

IPA Handbook for Singers

Cheri Montgomery

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PREFACE

The *IPA Handbook for Singers* is a compilation of the enunciation instructions found in the *English, Italian, German, French, and Advanced French Lyric Diction Workbooks*. Standard textbook instructions by Madeleine Marshall, Evelina Colorni, Dr. William Odom, Thomas Grubb, and Eileen Davis are referenced throughout.

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) provides a general guide to pronunciation but the exact sounds vary from language to language. This text defines the sounds as they apply to the English, Italian, German, and French languages.

Dictionary transcriptions represent the spoken form of a language. Adjustments to the IPA are necessary for lyric purposes. The phonetic indications given within the *IPA Handbook for Singers* are designed for sung application.

This text functions like a dictionary. Each vowel and consonant sound is listed on a separate page. Sample English, Italian, German, and French words are provided at the top of the page. The field is left blank if the sound does not exist in the particular language. Formation of the symbol is defined first for English, then further defined for the Italian, German, and French languages. The vowels are located on the odd pages and the consonants are located on the even pages. Tabs with gray shading indicate the highlighted sound providing convenient access to all symbols.

Phonetic Readings for Lyric Diction accompanies this text to provide additional enunciation and English transcription exercises. *Phonetic Transcription for Lyric Diction* may be used alongside this text to provide a concise approach to teaching transcription rules for lyric diction.

Spoken and sung examples of each symbol are available on the listening page at www.stmpublishers.com.

The *IPA Handbook for Singers* serves as a complementary resource for Oxford's *Exploring Art Song Lyrics* by Jonathan Retzlaff with IPA transcriptions by Cheri Montgomery. EASL provides phonetic readings for over 750 Italian, German, and French art songs and includes new English translations. The reader is referred to the appendix of this publication for a discussion of my method of transcription and choice of phonetic symbols.

It is my hope that the format of this handbook gives singers easy access to the appropriate singing sounds for the lyric languages.

Cheri Montgomery

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CLOSED MIXED [ø]

ENGLISH	ITALIAN	GERMAN	FRENCH
		schön [ʃø:n]	feu [fø]

Enunciation. Release and lower the jaw. Find the space of *ah* without spreading the lips. Raise the soft palate and enunciate a closed front [e] with the rounded lip position of a closed back [o]. It is primarily the forward tongue arch of [e] that influences vowel quality. Lip rounding only affects the outer articulators. Prepare the lip rounding early.

Warning. Form the lip and tongue position simultaneously to avoid diphthongization of [ø]. Do not allow the lip rounding to weaken the front vowel tongue position of [e]. Maintain an unaltered vowel formation throughout vocalization.

GERMAN

An authentic German [ø:] has a hint of [ɜ] color in the sound (as in *bird*). The singer must carefully maintain the lip and tongue position of [ø:] while lightly applying the [ɜ] color. Never form [ø:] with a retroflex *r* tongue.

Exercise. Here is the process for finding the [ø:] of *schön*:

1. Form the tongue arch of [e:] in the [a] space
2. Pronounce [ʃe:n] using the tongue arch of [e:] in the [a] space
3. Form the lip rounding for [o:] early and pronounce [ʃø:n] using the tongue arch of [e:] in the [a] space
4. Pronounce [ʃø:n] with added [ɜ] color – the tongue tip should touch the lower row of front teeth

FRENCH

An authentic French [ø] has a hint of [ʊ] color in the sound (as in *look*). The singer must carefully maintain the lip and tongue position of [ø] while lightly applying the [ʊ] color. The point of resonance for [ø] is vertically centered just in front of the two upper front teeth.

Warning. Do not articulate a glottal stop before initial [ø]. Do not replace the French [ø] with a German [ø] pronunciation – the color and resonance of [ø] is unique for each language.

Exercise. Here is the process for finding the [ø] of *feu*:

1. Form the tongue arch of [e] in the [a] space
2. Pronounce [fe] using the tongue arch of [e] in the [a] space
3. Form the lip rounding for [o] early and pronounce [fø] using the tongue arch of [e] in the [a] space
4. Pronounce [fø] with added [ʊ] color – the tone is vertically centered in front of the upper front teeth.

VLS

[ɑ]

[a]

[æ]

[ã]

[e]

[ɛ]

[ɜ]

[ẽ]

[ə]

[i]

[ɪ]

[j]

[o]

[ɔ]

[ø]

[œ]

[õ]

[ö]

[ɤ]

[u]

[ʊ]

[ʌ]

[w]

[y]

[ɻ]

[ɥ]

[ʰ]

[ː]

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Terms

CONS

VOICED ALVEOLAR STOP [d]

[b]

[ç]

[d]

ENGLISH	ITALIAN	GERMAN	FRENCH
dance [dɑns]	donna [ˈdɔnna]	Dank [daŋk]	désir [dezir]

[dʒ] **Description.** Voiced [d] is classified as alveolar in English and German, but dental in Italian and French.

[f]

[g]

[h]

[k]

[l]

[m]

[n]

[ŋ]

[ŋ]

[p]

[r]

[ɹ]

[ɹ]

[s]

[ʃ]

[t]

[tʃ]

[v]

[ʌ]

[χ]

[ʌ]

[z]

[ʒ]

[θ]

[ð]

[ʔ]

Articulation. Raise the soft palate and release the jaw. Place the tongue tip against the alveolar ridge and exert a slight resistance between the articulators. Add vocalized tone as the tongue tip flips downward.

Exercise 1. *deed, damp, doubt* / Round lips for: *duty, daughter, dome*

Warning. Partial voicing of the [d] would result in a [t]. Alveolar [d] should be fully voiced and free of aspirated articulation.

Exercise 2. The following words are often enunciated with a partially aspirated [d]. Articulate the fully voiced [d] required for lyric diction: *debt, deliver, dance, determine, detriment, distant, double, drain, drama, drink, door, decided, dignity, divine, drape*

FINAL b, d and g

Description. Final *b, d, and g* are articulated with an added vowel sound (this is not permitted for any other consonant). Without the additional vowel sound, the *b, d, and g* would be silent.

Articulation. Assume tongue position for *d*. Upon drop of tongue, enunciate a light, short schwa [ə] on the same pitch as assigned to the final syllable of the word (Marshall, pp. 80-81).

Warning. Avoid a partially aspirated articulation. Do not omit final *d*.

Exercise 3. Fully voice final *d* in the following words: *bird, wind, shade*

ITALIAN AND FRENCH [d]

Description. Consonants *d, n, t, l, s, z* (memory aid: *dental*) are classified as dental in Italian and French.

Articulation. Raise the soft palate and release the jaw. Place the tongue tip lightly against the inside of the upper front teeth. A fully vocalized tone is required for consonants *d, n* and *l*. Exert a slight resistance between the articulators for voiced *d* and release the tone without aspiration.

Warning. Do not allow the tongue to thicken or movement to become sluggish. The articulation of dental consonants should be quick in order to “release and give impulse to the vowel that follows” (Colorni, p. 55).

Italian exercise. Contrast the following English/Italian words:

divine/divino [di'vino], *diamond/diamante* [dia'mante],

distant/distanza [dis'tantsa]

French exercise. Contrast the following English/French words:

delicate/délicat [delika], *decide/decider* [deside], *dance/danser* [dãse]

DIPHTHONGS AND TRIPHTHONGS

Description. Discrepancies in transcription are most widely found among the diphthongs in English and German. It is a matter of pronunciation. English transcriptions in this text follow rules outlined by Madeleine Marshall. German transcriptions follow the *Siebs* pronunciation dictionary (recommended by Dr. William Odom).

ENGLISH

A closed vowel transcription of the English diphthongs and triphthongs reflects American English. An open vowel transcription is recommended for lyric diction (Marshall, p. 167-181). The first vowel receives the duration of the note value while the following vowel is added at the final moment of phonation. The diphthongs and triphthongs in the two right columns are the result of a schwa replacement of *r*.

[aɪ] <i>like, night, eyes</i>	[ɪə] <i>cheer, dear, merely</i>	[aɪə] <i>fire, prior</i>
[ɛɪ] <i>day, made, fate</i>	[ɛə] <i>air, share, where</i>	[aʊə] <i>shower, power</i>
[aʊ] <i>sound, now, house</i>	[ʊə] <i>poor, sure, tour</i>	[jʊə] <i>pure, cure</i>
[oʊ] <i>hope, gold, know</i>	[ɔə] <i>more, pour, your</i>	
[ɔɪ] <i>boy, voice, joy</i>		

ITALIAN

Falling Diphthongs. [i:] *sia, vie, rii, mio, Lucia*
 [u:] *tua, due, cui, suo, colui*
 [a:] *fai, omai, aurora*
 [e:] or [ɛ:] *reo, sei, miei, avrei*
 [o:] or [ɔ:] *voi, poiché, tuoi*

Rising Diphthongs. [j] *grazia, pietra, bionda, fiume, più*
 [w] *quando, seque, guida, buono, può*

GERMAN

Vowel length is not indicated within the diphthong but it is important to note that the first vowel of the diphthong is syllabic. It receives the duration of the note value while the following vowel is added at the final moment of phonation.

[æ] *mein, Zeit, Mai*
 [aʊ] *Traum, Haus, Baum*
 [ɔø] *Freund, Heute, Bäume*

FRENCH

There are no falling diphthongs in French.

VLS

[ɑ]

[a]

[æ]

[ã]

[e]

[ɛ]

[ɜ]

[ẽ]

[ə]

[i]

[ɪ]

[j]

[o]

[ɔ]

[ø]

[œ]

[õ]

[õ̃]

[ɣ]

[u]

[ʊ]

[ʌ]

[w]

[y]

[Y]

[ɥ]

[ʰ]

[ː]

DIPH

Terms

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