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Teaching Kids to Sing
Chapter 5: The Adolescent Singer
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Summary

- I. The Nature of Adolescents
 - A. Neuroimaging of the adolescent brain showed that the brain undergoes a massive reorganization between a person's twelfth and twenty-fifth years of life.
 - B. Puberty begins for males at around age 12, and for females begins when they first start their menstruation
 - C. Signs of depression include isolation, feelings of separation, change in appetite, sleep, concentration, mood, or ability to enjoy things.
 - D. Teachers who are intuitive and patient, and not talking down to or embarrassing students will not alienate their students, and more than likely befriend them
 - E. Separating males and females while singing will allow them to be focused and not try to impress anyone, work out their vocal difficulties, make them more confident in their vocal abilities
 - F. Continuing music classes is important because if they drop out in these adolescent years, they will not return.
 - G. To maintain interest, teachers should continue to try new methods and show the students that their voices are valuable to the choir and program.
- II. The Adolescent Female Voice
 - A. Puberty begins earlier for females than it does for males.
 - B. The larynx does not undergo a dramatic change, but it does thicken and grow in a lateral or rounded direction. The vocal folds grow only slightly.
 - C. The main vocal characteristic is changing from a flutelike quality as a child to a husky, breathy sound.
 - D. The vocal quality of a female changes from "loud and full" to "soft and pure"
 - E. Vocal models to use are recordings of excellent child and adolescent singers. Teachers' voices are also good models as long as their voices are competent.
 - F. Vibrato is the slight, even pulsing of the voice. It is developed by teaching good vocal technique to singers, and having good breath management
 - G. Females can grow out of the breathy quality, but with proper vocal instruction.
 - H. Recommendations for instructing adolescent girls is are breathing exercises, humming, ringing quality, light approach, and practice upper range.
 - I. Vocal registers for girls are basically the same as prepubertal children.
 - J. The upper voice vocal register should be exercised and strengthened with phonation exercises.

- K. Exercise the entire voice helps to build a total voice that is healthy and balanced.
 - L. Young girls ranges and tessituras grow throughout these stages, and they should sing in the ranges that are appropriate for their voices and not stretch them until their voices have begun changing and can reach further distances.
- III. The adolescent Male Voice
- A. Many boys see singing as more of a feminine activity, and that they are not manly if they sing. Some also are bullied or teased because they are in choir and singing.
 - B. Physical indicators of male pubertal onset:
 - i. Growth of body hair
 - ii. Growth spurt
 - iii. Physical awkwardness
 - iv. Development of sex organs
 - v. Facial blemishes
 - vi. Speaking voice experiences a temporary loss of control or “cracking” and a heavy, husky quality
 - vii. The vocal folds for boys increase in length and thickness. They grow over two times the amount of females.
 - C. Male Vocal Registers
 - D. At the onset of puberty, the male voice should be exercised in the lower and upper registers.
 - E. Having young boys sing in their upper registers is the secret to developing the high school tenor.
 - F. Falsetto voice is a false voice, the product of strained vocal technique, whereas the male alto voice is the pure upper register of the male changing voice.
 - G. The passaggio is the middle register of the male vocal range.
 - H. Most high school basses are actually baritones.
 - I. Boys at adolescence are capable of greater richness and depth if they learn to energize the entire vocal instrument.
 - J. When boys have singing parts that are out of their range, the pivoting technique allows them to change parts to where it is comfortable for them to sing.
 - K. Working the top voice down and keeping the breath support firm causes the two separate registers TA and CT to blend over the natural voice “break” that occurs between the two.

Discussion

This chapter gave detailed information about the adolescent singer, and the changes that happen to them and their voices as they are maturing. It explained the way adolescents begin to act and think, and how teachers should work with them and treat them as they are going through these times. It gave specific things to watch out for as well with these young students, especially the issues of depression, low self-esteem, bullying, and other things that affect their lives and make it hard on them to want to do things. This chapter helped me understand that I need to make

sure I am there for my students, and that they should be aware of that. I need to make it a point to know if my students are having trouble or are going through some of these issues. It was nice reading about the things in this chapter, and learning how the voice changes, and what I should be cautious of when I am teaching, and how to place students in choirs. This will be very helpful to me in the future as a music educator, to know what I can do to benefit my students and help them develop their singing voices and technique. I will be aware that many students will not be interested in choir, and that it is my job to try and create interest in the eyes of the students and continually reinforce that interest as they are in choirs so they continue with their musical experiences.