

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE YOUNG SINGER

- “Work in progress”
- Often lacking in self-esteem
- Sometimes sings with a breathy sound
- Often unpredictable in terms of pitch or tone quality
- May experience difficulty in shifting registers
- May sing with a nasal quality
- Lower register starting to develop
- Warmer tone starting to develop
- Resonance is “work in progress”

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE YOUNG VOICE

Because of physical changes occurring during adolescence, the following vocal issues may occur in singers of either sex:

- Insecurity of pitch
- Development of noticeable register breaks
- Increase in huskiness
- Decreased and inconsistent range
- Uncomfortable singing
- Heavy, breathy, rough or colourless tone
- Breathiness, thin quality at certain pitches
- Voice cracking
- Hoarseness

Taken from "Changing Voices": Deirdre Trundle, Voicesource Publishing (2005), ISBN 1-905090-00-5 <http://www.voicesource.co.uk/>

CHANGES IN THE YOUNG FEMALE VOICE

(After "Changing Voices", Deirdre Trundle, Voicessource Publishing,
 Table 2 : "Stages of Voice Changes in Girls")

During adolescence

- Girls are usually capable of a wider vocal range than boys both in terms of tessitura and dynamics
- The female larynx is not usually fully developed (not until around age of 24)
- The stages of physical development can take between three to five years to complete
- Voice is still developing ("work in progress")

STAGE	AVERAGE RANGE	MINIMUM RANGE	VOCAL CHARACTERISTICS	PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS
Unchanged	Bb - F''	D' - D''	Unconstricted and clear	No breast development
One	Bb - F''	D' - D''	Tone slightly warmer	Small signs of breast development
Two	A - F''	Bb - Bb'	Tone darker, slightly breathy	Fat on stomach, obvious breast development
Three	A - D''	Bb - Bb'	Breathy, cracking, register shifts difficult	Menstruation started
Four	A - F''	B - C''	Voice stabilises, tone more resonant and clear, top notes return	Post menarcheal

SOME STATEMENTS ABOUT YOUNG SINGERS AND SINGING

1. Vocal ability is highly dependent upon the singer's *personal self-esteem*. The more a teacher can help increase a student's self-esteem, the better singer that student will be.
2. Young singers need to be reminded that they are a "*work in progress*". Their voices are changing and often unpredictable. Patience and encouragement are very important in working with them.
3. The singing voice and the speaking voice are the same instrument. Good singing will not occur if speech habits are poor, since "*The habits you use the most win.*"
4. Singing is both a musical and a dramatic art. The more a singer can learn to use the body (facial expression and gestures / choreography) to express the text and music of a song, the more quickly and easily *vocal freedom* will be achieved.
5. Every singer needs to acquire a *vocal toolkit*. Each vocal exercise is a tool that can be utilised for a particular purpose. Singers need to have on hand a variety of exercises (tools) and need to understand the purposes(s) of each tool. Don't use the pliers to drive in a nail!
6. Young singers need to understand the difference between *singing* a particular choral part, and *being classified* as a particular voice type. Voices should not be classified until they are mature.
7. The young voice is not as fragile as we are sometimes led to believe. It is just as damaging to hold a young voice back from full development as it is to push a young singer beyond appropriate demands. *Both the upper register and the lower register* need to be developed and strengthened in the young singer.
8. In order to train young voices properly, it is advisable to gain a thorough understanding of how voices work. For lists of singing teachers in your area go to:
<http://www.nats.org> - also good for general information (US and Canada)
<http://www.aotos.org.uk> (UK)
<http://www.anats.org.au> (Australia)
<http://www.irmt.org.nz> (New Zealand)

THE YOUNG SINGER'S TOOLKIT

1. Wake up the body

- **Alignment and balance:** Check the six points line up: Ear – shoulder – lumbar – hip – knee – ankle. Remember that if one of these points moves out of line it will be more difficult to sing well
- **Deconstriction:** use a happy gasp of surprise, a chuckle or a silent laugh
- **Wrist shakes, shoulder rubs and wake up “slaps”**
- **No more “teen slumps”** – use stretching exercise to prepare the body for singing

2. Wake up the breathing

- **Bubbling (lip trills), trilled “r”, gargle (uvular R à la française)**
- **Revvng up the motor-bike!**
- **Hissing in rhythm (3-5-7-13)**
- **Blow out the candles**
- **Encourage easy, quiet breathing (newly baked bread, smelling a rose)**

3. Wake up the sound

- **Dead battery – vvv, vvv, vvv..... (lots of air, do rhythmically, check relaxed throat, neck and shoulders, flexed knees)**
- **Add a vowel to vvv eg vvvaaa, vvvooh..... (again do rhythmically)**
- **Yobbom, mobbom, mob – play with the sounds, keep lips relaxed**
- **Buh, buh, buh – call and response, move body, make up these rhythms for fun**
- **Chanting, speaking, majestic counting (1 to 10, 1 to 20 using a powerful resonant voice)**
- **Song texts as dramatic monologues (How many hearts have you broken....)**

4. Wake up the voice

- Humming e.g. 1354321 then down a semitone (half step)
- Drone (5) – 12321 then go down to 5; 23432 then down to 5 then 34543 and go down to 5; 23432 down to 5 then 12321. Always start with a vocalise, which doesn't stretch the voice too much. Use a vowel like oo or aa, or change the vowel.
- V or z: up and down a chromatic scale to a third, then go up a semitone (half step) each time. (This engages the muscles of the torso and abdomen to regulate the airflow and will provide the appropriate breath pressure for each pitch.)
- Ng exercises – “hingee, hingay, hingah, hingoh, hingoo” (These train the larynx to rise and fall smoothly, thus facilitating good legato, accurate pitching and flexibility) 1-1-123454321; 12-2-234565432 etc. going up a semitone (half step) each time
- M, n and ng sounds will help to develop resonance: many, many marshmallows, my mamma makes me move, oh no I'm getting hungry.
- Ngee – ay – ah – oh – oo (on one note at a time going up a semitone each time). This gives smooth onset of breath and voice
- To be, to sing, to open up my voice for you (154321 17654321 1987654321)
- I love to sing (18531 then up (or down) a semitone each time – I love to dance / sleep / swim / read etc. Allow students to supply own words!)

Song lyrics as a dramatic monologue

How many hearts have you broken with those
great big beautiful eyes?

Those great big beautiful eyes, that tell
beautiful lies

Tell me now

How many times have you kissed somebody

Like you kissed me just then

I don't believe you mean it, no!

But baby kiss me again and again!