

An Orchestra Teacher's Guide to Effectively Leading a Chorus

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Posture

- Balanced, aligned, centered around spine
- Feet hip width apart
- Shoulders comfortably back
- Suspended rib cage
- Your conductor's stance will affect their stance

Breath Control

- Like bowing, breath energy that creates the sound
- Affects depth of tone, color, pitch
- Inhalation through mouth
 - Feel low in body
 - Shoulders down
 - Rib cage expands
- Feeling of expansion in ribs while exhaling and singing
- Shoulders should not raise upward

Onset of Sound

- Created by breath energy instead of bow
- Raised soft palate
- Lowered jaw
- Beware of tension
- Gesture should reflect desired sound

Vowels

- Think of as "right hand" bow technique
- Aim for pure Latin vowels
- Tip of tongue at base of lower front teeth
- Tongue, jaw, lips to formulate
 - tongue: isolate use of parts of tongue (back, front, middle)
 - jaw: released/dropped at hinge
 - lips: corners in (ee, eh, ah), rounded (oh, oo)
- Diphthongs: dominant vowel should be sustained (usually first)
- Vowel Modification

Consonants

- Lips, teeth, tip of tongue
- Sing consonants quickly and efficiently
- Consonant precedes beat
- Potential issues
 - L's
 - S's, D's, T's

How do I conduct a singer?

- Like a wind player! ☺
 - Think of timing of breath
 - Think of color/vowel
 - Think of articulation of consonant
- Cueing and release gestures should encourage healthy singing.
 - Open
 - No tension

How do I speak to a singer?

- Titles of pieces
- Page, system, measure number
- Constructive criticism
 - Voice is personal
 - Changing voice can be traumatic time
 - Be careful when singling out people.

Warmups

- Always warm-up!
- Helps to coordinate breath, resonance, onset
- Focuses choristers on ideal sound
- Start mid-range with descending exercises on “oo”
- Aim for pure vowels and healthy tone
- Exercises tied to pieces

Gesture

- Hold the breath energy of the chorus between arms/hands. If the chorus is breathing in a shallow way, keep your gesture low.
- Cueing: open hand, inviting gesture
- Breathe in the shape of the vowel on the preparation. Remember to exhale.
- Releases: avoid rapid clamping of fingers shut.

Repertoire

- Texas List: <http://www.utexas.edu/uil/pml/browse>
- Rollo Dilworth, Andre Thomas, Dan Forrest, Sherri Porterfield, Doreen Rao, Henry Leck

Vocal Health

- Avoid singing at extreme range for extended lengths of time.
- Be aware of lengths of rehearsals where the singers stand without a break.

Resources

Davids, J., & LaTour, S. (2012). *Vocal technique: A guide for conductors, teachers, and singers*. Long Grove, Ill: Waveland.

Holt, M. and Jordan, J. (2008). *The School Choral Program: Philosophy, Planning, Organizing, and Teaching*. Chicago: GIA Publications.

Wall, J. (2009). *Diction for Singers: A Concise Reference for English, Italian, Latin, German, French and Spanish Pronunciation*. Redmond, WA: Celumbra Publishing.