

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.

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.

As you can see, there are many different ways of interpreting poetry, which also

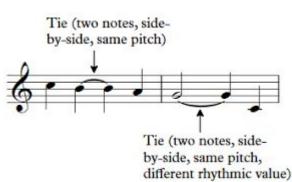
Groupings of Notes-Ties

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.



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

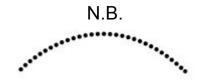
Composers have been making markings in music going all the way back to the Renaissance Era. Sometimes, Johann Sebastian Bach would put fermatas at the end of each one of his phrases to be clear. These fermatas are equal to a half note or a dotted half note in Baroque times. Take a quick listen to one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

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.





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.

- 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?



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!

