

Building Blocks for a Successful Voice Performing Chorister's Elements

Dr. Engebretson, 9/8/14

Breath –

- Silent, even breath (circle of breath – don't stop it)
- Diaphragmatic breathing, plus intercostal and back breathing
- Inhalation is filling a vacuum – exhalation is feeding it forward
- Breathe through the vowel that you wish to sing, with open mouth and nose
- Manage your breath – use less air on descent, more upon ascent

Physical –

- Posture and Alignment with Relaxation = Healthy Singing
- Core Strength and Engagement
- Singing with Energized Sound

Tone –

- Resonance and Focus in tone, Italian bel canto
- Freedom, space, height in vowels (“Ah’s” with raised palate, forward “yawn”)
- Ability to modify tone and color according to the text, language, style
- Vowel modification throughout the register
- Mixing of Vocal Registers, bring the top down throughout the range
- Don't over-sing – be a “member of a chorus” to enhance blend & balance

Diction –

- Know the text! Communicate ideas, not syllables
- Clear, concise, and uniform vowels, appropriate to the performance language
- Diphthongs and other vowel glides
- Rhythmic and melodic placement of consonants and vowels
- Articulate words beginning with vowels to make it / all clear
- Naturalness in words and understanding, accents, stress and repose

Pulse –

- The Alpha-Omega of singing, or life, for that matter
- Rhythmic undercurrent of each note, phrase, section, entire work
- Organization of pulse into rhythmic units, shaped according to period style

Musicality –

- Be the music! Sing with clear understanding of your text and musical line
- Sing the shape of the line in dialogue with others
- Hierarchy of the notes and text – all notes are not performed equally

Form –

- Overall shape of the piece, macro and micro –
- Forms of traditional pieces, Masses, Requiems, Oratorios and their texts

Synthesis –

Put all of the parts together in the context of the composer's life, style, influential teachers/colleagues, and society. Also perform according to the context of the form within the period and stylistic norms of performance practice.

And above all, enjoy making music and appreciate that you are the composer's voice. Practice singing with an attractive smile! It is up to you to bring the score off of the page and into the ear and heart of the listener. Singing is a great gift and an honor.