



Choir Virtual Learning

Women's Choir/Musical Phrases

April 22, 2020



Lesson: April 22, 2020

Objective/Learning Target: Students will be listening critically for elements of music in performance, specifically phrasing.

Bell Work:

Define the following:

- Phrasing
- Tie
- Slur

Use this dictionary link if needed:

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/link>



Phrasing

Musical phrases are nothing more than musical sentences. Do you ever wonder why your teachers are always screaming at you not to breathe in certain places, or why you connect certain words together? It all has to do with phrasing. There are certain factors that determine how a musical phrase is shaped. Let's take a look at a few.

Phrase Indicators

There are 3 specific phrase indicators we will look at for our purposes today.

1. Poetry/Text
2. Groupings of notes
3. Composer indicated phrase markings



Poetry/Text

It makes sense that music and poetry work so well together. Many times, the text is what drives how the music is written. Let's take a look at "My Country Tis Of Thee" as an example.

The first phrase of poetry reads:

My Country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of Thee I sing.

When we read it, we pause at the commas briefly to observe the punctuation.

When we sing it, it doesn't make sense to breathe or pause at the commas. Try singing it. Do you agree breathing every comma interrupts the musical line?

Try singing the entire phrase in one breath. It makes a more sensible line of music and the poetry makes more sense as well..

Happy Birthday!

Try the same thing with the song, “Happy Birthday.”

Happy Birthday to you

Happy Birthday to you

Happy Birthday dear (enter name here)

Happy Birthday to you.

Let’s phrase this in a few different ways.

1. Sing it and breathe at the end of each line.
2. Sing all in one breath
3. Sing the first two lines in one breath and the last two lines in one breath.

As you can see, there are many different ways of interpreting poetry, which also translates to how we make musical phrases. Whether we decide to break or extend musical phrases is dependent on textual cues and punctuation. Ultimately, if not otherwise notated in the music, phrasing will be determined by the conductor/performer using his/her best musical judgment.


Groupings of Notes-Ties

Sometimes notes are grouped together with ties.

Ties indicate that you will connect rhythmically two notes together rather than re-articulating the second note. Note: Tied notes must be on the same line or space. Rhythmically, the two quarter note B's in the example below you would sing for a total of two beats.

The G's in the following measure you would hold 3 beats.

Most importantly, you will never breathe on tied notes.



The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The first measure contains four quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, and A4. A slur connects the two B4 notes. The second measure contains a half note G4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note E4. A slur connects the two G4 notes. Arrows point from text labels to these slurs.

Tie (two notes, side-by-side, same pitch)

Tie (two notes, side-by-side, same pitch, different rhythmic value)

Groupings of Notes-Slurs

Slurs connect an entire phrase of notes and indicate all of the notes should be connected. You would sing all of the notes under the slur as one musical phrase. In the example below, you can see there are two slurs connecting four notes each. Since there is no poetry, we would sing these as two separate phrases.



Composer's Markings

Composers have been making markings in music going all the way back to the Renaissance Era. Sometimes, Johann Sebastian Bach would put fermatas at the end of each one of his phrases to be clear. These fermatas are equal to a half note or a dotted half note in Baroque times. Take a quick listen to one of his chorales. Watch the score and how Bach indicated the length of each phrase.

Bach Chorale: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vV1_U4-cvgQ

Composer's Markings Cont.

Another way composers indicate phrasing in the score is by placing breath marks where they want us to breathe. Similarly, composers can indicate not to breathe via a dotted line with an N.B. above it.



A musical score snippet for a vocal line. The lyrics are "You were your Dad - dy's son". The word "God" is circled in red, with a red arrow pointing to it from the text "BREATH MARK" written in red above the staff. The tempo marking "a tempo" is written above the circled "God". The score includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment with chords and bass notes.

N.B.



Practice

There is a piece of music on the next slide for you to analyze. You are the conductor, so there are things you'll need to decide based on what you've learned about poetry, groupings of notes and the composer's markings. Just using the first verse, address the following using the score on the next slide.

1. Read the poetry of the first verse.
2. Are there places you should indicate no breath markings to help the continuity of the music?
3. Do you see any ties or slurs?
4. Where would you place breath markings?

When Love is Kind

English

When love is kind, cheer-ful, and free,
If love can sigh for one a-lone,
Love must, in short, keep fond and true

Love's sure to find wel-come from me.
well pleased am I to be that one,
through good re-port, and ev-il too;

But when love brings heart-ache and pang,
But should I see love giv'n to rove,
else here I swear, young love may go,

tears and such things, love may go hang.
to two or three then good-bye love,
for aught I care, to Jer-i-cho!

Post Analysis

If you chose 2 measure phrases, this is what the song would sound like.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89jleHtoSq0>

If you chose 4 measure phrases, which is ideal, this is what the song would sound like.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMx8_wXFoRk

Conductor General's Warning: Do not base your vocal technique off these recordings. It's not bad, but sometimes it's not good!

Extra Practice

See if you can find music to one of your favorite songs you have performed in choir, as well as one you may not know. JW Pepper is a great resource for online scores of music and audio recordings. Here is the link:

<https://www.jwpepper.com/sheet-music/welcome.jsp>

As you look at the scores and/listen to an audio track, see if you can identify ties, slurs, and justifications for phrasing based on your listening.

Thanks for completing this lesson!

