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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

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Day 1

Practice Time:_____

Day 2

Practice Time:_____

Day 3

Practice Time:_____

Day 4

Practice Time:_____

Day 5

Practice Time:_____

Day 6

Practice Time:_____

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]	[nekst]	[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)

To Julia	[tu 'dʒulɪə]
1. The bracelet	[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 θrɛd 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 nɑt 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 rigid¹
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)

¹ Blades-Zeller, p. 78

Releasing Interfering Muscular Tension

[ðɛ:ʌf ə ɛ:ɪt 'ɛ:ʌfiʌz ʌv ðʌ 'bɑdi pi:ʊn tu ʌ 'nɛsɪsəri 'tɛnʃʌn]:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. [dʒɔ] | 5. [lips] |
| 2. [nɛk] | 6. [tʃiks] |
| 3. [tʌŋ] | 7. [a:ɪ bi:ʊz] |
| 4. ['ʃo:ʊldəz] | 8. ['ʌndləmz] |

['tɛnʃʌn ɪ'zʌlts ɪn 'mʌsəl ɪ'dʒɪdɪti ðæt kæn bi felt ænd sin]

['siŋəz mʌst ə:ɪ'dentɪfa:ɪ ænd ɪ'lis ,ɪntə'fr:ʌfiŋ 'mʌskjʊlə 'tɛnʃʌn]

['tɛnʃʌn ɪz ɪ'list θru 'mʊvmənt tʌtʃ ə dɪs'trækʃʌn]:

1. [ʌ 'mʌsəl ɪn 'mɔ:ʊʃʌn kæ'nat kiæmp tu ðʌ pɔ:ɪnt ʌv 'biŋ 'ɪdʒɪd]
2. [tʌtʃ ɪntə'ʌpts ðʌ nəv 'ɪmpʌlsez ðæt ɪ'zʌlt ɪn 'negatɪv 'tɛnʃʌn]
3. [ɪ'plɛ:ɪs 'negatɪv 'mʌsəl æk'tɪvɪti wɪð ən ʌ'pɔ:ʊziŋ 'mʊvmənt]

Muscle Awareness Exercise

['piæktɪs ðʌ jæg dʌl stɪtʃ 'ɛksʌsə:ɪz ɪn fɪʌnt ʌv ʌ 'mɪrə (pɛ:ɪdʒ 26)]

['ɪɛplɪke:ɪt ðʌ 'fɔləwe:ɪ'fɪlɪŋ ɪn ði ɛ:ɪt 'ɛ:ʌfiʌz 'ɪstɛd ʌ'bəv]

[ði ɛ:ɪt 'ɛ:ʌfiʌz əf ʌ 'pɛndædʒɛz ðæt hæŋ əf ən ʌ'la:ɪnd 'sentɪʊl kɔ:ʌ]

[ɪn'hʌns ðʌ fil ʌv ɪ'lis bɑ:ɪ ɪ'pɪtɪŋ ðʌ 'falo:ʊɪŋ 'kwɛ:ɪklə fɪɛ:ɪz]:

[pi:s æt ðʌ 'sentʌ]

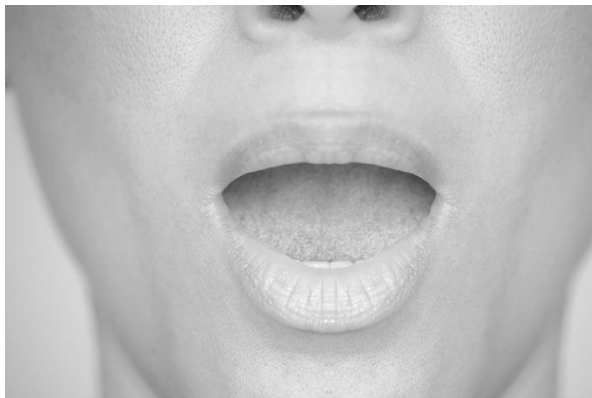
Formation of [i]

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 'æktʃʊʊli [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:ləv fɔ 'siŋiŋ mə:il in 'kwɑ: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 əɪ 'stæblɪft tu 'ju:ni'fa:ɪ ðə grʊp]

[ðə 'so:ʊloɪsts 'vɑ:ʊəlz əɪ 'stæblɪft tu 'bjutɪfa:ɪ 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:ʊlo:ʊ 'vɔ:ɪsez hæv ju'nik 'flŋkʃənz]

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

[ðə 'so:ʊlo:ʊ 'siŋəɪz 'so:ʊli ɪ'spənsɪbəl fɔ:]

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

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

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

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