



Working with the Male and Female Changing Voice

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Working with the Male and Female Changing Voice

- Negative practices
 - “don’t sing until voice settled”
 - Sing quietly or mouth the words
 - Put on back row
- Positive practices
 - Encourage to continue singing
 - Provide support and instruction
 - Monitor keenly
 - Teach correct usage




Teach Students What’s Going On

- They can expect change
- Range lessens for awhile
- Music will be adjusted




Physiological Changes in Boys

- Ages 12-18 (usually)
- Pituitary gland starts the “action”
- Related to puberty and primary and secondary sexual characteristics
- Speaking voice descends first
- Larynx grows about 10mm (Adam’s apple) & drops octave
- Baby fat drops away; muscles develop
- Breaks in voice may occur – This is normal – It’s OK!



Physiological Changes in Girls

- Ages 10-13
- Speaking voice lowers 3-4 half steps
- Larynx grows about 3-4 mm in length
- Increased breathiness, huskiness, hoarseness
- Insecurity of pitch
- Voice may “crack”
- Noticeable register “breaks”
- Decreased and inconsistent pitch range capabilities



The Male Voice Change: 4 Possibilities

- Voice drops to bass range very quickly, leaving no treble range
- Voice lowers gradually while retaining the treble range
- Voice retains treble range, adds pitches in the bass range but is incapable of singing in middle range
- Voice retains treble quality and also comfortably sings baritone range - rare



Vocal Ranges and Categories: What do we call them?

- Adult terminology? “Emerging adults”
- What’s popular:

■ Tenor, Baritone, or Bass	86%
■ Unchanged Voice	60%
■ Soprano or Alto	38%
■ Changing Baritone	36%
■ Settled Baritone	29%
■ Part I, II, III, or IV	26%
■ Treble	21%
■ Cambiata	21%
■ Mid-voice I, II, IIA	10%




What the Experts Say

- Irvin Cooper:
 - “Cambiata” = changing
 - Boy soprano, Cambiata, Baritone
- Frederick Swanson:
 - Boy alto (G octave straddling middle C), Tenor, Bass
 - Voice develops first in lower bass clef; often a “blank spot”



What the Experts Say

- Duncan McKenzie:
 - Soprano I and II, Alto, Alto-Tenor, Baritone (7th grade), Baritone (8th and 9th grades)
 - Change is gradual; lower notes appear as top notes gradually disappear
- John Cooksey:
 - “The Contemporary, Eclectic Theory of the Male Changing Voice”
 - Unchanged, Midvoice I, II, IIA, New Baritone, Settling Baritone
 - Growth pattern like a “slinky”




What the Experts Say

- Kenneth Phillips:
 - Tenor I (unchanged), Tenor II (changing), Tenor (newly changed), Baritone (changing), Bass (changing), Bass-Baritone (newly changed)
- Robert Fowells:
 - Unchanged, Changing, Changed
 - SATB – whichever fits most closely to voice




What the Experts Say about Girls

- Lynn Gackle
 - Stage I: Prepubertal (unchanged, ages 8-10)
 - Stage IIA: Pre-Menarcheal (ages 11-12)
 - Stage IIB: Post-Menarcheal (ages 13-14)
 - Stage III: Young Adult Female (emerging female adult voice; ages 15+)
 - *Shades of Change*




Voice Placement: “Vocal testing” or “audition”

- Group Testing
 - Warm up (sirens on “oo”)
 - Use well-known song
 - Students in circle
 - Students find comfortable key
 - “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” or “Jingle Bells”




Voice Placement: “Vocal testing” or “audition”

- Group Testing
 - BOYS:
 - Key of Bb: Boys in lower octave = baritones or Midvoice IIA
 - Key of F: Boys singing treble are unchanged or Midvoice I; boys singing octave lower are tenors, cambiatas, or Midvoice II's




Voice Placement: “Vocal testing” or “audition”

- Group Testing
 - GIRLS:
 - Key of Bb: identify girls singing clearly, strongly, and easily
 - Key of F or G: identify girls singing clearly, strongly, and easily
 - Those identified for both groups above are divided into two sections
 - Weaker voices assigned evenly between the two sections
 - Allow girls to experience both alto and soprano parts




Voice Placement: “Vocal testing” or “audition”

- Individual Testing
 - Warm up (siren on “oo”)
 - Establish general pitch area
 - Say “hello” or name
 - Countdown (speaking) 20 to 1
 - Student sings *do-re-mi-re-do* on “lah, lah” starting on comfortable pitch; move up or down by half steps




Voice Placement: “Vocal testing” or “audition”

- Individual Testing
 - Tips:
 - Start on student’s pitch
 - Notate highest and lowest sung pitches; watch for signs of tension
 - If voice “cracks” tell him his voice is changing registers
 - Some boys may have a “hole” in their range
 - May find a “subterranean bass”
 - Voice may move up after initial drop into the bass range




Voice Placement: “Vocal testing” or “audition”

- Components of the Test:
 - Normal speaking pitch
 - Lowest and highest note
 - Comfortable tessitura
 - Part in choir



Voice Placement: “Vocal testing” or “audition”

- How Often to Test:
 - Once a semester 48%
 - Eight weeks 29%
 - Once a year 5%
 - “Let me know when you are uncomfortable or something unusual is happening vocally”
 - Be careful of “pigeon-holing”
 - The “core” of the voice should be respected




Repertoire for Changing Voices

- Choosing the right music is crucial
- Best solution: music that most closely matches the vocal abilities of the changing voices
- “More parts rather than less”



Choosing Repertoire for Changing Voices

- Problems with SAB
 - Too high, too low, tessitura uncomfortable for male singers
 - “B” part vocally unhealthy for unchanged and changing voices
- Problems with Unison
 - Voices in choir are 5 – 6 different classifications
 - Most tunes cover an octave range
 - Comfortable range: D4-Bb4




Choosing Repertoire for Changing Voices

- Problems with SATB, TTBB
 - Most often written with adult voice in mind
- Problems with SSA
 - Works with few changed voices in group
 - Written indigenously for female voices
 - Appropriate for young male interests?
 - Check vocal tessituras; adapt for changing voices




Choosing Repertoire for Changing Voices

- Options:
 - Change notes; write alternate parts
 - Write a new part
 - Transpose to comfortable key
 - Octave displacement (change octave when uncomfortable)
 - Assign part that fits the voice
 - Voices assigned to sing only where ranges are accessible



Repertoire for Changing Voices

- General Guidelines:
 - Quality and variety of text, melody, rhythm, and craftsmanship
 - Note technical demands
 - Register shifts, awkward leaps, transitions
 - Long phrases and breath requirements
 - Range requirements
 - Flexibility limitations



Repertoire for Changing Voices

- 3 T's:
 - Tessitura
 - Text
 - Technique

Repertoire for Changing Voices

- Arranging for Changing Voices
 - Limited range melody (6th – octave)
 - Key that fits ranges
 - Melody in changing voice part
 - Assess abilities – help students be successful
 - Simple
 - Use repetition and ostinati
 - Consider breath, intervals, voice leading, ease of finding initial pitches, vowels on high notes, time to rest, alternative pitches suggested

Misc. Thoughts

- Co-ed or separate?
 - For choir
 - For vocal testing/placement
- Vocalises
 - Opportunity to teach healthy, correct vocal technique
 - Head voice to chest voice (descending)
 - Begin in composite unison octave range
 - Mix staccato/agility exercises with sustained exercises

Misc. Thoughts

Solving Vocal Difficulties:

- Immediate Remediation:
 - Inefficient breathing
 - Poor diction
 - Tight jaw
 - Closed throat
- Combination of Maturation and Remediation:
 - Poor intonation
 - Limited resonance
 - Limited dynamic range
 - Limited vocal range
 - Agility
 - Husky/breathy tone

Misc. Thoughts

- Junior High with Senior High?
- FINAL THOUGHTS

The Changing Voice: Male Vocal Ranges

Irwin Cooper: boy soprano, cambata, baritone, boy alto, tenor, bass


Duane McKende: sop. I, sop. 2, alto, alto/tenor, baritone, baritone 7th grade, baritone 8th/9th grades

John Cooksey: unchanged, mid-voice I, mid-voice II, mid-voice III, new baritone, setting baritone

Kenneth Phillips: tenor I (unchanged), tenor II (changing), tenor (newly changing)/changing, baritone, bass (changing), bass-baritone (newly changing)

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