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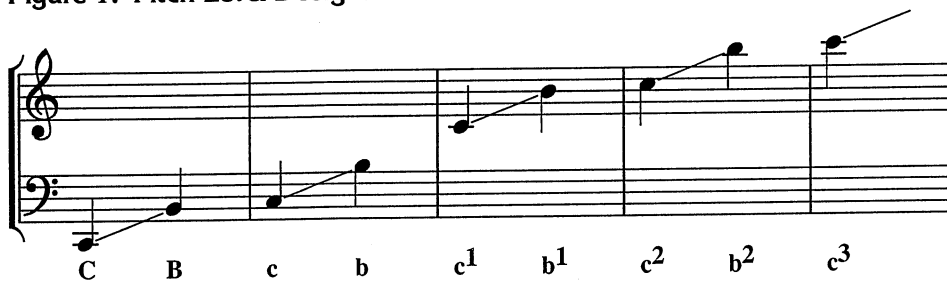
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## INTRODUCTION

Many directors of church and school choirs feel uncomfortable when dealing with boys' voices in their ensembles. Preparing music with a mixed chorus offers sufficient challenges without the questions which arise concerning the changing voice in boys: How do I know when a boy's voice is beginning to change? How do I classify these voices? What do I do with the boy who sings everything an octave lower than written? Should boys be singing when the voice change process seems most noticeable? What exercises will promote healthy singing habits and aid in the development of free and beautiful singing? How can I choose music which will fit the boys' voices? What can I do about boys' attitudes about singing?

Before discussing these questions and possible answers, let's briefly review three approaches to the classification of male voice change which emerged in the 1950's and 1960's. Figure 1 indicates the designation of pitches and ranges used throughout this manual, giving us a common reference point when discussing the various approaches to classifying boys' voices.

Figure 1. Pitch Level Designators



Irvin Cooper coined the term "cambiata" to describe the boy's changing voice prior to becoming a baritone. He classified all boys' voices as either boy sopranos,  $b\flat-f^2$ ; cambiata,  $f-c^2$ ; or baritones,  $B\flat-f^1$ . [1]

Frederick Swanson, retired director of the Moline (Illinois) Boys' Choir, applied three different classifications: boy alto,  $g-f^2$ ; tenor,  $d-e^1$ ; and bass,  $A-g$ . In addition, Swanson urged greater understanding of the contra-bass adolescent voice with its low notes of D and C or lower, commonly known as the "fry" tones. [2]

Duncan McKenzie, a British music educator, evolved the alto-tenor plan of classification with its six categories for boys: soprano I,  $c^1-g^2$ ; soprano II,  $b-e^2$ ; alto,  $a-c^2$ ; alto-tenor,  $g-g^1$ ; baritone, (seventh grade),  $c-b$ ; and baritone (eighth and ninth grade),  $B-c^1$ . [3]

Both McKenzie and Cooper felt that the junior high bass is rare, a fact opposed by Swanson. McKenzie and Cooper also believed that the changing voice lowers at a gradual rate. Swanson found that the rate of voice change was rapid.

For us, the dilemma ended with the emergence of John Cooksey's eclectic theory of voice change in boys developed in the 1970's. [4] His six categories, which include elements of the work of Cooper, McKenzie, and Swanson, are as follows: unchanged, a-f<sup>2</sup>; mid-voice I, a-b-c<sup>2</sup>; mid-voice II, f-a<sup>1</sup>; mid-voice II A, d-f #<sup>1</sup>; new baritone, B-d #<sup>1</sup>; and settling baritone, G-d<sup>1</sup>. [5] He, like McKenzie and Cooper, felt that the rate of change for the boy's changing voice was gradual.

Cooksey's categories provided us with much food for thought. Many of the ideas and concepts expressed in this book are based on his research. However, with extensive testing and in-class application, we reduced the six categories to four and modified them slightly to approximate more nearly what we found in our work. The names of the categories were changed to include the widely-used term, "cambiata." The four resulting categories are (1) treble, a-f<sup>2</sup>; (2) cambiata I, g-c<sup>2</sup>; (3) cambiata II, e-b-f<sup>1</sup>; and (4) baritone, A-d<sup>1</sup>. See Figure 2. As might be expected, all boys do not neatly fit within these exact ranges. However, in our experiences, most boys will.

The ideas in this book grew out of classroom experiences buttressed by broad-based research findings. The opening chapter addresses the challenge of classifying boys' voices. Succeeding chapters include practical suggestions for developing positive attitudes about vocal change, selecting and adapting music, placing boys within ensembles of various types, understanding adolescent behavior, tips for effective teaching and common problems with possible solutions. The final chapter is a list of recommended choral music for various voice combinations. Four appendices offer tested vocalises.

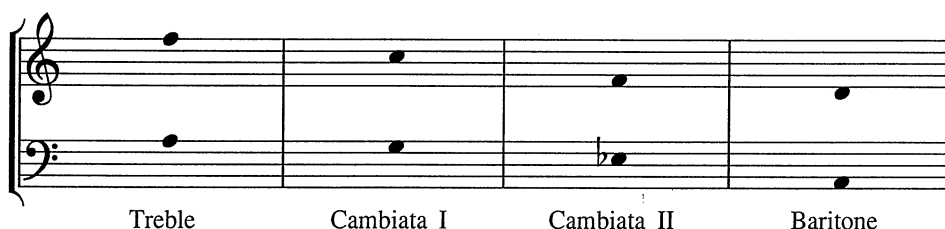
## I

# PUTTING ROUND PEGS IN ROUND HOLES

## VOICE PLACEMENT

Every young man deserves to know where he "fits in." As can be found under "Testing Procedures," non-threatening ways of determining a boy's vocal category can pave the way for increased self-esteem and musical growth. You should place boys into one of these four categories: Treble, Cambiata I, Cambiata II, or Baritone (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Categories and Ranges of Boys' Changing Voices





"I sound great on these low parts!"

### RECOGNIZING CHANGE

Cooksey indicates that the speaking voice changes before the singing voice and is a fairly reliable indicator of change. [6] The speaking voice lies near the bottom of the voice range. Changes in the singing voice proceed at various rates through the four-stage pattern beginning with Cambiata I. Change, for a majority of boys, begins at ages 12-13, is most active between 13-14, and tapers off between 15 and 18. [7] It should be noted that some boys' voices begin changing as early as the fourth and fifth grades. [8] Boys often experience loss of several pitches at the upper end of their voice ranges before adding new pitches to their lowest sung sounds.

The first signs that voice change is occurring include an increase in breathiness and physical signs of strain in the upper register. Watch for tightening neck muscles and occasional jutting jaws as boys compensate for reduced ranges and poor breath support. Boys who speak "hello" on the pitches A or A $\flat$  below middle C (c<sup>1</sup>) are usually Trebles (unchanged) or Cambiata I's. These young men may try to sing the tenor part, duck their heads, and growl around almost inaudibly below middle C. However, they certainly can and should sing either the soprano or the alto lines, whichever part is appropriate, so that bad habits do not develop. If you make this change, be sure to bolster the young man's esteem for himself by explaining the situation clearly and using terms to foster strong identity.