

DEVELOPING RESONANCE IN THE YOUNG SINGER

INTRODUCTIONS

- Teacher's introduction
- Introductions of class participants
- Discussion of course purpose and learning objectives
- Reminder that singing is not an exact science; there are many approaches and opinions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the sessions, the participants will be able to:

1. Identify at least five vocal characteristics or habits of the young singer.
2. Name and explain the purpose of at least six vocal tools/exercises that improve resonance and other aspects of the vocal sound.

EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG SINGERS

Turn to a neighbor and take a few moments to share with her/him any personal vocal experience (positive or negative) that you had before the age of 16 with a teacher, and discuss what impact that had on your singing.

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG SINGERS

Write down three characteristics or habits that are typical of young singers.
List is compiled and discussed.

DEMONSTRATION (If singers are available)

Teacher will work with young singers to illustrate ways to develop resonance and improve related aspects of singing.

CLARK'S CREDO

Examine statements about young singers and singing. (Handout #1)

THE SINGER'S TOOL CHEST

Demonstrate and discuss vocal exercises and their purposes. (Handouts #2-6)

SUMMARY

- Review the two learning objectives.
- Participants will name some vocal characteristics of young singers.
- Participants will name some effective vocal tools/exercises for working with singers.

CLARK'S CREDO
(wisdom gathered from four decades of teaching singing and speech)

1. Vocal ability is highly dependent upon the singer's personal level of self-esteem. The more a teacher can help increase a student's self-esteem, the better singer that student will be.
2. Young singers need to be reminded that they are "works in progress." Their voices are changing and often unpredictable. Patience and encouragement are very important in working with them.
3. The singing voice and the speaking voice are the same instrument. Good singing will not occur if speech habits are poor, since "The habits you use the most win!"
4. Singing is both a musical and a dramatic art. The more a singer can learn to use the body (facial expression and gestures/choreography) to express the text and music of a song, the more quickly and easily vocal freedom will be achieved.
5. Every singer needs to acquire a vocal "tool chest." Each vocal exercise is a tool that can be utilized for a particular purpose. Singers need to have on hand a variety of exercises (tools) and need to understand the purpose(s) of each tool. (Don't use the pliers to drive in a nail.)
6. Young singers need to understand the difference between singing a particular choral part (soprano, alto, lead, tenor, etc.) and being classified as a particular voice type (soprano, mezzo-soprano, etc.) Voices should not be classified until they are mature and have some vocal training.
7. The young voice is not as fragile as some people seem to think. It is just as damaging to hold a young voice back from full development as it is to push a young voice beyond appropriate demands. Both the upper register (cricothyroid -- CT -- dominant) and the lower register (thyroarytenoid -- TA -- dominant) need to be developed and strengthened in the young singer. Just as it would not be healthy or efficient to use only one leg when walking, neither is it healthy or efficient to use only one vocal register when singing. In order to train young voices properly, it behooves a teacher to gain a thorough understanding of how voices work, especially his/her own. The National Association of Teachers of Singing can provide names of its members who live in your area. <http://www.nats.org/>

Reference:

The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique – Richard Miller
ISBN 0-534-25535-3

THE SINGER'S TOOL CHEST
(a few of my favorite vocal exercises)

POSTURE AND BREATHING

1. Six points of balance (Handout #3)
2. Balloons
3. Lip trill, trilled R, gargle (uvular R)

PHONATION

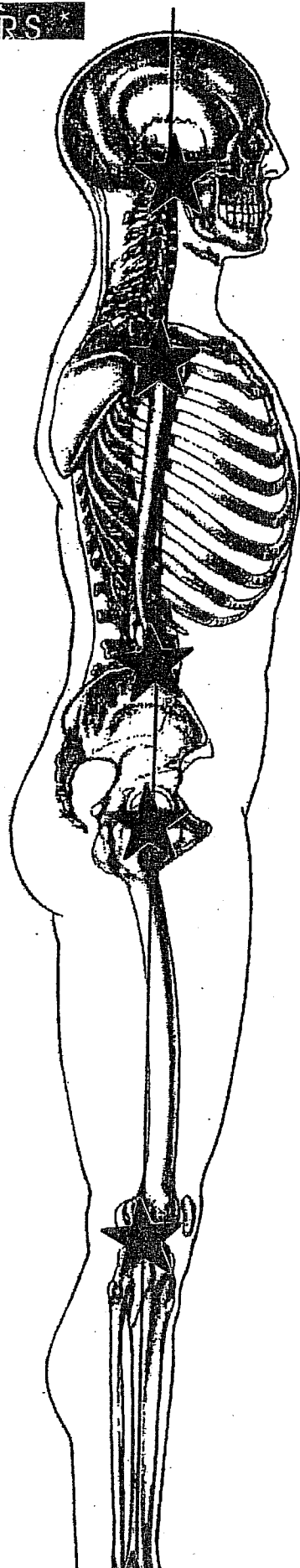
1. Rubber bands
2. Sirens (Handout #4)
3. Duck quack/witch voice
4. Fat cat//naa naa naa
5. Chanting//speaking
6. Song texts as dramatic monologues

RESONANCE

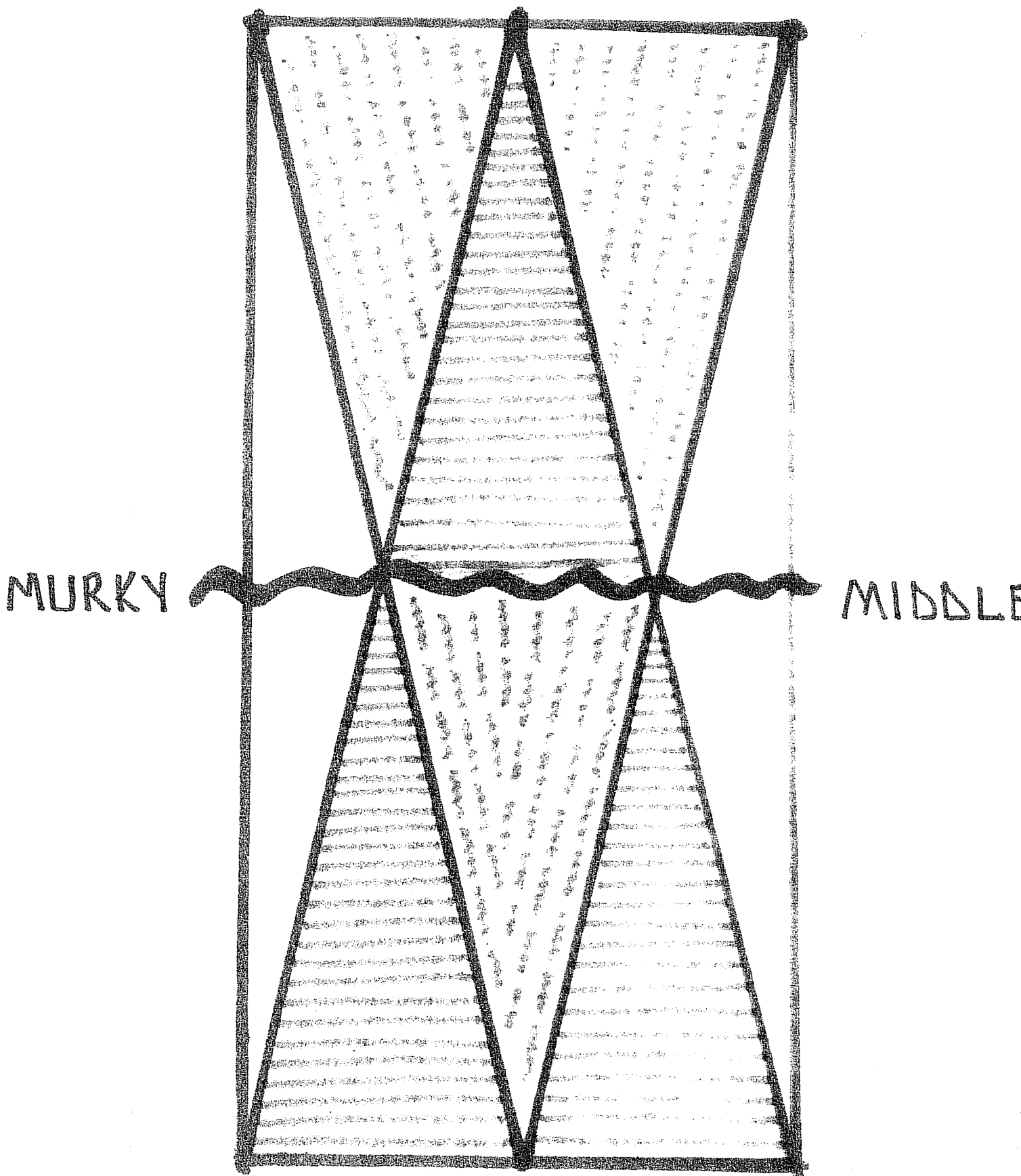
1. N and L (opening/closing the velar port)
2. Sustained L.
3. Vowel matching
4. Pencil in teeth (Carmen's rose)
5. Finger on lips (Shhh!)
6. [ŋ] and [n] – soft and hard palate sounds
6. Facial Aerobics (Handout #5)

ANDOVER EDUCATORS

The Core of the Body & the Places of Balance



HEAD VOICE



CHEST VOICE

FACIAL AEROBICS

The following exercise routine for the facial muscles has two main musical purposes:

1. to achieve greater muscle flexibility in order to be more emotionally expressive in singing and speaking
2. to improve vocal sound by opening up more resonance spaces in the head

Non-musical benefits include improved circulation, healthier complexion, and more effective emotional expression/communication in daily life.

The entire Facial Aerobics routine should be practiced at least once daily. Part One should be practiced at least 3 times daily. If working alone, one should use a mirror. If working in a group, work in pairs, having one person mirror the other, and taking turns leading.

PART ONE

Facial Flow
Closed Face
Facial Flow
Open Face
Facial Flow
Lower Half
Facial Flow
Upper Half
Facial Flow
Right Half
Facial Flow
Left Half
Facial Flow

PART TWO

Facial Flow
First Quadrant
Facial Flow
Second Quadrant
Facial Flow
Third Quadrant
Facial Flow
Fourth Quadrant
Facial Flow

EXERCISES

The exercises consist of the basic Facial Flow and various Isolation Exercises.

Facial Flow -- This is simply the process of exercising all the muscles of the face. It can take 5 seconds or 5 minutes. Simply move face muscles randomly, making sure to move parts of the face that want to remain still. Use a mirror to monitor progress. The Facial Flow is used as the first and last exercise in the routine, and is used in between the isolations. As one progresses through the routine, the facial flow should feel increasingly freer and more flexible.

Isolations -- All the other exercises involve isolating one part of the face and moving only those muscles. This is difficult, and may take much practice before one is successful. Mirror work is essential. At the beginning, it may help to hold one hand over or actually on the part of the face that is not supposed to be moving. Later the use of the hand should not be necessary.

Closed Face -- With eyes tightly closed, squeeze all muscles toward the center of the face. Scrunch up tight and hold for at least 10 seconds.

Open Face -- With eyes wide open, stretch all muscles out towards the edges of the face. Stretch out wide and hold for at least 10 seconds. (This exercise is similar to the yoga exercise known as the Lion.)

Lower, Upper, Right, and Left Halves -- In each case, move only the muscles in the designated half of the face. Move as many of these muscles as possible, check the mirror to monitor progress. These may be done in any order.

Quadrants -- This is the most advanced, most subtle part of the aerobics routine. Some quadrants may be easier than others at first, but work to make all four equally responsive. Mirror work is essential.

First Quadrant -- muscles of the forehead, eyebrows

Second Quadrant -- muscles around the eyes (not including eyebrows)

Third Quadrant -- muscles of the nose, upper cheeks, upper lip

Fourth Quadrant -- muscles of the lower cheeks, lower lip, jaw

HAVE FUN!!!!

From: theVocalist@yahoogroups.com on behalf of Lloyd W. Hanson
Sent: Sat 7/9/2005 9:28 AM
To: theVocalist@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [Vocalist] Where does the voice resonate?

Dear Vocalists:

Your description of the voice resonating in spaces that match its frequency such as the upper sinuses, and drawing the sound to firm muscles etc. is more a description of the feeling of the voice and less a description of where the voice actually does resonate.

The primary vocal resonators are the pharynx and the mouth (buccal) cavity with some additional resonance provided by the areas below the larynx. All other resonance sense such as in the nose or mask or sinuses are simply sympathetic resonances and, though they do provide the singer with a sense of vocal usage, they do not provide a significant resonance to the vocal quality or to the ability of voice to project.

So why should we be concerned about where the actual resonance is taking place if we still need to rely on our sensations of resonance in the sinuses, mask, resonance, etc.? The answer is that knowing how the sound from the vocal folds is transmitted and where it is resonated makes possible more accurate adjustments of the vocal mechanism.

Fortunately, the most flexible and adjustable functioning part of the vocal mechanism is the pharynx and the mouth cavity. Our tongue, jaw, lips, roof of mouth (soft palate) and throat are all adjustable and, to some extent, maneuverable in ways that are not commonly used in everyday speech. Even the smallest adjustment of any of these units has a great effect on vocal quality. In a sense, any method used to obtain a desired singing result is nothing more than making adjustments of these portions of the vocal resonance system.

We may use some form of imagery or applied sensation to achieve these adjustments but that does not change the fact that the adjustments are still only occurring in the pharynx and mouth cavity.

The pharynx and mouth cavity are capable of resonating any sound that the vocal folds can produce, be they high or low in terms of frequency or be they clear or "dirty" in terms of quality. Because the tongue is so large a part of these spaces and is so extremely flexible, it falls to the tongue to become the primary resonating space modifier. It is not difficult to learn to move the tongue into any of the necessary positions and shapes to achieve the desired tonal changes in the sound produced by the pharynx.

I prefer to learn directly how to use these units of the resonating space of the voice, that is, of the pharynx and mouth cavity. Others may prefer to learn how to adjust these units via imagery or applied sensation. And still others may prefer a combination of these methods. It really is not a concern except when any of these systems promotes an understanding of how sound is resonated and propagated that is not accurate.

One cannot draw or attract sound to places in the head. High tones do not inhabit higher places in the body any more than low tones inhabit lower places. The ability to project the voice is not dependent on how loudly one sings. Breath does not inhabit the lower extremities of the body. The diaphragm does not push out the breath.

Sound does not go through the top of the head. Low tones do not have a lack of high harmonics. The vocal folds do not vibrate by themselves. The list is endless. And most of it is unnecessary.

Lloyd W. Hanson

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From: theVocalist@yahoogroups.com on behalf of Lloyd W. Hanson
Sent: Sat 7/9/2005 6:56 PM
To: theVocalist@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [Vocalist] Where does the voice resonate?

Dear Vocalisters:

Voice projection is a product of the "Singer's Formant" This is a raise in the intensity of vocal partials in the 2800 to 3200 Hz range. It allows the voice to be heard over the loudest orchestra without amplification because the range of the Singer's Formant is above the strongest intensity range of the Orchestra. In other words, vocal projection is a matter of providing an increase in intensity in the range given, but it does not necessarily equate with singing loudly. Voice with the Singer's Formant can be heard when singing mezzo forte or even doing messa di voce phrasings.

Lloyd W. Hanson

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NOTE: Dr. Hanson is retired from the voice faculty of the University of North Arizona.