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REHEARSAL REFRESHER

Musical Hierarchy and Rehearsal Techniques



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2017 New York State School Music Association Winter Conference

“Rehearsal Refresher: Musical Hierarchy & Rehearsal Techniques”

Presentation

Handout

Supplementary materials:

- [Teaching for Transfer: The “Rules” of Expressive Singing](#)
- [Consistent Rehearsal Behaviors](#)

Rhythm

- [Takadimi Rhythm Syllables “Cheat Sheet”](#)
- [Gordon Rhythm Syllables “Cheat Sheet”](#)
- [Rhythm Flash Card Template \(Finale\)](#)
- [Rhythm Flash Card Template \(MuseScore\)](#)

Rehearsal Techniques

THE ROLE OF THE “REHEARSAL GUIDE”

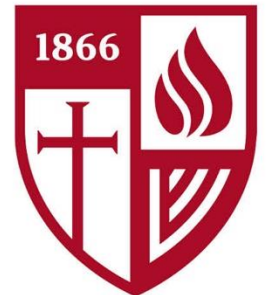


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Investigator

- **Where?**
- **Who?**
- **What?**
- **How?**
- **When?**



Physician



- **Diagnose**
- **Prescribe**
- **Implement**
- **Evaluate**



The Rehearsal Guide

- *Plan* vs. *Guide*
- Needed elements:
 - **Where?**
 - Always start with the largest landmarks and move to the smallest—be consistent!
 1. Page
 2. System
 3. Bar
 4. Beat



The Rehearsal Guide

- Needed elements:
 - **Where?**
 - **Who?** (which voice part?)
 - Many times it can be difficult to identify exactly with whom the problem lies
 - Isolate until you know



The Rehearsal Guide

- Needed elements:
 - **Where?**
 - **Who?**
 - **Diagnose: What?** (what are the specific issues?)
 - Aural?
 - Vocal-technical?
 - Conceptual/cognitive/mental?
 - Emotional or vision issue?



The Rehearsal Guide

- Needed elements:
 - **Where?**
 - **Who?**
 - **Diagnose: What?**
 - **Prescribe: How?**
 - What *strategies* and *techniques* will you use to address the issues?



The Rehearsal Guide

- **Prescribe: How?**
 - Several ways to solve every issue
 - Multiple teaching approaches to reach different learning styles in each section
 - Don't skip this step!
 - If you don't know how to solve it
 - Ask someone
 - Use your resource materials
 - Get creative and experiment



The Rehearsal Guide

- Needed elements:
 - **Where?**
 - **Who?**
 - **Diagnose: What?**
 - **Prescribe: How?**
 - **Implement: When?**
 - Is it appropriate (*sequential*) to address the *what* at this point in the learning process?



The Rehearsal Guide

- **Where?**
- **Who?**
- **Diagnose:** What?
- **Prescribe:** How?
- **Implement:** When?
- **Evaluate:** Was the prescription successful?

Rehearsal Techniques

REMEMBER THE SEQUENCE!



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Remember the Sequence!

André Thomas's Rehearsal Hierarchy

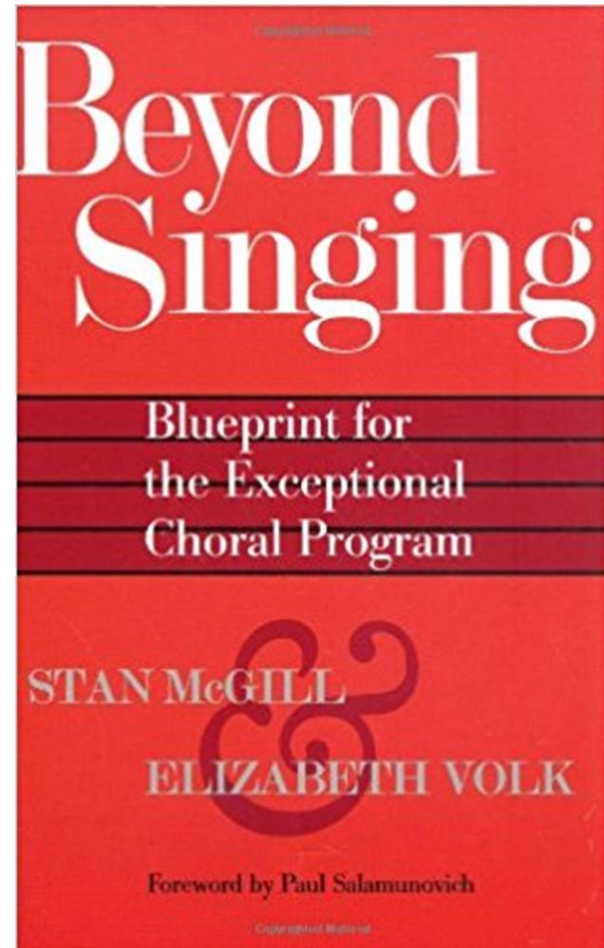
1. Correct rhythms and pitches
2. Intonation and tone quality
3. Articulation and diction
4. Precision
5. Phrasing and expression
6. Dynamic contrast
7. Balance and blend



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Remember the Sequence!

McGill, S. & Volk, E. (2007). *Beyond singing: Blueprint for the exceptional choral program*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Publishing. ISBN 978-1423420439.





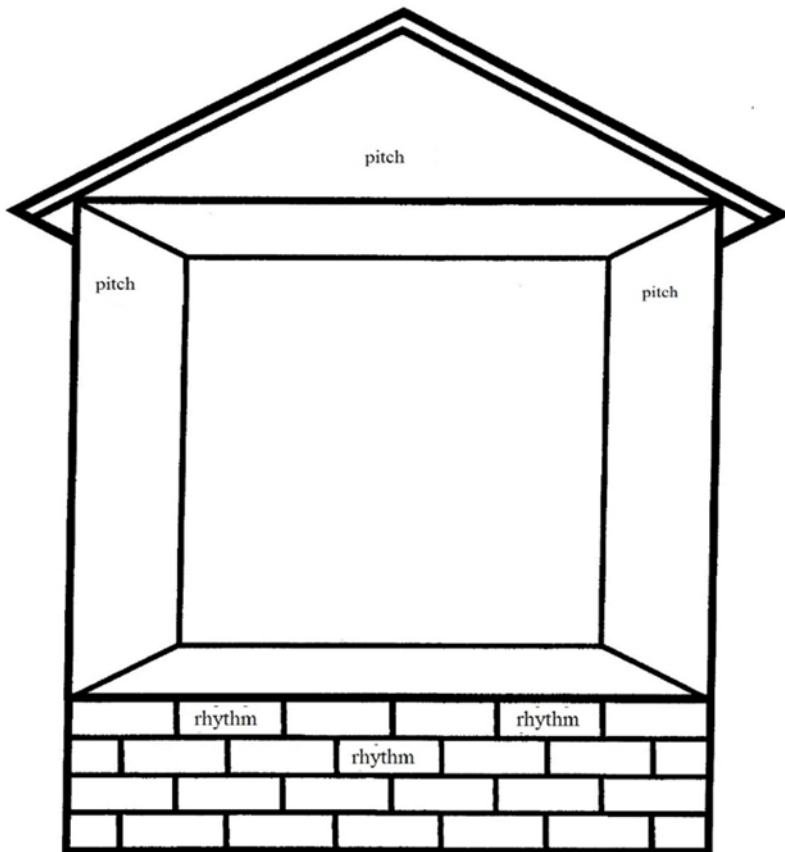
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Conductor-Constructor





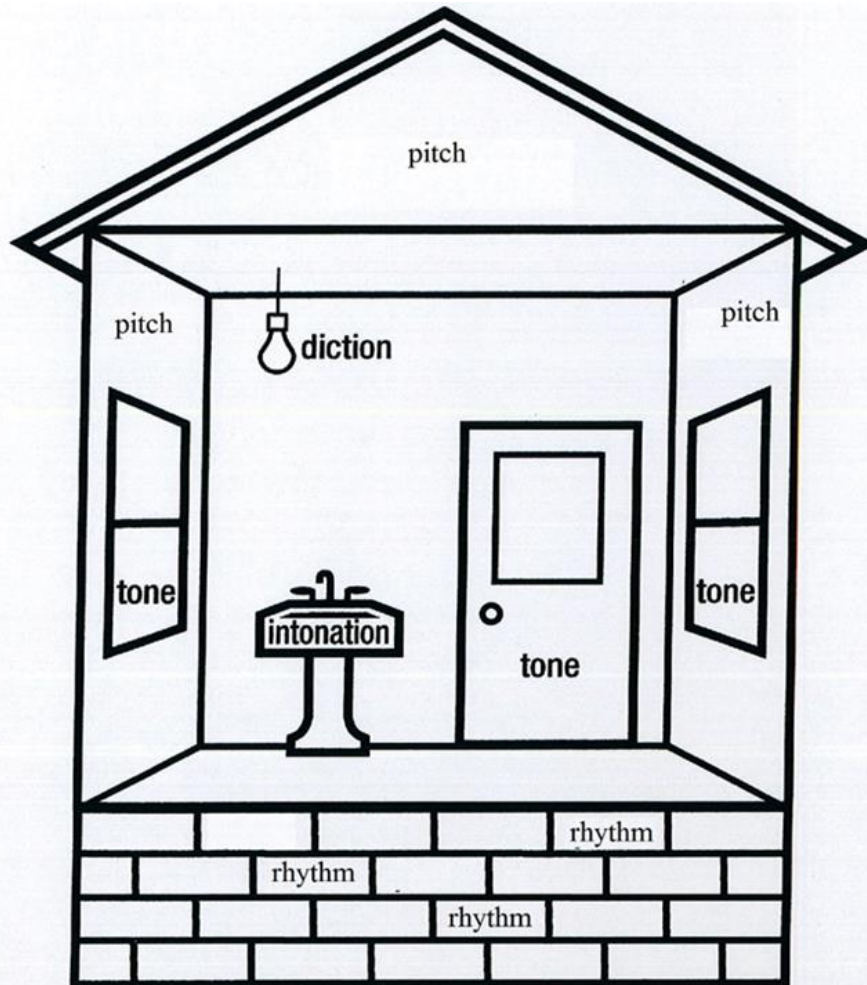
Level 1: The Core Level



1. Rhythm
2. Pitch



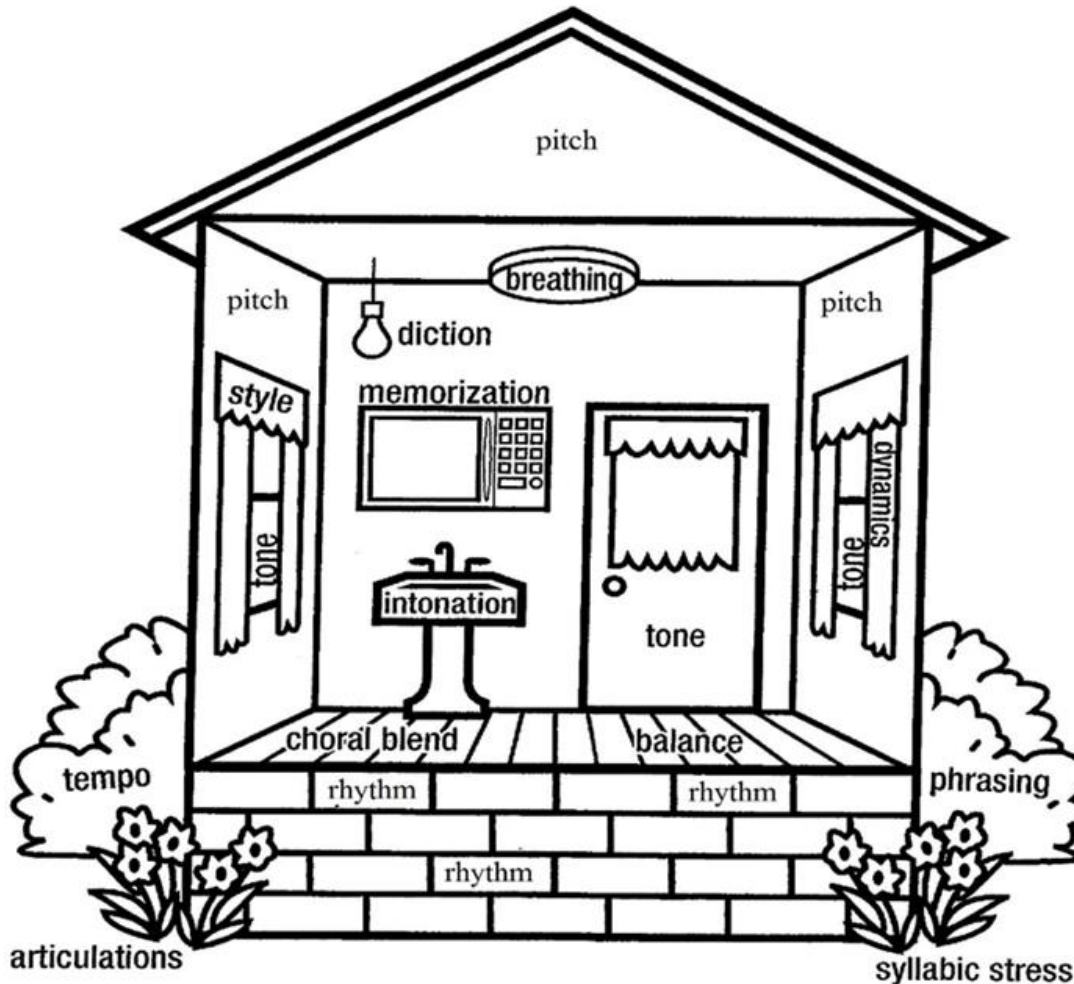
Level 2: Expectations No Builder Would Miss



3. Tone
4. Intonation
5. Diction



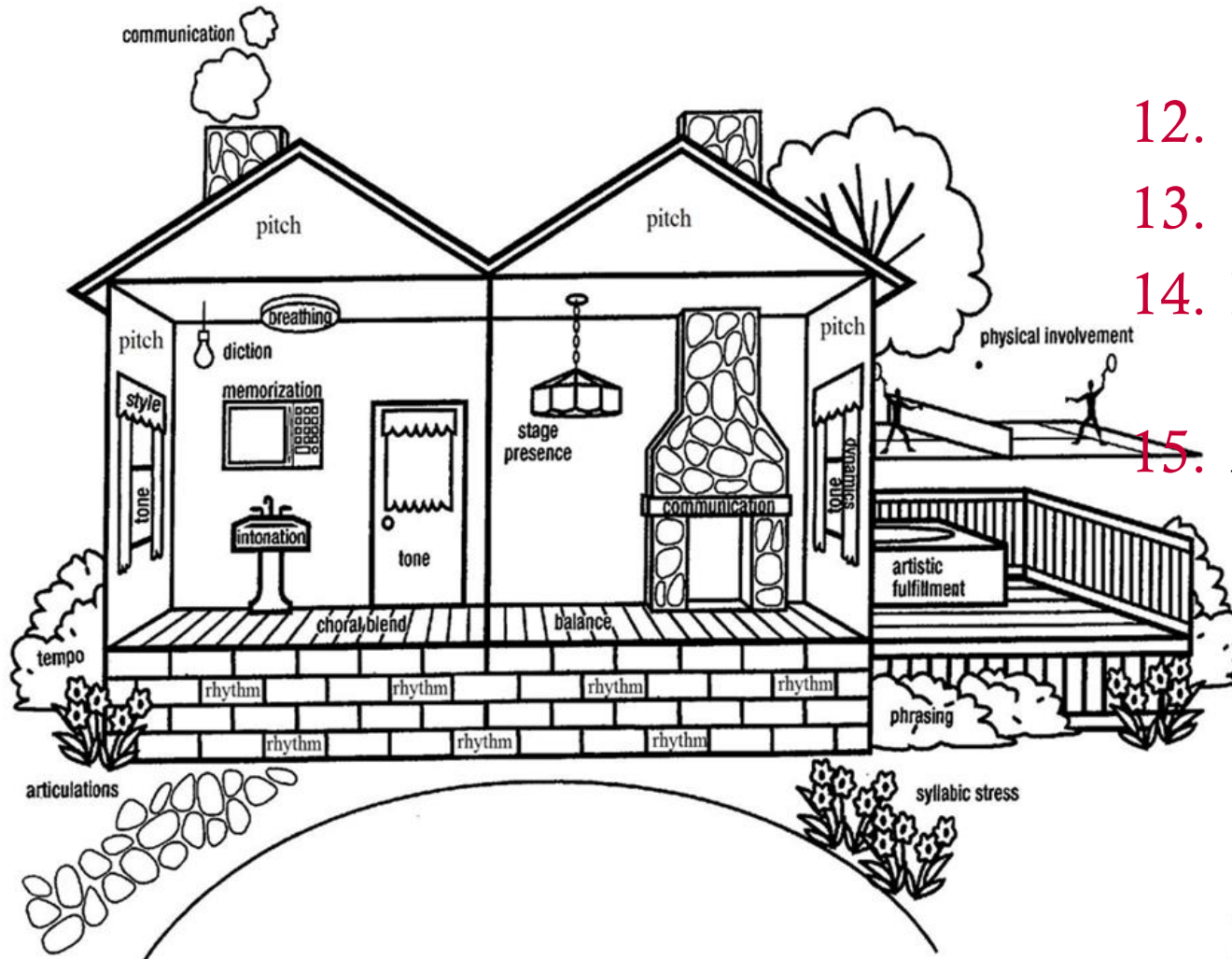
Level 3: Common Comforts We Expect



6. Breathing
7. Phrasing
8. Dynamics
9. Balance & blend
10. Style (syllabic stress, articulations, tempo, etc.)
11. Memorization



Level 4: The Dream Home



12. Communication

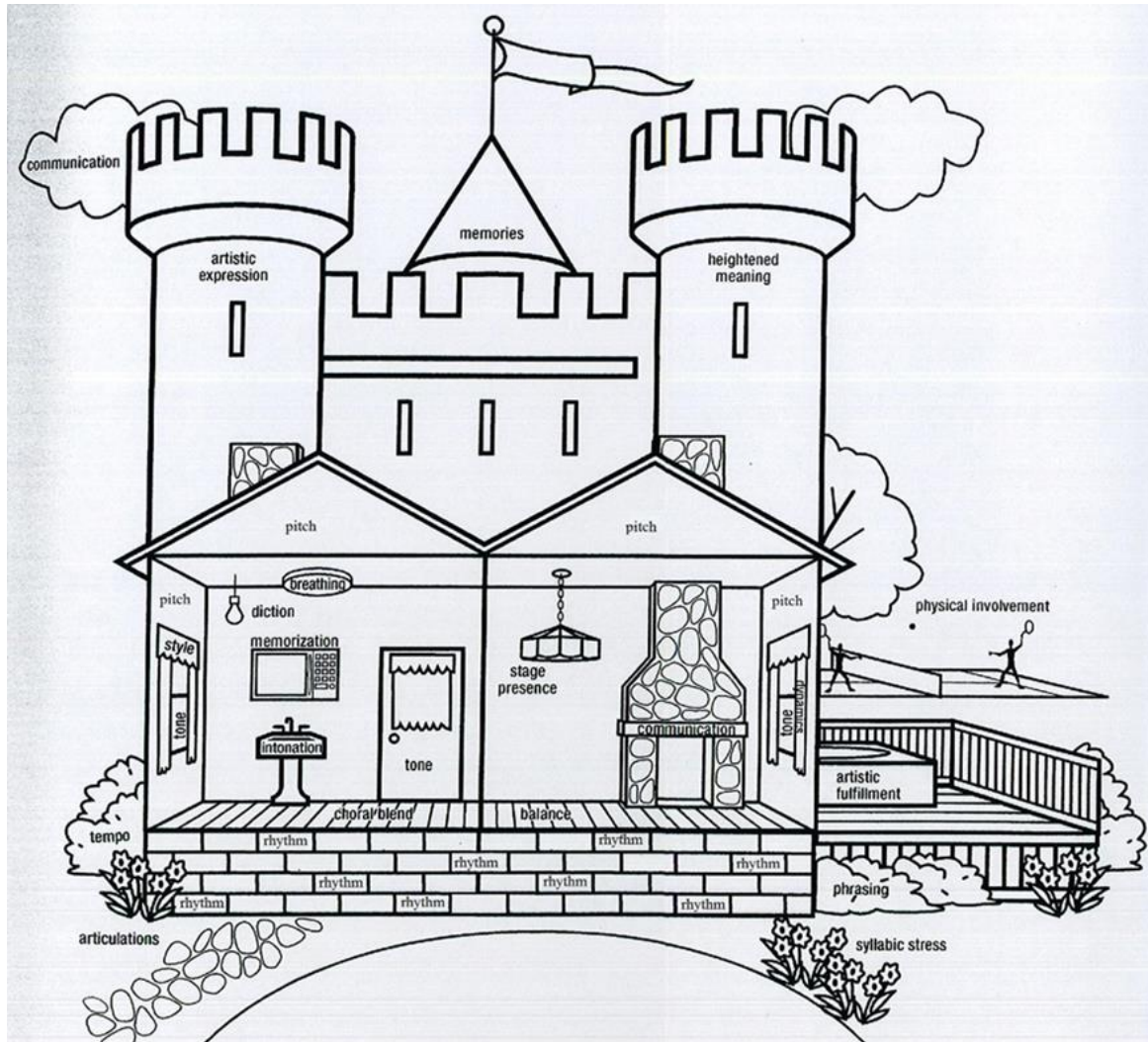
13. Stage presence

14. Physical
involvement

15. Artistic
fulfillment



Level 5: The Castle in the Clouds



16. Artistic expression

17. Heightened meaning

18. Memories

Rehearsal Techniques

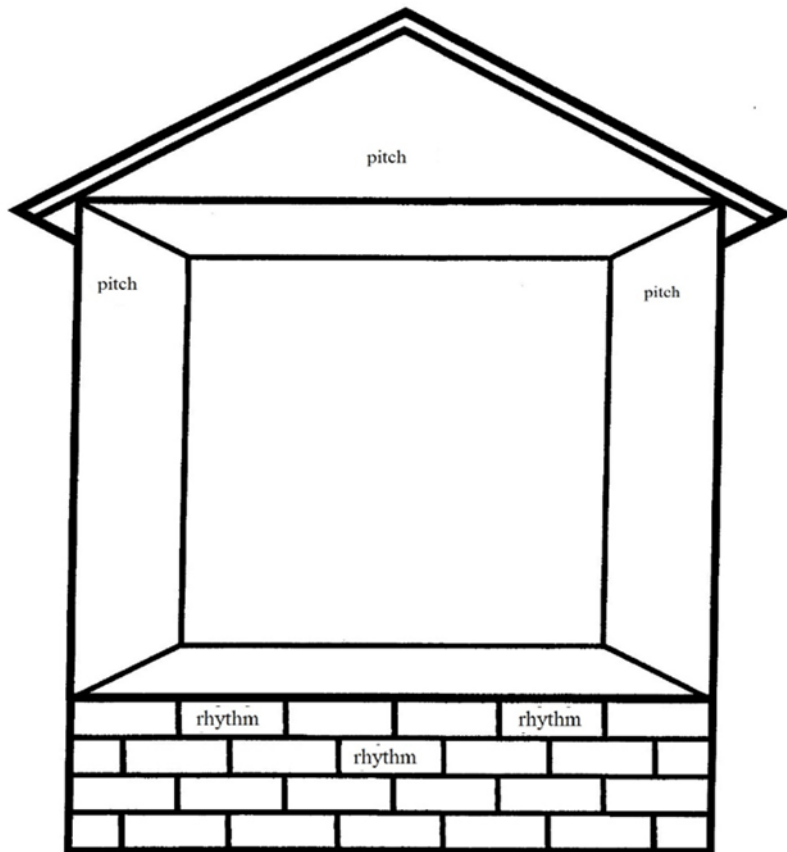
LEVEL 1: THE CORE LEVEL



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The Core Level

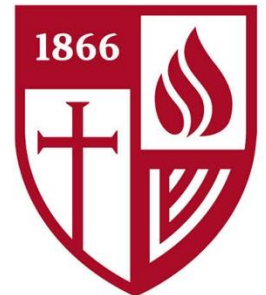


1. Rhythm
2. Pitch



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**The right note
at the wrong time
is the *wrong note!*
—Robert Shaw**





The Core Level

1. Rhythm

- Count-speaking: Takadimi (**cheat sheets** available online) **with patsching**
 - Introduce **rhythm patterns** before applying skills to repertoire
 - Flash card templates also available online

2. Pitch



Takadimi Rhythm Syllables

Gordon Rhythm Syllables “Cheat Sheet”

Dr. Adam Potter

RHYTHM SYLLABLES HOW-TO

No matter the meter, the basic unit of pulse always receives the syllable “Du.”

Simple meters:

♩ pulse																
Whole note	♩ Du-(u)-(u)-(u)															
Half note	♩ Du-(u)								♩ Du-(u)							
Quarter note (BEAT)	♩ Du				♩ Du				♩ Du				♩ Du			
Eighth note (BEAT DIVISION)	♩ Du		♩ de		♩ Du		♩ de		♩ Du		♩ de		♩ Du		♩ de	
Sixteenth note (BEAT SUBDIVISION)	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta

♩ pulse																
Double whole note	♩ Du-(u)-(u)-(u)															
Whole note	♩ Du-(u)								♩ Du-(u)							
Half note (BEAT)	♩ Du				♩ Du				♩ Du				♩ Du			
Quarter note (BEAT DIVISION)	♩ Du		♩ de		♩ Du		♩ de		♩ Du		♩ de		♩ Du		♩ de	
Eighth note (BEAT SUBDIVISION)	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta	♩ Du	♩ ta	♩ de	♩ ta



The Core Level

1. Rhythm

- Count-speaking: Takadimi
- Count-singing: Tometics or 1-e-&-a 2-e-&-a
(**full explanation** available online)

2. Pitch



Count-Speaking vs. Count-Singing

Count-Speaking vs. Count-Singing

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COUNT-SPEAKING

In count-speaking, chant rhythm syllables, articulating the rhythm in time.

Simple Meters

Ta To(h) Du Du(u)(u)(u) To(h) Du Du Ta Ta Ta-di Ta-ki-du Ta-ka-di-mi Ta-di-mi Ta-ka-di Ta-ka-mi (SH) Du-ta-de Du-ta-ta

Compound Meters

Ta To(h) Du Du(u) Du Du-da-di Du-di Du-da Ta-ki-du Ta-du Ta-ki Ta-va-ki-di-du-mu Ta-ki-di-du Ta-di Du-ta-da-ta-di-ta Du-da-ta-di Du-de Ta-va (SH) du-mu Du-ta * di-ta

(Examples above: Top line is modified Takadimi syllables; bottom line is Gordon syllables.)

COUNT-SINGING

In count-singing, articulate not the rhythm syllables but rather the underlying *divisions* or *subdivisions* (motoric rhythm), using the modified Tometics system for *legato*. Determine whether to sing division or subdivision syllables based on the shortest rhythmic note value in the passage to be count-sung.

Simple Meters

4tancta 1tancta 2tancta 3tancta 4tancta 1tancta 2tancta 3tancta 4tancta

1ta - ncta 2 - la - li 3 - ta - ne - ta 4ta - ne - ta 1 - ta - ncta 2 - tane - ta (silent)



The Core Level

1. Rhythm

- Count-speaking: Takadimi or Gordon rhythm syllables
- Count-singing: Tometics or 1-e-&-a 2-e-&-a
- Use of conductor-singer repetition/call-and-response

2. Pitch



The Core Level


















1. Rhythm

2. Pitch

- Tonal music: movable-Do solfège (AKA “solfa”), **w/ handsigns**
 - Introduce **tonal patterns** before applying skills to repertoire
 - Flash card templates available online



Tonal Ladder

#	Mi'	b
ri'	Ra'	me'
di'	Do' 	re'
li 	Ti 	te 
si 	La 	le 
fi 	So 	se 
ri 	Mi 	me 
di 	Ra 	re 
	Do 	
li,	Ti,	te,
si,	La,	le,
fi,	So,	se,
	Fa,	



The Core Level

1. Rhythm

2. Pitch

- Tonal music: movable-Do solfège (AKA “solfa”)
 - La-based minor w/ handsigns



The Core Level

1. Rhythm

2. Pitch

- Tonal music: movable-Do solfège (AKA “solfa”)
- Non-tonal music: fixed-Do solfège



The Core Level

Some recommendations:

- A note about using the piano
- Give students an opportunity to be successful at “the core level” before isolating rhythms/pitches.
 - This makes it *fair* to isolate because choristers have demonstrated their need for it.
 - This speeds up the process in case students do possess the skills of independent, literate musicians.



The Core Level

Some recommendations:

- Give students an opportunity to be successful at “the core level” before isolating rhythms/pitches.
- When isolating parts:
 - aim for at least two parts at once.
 - provide an activity for the parts you don’t need to hear
 - singing along
 - humming their own part
 - audiating & signing their own part
- When it is absolutely necessary to isolate a single part, use the opportunity not only to correct rhythms/pitches but also to address another musical/technical element (e.g., tone).

Rehearsal Techniques

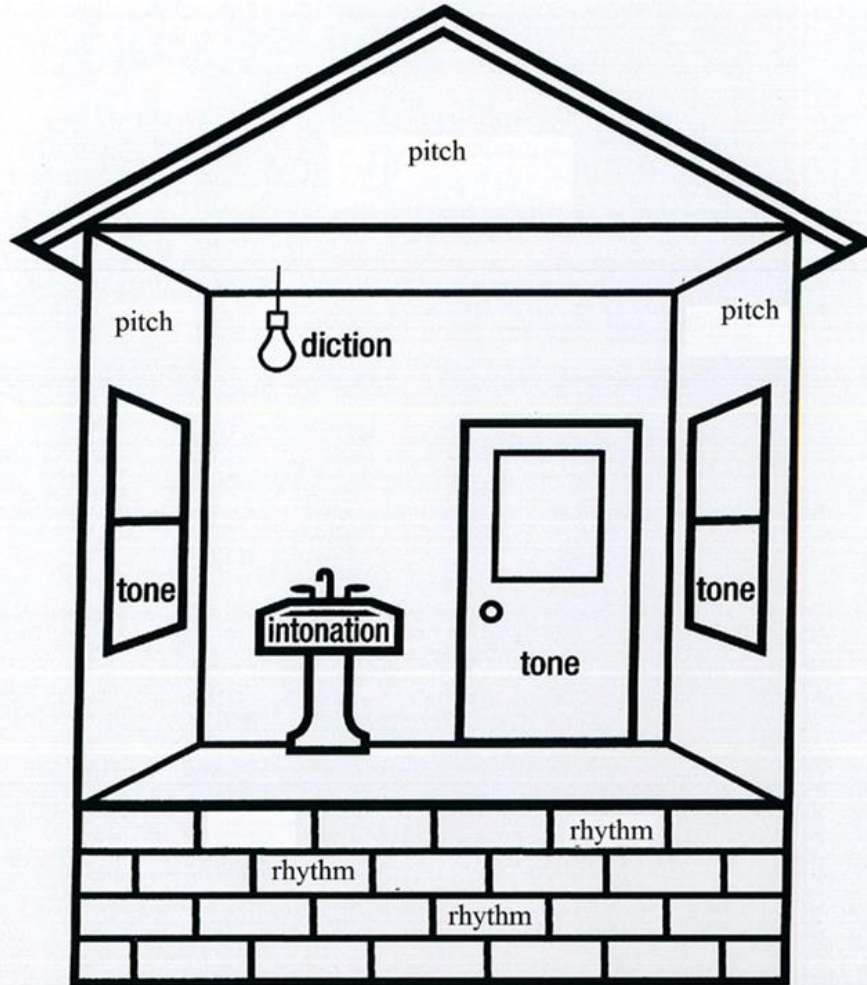
LEVEL 2: EXPECTATIONS NO BUILDER WOULD MISS



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Expectations No Builder Would Miss



3. Tone
4. Intonation
5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

- Attention to vowel formation
- Neutral syllables
 - Article available online: “The Neutral Syllable: Sending a Soundscape of Subliminal Messages”
 - Outlines vowel choices based on color, dynamic, and articulation

4. Intonation

5. Diction



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The Neutral Syllable: Sending a Soundscape of Subliminal Messages

The Neutral Syllable:

Sending a Soundscape of Subliminal Messages





Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

- Attention to vowel formation
- Neutral syllables
 - Use of *different* neutral syllables

4. Intonation

5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

- Attention to vowel formation
- Neutral syllables
- *Chiaro, oscuro, and chiaroscuro* exercises

4. Intonation

5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

- Attention to vowel formation
- Neutral syllables
- *Chiaro, oscuro, and chiaroscuro* exercises
- The “rules”

4. Intonation

5. Diction



Teaching for Transfer: The Rules of Expressive Singing

- **Rule of the Breath:** Breathe in the shape of the first/next vowel you sing
- **Rule of Phrase Shape:** Most phrases begin softer within the dynamic, then *crescendo* before a *decrescendo* at the end of the phrase
- **Rule of Melodic Contour:** When the melody ascends, *crescendo*; when it descends, *decrescendo*
- **Rule of Dynamic Contrast:** When going from a softer dynamic to a louder one, think even louder than the dynamic written; when going from a louder dynamic to a softer one, think even softer than the dynamic written
- **Rule of Punctuation:** *Usually* add a half-beat rest wherever there is a mark of punctuation in the text to define phrasing; *always* look at the conductor for sustain or release gestures to make sure!
- **Rule of the Steady Beat:** Note values longer than the steady beat *crescendo* or *decrescendo* (*watch!*)
- **Rule of Word Stress:** Underline the most important words/syllables—emphasize the same syllables within words (micro) and words within phrases (macro) while singing as you would in speech
- **Rule of the Dot:** A rhythmic dot almost always indicates a momentary “swell”
- **Rule of Chiaroscuro:** The higher you sing, the more *oscuro* you must think (open/space); the lower you sing, the more *chiaro* you must think (focus/place)
- **Rule of Crossing the Passaggio:** As you ascend, create more space but don’t think louder unless it’s indicated
- **Rule of the Slur:** Implied tenuto on the first note of any two-note phrase (“sing, shut up!”)
- **Rule of Dissonances:** Lean into the dissonant notes (tension) and lift off resolutions (release)
- **Rule of the Diphthong:** Sustain the primary vowel; the second vowel sounds just before the next consonant or syllable
- **Rule of the Consonant Onset:** Consonants are articulated before the beat, vowels are articulated on the beat (heel-to-floor exercise)
- **Rule of the Consonant Release:** Sound the consonant release on the next beat
- **Rule of the Shadow Vowel:** If the final consonant before a breath/rest is voiced, add a shadow vowel after it
- **Rule of the Final Syllable:** In no way accent “clip” or “slap” the final syllable of the phrase
- **Rule of the Glottal Stroke:** In English, if the word begins with a vowel and is lyrically important, initiate it with a gentle glottal onset
- **Rule of “The”:** If followed by a vowel, pronounce [ði] (“thee” earth); if followed by a consonant, pronounce [ðʌ] (“thuh” world)
- **Rule of Voicing:** In polyphonic music, “mic” the important motives and “shush” everything else
- **Rules of Articulation:** Depends on the style/period of the piece—consult Ruth Whitlock, *Choral*



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

- Attention to vowel formation
- Neutral syllables
- *Chiaro, oscuro, and chiaroscuro* exercises
- The “rules”
- Vocalices & exercises that address technical issues

4. Intonation

5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

4. Intonation

- Under-dynamic singing
- Staccato [dut]

5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

4. Intonation

- Under-dynamic singing
- Staccato [dut]
- [bIm]

5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

4. Intonation

- Under-dynamic singing
- Staccato [dut]
- [bIm]
- One chord at a time

5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

4. Intonation

- Under-dynamic singing
- Staccato [dut]
- [bim]
- One chord at a time
- Technical solution
 - Pitch problems have only 2 possible causes. Either the singer cannot hear the pitch or the singer cannot produce the pitch. When students cannot hear, fix with the tools addressed in step 2. When students cannot produce, find a way to correct their technique!

5. Diction



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

4. Intonation

5. Diction

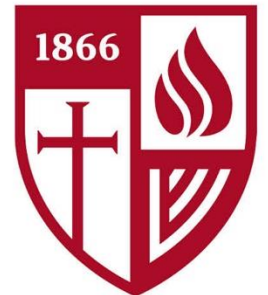
- Attention to consonant formation
 - Principle: Singing is *exaggerated* speech, an *extension* of speech.



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**To sing as we speak is the
domain of amateurs.**

—James Jordan





Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

4. Intonation

5. Diction

- Attention to consonant formation
 - Principle: Singing is *exaggerated* speech, an *extension* of speech.
- “Oratoric” echo-chanting”
- Rhythmic echo-chanting



Expectations No Builder Would Miss

3. Tone

4. Intonation

5. Diction

- Attention to consonant formation
- “Oratoric” echo-chanting”
- Rhythmic echo-chanting
- Shaw chord



Rehearsal Techniques

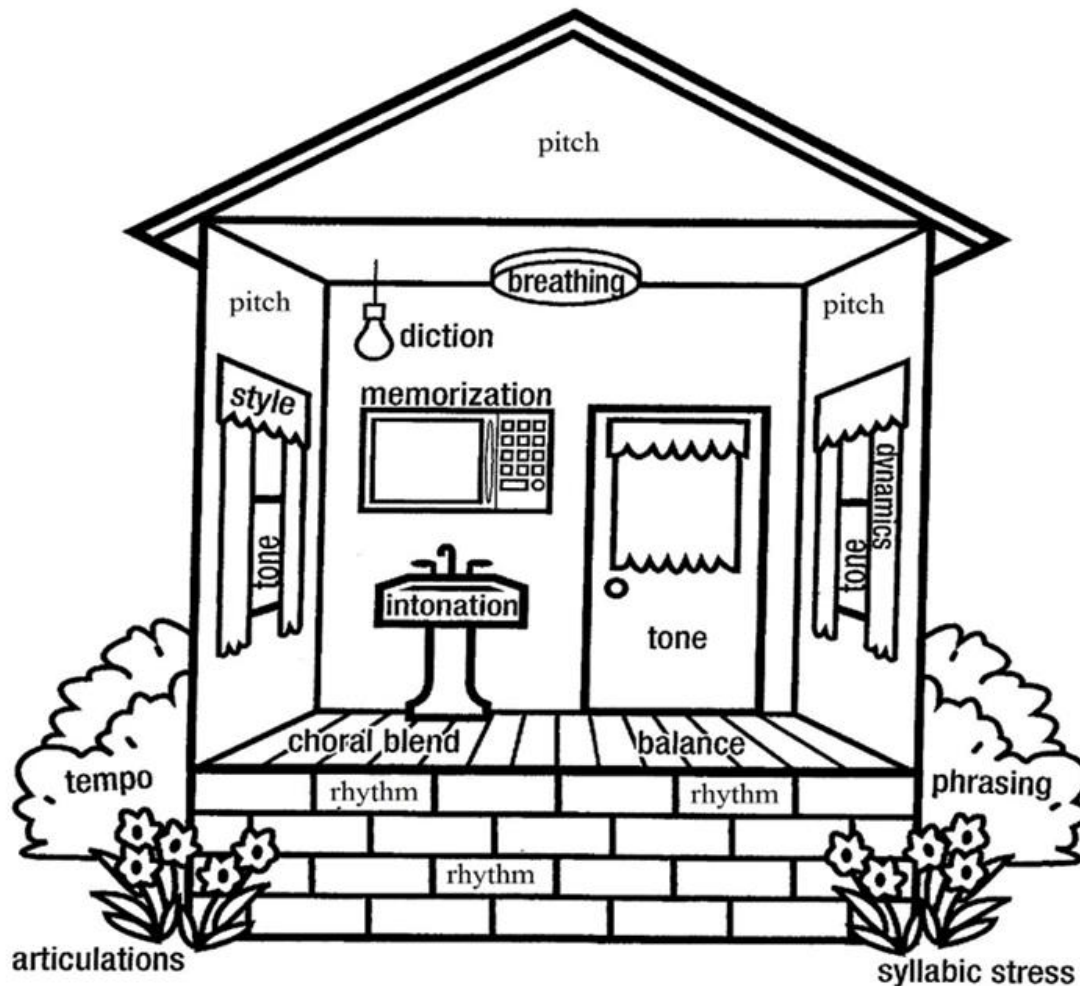
LEVEL 3: COMMON COMFORTS WE EXPECT



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Common Comforts We Expect



6. Breathing
7. Phrasing
8. Dynamics
9. Balance & blend
10. Style (syllabic stress, articulations, tempo, etc.)
11. Memorization



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

- Principle: Eliminate “housekeeping” as much as possible.
- *Show* with conducting (stop/“freeze” gesture)
- Students write in ✓s during 2nd/3rd reads (eyes up!)
- **Rule of Punctuation**—be consistent!

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

10. Style

11. Memorization



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

- *Show* with conducting (use of left hand)
- Singing through phrases on **lip trill**
 - “Steady column of air”

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

10. Style

11. Memorization



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

- *Show* with conducting (use of left hand)
- Singing through phrases on **lip trill**
- Vowels-only practice w/ **vowel hand signals**
 - “Steady column of air”
 - When adding consonants back in, allow them to disrupt airflow as little as possible

8. Dynamics

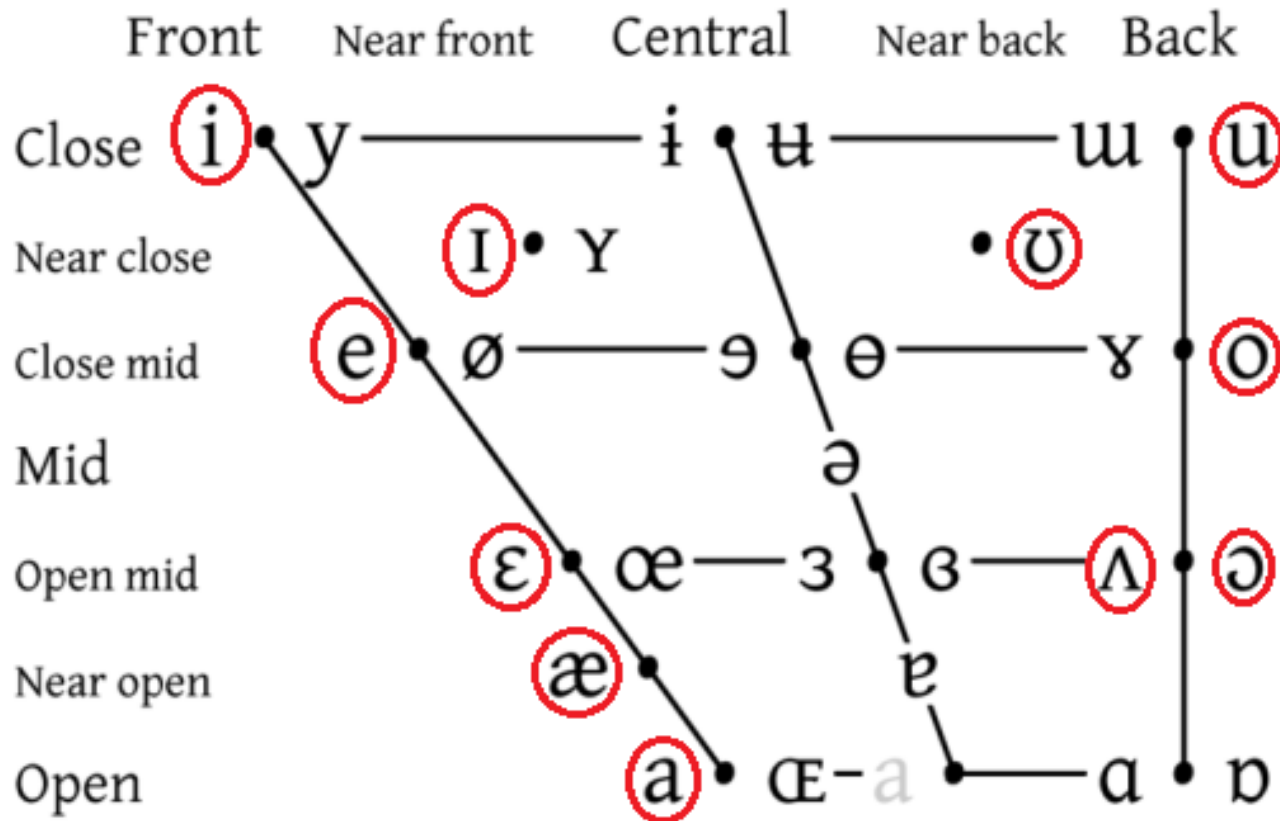
9. Balance & blend

10. Style

11. Memorization



Vowel Hand Signals

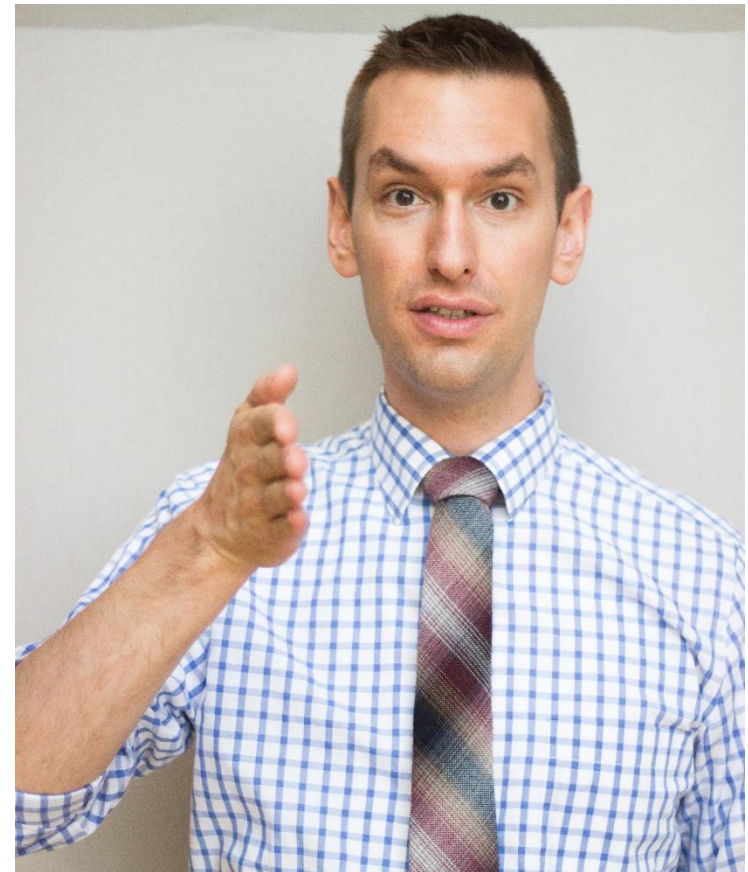


Vowels at right & left of bullets are rounded & unrounded.



Vowel Hand Signals

- [i] (“ee”) as in *keep*





Vowel Hand Signals

- [ɪ] (“ih”) as in *bit*





Vowel Hand Signals

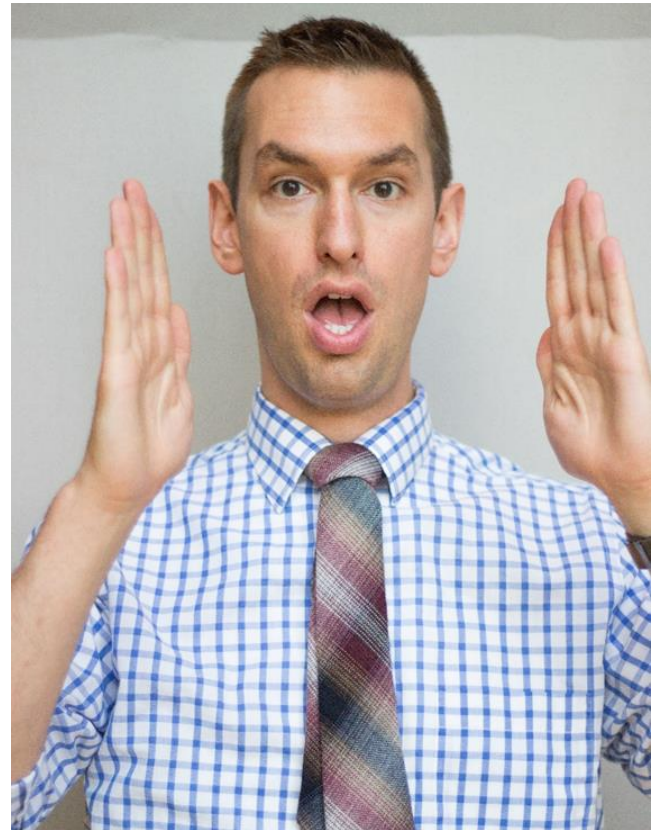
- [e] (“ay”) as in *cake*





Vowel Hand Signals

- [ɛ] (“eh”) as in *bed*



Vowel Hand Signals

- [æ] as in *cat*





Vowel Hand Signals

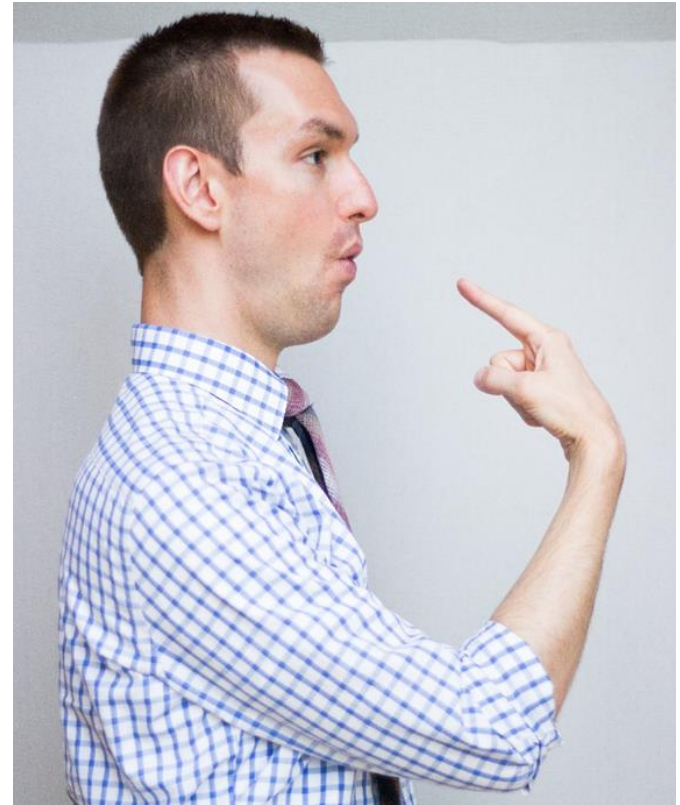
- [a] or [ɑ] (“ah”) as in *voila* or *father*





Vowel Hand Signals

- [u] (“oo”) as in *scoop*





Vowel Hand Signals

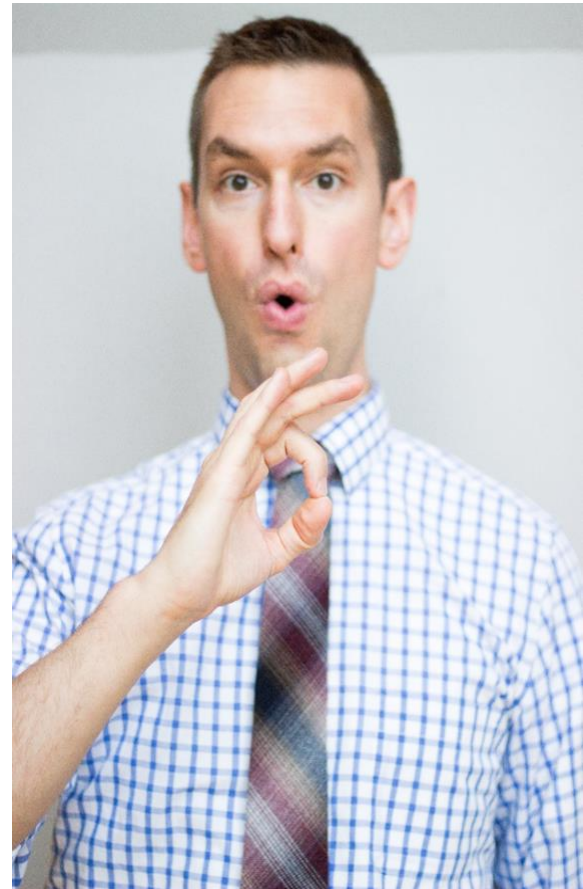
- [ʊ] as in *book*





Vowel Hand Signals

- [o] (“oh”) as in *boat*



Vowel Hand Signals

- [ʌ] or [ə] (“uh”) as in *bump*





Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

- *Show* with conducting (size/character of beat pattern, left-hand energy)
- Dynamic exercise w/ **Breath-Muscle/Flow-Phonation Voice Quality Continuum**

9. Balance & blend

10. Style

11. Memorization



Voice Quality Continuum





Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

- Principles: What is the *ideal* choral balance? What is “blend” and the best way to achieve it?
- Focus on vowel unification
 - Use of vowel hand signals
 - Use of **International Phonetic Alphabet** (“cheat sheet” available online)

10. Style

11. Memorization



IPA "Cheat Sheet"

International Phonetic Alphabet Cheat Sheet (Nearly) Every Symbol You'll Ever Need!

Each IPA symbol (in brackets)* represents a single phoneme (sound).

Pure Vowels

Tongue vowels

[i]	keep
[i]	lovely
[ɪ]	b <u>i</u> t
[e]	ch <u>e</u> g (Italian; "closed 'E'")
[(e)]	(between [e] and [ɛ]; used in French)
[ɛ]	b <u>e</u> d ("open 'E'")
[ə]	<u>a</u> bout (in unstressed syllable; "schwa")
[ʌ]	b <u>u</u> mp (in stressed syllable)
[ɑ]	f <u>a</u> ther ("dark 'ah'")
[a]	voil <u>a</u> ("bright 'ah'")
[æ]	c <u>a</u> t

Lip vowels

[u]	sc <u>oo</u> p
[ʊ]	b <u>oo</u> k
[o]	T <u>o</u> d (German; "closed 'O'")
[ɔ]	<u>a</u> we ("open 'O'")
[ɒ]	p <u>o</u> t (British)

Diphthongs

[eɪ] ¹ , [ɛi] ²	ca <u>k</u> e
[aɪ] ¹ , [a:i] ² , [a:e] ³	bri <u>g</u> ht
[aʊ] ¹ , [a:u] ² , [a:o] ³	hou <u>n</u> d
[oʊ] ¹	flo <u>a</u> t
[ɔɪ] ¹ , [ɔ:i] ² , [ɔ:v] ³	to <u>y</u>

Mixed Vowels

[ø]	= [e] + [o]
-----	-------------

Nasal Vowels (French)

[ɑ̃]	<u>e</u> n
[ɛ̃]	ma <u>i</u> n
[ɔ̃]	bo <u>n</u>
[œ̃]	<u>u</u> n

Glide Vowels

[w]	<u>w</u> as
[j]	y <u>e</u> s
[ɲ]	on <u>i</u> on
[ɥ]	pu <u>i</u> (French)

Lateral Consonants (Semi-Vowels)

[l]	l <u>i</u> ft
[ʎ]	g <u>l</u> i (Italian)

Stop Plosive Consonants

[p]	p <u>e</u> st
[b]	b <u>o</u> ring
[t]	t <u>a</u> n
[d]	d <u>u</u> mp
[k]	k <u>i</u> te
[g]	g <u>o</u> ose
[ʔ] or [ʀ]	(glottal stop)

Fricative Consonants

[f]	f <u>o</u> ot
[v]	v <u>o</u> wel
[s]	s <u>o</u> p <u>r</u> ano
[z]	z <u>i</u> p
[ʃ]	sh <u>u</u> sh
[ʒ]	As <u>i</u> an
[θ]	th <u>i</u> stle

Combination Consonants

[tʃ] or [tʃ]	ch <u>u</u> rch
[dʒ] or [dʒ]	jud <u>g</u> e

Nasal Consonants

[ŋ]	n <u>o</u> p <u>e</u>
[m]	m <u>i</u> nt
[ŋ]	s <u>i</u> ng

Those Terrible Rs!

[ɹ]	cu <u>r</u> tsy (in stressed syllable)
[ə]	b <u>u</u> tt <u>e</u> r, cho <u>i</u> r (in unstressed syllable or triphthong)
[ɹ]	r <u>u</u> n (initial position)
[r]	am <u>o</u> re (Italian; "flipped 'R'")
[r]	r <u>e</u> (Italian; "trilled" or "rolled 'R'")
[R]	uvular trill (not typically used in singing)
[ʀ]	d <u>e</u> r, v <u>o</u> r (German)
[ʀ]	ab <u>e</u> r (German)

Diacritical Marks

[ː]	lengthen preceding sound
[ˈ]	indicates primary stress
[ˌ]	indicates secondary stress
[.]	indicates syllabification



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

- Principles: What is the *ideal* choral balance? What is “blend” and the best way to achieve it?
- Focus on vowel unification
 - Use of vowel hand signals
 - Use of IPA
 - Vowel modification through & above *passaggio*

10. Style

11. Memorization



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

- Principles: What is the *ideal* choral balance? What is “blend” and the best way to achieve it?
- Focus on vowel unification
- Building chords from root up

10. Style

11. Memorization



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

- Principles: What is the *ideal* choral balance? What is “blend” and the best way to achieve it?
- Focus on vowel unification
- Building chords from root up
- Use of model voices

10. Style

11. Memorization



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

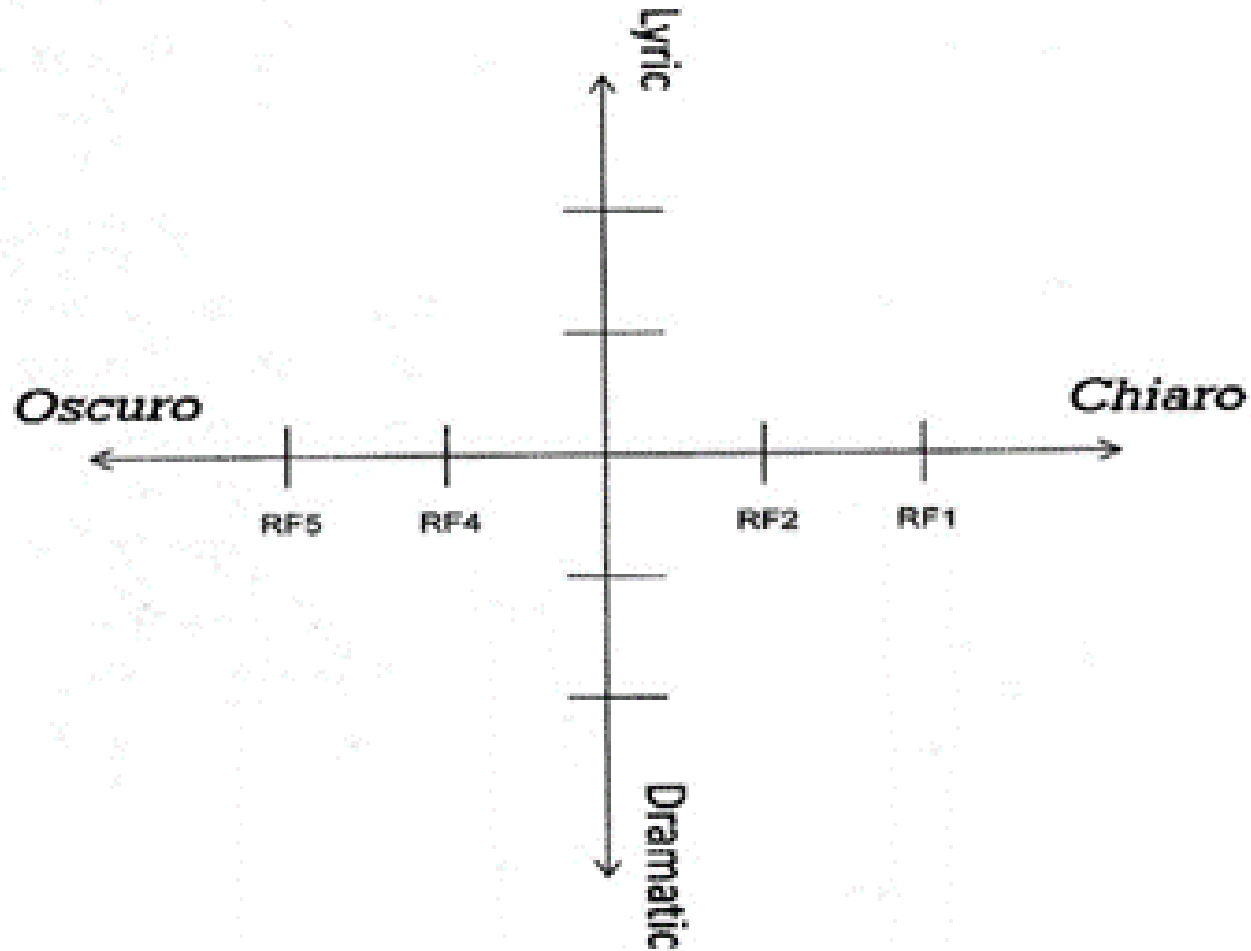
- Principles: What is the *ideal* choral balance? What is “blend” and the best way to achieve it?
- Focus on vowel unification
- Building chords from root up
- Use of model voices
- **X/Y Resonance Graph**

10. Style

11. Memorization



X/Y Resonance Graph



Zabriskie, A. (2007). *Foundations of choral tone: A proactive and healthy approach to vocal technique and choral blend*. Tallahassee, FL: Usingers Publishers. ISBN 978-0981481715.



Common Comforts We Expect

6. Breathing

7. Phrasing

8. Dynamics

9. Balance & blend

- Principles: What is the *ideal* choral balance? What is “blend” and the best way to achieve it?
- Focus on vowel unification
- Building chords from root up
- Use of model voices
- X/Y Resonance Graph
- Principle: **Create sectional unity before attempting ensemble “blend”**

10. Style

11. Memorization

Rehearsal Techniques

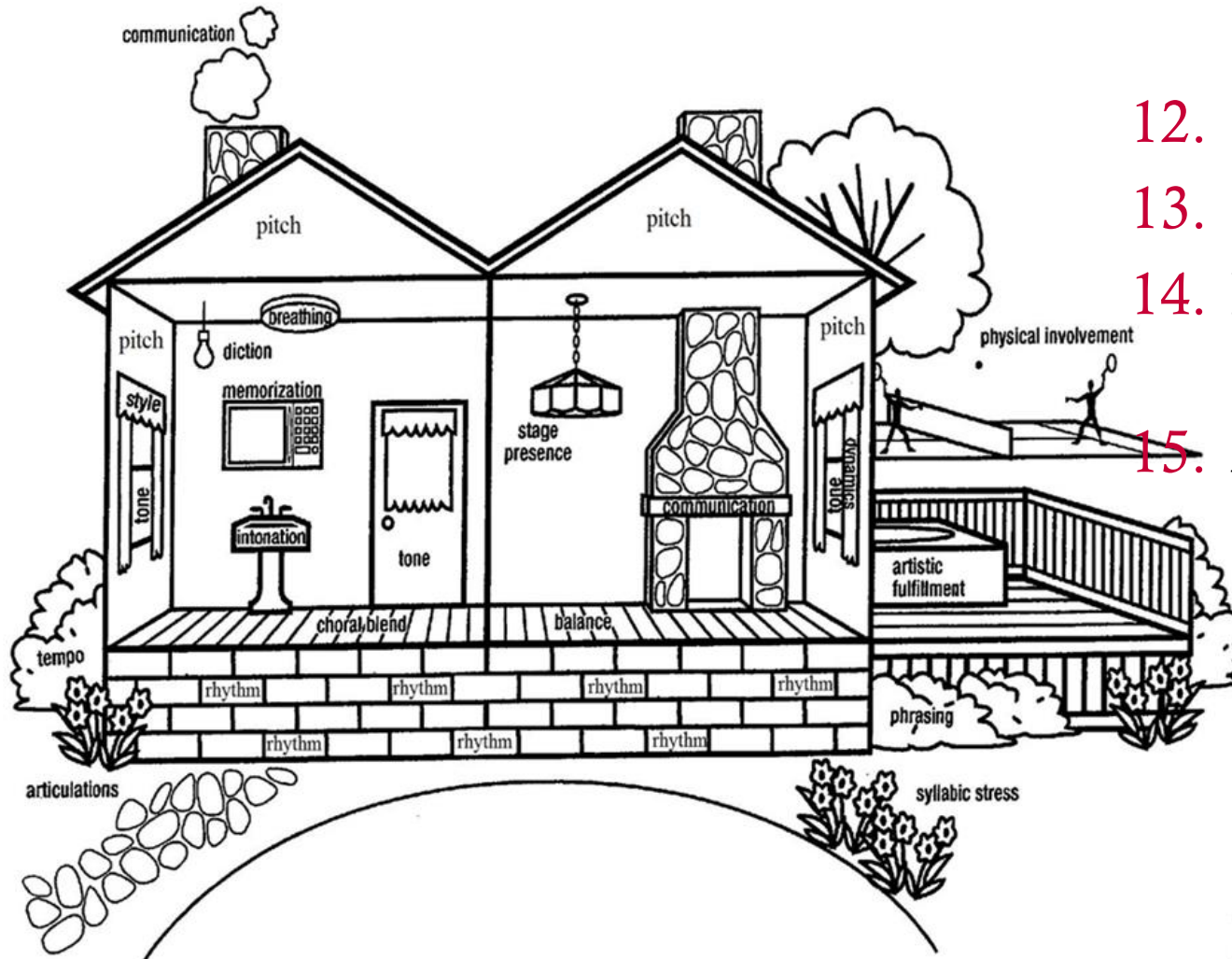
LEVEL 4: THE DREAM HOME



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The Dream Home



12. Communication

13. Stage presence

14. Physical
involvement

15. Artistic
fulfillment

Rehearsal Techniques

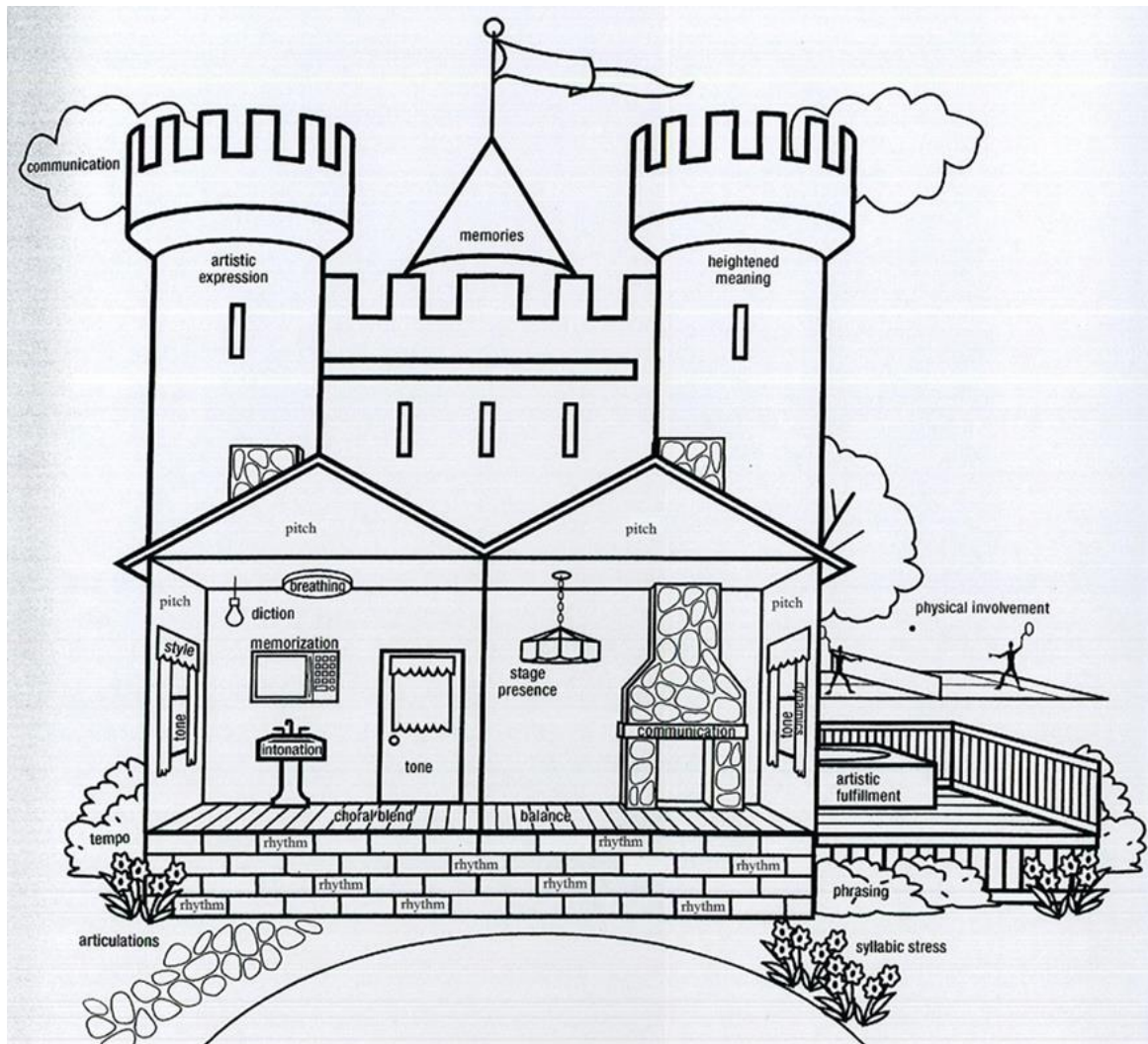
LEVEL 5: THE CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS



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The Castle in the Clouds



16. Artistic expression

17. Heightened meaning

18. Memories

Rehearsal Refresher

STRUCTURING AN EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT REHEARSAL

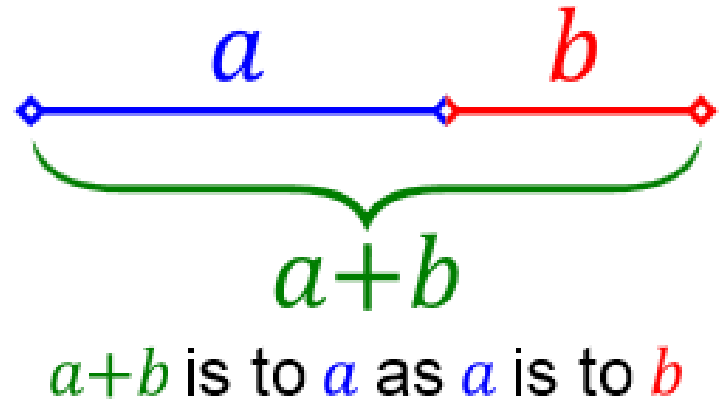


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Rehearsal Structure

- Pacing and momentum
 - The **golden mean**
 - Instructions of 7 words or fewer
 - Always singing
- Setting the tone
 - Teacher feedback
 - Use of humor
 - Avoidance of sarcasm & insults
- Working together
 - Foster a culture of safety, respect, and camaraderie every day
- Provide at least one “aesthetic moment” in every rehearsal
- Inspiration and imagination



QUESTIONS?



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