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# The Singer's Daily Practice Journal

Volume I: A graded introduction  
to vocal technique and diction

Cheri Montgomery

S.T.M. Publishers  
Nashville, TN

*Preface*

Students would benefit from daily lessons in the first year of study. There are many skills to be acquired at once and much of the information must be tailored to match the student's unique ability. This planner provides general information about the singing process and includes daily written assignments. The goal is to keep the singer thinking about their lessons throughout the week and to give the instructor an additional way of assessing the student's level of commitment.

The *International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)* gives the teacher a means of communicating precise sounds for vocal exercises and literature assignments. The vocal apparatus is uniquely structured for language. The sounds of language are uniquely suited for the vocal instrument. Consonants and vowels help us understand the function of the voice. They are useful for training, building, and refining the voice. Vocal concepts in this text are discussed using the IPA. The symbols selected represent an elegant manner of pronunciation as recommended by Madeleine Marshall, author of *The Singer's Manual of English Diction*. Space is provided beneath the IPA for students to supply the English translation. This approach gives students the opportunity to hear proper English and to complete a daily written assignment. An answer key is included and can be used to flip the daily exercise into a vowel transcription test.

Both volumes of this text combine textbook, workbook, and journal in one resource for voice students. The exercises, written in the treble clef, are to be transposed an octave lower for the male voice. Each section of the 15-week journal begins with manuscript paper for recording weekly lesson notes, exercises, and assignments. A check-list of vocal concepts is included. This gives the teacher the ability to direct students to the precise concept (with lesson and page number) that requires attention for the week. The following page provides space for the student to record progress and log daily practice times.

*Preface (continued)*

*The Singers Daily Practice Journal* prepares the student for English, Italian, German, French, and Latin repertoire assignments by providing a graded introduction to phonetic transcription, phonetic reading, and classical singing technique.

An abbreviated version of the pedagogy within this text is published in the *Journal of Singing*, Jan./Feb. 2018 issue: *The Voice and Diction Connection, A Diction Instructor's Approach to Voice Pedagogy* by Cheri Montgomery.

CM

*Table of Contents*

<u>Topics Covered</u>	<u>Page</u>
English Transcription: Week 1	1
Day 1: Introduction to the IPA	4
Day 2: English Front Vowels	5
Day 3: English Back Vowels	6
Day 4: English Central Vowels	7
Day 5: English Consonants – Fricatives	8
Day 6: English Consonants – Affricates, Glides, and Nasal [ŋ]	9
English Transcription: Week 2	11
Day 1: Transcription of English “r”	14
Day 2: English Diphthongs	15
Day 3: Vowel Replacement of “r”	16
Day 4: Polysyllabic Words	17
Day 5: Review of English Transcription Rules	18
Day 6: Phonetic Reading of English Text	19
Postural Alignment: Week 3	21
Day 1: Exploring Upright, Expansive Posture	24
Day 2: Imagery	26
Day 3: Releasing Interfering Muscular Tension	28
Day 4: Diction Diagnostic	30
Day 5: Low Expansion for the Breath	32
Day 6: Efficient Use of the Air	34
Lip Trills and [ŋ]: Week 4	37
Day 1: Exploring Vibrato – Lip Trills	40
Day 2: Lip and Tongue Trill Exercises	42
Day 3: Identifying Interfering Muscular Movement	44
Day 4: Remedies	46
Day 5: Exploring Legato	48
Day 6: Incorporating Vibrato	50
Pharyngeal Space and the Breath: Week 5	53
Day 1: Exploring Pharyngeal Space – [i]	56
Day 2: Onsets and Legato – [j]	58
Day 3: Sensory Awareness	60
Day 4: Consonant Voicing and the Fricatives	62
Day 5: Breath Support	64
Day 6: Breath Control	66

*Table of Contents*

<u>Topics Covered</u>	<u>Page</u>
Projection and Vibrato: Week 6	69
Day 1: Exploring Projection of the Tone – [u]	72
Day 2: Onsets and Legato Connection – [w]	74
Day 3: Vibrato	76
Day 4: Head Voice Vibrato	78
Day 5: Support Vibrato	80
Day 6: Equalizing the Scale	82
Palatal Space and Resonance: Week 7	85
Day 1: Exploring Palatal Space – [ɑ]	88
Day 2: Exploring Palatal Space – [æ]	90
Day 3: Exploring Palatal Space – [a]	92
Day 4: Exploring Resonance	94
Day 5: Discovering Chiaroscuro	96
Day 6: Choral Singing vs Solo Singing	98
Exploring the Secondary Vowels: Week 8	101
Day 1: Exploring Pharyngeal Space – Front Vowels	104
Day 2: Exploring Projection – Back Vowels	106
Day 3: Exploring Palatal Space – [ʌ]	108
Day 4: Optimizing [ɜ]	110
Day 5: Exploring Chiaroscuro – [y] and [ɻ]	112
Day 6: Exploring Chiaroscuro – [ø] and [œ]	114
Consonant Articulation: Week 9	117
Day 1: Energizing the Diction	120
Day 2: Avoiding Consonant Entanglements	122
Day 3: Exploring Alternate Formations	124
Day 4: Consonant Parameters to Exclude	126
Day 5: Consonant Parameters to Explore	128
Day 6: Final Consonants and Consonant Clusters	130
Musicianship and Performance: Week 10	133
Day 1: Vowel Equalization	136
Day 2: Exploring Range and Flexibility	138
Day 3: Discovering Artistry	140
Day 4: Dynamic Control	142
Day 5: Stage Deportment	144
Day 6: Vocal Health	146

*Table of Contents*

<u>Topics Covered</u>	<u>Page</u>
Articulatory Phonetics: Week 11	149
Day 1: Vowel Terms	152
Day 2: Consonant Terms	153
Day 3: Vowel Quiz	154
Day 4: Consonant Quiz	155
Day 5: Singing Quiz – Vowels	156
Day 6: Singing Quiz – Consonants	157
Italian Diction: Week 12	159
Day 1: Introduction to Italian Diction	162
Day 2: Italian [i] and [a]	163
Day 3: Italian [e] and [ɛ]	164
Day 4: Italian [u] and Double Consonants	165
Day 5: Italian [o] and [ɔ]	166
Day 6: Italian Double Consonants – Stops	167
German Diction: Week 13	169
Day 1: Introduction to German Diction	172
Day 2: Closed Vowels and Dark [ɑ]	173
Day 3: Open Vowels and Bright [a]	174
Day 4: Double Consonants	175
Day 5: Mixed Vowels	176
Day 6: Diphthongs, Ich-Laut, Ach-Laut	177
French Diction: Week 14	179
Day 1: Introduction to French Diction	182
Day 2: Dentals, Plosives, [i], [e], [a], and [w]	183
Day 3: The [j] Glide, [ɛ] and [ɶ]	184
Day 4: The Back Vowels, [ɑ], [ɔ], [ɜ], and [ɹ]	185
Day 5: The [ɥ] Glide and [y]	186
Day 6: The Schwa [ə], [ø], and [œ]	187
French, Latin, and English Diction: Week 15	189
Day 1: Nasals [ã] and [õ]	192
Day 2: Nasals [ê] and [œ]	193
Day 3: Introduction to Latin Diction	194
Day 4: Vowels: [ɛ] and [ɔ]	195
Day 5: Vowels: [i], [u] and [ɑ]	196
Day 6: English – Linking within the Phrase	197
Daily Warm-ups	200
Bibliography	206

*English Transcription: Week 1*

Day 1: Introduction to the IPA

Day 2: English Front Vowels

Day 3: English Back Vowels

Day 4: English Central Vowels

Day 5: English Consonants – Fricatives

Day 6: English Consonants – Affricates,  
[j] Glide, and Nasal [ŋ]

Lesson Notes, Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Checklist of Concepts to Review*

**BREATH**

Breath Control\_\_\_\_

p: 34, 62, 66

Breath Support\_\_\_\_

p: 62, 64

Breath Expansion\_\_\_\_

p: 32, 34

**DICTION**

Articulation\_\_\_\_

p: 120, 122, 124, 130

Front Vowels\_\_\_\_

p: 56, 104

Back Vowels\_\_\_\_

p: 72, 106

Central Vowels\_\_\_\_

p: 88, 90, 92, 108, 110

Mixed Vowels\_\_\_\_

p: 112, 114

**FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility\_\_\_\_

p: 108, 138

**MUSICIANSHIP**

Artistry\_\_\_\_

p: 140

Dynamics\_\_\_\_

p: 142

Legato\_\_\_\_

p: 48, 58, 74, 138, 140

**POSTURE**

Postural Alignment\_\_\_\_

p: 24, 26

**RANGE**

Range\_\_\_\_

p: 80, 90, 138

**ZONE**

Chiaroscuro\_\_\_\_

p: 96, 112, 114

Lip Trills\_\_\_\_

p: 40, 42

Palatal Space\_\_\_\_

p: 88, 90, 92, 108

Pharyngeal Space\_\_\_\_

p: 56, 58, 104, 108

Projection\_\_\_\_

p: 72, 74, 106

Register\_\_\_\_

p: 42, 82

Resonance\_\_\_\_

p: 92, 94, 96, 108, 136

Sensory Awareness\_\_\_\_

p: 60, 126

Vibrato\_\_\_\_

p: 40, 42; 50, 76, 78, 80

Vowel Equalization\_\_\_\_

p: 78, 94, 136

**WARM-UPS**\_\_\_\_

**WARNINGS**

Breathy Tone\_\_\_\_

p: 34, 76, 112, 124, 126

Faulty Formation\_\_\_\_

p: 110, 126

Faulty Movement\_\_\_\_

p: 44, 46

Faulty Onset\_\_\_\_

p: 58, 74, 126

Jaw Tension\_\_\_\_

p: 30, 110, 120, 122, 124

Nasal Tone\_\_\_\_

p: 110, 126

Pressed Tone\_\_\_\_

p: 34, 40, 42, 82

Spread Tone\_\_\_\_

p: 56, 60, 72, 110

Tension\_\_\_\_

p: 28, 30, 44, 46, 60

Tongue Impeded Tone\_\_\_\_

p: 110, 126

**OTHER**

Choral Singing\_\_\_\_

p: 98

Stage Deportment\_\_\_\_

p: 144

Vocal health\_\_\_\_

p: 146

*Daily Notes and Practice Times*

Day 1

Practice Time:\_\_\_\_\_

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Day 2

Practice Time:\_\_\_\_\_

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Day 3

Practice Time:\_\_\_\_\_

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Day 4

Practice Time:\_\_\_\_\_

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Day 5

Practice Time:\_\_\_\_\_

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Day 6

Practice Time:\_\_\_\_\_

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### The International Phonetic Alphabet

The IPA was established by the International Phonetic Association around 1888. Each symbol stands for one sound. Brackets enclose the symbols of a word or phrase. Precise pronunciation of each symbol must be defined within the respective language. Vowel and consonant terms are defined on pages 152 and 153.

### English Transcription

Silent vowels are not transcribed. A final *e* is often silent in English. For example, the four-letter word *love* [lʌv] is transcribed with three symbols to represent the three sounds that are actually pronounced. Single vowels may have more than one sound. The *i* of *like* [la:ɪk] is transcribed with two symbols to represent the two sounds pronounced. Sometimes a vowel cluster makes one sound as in the word *tree* [tri]. Silent consonants are not transcribed. The *l* of *could* [kʊd] is silent. Double consonants are represented with a single symbol as in the word *call* [kɔl]. Some consonants have phonetic changes. Pronunciation depends on the consonant's position within the word. For example, a final *s* is [z] when preceded by a voiced consonant: *waves* [wε:ɪvz]. A final *d* is [t] when preceded by a voiceless consonant: *looked* [lʊkt].

Here is a list of IPA symbols with common English spellings:

[ɑ]: a, o	[h]: h	[o]: o	[u]: oo, ou, u, ew
[æ]: a	[i]: ee, ea, ie	[ɔ]: al, aw, or, au, ou	[ʊ]: oo, ou, u
[b]: b	[ɪ]: i, ie, ui, y	[p]: p	[ʌ]: o, u, ou
[d]: d, t	[j]: y	[ɹ] and [r]: r	[v]: v
[ɛ]: e, ea, ie, ai	[k]: c, ck, qu	[s]: c, s	[w]: w
[ɜ]: vowel + r	[ks]: x	[ʃ]: sh, ch	[ʍ]: wh
[f]: f, ph, gh	[l]: l	[t]: t	[z]: z, s
[g]: g	[m]: m	[ʧ]: ch	[ʒ]: z, s
[dʒ]: g, j	[n]: n	[ð]: th	[ˈ]: stress mark
[gz]: x	[ŋ]: ng, nk	[θ]: th	[ː]: long mark

The schwa [ə] stands for an undefined sound in an unstressed syllable. It has many sounds in English. Pronunciation is based on spelling and duration of the note. For example, the *e* of *golden* is pronounced as an [ɪ] sound when set on a short note. It is [ɛ] when set on a sustained tone. The pronunciation of vowels in unstressed syllables is defined in this text according to the sustained pronunciation. Note: The sound of unstressed [æ] is often mixed with [ɪ] or [ʌ]: *fountain* [ˈfa:ʊntæn].

### English Front Vowels

IPA	English	Transcription	Rules
[i]	sea	[si]	<i>e, ee, ea, ie, eo</i> spellings
[ɪ]	fit	[fɪt]	<i>i, ie, ui, y</i> spellings
[ɛ]	bells	[bɛlz]	<i>e, ea, ie, ai</i> spellings
[ɛ]	scent	[sɛnt]	<i>c + front vowel</i>
[ɛ]	clear	[klɪ:ɹ]	<i>c + back vowel or consonant</i>

Provide IPA:

1. keys	twelve	picked	weeps
2. fence	kissed	speaks	quick
3. minced	peaks	elms	knees
4. cleansed	fixed	queen	guessed
5. limbs	dwells	his	zeal
6. helped	gives	ceased	debts

Provide English Spelling:

1. [ɛls]	[pɪs]	[bɪlt]	[hɛns]
2. [sɪnz]	[nɛkst]	[ɪst]	[klɪk]
3. [hɪmz]	[sɪns]	[kwɛst]	[gɪs]

Answer Key:

1. [kɪz]	[twɛlv]	[pɪkt]	[wɪps]
2. [fɛns]	[kɪst]	[spɪks]	[kwɪk]
3. [mɪnst]	[pɪks]	[ɛlmz]	[nɪz]
4. [klɛnzɪd]	[fɪkst]	[kwɪn]	[gɛst]
5. [lɪmz]	[dwɛlz]	[hɪz]	[zɪl]
6. [hɛlpt]	[gɪvz]	[sɪst]	[dɛts]
1. else	peace	built	hence
2. scenes	next	east	click
3. hymns	since	quest	geese

*Phonetic Reading of English Text*

The following lessons include daily phonetic assignments. General vocal principles are outlined in English on the even numbered pages with phonetic transcription of the text provided on the odd numbered pages. The daily assignment is to read the IPA and provide an English translation beneath the symbols. The exercise may be reversed by providing vowel symbols beneath the English words. This trains the singer to focus on the vowel line as represented by IPA. Test your skill by covering the left column and reading the IPA in the right column:

Art Song by Quilter, Roger (Eng. 1877 - 1953)

<b>To Julia</b>	[ tu 'dʒulɪə ]
<b>1. The bracelet</b>	[ ðə 'brɛ:ɪslet ]
Herrick, Robert (Eng. 1591 - 1674)	
<i>Why I tie about thy wrist,</i>	[ ʌɑ:ɪ ə:ɪ tɑ:ɪ ə 'bɑ:ʊt ðɑ:ɪ ɪɪst ]
<i>Julia, this my silken twist;</i>	[ 'dʒulɪə ðɪs mə:ɪ 'sɪlken twɪst ]
<i>For what other reason is't,</i>	[ fɔ ʌɑt 'ʌðə 'ɪzən ɪz ]
<i>But to show thee how, in part,</i>	[ bʌt tu ʃo:ʊ ði ha:ʊ ɪn pɑt ]
<i>Thou my pretty captive art?</i>	[ ðɑ:ʊ mə:ɪ 'pɪtɪ 'kæptɪv ɑt ]
<i>But thy bonds slave is my heart;</i>	[ bʌt ðɑ:ɪ 'bɑndslɛ:ɪv ɪz mə:ɪ hɑt ]
<i>'Tis but silk that bindeth thee,</i>	[ tɪz bʌt sɪlk ðæt 'bɑ:ɪndɛθ ði ]
<i>Knap the thread and thou art free:</i>	[ nəp ðə θred ænd ðɑ:ʊ ɑt fri ]
<i>But 'tis otherwise with me;</i>	[ bʌt tɪz 'ʌðəwa:ɪz wɪð mi ]
<i>I am bound, and fast bound, so</i>	[ ə:ɪ æm bɑ:ʊnd ænd fɑst bɑ:ʊnd so:ʊ ]
<i>That from thee I cannot go;</i>	[ ðæt frɪm ði ə:ɪ kæn'nat go:ʊ ]
<i>If I could, I would not so.</i>	[ ɪf ə:ɪ kʊd ə:ɪ wʊd nat so:ʊ ]

*Postural Alignment: Week 3*

Day 1: Exploring Upright, Expansive Posture

Day 2: Imagery

Day 3: Releasing Interfering Muscular Tension

Day 4: Diction Diagnostic

Day 5: Low Expansion for the Breath

Day 6: Efficient Use of the Air

*Releasing Interfering Muscular Tension*

There are eight areas of the body prone to unnecessary tension:

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Jaw       | 5. Lips      |
| 2. Neck      | 6. Cheeks    |
| 3. Tongue    | 7. Eye brows |
| 4. Shoulders | 8. Underarms |

Tension results in muscle rigidity that can be felt and seen.

Singers must learn to identify and release interfering muscular tension.

Tension is released through movement, touch, or distraction:

1. A muscle in motion cannot cramp to the point of being rigid<sup>1</sup>
2. Touch interrupts the nerve impulses that result in negative tension
3. Replace negative muscle activity with an opposing movement

*Muscle Awareness Exercise*

Practice the “Rag Doll Stretch” exercise in front of a mirror (page 26).

Replicate the fall-away feeling in the eight areas listed above.

The eight areas are appendages that hang off an aligned central core.

Enhance the feel of release by repeating the following Quaker phrase:

“Peace at the center” (concept by Hellen Swank)

<sup>1</sup> Blades-Zeller, p. 78

*Releasing Interfering Muscular Tension*

[ ðɛ:ʌf ə ɛ:ɪt 'ɛ:ʌfɪʌz ʌv ðʌ 'bɑdɪ pɪo:ʊn tu ʌ 'nɛsɪsɛrɪ 'tɛnʃʌn ]:

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. [ dʒɔ ]       | 5. [ lɪps ]       |
| 2. [ nɛk ]       | 6. [ tʃɪks ]      |
| 3. [ tʌŋ ]       | 7. [ ɑ:ɪ bɪɑ:ʊz ] |
| 4. [ 'ʃo:ʊldəz ] | 8. [ 'ʌndləʌmz ]  |

[ 'tɛnʃʌn ɪ'zʌlts ɪn 'mʌsəl ɪ'dʒɪdɪtɪ ðæt kæn bi felt ænd sɪn ]

[ 'sɪŋəz mʌst ɑ:ɪ'dentɪfaɪ ænd ɪ'lɪs ɪntə'frɪ:ʌfɪŋ 'mʌskjʊlə 'tɛnʃʌn ]

[ 'tɛnʃʌn ɪz ɪ'lɪst θru 'mʊvmɛnt tʌʃ ə dɪs'træksʃʌn ]:

1. [ ʌ 'mʌsəl ɪn 'mo:ʊʃʌn kæ'nat kɪæmp tu ðʌ pɔ:ɪnt ʌv 'biŋ ɪ'dʒɪd ]
2. [ tʌʃ ɪntə'ʌpts ðʌ nəv 'ɪmpʌlsez ðæt ɪ'zʌlt ɪn 'nɛgətɪv 'tɛnʃʌn ]
3. [ ɪ'plɛ:ɪs 'nɛgətɪv 'mʌsəl æk'tɪvɪtɪ wɪð æn ʌ'pɔ:ʊzɪŋ 'mʊvmɛnt ]

*Muscle Awareness Exercise*

[ 'pɪæktɪs ðʌ ɪæg dʌl stɪɛʃ 'ɛksʌsɑ:ɪz ɪn frʌnt ʌv ʌ 'mɪrə (pɛ:ɪdʒ 26) ]

[ 'ɪɛplɪkɛ:ɪt ðʌ 'fɔləweɪɪ'fɪlɪŋ ɪn ðɪ ɛ:ɪt 'ɛ:ʌfɪʌz 'ɪstɛd ʌ'bəv ]

[ ðɪ ɛ:ɪt 'ɛ:ʌfɪʌz ɑf ʌ 'pɛndædʒɛz ðæt hæŋ əf æn ʌ'la:ɪnd 'sɛntɪʊl kɔ:ʌ ]

[ ɪn'hʌns ðʌ fɪl ʌv ɪ'lɪs bɑ:ɪ rɪ'pɪtɪŋ ðʌ 'falo:ʊɪŋ 'kwɛ:ɪklə fɪɛ:ɪz ]:

[ pɪs æt ðʌ 'sɛntʌ ]



## Formation of [i]

### Speaker's [i]



The [i] for speech is formed with the lips.

### Singer's [i]



The [i] for singing is formed with the tongue. The jaw is released and the tongue arch is far forward.

## Pharyngeal Space and the Breath: Week 5

Day 1: Exploring Pharyngeal Space – [i]

Day 2: Onsets and Legato – [j]

Day 3: Sensory Awareness

Day 4: Consonant Voicing and the Fricatives

Day 5: Breath Support

Day 6: Breath Control

*Exploring Pharyngeal Space – [i]*  
(see image on page 52)

The [i] for speech is formed by spreading the lips.

The [i] for singing is formed with a forward arch of the tongue.

Pharyngeal space is increased when the bulk of the tongue is forward.

*Tongue Push-Ups*

Tongue arch exercises reprogram the speech muscles for singing.

1. Release the jaw for [a] and raise the soft palate
2. The tongue lies low and flat on the floor of the mouth
3. The tongue tip contacts the lower front teeth for the entire exercise
4. The lips are neither rounded nor spread
5. Form [i] by arching the tongue forward (observe in a mirror)
6. The sides of the tongue contact the length of the upper molars
7. Do not spread the lips nor alter the position of the jaw
8. Check for accuracy by whispering an [i] vowel
9. Record the sound to insure that it is actually [i] and not [ɪ]
10. If vowel clarity is lacking, enunciate [i] with a [j] tongue arch
11. Alternate between [a] and [i] by means of tongue movement only
12. Maintain the [a] lip and jaw position

*Exploring Pharyngeal Space – [i]*  
(see image on page 52)

[ ði [i] fə spiʃ ɪz fəmd bɑ:ɪ 'spɪɛdɪŋ ðʌ lɪps ]

[ ði [i] fə 'sɪŋɪŋ ɪz fəmd wɪð ʌ 'fəwʊd ʌf ʌv ðʌ tʌŋ ]

[ fl'ɪndʒʊl spɛ:ɪs ɪz ɪn'kɪst mɛn ðʌ bʌlk ʌv ðʌ tʌŋ ɪz 'fəwʊd ]

*Tongue Push-Ups*

[ tʌŋ ʌf 'ɛksʌsɑ:ɪzɪz ɪ'pɪo:ʊgɪæm ðʌ spiʃ 'mʌsʊlz fə 'sɪŋɪŋ ]

1. [ ɪ'lis ðʌ dʒə fə [a] ænd ɪɛ:ɪz ðʌ saft 'pælæt ]
2. [ ðʌ tʌŋ lɑ:ɪz lo:ʊ ænd flæt ən ðʌ flɔ:ʌf ʌv ðʌ mɑ:ʊθ ]
3. [ ðʌ tʌŋ tɪp 'kʌntækt ðʌ 'lo:ʊʌ flʌnt tɪθ fə ði ɪn'tɑ:ɪʌ 'ɛksʌsɑ:ɪz ]
4. [ ðʌ lɪps ɑ 'nɑ:ɪðʌ 'ɪɑ:ʊndɛd nə spɪɛd ]
5. [ fəm [i] bɑ:ɪ 'ʌfɪŋ ðʌ tʌŋ 'fəwʊd (ʌb'zɜv ɪn ʌ 'mɪrɔ) ]
6. [ ðʌ sɑ:ɪdz ʌv ðʌ tʌŋ 'kʌntækt ðʌ lɛŋθ ʌv ði 'ʌpʌ 'mɔ:ʊlɪz ]
7. [ du nat spɪɛd ðʌ lɪps nə 'ɔltʌ ðʌ pɔ'zɪʃʌn ʌv ðʌ dʒə ]
8. [ ʃɛk fə 'ækjʊræsi bɑ:ɪ 'mɪspɛɪŋ æn [i] 'vɑ:ʊʌl ]
9. [ 'ɪɛkɔð ðʌ sɑ:ʊnd tu ɪn'ʃʊ:ʌ ðæt ɪt ɪz 'ækʃʊʊli [i] ænd nat [ɪ] ]
10. [ ɪf 'vɑ:ʊʌl 'klærɪtɪ ɪz 'lækɪŋ ɪ'nʌnsɪɛ:ɪt [i] wɪð ʌ [j] tʌŋ ʌf ]
11. [ 'ɔltʌ nɛ:ɪt bɪ'twɪn [a] ænd [i] bɑ:ɪ mɪnz ʌv tʌŋ 'mʊvmɛnt 'o:ʊnlɪ ]
12. [ mɛ:ɪn'tɛ:ɪn ði [a] lɪp ænd dʒə pɔ'zɪʃʌn ]

*Choral Singing vs Solo Singing*

Many singers discover their love for singing while in choir.

A choral background provides a choral diction frame of reference.

Choral vowels and consonants are established to unify the group.

The soloist's vowels are established to beautify and project one voice.

Some vowels ([i] in particular) are too harsh when amplified en masse.

*Warnings*

*Choral singing is a careful coordination of many voices articulating in a unified manner. Each member of the group becomes acutely aware of supporting a singular articulation, especially for final "s". For many singers, this is interpreted into a weakening of the vowel. Some have established the habit of covering the vowel sound or diminishing the vibrato in order to blend with the group. Consonants may be weakened as well.*

*Solution*

Understand that choral and solo voices have unique functions.

The choral singer must be sensitive to the blend of the group.

The solo singer is solely responsible for:

1. Vibrancy of the tone (vibrato)
2. Clarity of the vowel (vowel formation)
3. Projection of the text (consonant articulation)

*Choral Singing vs Solo Singing*

[ 'meni 'siŋəz dis'kʌvə ðe:l əv fə 'siŋiŋ mə:il in 'kwa:ɪə ]

[ ə 'kɔ:ʊl 'bækgɹɑ:ʊnd piə'vɑ:ɪdz ə 'kɔ:ʊl 'dɪkʃən fi:ɪm əv 'i:fi:əns ]

[ 'kɔ:ʊl 'vɑ:ʊəlz ænd 'kənsənənts əf i'stæblɪft tu 'ju:ni'fa:i ðə grʊp ]

[ ðə 'so:ʊləists 'vɑ:ʊəlz əf i'stæblɪft tu 'bjutɪfa:i ænd piə'dʒekt wʌn vɔ:ɪs ]

[ sʌm 'vɑ:ʊəlz ([i] in pɑ'tɪkjʊlə) ə tu hɑf mən 'æmplɪfa:ɪd ən məs ]

*Warnings*

*Choral singing is a careful coordination of many voices articulating in a unified manner. Each member of the group becomes acutely aware of supporting a singular articulation, especially for final "s". For many singers, this is interpreted into a weakening of the vowel. Some have established the habit of covering the vowel sound or diminishing the vibrato in order to blend with the group. Consonants may be weakened as well.*

*Solution*

[ əndə'stænd ðæt 'kɔ:ʊl ænd 'so:ʊlə:ʊ 'vɔ:ɪsəz hæv ju'nik 'flŋkʃənz ]

[ ðə 'kɔ:ʊl 'siŋə məst bi 'sensɪtɪv tu ðə blænd əv ðə grʊp ]

[ ðə 'so:ʊlə:ʊ 'siŋəf ɪz 'so:ʊli rɪ'spənsɪbəl fə ]:

1. [ 'vɑ:ɪbɪənsɪ əv ðə to:ʊn (vɑ:i'bi:əto:ʊ) ]

2. [ 'klærɪti əv ðə 'vɑ:ʊəl ('vɑ:ʊəl fə'me:ɪʃən) ]

3. [ piə'dʒekʃən əv ðə tekst ('kənsənənt ə'tɪkjʊle:ɪʃən) ]

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