

Vocalize! 2

36 More Accompanied Exercises that Teach Technique

Composed and Arranged by Andy Beck

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Book & Online PDF/Audio (00-49864)

ISBN-10: 1-4706-5119-X
ISBN-13: 978-1-4706-5119-0

Introduction

For many singers, preparing for upcoming performances with limited rehearsals leaves little time for the most valuable vocal lessons—lessons that are sometimes called out during a musical interlude or scribbled on the board just as the bell interrupts that final chord. “Support!” “Concentrate on your vowels!” “Enunciate!” “Shape the phrases!” This innovative warm-up collection is designed to build and bolster many important skills required for outstanding vocal technique. While some of the same topics appear in the original *Vocalize!*, all 36 exercises in this sequel are unique.

When singing or teaching a warm-up: be clear and specific about the goals for each exercise; vary your routine often, perhaps even every time; begin in the most comfortable range before modulating.

How to Use the Exercises in This Book

- As enhancements for your traditional warm-up routine
- As mini-master classes about specific vocal skills
- To reinforce “all the things we already know how to do”
- When first learning, as simple sight-reading exercises
- To practice specific techniques required in your performance repertoire
- As a vocal curriculum for beginning singers
- As a guide for self-directed vocal study
- To assess the growth of ensemble singers
- As technical drills for individual performance juries

Organization

The book is organized into twelve sections based on the primary focus of each exercise. But remember, the art of singing is cumulative. So while the emphasis of a specific example may be on diction, don't neglect proper breath support, beautiful tone quality, correct posture, and all of those other developing vocal skills.

Beginning Warm-Ups

A great way to start a rehearsal, practice session, or voice lesson. These exercises feature conservative vocal ranges and small melodic intervals. Use them to gently warm the vocal folds, start the flow of air, and focus the mind.

Posture / Relaxation

Whether standing or seated, good posture is required in order to sing well. Additionally, a rigid face or body will prevent free, supported, natural singing. The exercises in this section teach singers to avoid tension, align their posture, and even suggest some gentle movements to relax and set the body for singing.

Vowels

The ability to produce clearly defined vowels is a fundamental vocal skill. You may practice these examples as written or substitute other vowel patterns as desired. From time to time, use a mirror to check the shape and opening of the mouth.

Breath Support

Just as a kite needs wind to fly, so does the voice require breath to phonate. It all begins with a deep, full, relaxed inhalation, followed by a controlled, consistent flow of air. In preparation for the exercises in this section, practice a deep slow intake as if sipping through a straw, and then exhale on a strongly supported “ss” for as long as possible.

Tone Quality

It's not easy to define, but “tone quality” refers to the color, timbre, or sound quality of a voice or musical instrument. Is it dark? Bright? Rich? Breathy? Pinched? Warm? No two voices are the same, but the goal is to produce a natural sound, free from tension and focused with resonance.

Resonance

Many singers desire a less “breathy” sound that projects with ease. Rather than oversinging or pushing for volume, developing a natural resonance is the solution. The drills in this section are intended to awaken vocal resonators with time-tested techniques such as humming and lip trills.

Diction

What sets vocal music apart from instrumental music? The words! And with those words comes the responsibility to make them understood. A lot depends on the lips, the teeth, and the tongue (their placement and movement), plus the amount of air used to enunciate.

Intonation

While pitch problems are often the result of a shortcoming of technique (such as misaligned posture, tension, shallow vowels, or a lack of breath), the ear plays a big part, too. This chapter invites vocalists to concentrate on intonation, sing in the center of the pitch, and avoid scoops and slides.

Range

Nearly every singer hopes to expand their vocal range, but there are a finite number of notes that any human instrument can sing with ease. Here’s the good news though—most of us can reveal a few more notes (on either end) with careful practice that encourages healthy technique and avoids forcing.

Expression

In the end, singing should be an aesthetic exchange between performers and their audiences. So singers must prioritize musical expression, connecting to emotions, and dramatic storytelling within a song. Can this be taught? Absolutely! The first step is to identify the fundamental concepts, the second step is to practice them. Here are a few drills to lead the way.

Miscellaneous Skills

One of the best ways to learn any subject is to sing about it. Three diverse topics are included: the onset of tone, watching the conductor, and syllabic stress.

Harmony

These exercises are in multiple parts, nurturing the ability to harmonize and sing independent lines with confidence.

In the end, singing is all about musical interpretation and the emotions conveyed by performers. But a lack of technique limits our ability to deliver a strong performance. So, let’s begin by developing the core technical skills that provide a foundation for great singing.

About the Author



Andy Beck received a bachelor’s degree in music education from Ithaca College and a master’s degree in music education from Northwest Missouri State University. Following his nine-year appointment as Vocal Music Director at Johnson City High School in New York State, Andy joined the editorial team of Alfred Music where he serves as Director of Choral and Classroom Publications. A successful composer and arranger, Andy has authored many top-selling chorals and resources over his 20 years with Alfred. Fully committed to arts education, music literacy, and choral artistry, Mr. Beck is in demand as a guest conductor and clinician for music educators and students throughout the country.

How to Sing



1 2

This joyful exercise is designed to warm the voice and set the mood for a mindful singing practice. Use a fully supported tone, solid breath support, and plenty of space in the mouth and throat. Keep that same openness each time you breathe in preparation for the next phrase.

Optional: To accentuate the vowel quality, try performing without any of the consonants. Once you achieve a smoothly connected line of round sounds, gradually add the consonants back in as the sparkling jewelry on your wardrobe of vowels.

Joyfully (♩ = ca. 76)

5
Sound the mu - sic now, round - ing ev - 'ry vowel,

9
proud - ly learn - ing how, how to sing.

Releasing the Jaw



5



3

The jaw plays a very important role in vocal technique. When singing or speaking, it should gently release, creating just the right amount of space to accommodate the vowels and consonants needed for good diction. Never force the jaw down, but rather allow it to loosely fall. Be careful not to overestimate the space needed—too much can be detrimental.

Physical extension: Place a hand gently on your chin while vocalizing to evaluate the movement of your jaw. Let it float open and closed in a relaxed manner.

Smooth and easy (♩ = ca. 108)

Down and re-laxed,

nev-er jut-ting for-ward. Down and re-laxed,

re-leas-ing the jaw. Down and re-

Qualities of Tone



15



7

The term “tone quality” refers to the timbre of an instrument. A well-developed voice will be able to healthily produce various tone qualities as required by the style, genre, and origin of the performance repertoire. The descriptors found in this exercise (“warm,” “smooth,” and “light as a feather”) are intended to inspire a pleasing, lyrical, and flexible sound.

Music by **TOMMASO GIORDANI**
Words by **ANDY BECK**

Larghetto (♩ = ca. 56)

Warm as the sun,

4 *poco rit.*, *a tempo*
smooth as a stone, light as a feather, — qual - i - ties of tone.

7 *poco rit.*,
Warm as the sun, smooth as a stone, light as a feather, —

poco rit.