

Emerald Choral Academy

Vocal Resilience

J. Scott Kovacs





Land Acknowledgement

"The Emerald Ensemble would like to acknowledge that we gather on the traditional land of the Coast Salish people, past and present and honor with gratitude the land itself and all the people of the Coast Salish nations."

Disclaimer

- All the information in this presentation is intended to be informational. It is not intended for the purpose of diagnosing or treating medical disorders. The Emerald Choral Academy is not responsible for conditions that require a licensed professional for diagnosis or treatment. If you are experiencing symptoms that might require a diagnosis, seek medical attention.



Poll




How many of us are currently studying with a voice professional?



How many have studied with a voice professional in the past?



Definitions

- Habilitation- To earn, develop, improve, and keep skills needed for a task. (Very likely your voice teacher/professional.)
 - Pedagogy- The method or practice of teaching something (such as how to sing more efficiently.)
 - Rehabilitation- Regaining skills abilities, and knowledge. Often after an injury or other trauma. (Generally, not your voice teacher.)
 - Resilience- Having a state of elasticity, adaptability, recoverability
 - Vocology- The science and practice of vocal habilitation, or vocal training and therapy.
- 



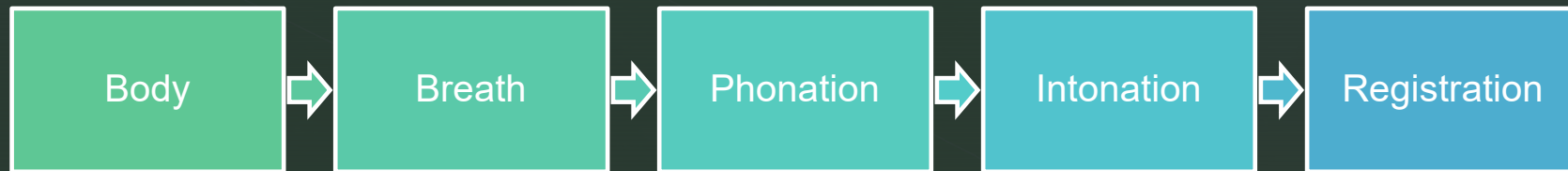
Achieving Vocal Resilience

Establishing and keeping habits that sustain efficient vocal production over a long period of time. This requires frequent monitoring and evaluation to determine what new skills and strategies are needed to avoid coping mechanisms and ineffective or inefficient habits that might result in or contribute to lack of enjoyment of or deterioration of the singing voice.

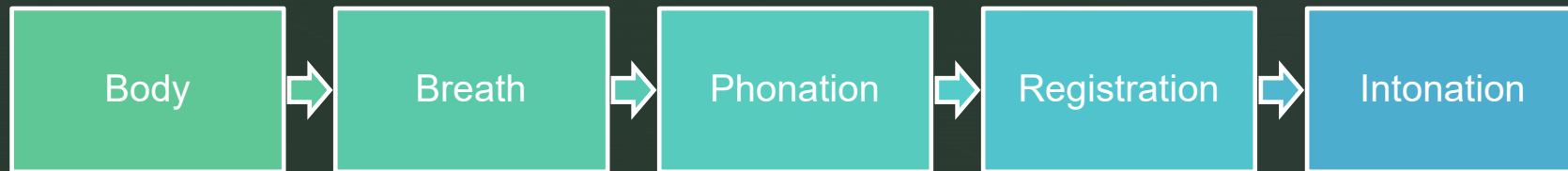
(If it feels good , you're probably doing it right!)



Five Steps to Resilience (Vocal)



Five Steps to Resilience (Choral)



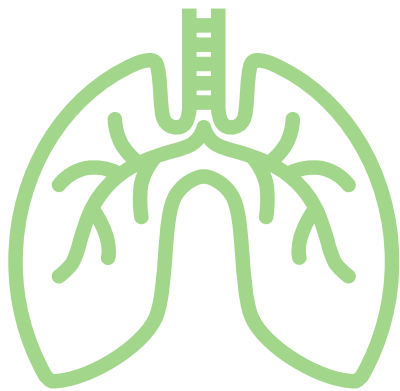
Body



The entire body, all of its senses, systems, and subsystems are available to us in creating efficient, enjoyable singing.

- Musculo/skeletal: Body alignment when standing or sitting
- Respiration and phonation: (hint: you already know how to breathe!)
- Sensation and perception: how does what we feel inform what we do?
- Innervation and cognition: how conscious or unconscious is our “technique?”

Breath



“Chi sa respirare, sa cantare.”

(Who knows how to breathe, knows how to sing.)

- Appoggio- To lean onto or support. (Bel canto)
- Body-centering: feet, hips, chest, shoulders, neck, head
- Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais
- What NOT to do (the apophatic version of *Appoggio*)
- You already know how to breathe- ease over “technique”

Phonation

- Phonation is “the utterance of speech sound”
- Vocal folds are vibrating, intrinsic muscles of the larynx engaged
- Subglottal, supraglottal, and intra-oral air pressure (inertance)
- Correlation between vowel and glottal constriction (adduction)
- Garden hose model (glottal pressure)
- Tension: neck, glottis, & tongue

Intonation

- “Sharpness/Flatness”- consider the breath *first* (too much sound for the air provided? Not enough air for the dynamic?)
- “The Singers Formant” – an acoustic phenomenon that involves the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and sometimes 6th “overtone” of a pitch, relative to vowel and “placement” in the mouth (sometimes called “ring” or vibrancy.) *Container model*
- Think in terms of “resonance” (Ragan)
- The efficiency of the vowel is pitch dependent (Coffin, Howell)

Registration

*Registration is a metaphor that refers to variations in sound and physical sensation that change in response to functional adjustments in the vocal mechanism.
(Voice Science Works)*

- **Chest, Head, and Mix** (chest-dominant, head-dominant)
 - Falsetto
 - Mode 0, 1, & 2, L0, L1, L2 (terminology discrepancies)
 - CT & TA dominant
 - Testosterone influenced and estrogen influenced puberty

Registration (cont.)

- *Passaggio*: place of transition in the voice between registers
- Dynamic vs. Static registration events (not breaks)
- Efficient registration relies on a (pitch and vowel-dependent) balance between breath pressure (and flow), laryngeal configuration, acoustic variation, and perception. (Voice Science Works)
- Making effective registration choices for the tessitura, dynamic, and style (CCM/belting).

Tip: Cool Down!

- Cooling down the voice is as important as warming up!
- Lip trills/buzz
- Straw phonation/SOVTE's
- Sing in the car, sing along
- Sirens, sighs, moans and groans (fry tone)

Poll



How many of us are currently attending in person rehearsals?



How many of us have sung a live concert in the last two months or will perform in one before the summer?

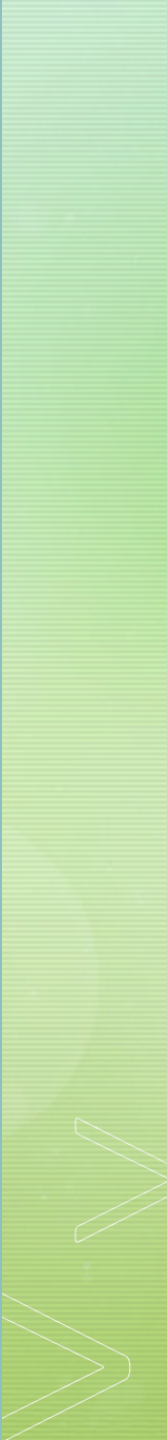
Resilience: Masked Singing



- Change your mask frequently (esp. when wet!)
- Breathe more frequently
- “Acoustic impedance” = we tend to over sing
- Keep it *forward* for the most efficient vocal production
- Use your body, not just your ears!

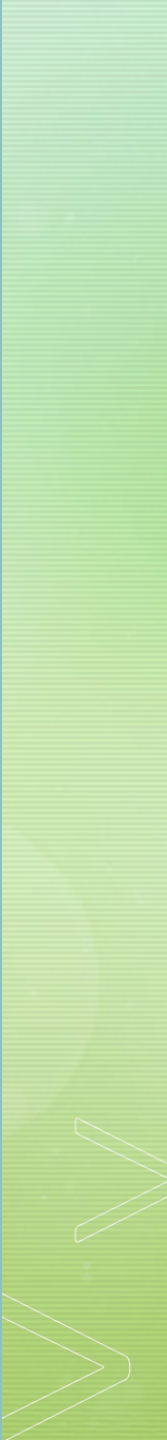


Resilience: In-person rehearsals

- Your folder arm will get tired, switch up! (Stretch! Roll!)
 - Frequent posture checks
 - Frequent neck/tongue tension checks
 - HYDRATE!!!
 - Know what you need to warm up completely
- 

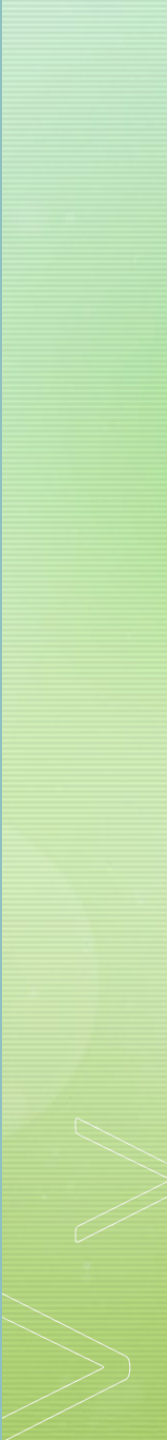


Resilience or Recovery?

- Illnesses other than Covid
 - Building volume (both air and sound)
 - “Soft limits”
 - Is my voice just tired or is it injured?
 - ENT, SLP, Voice Professional
 - Develop body & breath FIRST, then phonation, intonation, reg.
- 



Final Thoughts

- Tension is the enemy of efficient singing
 - Have your own set of warm ups that work for you
 - Reduce judgements, replace with evaluations
 - If it hurts, STOP
 - When changes to the voice persist after ten days, seek help
- 

Sources

- Dimon, Theodore. *Anatomy of the Voice: An Illustrated Guide for Singers, Coaches, and Speech Therapists*. North Atlantic Books, 2018
- Ragan, Kari. *A Systematic Approach to Voice: The Art of Studio Application*. Plural Publishing, Inc., 2020
- Titze, I. R. (2021). *Principles of voice production*. National Center for Voice and Speech.
- <https://www.trimblevocalinstitute.com>
- <https://www.voicescienceworks.org/vocal-health.html>
- **Special thanks to Heidi Moss-Erickson, San Francisco Conservatory of Music**

Now for your
questions...
...and maybe some
guided practice!

