

SIGHT SINGING
WELS Choral Dialogue 2012
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The characteristics of a good musician can be summarized as follows:

1. *A well-trained ear.*
2. *A well-trained intelligence.*
3. *A well-trained heart.*
4. *A well-trained hand.*

All four music develop together, in constant equilibrium. As soon as one lags behind or rushes ahead, there is something wrong. So far most of you have met only the requirement of the fourth point: the training of your fingers has left the rest far behind. You would have achieved the same results more quickly and easily, however, if the training of the other three had kept pace. Zoltan Kodaly

Why include sight singing?

- Music literacy – the well-trained intelligence
- Development of inner and outer hearing – the well-trained ear

Considerations when choosing sight singing materials

- How does it fit with your curriculum?
- Where does this method occur in the scope and sequence of your program?
- How much time does sight-singing take within a rehearsal? Is sight-singing a separate entity and/or is it integrated in choral music being studied?
- How do you deal with sight-singing in ensembles where students can join for more than one year?

Progression of concepts and skills

Melodic Concepts and Skills

- Are melodic concepts/skills approached through step-wise motion or intervallic motion?
- What is the sequence of intervals?
- What is the sequence of key signatures and singing in multiple keys?
- How much reinforcement is provided at each step? What do you do if your students need more practice on a given concept/skill?

Rhythmic

- Is the approach “whole-note-down” or “quarter-note-out”?
- How is meter handled?
- At what point are sixteenth notes, compound meter, and dotted quarter-eighth introduced? How is this done?

Assessment

- To what extent do you “work” each sight singing exercise?
- How do you assess student work?
- How do you know when your students have mastered a skill/concept?

Tools

Melodic Tools

- If you are using solfege, is it movable *do* or fixed *do*?
- Are you using scale numbers?

Rhythmic Tools

- Are rhythms counted by the numbers, Takadimi syllables, or other forms of counting?

Other considerations

- How musical and artistic are the exercises? Are they enjoyable and musically satisfying?
- Is there text? Are texts well written and related to the music?
- What other expressive elements, part-singing skills, etc. are included?
- How much does the series cost?

Some final thoughts.....

Sight-singing is like exercise. You have to keep doing it to stay in shape.

Sight-singing takes time, but saves time in the long run because student learning is better.

Apply sight-reading to choral literature at every opportunity. It doesn't have to be the whole song. It might only be a portion of the rhythm or singing the main melody in solfege. Look for connections in every octavo.

You can never run out of sight-singing skills and concepts. After mastering major keys, go to minor sight-singing, then modal, then atonal. When all else is exhausted your choir is clearly ready to learn all of their music through sight-singing.