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Singing in Parts: A Hierarchy for Success

I. VOICING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR

ASK THEM QUESTIONS THEY CAN ANSWER (Respect Ranges)

Cooper placement adaptation for boys and girls: (jingle bells)

LOW: Isolate low octave, D major (accurate pitch)

HIGH: Isolate “unchanged”, G major (accurate pitch)

MIDDLE: Isolate accurate middle range singers, A major

OTHERS: Isolate best pitches for non-accurate pitch matchers (small groups)

GIRLS: Two equal groups of voices (to avoid specialists in belting and chest voice)

YOU ARE NOW READY TO REHEARSE YOUR STUDENTS ON
VOCALLY APPROPRIATE LITERATURE: SATB, HML (boys), or SSA

II. BUILDING INDEPENDENCE (while still matching pitch!)

1. Sing a melody (middle school mixed choirs: find phrases that fit each section, adapt treble music, sing as SATB)
2. Add an ostinato (rhythmic, melodic)
3. Use partner songs
4. Add a descant
5. Sing chord roots
6. Add vocal chording, as possible (sample I IV V, below)

MM// FF// MM// RR//

SS// LL// SS// SS//

DD// DD// DD// TT//

7. Sing phrases or sections of a round

8. Sing rounds and canons
9. Sing "Transition" pieces (elements from above appear in score)
Ostinato, Descant, Partner Song, Canonic entrances, Call/Response, etc.
10. Sing Part Songs---2-4 voices (time share, if boys on SAB parts)

Sample Unison Song for Pitch Matching: PHRASE METHOD

I WANNA GO HOME

G7
G7
G7
G7

I WAN-NA GO HOME I WAN-NA GO HOME I WAN-NA LEAVE THIS SCHOOL MY PEN-CIL PAP-ER AND BOOKS I'M

C7
C7
G7
G7

5 TIRE D OF IT ALL I'M TIRE D OF IT ALL I'M TIRE D OF STU-DYIN' REC I-TA-TION QUEST-ION ING LOOKS I

D7
C7
G7
G7

9 WANT MY I -POD... I WANT MY T. V. I WANT TO GET A-WAY TO GET A - WAY FROM IT ALL!

Resources

- Abrahams & Head. *Teaching Music through Performance in Middle School Choir*. GIA
- Choksy, Lois. *The Kodaly Context*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1981.
- Herrington, Judith and Clayton Miller. *Lame Brain Games*. Hal Leonard, 08301578
- Holt & Jordan. *The School Choral Program*. Chicago: GIA
- Kemp, Helen. *Where in the world*. Augsburg Press, ISBN 0-8006-4800-5.
- Nash, Grace. *Echo chain singing games*. distributor: Swartwout Prod., Sedona, AZ
- Schmid, Will (1998). *World Music Drumming*. Hal Leonard. 09970094

Rules for Transfer

- **The Rule of the Steady Beat.**
- **The Rule of Consonant Releases.**
- **The Rule of Diphthongs.**
- **The Rule of Punctuation.**
- **The Rule of the Slur (and other articulations).**
- **The Rule of Word Stress.**

Each example serves to demonstrate a general concept, but every composition programmed also may have specific performance needs that could become a rule for only that selection. Other rules a teacher might opt to use include:

- the Rule of Dissonance (crescendo and resolve);
- the Rule of Dynamic Contrast (for some music, this is the key variable for expressive performance);
- the Rule of Voicing (bring out important motifs from the choral texture); and
- the Rule of Repetition (dynamic scheme for a text or music sequence).

Young singers may not know every important aspect about the music they are performing, but given information by the teacher, it is very possible for them to make decisions, be held accountable (assessment), and sing beautifully.