

Floor - Roof exercises

explore individual voice qualities and increase the singers' self-esteem.

WORKSHOP

Singers need to feel that they contribute to the whole group

IN RHYTHMIC VOCAL GROUPS all singers need to feel that they are important for the development of the whole group. This is necessary for an organic process where each singer takes individual responsibility. These exercises build a foundation for the group's ability to find a collective blend based on a deep knowledge of the contributions of each person.

This paper guides you through each step in a series of blend exercises. The goal is for each person to be able to follow any other person's timbre, while singing.

Most important things

- Be open to following whatever sound that comes out of the singers.
- Be non-judgmental about individual voices.
- The focus person is always perfect, by definition.
- Make sure that all singers in the group are focus singers at some point during the course of the exercise.
- Sometimes you need to improvise the order of exercises.
- Respect the session leader's decisions about what to do next.

The focus person is always perfect!

First steps

- Pick an example from your repertoire; 8-12 bars of a homophonic song.
- Sing through the example once or twice.
- Check that notes and note releases are correct and simultaneous, to avoid confusion later.

Pre-exercises

1. QUIET / LOUD.
 - a. Sing as quiet as possible
 - b. Sing even more quiet
 - c. Sing so quiet that you cannot even produce a note sometimes.
 - d. Add a little bit of support so you get into the "room".
 - e. Sing as loud as possible. FOCUS: how does this feel physically? We don't want destroyed voices
 - f. Stretch and sing even louder. FOCUS: how does this feel physically?
 - g. Assign one focus person who makes gradual changes between quiet and loud.
 - Anything the focus person does is "right".
 - The exercise is for everybody else.
 - Let the focus person sing twice.
 - h. ask the focus person how it felt.
 - i. validate the focus person's feelings (mirror)

Sing so quiet that you get down into the "basement"

Ask how the focus person feels. Validate the feelings.

WORKSHOP

These exercises are specifically designed to address fundamental musical parameters, while strengthening self-esteem in singers'

Explore the "ugly" also!

Fun and focus!

Purposes:

- to explore & practise extreme quiet and loud dynamics
- to leave the comfort zone, in a structured way.
- introduce the singers to the concept of one focus person.
(Recommendation: begin with an alto, tenor or bass.)
- the focus person will get a chance to experience how it feels when the other singers pay attention and follow. This is very good for self-esteem.
- Self-esteem is strengthened when the focus person's feelings are validated by the session leader.

2. BRIGHT / DARK

- a. Sing as bright and nasal as possible
- b. Sing even brighter and more nasal (repeat this until it sounds Really Ugly)
- c. Sing as dark as possible
- d. Sing even darker (if singers add an "over-classical" vibrato, ask them to sing with a normal but dark voice)
- e. Assign a focus person who makes gradual changes between bright and dark.
 - Anything the focus person does is "right".
 - The exercise is mainly for everybody else.
 - Let the focus person sing twice.
- f. ask the focus person how it felt.
- g. validate the focus person's feelings (mirror)
- h. Assign another focus person

Purposes:

- this is usually when the Fun begins :-)
- introduce the singers to paying attention to timbre differences
- to distinguish between personal timbre differences.
When everyone sings bright, they usually sing with their own idea of what bright is. But when they follow a focus person, they will naturally adapt to this person's idea of "bright" and "dark"

WORKSHOP

Singers are often unaware of vibratos being sung. Apply maximum vibrato first, then you can ask them to take it away.

3. INFLECTIONS

- a. Maximum vibrato on every note / no vibrato (you will need to sing "Anything" slower)
- b. Scoop every note / sing straight on every pitch (same procedure as with 3 a-d)
- c. Ask a focus person to add vibrato or scoop by intuition, and all others to follow
- d. Same as c, except that you ask the bass singer to sing with straight pitch on all notes.

4. BREATHY / NON-BREATHY (same procedure as 2 a-g)

5. MINIMUM / MAXIMUM ARTICULATION (in this exercise: small / big mouth)

- a. Sing with minimum articulation: open your mouth by 1 millimeter.
- b. Sing with maximum articulation: open your mouths as much as possible.
- c. assign a focus person who makes gradual changes between minimum

Articulation has a profound impact on the group blend. Especially when in sync.

That is the end of pre-exercises.

Clone each other's sound

This is the "real exercise", and when it gets really interesting.

Experience has shown that the pre-exercises need be done first, in the same session, before the attention of the singers are fine-tuned to make this exercise possible.

6. FOCUS PERSONS SING WITH THEIR NATURAL VOICES

- a. Assign a focus person who sings with his/her natural voice, and does whatever phrasing or sound he/she feels like doing.
For example: loud/quiet, bright/dark, with inflection/no inflection, etcetera.
Changes are good because the focus singer's voice timbre will change naturally.
- b. Ask the focus person how this feels
- c. validate
- d. Assign a new focus person, until everyone's voice has been heard.

The singers in any given ensemble have a vast range of sound and timbral possibilities.

Every singer is important!!!