Let Children Sing Joyfully

Training of Children's Choir



by David chi-beng Yap

LET CHILDREN SING JOYFULLY

By David Chi-Beng Yap
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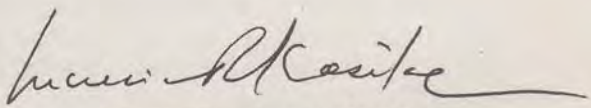
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FOREWORD

Commendations to David C.B. Yap for writing another functional book for choral trainers this time, entitled "Let Children Sing Joyfully," truly a most welcome addition to the dearth of pedagogical books for the effective training of and organizing children's choirs. A cassette set of 91 appropriate musical samples accompanies this book.

Writing from long years of experience, Mr. Yap's wise handling of children's voices provides very useful and proper guidelines to those who undertake the delicate task of teaching children's choirs how to sing correctly and effortlessly, avoiding the common pitfalls of many conductors who train children's choirs any old way. In the process, they ruin young voices and raise groups of children who sing automatically and blindly imitate their leaders who go through the rehearsal sessions groping in the dark.

Let Children Sing Joyfully upgrades the goals of organizing and training children's voices from the outset to sing naturally and correctly, with understanding, with discipline and with total musicianship, making them enjoy singing as well as making others enjoy their meaningful renditions, reaching out from heart to heart.



LUCRECIA R. KASILAG
President
Cultural Center of the Philippines

LET CHILDREN SING JOYFULLY
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PREFACE

Generally speaking, teaching a children's choir is much easier than handling a youth or adult choir. This is because of the following reasons:

1. Physically, every child is born with a perfect instrument, that is, the vocal organ. The children's vocal organ is NEW, PERFECT, and UNSPOILED.

2. Psychologically, the child is pure and unaffected. He responds without question to authority and he tackles tasks assigned to him with enthusiasm and vivacity. Everything that he experiences is new to him.

3. Intellectually, the child absorbs facts easily during the development stage. He is easier to teach because his reaction is fast and his memory is good.

4. His daily activities are very simple, routine in a way. He is learning to socialize and be a part of a group. Parents at this period, have more concern regarding his activities.

Letting children sing and teaching them the correct way of singing does not mean that we expect all of them to become singers in the future. But rather a children's choir has more important goals to achieve such as the following:

1. To discipline the child both in his behavior and intellect.

2. To learn teamwork.

3. To learn to appreciate music of good quality.

4. To influence the choice of interesting activities in the future.

5. To prepare him for future membership in a youth and/or adult choir.

6. Being a choir member can be a memorable and valuable experience for a child.

The far reaching effects of a children's choir are innumerable:

1. Because of their clear, pure voice and their ways, their singing moves the hearts of the listeners.

2. A bond of understanding develops between parents and children, teachers and pupils.

3. Because of this, the educational system is enhanced and music education becomes an integral part of the system.

The children's choir conductor can be either a man or a woman, but it is preferable to have a female conductor whose voice quality is clear and fine. Choirs which do not have such a choice, may use a voice trainor. A male conductor must know how to sing falsetto.

This book does not deal with conducting techniques,

(only a few are mentioned in Chapter Six), but for a more detailed discussion on the conducting techniques, I would recommend the reader to refer to my book entitled "Basic Choral Conducting," published by the Cultural Center of the Philippines, National Music Competitions for Young Artists, Roxas Blvd., Manila, Philippines.

Here are six principles to consider:

1. The conductor must know the children's voice and how it develops. (Chapter 1)

2. The conductor must know how to classify childrens' voices. (Chapter 2)

3. Vocal training techniques such as vocal production, attack, release, phrasing, dynamic, breathing, ear training, diction and solfeggio must be well-planned and should fit the needs of the group. The method of teaching should also fit the group. (Chapter 3)

4. Child psychology together with the basic principles of teaching should be used and applied liberally.

5. Song materials and exercises must be of good quality and they should be suitable for children. (Chapter 4)

6. The conductor must look after the total musical development of the child and his musicianship. This includes note reading, ear training, creative work and instrumental playing.

Cassette recordings accompany this book to illustrate various points in Chapters One to Three.

The author has observed that at present, church music has become substandard. For a possible solution to this problem, he is encouraging churches to start a children's choir. This book is dedicated to conductors who are teaching and training children's choirs. May the Lord give you wisdom in reading this book as well as in applying the various ideas found here, with your God-given talent.

I wish to thank Dr. Lucrecia R. Kasilag, President of the Cultural Center of the Philippines and over-all chairman of the National Music Competitions for Young Artists,who has so graciously given me the privilege to work with the Manila Children's Choir for the experimental use of this book; to the members of the Manila Children's Choir for their inspiration; and the staff, Fred Tiburcio, Josefina Tech, Bernie de Leon, and Gloria Acantilado for their support and assistance.

My deepest appreciation goes to Frances Siodora Tiburcio and to Steve Banta for making the English transcription from my manuscripts.

And most of all to my wife So Hua (Esther Yap), for her abiding interest and support for all my work at the NAMCYA-Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Chinese Church Music Association.

It is the aim of this book to teach children to sing correctly and in the process enjoy singing. LET CHILDREN SING JOYFULLY!

David Chi-Beng Yap
June, 1984

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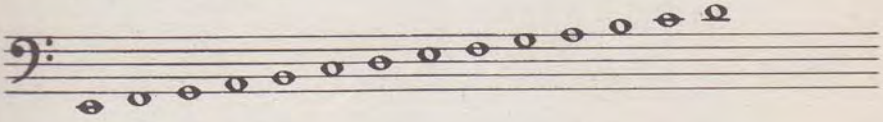
CHAPTER I

CHILDREN'S VOICE

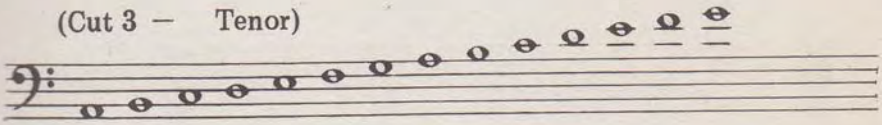
(Cut 1 — Opening song)

The human voice has four ranges of pitch, from low to high: bass, tenor, alto and soprano.

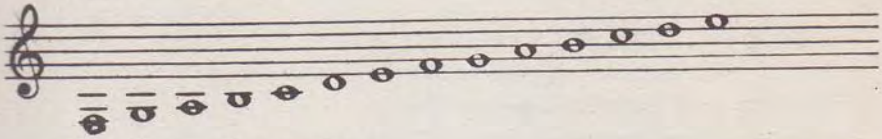
(Cut 2 — Bass)



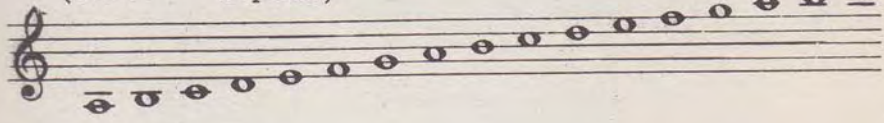
(Cut 3 — Tenor)



(Cut 4 — Alto)

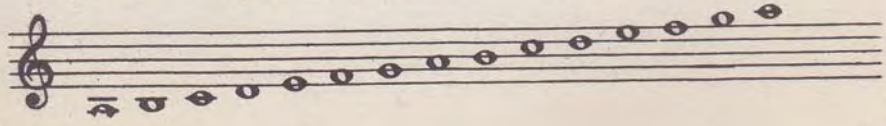


(Cut 5 — Soprano)



The female voice differs from the male voice in pitch. The children's voice is the same as the soprano voice in pitch.

(Cut 6 — Children' choir)



Children's voice is more pure and light (Cut 7) compared to the female voice which is richer, rounder and fuller. (Cut 8)

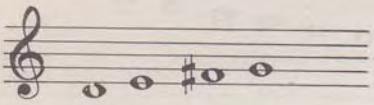
(Cut 7 — Children's voice)

(Cut 8 — Soprano voice)

Different age groups of the children's voice.

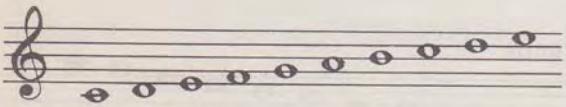
(a) 3 to 6 years old

(Cut 9 — Voice of a 4-year old girl)



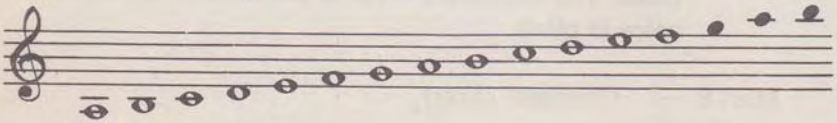
(b) 7 to 9 years old

(Cut 10 — Voice of a 7-year old boy)



(c) 10 to 13 years old

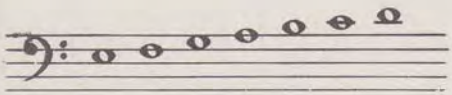
(Cut 11 — Voice of an 11-year old boy)



The above grouping is the author's idea. One can have other age groupings.

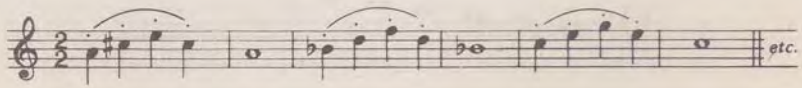
Normally, boys' voice change during the adolescent period at about 13 years old. Among the girls, no radical change happens, except that their voice becomes thicker and fuller as they grow up.

(Cut 12 — Voice of a 13-year old boy which is about to crack)



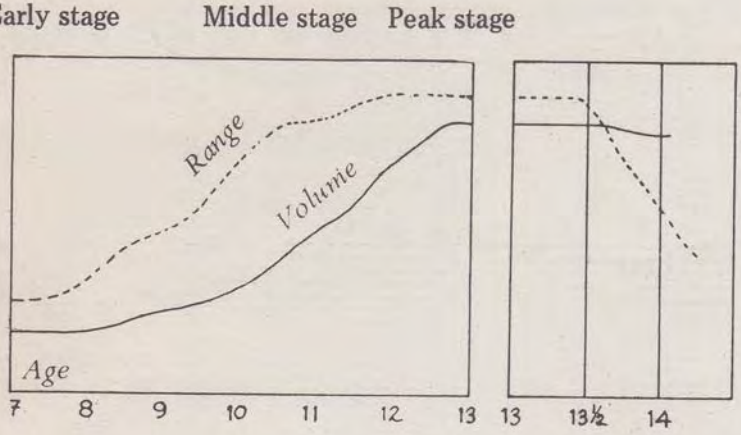
The special characteristic of the boy's voice is that it is more brilliant and stronger than the girls. From the very start, the teacher must explain to boys about their similarity to girls' voice. In fact there is the so called "Boy Soprano" that is typical among boys.

(Cut 13 — Typical boy soprano)



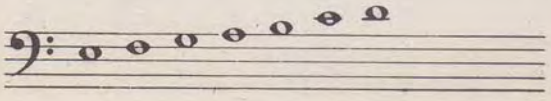
A boy's voice from 7 to 13 years old undergoes three stages of development. Starting from early to middle stages and later reaching the peak stage, his voice becomes brighter, wider in range and stronger in volume.

Fig. 1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOYS' VOICE



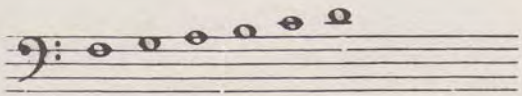
When boys reach the age when their voices crack, they no longer belong to the children's voice category, because their voice drops one octave and they can hardly control it.

(Cut 14 — A cracked voice)

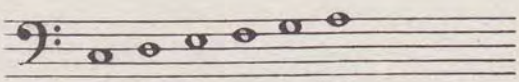


Should boys continue singing during this period? Expert musicians vary in their opinions. The author personally believes that boys should be encouraged to go on singing, simply because it is a rule of nature that there should be no gap in singing; but for precautionary measures, for at least six months to one year, boys should not sing too long which might result in strained voices. They should also avoid singing high or shouting. It is advisable that during this period, they join the youth choir as alto or tenor.

(Cut 15 — A boy's voice that has a tendency to go to the tenor range).



(Cut 16 — A boy's voice that has a tendency to go to the baritone/bass range).

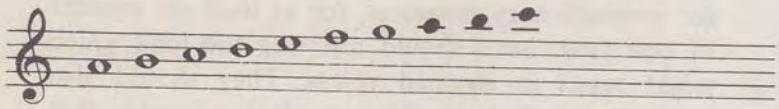


Aside from checking their ranges, another way of determining whether they belong to the tenor or baritone/bass is to check the timbre and tone color of their voices.

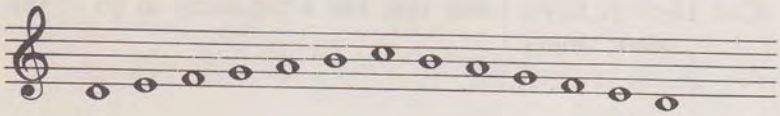
To lessen their frustration, the conductor must prepare the boys psychologically for the time when their voices crack.

The children's voice has three voice placements:

(Cut 17 — Head voice)



(Cut 18 — Middle voice)



(Cut 19 — Chest voice)

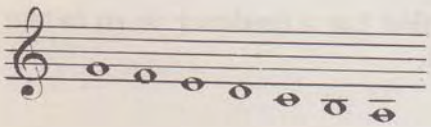
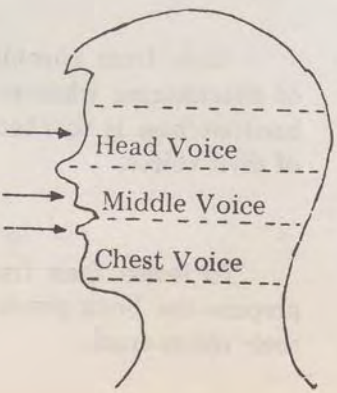


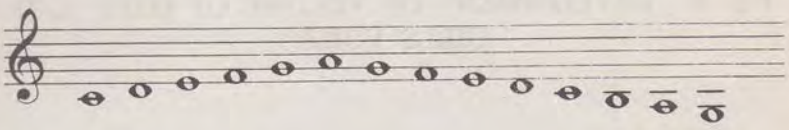
Fig. 2. VOICE PLACEMENTS AND RESONANCE

1st — the head voice
2nd — the middle voice
3rd — the chest voice



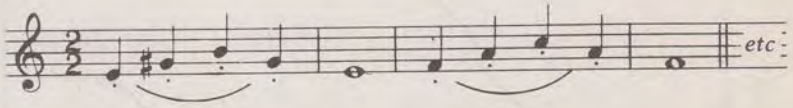
These three voice placements vary from one child to another. When children sing, discourage them from using the chest voice because they sometimes produce the throaty voice.

(Cut 20 — Boy using the throaty voice)



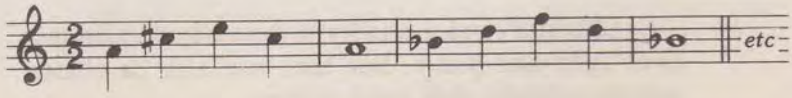
The middle voice, bright and clear, is very lovely.

(Cut 21 — Boy using the middle voice)



The head voice is one of the most beautiful voices of a child. Aside from being pure and high, it is easy to produce.

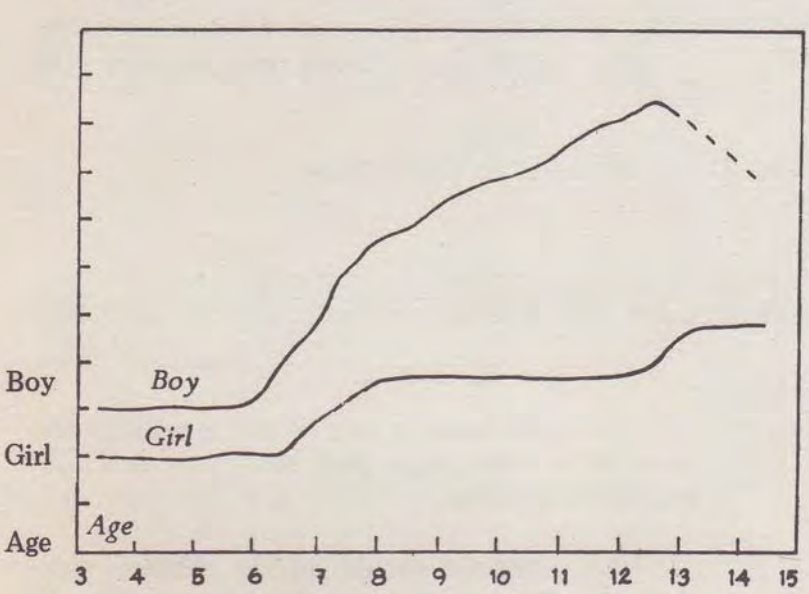
The conductor should let the children, especially the girls, master the head voice, since this will be the foundation of their entire singing life. After that, the middle voice and finally the chest voice can be tackled.



(Cut 22 — Girl using the head voice)

There is a parallel development going on between the chronological age and the volume of the voice. A boy's voice naturally sounds bigger than a girl's voice. Below is a chart which shows the difference of volume and age between boys and girls.

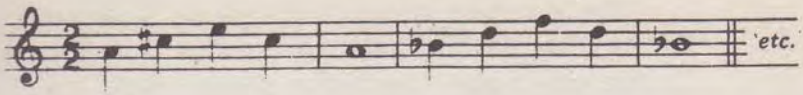
Fig. 3. DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUME OF BOYS' AND GIRLS' VOICE



Vocal timbre and tone color are inborn and inherited and they depend on the shape and size of pharyngeal resonators. That is why members of one family often sound the same when talking.

Children's voice quality is generally divided into two: light and heavy. But they can also be characterized as bright, dull, solid or loose.

(Cut 23 to 31)



(Cut 23 — Light voice)

(Cut 24 — Heavy voice)

There are those with breathy voice especially among the girls; but this has nothing to do with the vocal quality.

(Cut 25 — Breathy voice)

Many girls, due to shyness or timidity, sing very softly or have thin voices. This also has nothing to do with vocal quality.

(Cut 26 — Thin, light voice)

Another kind of voice is the nasal voice which also has nothing to do with vocal quality.

(Cut 27 — Nasal voice)

Breathy, thin and the nasal voice can be improved. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Since the vocal quality cannot be changed, the volume and tone color can be improved through training.

Changing the tone color from dark to bright or bright to dark can be done by making adjustments in the opening of the oral area of the mouth and the oral cavity.

(Cut 28 — Change of tone color)

The best way of teaching children is through imitation because children like to follow the leader. To accomplish this, the teacher should ideally have a fine, bright, and high voice.

(Cut 29 — Teacher being imitated by the children)

Sometimes, children can be used as models.

(Cut 30 — A child imitated by his peers)

Fig. 4. IMITATION — CHILDREN TO CHOIR. IMITATION — CHILDREN TO CHILDREN



(Cut 31 — A child imitated by another child)

Fig. 5 IMITATION — CHILD TO ANOTHER CHILD



The piano should be used in teaching, only if all the above suggestions cannot be done. The role of the piano in children's choral training is just as an accompaniment or as a secondary guide.

(Cut 32 — Piano playing all notes)

This method should be avoided.

(Cut 33 — Piano providing a rhythmic accompaniment only)

This is the correct method. Accurate intonation is inherited and is not dependent on the age of an individual. It is the accuracy of tone and steadiness of sound which are related to the hearing ability as well as the understanding and reaction of the individual to any sound.

(Cut 34 — A 7-year old girl singing with a stable voice)

(Cut 35 — A 7-year old girl singing with an unstable voice)

(Cut 36 — A 7-year old girl singing out of tune)

Being out of tune in singing, is not really being tone deaf in the literal sense of the word. The individual who is given that label is only slow in hearing and lacks concentration. This disability can be remedied through training. In cases like this, the teacher must be very patient in training students. For more on this topic, read Chapter Three.

SUMMARY

1. The areas of the human voice
2. The characteristics and ranges of children's voice
3. The placements and resonance of children's voice
4. The difference between boys' and girls' voice
5. The timbre and tone color of children's voice
6. Imitation and intonation of children's voice

CHAPTER II

CLASSIFICATION OF CHILDREN'S VOICE

If a child is normal and healthy, he or she should be able to sing and belong to the women's voice group. When a child first joins the choir, he or she is given an audition and a voice classification. Children can be grouped as S_1 (high voice), S_2 (medium voice), and S_3 (low voice). For the junior choir, ages 7-9, S_1 and S_2 only are used.

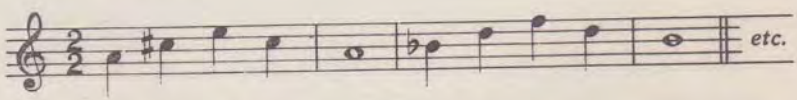
In classifying the voices, avoid using the terms soprano and alto. Boys, especially at age 10 onward, are prejudiced and equate these term with women's voices.

When classifying voices, use a small studio with a properly-tuned piano. But the piano should be used only as a guide and not while the children are singing.

Voice testing should include the following areas: tonal quality, intonation, hearing ability, rhythm, range, and facial expression.

During the testing of the vocal or tonal quality, use the head and middle voices, or the most comfortable range for the child being tested. Classify them into either light or heavy, bright or dull, solid or loose,and high, medium or low.

(Cut 37 to 45)



(Cut 37 — Light tonal quality) (Cut 38 — Heavy tonal quality)

(Cut 39 — Bright tonal quality) (Cut 43 — High quality)

(Cut 40 — Dull tonal quality) (Cut 44 — Medium quality)

(Cut 41 — Solid quality) (Cut 45 — Low quality)

(Cut 42 — Loose tonal quality)

Every child must have an individual voice record to be updated every 6 months or yearly.

Fig. 6 INDIVIDUAL VOICE RECORD

Individual Voice Record

Name _____ Sex _____

Address _____ Tel. _____

Date of Birth _____ Name of Father _____

Name of Mother _____

	First Test	2nd Test	3rd Test	4th Test
	Date	Date	Date	Date
	Age	Age:	Age:	Age:
Tonal Quality				
Intonation				
Hearing				
Rhythm				
Voice Range				
Facial Expression				
Other inst. played				
Remarks				
Classification	S_1 S_2 S_3	S_1 S_2 S_3	S_1 S_2 S_3	S_1 S_2 S_3

Record : A _____ B _____ C _____

To test quallity, use the terms light (L), heavy (H), bright (B), solid (S), dull (D), or loose (Lo).

To test intonation, hearing ability, and rhythm use the terms poor (P), fair (F), good (G), or excellent (E).

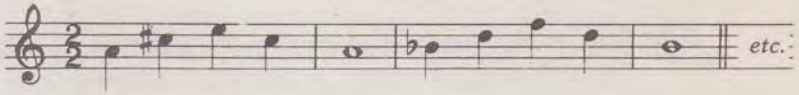
To test range, use the terms high (H), medium (M), and low (L).

For facial expression, use natural (N), or unnatural (Unn).

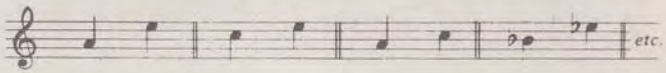
Breathy, nasal, thin voice, voice for solo material, typical boy soprano or individual coaching necessary, are noted under the heading "Remarks."

To test quality, intonation, hearing ability, and range, use mainly chords, up and down leaps, long phrases and whole tone scales.

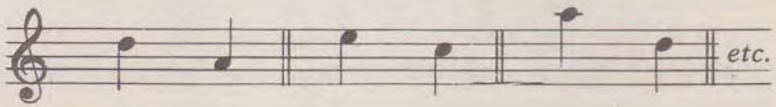
(Cut 46 — Triad chord d m s m d)



(Cut 47 — Leap, from low to high)



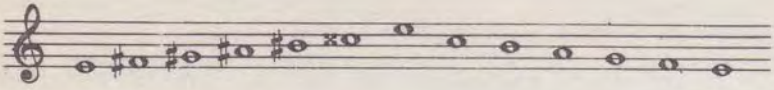
(Cut 48 — Leap, from high to low)



(Cut 49 — Musical phrase)



(Cut 50 — Whole tone scale up and down (4 or 5 notes only))



Here are some reminders for children's voice classification:

1. Do not use the piano while they are singing.

2. Nervousness cannot be avoided among children while they are being tested. So the teacher must try to make them as relaxed as possible before testing them. Prepare the children psychologically by asking them their name, where they study, and other pertinent information.

3. Test them a second time; give the children all the chances possible before telling them whether they passed or not.

4. Record A, B, or C after testing. A — accept; B — consider to accept, try for a period; C — reject.

(Cut 51 — Hand clapping) To test rhythm, use hand clapping.

(Cut 52 — Sample of tested children)

(Cut 53 — S_1) (Cut 54 — S_2) (Cut 55 — S_3)

Emphasize to the choir that S_2 and S_3 are the most important parts in the choir. Put children with dark and solid voices as well as those with good hearing ability in S_3.

Avoid being too strict when testing children below 7 years old.

(Cut 56 — Testing children of age 6)

Parents should fill-in the information sheet (Fig. 7) during the enrollment period.

Fig. 7 INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMATION SHEET

Date _____

Name _____ Sex ____

Date of Birth _____ Age ____

Address _____

School — grade and section _____

Musical activities _____

Instrument played _____

Choir groups joined _____

Parents / guardians _____

During the actual testing:

1. Classify the children into groups A, B, or C to indicate natural music ability. Group A children are automatically in, group B children are to be retested and to be reconsidered, and for group C, their inclusion will be studied further.

2. To maintain an ideal number, start with at least 60 members.

3. Those belonging to the age group 8-13 will be the seniors while 7-9 will be the juniors.

4. Half of your choir must be made up of boys. The minimum number is two-fifths of the entire choir.

5. S_1, S_2, and S_3 must have equal members or preferably have more in the lower areas.

The above pointers are not the absolute way of choosing choir members. Everything depends on the conductor — his aims and goals for the choir. Whatever musical level the conductor is aspiring for will help in the choosing of choir members. If the group is mainly for competition, get only group A children, but if it is for school activities and more time can be given for the development of their voices, groups A, B and even C can be included in the choir.

SUMMARY

1. Classification of voices — S_1, S_2, S_3

2. Testing of tonal quality, intonation, hearing ability, range, rhythm, and facial expression

3. Psychological preparation

4. After testing, grouping the children according to their musical abilities — Group A, B or C

CHAPTER III

TRAINING EXERCISES FOR CHILDREN'S CHOIR

This chapter contains eight areas of choral technique training. In any endeavor, the foundation is most important, and having a good foundation, one can go further. All the areas mentioned in this book occur simultaneously and not one at a time or successively. The steps in learning these techniques must be followed closely. Progress in learning them will depend on the individual. Whether slow or fast, learning these techniques must be a continuing process. In every rehearsal period, vocal training techniques and theory should be done twice, 10-15 minutes each time. This should be included in the rehearsal schedule or plan.

The singing posture should be natural: shoulders down, chin in, mouth wide open with a smile.

Fig. 8 — SINGING POSTURE





EXERCISE I — VOICE PRODUCTION AND PROJECTION

A. Vowels

ä (basa), ā (say), ē (see)
ō (so), o͞o (zoo)

(Cut 57 — Sing a, put 2 fingers in the mouth opening)

Sing ä — the vowel a is the easiest vowel to sing. Use it often in order to form the habit of opening the mouth wide.

Fig. 9a SING "ä," USING TWO FINGERS



Fig. 9b



Fig.10a - SING "ā" and "ē," USING ONE FINGER

(Cut 58 — Sing ā and ē, put 1 finger)

Fig. 10a



Fig. 10b



Sing ā & ē — the vowels ā and ē are the most difficult vowels to sing.

Sing ō & o͞o — the vowels ō and o͞o are easy to sing. Just follow the shape of the mouth. Always start with the head voice. Start singing the A chord until the entire voice box opens and this becomes a habit.

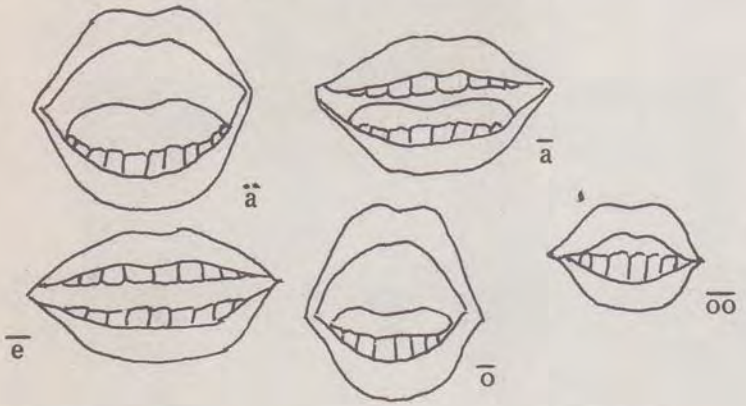
(Cut 59 — Group singing o, take out the finger)

(Cut 60 — Group singing oo, take out the finger)

Only after the head voice technique has been mastered can the conductor proceed to the teaching of the middle voice and the chest voice.

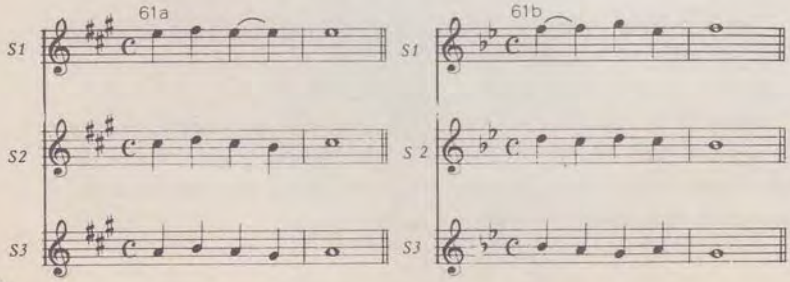
All three levels of children's voice are learned using the movable "do" system.

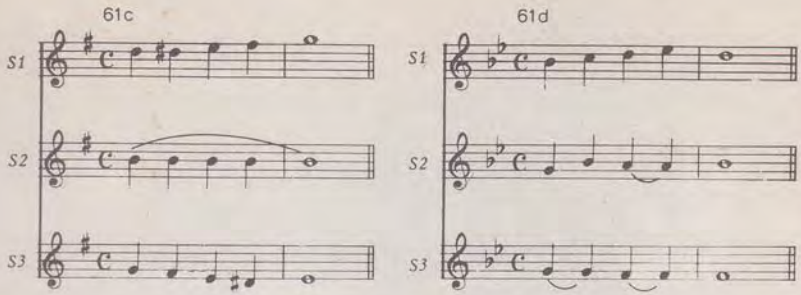
Fig.11— SHAPES OF THE MOUTH WHILE SINGING



Use any vowels to sing these exercises, and use fermata to check voice blending.

(Cut 61 — 3-part singing progression)





B. Diphthongs

Use the same method used for vowels to sing diphthongs (a combination of 2 vowels).

(Cut 62 — ä - ē (I) -- my, light, 2 fingers to 1 finger)

(Cut 63 — ē - ā - mea, theater, 1 finger to 2 fingers)

(Cut 64 — ä - o o — how, cow, house, 2 fingers to no finger)

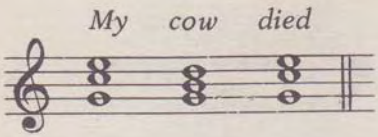
(Cut 65 — ē - oo — view, few, cue, 1 finger to no finger)

(Cut 66 — ē - ä — yard, yam, 1 finger to 2 fingers)

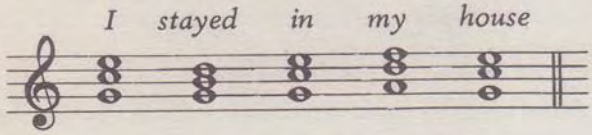
(Cut 67 — ē - ō — show, yoyo, leo, 1 finger to no finger)

In singing diphthongs, identify the sustained and vanishing vowels. Sustained vowels must be sung longer while vanishing vowels should be short. The way diphthongs are sung depends on the tempo, the dynamics, and the words preceding and following it.

(Cut 68 — My cow died)



(Cut 69 — I stayed in my house)



There are several methods of voice expansion and projection.

1. a. Put both palms lightly against the cheeks to help drop the jaw. (Fig. 12)

   b. Put both palms against the neck to check if the muscles of the neck are relaxed. (Fig. 13)



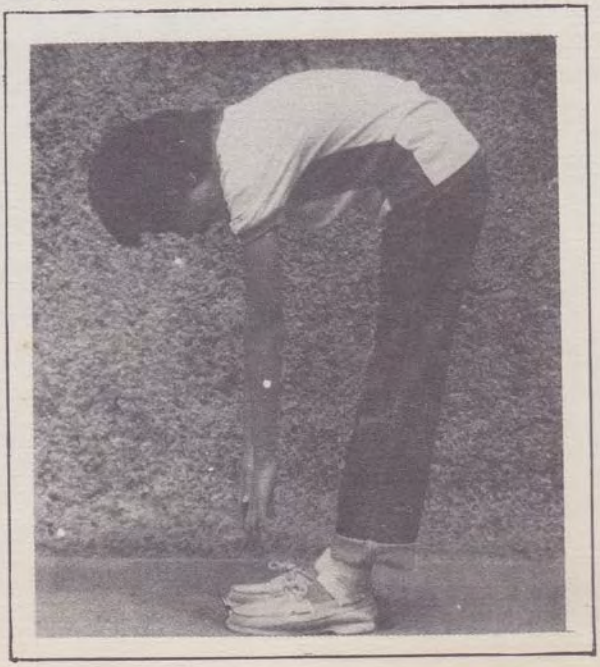
Fig. 12

Fig. 13



2. Bend your body and swing arms. (Fig. 14)

Fig. 14

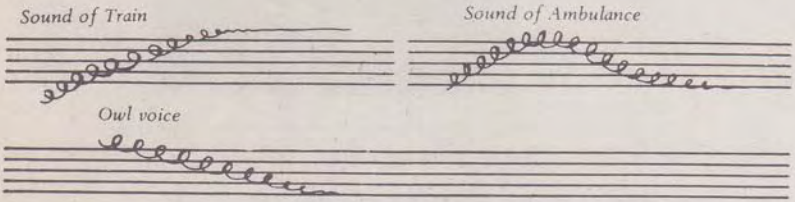


3. Use three kinds of drills, project voice toward the farthest point.

(Cut 70 — Sound of train)

(Cut 71 — Sound of ambulance)

(Cut 72 — Sound of the owl or yawning)



4. Put both hands, palms down, fingers interlacing, on top of the head and sing. (Fig. 15)

Fig. 15



5. Draw voice from mouth, act this out. (Fig. 16)

Fig. 16



6. Teacher listening to individual student (Fig. 17)

Fig. 17



In the above methods of voice projection, it is important that the teacher listens carefully to individual student (Fig. 15) to see if he/she is focusing his/her tone. The teacher must check if the student is using minimum energy to produce a powerful sound. This is the most effective way to improve breathy, thin voices and nasal voices.

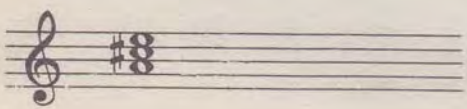
To summarize, voice projection should come naturally, and the best voice model is the children's voice followed by the female soprano voice. If there is no other choice, the piano can be used as a guide.

Head voice placement is the easiest to practice among the above-mentioned three different voice placements. Therefore, the conductor must pay more attention to middle and chest voice resonants. In order to avoid the artificial sound always bear in mind the "light," "fine," and "natural" ways of singing.

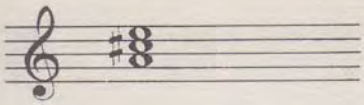
EXERCISE II — ATTACK AND RELEASE

Attack makes use of the diaphragm. Attack and release go together.

(Cut 73 — 3 parts singing attack and release)



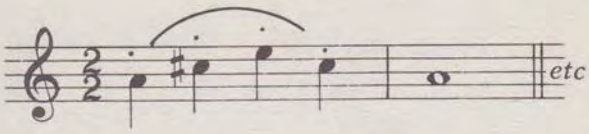
(Cut 74 — Different volume attack and release: p, mp, f)



P, mp, f

In attack, whether soft or loud, fast or slow, the tone produced must always be rich and full.

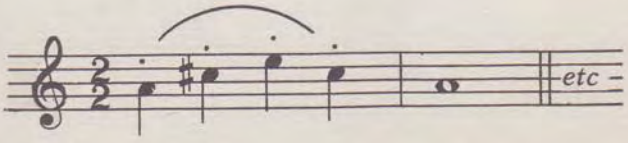
(Cut 75 — Rhythmic patterns to be clapped, then sung)



EXERCISE III — PHRASINC

Exercises involving staccato and legato are the most commonly used in phrasing.

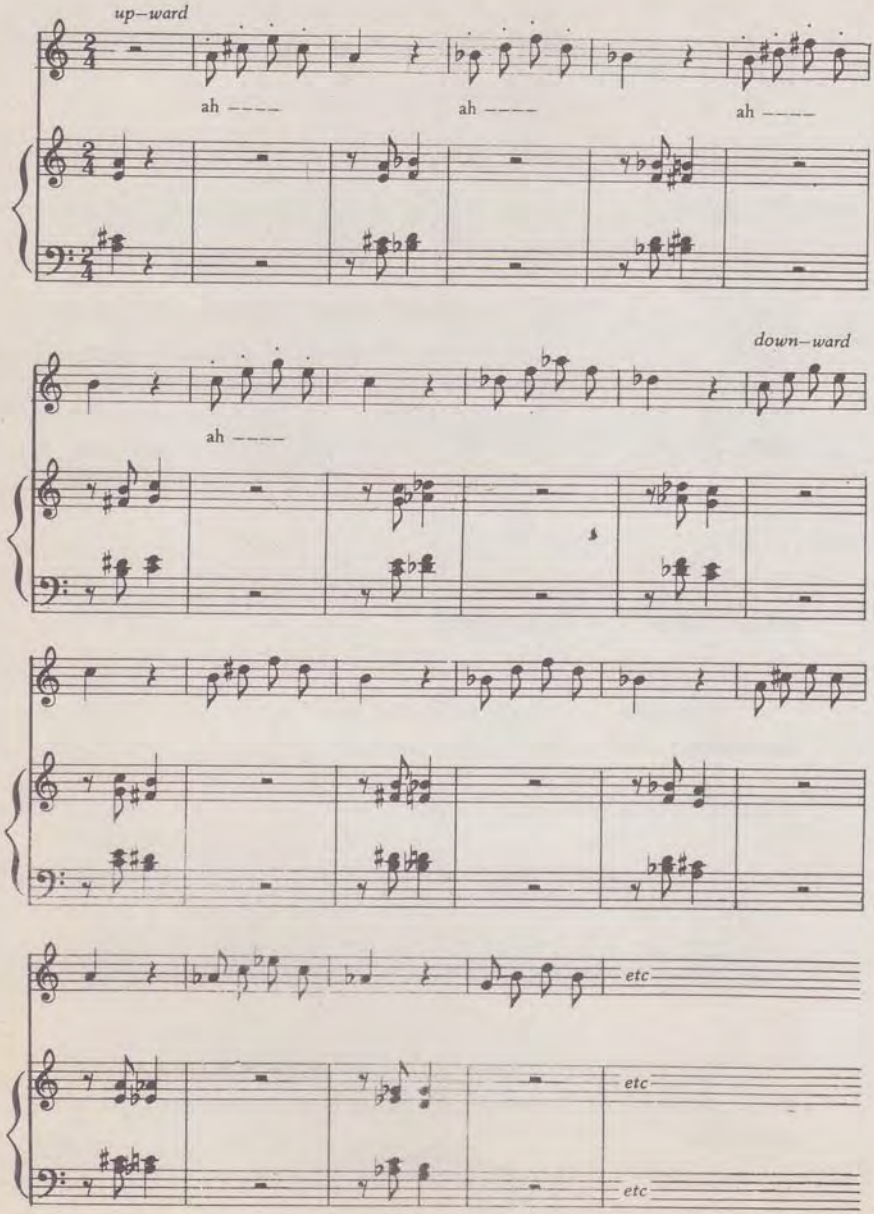
(Cut 76 — Staccato and legato)



The author recommends using triad chords as bases of voice projection. The diatonic scale is suitable for adult voice exercises.

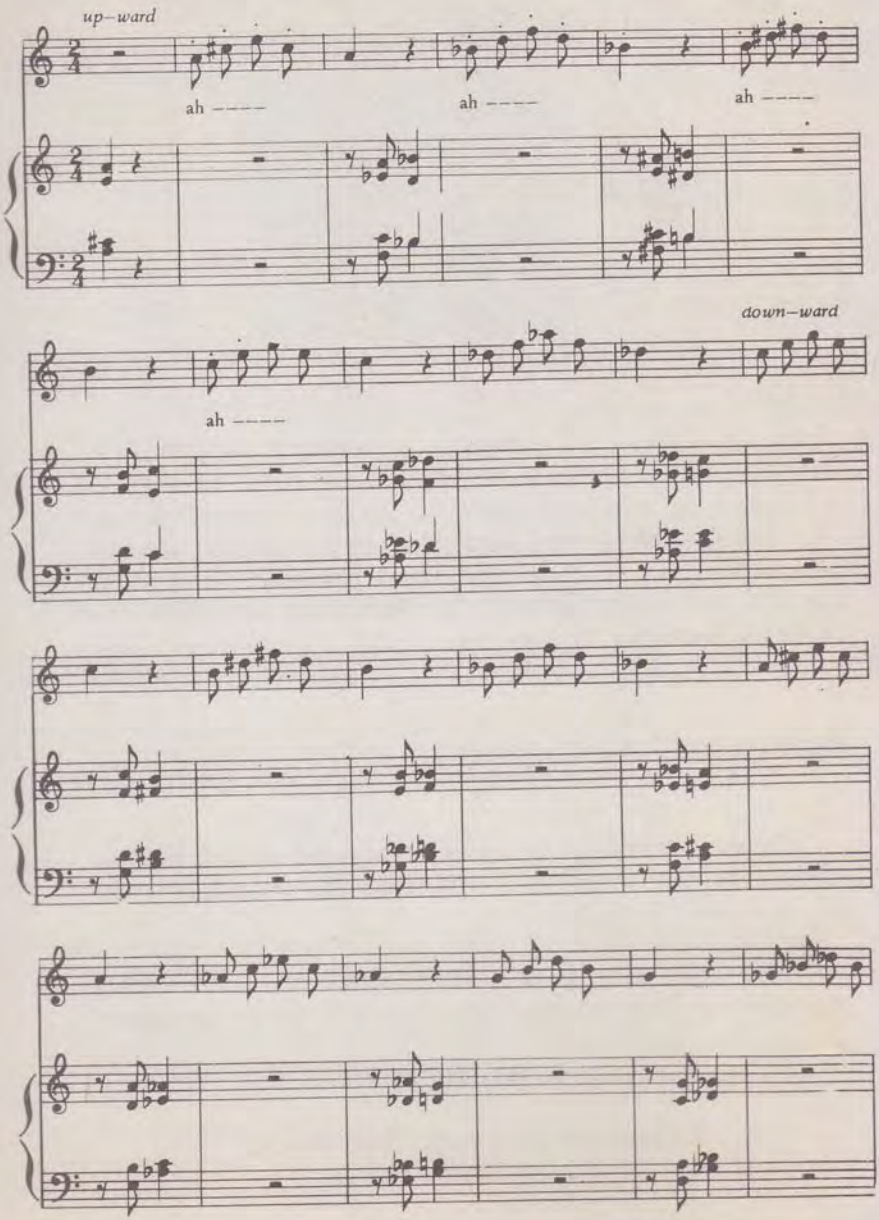
For phrasing exercises, the piano must rhythmically go with the choir.

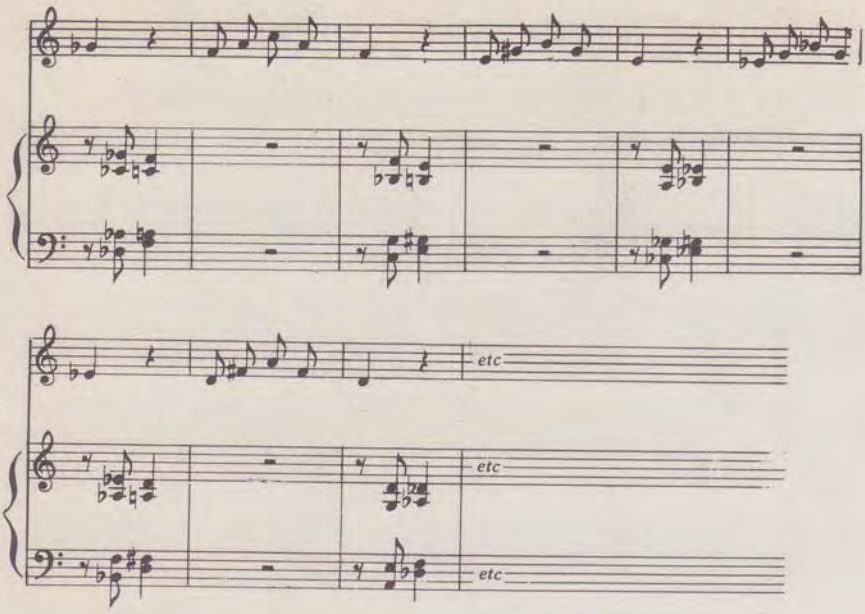
(Cut 77 — Choir with piano)



(Cut 78 — Choir with piano — another way of accompanying)

(Cut 79 — Notice that the piano did not play during the singing).





The first three areas mentioned in this chapter are concerned mainly with tone production, projection, and blending. For variety and interest, the choir must be divided into three sections — S_1, S_2, and S_3.

EXERCISE IV — BREATHING

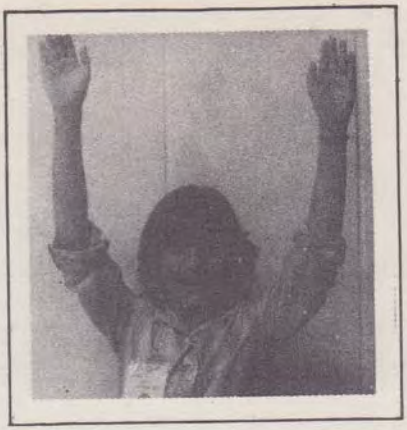
Correct breathing is essential to good choral singing. Aside from the actual choral singing, the conductor must set aside time for this area.

The conductor must always count out loud during rehearsals and say whether the choir will exhale or inhale.

Below, is an exercise for deep breathing. (Fig. 18)

Raise hands and inhale. Hold breath.
Put hands down. Exhale.

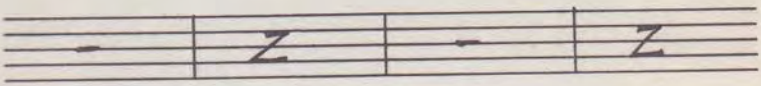
Fig. 18



The tempo of the song or exercise is closely related to the amount of air needed. Exercises should include both slow inhalation and slow exhalation while making the sound. "Z"

(Cut 80 — Slow exhalation while making the sound Z-Z-Z-Z)

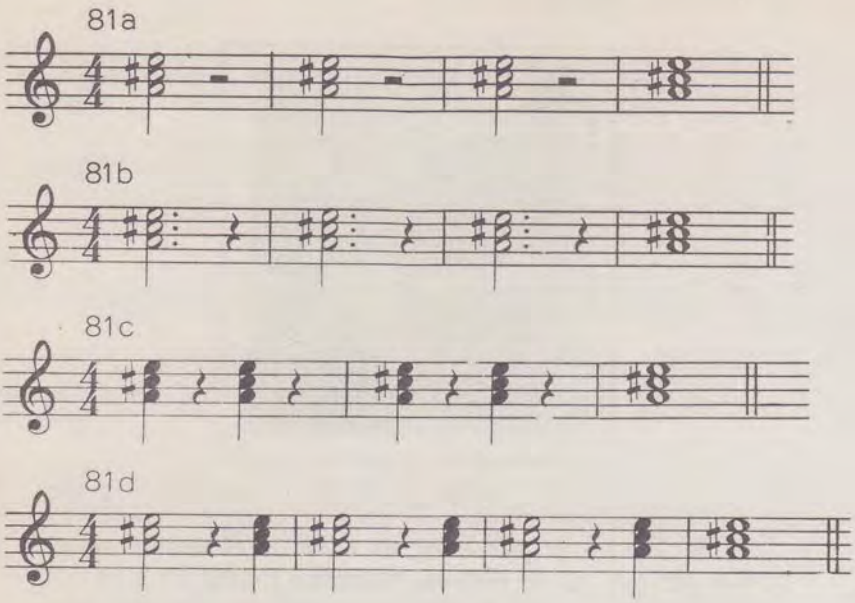
Inhale Exhale Inhale Exhale



Below are some exercises for breathing. The conductor must always bear in mind the following points while doing these exercises:

1. brilliant and focused tones
2. breathing reserved energy and air
3. always sing toward a bigger volume at the end
4. proper breath support

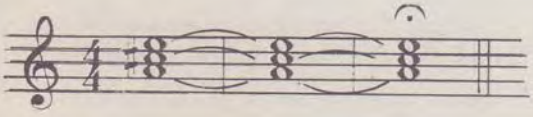
(Cut 81 — Breathing exercises)



Staggered breathing

In staggered breathing, the choir is usually divided into small groups. Every other choir member is grouped together and they breathe together. Those seated next to them continue singing and take a breath only after the first group has taken theirs.

(Cut 82 — Staggered breathing



Pointers for Correct Breathing

1. Avoid making sucking sounds while inhaling. To inhale properly, open wide the mouth and throat and expand the rib cage like an accordion, and allow air to automatically flow in.

2. Learn to breathe deeply.

   a. After taking the initial breath, take an additional breath.

   b. As in taking a deep breath when smelling a flower. (Fig. 19)

   c. Similar to "shock." (Fig. 20)

3. When exhaling, do not use up all inhaled air. The diaphragm must control exhalation.

(Cut 83 — Controlled singing by using the diaphragm).

4. Use minimum air and energy in producing a maximum sound. Do this by trying to sing against a piece of paper in front of the mouth.

Breathing is a complicated process, so the conductor must spend time studying and learning the different techniques for correct breathing.

Fig. 19



Fig. 20

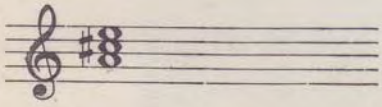


EXERCISE V – DYNAMICS

Since the children's voice is limited by the size of the voice box, they cannot be asked to sing loud. Two solutions to this are to have more members in the choir or master the voice projection technique.

Exercises for this area are in fixed volume and in varied volume.

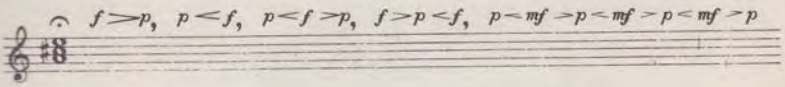
(Cut 84 – Fixed volume)



f=Forte
mf=Mezzo Forte
pp=Pianissimo
sf=Sforzando

p=Piano
mp=Mezzo Piano

(Cut 85 — Varied volume)



f > p p < f p < f > p

f > p < f sfp < f

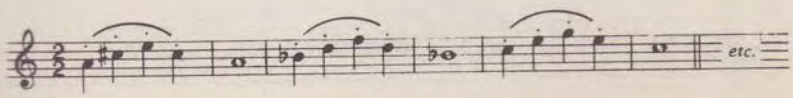
p < mf > p < mf > p < mf > p

EXERCISE VI AUDIO or HEARING ABILITY

Hearing is the direct, accurate reaction to any sound. Children who can sing with correct intonation have good hearing ability. Those who are slow in hearing should be trained, since it takes more time for them to hear the sounds.

What should be done to children who are tonedeaf? If the child is healthy, he cannot be tone deaf. It is unfair to label one who reacts slowly to sound as being tone deaf. This will create in him a feeling of inferiority, and as he grows up, he really becomes tone deaf.

(Cut 86 — Boy who can't sing notes correctly)



Always give a comfortable range to the children. Sing close to their ears.

Or, the most effective method is to let a child sing to another child. (Fig. 21)

(Cut 87 — Children singing to children)

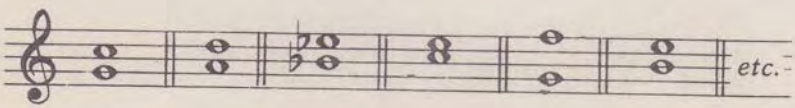
Fig. 21 — SINGING TO CHILDREN'S EAR



Encourage children when they cannot sing well. Let them sit with someone who can sing correctly and place them in S_3. Advise them to sing softly, and test them weekly.

Another way of training hearing is for the children to sing a number of intervals in staccato.

(Cut 88 — Sing staccato, 2 parts)



(Cut 89 — For 3 parts)

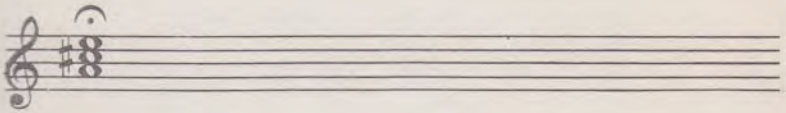


Kodaly's "Let Us Sing Correctly" is one of the best books for ear training.

EXERCISE VII — DICTION (Fig. 22)

Diction is the correct way of pronouncing vowels, diphthongs, and consonants.

(Cut 90 — Choir singing some of the consonants like b, k, g, j, m in three parts).



B — Boy; C — Cow; CH — Child; F — Father; G — Gain; GL — Glory; H — How; J — Joy; K — Book, King; L — Light; M — My, them; N — No, gain; P — Poor; Q — Quick; R — Rice; S — See, miss; T — Time, light; TH — Thee, breath; V — Victory, love; X — Ox; Z — Zoo; etc.

Fig. 22

1. *Basic Vowels*

ä	*car, bar*
ā	*lay, say*
ē	*see, fee*
ō	*so, oh*
o͞o	*zoo, do*

2. *Diphthongs*

ä – ē	*my, light*
ä – o͞o	*how, cow, house*
ē – o͞o	*view, few, cue*
ē – ä	*yard, yarn*
ē – ō	*yoyo, leo*

3. *Consonants with pitch*

z, l, m, n, th, ng, r, w, b

4. *Explosive consonants*

b, c, d, k, ch, p, q, t, f, v, g

5. *Sibilants*

s, sh, ch, th, ks, x

6. *Guttural consonants*

g, q, x, k,

7. *Aspirated consonant*

   h

8. *Voiced consonants*

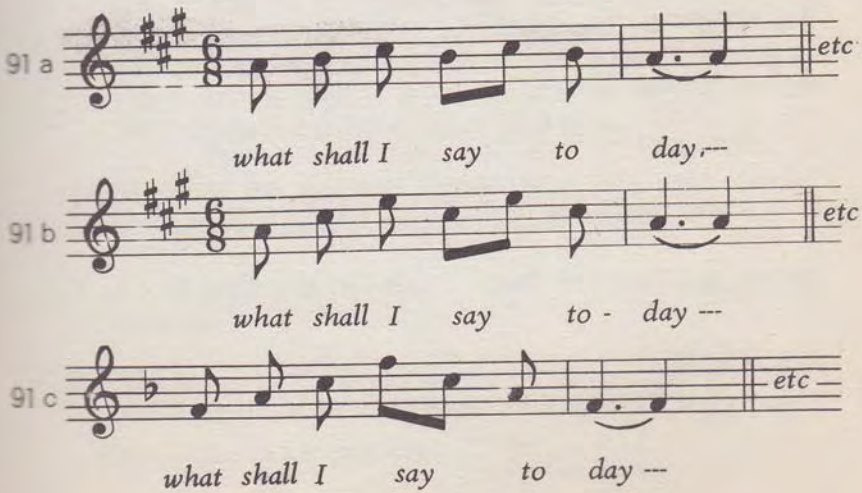
   God, land, rob, love

9. *"r" in three different functions*

   a. *silent "r"* — *Lord*
   b. *Rolled "r"* — *Right*
   c. *Vanishing "r"* — *Father*

When singing, consonants must be exaggerated especially when singing softly.

(Cut 91 — Continuation of consonants and vowels)



EXERCISE VIII – SOLFEGGIO

Note reading is only a part of solfeggio. The conductor must know the relationship of notes to rhythm, phrasing, hearing ability, dynamics and tempo, and how to coordinate all these. Follow the steps mentioned in note reading. Refer also to the author's book "27 Lessons in Solfeggio" published by Cultural Center of the Philippines, National Music Competitions for Young Artists, Roxas Blvd., Manila, Philippines.

SUMMARY

1. Voice Production and Projection
2. Attack and Release
3. Phrasing
4. Breathing
5. Dynamics
6. Audio or Hearing Ability
7. Diction
8. Solfeggio

CHAPTER IV

SELECTING AND ARRANGING SONGS FOR CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Choral arrangement is a very complicated subject that one must spend quite some time to master. However, the following suggestions are offered for selecting and arranging music materials for children's choir.

1. Children must understand the text. It must be related to daily experiences to make them interested.

2. The song must be singable. It must be within the children's range and fitted to their vocal capabilities. It must be within the standard of children's songs and the dynamics must fit the song.

3. The music must be in the traditional style since this is the closest to the fundamental singing technique. A capella singing is highly recommended as this would lead to independent singing and would result in a developed hearing ability. A capella singing can be started from the junior group — ages 7 to 9 years.

4. Materials for women's voices (SSA) can used by the children as long as the text is suitable for them.

5. SATB materials can also be used, but they have to be arranged for children.

6. The range of the songs should be high preferably using more of the head tone area. If necessary, transpose the song to a higher key.

7. In choosing the text, priority must be given to songs using the native dialect.

8. It is not how easy or how difficult a song is, but how it is sung.

9. Choose lively songs for children to sing, especially for junior class, more action and rhythmic patterns must prevail.

10. When preparing for a concert, learn how to balance the program. The songs can be arranged either by chronological order, sacred or secular, or by moods.

CHAPTER V

ORGANIZING A CHILDREN'S CHOIR

I. Age Grouping and Choir Setting

Grouping of the children's choir according to age:

Kindergarten — 5 to 7 years old

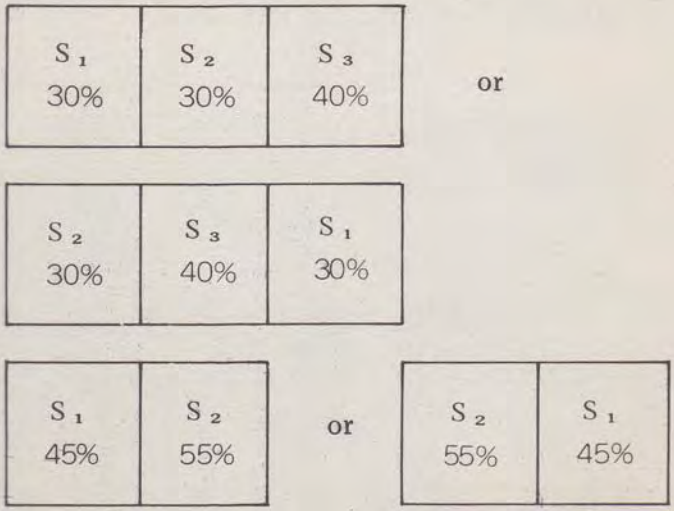
Junior — 7 to 9 years old

Senior — 8 to 10 years old

Every member of each group must pass the audition.

Choose about 60 children to give allowance for drop-outs.

Fig. 23 SUGGESTED NUMBER OF MEMBERS PER SECTION



Seating arrangements as well as arrangements during performances may vary. Whatever arrangement you choose, it should not affect the vocal production of the children.

* Separate S_2 from S_1 until the time that they know their parts.

II. Facilities

It is ideal to use risers with choirs during rehearsals. Assign the children to permanent seats.

A big mirror in front of the choir would help them see and check their facial expressions. (Fig. 24.)

Every member should have an envelope with the following contents:

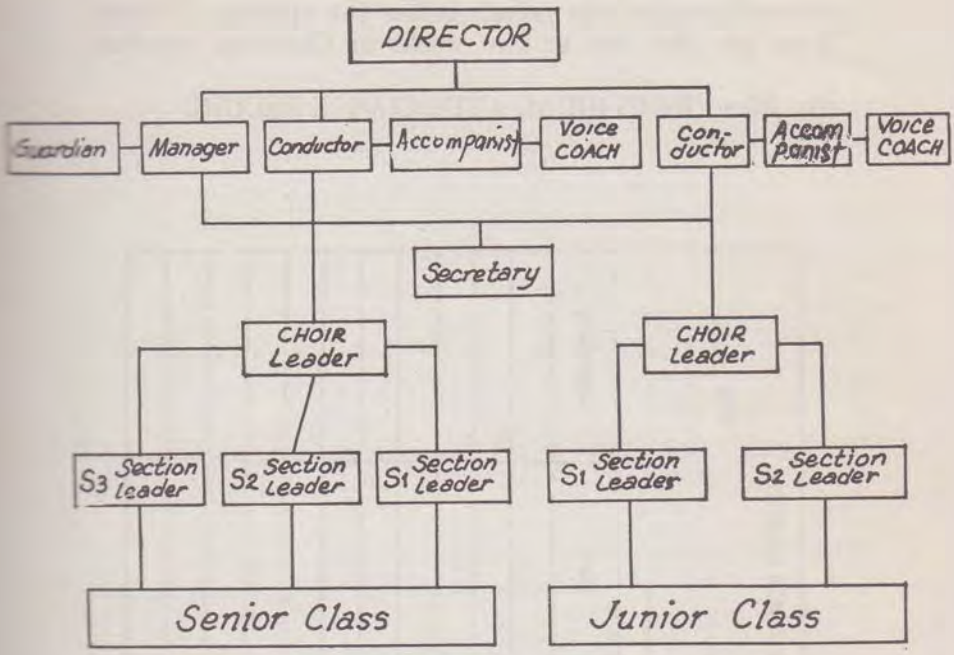
A folder containing individual attendance record, voice record, tests record, music staff sheets, current songs, and pencil.

Fig. 24. MIRROR IN FRONT OF THE CHOIR



III. Organizational Set-up

Fig. 25



The director heads the entire staff. Next is the manager, who is responsible for all the business side of the organization. The secretary assists the manager in administrative duties, like keeping of records, making collections, taking care of music materials as well as the correspondence. The conductor, together with the pianist and voice trainor (if there is one), takes charge of the musical aspects of the organization. There are also the class leader and the section leaders. Last are the choir mothers, a volunteer group of mothers who help in whatever way they can and where they are most needed.

IV. Children's Choir Calendar

The choir calendar follows the school calendar. It ends two weeks before the end of the school year to give the members sufficient time to review for their school finals. Summer vacation lasts only for one month. Therefore choir rehearsals resume one month before the opening of classes. There are also one or two weeks of Christmas vacation.

Fig. 26 — INDIVIDUAL ATTENDANCE RECORD

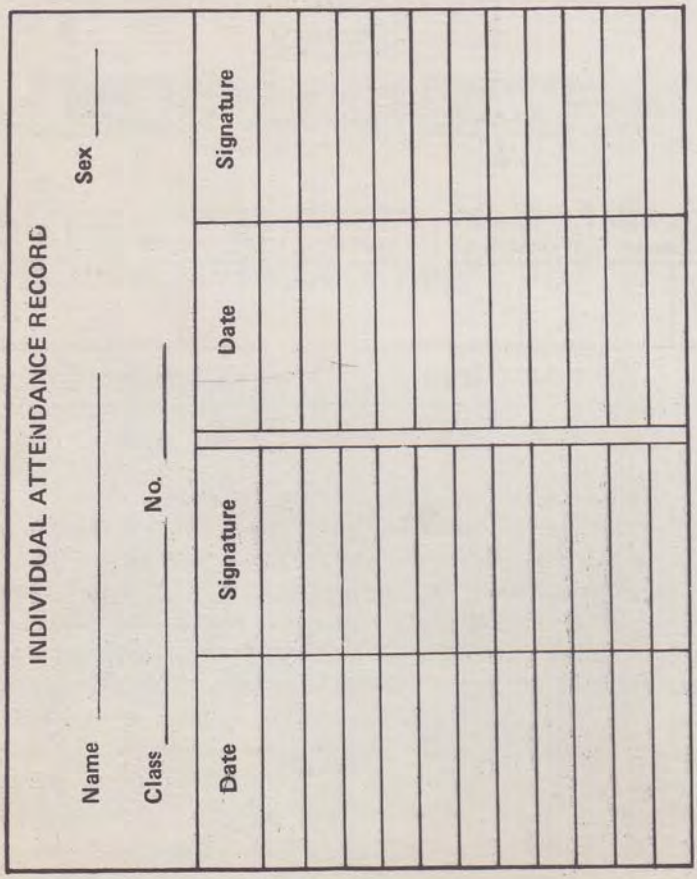


Fig. 27. GROUP ATTENDANCE RECORD

Group Attendance Record

Class Name _____

Calendar Year _____ Semester _____

No.	Name	Month				Month				Month			
		Date				Date				Date			
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													

Individual and group tests on theory and singing should be given at least once every semester.

Fig. 28. INDIVIDUAL TEST RECORD

Date	Solfeggio	Dictation	Creativity	Others	Average	Instructor Signature

Date	Title of Song	Quality	Diction	Interpretation	Average	Instructor Signature

Absentees should be required to submit written excuse slips. In cases where a child has incurred many absences, there is no other recourse but to drop him/her.

Fig. 29. GROUP TEST RECORD

GROUP TESTING RECORD

Date	Solfeggio	Dictation	Rhythm	Average	Instructor Signature

GROUP SINGING RECORD

Date	Title of Song	Quality	Diction	Technique	Average	Instructor Signature

V. Awards and Incentives

1. For members to avail of these awards and scholarships, give the children tests.

2. The choir should have regular recitals, culminating activity or a year-end activity where certificates of appreciation are given to members — girls who are already 14 years old and boys whose voices are already changing.

3. Changes in membership of each group should be made after the year's concert.

4. Schools should acknowledge child's participation in the choir during the Recognition Day program.

Cultural Center of the Philippines
National Music Competitions for Young Artists
Manila Children's Choir



STUDENT REPORT CARD

Name _____ Sex _____

___19 ___ to ___19 ___Class ___
___19 ___ to ___19 ___Class ___
___19 ___ to ___19 ___Class ___
___19 ___ to ___19 ___Class ___

Voice Classification _____

Comments:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Signed:

_____ Music Teacher

_____ Music Teacher

_____ Director

_____ Manager

_____

Signed Parent:

19 - 19
1st sem. _____

2nd sem. _____

19 - 19
1st sem. _____

2nd sem. _____

Fig. 30. STUDENT RECORD CARD

SEMESTRAL RATINGS

SUBJECTS:

	19 - 19		19 - 19	
	1st sem	2nd sem	1st sem	2nd sem
Music Theory				
Voice Training				
Group Music Theory				
Group Voice Training				
Average				

SEMESTRAL ATTENDANCE

	19 -19		19 -19	
	1st sem	2nd sem	1st sem	2nd sem
No. of Class days				
No. of days present				
No. of days late				

Appearance in Concerts:

Place	Date
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

DEPORTMENT

	19 - 19		19 - 19	
	1st sem	2nd sem	1st sem	2nd sem
Social Attitudes:				
1. Recognizes & respects rights of others				
2. Accepts criticisms and suggestions well.				
3. Appears happy and well adjusted.				
4. Careful of his own & other people's property.				
5. Shows willingness to work and cooperate.				
6. Courteous				
Work Habits:				
1. Has the right attitude towards work.				
2. Exert effort in assigned task.				
3. Fol ws directions				
4. Complete assigned tasks				
Health Habits:				
1. Clean in person				
2. Clean in clothing				
Leadership:				
1. Leads in class activities				
2. Shows interest in assuming leadership.				

A - Excellent
B - Very Good
C - Good
D - Fair
E - Poor

VI. Other Activities

1. Once-a-year concert for the general public

2. Recitals exclusively for parents and other family members

3. Parents' meeting once every six months

4. Publication and correspondence to keep members abreast of choir activities

5. Outings and other social gatherings for choir members and their families

REMINDERS

1. At the beginning of the book, it was mentioned that it is easier to teach a children's choir than an adult choir because of certain physical, psychological and intellectual factors, which children possess. But when it comes to handling a children's choir, an expert musician who has already acquired choral conducting technique, and has had experience in teaching children's choirs is needed or else the conductor must be guided by an experienced one.

2. Conducting techniques for both children and adult choirs are the same except for the amount of energy used, which happens to be more in the adult choir.

3. Music scores must be well printed. Songs should be memorized before performances.

4. For voice training exercises, follow closely the areas mentioned in Chapter Three.

5. Have lesson plans where all objectives and activities for every rehearsal are outlined.

6. It is common to have drop-outs in the choir especially among those children who are forced to join the choir.

7. Rehearsal periods should be divided so that theory and singing are each covered in a session, for example:

   2-hour rehearsals

   20 min. voice training and theory
   30 min. singing
   20 min. rest period
   15 min. voice training and theory
   35 min. singing

   Total: 120 min.

3-hour rehearsals

25 min. voice training and theory
30 min. singing
20 min. theory
15 min. singing
30 min. rest period
20 min. voice training and theory
40 min. singing

Total: 180 min.

8. The most important factors in the overall development of a child's musicianship are: theory — which includes note reading, hearing ability, rhythm, and creativity; and voice production (projection, intonation, breathing and diction).





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