



Singing every Thursday at 7:00 PM, Community
United Methodist Church of Olathe



Visit us at our official web site:

<http://barbershopsingingmontrose.yolasite.com/>

NOVEMBER 2016
Vol. 32 Number 11

I have no idea who wrote the good information on the next two pages, and I have no idea where I got it, but I found it in some stuff I still have in the computer. If you have read this before, try it again anyway. If not, try it now. I guess it must work or I wouldn't have saved it. If the author has their feelings hurt because I didn't mention their name, tough unless they want to take the credit ... or blame for writing it.

Ten Steps to a Note

There are lots of ways to skin a cat, and there may be other ways to begin to sing a note, a phrase, a song. But this is a simple outline of how I approach singing. I developed this outline for the Vocal Majority in 1977. We were working on the first word in a song: "Everything must have an end." There were too many variables in how this first-time International Champion chorus was approaching the very first sound, so I put it to the chorus thusly:

1. **Hear a pitch.** Could be a pitchpipe, a hum, anything. I have found that many people, even very experienced singers, do not listen actively to the fine tuning of the pitch, so they just don't start in the same key. Textbooks say that if you think you have an ear, you need to be able to discern and discriminate pitch to within two cycles (Hertz). *This is a mental step; don't practice out loud.*
2. **Find your Note.** Let's say you start on the fifth scale step, SOL. If it doesn't just "come" to you, don't be ashamed to go up the scale by scale steps (mentally but on purpose) to find your note. It's what the pros do; they just do it faster than some. It saves time to do it that way, and it's foolproof. *This is a mental step also. Do NOT practice or find your note out loud (called humming).*
3. **Posture.** The common things most people consider are width of stance, shoulders up and back, chest out, balance front to back. The most under-appreciated aspect of posture is head position. The books say the head should be parallel to the ground, but this is hard to achieve. If the head is tilted just a little downward, just allowed to FALL downward (I call it "two degrees") the muscles under the chin and the jaw muscles will be more relaxed and will have less tension in them. And the actual air tube (trachea) will be freer and larger, and can pass more air.
4. **Drop the Jaw.** Singers should feel that they have marbles between their molars, and that the entire jaw has dropped from its moorings at the temporomandibular joint (TMJ). Not an "alligator mouth," where only the front teeth are separated, but there is no or little space in the back of the mouth. I tell students just to act stupefied for a second, as if they heard they won the lottery. That jaw will drop.
5. **Form a vowel.** The purpose of this step is to assure that the first sound out of your mouth is the correct sound, the one you want to sing. Most vowels are open enough so that you can form that vowel and then go on. If you are going to sing, say, an EE or an IH, you might want to open up, drop the jaw, and form some open vowel that is close to those mentioned above, maybe an EH. If the vowel is formed very early, you are increasing the odds of having that vowel be the one that sounds when you start to sing.
6. **Open the Throat.** This is the feeling of yawn that almost every professional singer mentions when asked how they go about singing. See Jerome Hines's great book "Great Singers on Great Singing." He interviewed all the big name opera singers, and almost all of them mention the feeling of the beginning of the yawn to position properly for singing.

7. **Open the Vocal Folds.** Usually this will happen naturally. If you have a noisy inhale, and the vocal folds are trying to vibrate, making some noise, the vocal folds are not far enough apart, and you have to think about it some more. Think of taking a big gulp of air, like a swimmer, with your mouth wide open, and you will probably get the vocal folds open more.
8. **Singer's Breath.** The air going into your lungs should go to the BOTTOM of the lungs first. The abdomen should relax outward, and you should feel that you have air all the way down into your abdominal area. The "Straw Breath" is a good drill for that. Purse your lips very tightly and inhale noisily (your LIPS are making the noise, not your vocal cords). Your Abs should expand AND the area around your waist in the back, your ribs in the back. You should be able to do all this and get a full breath in "real life" as you sing, (a normal breath, not the Straw Breath) in an eighth rest's worth of time.
9. **Nothing.** This is my "cute" way of saying that the vocal folds do NOT come back together ("adduce") after you inhale and before you sing. If they do come together you will make a sharp attack sound as the vocal folds release from each other. It's not a pleasant sound and it's not good for your vocal cords. If you are still having problems with this, put a gentle "h" in front of that vowel you are starting the phrase with (if in fact you are starting with a vowel). An "h" is simply air passing through the vocal folds, which must be open to allow that air to pass. Then sing it again without the "h."
10. **Support and add Air.** In that order. The lifting of the tummy muscles at the belt level lift in and slightly up as you sing. The important thing about that lifting is that it sends some great nerve signals to the larynx through the vagus nerve and to the diaphragm through the phrenic nerve. The signals tell the larynx to stay in its proper position, which is a little lower than it is at rest, and they also tell the vocal folds exactly how much to come together for the maximum and best sound.

This lifting also helps the diaphragm do its job of metering the air you use to sing with, but the primary benefit of "lift" is to tone production.

There are three timelines here: (1) Support, (2) air through the vocal folds, and (3) vocal folds vibrating and making sound. These three timelines each begin milliseconds apart, and in the order above. When you stop singing, the order is reversed. First the sound stops, with a nice decrescendo (accompanied by MORE lift, not less) and cessation. Then the air stops flowing through the glottis, the space between the vocal cords. Then the support stops and you cease to lift the abdominal muscles. These beginnings and endings between (1), (2), and (3) are literally milliseconds apart, and if you execute them constantly listeners will never HEAR technique, but they will hear the results of that technique: consistent, dependable sounds.

I find that if you do all the above in the same way every time you start a note, you will achieve the result you want. The same sound in the same way every time you attempt to sing. Having a solid technique is a great confidence builder. If you KNOW that that note you are going for will be there because you KNOW your techniques are correct, guess what? That note will always be there, just like you like it.

CANYON CHORDS is the official monthly publication of the Black Canyon Barbershop Chorus known as the Montrose, Colorado, chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. Opinions stated in this bulletin are not necessarily those of the Chapter, the Editor, or possibly even the stated author.

2016 CHAPTER OFFICERS

(Term expires 12/31 in year shown after office)

PRESIDENT (2017)

Larry Cooper

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

John Taylor

SECRETARY (2016)

Chuck Frush

TREASURER (2016)

Rex Pierson

PRACTICE & PERFORMANCES VP (2017)

Dennis Olmstead

MEMBERSHIP VP (2016)

John Taylor

PUBLIC RELATIONS VP (2017)

John Thrasher

MUSIC VP (2017)

Vacant

COMMUNICATIONS VP (???)

Bill Sutton

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE (1 year terms)

Bob Brethouwer

Larry Wilkinson

Tim Lund

MUSICAL DIRECTOR:

Larry Cooper and Grady Weiszbrod

Tom Chamberlain, Emeritus

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Vacant

SERGEANT AT ARMS

Bob Brethouwer

SUNSHINE GUY

Rex Pierson

CHAPTER HISTORIAN

Tom Chamberlain

Splinters from the Board

Notice: These are NOT the official minutes and merely present a tongue in cheek observation of our Board Meetings. Official minutes can be found on our website.



Some may think Board meetings are places where decisions are made and planning is done, but our meetings counter that assumption. Meetings are apparently for discussion, more discussion, and adjourning before any decisions are made. Well, maybe one was made.

There was a motion made, sort of voted on and then revised and probably voted on again before endless attempts to describe exactly what the motion was so it could be properly transcribed in the minutes so we could read them the weekend before the next meeting. That motion may or may not have said that we could/should/may request any well established or burgeoning choir/chorus director who might want to direct our chapter could come to demonstrate their ability for three weeks so we could accept them or refuse them, but they would be paid anyway just for making the effort. If this is confusing, read the minutes.

THE SHOW: Well, I guess we are going to have a show but what kind is really up in the air.

Minimizing our work seemed to be a prime focus until it was pointed out how much it would cost to have several guest quartets and choirs thus making a profit nearly impossible, plus the possibility that some in the audience might be put-off by coming to a barbershop music show with very little barbershop music. So, as might be expected, Dr Bob made a motion to adjourn. Since Pres. Coop will be gone for a month or so next year, we may need to deal with this in December. What the heck? Valentines Day singing? Fund raising?

I think we had an election on the Thursday before the board meeting, but I'm not really sure who we voted on. I think someone, maybe Coop, said "All in favor of electing those who are running say Aye." or something like that. So if you are expecting me to tell you who is what and for how long, you are expecting the impossible. But somebody will know, maybe. Perhaps this will be cleared up at the Board Meeting.

By some kind of acclamation it was decided (a word not often used) that we would NOT participate in the Delta Christmas Parade. But we will sing before. Now at 5:00 pm

Most of the stuff people worry about, ain't never gonna happen anyway.

It was pretty much established that the nomination committee failed to find anyone willing to serve as our Music VP since Carol resigned. It was not clear, however, how much effort really went into trying to find someone, but the results are obvious. We don't have a Music VP. As far as the rest of officer positions, it seems that all who are now serving will continue to serve, as far as we know. Robert the guy who wrote the Rules would be turning over in his grave if he really knew how his rules are ignored.

**God
Bless
America**



NOTE: Fourmata with Coop singing bari will participate in the Olathe High School Veterans Day assembly on November 11. Always a good idea to keep our relationship current with the young folks.



Because we are not doing much and because if I wait until after the Sweet Ad show and Christmas sing in Delta I won't have anything for the December issue, which is pretty typical. So this is done now so we can claim an issue for November in case we are still messing with CARA points. But that may not be an issue.

Now you know why you are getting a bulletin with very little content. Of course, if some of you felt the need, I could print something from you. Thanks to John Taylor. He did send something. It's on the last pager where it belongs. It's darn good stuff.



Tim Davis	November 16
Dan Baer	November 29
Phil Plumb	December 9
John Taylor	December 14

*We don't stop singing because we get old,
we get old because we stop singing.*

Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.



ROCKY ROAD

Contact: Vern Dockter

970-210-1793

