The Singer’s Daily Practice Journal

Volume I: A graded introduction to vocal technique and diction

Cheri Montgomery

S.T.M. Publishers
Nashville, TN
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. A sample voice syllabus and gradebook are available on the instructor’s page at www.stmpublishers.com.

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 in this series 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.
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.

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Daily Notes and Practice Times

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* [laɪk] is transcribed with two symbols to represent the two sounds pronounced. Sometimes a vowel cluster makes one sound as in the word *tree* [tɹi]. 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 proceeded by a voiced consonant: *waves* [wɛːvz]. A final *d* is [t] when proceeded by a voiceless consonant: *looked* [lʊkt].

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

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<td>[a]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>d, t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>i, ie, ui, y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>e, ea, ie, ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>c, s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>sh, ch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>f, ph, gh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ŋ]</td>
<td>ng, nk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[θ]</td>
<td>th</td>
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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* ['fɔːontæn].
**English Front Vowels**

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<td>[i]</td>
<td>sea</td>
<td>[si]</td>
<td><em>e, ee, ea, ie, eo</em> spellings</td>
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<tr>
<td>[ɪ]</td>
<td>fit</td>
<td>[fit]</td>
<td><em>i, ie, ui, y</em> spellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>bells</td>
<td>[belz]</td>
<td><em>e, ea, ie, ai</em> spellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>scent</td>
<td>[sɛnt]</td>
<td><em>c + front vowel</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>clear</td>
<td>[kʰlɪə]</td>
<td><em>c + back vowel or consonant</em></td>
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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]
[pis]
[bɪlt]
[hɛns]

2. [sinz]
[nɛkst]
[ist]
[klɪk]

3. [hɪmz]
[sɪns]
[kwɛst]
[gɪs]

Answer Key:

1. [kiz]
twɛlv
[pɪkt]
[wips]

2. [fɛns]
[kɪst]
[spiks]
[kwɪk]

3. [mɪnst]
[pɪks]
[ɛlmz]
[nɪz]

4. [klɛnzd]
[fɪkst]
[kwɛnt]
[gest]

5. [lɪmz]
dwɛlz
[hɪz]
[zɪl]

6. [helpt]
gɪvz
[sɪst]
[dɛts]

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<td>1</td>
<td>else</td>
<td>peace</td>
<td>built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>scenes</td>
<td>next</td>
<td>east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>hymns</td>
<td>since</td>
<td>quest</td>
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geese
Correct vs Incorrect Postural Alignment

- **Low Energy Stance**
- **Sternum Pressed High**
- **Soldier’s Stance**
- **Jutting Chin**
- **Slumped Posture**
- **Aligned Posture**
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
Exploring Upright, Expansive Posture

There are seven attributes of good posture (see image on page 20):

1. The spine is elongated
2. The skull is balanced on the spine
3. The feet feel rooted
4. The body is balanced and aligned
5. The rib cage feels open and expanded
6. The stance is buoyant and elastic
7. The posture maintains a noble stance

The Rag Doll Stretch Exercise ~ Clifton Ware

Multiple concepts are incorporated in one simple assignment:

1. Bend at the waist and swing the arms
2. Notice the fall-away feeling in the shoulders
3. Stretch the arms upward toward the ceiling
4. Maintain the position of the sternum
5. Place a finger on the sternum then release and lower the arms
6. Replicate the fall-away feeling in the shoulders, neck, and jaw
Exploring Upright, Expansive Posture

[ðeɪər ə 'seven 'ætɪbjuts əv gʊd 'pæʃʊ (si 'ɪmædz æn ˈprɛɪdʒ 'twenti) ]:

1. [ðə spaː in ɪz ɪ'laŋɡeɪtɪd]
2. [ðə skɔl ɪz 'bælænst æn ðə spaː in]
3. [ðə fit fil 'ɪrʊtɪd]
4. [ðə 'bædi ɪz 'bælænst ænd ˈlaːɪnd]
5. [ðə riːb keɪdz filz 'oːpən ænd ɪk'spændɪd]
6. [ðə stæns ɪz 'bɔːrænt ænd ɪ'leɪstɪk]
7. [ðə 'pæʃʊ mɛː in'tɛɪn z æn 'noʊubəl stæns]

The Rag Doll Stretch Exercise ~ Clifton Ware

[ˈmæltɪpʊl 'kænsəpts ær mˈkɒərəːtɪd ɪn ˈwæn 'sɪmpəl æn 'saɪ:nment]:

1. [bɛnd æt ðə wɛːist ænd swiŋ ðɪ amz]
2. [ˈnoʊtɪs ðə 'fəlæwər'fɪliŋ ɪn ðə 'ʃoʊldəz]
3. [stɪə ɹɪ di amz 'ærpwɔd twɔd ðə 'sɪlɪŋ]
4. [mɛː in'tɛː n ðə poʊ'zɪʃən æn ðə 'stənæm]
5. [pleːs ə 'fɪŋər ɒn ðə 'stənæm ən 'lɪs ænd 'ləʊə ðɪ amz]
6. [ˈrɛplɪkət ðə 'fəlæwər'fɪliŋ ɪn ðə 'ʃoʊldəz nək ænd ɹəʊ]
The Tree Image

This exercise from a ballet class compares posture with tree growth:

1. Take off your shoes so that your feet can feel the floor
2. The feet are slightly apart with the dominant foot forward
3. Imagine your toes are roots growing into the ground
4. The sternum and head are branches growing toward the sun
5. Release your head from the spine as if it were a top branch
6. The crown of your head (ponytail) is the tallest limb

The Diver Image ~ William McIver

Mimic the buoyant stance of a diver at the edge of a diving board.¹

Find a balanced and energized pose that is ready for activity.

Warnings

Avoid a stiff stance and do not stand with the feet close together.

A slumped posture is not prepared for the demands of singing.

The chin should not jut forward nor be tucked in.

Do not raise the shoulders nor press the chest high.

See examples of incorrect posture on page 20.

The Tree Image

1. Speak af jo:'lujus so:u dat jo:'l fit ke:n fil da flo:'l
2. da fit a 'sla:itli 'pat wid da 'damminent fut 'fowod
3. i'mædzin jo:'l to:uz a truts gri:u:n 'intu da gri:und
4. da 'st3nam ænd hed a 'bræntez gri:u:n twod da san
5. ni'lis jo:'l hed fiam da spa:in æz if it wər a tap brænt
6. da kia:un av jo:'l hed ('pə:uniti:il) iz da 'tolest lim

The Diver Image ~ William McIver

1. mimik da 'ba:ænt stans av da:ivag æt di edʒ av da:ivin bod
2. fə:ind a 'bælanst ænd 'enadʒa:zd po:uz daet iz 'medi for æk'tiviti

Warnings

1. 'vo:id a stif stans ænd du nat stænd wid da fit klo:os tu'geda
2. slampt 'pasfɔr iz nat mai'pɛ:d fɔ da di'mandz av 'si:jn
3. da fi:n jod nat dʒat 'fowod no bi takt in
4. du nat re:iz da 'fo:uldaz no pies da ʃest hə:i
5. si ɡ'zampolz av inko'rekt pasfɔr an pe:idʒ 'twenti
Releasing Interfering Muscular Tension

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

1. Jaw  
2. Neck  
3. Tongue  
4. Shoulders  
5. Lips  
6. Cheeks  
7. Eye brows  
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\(^2\)
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 24).

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)

\(^2\) Blades-Zeller, p. 78
Week 3, Day 3

Releasing Interfering Muscular Tension

[ 'ðiːəɡ ə ɛːt 'eɪərɪəz əv ðə 'bædɪ pɪəʊn tu ə 'nesɪsɪt 'teɪʃən']:

1. [ dʒɔ ]
2. [ nɛk ]
3. [ tæŋ ]
4. [ 'ʃoʊuldæz ]
5. [ lɪps ]
6. [ ʃɪks ]
7. [ ə:ɪ bɪə:ʊz ]
8. [ 'ʌndəmæmz ]

[ 'teɪʃən ɪə'zɑlts in 'mæsəl ɪə'dzɪdɪtɪ dæt kæn bi felt ænd sin ]

[ 'sɪərəz mast ə:ɪ'dentɪfə:ɪ ænd ɪə'lis ,ɪntə'fɪərɪŋ 'maskjʊla 'teɪʃən ]

[ 'teɪʃən ɪz ɪə'list θɪəu 'muvment tæf ə dis'trektʃən ]:

1. [ ə 'mæsəl in 'moʊʃən kæ'nat kæmp tu ə ɹə ɪnt əv 'bɪiŋ 'rɪdʒɪd]
2. [ tæf ɪntə'ræpts ə ɜəv 'ɪmpəlsəz dæt ɪə'zɔlt ɪn 'nεɡətɪv 'teɪʃən]
3. [ ɪə'ple:ɪs 'nεɡətɪv 'mæsəl æk'tɪvɪtɪ wɪd æn ə 'pəuzɪŋ 'muvment ]

Muscle Awareness Exercise

[ 'præktɪs ə ɹæg dæl stɪf ᵉ'ksæsə:ɪz ɪn fɪənt əv ə 'mɪc (pɛ:ɪdʒ 24) ]

[ 'rɛplɪkət ə ɹælweɪz'fɪliŋ ɪn ət ɛ:ɪt 'eɪərɪəz 'lɪsted ə'bæv ]

[ ət ɛ:ɪt 'eɪərɪəz əf ə 'pɛndədzɛz dæt hæŋ əf æn ə'la:ɪnd 'sɛntɪʊl kə:ə ]

[ in'hæns ə ɹɪə fil əv ɪə'lis bæ:ɪ ɪə'pɪtɪŋ ət ʃɑləʊɪŋ 'kweɪkə fɪə:ɪz ]:

[ pis æt ə ɹɛntə ]
Diction Diagnostic

Observe the contact between the articulators to monitor tension:

1. Form [b] with tightly pressed lips
2. Touch the sides of the throat beneath the chin
3. Feel how the neck muscles tighten in response
4. Sustain a [m] with the lips barely touching
5. The lips tingle when light contact is achieved (see page 36)

Light contact energizes the diction and enhances flexibility.

There is “tension” required for singing, but that tension should be as low in the body and as far away from the area of the throat, jaw, and tongue as possible. Lindsey Christiansen

Tension at the tongue base is released with tongue arch exercises:

\[
\text{Maintain the space of [a] throughout the exercise. See page 92 for a description of central [a].}
\]

Alternate between bilabials and dentals to release the lip and tongue:

\[
\text{[ la be da me ni po tu la be ] ~ Barbara Honn}
\]

Let the articulators articulate and not support. One of the major problems for both diction and fine singing is that the articulators often try to be the supporters. Lindsey Christiansen
Diction Diagnostic

[ ab'zv də 'kantækt bi'twin ði a'tikjule:itəz tu 'manita 'teʃən ]:

1. [ fəm [b] wɪd 'ta:tiθi pɪest lɪps ]

2. [ ˈtæʃ də sɑːidz ən də ˈθrəʊt bi'niθ də ʃɪn ]

3. [ fɪl hæ:ʊ də nek 'mæsəlz 'tɑːiten in ni'spɪns ]

4. [ ˈsteɪn ə [m] wɪd də lɪps 'bɛlɪ 'tæʃən ]

5. [ də lɪps 'tɪŋgəl ˌmɛn lɑ:it 'kantækt iz ə'ʃɪvd (si pɛ:idʒ 36) ]

[ lɑ:it 'kantækt 'enədʒə:ɪsez də 'dɪkʃən ænd in 'hansez fleksi'bɪlɪtɪ ]

There is “tension” required for singing, but that tension should be as low in the body and as far away from the area of the throat, jaw, and tongue as possible. Lindsey Christiansen

[ 'teʃən æt də tæŋ bɛːis ɪz ɪ:li'sɪst wɪd tæŋ əʃ 'eksəsa:ɪsez ]:

Maintain the space of [a] throughout the exercise. See page 92 for a description of central [a].

[ ˈɔltə:ɪt bi'twin bɑːl'ɛbiəlz ænd 'dentolz tu ri'lis də lɪp ænd tən ]:

[ la be da me ni po tu la be ] ~ Barbara Honn

Let the articulators articulate and not support. One of the major problems for both diction and fine singing is that the articulators often try to be the supporters. Lindsey Christiansen
Low Expansion for the Breath

The breath expansion for singing is lower than that of speech.

The singer’s expansion occurs below the waist and around the body.

It may feel awkward but not strenuous to expand the lower abdomen.

Experiencing a Low Expansion for the Breath

1. Sit with elbows on the knees and chin in the palms
2. Inhale and feel expansion in the lower back region
3. Lay with your upper back and shoulders flat on the floor
4. Place a book on your stomach below the belly button
5. Inhale and observe the expansion in the lower abdomen
6. Stand and replicate the posture of number three above
7. Inhale a [w] on seven counts with expansion below the waist
8. Form a [s] without pressing the articulators
9. Expel all the air articulating the [s] on seven counts
10. Maintain a consistent flow of aspirated sound

Additional Goals

Inhale a suitable amount of air to meet the demands of the phrase.

The diaphragm moves while the ribs and sternum stay calm and released.
Low Expansion for the Breath

[ðə hriθ ìk'spænjən fə 'sɪnj iz 'ləuə dæn dæt əv spiʧ]

[ðə 'sɪnjəz ìk'spænjən ə'kəz bi'loʊ ə wɪəst ənd ə'ræʊnd ə ʰbaði]

[it miː fi ʰkwəd bæt nɔt 'stɪənjuəs tu ìk'spænd ə ʰloʊə 'æbdəmən]

Experiencing a Low Expansion for the Breath

1. [sɪt wɪð 'ɛlboʊz ən ðə niz ənd fɪn m ə pæmz]
2. [ɪn'həːl ænd fɪl ìk'spænjən ɪn ðə 'loʊə bæk 'aɪdʒən]
3. [læːi wɪð jəː 'apa bæk ənd 'jʊəldəz flæt ən ðə fləː]
4. [plɛːs ə bʊk ən jəː 'stamək bi'loʊ ə ʰbɛl ʰbatən]
5. [ɪn'həːl ən bə'zəv əi ìk'spænjən ɪn ðə 'loʊə 'æbdəmən]
6. [steænd ənd ɪəplɪkət ə ʰpæʃfɔr əv 'næmbə ðri ə'bæv]
7. [ɪn'həːl ə [w] ən 'sɛvən kæːunts wɪd ìk'spænjən bi'loʊ ə wɪəst]
8. [fɒm ə [s] wɪð'əʊt 'piɛsiŋ əi ə'tɪkjʊlətəz]
9. [ɪk'spɛl əl əi eːlə ə'tɪkjʊlətɪŋ ə ə 'tɪkjʊlətəz]
10. [mɛːn'teːn ə kæn'sɪstənt fləː əv 'æspɪrətɪd səʊnd]

Additional Goals

[ɪn'həːl ə ʰ'sjuːtəbʊl ə'mɑːnt əv ɛə tu mɪt ðə dɪ'mændz əv ðə fɪəz]

['ðə ʰdaːrʃfæm mʊvz ə:d ðə 'stɛnəm stɛː kæm ænd əl'list]
Efficient Use of the Air

The breath for singing should be a response to the musical phrase one is about to sing – the thought of the phrase should inspire the breath.  
Cynthia Hoffmann

Efficient use of the air is just as important as the inhalation.

Breathe in the shape of the vowel.

Do not hold the air in; neither force it out.

Allow the breath to flow out in a fine stream of air.

Imagine releasing the breath through a straw.

A candle was used in the bel canto period to monitor air flow.

The singer was asked to sing near the flame.

The tone was considered “pressed” if the flame flickered.

Warnings

Note: A planned inhalation allows the singer to release all the air.

Do not raise the sternum or shoulders upon inhalation.

A loud breath indicates restriction within the air passage.

Packing up an excessive amount of air causes tension.

Do not allow the ribs to collapse.

Slumped posture does not accommodate a low expansion for the breath.
Efficient Use of the Air

The breath for singing should be a response to the musical phrase one is about to sing – the thought of the phrase should inspire the breath.

Cynthia Hoffmann

Warnings

Note:
Bibliography


Bibliography


