

Building Choral Tone

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*Tone is the first thing perceived
by an audience.*

*Let's explore ways to build your choir's
tone so that it is pleasant and special.*

Lets' make this concrete!

There are particular steps that we can take to ***sequentially*** teach choral tone.

SINGLISH

We speak in English

We sing in **“Singlish”**

SINGLISH

- When we sing words, it's best to sing them differently than the way that we speak them. If singing sounded like speaking, it wouldn't be art. It wouldn't "preach" to the congregation. Singing should sound *special*.
- **How do you make it special?**
- **Singing in "singlish" means putting more space in your mouth.**

SINGLISH

- How do we make SINGLISH a habit in our choral singers?

-Introduce the concept of tone.

(bright, dark, spread, tall, round, angular)

-Teach the formula: P + B + S = TONE

How do we get good tone?

POSTURE

+

BREATH

+

SPACE

=

TONE

TONE

PLACEMENT GAMES

- Meow
- Woof
- Holy moly
- Roller coaster
- “Dad, can I have the keys?”

STONE

PLACEMENT GAMES INVOLVE:

- FUN
- Pitch approximation
- Variety
- Use them during warm-up time

TONE

Descriptor Words

- Clear
- Round, natural
- Ringing - ping, buoyant
- Bright, forward
- Light, feathery, airy, light
- Dark, swallowed, back, thick, heavy

How do we get good tone?

POSTURE

+

BREATH

+

SPACE

=

TONE

POSTURE

- Alignment
- Just like putting together your instrument
- Change mindsets.....defy the laptop, defy the cell phone, defy traffic, take out your swords
- Research tells us that how we hold our bodies affects the way we sound. Data proves this.
- Feet, hips, knees, waist, rib cage, shoulders, neck, chin, jaw, where spine and skull meet.

BREATHING

8 ways to teach breathing concepts

1. Christmas Tree Breath - still vs. expand*
2. Hoberman Sphere - shows where to expand*
3. Milk Shake Breath - cold, silent breath, where to fill (not shoulders!)*
4. Swan Breath

BREATHING

8 ways to teach breathing concepts

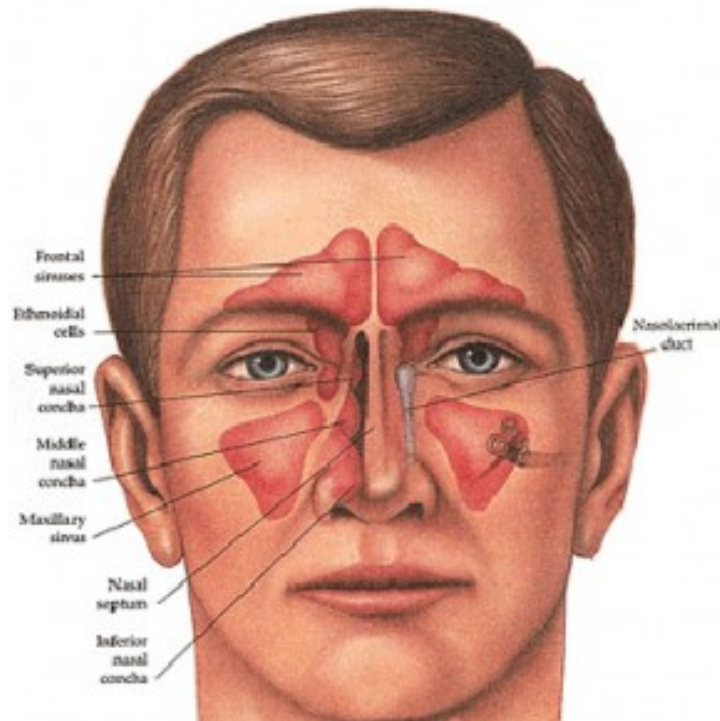
5. Blow out birthday candles - silly vs. singer*
(how to use breath in a meaningful way)
6. String – manage air, sing through long notes*
7. Magic carpet ride (fist/voice, palm/carpet)*
8. Sand in hand – supporting the sound*

BREATHING

BREATH is the
fuel for your
sound

SPACE

- Sneeze, Yawn, Ping Pong Ball, Ring – sinuses



RESONATORS for space

Your voice resonates (**rings**) in your vocal tract.

VOCAL TRACT

THROAT

MOUTH

NASAL PASSAGES

SINUSES

SPACE



SPACE

WHAT'S WITH THE QUESTION MARK?

- Stimulates imagination
- Familiar image
- Places the sound
- Creates different posture – research tells us!

SPACE



SPACE

- What's with the beard and ponytail?
- It helps singers release tension
- It helps singers sing beyond their mouth/face area. (gives the tone direction)
- It helps with alignment (posture – research tells us!)

SPACE – modify?

Treble/Female voices:

- more space on high notes (ah, oh)
- trumpet lips on low notes (ee, oo)

Changed Voices/Male voices:

- less space up high (oo, ee)
- open on bottom (ah, oh)

SPACE

How can you maximize
space in your mouth?

*It's done through shaping
vowels*

SPACE - VOWELS

VOWELS – what body parts?

JAW – relaxed

LIPS - shape

Round, Oval, Square

TONGUE - get it out of the way

Hard vs. soft surface

Tip down

Forward or back?

VOWELS – How to teach?

ECHO

COLOR CARDS

HAND SIGNS

**Choirs that have variance in their vowels, don't have good tone. UNIFICATION IS KEY*

STONE STEALERS

- Ping Pong ball in mouth – space
- Tongue Puppet (hand – thumb)*

R, L, M, N

PHONE STEALERS



STONE STEALERS

FLIP THE "R"

r

NEGATE THE "R"



STONE STEALERS

Students should mark “r”s in their music. (underline or diagonal slash)

Let students make the determination of flipping or negating “r”s.

Get the singers involved in making the decisions.

Hold them accountable for executing the decision made about “r”s.



PHRASING

- Can good choral tone be produced without shaping a phrase?
- Default Settings (factory settings) * < >
- Sing the LINE = use string*
- The highest note is usually the loudest
- When there is a tie over the barline, crescendo over the barline *

PHRASING

SHAPING

- Long note → do something
(usually <)
- Factory Settings < > (don't forget)
- Good phrasing makes your already good tone sound better!

What else is needed for good tone?

1. IMAGINATION of the singers (conductor)
2. CONTEXT of the song

THE EXTRA MILE

In addition to getting singers to use their imaginations, what else is needed?

VOCAL MODELING

THE EXTRA MILE

VOCAL MODELING

What is it?

The teacher use his/her voice as a model to demonstrate what is desired from the singers.

Sounds easy, right?

THE EXTRA MILE

VOCAL MODELING

What's so challenging about it?

1. The teacher may not be confident
2. The teacher may have vocal problems
3. The teacher may use a voice that is too heavy or too mature for the singers in front of them

THE EXTRA MILE

Rising up to the challenge

1. Confidence – work the songs into your voice
2. Vocal problems – Seek advice from a colleague or a local voice teacher
3. Record yourself to be sure that your demonstrating voice is one that is appropriate for young singers (consider weight, intonation, vibrato, diction)

REVIEW

1. Establish the idea of SINGLISH
2. Play “placement” games to introduce the concept of tone, the quality of our voices.
3. Introduce the formula: $P + B + S = \text{tone}$
4. Teach good posture.
5. Teach breathing.
6. Teach space (including vowels).
7. Eliminate tone stealers.
8. Teach phrasing.
9. Go the extra mile yourself (vocal modeling).

GOOD TONE - ACCOUNTABILITY

- Challenge your singers. Don't simply accept what your singers give you. Don't be complacent.
- Challenge yourself to listen deeply to your choir.
- Challenge yourself to use your imagination as a conductor. Be a “decider” and “communicator”.
- Challenge yourself to use your own voice to produce what you are asking for in terms of tone. While experimenting, take note of the steps you took to achieve the sound you want (record yourself). Then, design a lesson plan to get your singers where you want them to be.

SET THE TABLE FOR GOOD TONE

MUSICIAN'S MINDS
&
ARTIST'S HEARTS