

Chapter 6: Vocal Music

Music Appreciation

Mr. G. Armbrister

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

The human voice is a remarkable instrument. It is the primary means by which we express ourselves and convey our moods and beliefs. It gives us the power to communicate – not only in speech but in song. In this chapter, you will explore the possibilities of this amazing instrument. You will learn about the many ways the voice is used, by itself or in concert with other instruments, to make music.

Vocabulary

- Register – vocal range.
- Range – the distance between the lowest and highest pitches of the voice.
- Soprano – the highest female register.
- Coloratura – the soprano voice that is light and flexible enough to perform rapid scales and trills.
- Mezzo-Soprano – the intermediate female voice that sings in the lower part of the soprano range.
- Contralto – a low female register with a full, rich, dark, and powerful quality.

Vocabulary, cont'd

- Countertenor – the highest male voices with a falsetto range and quality and a register in the female alto range.
- Tenor – the high male range with a powerful, ringing quality.
- Baritone – the intermediate male voice.
- Bass – a lower male register with a rich, robust, resonant, and full quality.

Still More Vocabulary

- Audiation – the capacity to think sound (to hear music in your “mind’s ear”).
- A capella – singing without instrumental accompaniment.
- Bel canto – a singing style characterized by lyrical and flowing phrases, beauty of vocal color, and brilliant technique.
- Blues – a genre of African American music that often expresses frustration, sadness, or longing.
- Blue Notes – selected pitches, usually on the third and seventh degrees of the scale, whose intonation is altered at the discretion of the performer.

6.1: The Voice as a Musical Instrument

- Your voice is unique.
- Singers rely on the unique qualities of their voices to differentiate themselves from other performers.
- Timbre – tone quality of a voice or instrument.

Words that describe timbre:

- Bright
- Harsh
- Hoarse
- Light
- Melodious
- Rich
- Shrill
- Strained
- Tense
- Dark
- Heavy
- Husky
- Mellow
- Nasal
- Rough
- Smooth
- Sweet
- Warm

Can you think of other words that
might describe timbre?

Operatic Voices

- Beverly Sills, coloratura soprano
- Denyce Graves, mezzo-soprano
- Marian Anderson, contralto
- David Daniels, countertenor
- Luciano Pavarotti, tenor
- Sherrill Milnes, baritone
- Samuel, Ramsey, bass

Question:

Can you guess Andrea Bocelli's
vocal style?

Answer:

Crossover – Operatic and Pop

Charlotte Church is another successful
“crossover” singer.

Can you think of other examples of
successful crossover musicians?

6.2: Voices in Your School Community

Like MSD, most high schools in America have a choir/chorus. Some also have jazz choirs, gospel choirs, or other types of small ensembles. Have you ever attended a performance by MSD Chorus? Are you or any of your friends in chorus? Just like athletic teams, choral ensembles can bring a school a sense of pride, accomplishment, and enjoyment. The chorus in most high schools is made up of sopranos, altos, tenors, and baritones/basses. **Where does your vocal range fit in a high school choir/chorus?**

Musical Textures

- Monophonic
- Polyphonic
- Homophonic

Using your speaking voice, say these everyday phrases in your own unique way.

- “ See you later.”
- “Be careful!”
- “Good night.”
- “Hello?”

Does your voice change when you recognize the person on the other end of the telephone line?

Audiation

Audiation helps you internalize the pitches and the rhythm of a melody.

Have fun practicing your audiation skills with your favorite popular song!

Keep Calm and Sing A capella!

6.3: The Art of Vocal Performance

Whether it occurs in an opera house or on a rock concert stage, singing is very much an art form. Like other art forms, the vocal performance is a distillation of many factors that shape and refine it. You have already examined several of these, such as timbre and register, earlier in the chapter. Other critical factors include **cultural influence** and the **specific style** of music being performed.

Think of an example of music you enjoy. How does the music reflect its culture of origin?

Vocal Timbre and Musical Style

If all sounds in the world can be used for expressive purposes, then which sounds do we select for what purposes? Are some sounds more suitable for expressing certain emotions than others? To express a variety of emotions in music and to attain maximum impact, we must choose the most suitable timbre.

Bel Canto Style

(“Beautiful Singing”)

Blues Style

- Improvisation
- 12-Bar Blues
- Blue Notes

What musical genres have grown
out of the blues?

Contrasts in Vocal Music

Let's Review

Vocal timbre, register, and range all contribute to the uniqueness of a singer's voice. Musical communication requires technique (performing the right sounds, in time and tune) and expression (effectively conveying the mood of the music). These skills can be acquired partly through audiating, hearing sounds through your mind's ear. Culture and musical style are additional factors that affect a vocal performance.

Keep Calm and Sing On!