

Vocal Training of the Young Voice

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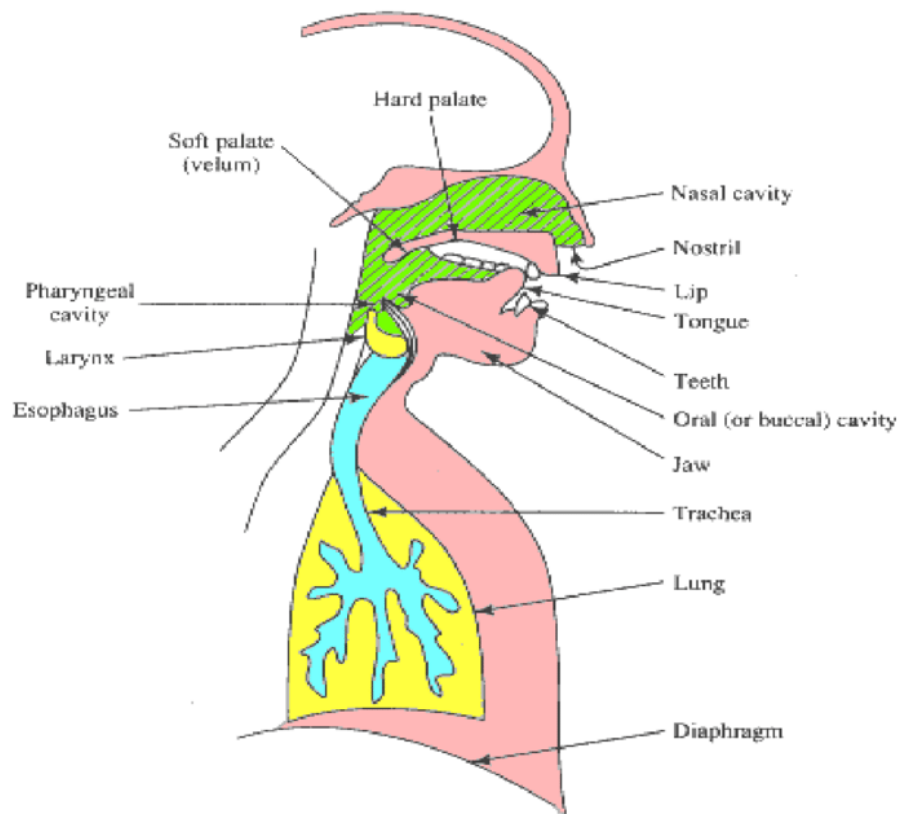
Preliminary Stage of Vocal Training (Fr. William Finn)

- The correction of vocal abuses
- The development of positive qualities
- The establishment of accurate pitch

Becoming Aware

- Gradually help the child to become aware of his vocal mechanism
- Begin with an experience and expand from there
 - Ex. Matching Pitch: start with one note, expand to two and so on

The Human Vocal Mechanism



Images from:

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Schematic-view-of-the-human-vocal-mechanism_fig1_327790858

Posture

- Head—up straight
- Shoulders—down and relaxed
- Knees—slightly bent
- Toes (Feet)—under the shoulders

Awareness

- Soldier—Athlete—Slouch (Tension—Engagement—Relaxation)
- Expand the chest cavity
- Sing in the various positions
- Sing standing, sitting, lounging

Breathing

- Using a picture (such as above), give a brief description of how the diaphragm muscle draws downward allowing air to rush into the lungs. As the diaphragm moves upward air leaves the lungs and rushes over the vocal folds, causing them to vibrate.
- Inhalation—Exhalation (engagement of both)
- Breath Control versus Breath Support

Awareness

- Breathing while lying on the floor
- Barking like a dog or laughing like Santa Claus—ask the singer to place his hands against the front, back and sides of his stomach in order to feel the external sensations
- Breathe out slowly till all the lungs are empty, then completely relax the diaphragm (notice the air rushing in again)
- Deep breath (the inner tube)

Vocal Sound

- Head voice and chest voice
- Natural sound, free of force or tension
- Begin with soft singing in the head voice and return to it often (this cures more problems than can be imagined)
- Begin singing higher in the range and descending (eventually creating a smooth transition from the head to the chest voice)
- Resonance—the natural microphone
- Character of the Voice and maintaining it at all levels of pitch and volume

Awareness

- Head voice (elf) and chest voice (Santa Claus) (Use of the siren)
- Use of the sigh
- Sing a hymn or short song forte followed by piano (listen to the difference)
- Resonance: humming or buzzing (feel the sensation in different ranges)
- Demonstrate healthy and unhealthy vocal sounds and ask the child to describe what he hears. What is pleasant versus what is ugly? Ask the child to imitate (the goal is for the child to be aware of his own voice)
- Experience the natural break (not the best word) in the voice and how to navigate the change

Pitch

- Beginning—middle—end of note
- Hearing—mind—body
- Expand the range (always listening for vocal issues)
- *Messa di voce*
- Singing sharp (tension and nervousness)
- Singing flat (physical/mental/aural reasons)
- Flat singing often happens on 1) repeated notes, 2) long notes and 3) descending notes

Awareness

- Developing the ear is paramount (intonation exercises)
- Breath support
- Alighting on the note versus falling on the note
- Use of hand motions
- Dynamic pitch versus static pitch

Diction (Vowels and Consonants)

- We generally sing on vowels (although some can be sung or hummed)
- Vowels should be tall and spacious (without creating undue tension) like the dome of a cathedral
- Singing diphthongs and triphthongs
- Consonants should be clear and rhythmic
- Latin pronunciation and English pronunciation
- Teach students to listen to the sounds that come out of their mouths

Awareness

- Use the vocal warm-up to inculcate good diction
- Use of tongue twisters
- Model poor diction versus proper diction and ask students to do the same

Expressive Singing

- Healthy vocal habits
- Music as rhetoric (put the tune to the music, not the music to the tune)

Awareness

- Ask students to proclaim the text convincingly before singing

The Changing Voice

- Before puberty it is difficult to tell the difference between boys and girls voices
- Both girls and boys experience vocal change (the boy's experience is readily noticeable)
- Boys
 - Physically mature before their voices do and this is when their voices are the most incredible
 - Most can continue to sing, but with smaller registers
 - Don't place them into a lower part too early
 - It is best to reiterate that this is a normal part of becoming a man

Vocal Issues/Problems

- Students often come with bad vocal habits, but occasionally some will have more severe vocal issues. If a child perpetually struggles to produce sound or produces a very rough sound, this could be an indication of deeper problems. Parents might be recommended to take their child to an ear, nose and throat specialist.