



The Orange Spiel

News Of The Jacksonville Big O Chapter



<http://www.BigOrangeChorus.com>



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We meet at 7:00 most Thursdays at Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran, 7860 Southside Blvd, Jacksonville, FL
Guests always welcome Call 355-SING No Experience Necessary

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Welcome to the New Year! It looks like most of those cancelled conventions, shows, brigade rallies, and other performances are finally on track to be back on our schedules. The trick now is to be ready for them.

How are our choruses doing? Back to their previous splendor or maybe just a VLQ (very large quartet)? Have our voices been exercised enough to still be in shape? Can we just jump back in at our previous level or is remedial training going to be needed? How is our repertoire doing? Do we all know our notes and words well enough to be able to concentrate on musicality and artistry?

How are our quartets doing? Have some been disbanded? Have some had a member or two drop out? Have any new ones been formed?

How is recruiting going? What have we been doing that might entice new members to want to join in the fun we used to have?

Are our competition and show packages ready to go or might we have to revert to something a little less ambitious?

Are these and other questions being asked?

WANTED!!

MEN WHO LIKE TO SING!



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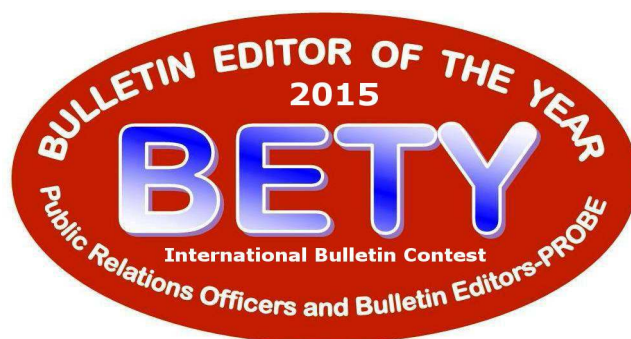
EDITORIAL

It looks like the Sunshine District Spring Convention is on! It is scheduled for 25-27 March, 2022. Since the new venue for this year is in our back yard (World Golf Village Renaissance), we are expected to be the host chapter. This will be a big job. With our current small numbers, we will be asking other nearby chapters to help. For our recent guests who have not yet formally joined, membership is not required to help with hosting.

With our history of being one of the powerhouses in the district, we are also expected to perform in the competition. Membership is required to compete on stage. We likely will be selecting music a little less ambitious than what we were doing previous to this enforced hiatus.

We will definitely be needing all current and previous members, spouses and significant others, regular guests, and new invitees to be involved in this endeavor. The time to begin preparing is now!

Let's see if we can get more people interested in coming to our first rehearsal of the new year. Ask anyone you know who likes to sing. Invite friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. Singing is fun. Singing well is even better. Performing in public shares that fun with lots of people. Everybody wins.



TIPS FOR PRACTICING SINGING: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO VOCAL DEVELOPMENT

by Karyn O'Connor
from singwise.com

In this article, I have attempted to cover the major areas of vocal skill building, and have included at least one practical exercise for developing each of these skills. These exercises should be transposed according to the singer's voice type and range, as well as the specific area of the individual singer's range which is being targeted in the exercise (e.g., chest register, head register, primo passaggio, etc.). It is important to note that a singer will not automatically improve by merely attempting these exercises over and over again if he or she is applying incorrect technique to them. If the most basic technical skills are lacking, then repeating the same exercises will likely produce the same, or even worse, results, as vocal fatigue, strain or injury may occur due to misuse of the vocal instrument. These are exercises that can be added to an existing vocal workout program or used to supplement the vocal training provided during lessons with a singing instructor.

This guide, along with the specific exercises contained in it, is not intended to take the place of professional voice training. More often than not, improvement is more rapid and steady when a singer has a knowledgeable and skilled vocal instructor helping him or her to develop his or her vocal instrument. However, I do understand that many of my readers are currently between teachers, or choose not to invest in private voice lessons for a variety of reasons, and are actively seeking helpful advice and sound guidance in how to improve in specific areas of vocal performance.

It should also be understood that this article is not an attempt at outlining a complete or systematic approach to voice training. Such a feat would be beyond the scope of this relatively brief article. I have merely made some suggestions that may or may not complement the singer's current voice study program or fit the singer's current needs.

Readers may contact me for more specific information or advice on how to achieve their vocal improvement goals or to inform me of any detail that might be missing in this overview. As always, please understand that it would be difficult for me to diagnose any technical errors or vocal health issues when I cannot listen to and observe a singer in person. However, I can make 'educated guesses' or assessments based on the information with which I am provided, as well as what I have learned from my years of teaching and research,

and then provide information and practice tools.

Getting Started

Be Healthy

First, a singer needs to take good care of the voice and his or her entire body before singing even begins. The singer should eat a nutritionally balanced and healthy diet. Good nutrition and adequate rest boost the immune system, helping a singer to avoid colds and other health problems that will affect his or her voice usage.

A singer should also exercise aerobically in order to increase lung capacity and stamina, and avoid cigarette and marijuana smoke, as they dry out and degrade the function of the lungs and vocal folds, which in turn makes breath management during singing less effective and voice quality less than optimal. Having good lung capacity will help especially during performances in which a singer moves around on stage with high energy or dances while singing.

Hydration is very important to helping the voice function at its optimum for lessons, rehearsals and performances. Ideally, the body should remain well hydrated, preferably with water, throughout the day, and the singer should not wait until the practice session before drinking water. During singing tasks, room-temperature water is ideal, as cold water has a slight numbing affect on the throat and makes it more difficult for the vocal instrument to work effectively. Avoid allergens that may cause throat irritation or nasal congestion, and medications that may have a drying effect on the throat.

For more tips on how to care for the voice and how to cope with specific vocal health issues, please read [Caring For Your Voice](#).

Be Safe

Above all, a singer needs to use correct singing technique in order to ensure that the voice is healthy and can be used for many years.

There should never be any feeling of discomfort or pain when singing or vocalizing. If a singer feels pain or discomfort, he or she should stop singing immediately. Pain is always a sign of unhealthy singing technique. Do not believe for one moment that the old 'no pain, no gain' adage should also apply to developing the singing voice.

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Some methods of training will even go so far as to encourage the singer to dismiss certain discomforts and pain while learning a new contemporary vocal effect or technique, assuring them that the discomfort and pain will eventually go away after they've become accustomed to using their voice in a certain (I dare say questionable) manner. If the pain is persistent, the voice should be rested, and a medical throat specialist (ENT or otolaryngologist) should be consulted, as this may be a sign of more serious damage to the vocal folds. Note that, when the voice is begun used properly, there should never be any need for vocal rest and recuperation after singing.

In many cases, singers notice more subtle changes in their voice quality without any pain or discomfort. Hoarseness, unsteadiness, an inability to sing at a softer volume, a voice that cuts out, range limitations, etc. are all signs of potential fatigue, strain or injury, not merely sources of frustration. If the singer experiences any of these changes in voice quality or function, even if they are not accompanied by pain or discomfort, he or she should seek immediate rehabilitative help, as continuing to use the vocal instrument incorrectly could lead to more and more serious vocal problems, including some that may become permanent.

If the singer finds that he or she requires days of rest between rehearsals or performances, this is also a sign that the voice is being worked incorrectly, not necessarily that it is being overworked, (although the latter may also be true). If the pain is present only at certain places in the singer's range, such as in the upper range of the voice, the singer should immediately descend the scale again and re-examine his or her technique in the notes preceding the spot where the pain began to present itself, paying special attention to even the most subtle signs of tension and strain. (Remember that upper range will not be increased when incorrect technique is being used, and it therefore makes no sense to keep pushing the voice higher when it is painful or evidently squeezed. It would be best to sing only within comfortable range until the singer's technique has been corrected.) A knowledgeable vocal technique instructor will be able to assess the problem and provide practical tips and exercises for eliminating it in the future. Learning good technique will help a singer cope with the intense demands of a busy singing schedule so that he or she will be able to continue performing without the need to cancel gigs or concerts.

Warming Up The Voice

When the singer is ready to begin practicing, he or she needs to take some time to slowly warm up the vocal instrument so that it is ready for the demands that are about to be placed on it. Just as an athlete would never begin a training session without first stretching and loosening his or her muscles, it is never recommended that a singer jump into intense vocal demands without first allowing the voice to properly warm up.

I am frequently asked how long a warm-up routine should be. My answer is always that the length of a warm-up routine is entirely dependent on the individual, and even that may change with the day, time of day or season. Some singers require a half hour before they feel as though their instruments are sufficiently 'limber', while others feel as though ten minutes of easy vocalizing suffice. The kinds of singing tasks (style, repertoire, tessitura, etc.) that will follow may affect the length of the warm up. A classical singer who vocalizes mostly in high lying tessituras, for example, may require more time to warm up than a singer of a contemporary genre who never sings above his or her secondo passaggio. A belter may require more warm up time than someone who sings gentle children's song. The time of day in which the singer vocalizes may also affect warm up times. For example, many singers require more time to warm up in the mornings after their voices have not been used for many hours (during sleep). Other singers have seasonal allergies, and it takes them longer to break up excess mucous.

I prefer to keep 'warm ups' and 'vocal practice' in two separate categories. To me, a warm up consists of easy vocalization tasks that require little concentration or effort, and that aren't necessarily intended for improvement of technical skills (although they can certainly play a role in improvement, too). The exercises and 'vocalises' that a singer would use after warm up exercises, on the other hand, are designed to encourage the development of various technical skills, and will be more targeted and challenging than warm up exercises.

Tongue-tip trills and lip trills on arpeggios and scales are highly effective at gently warming up the voice because they employ only the thin edges of the vocal folds during phonation, allowing less of the vocal fold to be involved in phonation and making elongation and thinning of the folds (and thus higher pitches) easier, and because they encourage the breathing mechanism to quickly kick into gear, as well. In *Caring For Your Voice*, I explain why trills are par-

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ticularly effective in greater detail.

I use these two warm-ups for my students who can trill their lips and/or tongues:

Warm Up Exercise 1



Warm Up Exercise 2



Don't be discouraged if you find it difficult to maintain the trill throughout the exercise at first. Many students have to learn to use the correct amount of breath pressure along with the optimal degree of closure at the lip or tongue level. Practice will enable a singer to find the right balance, and thus be able to maintain a steady stream of tone during the warm-up exercises. Also, many students find that they begin to lose the consistency of their lip trills at the bottom end of their ranges, largely due to the need for less breath pressure, but also because lower frequencies (pitches) have a slower oscillatory rate. One helpful solution is to apply two fingers to the lower cheeks just outside the corners of the mouth (parallel to the space between the upper and lower sets of teeth), and then gently push up just a little, thus lifting, the zygomatic muscles. Often-times, what happens during lip trills is that the zygomatic muscles begin to pull down because the puckering of the lips during lip trills cause them to droop and lose their 'lift'.

If the singer is unable to do either lip or tongue trills, warming up can still be effectively done using short five-note scales that both ascend and descend in pitch singing a comfortable vowel or any combination of vowels and consonants that are easy and free for the individual singer. 'Ooh' and 'Ah' are very popular for warm-ups with my students because they are a neutral vowel and open vowel, respectively. I usually suggest avoiding longer scales and

arpeggios until the voice has had a chance to loosen up because the extended range and intervallic leaps can be tension and stress inducing for the unprepared voice.

For my students who are unable to trill, I usually use this warm-up exercise on the vowel of their choice, moving up the range one key at a time, because it is easy and avoids having to hit higher pitches before the voice is ready:

Warm Up Exercise 3

Triads are also effective for warm ups.



Warm Up Exercise 4



Warm ups can involve nearly any kind of healthy vocalization - from lip and tongue trills to gentle sirening to simple five-note scales on a vowel sound to simple songs with small ranges - so long as they get the instrument 'loosened up' and the breathing mechanism shifted into high gear. The most important thing with warm ups is to take things slowly in terms of pitch and to use proper technique, (something often neglected or ignored during warm ups, as singers tend to think of warm ups as a quick 'practice round' before they really have to sing). You never want to sing as high as you possibly can or as low as you possibly can immediately. Start in comfortable middle range and work your way gradually to higher and lower pitches. Tongue or lip trills (rolls) are excellent for warm ups, and you can use them to cover your entire range, but your larynx must still be functioning properly and your muscles relaxed when you do them, or else you won't be helping your voice at all. So long as you are not pushing yourself as soon as you start, you should be fine.

Vocal Skill Building

Increasing Vocal Range

One major goal of every singer is to have a well-developed and impressive singing range. A broader range means more versatility and improved artistic

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expression, as the singer is less likely to struggle to sing all the notes of a song in the original key. Each note within the song will sound comfortable and pleasant. However, this goal of stretching the vocal range, if not approached carefully and correctly, can present numerous risks, including vocal fatigue, strain and injury.

The key to successfully increasing the singing range is to do so gradually and healthily. A student of voice needs to avoid the temptation to rush ahead of his or her instrument, forcing it to reach for high or low notes that it is not yet ready to sing. Although a singer may be physically able to hit a certain pitch, that doesn't necessarily mean that he or she is singing it correctly. If the note sounds squeaky, shrill, breathy or strained, or if the voice cracks or the throat feels tight, uncomfortable or painful, the singer isn't yet ready to sing that note. More technical development will be necessary before these notes become easier and safer to sing.

A certain degree of technical proficiency is necessary in order for a student to effectively extend his or her upper range. If the singer is unable to access the head register due to incorrect laryngeal and acoustical function (e.g., no laryngeal tilt in the upper middle register, thus preventing the vocal folds from lengthening and thinning properly, no vowel modification, a raised larynx with an improper tilt or supraglottic compression (e.g., squeezing with the muscles of the larynx and neck), the voice will hit a proverbial wall around the second passaggio and not be able to safely break past it until proper technique is in place. Once good technique is established, range is then gradually and methodically increased, one note (i.e., semitone) at a time, typically through short, simple exercises that use a very small range and intervals of only one half or full step at a time. It is usually best to allow each new note to be perfected - it should feel comfortable, be well supported and sound consistently pleasant - before attempting to add another note. Although it may be possible for a student of voice to sing a few notes higher or lower yet, he or she should always focus on the notes immediately above or below until they are consistently well produced, and he or she should never sing notes if the voice feels strained in any way. Having an extended range is of little use if the uppermost and lowermost notes of that range sound or feel terrible. Once the tone begins to fall apart or the voice begins to break, singing those notes is pointless - they won't be improved by repeatedly singing them incorrectly and

they certainly won't impress anyone if used in a performance - and it is important to go back down (or up) in the scale and stop at the first note that begins to sound less controlled or feels uncomfortable. A student and teacher team should then examine the reasons for this loss of balanced, steady, free-flowing tone and attempt to make adjustments to and improvements in the student's technical execution of that note before moving on. Otherwise, the remainder of the scale will do nothing but deteriorate in quality, and the singer make risk vocal injury.

Many singers want to develop their ranges quickly and may have unrealistic expectations or timetables. Patience is a necessary prerequisite in vocal training. In many cases, some simple adjustments made to the student's technique (e.g., how he or she approaches a note) can produce dramatic results. I have had some students add over a half an octave to their ranges in a single lesson once they have corrected the errors that had previously been causing the limitations in their range. These results may not be typical for every singer or circumstance, however.

Although extending one's vocal range is always a noble goal, the student of voice must also understand and accept that his or her body - in which lies the vocal instrument - has certain physical boundaries or limitations unique to that individual. For example, a bass singer should never expect himself to be able to hit the highest notes of the tenor range because his physical instrument is simply not designed to do so. Similarly, a soprano will likely never be able to extend her range to the bottommost notes of a contralto's range. There is likely to be some overlapping in range between voice types, and some singers will be able to develop exceptionally broad ranges, but a higher instrument will always be somewhat more limited at the lower part of the range than a lower instrument will be and vice versa. These limitations may be a source of frustration to many singers, especially when their voice types and ranges don't fit with or get them cast for desired roles or gigs, but, unfortunately, it is an unavoidable fact of nature. All that a singer can do is make the most of the type of voice that he or she has been given, and develop as a full a range as is physically possible for him or her.

A singer shouldn't be discouraged in discovering that his or her voice belongs to a particular vocal Fach (voice type) that he or she deems less desirable, as voice classification doesn't change an individual singer's vocal abilities or place any more limitations on that singer than those that were already there before. Each voice is unique, and some

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singers will be able to develop extensive ranges, while others may always have a more narrow range of usable pitches within which he or she can sing, even after training. An individual mezzo soprano may be able to sing higher than a certain soprano, or an individual tenor may have access to more notes than a certain baritone might.

It should be noted that many limitations in range are due to a failure to apply the appropriate laryngeal function to the particular pitches involved. Misuse of the muscles through squeezing is also quite common. I have a student who had believed herself to be a soprano before coming to study with me. She had a well-developed and extensive upper range, and it seemed reasonable to assume that she was a soprano based on that information alone. Furthermore, she sang only in head voice tones, carrying them down as low in the scale as she possibly could (G3), thus severely limiting the lower extension of her range. Once she learned to use her chest voice, however, we discovered that she is actually a dramatic mezzo soprano with an extremely powerful chest register, and she added over five full tones to the bottom of her range - she now vocalizes as low as Bb2.

The opposite phenomenon tends to happen for students who incorrectly categorize themselves as lower vocal voice types, such as contraltos, baritones or basses, simply because they don't know how to sing in head voice. Once they figure out how to navigate the upper passaggio, they find that they suddenly have access to an octave or more above what they had previously believed to be the uppermost notes of their range. The moral of the story is that an untrained singer shouldn't assume that he or she cannot sing any higher or lower, and thus categorize himself or herself as a particular voice type, until he or she has developed enough technique to know what kind of range he or she can reasonably expect to be able to develop. (It is the locations of the passaggi, not the highest and lowest notes of a singer's range, that most accurately determine voice type. A technique instructor can help a singer to identify where these pivotal registration events occur for that individual voice, and accurately categorize the voice.)

Some of the best exercises for increasing range, particularly at the top of the scale, are simple three-note exercises on all of the five pure Italian vowels. I use the following exercise to develop both the upper and lower range:

Vocal Range Increasing Exercise 1



Short chromatic scales are also excellent exercises for gently and gradually broadening a singer's range because they involve very small steps of only a semitone. (When attempting to add notes to the top or bottom of the range, it is always best to avoid large intervals.) For example:

Vocal Range Increasing Exercise 2



Blending (Or Bridging) The Registers

Learning to blend the registers is one of the most challenging, and often frustrating, aspects of singing for most students. Most new singers have noticeable register breaks, in which their voices shift into the adjacent register with a crack or 'clunk' or change in volume or tone quality, and it takes a great deal of work and dedication to retrain the vocal instrument to make the correct acoustic and muscular adjustments necessary at every pitch to promote seamless transitions throughout the range.

In order for the vocal folds to produce higher pitches, they must elongate and become thinner, with less of the folds becoming involved in vibration. As pitch descends, the opposite occurs, and the vocal folds become shorter and more compact, and more muscular mass becomes involved. When registers are smoothly blended or '**bridged**', there is a certain balance of muscular involvement that needs to become reversed around the **passaggi** (the pivotal registration change points). The chest register is primarily **thyroarytenoid** (shortener) dominant, the middle register (women) or zona di passaggio (men) are 'mixed in function', and the head register are primarily **cricothyroid** (lengthener) dominant. Therefore, moving from chest voice to **mixed (middle) voice** requires that the balance of the laryngeal muscles shifts from shortener to lengthener dominant to create and support the higher pitches. This shift needs to be gradual and continuous, or else an unpleasant register break will occur.

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This gradual muscular shifting is aided by a simultaneous acoustic shift, generally achieved through subtle modification or alteration of the sung vowels and by adjustments in breath energy. In Italian, this aspect of technique is generally referred to 'aggiustamento'. When the acoustic shift begins to happen, the tone of the voice generally starts to incorporate more and more of the adjacent register's quality. For example, as a male singer moves upward through his *zona di passaggio*, the tone will gradually begin to sound more and more 'head voice like' and less and less 'chest voice like', and there will be a section in which both sounds are very clearly part of the mixture. Failing to allow this acoustic shift to take place over the course of the several notes preceding the *passaggio*, where the muscular shift naturally occurs, will inevitably cause an abrupt and noticeable change in sound (i.e., a register break).

The French term for this mixed sound quality is *voix mixte*. This *registre mixte* (mixed register) is found in the region of the singer's range that is common to both the heavier (chest) and lighter (head) laryngeal mechanisms. It refers either to an intermediate vibratory mode that borrows timbre (resonance qualities) and muscular elements from both the lower (chest) and upper (head) registers or to a vocal technique developed in the Western lyric school of singing in which singers unite or bridge their chest and head registers. Most researchers believe that this resonance balancing choice can be produced in either the lower laryngeal mechanism, (which is more common in men since they have a greater chest register range) or in the lighter laryngeal mechanism, (which is more common in women because they have a longer middle section of their range). In this sense, *voix mixte* is a register made in either chest or head that is coloured to sound more like the vibratory mode of the other register. Use of *voix mixte* allows singers to realize a homogenous voice timbre throughout their *tessitura* and eliminate register breaks.

The biggest mistake that I see with singers is that they attempt to learn blending by repeatedly singing the same scales quickly, with the same results each time. (Speed does not cover up, nor improve, bad sound.) They would be better served, instead, by breaking down those scales note by note. Major scales and chromatic scales that begin a few notes below the *passaggio* and end a few notes above it are a great starting place for learning to

effectively blend or bridge the registers. A student can start out slowly, taking special note of the resonance and muscular balancing at each semitone, and feel how this balance shifts very gradually in the scale. By tackling and perfecting individual notes in the scale first, a student can usually learn to recognize the physical and acoustic signs associated with both correct and incorrect resonance and blending, make necessary adjustments, and develop effective muscle memory. Once the vocal instrument learns to consistently make the correct adjustments at every note, the range and tempo of the exercise can be gradually increased.

There are female students for whom blending is a major challenge because of the relative heaviness and fullness of their chest registers as compared to that of their middle registers. For these lower voiced singers, their chest voice tones are full, and there is a great deal of dynamic intensity (e.g., volume), yet their timbre significantly lightens and their volume diminishes when they are singing in their middle registers. With these students, I introduce the concept of *voix mixte* to help them blend the colours of their adjacent registers and ultimately eliminate register breaks. (Sometimes, I suggest that they think of this section of their range as a sort of 'grey area' that is neither fully chest nor fully head, and in which they can choose to balance their tone as they see fit for a given vocal task.) I usually have them intentionally but progressively lighten up or brighten the tone of their chest register as they ascend the scale toward their first *passaggio*. Likewise, as they enter their middle register, I have them hold onto a little bit of the fullness of their chest register tones (but still allow for the appropriate muscular changes or register shifts where they would naturally occur) and increase their breath energy. Doing so often enables them to create a more homogenous sound between these two registers that would otherwise sound very different. Then, we work toward developing a stronger middle register. Dramatic baritones will often encounter the same kinds of challenges when they ascend the scale and enter their *zona di passaggio* and head register. This same blending technique is often helpful for them.

For lighter or more lyric voices and for voices of higher fachs, this same kind of blending technique is not usually as necessary, as the chest register for these voice types is not usually as 'big', creating less inconsistency between timbres as they ascend into their middle and upper registers, or descend into their chest register. Glides, slurs and portamentos (short, smooth slides through intervals in which all the in-between notes are sung), both ascending and descending in pitch, can help the student learn to make smooth laryngeal adjustments. For example:

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Blending The Registers Exercise 1



Blending The Registers Exercise 2



Blending The Registers Exercise 3



Blending The Registers Exercise 4



These slides should be made slowly, and the tendency to rush through the second half of the descent should be avoided. (I liken this to a roller coaster ride. At the top of the coaster's hill, the car is moving forward, but slowly. As it begins to de-

scend the hill, however, the car picks up more and more momentum and thus speed. The voice tends to do the same thing when descending in pitch.) It's a particularly good idea to practice gliding smoothly and with control through the passaggi, as this is when it is likely to be the most difficult. If the passaggi are problematic and the student experiences a 'clunking', he or she should try a short, chromatic scale, such as Vocal Range Increasing Exercise 2 (above), and apply it in the area of the passaggio in order to master the acoustic and muscular shifts associated with each individual note in the scale. Use all of the five pure Italian vowels.

There are many examples in both classical and contemporary repertoire in which singers are required to slide from (or 'tie') one note to another during a single word or vowel phoneme rather than sing each note in isolation. Practicing vocal glides will help to develop the necessary control to use them during the singing of text.

Two of my favourite exercises for teaching blending of the registers once a certain mastery of the passaggi has been achieved involve a gradual 'back and forth' climb and descent that cover a little more than an octave in range. The goal is to avoid the 'stair stepping' or 'zigzagging' sound in which the voice shifts very dramatically from pitch to pitch. To avoid this, the singer needs some control over his or her instrument. To illustrate the difference in the smoothness and control that I desire to hear, I sometimes tell my more visual students to think of their voices floating gently like a leaf in the wind, or climbing an escalator rather than climbing the stairs.

Some students also have a tendency to emphasize certain notes, usually the lower notes, more than the others in the exercise. These notes will often sound louder or be better articulated than the others - I call this 'revving' - and the student needs to learn to maintain both steadiness of volume and consistency of articulatory definition.

Blending The Registers Exercise 5 (Part 1)



Then, after taking a breath, the exercise continues with ...

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Blending The Registers Exercise 5 (Part 2)



Different combinations of vowels and consonants can be used in these exercises, such as 'Gay'.Dah' and 'Nay Nah'. Singing the exercise on single, sustained vowels, such as 'o' or 'e' adds a little more of a challenge to the exercise.

Another variation to this exercise, which involves a little more breath control due to its being a bit longer, is:

Blending The Registers Exercise 6



Another exercise that extends through different registers and also develops the singer's ability to smoothly execute (short) intervallic leaps is:

Blending The Registers Exercise 7



The challenges for most students with this exercise include staying on pitch, maintaining smoothness of the legato line and finding consistency of timbre between the registers. In addition to demanding laryngeal flexibility, this exercise can also help to develop vocal agility. (It's one of my favourite multi-purpose exercises.)

To learn more about blending the registers, please

read Blending the Registers in Good Tone Production For Singing, as well as Register Breaks and Passaggi in the Glossary of Vocal Terms and the article on vowel modification.

I have also just written an article on Eliminating Register Breaks that offers more explanation of the possible causes of register breaks and practical tips on how to even out the singer's scale.

...To Be Continued Next Month...

An optimist stays up
until midnight to see the
New Year in. A pessimist
stays up to make sure
the old year leaves.

—WILLIAM E. VAUGHAN,
JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR



TWO APPROACHES TO MEMORIZATION – ONE OF WHICH CAN LEAVE YOU LOST AND STRANDED IF YOU RELY ON IT TOO MUCH!

by Dr Noah Kagyama
from bulletproofmusician.com

Ah, the dreaded memory slip.

If you're like most musicians, you've probably experienced at least one in your performance history. I'm guessing that you've probably also had the experience of spending a sleepless night playing and replaying music in your head, in an effort to reassure yourself that you do indeed have everything memorized. Or maybe you've found yourself on stage, thinking not about the music, but worrying about whether you're going to be able to remember what comes next...

It may not literally be life or death, but it can certainly feel that way at times.

Of course, then there are those for whom memorization seems to happen naturally. Easily. Almost without trying.

What's up with that? Are their brains just wired differently than ours? Or do they know something we don't?

The study of memorization

Roger Chaffin, a now-retired professor of psychology at UConn (and amateur flutist), has conducted a number of studies on the learning processes of high-level musicians.

And several are related specifically to the memorization process, and provide some insights into how expert memorizers memorize.

Two types of memory

Type #1: Serial chaining

It turns out that there are two types of memory that musicians rely on – and each has its own pros and cons. Which is helpful to know, to make sure we don't put all of our memory eggs in the wrong basket.

The first type is called serial chaining. This is where playing one phrase cues up your memory of the next phrase, which cues up your memory of

the phrase after that, and so on.

On the plus side, this type of memory develops naturally as you work on a piece, so there's not much you have to do other than practice as normal. And it works pretty darn well too! So what's the downside?

Well...serial chaining works well as long as the conditions of *retrieval* are close to the conditions of *practice*.

Any deviations from our experience in the practice room, either internal or external, have the potential to weaken these "chains" which link one phrase or passage to the next. And if one of the chains break, we're kind of screwed, because often, the only way to get back on track is to start at the first chain again.

It's kind of like how most of us sing the alphabet song. For instance, take a moment to start singing the ABC song – but start from the letter F **AND DO NOT** help yourself cue up the correct note by singing in your head from the letter A.

Not so easy, right?

I had a job in grad school that required doing lots of filing of records alphabetically. You'd think I would have figured out the alphabet by then, but it was surprising how often I had to sing the ABC song to myself to figure out which letter came after which. And even more surprising was how often I had to start at A. In fact, I still seem incapable of starting anywhere other than A or Q. Bizarre.

All this to say, if serial chaining is the only type of memory we have developed for our recital program, we probably *should* be a little bit freaked out about the reliability of our memory.

Type #2: Content addressable access

If serial chaining is like autopilot or cruise control, the second type of memory is like driving a stick. Called "content addressable access," it involves creating specific "retrieval" or "performance cues" that are kind of like headings or chapter markings that help us get back on track at any of a whole range of locations throughout the piece. So if everything goes to crap, and we break a chain, instead of having to backtrack and start at the beginning, we are never more than a few bars away from a fresh start.

The downside, is that these cues don't just spontaneously appear on their own out of thin air. We have to take the time to intentionally create and rehearse them in practice. So it takes some effort and a bit of time.

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TWO APPROACHES TO MEMORIZATION
(continued)

(Continued from page 11)

Though that's arguably a small price to pay for the peace of mind which comes from knowing that you know a piece like the back of your hand.

So what do performance cues look like?

Four performance cues

Well, there are at least 4 different kinds.

1. Structural cues are natural breaks or logical sections that form the structure of a piece. Like the exposition/development/recap, or where phrases begin and end.
2. Expressive cues are mood or character-based. Sections that you decide should be mysterious, or pensive. Or that communicate happiness, sadness, or sarcasm. Or involve characters who form part of a narrative in your head.
3. Interpretive cues are also musical in nature, but related more to the hints that the composer has left us in the score. Like changes in tempo, phrasing, dynamics, and all those Italian words we suddenly realize we should have looked up when our teacher quizzes us in a lesson.
4. Basic cues are technique-related, such as bowing, sticking, or fingering choices.

Taken together, these four types of cues add additional layers of information to the music. Kind of like landmarks that let us know if we're on the right path or not, and help us get back on track if we start to lose our way. Though, just FYI, not all performance cues are created equal – the structural and expressive cues seem to be the most useful, with basic cues being the least helpful (and possibly actively *unhelpful*).

So...how exactly do these performance cues help with memory?

Mental performance scripts

Through observational studies of musicians learning and memorizing new works for performance (e.g. Chaffin et al., 2009), Chaffin found that these performance cues are created during practice sessions, and are rehearsed during practice as well.

In other words, rather than just starting a phrase mindlessly, expert memorizers seem to start and stop at these recovery points during practice, thinking about the structural, expressive, interpretive, or

technical element involved. Over time, this creates a "*mental* script" or map of the piece, which gets encoded into memory along with the physical script (i.e. the technical execution of the piece).

So as expert memorizers work out the musical and technical details of a piece, making clearer and deliberate decisions about the musical structure, character, phrasing, fingerings, and what to focus on from phrase to phrase, this not only boosts the level of their musicianship, but also serves to anchor these performance cues more deeply into memory. Much as you might consciously pay close attention to street signs and landmarks as you practice navigating through and familiarizing yourself with a new city that you've just moved to.

Take action

So what can we take away from all of this?

Well, the big take-home for me is that memorization seems to be a skill. An active process that one goes through in the course of learning a piece, rather than something that just magically happens on its own with enough time and repetition. And that thoughtfully engaging with fundamental aspects of the music when we practice – from observations about patterns in the music to decisions about phrasing and voicing and how this relates to mood, character, and emotion – lays the groundwork for how expressively we will play on stage, as well as how confident we will be in our memory.

After all, if we haven't created or practiced a mental script in advance, our squirrely little brains will probably be happy to create one for us. But one that is probably much more based in fear and anxiety, than the nuances and musical details that would make for a more engaged and compelling (and worry-free) performance.

Year's end is
neither an end nor a
beginning but a going on.

—HAL BORLAND,
AUTHOR, JOURNALIST,
AND NATURALIST

VOCAL PAIN: WHY YOUR VOICE HURTS WHEN TALKING

by Katarina Hornakova
from how2improvesinging.com

Let me share three truths about pain that will help you understand why your voice hurts when talking. I will also share 5 tips on how to start reducing chronic pain or discomfort from your voice. You may actually be surprised to know that you already have everything you need within you to change your perception of vocal pain.

Almost every day, I meet with people who experience some level of pain or discomfort when using their voice. They all tell me: My voice hurts when I talk. And they all have one wish – they want the pain to go away. The problem with that wish is that the more they are focused on pain, the more it persists in their voice and body.

I want to tell you why this is happening and what you can do to start eliminating pain from your voice. This understanding of pain is one of the most important things you can do on the way to a better voice. And it does not matter how long you experienced pain, or how severe it is, knowing more about pain can actually decrease the perception of pain. Yes, just knowing how your body works can bring some relief.

So, here are three truths about pain:

Truth #1 Pain is a good thing

Your brain will produce pain when it concludes that your tissues are in danger and you need to do something about it. The sensation of pain is actually a very useful signal that can save you from further harm and danger.

This is possible because there are millions and millions of sensors all over your body, in the skin, muscles, joints and ligaments. These sensors send millions and millions of messages to your brain. Some sensors inform your brain about the temperature, some respond to movement and position of different muscles and body parts, some sensors respond to pressure. Our brain receives these messages constantly.

Danger messages can become pain messages when your brain interprets them as that. Pain is not a perfect representation of what is really going

on at the tissue level. Because you can have a severe injury and no pain and you can have the most insignificant injury but a lot of pain. The amount of pain does not reflect the amount of tissue damage.

Now, the opposite can be true too. A situation where there is no more danger of tissue damage but pain persists. And that's when we talk about chronic pain. This is very typical of voice problems with persistent pain.

Truth #2 Your brain is not perfect

The number one role of your body is to protect you. Your body will try to protect you no matter what. Survival is the main goal. It does not matter if the threat is real or not. And what I mean by that is: your body will protect you with pain from situations that don't cause any tissue damage.

How is this possible? Your brain will consider everything possible and will not take any chances. Your brain will consider your thoughts, beliefs, past experiences, your knowledge and understanding, your values, your support system, the environment that you are in right now. There are so many factors that your brain will consider to protect you.

And I could go on and on and on. There are so many things that can affect how your brain interprets signals and messages. But from my many years of experience, I know that people who are worried about their voice, who do not understand what is happening to them and why, people who believe that they will not get better, people who feel alone or people who feel like a failure, they tend to have more pain than others.

Truth #3 You have super powers

The good news is that you can actually affect how you perceive pain. As I said before, your brain receives a lot of messages from your body, some neutral messages, some danger messages and some messages of safety. If your brain receives mostly signals of safety, you have the power to decrease the amount of pain you feel.

I absolutely know that it is very hard to believe that your thoughts, emotions and a million other factors can make your pain get worse or go away. I see it every day when I work with my clients. They tell me that their voice hurts. My reassurance that they are going to be ok and that they are not damaging their voice when talking go a long way in building their bank of safety messages to their brain.

Five tips

(Continued on page 14)

VOCAL PAIN: WHY YOUR VOICE HURTS (continued)

(Continued from page 13)

Check with ENT

Make an appointment to see a laryngologist for a proper voice assessment. If the doctor tells you that there are no structural changes or damage on your vocal folds, then start believing that it is safe to use your voice even though it feels like burning inside your throat. Most likely, there is tension, which your body interprets as pain.

Know What To Do

Find a trusted professional who can help you outline the next steps you need to take on your vocal journey. Make sure that you understand what needs to be done for you to feel better. Learn about your voice and how it works. Make sure you understand why you do what you do and how it is helping you. Understand what physical exercises, vocal exercises and manual approaches you can use to ease tension.

Find Peers

Find people who have the same vocal issue. Knowing that there are people with the same problem who were able to find a solution gives you hope and emotional support. When you feel understood by others and when you don't feel alone with your problem, pain tends to lessen.

Attract Joy

Smile a lot. Spend time in joyful situations with your family and friends.

Think Positively

Replace your negative thoughts with positive. Start your day with positive affirmations for your voice. Start with joy and hope instead of worry and despair. Follow a regular mindfulness or meditation practice and it does not have to be long.

These five tips will help you start signaling safety to your brain and your pain will slowly go away. But I have to warn you: this is a process, it's not a quick fix. Your pain or discomfort will stay with you for some time because it is a learned behaviour. But luckily, learned behaviours can be unlearned, it just takes time.



Here's a simple way to financially support the Big Orange Chorus, at no cost to you! If you shop on amazon.com you can sign up for the Amazon Smile program, and designate the Big O as your charity of choice. Then anytime you make a purchase on Amazon (Smile), they make a donation to us! No cost to you, and a donation to us: win win!

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Here's a simple way to financially support the Big Orange Chorus, at no cost to you! If you shop at any of the more than 400 merchants or like to purchase eGift Cards, FlipGive will give us back from 1% to 20%, depending on the merchant.

To sign up, visit <https://www.flipgive.com/f/570688> and start shopping.

Thanks in advance!!

Editor's Note: The latest version of the Amazon app (both android and iOS) now has an option to activate smile in the app, so that you can get the charity donations for purchases made in the app (if you enable it). Open the app and find 'Settings' in the main menu. Tap on 'AmazonSmile' and follow the on-screen instructions to turn on AmazonSmile on your phone.

FREE YOUR VOICE

by John Newell, Lead, *Realtime*
from Let It Out ©2013 Used by permission

Breathing Exercises

...continued from last month

- If you persistently run out of breath in phrases, your diaphragm muscles may not be strong enough. In this case, do the same exercise as in the paragraph above, but do the exhale to a strong and pressurized 'sssss' sound. Use your abdominal muscles to drive the breath with sharp, explosive power that instantly makes your entire abdomen 'rock' hard. Particularly feel your solar plexus, which is the fleshy part an inch or two below your sternum. When you hiss the breath out, you should feel the solar plexus press outward strongly. If it does not, adjust how you expel the breath powerfully until it does. Check you are isolating the muscles properly and staying free in your neck and shoulders and not collapsing your torso. You will find your muscles tire quickly, but repeat regularly to improve your strength and stability. When you sing, you will not need to use such muscle power, but it is good to strengthen those muscles with exercises to they will be stronger than is perhaps needed.
- Vary the speed of your 'sssss' pulses so some are longer and sustained and others are short and rapid.
- Deep Yoga breathing. it is refreshing, rhythmic and good for you.
- When practicing your singing, allow the breath flow to start for a split second before you vocalize,. This will prevent a glottal start.

You have achieved success when you don't know if what you are doing is work or play...

**FREE SINGING TIPS**

by Yvonne DeBandi
from a2z-singing-tips.com

U = Unique Voice Under Construction. Remember that your voice has its own unique fingerprint and is constantly changing with our actions, environment, health habits, etc. With this in mind, listen to your own voice often and use vocal training tools to keep your voice on the right track.

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Nicole LeGault
from a2z-singing-tips.com

U is for Undaunted. People often take their singing ambitions very seriously, and then along comes some person of authority who says "It's unrealistic to think you'll ever be a professional" for whatever reason. Think for a moment and try to come up with the names of five superstars to whom this person would be likely to say the same thing!

FREE SINGING TIPS

by Mick Walsh
from a2z-singing-tips.com

U. Understanding. If you don't understand what your coach has told you or why you are doing a particular exercise please ask. We need feed back in order to provide you with a better service and sometimes we make mistakes. Last week I told a 6 foot four 185 lb MAN that he was a Soprano. Duh!! I didn't even realize I'd made that mistake until he came back the next week and told me what I had said. So don't be afraid to ask questions if there's something you don't understand. Still can't believe I said that!!

He who does not bring his music to rehearsal because he thinks he already knows the songs may also be under the delusion that he's singing the correct notes too.



QUARTET CORNER

Our quartets are practicing social distancing or re-grouping.

What is YOUR quartet doing? Don't have one? Find three other guys and start one! Can't find a match? Drop me a line and I'll run a list of guys looking to quartet up here in the bulletin. It's one of those really fun things that you don't fully understand until you've done it.

It's never too early to be thinking about Singing Valentines. Quartets are always needed, officially formed or pickup. It's only a few easy songs. Learning more than one voice part to these songs can help make you easier to fit into a quartet.

CHAPTER QUARTETS



On Point (disbanded)

Dillon Tidwell, tenor
Daniel Pesante, lead
Timothy Keatley, baritone
Alex Burney, bass

Slice!

Terry Ezell, tenor
Eric Grimes, lead
Jason Dearing, baritone
vacant, bass

No Name Yet

? tenor
? lead
? baritone
? bass



Big Orange Chorus

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Thu	06 Jan	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	13 Jan	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	20 Jan	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	27 Jan	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	03 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	10 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	17 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods
Thu	24 Feb	Shepherd of the Woods

BIRTHDAYS

03 Jan	Alexander Burney
21 Jan	David Walker
31 Jan	Mark Roblez

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Mon	14 Feb	Singing Valentines
Fri	25 Mar	Convention Host
Sat	26 Mar	Convention Host/Competition
Sun	27 Mar	Convention Host

...more to come

RECENT GUESTS

Chuck Cashin	Jim Akers
Willy Vidmar	Mike Morgan
Dale Pratt	Hudson Pratt
Dan Newsom	Trans Maynard
Asrul Dawson	Bill Caruso
Ethan Erastain	Alex White
Tristan Arthurs	Mark Murillo
Roger Erastaine	Ron Blewett
Jon Greene	Jim Harper
G Lane	Brandon Edwards
Joe McLean	Adom Panshukian
Christian Cornella-Carlson	
Ray Parzik	Michael Reynolds
Ed Fitzgerald	Kyle Batchelder
David Brown	Thomas Barhacs
Pat McCormack	David Brown
Thomas Barhacs	Richard Breault
Justin McGhie	Emily Dearing
Sean Henderson	Doug Owens
Chris Redman	

⇒ BIG O BUCK\$ ⇐

BIG O BUCKS SCHEDULE

...more to come

WELCOME

NEWEST MEMBERS

Les Mower	April
Ray Parzik	August
Ed Fitzgerald	September

I'll talk to anyone about anything,
but sooner or later I'll tell him I sing.
I'll invite him to visit on Thursday night
and if he likes what he hears, he just
might become a member and maybe
he'll bring another good man
who likes to sing.

2021 DIRECTING TEAM



Jay Giallombardo
Front Line
Director

2021 OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS



Dave Walker
Uniform
Manager

PHOTO
NOT
AVAILABLE

vacant
Chorus
Manager



John Alexander
Bulletin
Editor



Frank Nosalek
Webmaster &
Technology

PHOTO
NOT
AVAILABLE

vacant
Show
Chairman



vacant
Big O Bucks
Coordinator

EDITOR'S NOTE

Article and column submissions are solicited.
Help make this a better bulletin. Send me stuff!
The deadline for February is 26 January
Items without a byline are from the Editor.

The Orange Spiel
John Alexander, Editor
2429 Southern Links Dr
Fleming Island FL 32003

Back issues are available online at:
www.bigorangechorus.com/newsarchive.htm
More specific and timely performance information
is in my weekly sheet, *Orange Zest*.

**Print off two copies
of this newsletter
to share – one with
your family and
one with someone
you are bringing to
a chapter meeting.
Let them know they
belong here!**

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**IMAGINE 80 MEN ON THE RISERS
BE A SINGER-BRINGER**



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