Vocal Music Virtual Learning

7th Grade Choir

Musical Terms Review

May 22, 2020

7th Grade Choir
Lesson: May 22, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:

To review the musical terms we have learned this year and put those concepts into practice.

Warm-Up Activity

Watch the following recording by Voces8 and consider all the different ways you could discuss or think about their performance. What are all the different aspects of music that you could focus on? Here are some examples:

- Dynamics/Phrasing
- Tone
- Ensemble Precision
- Breathing/Breath Support

Warm-Up Activity

2nd Warm-Up Activity

Review:

Write down as many different musical terms as you can think of that we have learned about in these lessons. Even if you cannot remember what the term means, list as many as you can regardless.

Musical Terms Review

Our goal today is to review many of the different terms and concepts we have focused on the last two months. These are important concepts for any musician, and will continue to be relevant for students who take music classes in the future.

Dynamics: The way we talk about loud and soft in music

Dynamics: how loud and soft a piece of music is performed.

Dynamics can describe how **loud** or **soft** a section of music is, and it can describe the volume level changing (getting **softer** and getting **louder**)

The words we use to describe dynamics come the Italian language.

The two main dynamic levels are forte (which means “loud”) and piano (which means “quiet”)

Look to the chart on the right to see all of the main dynamic levels you will see in music --------->

fff	as fortissimo as possible
ff	fortissimo (very loud)
f	forte (loud)
mf	mezzo forte (moderately loud)
mp	mezzo piano (moderately soft)
p	piano (soft)
pp	pianissimo (very soft)
ppp	as pianissimo as possible

Activity: Identify dynamic levels in a piece of music as you listen to it

Listen to the opening movement of Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana". The movement is titled "O Fortuna", and is a very well-known piece of music, famous for its changes in dynamics.

As you listen, notice every time the dynamic level changes. With each change, use the dynamic chart on the previous slide to describe the dynamic level (how loud it is) using the dynamic level terminology.

Video: O fortuna

Changing Dynamics: Getting loud or getting soft

In music, when we want to gradually change the dynamic of the music we are playing, we have a few important ways to notate that. The most common way is to use a ***crescendo*** or a ***decrescendo***.

Crescendo

To ***crescendo*** in music means to get louder. In music, it is usually either marked with an abbreviation like this:

cresc.

Or it is marked with a ‘hairpin’ marking that looks

Decrescendo

To ***decrescendo*** in music means to get softer. In music, it is usually either marked with an abbreviation like this:

decresc.

Or it is marked with a ‘hairpin’ marking that looks like this:

Other Dynamic Changes

Crescendo and *Decrescendo* are both gradual changes in volume. Here are a few other dynamic notation changes, some of which happen much more suddenly:

sub. ***p*** - the symbol for *subito piano*, or suddenly quiet.

sfz - the symbol for *sforzando*, which means suddenly and forcefully loud or accented

Other Dynamic Changes

fp - the symbol for *forte piano*, where music starts forte and immediately drops to piano

dim. - the symbol for *diminuendo*, which is similar to a *decrescendo*.

Activity: Identify dynamic levels in a piece of music as you listen to it

Listen to Samuel Barber's choir piece "Agnus Dei". As you listen, make a note for every time you notice the dynamic level changing. Identify which type of dynamics change you are hearing (***crescendo***, ***decrescendo/diminuendo***, ***sfz***, etc.)

Video: Agnus Dei

The other component to dynamics is "Phrasing"

To review the concept of "phrasing", start with this:

- Speak or sing one note for a count of ten.
- Then, do it again, but this time, get gradually louder as you count 1-5 the get gradually quieter as you count 6-10.
- Finally, do it a third time, and this time start loud but start getting quieter until you reach 5, then start getting louder from 6-10.

This is what that looks like in music:

Earlier this week we learned about dynamics. This is what your first example would have looked like using crescendo and decrescendo markings:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Let’s try it ourselves!

Sing the first phrase of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”. As you sing, crescendo to the word “star”, then start to decrescendo until the word “are.”

It should look something like this:

“Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are”

Now, try it over the whole song

With each phrase, try getting louder for the first half, then softer for the second:

“Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are?
Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the sky;
Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are?”

Follow-up activity:

Now that you understand how musicians sing with phrasing, lets see if you can hear it being done by a professional choir.

Click on the link and listen to the choir sing, and as you listen, draw a line with a pencil. When the are getting louder, draw your line on an incline. When the are getting quieter, draw your line on a decline. Start a new line when you hear a new phrase!

Cantique de Jean Racine, performed by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge

Ensemble Precision

Ensemble Precision
Definition:

How tightly together a group of musicians (an ensemble) sync up to each other, including their sense of beat, their entrances and cut offs, and the rhythms they are playing.

So how do we evaluate or measure ensemble precision?

If you are trying to evaluate how well an ensemble is playing together, here is a list of things you can listen for:

So how do we evaluate or measure ensemble precision?

- Everyone keeping the beat together
  - No one rushing the tempo or going too slow
- Everyone entering at the same time in a new section
- Everyone cutting off together at the same time
- The words being sung sync up with each other
  - If this ISN'T happening, the words will sound messy or mumbled
- The overall effect of the music should could be described as "crip" or "clean" if the ensemble precision of the group is being successful

Let's evaluate some Ensemble Precision!

Now that you have a sense of what "ensemble precision" is, let's try and evaluate how successful a few different ensembles are in their ensemble precision!

For the sake of this exercise, we are going to use the ensemble rating system that judges use at large ensemble contests for choirs, orchestras and bands.

Let's evaluate some Ensemble Precision!

That means, as you evaluate, come up with a rating between 1 (the best you can do) and 5 (the worst you can do). We will evaluate three ensembles different ensembles performing three different pieces of music.

1	2	3	4	5
Exemplary	**Outstanding**	**Satisfactory**	**Developing**	**Ineffective**

Ensemble #1: “Milwaukee Children’s Choir”

This is a volunteer children’s choir singing the Israeli song “Dodi Li”.

We use the word “tone” to describe the quality and character of our singing voice

Tone - Definition

The a musical or vocal sound with reference to its pitch, quality, and strength.

I want to a have a good tone in MY singing!

So… how do I do that?

I’m so glad you asked! We do have a lot of control over the character of our singing voice and the tone that we produce. But in order to understand how we control our tone, we need to understand a bit more about how singing works.

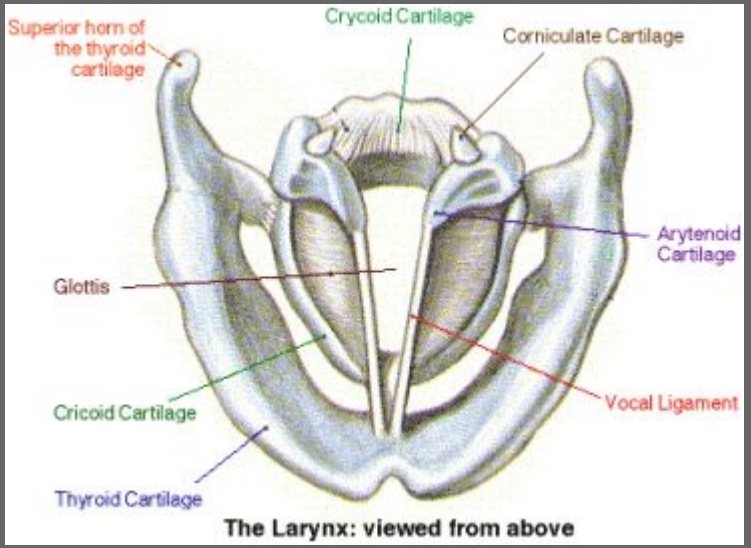
I want to a have a good tone in MY singing! So... how do I do that?

Let's talk a little bit about the anatomy of your voice and which parts of your body help support your voice.

We'll go over all this in more detail in a later lesson, but this will give us an introduction.

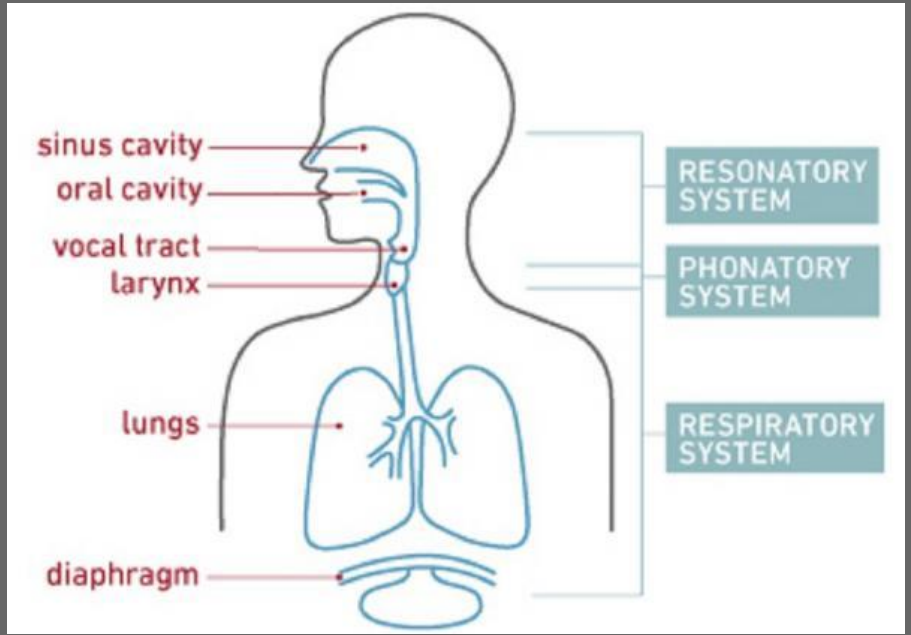
Stop #1:
Your Voice Box

The sound of your voice is generated in your larynx, which we also call your voice box. We call the act of your voice box making sound “phonating”.



Stop # 2: Where that sound echoes

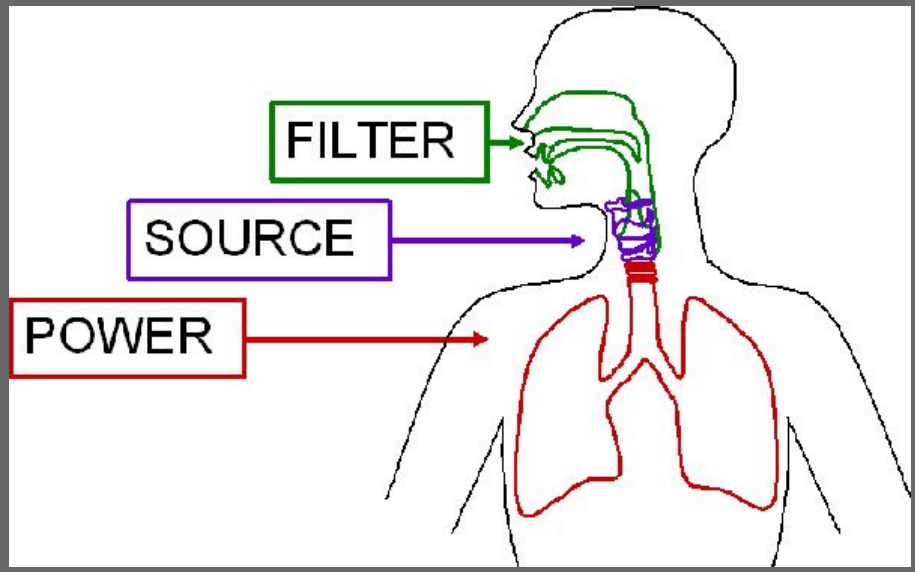
When the sound of your voice leaves your larynx, it echoes or “resonates” in your throat (vocal tract), mouth (oral cavity) and nasal passages (sinus cavity)



A system that works together

Your speaking and singing voice works because the different parts of your body work together:

- Your lungs and diaphragm provide the power
- Your larynx makes the sound
- Your resonation chambers filter that sound into a nice, rich singing or speaking voice



So what part of this process can we control?

We can't really change anything happening in our larynx. But we CAN focus on our breathing and on how we make our vowels.

This is where singing technique comes from

Breathing: By focusing on taking deep breaths and using our breath effectively, we support our singing voices better and provide stability to our singing tone.

Singing with tall vowels: When we sing with tall vowels and an open throat, we are working on opening our phonation system, the filter for our singing sound.

A more open system = More space for sound to echo = A more mature and rich tone!

Let's experiment!

Here's a fun phrase for you:

Say "Tacky, nasty Takis sauce!" three or four times. Experiment with saying it in your low voice, saying it in your high voice, then singing it in your low voice and high voice.

When you say the first two words (tacky and nasty) the vowels in your mouth are naturally flat, and don't have much resonance (echo) to them. When you say the second two words (Takis and sauce) the vowels in your mouth are naturally taller and have a better tone.

Last, try singing the phrase like a little kid, and then like a British opera singer. You may notice that the second time you have taller vowels in your mouth!

Singing with tall vowels is the biggest way we can improve our singing tone

When we make more space inside our mouths, we give our voices more space to resonate, and that makes our singing sound better! We get that space by singing with an open throat, dropping our jaws, and singing with tall vowels!

Now listen and evaluate

Click on the link to the professional choir on the right and listen to their singing tone. Write down at least three words you hear them sing where they use good, tall vowels.

Voces8 singing Sound of Silence

Follow- Up Activity:

Now, let's try to put it all together. Pick a song (such as one of the songs we learned at the beginning of this week) and perform the song with all of these ideas in mind:

1. Dynamics/Phrasing
2. Ensemble Precision
3. Tone
    a. Breath support and tall vowels.

Perform for someone else and see what they say!