

Please note that not all pages are included. This is purposely done in order to protect our property and the work of our esteemed composers.

If you would like to see this work in its entirety, please order online or call us at 800-647-2117.

Table of Contents

PART I

Training the Young Singer at Five and Six Years of Age

Chapter 1	Why Train a Young Child to Sing?	19
Chapter 2	Starting the Musical Experience	27
Chapter 3	Rehearsal Routine and Exercises	43
Chapter 4	Tone Building and Intonation	69
Chapter 5	Theory and Score Instruction	79
Chapter 6	Musical Games and Activity Sheets	87
Chapter 7	Guidelines for Literature	105

PART II

The Singer's Journey Continues at Seven and Eight Years of Age

Chapter 8	Continuing the Musical Experience	115
Chapter 9	Increasing the Rehearsal Routine	121
Chapter 10	More Advanced Exercises	127
Chapter 11	Tone Building and Intonation	137
Chapter 12	Building Reading Skills and Score Interpretation	145
Chapter 13	Guidelines for Literature	153
A Final Reflection		159
Resources		160

Preface

The first *Innocent Sounds~Building Choral Tone and Artistry in Your Children's Choir~A Personal Journey* was written over a ten-year period and published in 1999. The purpose of the book was to share my knowledge of the young voice, both chorally and vocally, from the time I had my first children's choir at the age of fourteen to the present.

My entire life has been devoted to the healthy training of voices of every age, but particularly the young singers, ages 5-18, who have come to me at varying stages of growth and vocal capability. I love to build the voice with a solid and comprehensive technique that is filled with common sense, musical knowledge, and confidence. To that end, I have developed a specific method of training that, when followed by teachers with varying levels of experience, will remain with the student throughout his/her entire life.

Since my first printed observations in *Innocent Sounds*, I have come to realize there is more for me to share with music professionals in the field. A five-year-old needs a different approach to singing than an adolescent singer, and the changing, more mature male voice needs different training and supervision than the maturing woman's voice. The techniques and goals frequently parallel each other, but it is often the approach that is different.

I have studied and taught voices of all shapes, sizes, and ages with great success in my voice studio, choirs, and opera company. Many of the techniques are the same, because good singing is simply good singing. The thrust of these books is to explore and train the total voice with both boys and girls, bringing them to vocal fruition as adult singers.

This has been a journey of great joy, creativity, and experimentation. This series of books are devoted to you and how you can become a better observer and supervisor of the voice rather than a teacher of the voice. By following these suggestions you will become a masterful teacher and conductor. By purchasing these books, you are about to join my journey, a journey that has been both exciting and successful. This trip requires you to listen, watch, and be mindful of your students' vocal needs. You should begin your travels by developing your own vocal skills. Once that is accomplished, the travel plan I have in mind will be exciting, a wonderful journey you will not want to miss as you learn to properly develop and supervise your students' singing, building them into flourishing singers and artists.

My "musical philosophy" in the first edition of *Innocent Sounds* has not changed. Fine, thoughtful teaching is simply fine, thoughtful teaching. Imagination and the willingness to discover a vocal solution must always be at the heart of your teaching journey. I have yet to meet a student whom I could not teach to sing, including people who are hearing-impaired. The one thing I have recently discovered is that a conductor's arrogance can get in the way of fine teaching and music making. A fine sense of self, with a healthy ego and a real knowledge of your students, will change your teaching style for years to come. By being a music teacher, you have already developed an artistic legacy. If you put your students and great literature at the hallmark of your teaching, you will become a successful traveler.

PART I

Training the Young Singer at Five and Six Years of Age

Guidelines to Improve Teaching Skills

- Chapter 1** Why Train a Young Child to Sing?
- Chapter 2** Starting the Musical Experience
- Chapter 3** Rehearsal Routine and Exercises
- Chapter 4** Tone Building and Intonation
- Chapter 5** Theory and Score Instruction
- Chapter 6** Musical Games and Activity Sheets
- Chapter 7** Guidelines for Literature

1

WHY TRAIN A YOUNG CHILD TO SING?



*“Once you are interested in shaping children’s lives,
you will never be interested in anything else again. There is nothing greater.”*

~ Isadora Duncan



The Reasons for Training Young Voices

Training the young, inexperienced children’s ensemble is artistically important, universally powerful, and tremendously gratifying. By training children of this age to sing properly you begin to mold their future beyond music, developing intellectual and perceptive skills as well as coordination and creative capabilities. Singing, which carries with it words of great power, directly relates to physical and social development, contributing to an individual child’s greater knowledge of the world.

Exposing a child to the discipline of correct singing, when they have very few bad habits, is an important concept to embrace as a conductor/teacher. While you prepare them for the more advanced ensemble experience, you are fostering the child’s ability to:

- communicate feelings
- develop coordination
- build concentration and attention span
- improve sequencing skills
- work on reading and math proficiency
- broaden language skills and vocabulary
- create awareness of standard repertory sung worldwide

Objective 4: Music That Encourages Legato Singing

If you are going to encourage artistic singing on longer phrase shapes, with a beautiful tone, you must select music that trains the children to perfect the long *legato* line on air that is connected to the words. When children sing energetically they often sing with a shouted tone quality. This is vocally unhealthy. *Legato* singing will advance their breathing techniques.

Objective 5: Music That Stresses Score and Articulation Marks

Learning to interpret the score and understand what these marks mean is extremely important to the future of a child's music reading skills. Even though students will be taught by rote in the early stages of their musical training, they can still learn to understand and interpret the symbols in the score. This is an area where high expectations are imperative.

These five pedagogical objectives are taken from *Choral Excellence for Treble Voices~Your Guide to the World's Finest Choral Literature*. This on-going project includes both a book and accompanying website of teaching annotations with historic observations in ten pedagogical areas. It is published by Choral Excellence in Waitsfield, Vermont, and is available for order or renewal on the Choral Excellence website www.choralexcellence.com.

Suggested Activities for the Conductor

Research and find books that contain timeless melodies appropriate for this impressionable age. Keep the pedagogical areas foremost in your mind when collecting these materials.

Nursery rhymes, patriotic songs, canons, carols, easy songs in foreign languages, folksongs, and simple classics by composers of all periods are appropriate materials to collect.

Seek out old series books such as *Making Music Your Own* from Silver Burdett or *Exploring Music* from Prentice Hall. These books are filled with timeless songs children love to sing. Many of them are out of print, but can often be found in local schools.

Find collections of known classics that include a variety of composers and songs both sacred and secular. Children need to become aware of what we call "music of our historic past."

Contemporary music is also important. A commitment to training children to sing music composed by living composers helps them become more aware of the world around them.

2

STARTING THE MUSICAL EXPERIENCE



"You are you!"

~ Margaret Wise Brown



Forming a Kinderchorus

When forming an ensemble of five- and six-year-olds it is important that you are organized. This is true with all choral organizations, but with the very young singer it takes on a renewed meaning. Thoughtful planning is a critical element in reassuring the parents that these children are in good and knowledgeable hands with you as the conductor. For many children, this may be the first organization they have joined in which group instruction is used.

At the end of this chapter, you will find sample forms to photocopy and use to help you organize all of your ensembles. The samples included are enrollment and volunteer forms, a vocal evaluation form, and several release documents, as well as a sample welcome letter, which provides information about the ensemble. All of these papers should be filled out by the parents and mailed back to you before the interview and vocal evaluation.

The Parent Interview

The parent interview, in conjunction with the student vocal evaluation, provides you with a clear understanding of your parents and the talent pool available to you with the children. When setting up your schedule for the parent interview and vocal evaluation, arrange these sessions in 15-to-20-minute intervals. Schedule the candidates in groups of three, with an assistant to help organize the paper work as you talk with the parents about the ensemble and your vocal goals for the children.

The parent interview is more important than the vocal evaluation. If you have a group of parents that are always trying to tamper with your program, you will constantly feel frustrated. You need to assess your parents in the first five minutes of the interview. We are working under the premise that all children can be taught to sing. However, you must remember that every child comes with parents or guardians, and that the parents need to become a positive asset to reward your program. You must determine if the parents are:

- cooperative
- team players
- demonstrating genuine interest in the choral art
- not placing their child on an artistic platform

If the parent displays any negative qualities, the interview should be followed up with a private phone call. In this conversation, you need to express your mission for all the children and that everyone must work together for the common good. You may have to say something like: “Your child seems to have some musical talent, but there is a large talent pool and everyone needs to cooperate and respond with understanding and a sense of fair play if the artistic organization is to be a success.” You will find that most parents will back off after this conversation and perhaps become some of your greatest backers. Most of these parents will either shape up or take their child out of the artistic experience. It is a loss for the child, but you can't have parents involved who are divisive.

The parent interview will allow you some time to meet and know the parents while, at the same time, identifying people as volunteers for:

- room set-up
- rehearsal supervision
- arrangements for snack and juice break
- rehearsal clean-up
- robes or performance wardrobe supervision
- performance assistance
- music library assistance

The Vocal Evaluation

While the parent interview is continuing with your assistant, you can begin the vocal evaluation. If you have no assistant, you may want to extend the vocal evaluations to 25-to-30-minute intervals. Conduct the vocal evaluation with all three children

THE CHAPTER IN CAPSULE



It is imperative to the success of your adventure in training the young singer that you be completely organized.



The interview and vocal evaluation should be non-threatening and positive, putting the child and parents at ease.



The size of the ensemble should be limited to no more than 10–15 children. If you find yourself over that number, form two small classes that can be combined for performance.



You need to carefully pick your staff and music assistant. They need to be organized and have specific duties.



Beyond teaching, communication is one of the most important things you will do. All families have busy calendars. It is critical to the lifeblood of your organization that they be kept informed.



Start a Parent Advisory Committee to help you run your choir and insure its success.



Always have your equipment in place and the room carefully set up with a singing area and a movement or activity area for the children.

3

REHEARSAL ROUTINE AND EXERCISES



“Teaching music is a human experience.”

~ Shirley Mullins



Getting the Young Ensemble Started

Most children at this stage have had either very little or no experience with formal training in singing. They may have been in a pre-school where singing occurred, but usually on a less formal basis. Training the young child to sing properly, to meet their full vocal potential, takes care and thoughtful instruction. The most important factor is to treat all of them as full-blown artists regardless of their limited vocal experience.

Creating a Playful Learning Environment

Creating a playful environment does not mean to imply bedlam. Children love structure and discipline, but they should be taught to have fun while they are learning. When making music with children, the word structure takes on new meaning. There must be a routine developed that leads everyone to feel comfortable and successful with making music. A joyful atmosphere includes the following qualities:

- cheerfulness
- discipline
- focus
- teamwork
- effort
- humor
- physical expression

How does one create a playful environment that is both disciplined and structured? Develop a vocal routine that is appropriate while being both carefree and challenging. It must be a routine that contains key technical ingredients that assist young children in becoming better singers. This section of the rehearsal should be fun, but filled with high expectations.

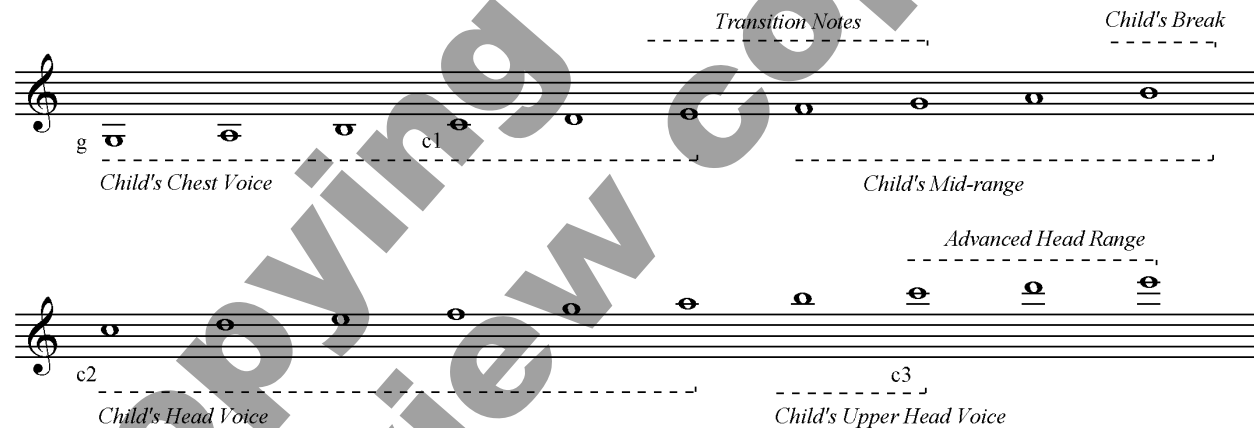
A Vocal Routine Filled with Joy and Challenge

A healthy, productive vocal routine must start the first moment the children come through the door. They must be greeted with warmth and taken to their assigned seat. They should be allowed to chat and relax as they begin to know each other. No more than five minutes should elapse before you reintroduce yourself and start the rehearsal. *Always start on time!*

ROUTINE 1

The first set of games helps the children understand pitch and register. A range chart of the child's voice is notated below:

Chart of the Range of the Child's Voice



Have everyone stand up and play whooping, sighing, and nonsense word syllable games. They may feel shy or silly at first but get them to imitate your tone and sounds at various registers. They may giggle, but insist they imitate you exactly. Lots of hand motions and body movements are critical in this activity. Keep all of these games organized, yet fun. (Read Chapters 2 and 3 of *Innocent Sounds, Book II* for additional exercises, suggestions, and more extensive observations.)

Make up some personal nonsense games that are within your own comfort zone. Again, when creating your own games, the use of the body is critical. Some suggested games follow.

5. Once that is perfected, add the clapping, the marching, and the singing all at the same time.
6. Again, limit your time with these exercises, adding a little more each week.

G A M E 3

The Spiny Posture Game

Good posture in both a sitting and standing position is important if you are going to develop fine singing skills in your young singers. Good posture can be made into a game as well. By encouraging uniform posture you are developing their ability to become a team. You want to teach them to look like an ensemble from the very beginning, and good singing posture will start this process. Posture is also important to healthy vocal singing.

Teaching Suggestions for the Spiny Posture Game

Stacking the spine works toward refined posture while teaching the children to relax. Begin the singing routine by having the children “stack their spine.” To stack the spine properly do the following:

1. Put your hands up in the air over your head.
2. Go up on your toes and swing your hands from side to side. Allow your shoulders to rotate naturally as you move your hands.
3. Drop your upper body down like a dishrag with your legs straight, and bounce lightly while rotating the hands and arms up and down. Keep your shoulders relaxed as you rotate your arms and shoulders.
4. Now slowly start to stand up, while stacking the spine one vertebra at a time.

The Spiny Posture Game: Stand on toes



Drop down and stack



4

TONE BUILDING AND INTONATION



“To build an outstanding children’s choir, the conductor must understand the basic tenets of singing. Exquisite tone, effective breath support, clear diction, musical phrasing, and perfect intonation are among the concepts that need to be nurtured during every rehearsal.”

~ Jean Ashworth Bartle

Tone Building and the Young Singer

Many conductors do not realize or grasp the importance of building tone in the very young singer. Some voices will come to you with a clear sound that has some power, but in general this is not the case. Their bodies are small, and as an end result they sing small. Teaching a child to project with a tone of great beauty and clarity is all part of being a fine vocal curator, nurturing the voice to project with power and beauty.

Vocal exercises should be selected and designed to build tone and power even in the smallest and most timid child. These exercises need to be introduced in a proper sequence and at the right time in the child’s vocal development. When proper singing is introduced, children can go a long way in developing a beautiful tone with fine intonation. The relaxation and breathing exercises are important to the child’s ability to “wake up the voice”, helping them to discover their full vocal potential.

You have already taught the children to sing ascending and descending scales in various key signatures, and the simple “Alleluia” in a descending and ascending pattern. These exercises are important to integrate into the singing process, improving their intonation and better understanding of refined pitch. Teaching children to sing with vocal agility and flexibility is critical to individual vocal development at all stages of their singing. By introducing flexibility exercises to children at a young age, you will guarantee a sound that is ringing and quite clear in quality. These exercises will de-



The Application

1. Ask the children to stand in a straight line in the activity area.
2. Have them cup their hands around their mouth to make a megaphone shape.
3. Sing the descending scale-wise passage of the first part on “NOO”, “NOH” with centered vowels connecting then to “ZEE-AH” in the same key. There should be a sip breath between Part 1 and 2 of this exercise. This should be sung as quickly as the children can manage to sing with power while working their tongue flexibility.
4. Have them focus on a point on the wall and sing to that place, working to project their voices on their air in pure head voice.
5. Once “NOO”, “NOH”, and “ZEE-AH” are mastered and projected into the room, sing the “DOO” and “ONYION” section of the exercise. The combination of this group of syllables has similar tongue positions which will build the power while working flexibility and their vocal acoustic.
6. As you work this exercise, ask the children to continue singing while stepping further and further back into the room, thereby forcing them to project their voices a longer distance.
7. Start this exercise on d2 and go up to g2 and beyond, and down below the break to g1.

Teaching Suggestions

1. You should begin to use this exercise once you have gained their confidence and they have learned to sing in tune. If you do this exercise before that time, it will be confusing and you will not accomplish your vocal objective. (For suggestions on how to deal with the uncertain or out-of-tune singer, see the techniques and observations included in Chapter 7 of *Innocent Sounds, Book II*.)

5

THEORY AND SCORE INSTRUCTION



*“First of all you must use your ears
to take some of the burden from your eyes.”*

~ Carlos Castaneda



Young children have minds like a sponge and can learn critical theoretical aspects of music very quickly. Although many of them have limited reading skills, you can introduce elements of the score and basic music theory from day one of your teaching time with them. Theory and score instruction should be simple and straightforward, something that is ongoing. As you build their theoretical knowledge stone by stone, the dialogue should be clear and easy to understand.

The teaching of the score should encompass everything on the printed page, all of the elements found in the music they are singing. Following are the basic skills to cover on a regular basis:

- clef signs
- meter signatures
- key signatures, both major and minor
- note values
- letter names of notes
- score articulation marks
- dynamics
- Italian score indications (to name a few)

accelerando; poco ritard.; crescendo; moderato; andante; vivace

This may appear to be a lot of overwhelming information, but young children can learn these score basics early on, preparing them to begin to read music when a score is finally placed in their hands. The information should be introduced on a repeated basis in which the theoretical aspects of the rehearsal are presented as part of their ordinary routine. Always put all of the elements up on the board in a staff so they begin to see this musical information. When they hold a score in their hands for the first time, they will already have a working knowledge of what they are holding.

Suggested Score Dialogue

1. *What clef are we singing in?*
2. *What does this time signature mean?*
3. *How many sharps (or flats) are in this key signature?*
4. *What is the key of this piece? (If minor play the tonic chord and ask them if it sounds happy or sad).*
5. *This is the first note of the piece. Please recite the music alphabet starting with g1 on the second line and discover what note we are starting on.*
6. *Is the starting note above g1 or below g1? Do we go backwards or forwards in the music alphabet?*

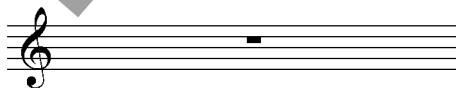
The dialogue written above is only a small sample of the question and answer dialogue you can have with the children. You can have this dialogue with the introduction of a new piece of music or one they already know.

Supervising a Young Singer's Theory Instruction

The basic points to make when introducing and teaching the major theory elements are suggested below. Although you are teaching these songs by rote, the children need to begin to recognize certain theoretical aspects of a musical score that will stay with them a lifetime. The key here is to develop their theoretical memory just as you expand their vocal memory.

Learning the Names of the Lines and Spaces

1. *You sing in the G Clef and this is what a G Clef looks like.* Place the Clef Signature on the board on a music staff that you have previously drawn, if necessary. The reason it is called the G Clef is because it assigns the note G to the line of the staff that is encircled by the curl of the "G" symbol.



6

MUSICAL GAMES AND ACTIVITY SHEETS



“The more I study listening, the more convinced I am that those who know how to listen are the exceptions.”

~ Alfred Tomatis, M.D.



Playing classic musical games with your young choral ensemble goes beyond simple activity. It gives you an opportunity to work on the children’s:

- ▶ rhythmic skills
- ▶ sequencing
- ▶ coordination
- ▶ ability to concentrate

These games are also excellent for building social skills. Although often planned at the end of a rehearsal, they also can be used if the children seem listless or appear to have lost their concentration. A class of young children can be turned around on a dime, restoring a group of children to higher productivity, when used in the middle of a rehearsal.

There are often siblings in the room, watching the rehearsal, and they can often be drawn into the game or games. In the end, the children may include these games in their home routine or during play with other children in their neighborhood. You always want to throw that large net!

All the music in this chapter can be found in a wonderful collection entitled, *The Great Children’s Songbook*, edited by David Eddleman. Although the games have been embellished to fit the needs of this particular age group, many are also the creation of this author. The suggested games below are in no way meant to be comprehensive, but represent some of the author’s favorites. Think of these activity games as, “The work of children is to play!”

G A M E 1

Did You Ever See a Lassie?

Did You Ever See a Lassie

Traditional Scottish

Sing Playfully

The musical score is written in 3/4 time and consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody starts with a pick-up note (quarter note) followed by two quarter notes in each measure. The lyrics are: "Did you ev - er see a lass - ie, a lass - ie, a". The second staff continues the melody with lyrics: "lass - ie, did you ev - er see a lass - ie go this way and". The third staff has lyrics: "that? Go this way and that way and this way and". The fourth staff concludes with lyrics: "that way. Did you ev - er see a lass - ie go this way and that?". Chords are indicated above the staff: F, C7/E, F, C7/E, F, mp, C7/E, F, mf, C, F, f, C7, F.

Did you ev - er see a lass - ie, a lass - ie, a
 lass - ie, did you ev - er see a lass - ie go this way and
 that? Go this way and that way and this way and
 that way. Did you ev - er see a lass - ie go this way and that?

This is a game that develops the children's creativity, as they have to make up different gestures. Although the song is in 3/4 meter, the children must think the rhythm in pulses of one. This activity can actually be done at their chairs and is an excellent choice to use when the children's attention span has dwindled. They have great fun with this activity as they build their rhythmic skills.

Teaching Suggestions

1. Introduce the concept of three by counting and clapping 1-2-3. We have three beats in each measure.
2. This piece starts with a pick-up, a partial measure with one beat.
3. This piece has three beats or quarter notes in each measure.
4. It takes two eighth notes to make a quarter note. Put three quarters and six eighths on the board.
5. Point out that this game contains uneven rhythms because of the dots attached to quarter notes, making these notes dotted quarter notes.
6. Teach the melody carefully with the proper rhythms.

THE CHAPTER IN CAPSULE



Musical games with children go beyond basic activity. Training the children to play and sing these games affords you the opportunity to work on their rhythmic skills, sequencing, coordination, and ability to concentrate.



It is important to purchase collections of these activity games and songbooks, training children to know songs of our oral history from all over the world.



Recordings of these songs often sound shouted (singing that has improper vowel formation) in tone. They do not offer a good vocal model. These songs should be sung with artistic integrity.



These pieces are filled with theory opportunities that help develop a young child's knowledge and understanding of the music score, even when singers are being taught by rote.



The songs that are listed have *Teaching Suggestions* as well as *How to Play This Game*. In adding new songs that you like, go through the discipline of doing this for yourself.



Develop Activity Sheets for home use with your families. Siblings are often in rehearsal and love to play the music games with the chorus members. Giving them activities that the entire family can do is very important.



The activities should have a great deal of variety. Make suggestions that are “out of the box.”

7

GUIDELINES FOR LITERATURE



*“Music has charms to soothe a savage beast,
to soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak.”*

~ William Congreve



The music you select for this young choir is critical to their musical success. The literature must be of great pedagogical value, enhancing the child’s capability as a singer and an eventual interpreter and reader of the score. It is important to introduce young children to music of the world’s oral heritage, allowing them to sing with people of all ages, including family who already know the song. Singing is about sharing their voice with others, and having the knowledge and skill to sing at a moment’s notice. Great literature is important to introduce at every age, but this first introduction must instill an abiding love and respect for fine repertoire.

Most of the music you will select at this point in a child’s music instruction is in the public domain. Song sheets should go home with the children so parents can help them practice and work on the pieces you have selected.

Look at Singing as Four Levels of Development

Although we are dealing with the very young singer in this section of a three-part book project, it is important that we keep the whole singer in mind in terms of vocal development. All singers, with proper instruction, will grow and mature at different rates. Each individual person needs to be carefully evaluated and challenged appropriately. The four levels of singing in treble voices are briefly discussed below and follow the large choral literature project of the book and website *Choral Excellence for Treble Voices*.

Level 1: The Beginning Singer

The beginning singer can be a person of any age, but it definitely applies to the five- and six-year-old unless they have uncanny musical abilities. There are music prodigies including gifted singers. These singers are rare but they do exist. They still need to learn age-appropriate materials that will become part of their permanent repertory.



Level 2: The Intermediate Singer

The intermediate singer can be a person of any age, but has had some significant musical training and requires music and experiences of greater challenge. Many singers up to the age of 12 or 13 often fall into this category.



Level 3: The Advanced Singer

The advanced singer belongs in any ensemble of great ability, ready to sing most literature that is within his/her focus or range. These are singers of thirteen and older, in the formative teen-age years. This music must be full of challenge and magic. Include music of all periods and in all languages by some of the greatest composers both living and of our historic past.



Level 4: The Women's Chorus

The women's chorus sings music at all levels of difficulty, including music that would be only appropriate with the adult female singer. This level includes college choirs and community women's choruses as well as the more advanced teen-age ensemble. Women come to this singing experience at all levels of capability and should be treated accordingly, working on any bad habits or poor vocal habits. Many of the exercises and activities with the children's ensemble can be used with this organization as well. Understanding and applying some of the activities and exercises in the other three levels is critical to the growth and development of a fine women's chorus.



8

CONTINUING
THE MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

*“In an instant, music can uplift our soul.
It awakens within us the spirit of prayer, compassion, and love.
It clears our minds and has been known to make us smarter.”*

~ Don Campbell, THE MOZART EFFECT

Teaching the Seven- and Eight-Year-Old

Training the advancing ensemble has far-reaching consequences in terms of their knowledge, music scholarship, and artistry. The major difference between the Kinderchorus and this age group is that the seven- and eight-year-olds can read. As a result, the score becomes an integral part of their music experience.

Many of the children in this age group may not have been fortunate enough to be in a musical ensemble when they were five and six years old. If that is the case, a lot of the techniques suggested in Part I of this book will apply to this age group as well.

The by-products, in terms of character development through singing, remain the same. Their self-confidence will only expand and become more enhanced. These children will have more advanced coordination and longer attention spans. High expectations are still critical to ensure the children’s continued artistic progress.

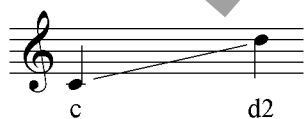
This is the perfect time to train the children to read music. In order to achieve this goal, the score must always be in their hands. Word sheets are truly disrespectful to their developing artistry and should not be used as part of the serious training of your choral ensemble.

Guidelines for Selecting Repertoire for this Age Group

1. Select music that is more advanced but still age appropriate. The repertoire must include melodies they should know and be able to sing with other singers at a moments notice. The list should also include music of greater challenge.
2. Choose art songs, oratorio selections, and other great repertoire by composers of our historic past.
3. Include fine contemporary music that expands the child's knowledge of the score as you build their musical accuracy.
4. Select scores or commissioned music by living American composers.
5. Build the child's knowledge of our American musical heritage by singing music by composers such as William Billings, Lowell Mason, Stephen Foster, and others of similar nature.
6. Continue to select folk music and spirituals that are more advanced in difficulty.
7. Include music in foreign languages such as Spanish, German, French, or Italian, advancing the child's knowledge of music from other countries. There should be at least two to three pieces in a foreign language in their folders at all times; one of these pieces should be in Latin. Their diction skills should also be increased.
 - ▶ Latin has no diphthongs; therefore it will help with their vowel placement and acoustic growth.
 - ▶ Unison Latin pieces are ideal for building a ringing headtone in young children.
8. Continue to select music based on pedagogical objectives that will increase the children's singing capabilities. Add the following two new pedagogical objectives to the list of five pedagogical areas introduced in Part I of this book.

Music That Enhances the Mid-Range

You must be relentless in developing this area with children. In general, treble singers between the ages of 8 and 11 all have a crystal-like tone quality. They can also begin to explore and discover different registers of their voice. This exploration will help you determine which part they should sing—what is natural in their own personal vocal development. Start at middle C with all exercises and, when the sound starts to spark with clarity, vocalize them down into the middle tessitura to g1 and then back up again.



The point is to keep them singing through their natural break. Pick pieces that run from c1 to d2 to build that mid-range. Working this range is best on “DOO”. Faster air is required in this tessitura, but they must avoid a shouted, forced tone qual-

9

INCREASING THE REHEARSAL ROUTINE



"I believe that a nation that allows music to be expendable is in danger of becoming expendable itself."

~ Richard Dreyfuss

At This Age It Is More about the Score

All of the suggestions made in Chapter 2 of this book should be applied to the formation of a choir of this age group. The vocal evaluation and parent interview should be handled in the same manner. The use of forms and organization structure should also remain the same. Personnel and organization infrastructure holds true as well. That being said, this age ensemble can be taught alone or with a pianist as your assistant. These children are more independent and do not need the attention the younger children required.

Children of this age have begun to read. It is imperative that scores be available to all of them. Using scores can directly increase their knowledge and skill in:

- vocabulary
- spelling
- reading fluency

When at all possible, the children should have the experience of being conducted. They learn so much more about the music and how to interpret the score in front of them when you are conducting. A by-product of conducting and being able to directly observe them is that you are much more aware of their abilities and inabilities.

The Size of the Ensemble

The size of this ensemble can be larger. If you have an accompanist, a parent assistant, and the proper space, this ensemble could number thirty singers. This choir will also require an activity area in which to build their vocal acoustic and tone quality. Make your decision about numbers based on the ability of the children. Continue to provide brief social breaks or events to develop a friendly community as you build the child's interpersonal skills.

Organizing the Music and Folders

Organizing the music into folders for the children's use is one of those critical areas that must be carefully planned and executed. Because preparing their folders requires a lot of work, a librarian or parent helper would be extremely valuable. If the folders are not prepared properly, precious rehearsal time can be lost because the children are struggling with their music. For the children to be able to use their scores easily, the notebooks need to be organized in the following way:



1. Everyone should have a one-inch black binder. Even though they will perform with their music memorized, the uniformity is very important. They need to look and feel like a choir if they are going to perform as an artistic ensemble of expanding capability.
2. Dividers should be placed in all the notebooks. You can divide the music in different ways. Below is one suggestion:
 - ▶ sacred
 - ▶ secular
 - ▶ seasonal
 - ▶ extended works
3. Every folder and every piece of music should be numbered. Every child gets a numbered folder that *stays with them throughout their years in the ensemble*. They will be marking their music and will be referring to these marks over the years. This is particularly true when you repeat some music from year to year.
4. The music should be three-hole-punched and placed in the folder alphabetized by title under the suggested categories in number two. Organizing the music this way makes it easier for them to find their music quickly and saves you valuable rehearsal time.

10

MORE ADVANCED EXERCISES



“One fundamental principle needs to underlie all aural teaching and teaching procedures: students must be taught and constantly reminded to listen to everything else except themselves.”

~ James Jordan and Matthew Mehaffey

The exercises in Chapter 4, Part I of this book should be used with this ensemble. They should be introduced in sequence, with advancing techniques forming a foundation that grows much like a pyramid, building a comfort zone for all of the singers. Playfulness in using these vocal exercises is still critical to their success. Variety also plays a role, but routine is an imperative component of fine vocal health. It is important to start this vocal routine early in their singing lives. At ages five and six you have trained them to discover their voices and sing with an elegant tone quality and fine intonation. Now you are going to expand their vocal capability, helping them to develop agile, powerful voices.

A Solid Vocal Routine for Tone Building

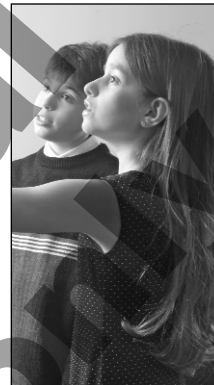
Tone building is not a mystery: it is a carefully thought out sequence of vocal events that slowly builds the voice. The voice is like a well-lubricated engine. Once the routine is in place and the exercises begin to flow, the vocal color and power begin to expand and develop.

The following sequence of exercises will nurture your singers for a lifetime of healthy, resilient singing. The exercises below will remain in place for the intermediate and advanced singer as you introduce exercises and sequences of increased difficulty. See Chapter 5 (Breathing Exercises) and Chapter 6 (Vocal Exercises) of *Innocent Sounds, Book II* for a more complete explanation of how to use these exercises.

A Sequence of Breathing and Vocal Exercises to Advance the Voice

Each of these exercises should be done quickly, moving in sequence through the entire group of activities. The children should feel free to use their arms and hands during the warm-up. In fact, in many cases, the entire body should be used. Encourage them to move around the room as the vocal exercises begin to liberate the body and the voice.

- hand over the head in a swan-like position
- both hands rotating in a circle around the face
- walk through the room while singing to free the voice



ACTIVITY 1

Let's Sigh—Then Stack the Spine (The Spiny Posture Game)

We have thoroughly discussed these two exercises in Chapter 3. This age child can execute these two activities very quickly and efficiently. It is important that you work to remove all the tension from their bodies as they drop like dishrags on the sigh and then stack the spine one vertebrae at a time. These are flexibility exercises that help the singers relax. (See Chapter 3, page 53 for suggestions on how to execute this activity.)

ACTIVITY 2

Alternate Nee-Nah with Yee-Yah

This exercise should sound focused and ringing. The “N” and “Y” should be carefully articulated as you work this activity. The “EE” must sound right on the front of the face with a ringing tone quality. Have the children explore the full range of their voice by doing the exercise both high and low. (See Chapter 3 for suggestions on how to execute this activity.)



1. Use the megaphone game to expand the tone.
2. Ask them to frame the sides of the eyes with their hands, working to send the tone through their eyes.
3. Have them swing their hands in alternation up over their heads as they walk and sing this exercise.

11

TONE BUILDING AND INTONATION



*“Music should humbly seek to please:
within these limits great beauty may well be found.*

~ Claude Debussy

Vocal Acoustics

Vocal Acoustics is defined as a centered tone that sounds powerful and focused, but not forced. It is one of those musical elements that must be concentrated on throughout every rehearsal, or the choir’s tone and intonation will not grow. You think a difficult score is your challenge, but intonation and vocal acoustics are much more formidable. If a choir cannot sing perfectly in tune with a tone of great power and beauty, then you are wasting your singer’s time. Anemic, fuzzy singing that sounds listless and out-of-tune is the bane of a conductor’s existence and must be addressed on an ongoing basis. Part II of *Innocent Sounds, Book II* addresses this subject in a thorough way. The entire section should be read and studied carefully, helping you to realize a full grasp of the musical elements that make for fine intonation and tone building.

Elements That Assure Fine Intonation~Building a Choir’s Tone

To assure fine intonation and a beautiful tonal acoustic that will radiate throughout every performance, a number of elements should be present. Each member of the choir must be taught:

- in-tune singing
- correct breathing
- well-enunciated consonants
- pure vowels
- musical accuracy
- physical and vocal energy

The Instrument Is the Body

It is your job to train the whole voice, which includes the entire body. There are advanced techniques that will make this happen beyond breathing and vocal exercises, which are included both in Part I, Chapter 3 of this book, and in the acoustics chapters of *Innocent Sounds, Book II*. Some of the basics for you to work with your singers to grow the tone and intonation are listed below.

Walking as They Sing

- should walk relaxed
- keep back straight
- swing arms naturally
- use arms up over your head
- stay on the beat

Using the Hands and Arms

- over the head
- swing arms from side to side as they march
- shaking their hands as they march

Relaxation Techniques

- stacking the spine
- marching
- touching the toes as they sing while sitting on the floor in a spread eagle position and touching across to the opposite foot
- touching the toes as they sing while standing



All of these activities will force the children to use their diaphragms while they sing. You may feel like you are running a gym class, but you are actually encouraging them to sing without tension.

My past student and colleague Alyssa Sullivan Volker makes the following observations on movement and the voice:

“Moving while singing serves a dual purpose; it literally frees up the breath mechanism, allowing for more support, while it also frees up the mind from focusing only on the voice. Like chewing gum while walking or rubbing the tummy while patting your head, it forces you to multi-task and eliminates some of the mental hang-ups often inherent in singing. I tell my students, ‘Get out of your head! Your voice is not in your brain, it is in your body!’”

12

BUILDING READING SKILLS AND SCORE INTERPRETATION



*“To begin with, one must understand what the musical score is.
It is a script, like the script for a play.
Musical performance is an effort, an attempt by one or more players
to interpret the musical composition on the basis of its script or score.”*

~ David Barnett

Knowing the Score

Interpreting and learning to read the score is the greatest gift you can give your students beyond the magnificent gift of singing. Teaching the theoretic aspects of music can be daunting, but it is really quite simple. On a personal level, if my more advanced singers can read the score better than I, I feel I have truly done my job.

Characteristics to Look for in Pieces to Teach Music Reading

There are some very specific characteristics to look for in selecting pieces that will train young children to read music. If the pieces are too difficult, the children give up and will never learn to read the score. It is your job to make sense of it for them by giving them a steady diet of score work that is direct and simple. Constant review and questions that keep reminding them of the score elements are critical. Scores for music reading should have the following elements:

- ▶ music in the more basic keys such as C, and the basic sharp keys of G and D Major
- ▶ music in the basic flat keys of F, B-Flat, E-Flat, and A-Flat Major
- ▶ meter signatures that relate: 4/4 (common time), 2/4, 3/4, and 6/8.
- ▶ pieces that have a lot of stepwise movement or basic intervals they can understand so the choir can easily read octaves, thirds, fifths, scale-wise passages, and repeated notes

Avoid selecting pieces in minor. Make sure they can read with ease in the major keys first. Reading in minor keys will be added at the more intermediate level.

Begin with a Song They Already Know

Begin the theory process by reviewing or introducing the theoretic concepts in Part I of this book. You may need to go back to the basics on numerous occasions. They now have a score in their hand. Begin by selecting a score in C or G Major with a basic meter signature such as 2/4, 4/4 or 6/8. Pick a piece they are already familiar with. Let's pick our old friend *Sing, Gaily Sing!* Start with the following theory drill:

Theory Drill

1. Music has five lines and four spaces. What is it called?
(a staff)
Draw a staff on the board.
2. Place a G Clef on the staff. What is this symbol called?
(G clef)
Why is it called a G Clef?
(because the circle of the G clef falls on the G line)
3. We have a music alphabet. Can someone recite it for me?
(The music alphabet is A B C D E F G and begins again with A.)
4. If G is on the second line of the staff; where is A?
(on the second space)
Can someone come up and place a whole note on the A space?
Now, tell me where the first A is in your music.
(It is the second and third notes of the piece on the word "gaily".)
5. Let us label all the lines and spaces on the staff with a letter name. Point out that when you go up the staff you go forwards in the music alphabet. When you go down the staff, you go backwards in the music alphabet.
6. Practice going forward and backward in the alphabet a few times with the children chanting out loud.
7. Now place the F# on the board. Review the order of sharps put forth in Part I, Chapter 5 of this book and the rules for finding the key in sharps.

13

GUIDELINES FOR LITERATURE



“When using fine choral literature as a jumping off point for instruction, each piece becomes a lightening rod that encourages artistry and excellence in singing at a pace that surprises both the instructor and the student.”

~ Marie Stultz

Choral literature for this age group must be rewarding as you train them to understand the score. It is important to consider the seven pedagogical areas when selecting their music. Repertoire should include music of all periods and styles, as well as music in foreign languages. The music literature you select should help the children better understand the “world stage.” The music selection should be a bit more sophisticated in nature.

The guidelines for the selection of choral literature and how to evaluate editions are thoroughly discussed in Part III of *Innocent Sounds, Book II*. The criteria and suggestions will help the conductor select music of high quality that is appropriate for this age group. The repertory list includes published music in both the sacred and secular category. Most of the pieces on this list have been annotated with teaching suggestions and can be found on the website available from Choral Excellence. The asterisk in front of some of the recommended pieces indicates sacred music. For additional resources, see *Innocent Sounds, Book II*.

Folksongs and Spirituals

Rise, Children, Gonna Praise the Lord (Burkhardt)
**Sandmännchen (Brahms/ Stultz)*
She's Like the Swallow (Vaughan Williams)
The Rich Old Lady (Vaughan Williams)
The Sally Gardens (Britten)
Two Welsh Tunes for Treble Voices (Haydn)

Pedagogical Areas

Midrange
Legato
Legato
 Diction/Tone Builder
Legato
 Vowels

Carols

A Cradle Song (DeLong)
A New Year Carol (Britten)
Balulalow (Warlock)
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (Rameau)
Ding Dong! Merrily on High (Wood)
Donkey Carol (Rutter)
**Il est né le divin Enfant (Fauré)*
Lo, How a Rose (Praetorius/ Stultz)
Shall We Gather by the River (Copland)
The Birds (Britten)
'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime (Hinton)
Wandering Kings (Carter)
Zumba, Zumba (Stultz)

Pedagogical Areas

Vowels
Legato
 Vowels
Legato
 Accuracy
 Headtone
 Diction/Tone
 Headtone
 Mid-Range
 Chest Range
 Headtone
Legato
 Mid-Range

Simple Rounds

**Canons for the Church Year (Burkhardt~3 Volumes)*
**Dona nobis pacem*
**Hashivenu*
Old Abram Brown
Shalom Chaverim (Burkhardt)
Song Common to All~Pammelia (Ravenscroft)

Pedagogical Areas

Mid-Range
 Vowels
 Vowels
 Score/Articulation Marks
 Mid-Range
 Mid-Range