

THE SINGING PEDAGOGUE (part II) A parallel between vocal therapy exercises and vocalization

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Abstract: *As a vocal pedagogue, I am trying to create a school to promote a safe pedagogy, to prevent the damage of the voice. Moreover, if the voice is damaged, I try to cure it through non-medical methods, together with the vocal therapist and the phoniatician.*

Keywords: *Vocal therapy exercises, vocal exercises, vocalization.*

1. Introduction

First, if the voice is already damaged, we, the team formed with a phoniatician, recommend to determine the vocal range of the dysphonic voice, comparing it to the medium of the speaking voice (by the way, Dr. Bogdan is the first phoniatician in Romania; he developed an original method to recover the speaking voice. I have taken over and researched, building a method to recover the singing voice, based on Dr. Bogdan's exercises. I have included these exercises in my everyday singing lessons). Usually, for a healthy voice, the “medium tone” is a note between C¹ (the central C is C¹) and F¹. For a dysphonic voice, this medium tone is lower or higher than normal, so we will try to higher it up or lower it down, according to the phoniatic evaluation.

If the voice is healthy, I recommend to start the vocalization with the “medium tone” of speaking, meaning C¹ for mezzo-sopranos or altos, and D¹ for sopranos. For masculine voices, B for baritones and basses, and E flat for tenors.

2. Exercises for Resonance

The goal:

- To lift the vocal sound into the superior resonance system, especially into the nasal cavity, by the activation of the soft palate. One gets then a “nasal resonance” or a “honky” muffled sound [34].

Means of doing:

- The student will stand up and inhale slowly, keeping in mind the correct posture and breathing technique. The exhalation will be only through the nose, trying to phonate using the “[h]m” consonants with the mouth opened;
- The larynx will be comfortably low, the pharynx is large, the tongue is relaxed and lifted posteriorly, the velum is relaxed and the mouth large opened;
- The placement of the sound should be localized in the anterior facial bones;
- The emotional atmosphere should be relaxed, the student should picture a perfect day, exclaiming in mind: “hm-hm-hm-hm, what a wonderful day!”

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- The glottal attack will be aspirate, firm, light, with the “*imaginary h*” (meaning a rate of air flowing through the nose, before the sound is heard);

- The student sings the sound “[*h*]m”, shortly, repeating it 5-10 times, on different notes, from semitone to semitone, focusing on the forward placement of the nasal sound and the abdominal “*appoggio*”. Then s/he will sing a sustained tone;

Not to forget:

- The glottal attack should be clear, firm, light, with the “*imaginary [h]*”, and the forward placement of the sound resonance into the anterior facial bones and the feeling of the abdominal “*appoggio*”.

This is somehow similar to the “*yawn-sigh*” technique used in vocal therapy. The various ways to use the “*yawn-sigh*” in a regular vocalization for resonance may be summarized in the following notations:

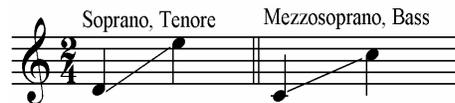


Fig. 1. *Range for all exercises*

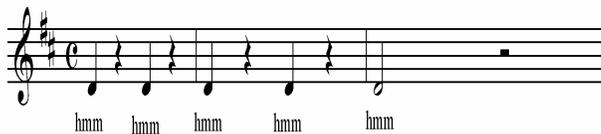


Fig. 2. *A vocalization for resonance*

These exercises can be continued as followed:

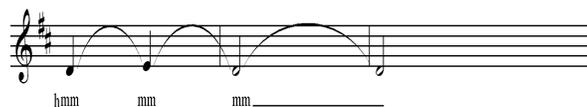


Fig. 3. *A vocalization for resonance in major second*

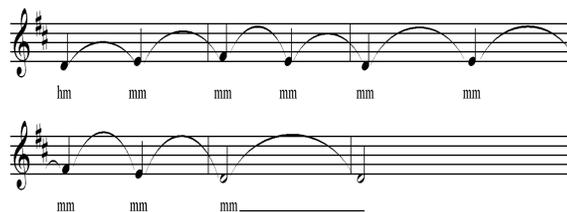


Fig. 4. *A vocalization for resonance in major third*



Fig. 5. A vocalization for resonance in perfect fifth

3. Exercises which Combine the Consonant *m* with the Vowels *a, e, i, o, u*:

The goal:

To obtain the relaxation of the pharyngeal muscles, the “*open the throat*”-movement for the vocal expression of the vowels *a, e, i, o, u*, without any effort, means to display a larger pharyngeal resonance cavity. It is known that the nasal consonants and the plosives can discipline

the soft palate, since arching the velum is necessary for the implosion phase.

Means of doing:

This exercise is like taking inventory of one’s voice.

The pharynx should be enlarged, to acquire freedom of phonation, pronouncing [*h*]m (an *imaginary h*, for the light glottal attack) about 3-4 seconds, then lightly pronouncing the vowels *a, e, i, o, u*.

- [h] M – MM – MA – MM;
- [h] M – MM – ME – MM;
- [h] M – MM – MI – MM;
- [h] M – MM – MO – MM;
- [h] M – MM – MU – MM;
- [h] M – MM – MA – MM – ME – MM – MI – MM – MO – MM – MU – MU – MM.

The jaw will be moderately low, being a guarantee for a low larynx, trying the “*yawn-sigh*” sensation, by picturing the “*interior smile*”. This avoids the muscular tension which can appear in the tongue, pharynx and larynx;

- The subject must be sure to get a deep breath before the attack of the tone, to sustain the phonation;
- The articulation of each vowel will be soft and clear, avoiding the hard glottal attack, having in mind a good breath control, a forward and high placement of the vowels, as nearly as possible in the same place as the consonant *m*, the so-called “*mask*” resonance;

This exercise can be repeated 5-6 times, each time in a much higher key, and can be transposed upward and downward, from

semitone to semitone, depending on the range of the individual subject.

Not to forget:

- The vocal sound should have both “*pointed and round*” qualities;
- The glottal attack should be firm and light in the same time, using the “*imaginary [h]*”;
- The abdominal support and the resonance placement of the vowels as well as for the consonant [*m*] should be as near as possible.

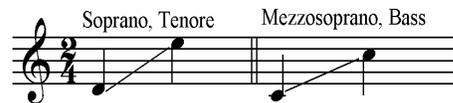


Fig. 6. Range for all exercises



Fig. 7. A vocalization for the relaxation of the pharyngeal muscles

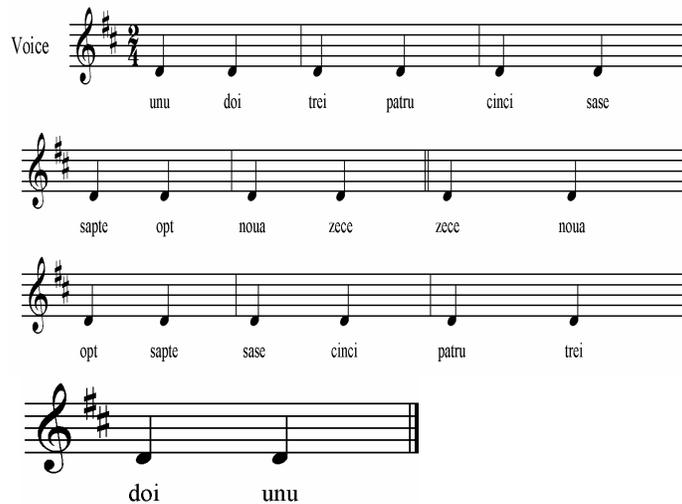


Fig. 8. An enumeration exercise, using legato and the intonation of only one sound, counting from one to ten

This exercise continues from semitone to semitone within the recommended range.

This exercise will also continue from semitone to semitone within the recommended range.

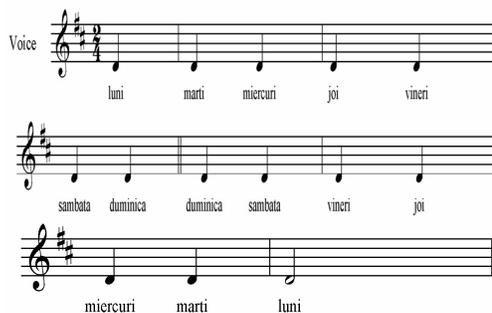


Fig. 9. An enumeration exercise of the days of the weeks, from Monday to Sunday, using legato and the intonation of only one sound

All these exercises present the physical part of the “work itself”. I believe that beyond the exercises, the individual work with a subject means to focus also one's particular attention on the education of the student's mind, the student's soul and the student's body. Paraphrasing Novalis (who was the pseudonym of Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (May 2, 1772 - March 25, 1801, an author and philosopher of early German Romanticism), [35], the fusion of all the above mentioned aspects creates the “magic of the pedagogical art”, which consists in “using arbitrarily the world of the sensibilities”.

Thus, if we, the singing teachers, the vocal coaches, the vocal therapists or, the vocal retrievals, named by me *singing pedagogues*, use a proper vocal technique, based on or related to the phoniatic exercises, we will not only succeed on the vocal field, keeping the voice healthy, but also train the singers' minds, preventing the illness of the voice, and offering an alternative for a healthy and long-living voice.

In the first and second part of this study, I firmly recommend not to respect the dictum: “*just relax and sing naturally*”, because that can induce the laziness of the whole mechanism which produces the singing voice.

My opinion is that this is a matter of muscular independence which is necessary for any delicate skill. The extrinsic laryngeal musculature, the neck muscles have to be consciously controlled and the intrinsic musculature, which is largely unconscious, must be activated. Only then, we can have the *sensation of the “resonance”* or *the sensation of the forward placement of the sound*. This means the perfect coordination between diaphragmatic action and the vocal cord activity during the process of emission of the singing voice.

We, *the singing pedagogues*, will always be concerned with freedom and natural voice production, acquired through years of assiduous and conscious professor-student work. The real development of vocal technic comes not only with a stronger and louder voice, but with the addition of freedom, agility, brilliance and beauty to the voice. We will also succeed to acquire a healthier, professional voice, both in speaking and in singing.

Singing is one of the most competitive professions. In my point of view, the knowledge of the mechanism which produces the voice, the correct body posture, the breathing technique, the phonation, the vocalization, and the

training of the speaking voice are the foundation of an objective singing pedagogy and mastery of the vocal technic, both of the singing and speaking voice, it is the sovereignty of a singing pedagogue.

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