

Technique Tips

How to get crisp consonants and a beautiful sound

All conductors want nice clear diction. But they don't want all consonants and no quality of sound- that is pointless! The effort in making consonants should be focused lower in the body, the 'support' area we worked on in the last session. Yes, the tongue/teeth/lips are involved but text will be clearer (and less tiring!) if all consonants are fully on the body ('supported'). This will also help maintain a happy healthy sound and improve the stamina of the singers.

The trick with maintaining quality of sound with clarity of text is to keep the throat & resonating space OPEN and allow the body support to take care of the consonants. The resonating space will close-down if there is too much action going on in the mouth and not enough in the body, compromising the quality of the sound and the diction. Think loooooow on the body!

- Check in with alignment
- Nostril breathing (great for mindfulness – mid-rehearsal if tension is high or something is just not working).

What do I mean by keeping resonating space open?

- Hot potato breath
- How to HUM properly- big happy AH vowel then close your lips round it. Keep space between the back molars- keeps the soft pallet lifted.
- RELAX THE JAW and generally get it out of the way as much as possible....
- 5 vowels (A-E-I-O-U) with no jaw. Also K-G-L-T-D-N with no jaw.
- How to check: pinkies on back molars, fist on chin, fingers on cheeks between back molars, hands on face
- Alleluia and Gelingegelange
- Images to keep the resonating space open: neck-puppet, albert hall dome, yawning, pre-sneeze, hot potato breath

- Images for helping air flow: bow and arrow, painting a rainbow, pli , painting the space around you, pulling ropes/fabric towards you
- The brain processes words and music in different sides. Start learning the words first (speaking them on the body) and the tune to LA (or equivalent) and then add them together little bit at a time, give their brains a chance!
- Mia-mia (with any consonant zia, rria, lia, nia, via) – works as a round too.
- In pairs, hold hands and bend knees balancing each other’s weight until you reach the ground then come back up. Do this on hiss, zzz/vvv or any exercise or tricky phrase.

Keep in touch

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