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Teaching Kids to Sing
Chapter 4: The Child Singer
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Summary

I. Characteristics of vocal development

A. The Preschool Singer

- i. Infants develop imitation called “musical babbling”, early cries and coos turn into musical babbling that has definite pitches frequently repeated small intervals
- ii. These vocal explorations should be encouraged and responded to by adults, and with these responses, infants learn to attach meaning to their sounds
- iii. Period of approximation of singing is eighteen months to three years, and during these years tonal patterns should be introduced, an environment rich in music, and singing in upper register should be emphasized
- iv. Preschool years are important for the foundation of musical learning.

B. Physiology

- i. Breathing exercises are recommended to begin in second grade, when the breathing system of a child is ready to be developed
- ii. A child’s larynx sits higher in their throat and their lungs are horizontal which result in a higher-pitched timbre and quicker, larger amount of breath intake
- iii. As they age, the larynx lowers and the lungs become vertical and the volume increases creating deeper breathing and support, and lower-pitched timbre

C. The Elementary Singer

- i. Instruction in vocal technique should begin no later than the second grade.
- ii. Children develop bad habits without proper instruction in the process of singing. Developing good technique requires practice.
- iii. Vocal pitch-matching development is a model that aids teachers in the classroom when teaching pitch matching at a young age.

II. Vocal Parameters

A. Vocal Registers

- i. Adults trained can usually range three octaves, which are divided into registers.
- ii. Registers are used always in singing, and should be developed to combine and balance the blend between them when vocalizing.

B. Physiology

- i. The registers are usually divided into three registers; upper, middle, and lower.

- ii. The different vibrations of the chords produce registers, and range of these depends on the gender of the individual and the nature of the organ.
 - iii. No noticeable breaks from one register to the other should be present if they are developed and vocalized properly.
 - C. Child Vocal Registers
 - i. The head voice is referred as the cricothyroid-dominant register.
 - ii. The chest voice is referred to as the thyroarytenoid-dominant register. Children lacking in vocal instruction usually use their chest voice when singing, which sometimes damages their voice.
 - iii. Child singers usually have the problem of not being able to shift registers as pitch ascends.
 - iv. Developing the upper, middle, and lower registers in young singers' voices provides for exercise of the total voice and prepares the way for a healthy passage into the adolescent voice.
 - D. Singing Popular Music
 - i. This type of music advocates a "belting" singing style, which harms the singing voice of developing children, unless taught properly.
 - ii. Children should be taught to sing a variety of styles, using correct vocal registration.
- III. Vocal Quality
- A. Vocal registers influence vocal quality.
 - i. Pharyngeal resonance creates the vocal quality.
 - B. Child Vocal Quality is either loud and booming or soft and whispering.
 - i. Children should be taught the vitalization and coordination of the body in singing in order to understand how to sing properly.
 - C. Exercise and vocalizes should begin in upper register and move down to fully articulate the blending of registers.
- IV. Range and Tessitura
- A. Range refers to the number of pitches or distance between the highest and lowest pitches a person can sing.
 - i. There are two types of range: physiological and musical.
 - B. Tessitura refers to the general region of a vocal part within which most of the pitches fall.
 - C. Research on Vocal Range
 - i. Young singers ranges are wider now than they were in the past.
 - ii. Young children's songs should be pitched in a limited range, which gradually expands as children mature.
 - iii. The higher vocal register usually has a wider range for singing.
 - iv. Children should exercise both lower and upper registers.
 - D. Child Vocal Ranges and Tessituras
 - i. First-grade range is c1-c2 and tessitura is d1-a1.
 - ii. Second-grade range is b-d2 and tessitura is d1-b1.
 - iii. Third-grade range is bb-eb2 and tessitura is d1-c2.
 - iv. Fourth-grade range is a-e2 and tessitura is d1-d2.
 - v. Fifth-grade range is ab-f2 and tessitura is d1-d2.
 - vi. Sixth-grade range is g-g2 and tessitura is d1-d2.

V. Teaching a Song

- A. Most song teaching in the elementary grades is accomplished by rote instruction. Music reading becomes a greater part as students mature.
- B. Immersion
 - i. Teaching a song by presenting it several times before asking students to sing
 - ii. Teacher should model the song to their students, introducing it on neutral syllables, words, and solfege.
- C. Whole-Part-Whole
 - A. All song teaching begin first with modeling the text, especially when diction is important, then sing melody with solfege syllables, a neutral syllable, and words.
 - B. Elementary teachers should teach their students by rote and by sight.

Discussion

Infants cry and coo, doing what this book calls “musical babbling”. These sounds they make need to be responded to and encouraged, so they begin singing as a toddler and can develop their voices. Introducing tonal patterns and modeling songs in preschool and kindergarten is crucial to the development of young children’s singing voices. Since I want to be an elementary music teacher, this chapter was very influential to me and made me truly understand why it is important to begin children singing so young. In order for students to continue to grow as musicians, instruction needs to begin in the early ages beginning vocal instruction at age eight. In my classroom, I will understand that students have different registers depending on their age and gender, and I will accommodate my lessons to involve songs that are pitched in their tessituras and grow with their maturing voices. I will teach my students by rote and by sight, so they learn both and can grow in musical literacy, as they get older. I will be sure to model and accompany my students so they will have the complete experience when singing and will produce music themselves with my teaching. From reading this chapter, I can now understand how students develop as singers and the necessary actions I must take to help them. I understand the physiological aspects of their development and can introduce this to my students so they can learn it and understand how it engages them as well.