

Balance and Blend

And

Rehearsal Techniques

Dale Kynaston - 2010

Balance and Blend

Matching Voices / Balancing Chords

➤ There are two key issues with quartets other than knowing the notes and words, singing in tune and from the heart.

The answer - Balance and Blend.

Balance and Blend

Matching Voices / Balancing Chords

- Some quartets are lucky to have an immediate blend of voices sharing the same vocal qualities but this is rare.
- You may be lucky to have a good Lead and Bass match or Baritone and Bass but not always everyone.
- You may have moments when things seem to match well and other times when they do not.

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Balance and Blend

Matching Voices / Balancing Chords

- Other than the natural blend there are other issues which may enhance or detract from the blend of the quartet.
- Vowel production / modification
- Active listening

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Balance and Blend

Matching Voices / Balancing Chords

- Good Quartets spend a lot of time understanding chords and who sings what part of the chord so that they can get the best out of them.
- Understanding the required balance in chors is essential
- Also understanding fine tuning of chords is important

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Balance and Blend

Matching Voices

- Methods to match voices:
 - Understanding Good Vocal Production – What's Available
 - Individual Coaching
 - Unison Singing
 - Duets
 - Four in a Line

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Balance and Blend

Matching Voices

➤ Methods to match voices:

Understanding What's Available –

Exercise – Languages

Exercise (Holy Moley / nya nya)

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Balance and Blend

Matching Voices

➤ Methods to match voices:

Understanding What's Available –

Individual coaching to use resonators

Volunteer!

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Balance and Blend

Matching Voices

- Methods to match voices: More Volunteers!

Unison Singing

Duets

Four in a Line

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Balance and Blend

Balancing the Sound

- Methods to balance the sound:
- Understand the Barbershop Cone of Sound
- Each voice part to understand their role
- Understand the music and chords
- Mark Your Music with your significant notes in chords
- Try a different line up

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Breath Management

The Fuel to the Larynx

- Good breathing technique and breath support is one of the defining qualities of professional singers versus amateurs.
- A Capella singing requires excellence in breath control as we have no instruments to fill the gaps.
- There are many approaches to teaching in this area from physiological to analogical
- Rehearsing breathing technique is as important as rehearsing performance or vocal techniques

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Breath Management

Or

The Fuel Behind the Sound

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Breath Management

Posture

Singing is a whole body exercise!

Good posture is more important than you think.

Good singing posture has an immediate effect on the sound we produce – a comfortable stance enables you to support the vocal instrument in the right position to allow maximum resonance.

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Breath Management

Posture

Feet slightly apart, knees relaxed (not locked), shoulders relaxed but back (do the shoulder lift see where they go naturally when you release them).

Stand with a singer's posture – Stand tall, imagine you are puppet with a string coming out the top of your head from the crown of your hair - see how the tube gets longer!

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Posture Do's and Don'ts

- Do.....
 - Be relaxed and natural but stand tall and proud
 - Keep your movements fluid
 - Keep your chin level
 - Keep your knees loose
 - Keep your shoulders sloping and relaxed
 - Keep your toes pointed forward with your weight on soles
 - Keep the front of your neck loose - don't stretch it
 - Keep your back muscles relaxed
 - Smile!
- Don't.....
 - Drop or hunch your shoulders
 - Move stiffly or jerkily
 - Drop or tuck in your chin when trying to sing low notes
 - Stretch your head upward when trying to sing high notes
 - Lock your knees

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Breath Management

•Breathing in: the elastic recoil

Singing requires the active use of the muscles involved in expiration – muscles in the back; the abdominal wall and the chest. This exercise will help you to explore what breathing for singing is all about!

The idea is just to allow the breath to 'drop in'!

Put one hand over the abdomen

Breathe out sharply on pshhh – use the hand to send the abdomen right back towards the back bone (Don't breathe in first!)

•Concentrate on active exhalation
Don't worry about using up all the air.

Notice that if you wait and allow your abdominal wall to relax the end of the sound, the abdomen will bounce outwards and you will have breathed in.

Think about the baby sleeping

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Breath Management

Air Flow: Working with the muscles of the abdominal wall

Put your hands around your waist – just below your rib cage. Now cough. You will feel the muscles at either side of your waist band push out.

Now vvvvv/hey hey – remember to keep the sensation of sending the abdomen inwards like in the first exercise.

Rrrr, K, FF, P, T

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Breath Management

Here's a few ideas

It's some times easier to achieve your goal through use of analogies, so here are a few:

Think about the air being heavy and travelling across your tongue then dropping at the back of your throat

Or think about a hole in the centre of your lower back and when you breath in you suck the air in through the hole

Or think about having a belt which is full of noses

When releasing the air think about a drainpipe running from your tummy up to your moth with a constant column of air

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Breath Management

Exercises

If possible, sit on a chair or lie on the floor.

Focus on filling up your stomach from the bottom to the top taking a slow deep breath. (The aim is not to fill yourself to bursting but to inhale enough air so that you can feel the difference between a shallow breath taken when breathing from the chest).

You should feel your stomach rise and your hands being raised gently up and outward until you feel your chest expanding. The expansion is not only at the front of the body but also to the sides and back as well.

Now breathe in for 5 and out for 10 (on an fffffff), then in for 4 and out for 10, in for 3 out for 10, in for 2 out for 10 in for 1 out for 10, finally in for 1 out for 15 and 20. Copyright Dale Kynaston 2008

Breath Management

Exercises Cont....

Practice daily before you rise in the morning and prior to sleeping at night for 5 - 10 minutes gradually increasing this to 3 or 4 times a day.

Once you get it right, practice as often as possible, sitting, standing and whilst at work until you are breathing naturally from your abdomen.

Everyone walks at least 20 paces in a day so try the following:

For the first 10 paces breathe in correctly then breathe out to 10 paces
Then breathe in for 5 and out for 15, then in for 2 and out for 18
Finally in for 1 and out for 19 – as you breathe out produce and fffffff

Scale in thirds

Individual Coaching

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Vocal Production

Or

Resonance and Freedom

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Vocal Production

How do I make the notes cont.....?

To make a voice you need three things

Power, sound source generated by breath from the lungs. Good singing requires good airflow. Without breath you cannot get vibrations. It also relies on good support – airflow, breath management and using the muscles of the body to assist the work of the larynx.

Sound source - creating the tone made in the larynx. The larynx is at the top of the wind pipe and is where we find the vocal folds. This is where the sound is actually made. The two vocal folds produce vibrations when they close against the breath. They open and close together many times per second according to the note we are singing. If we sing a middle C the vocal folds are closing and opening 262 times per second! As we breathe out a stream of air hits the closed vocal folds and is chopped up into smaller puffs of air – as the vocal folds open and close.

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Vocal Production

How do I make the notes?

To make a voice you need three things

Power, Sound Source and

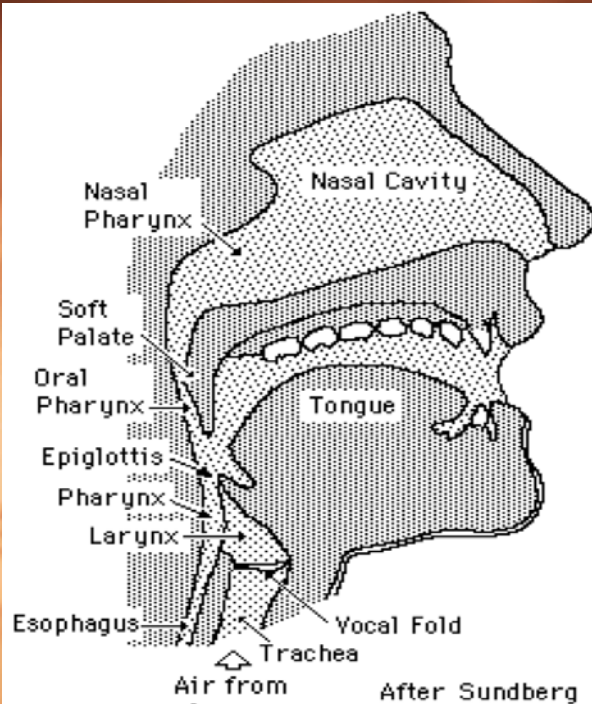
Filter – The vocal tract that shapes and amplifies the sound. The sound is modified by the resonating qualities of the tube. Depending on how you shape your resonators, you can change the quality of the sound produced.

There is space above the larynx – the laryngo-pharynx

Space in the mouth – the oro-pharynx

Space in the nose – naso-pharynx

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Note:
The dangerous
Tongue!

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Vocal Production

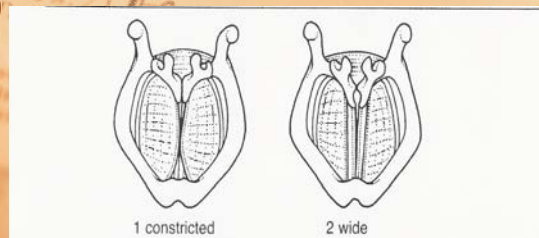
Locating the vocal folds

To be able to feel where the sound begins in the larynx

Uh oh - clap hands on each sound – feel a glottal stop

Go to make the sound again but stop. Notice you are stopping the breath. Can you feel the stop? Where is it? In the larynx! You are holding the breath behind the vocal folds.

Now release the stop. What do you notice? You will probably hear a little pop. This is the sound of the glottis, the space between the two vocal folds opening and letting the air out.



Constriction occurs at difficult bits in the song:
high low notes
fast notes
at the end of the breath
loud or long notes
in performance – when we are nervous

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Resonance - what is it?

It's when...

♪ tone is produced freely and easily and has fullness, richness and carrying power

♪ all of the cavities in the head resonate

♪ a voice possesses brilliance

♪ we create overtones

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Vocal Production

Resonance - what is it?

Filter – The vocal tract that shapes and amplifies the sound. The sound is modified by the resonating qualities of the tube. Depending on how you shape your resonators, you can change the quality of the sound produced. The principle resonating cavities that contribute to the sound are:

Space above the larynx – the laryngo-pharynx
Space in the mouth – the oro-pharynx
Space in the nose – naso-pharynx

The Soft Palate

A key ingredient in establishing a good resonant tone is being in touch with what is happening to the soft palate. The soft palate is a complex group of muscles. It can be tensed, raised, depressed or relaxed.

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Vocal Production

Locating the Soft Palate – this is really important because it can filter the sound, sending it out through the nose or through the mouth or both together. It plays an important role in the quality of resonance. It is like a doorway between the nose and the mouth

1. Breathe in and out through the nose
2. Sing 'sing' hold the ng. What do you feel? Where is the tongue?
Touching something at the back of the mouth...that's the soft palate.
3. Whilst the singing the ng sound, pinch the nose. What happens? The sound has stopped! This is a sign that you have opened the nasal port.
4. Now sing 'sing' hold the ng... after pinching your nose sing 'geee'.

What happens this time? The pressure inside the nose releases and the sound comes out of your mouth. This is a sign that you have closed the nasal port

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Locating the Soft Palate Cont.....

The idea is to create space in the mouth. Think about the sound lifting up and over the roof of the mouth and hitting the front teeth! Don't worry about getting the sound out. If you create the right sound inside the mouth it will get out all by itself!

All the sound that you make must be tall, upright and vertical. Do the 'stretch a rubber band from horizontal to vertical' exercise

Keep the jaw and tongue relaxed. Don't open the jaw too wide. Try the 'blah blah' exercise moving up and down the scale

Exercise "My Bonnie... Lies Over the Ocean"

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Vocal Production

• Exercise – Hum and Place

- Silently laugh to remove constriction and retract the false folds. Inner smile.
- Maintain an open throat and utilize vocal resonators with the vowels, "oo," "oh," "ah," "eh," "ee."
- Gently massage your cheeks and jaw to release any tension that may be present. Relax the jaw downward with ease.
- Say "aw" as you open and relax your jaw.
- Lightly touch your lips together: Lips together, teeth apart.
- As you sing place your index fingers on cheeks and either side of the nose to feel the vibrations produced while humming.
- Increase the sensation of vibration in the cheeks and nasal passages.
- Next, open to an "oo" vowel maintaining free resonant sound.

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Vocal Production

- **Exercise – Find the Resonators**
- Holy Moley – yawn – hot air
- Nya Nya Nya Nya Nya
- My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean – Using hand to indicate where the sound is being placed
- Lip trills to the same song – incorporate good breathing
- Individual coaching

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Performance

Or

Getting it Over the Footlights

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Performance / Presentation

- In your groups discuss what you think the term means.

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Presentation

Definition (dictionary):

1. an act of presenting.
2. the state of being presented.
3. a social introduction, as of a person at court.
4. an exhibition or performance, as of a play or film.
5. offering, delivering, or bestowal, as of a gift.
6. a gift.
7. a demonstration, lecture, or welcoming speech.
8. a manner or style of speaking, instructing, or putting oneself forward: ***His presentation was very poor.***

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Presentation

Presentation is a giving, a bringing forth, a sharing, including the thrill of transforming a printed song into an emotional experience and sharing it with an audience.

Words, notes and other symbols on the printed page are the composers and latterly the arrangers gift to the performer.

The presentation of the song is the performers gift to the audience. Here the performer has the freedom to explore individual style as part of a unified performing group.

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Song Analysis

- How to recognise the strengths of the song
- Rhythm
- Melody
- Lyric
- Comedy
- Harmony

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A close-up photograph of a musical score with a pencil resting on it. The score is slightly out of focus, but the text 'A. Sax.' and 'Cors. / 1' is visible. The background is a warm, golden-brown color.

When the Lyric is the Strong Point

Lyric-driven Delivery

Assumptions -

- You know your notes and words - 110%
- You sing the notes with good vocal quality
- You sing the notes as in-tune as you can
- There is consistent “ring” in your voice
- Synchronization is *perfect* (or very close)
- You won't settle for “that's good enough”

Song

- Defined by Merriam-Webster as a “poetic composition”, or “poem easily set to music”
- So...delivering a song can become like delivering poetry

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Effective Delivery

- Word Emphasis/Inflection
- Expression (visual)
- Gesture
- Eye Contact

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Practice without music

Read this phrase:

I had a cat

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Practice without music

Read this poem:

My baby sister's
really swell.
I love her smile,
but not her smell.

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Rhythm as the main Driver

- E.g Down by the riverside, Blue Skies, Chatanooga Choo Choo
- Take care – Don't mess with the rhythm just because you feel you need to change, it as you will weaken the songs strength.

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Melody, Harmony and Comedy

Melody eg, Smilin' Through, Danny Boy

Take care to recognise the high points and where the lyric and melody may contradict each other.

Harmonic eg, Bright was the night

Some songs are structure to be very strong harmonically. Often newer barbershop arrangements are like this.

Comedy eg, "My wife is on a diet"

Know the punch lines and time them well. Relate to the majority.

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The Mix

- In any piece of music there is an ebb and flow between all of the elements discussed even though there is an overriding element.
- Therefore the initial planning stages are really important for the music team to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the song.
- If you miss this step then at best you will perform to a “satisfactory” level and receive polite ripples of applause from the audience.

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Song Choice

- Choose a song that fits you!
- If you enjoy it and can relate to it then the audience have a chance to enjoy it too.
- If it is a difficult and clever arrangement the audience may think that it sounds that way. Is that the impression you want to leave them with?
- If you have a great experience singing the song then the audience will too.

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Getting inside the song

- To whom are you singing?
- Story-telling?
- Different Characters?
- Eye Contact when appropriate
- More later.....

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Living the Song

- “To be a truly honest and sincere performer you need to not only understand the lyric or to sing with perfect pitch and synchronisation but you need to live the song”

D.Kynaston 2005

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What makes the Performance Truly Believable?

- Logical Action and Reaction
- Sustained Performance
- Physical and Emotional Control
- Inner Motivation (Dictating physical movement and reaction)
- Movements and Gestures consistent with motivation
- Thorough Knowledge of and well rehearsed material
- Practice your technique **BUT NOT DURING THE PERFORMANCE**

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Finding the Character

- Who am I?
- Where does the Action take place?
- With Whom?
- How does the character change?
- What is the motivation?

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Who Am I?

- Name?
- Age and occupation?
- Appearance?
- Where from / Originally?
- Education?
- Affluence – Rich/Poor?
- In Love?
- How are you perceived by others?

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Understand the Character

- By understanding the character you are better able to know how far away from your own personality they are and what to do about it
- It is often enjoyable to try out characters who are opposite to yourself.

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Where ?

- Outdoors or Indoors?
- House, Barn, Beach, Church, Garden?
- City, Village, Town?
- Train Station?
- Mars?
- Your Mind / imagination?
- Knowing exactly where the action is taking place has a marked effect on dynamics and gestures.

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With Whom?

- Class at reunion?
- Army buddies?
- Girl/Boy friend?
- Lover?
- Fiance?
- Wife/Husband?
- Mother/Father?
- Old Friend?
- Hero?

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Motivation – What For?

- What happened just before the song?
- What is the overriding urge that makes your character say / sing these words?
- Understand the History of events.
- How does this change throughout the song?
- Consider, the preceding action the characters condition and the environment to enable the character pace to be set.

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Gesture / Body Language

- Does gesture enhance our delivery? OR distract from our delivery?
- Consistent / inappropriate or pantomime gesture = consistent distraction (example video)
- Meaningful gesture = meaningful delivery
- Eye Movements
- Points of focus
- Eye Contact (or not?)
- Perform as the character in the story and the gestures, pace and body language should fall in line.
- Mime Exercise – 3 themes

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Experimenting with faces 😊

- Happy
- Sad
- Surprised
- Fearful
- Angry
- Dislike
- Shy
- Hopeful
- Disappointed
- Courageous

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Experiment some more 😞

- Anxious
- Bored
- Stubborn
- Tired
- Disgusted
- Puzzled
- Calm
- Sorry
- Mischievous
- Arrogant

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Choreography

- If the song is fun and rhythmic then planned moves to enhance the performance may well be appropriate.
- Take care not to over do it with pantomime moves
- Do only what the group is capable of pulling off with ease.
- Keep it appropriate to the music.

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Some Simple tips

- At home practice singing the song into the mirror or video camera or just move around the room freely in character and see what movements come from this experience.
- In your group use the “Big Musical Production” exercise.
- Always perform in character – even when practicing small sections of the song

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Creating a Plan

- The development of a plan is essential to the great performance you are after
- Where should we start (RMLHC)?
- Next – Ask the group! Have a basic idea but be willing to go along with the majority otherwise it will not work.
- Write a background story that covers the characterisations, motivations and development throughout the song.
- The MD, or music team have the ultimate control over the final plan (there may be many versions at first)
- Example (You Don't Know Me)

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Let's Try It

- Who
- Where
- With Whom
- Why
- Development

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Artistry – the ingredient for “great”

- “Great artistry is achieved when the unified (singing) skills blend into each other and cease to be obvious to the listener, serving *only* as a means to deliver the emotional impact of the song”

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Questions?

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