasemann. *Voice Building for Choirs*. Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw Music, Inc., 1982.

Gumm, Alan. (ed.) *The Choral Director's Cookbook: Insights and Inspired Recipes for Beginners and Experts*. Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2006.

Jordan, James. *The Choral Warm-Up: Method, Procedures, Planning, and Core Vocal Exercises*. Chicago: GIA, Publications, 2005.

Ware, Clifton. *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy: The Foundations and Process of Singing*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1998.