

AN INTRODUCTION TO SINGING TEACHING FOR THE BEGINNER TEACHER

By Stephanie Smith

“I have always maintained that the more natural the voice the more beautiful it will be. When a student first comes to me I always try to ascertain how naturally he or she sings and subsequently attempt to build on that.” (Isobel Baillie, 1982, pg 108)

Within this introduction to singing teaching guide, I would like to provide new teachers with a resource which provides advice on preparing for your first lesson, lesson ideas, technique exercises and addressing the difference between working in a one to one setting, as well as much more.

Your first singing lesson as a teacher can be a daunting prospect, however with this resource, I will cover all the planning needed and the teaching of the lessons to make you feel more at ease before giving your first lesson. I will also advise on building upon these lessons and ideas for warm ups and warm up song/games for groups.

I hope this resource helps budding singing teachers out there.

Stephanie

Preparation for teaching



I remember my first lesson as a singing teacher. I was in my fourth year of Undergraduate studies at the Royal Northern College of Music and had been offered a job to take over a singing teaching post at a Stagecoach in Manchester. The Stagecoach franchise is a musical theatre school made up of group lessons of singing, drama and dance. I jumped at the chance and my teaching career began...

To prepare for this teaching job was slightly different to other jobs, as all groups had a high number of children in them (approximately 18) and were split into three different age groups. So with regards to my preparation, a lot more was focused on rounds and warm ups specifically for groups (This is covered later in Group lessons).

With regard to your preparation, a solid basis and knowledge of the voice and how it works is key. Whether that knowledge has come from a teacher, university or music college, there are many different paths into singing teaching.

There are a number of different scenarios that someone could have come to you from for lessons.

1. *A parent or the pupil rings up and books in for a trial lesson*
2. *A new school job*
3. *Musical Theatre group student and wants 1 to1 lessons*
4. *A pupil passed on from a Colleague*

All of these different scenarios will mean you have different information regarding the background of the pupil.

If the pupil has come from **scenario 1**, I would advise you to ask the following questions:

- Has ____ had singing lessons before?
- If so, with whom and for how long?
- Has ____ done any grades?
- How old is ____?
- What type of genres does ____ like to sing? I'm a ____ singer.

These questions will then give you enough of an idea as to what repertoire to bring with you.

Scenario 2 is a lot harder, as generally you don't get any information as to who your teaching in school until you begin the job. Sometimes you can contact the previous teacher to get an overview of the pupils, but if you can't, that's why the repertoire folder is very important.

Scenario 3 is easier as the pupil will perhaps know a little bit about singing and you know what genre they have been working on.

Scenario 4 is the best for preparation if they've taught the pupil before. You can ask all about the range and voice from the previous teacher.

After you've received your background information, it is time to carry out the preparation.

The key things to prepare before you start teaching are:

- A file of repertoire with something suitable for everyone
- Warm up exercises
- Piano parts of the repertoire (should you play piano)

Tip: It's a good idea to write out the warm ups exercises and you can refer to them in the lesson.

Let us begin with the first bullet point...

The file of repertoire is very important! It's good to cover all genres, so you have something for everyone. Preferably in the different keys. Below are a few ideas of repertoire that I like to begin with with someone new. Each song brings something different to work on and once you have a better idea of the voice, of course you fit the repertoire to that person. With regard to choosing the repertoire in the lesson for your new pupil, you want to choose the piece most suited to their range and the type

of genres they usually sing so you can start to get a really good idea of how their voice works.

Choosing repertoire after the first lesson can be complex and takes a lot of thought.

Try and choose repertoire that will work on a specific technical aspect that they need to work on, i.e. pitching, head voice, more colours needed etc.

Below is a list of repertoire I've put together to give you some inspiration before setting up your own folder...

Repertoire ideas for your 1st lesson folder

Musical Theatre

- Where is love? – Oliver (Lionel Bart) – This piece is great if you've got a child starting, male or female. The range isn't huge and it allows you to get a sense of the voice and talk about the importance of legato, so we don't hear, Where hair hair hair hair is love and the beginning
- You don't know this man – Parade (Jason Robert Brown) – This is my go to piece for teenagers, as to begin with it's all about story telling. The range is taxing as it is mostly middle voice but does go a little higher at the end. However, it allows you to start talking about the head voice earlier, as generally not many younger people use it/have ever worked on it.

- All I care about – Chicago (John Kander) – For the budding Baritone, this is a great piece. It's easy to pick up, has lots of character and you can determine where the voice lies.
- Do Ray Mi - Sound of Music – Mainly by step and great for children.

Classical

- Pie Jesu – Faure or Andrew Lloyd Webber – Two very well-known pieces.
- Down by the Salley Gardens – Benjamin Britten Arrangement – Available in a number of keys and in English. A lot of the piece is by step and would suit a pupil who would like to delve into the classical repertoire.
- Caro mio ben – from the 24 Italian arias book – All arias in this book are perfect introduction to classical singing and come in different keys. They are also a great introduction to language.

Pop

- Desperado – A good choice for men and not a huge range to start with.
- To make you feel my love – Adele - Everyone seems to love Adele at the moment and everyone wants to sing her songs. It's a good song to do, if the pupil is nervous about learning something they don't know in the first lesson.

TIP: Be confident in the repertoire you've chosen! These are just example of what I think works.

Moving onto the second bullet point with regards to planning... warm ups. Before warm ups can be considered, have a think of all the different voice types and be clear in your knowledge of them.

“Voices are classified by their perceived qualities or characteristics, including range, tessitura, weight, and color (timbre), as well as vocal registration and vocal transition points that include 'breaks' in the voice.” (O’Connor, 2008-2019)

With regards to women’s voices, they are usually categorised into three types:

Soprano, Mezzo Soprano and Contralto (Alto). Men’s voices are usually caterogised into four groups: Countertenor, Tenor, Baritone and Bass.

After these categories, we have sub-categories depending on vocal timbre, weight and extensions. There are many different types of Soprano, for example, the Coloratura soprano, the lyric soprano and the soubrette.

- Soprano – A high female or younger boys voice
- Alto – A low female or boy’s voice
- Tenor – A high male voice
- Bass – A low male voice

A typical range for the voice types, although remember every voice is different.



(Vocal Ranges Chart,2019)

Warm up's

This is the first time you will have heard this voice...take your time and explain what you're trying to achieve in a clear concise way!

It's always a good idea to just tell the pupil that you're going to start with a warm up and why it's important to warm up well before you go into a song.

So what are the benefits to warming up our voices? Davidson (2016) states,

- Warming up will help to relax the muscles of your larynx and eliminate tension
- Warming up will gently stretch the muscles and ligaments of the vocal cords/folds ready for singing
- Warming up will increase the blood flow to the vocal cords/folds enabling them to become more supple and flexible.
- Warming up will help to smooth through your vocal bridges
- Warming up will help to prevent injury
- Warming up will reinforce good technique
- Warming up will help to focus

I start by asking the pupil where they feel comfortable singing, high, low or middle, and what styles they enjoy singing in. Even though it's sometimes covered in an email/phone call, it's good to hear it again and ask any questions you might have.

TIP: A lot of singers say they like to sing more in the middle, even though I hear a Soprano tone and they have a much bigger range.

Exercises

It's good to start with something simple as the pupil is usually a bit nervous/hesitant as this is normally new territory.

Here are two simple ideas to start, one they have mastered that take them up and down to assess the range.

1-5 i.e. Middle C to G or 5-1 i.e. G to C

sung on a La or an E vowel

After the simple warm up, here are some ideas...

1-5-1 – Ne, Na, Nay – Legato and Staccato

Arpeggios – Start low and try and introduce a bit of legato line

(Sing on any vowel and then start introducing two vowels)

Tip: A lot of voices widen at the top, try and get them to keep the voice slimmer with more of an upwards arrow rather than widening.

Downward scales – Explain that even though you are going down, you need to think up to stop the voice from dropping.

Tongue Twisters – Butter Jelly

Peanut Butter

Chester Cheetah chewed a chunk of cheddar cheese

Red lorry, yellow lorry

Tip: It's a good idea to bring a notepad and write down the new pupils range and genres that they like.

That is all of the preparation done; remember take your time, be patience and don't overload your pupil in the first lesson. Have fun and be positive!

Here are some handy tips from other singing teachers to think about before giving your first lesson...

Advice from other singing teachers for teachers beginning their teaching career

Olivia: With regards to repertoire, I found to have well-known songs with me was key. I brought a well-known musical theatre book, with songs from musicals like the Sound of Music and well known pieces from the classical repertoire such as Pie Jesu and Panis Angelicus, so that you have something easy to teach in the first lesson. I also prepared a set of warm up's that I felt confident delivering and playing on the

piano in the lesson. One thing I would say is to seek advice when you need it. You always know more than you think you do, but it's also important to ask fellow teachers too sometimes. Have a clear idea of what you're going to charge and your cancellation policy and have confidence in your ability! Good luck!

Lucy: Above all I try and keep my lessons fun and creative so that my students imagination is kept alive and they are enjoying the process. Teaching is just as much about knowing what not to say as about what to say. Students can get demoralised if too much is thrown at them at once. I try to keep my teaching as a dialogue as much as possible so they feel they are an active player in their learning process. As a teacher I learn as much from my students as they do from me.

Angharad: Don't Rush! Don't try everything out with pupils straight away. If there are a lot of technical issues to work on, start with one simple thing that can be tackled relatively easily and build from there. Give positive comments to the pupils before giving them something to work on. The most important thing though is to have patience and be adaptable.

Camilla: Make sure you know the mechanics of the voice, always keep learning and attending masterclasses/lectures about the voice, focus on the breath and have fun exploring the voice with students. Also have your go to warm ups to hand!

Next comes the big day.....

The first lesson



“Whether you are teaching for the very first time or are a seasoned veteran, prepare carefully for the initial class. Your preparation and attitude is contagious: students will pick up on your excitement, be more likely to commit to your class and invest greater energy in the class.” (Stanford University)

A few tips for your first lesson!

- Always be early
- Dress Smart
- Have your repertoire folder with you, including two copies of each piece (one for the pupil)
- Have a plan with you with regards to warm ups

All your preparation is done, now go through your warm up and choose a song from the folder, it's as simple as that! The first lesson is usually always a trial lesson with private pupils. Remember be patient and you know more than you think you do! Ultimately have fun!

That's it...your first lesson is done!

Building on the first lesson

I'm sure the first lesson was a success and you are hired! After the first lesson, it is a good idea to make a repertoire list for that pupil. Of course, think about the genres they suggested, but pupils are also amenable to repertoire that you think would suit the voice. Make sure to build on warm ups weekly by making them harder and introducing new vocal technical ideas.

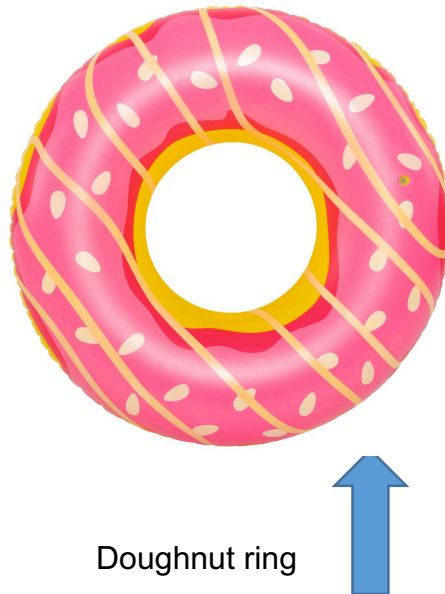
Breathing:

"The basic function of producing sound with the human vocal instrument is a simple one....in the human body, air passes constantly through membranes – the vocal chords – when we breathe and renew the air in the lungs." (Schiotz, pg 21)

Breathing must always be covered and the basics taught in the next few lessons. It's a good idea to get the pupil to breathe in and then to breathe out all of the air on a hiss until they are empty. The body then releases automatically and they are then able to feel where the breath sits. People sometimes think that they have to breathe into their chest and shoulders, however this exercise introduces them to the realm of the low breath.

(Fleming, pg39) agrees and says, "Ask a nonsinger to take in a huge breath, and he will usually lift his shoulders and chest, pulling in his abdominal muscles, actions that are followed by a red face and straining neck muscles..."

I like to say that you imagine wearing a doughnut ring that you use in the swimming pool and you breathe into all parts of the doughnut and where the doughnut sits (all around your body and low). You can adapt the exercise to include breathing in and out for so many counts.



To introduce breathing into the back, you can ask the pupil to lie on the floor and concentrate on breathing low and into the floor.

Blowing out the candles is great for young children. It engages the breath and support muscles and over time you can start explaining how these work.

(Schiotz, pg 22) states that, "In order to learn how to maintain natural and easy breathing in singing, the young person should observe the way a baby breathes when it yells its head off and watch how it's little tummy and diaphragm are working." Explain to your pupils this thought and as the breath is supported by the body, the baby is able to scream for hours. .

*See also sumo breathing in the group lesson warm up ideas section.

Posture:

Posture is also a key thing that needs to be introduced in the early lessons. Singing with good posture is vital to better singing and this needs to be explained. With little children, I say that you have an invisible cord pulling you up straighter, they love this idea and do keep good posture when reminded.

Support:

I've found a few exercises to be very worthwhile and thrilling for pupils when introducing the idea of support. They are explained below:

The wall - A name thought of by myself, this exercise engages the support muscles in a health way. Ask the pupil to stand strong near the wall, with one hand pressing against the wall (you can press against anything as long as it can take the weight) make sure the pupil isn't leaning against the wall when they press the wall and are stood upright. Then explain before the first note of the phrase the press lightly against the wall and any other notes they feel they need a bit more help on, i.e. higher notes or a descending phrase. Explain that they shouldn't be pushing constantly. The pupil will be amazed at how much stronger their voice is.

The box – Ask the pupil to pick up a box when they are singing a note that needs more support. The Body will kick in and show the pupil the body support needed to support the note.

Lip Trills:

Lip trills are made by permitting the air to pass through your lips freely. The lips come together and vibrate as you are sending a constant, supported stream of air.

Demonstrate to the pupil how to achieve the lip trills and make sure they are not pushing the air through with force. If the lip trill is started with weight and might, the trill won't last for long and will end abruptly because the air isn't free. Once the pupil has achieved the lip trill, start working on the range, taking the trill up to the top and bottom of the range. Allow them to have fun staying at the top of the range and ask them to notice where those lip trills are feeling at the extremes of the ranges.

“Each pupil is an individual with different requirements and difficulties. What I do try to maintain at all costs is the natural foundation upon which to build.” (Isobel Baillie, 1982, Pg109)

Approaching different work situations



The main difference with the work situations is the length of the lessons. The length of the lesson depends on the age and experience of the singer. Of course, it also depends on how much the parents are willing to pay per week!

For my private pupils, I teach for:

- 30 minutes
- 1 Hour

TIP: Some teachers also do 45 minute lessons!

If you are working in a school or a music service, the lesson times can be much shorter. We've spoken previously about sometimes the lack of information about the pupils you will teach and how to deal with that. Here, I'd like to give you a plan of how to split your lesson time for shorter lessons to ensure a well-planned, concise lesson.

The shortest lesson length I've ever taught is a fifteen-minute slot. If you're very prepared and have your repertoire folder with you or the piece that the child has been working previously in school on, you will be great.

Here is an idea of how to split the lesson up:

- Five-minute warm up
- Ten-minute repertoire

It's really important to keep an eye on the time. I have got carried away many a time with something and not finished the warm ups before the next person has arrived and then you've lost your repertoire time. It's also important to tell the child what you are want to achieve in the lesson.

With 10 minutes for repertoire, I realise it's not long at all, however aim to learn one page of the song given and work on it a little bit. Naturally, you can't go into as much detail as you can in a longer lesson. It's always a good idea, however to ask the pupil to learn the rest for homework and then in the next lesson, you're able to work on all of the piece, instead of teaching the pupil the notes.

As with fifteen minute lessons, we also have 20 minute lessons in school and music services. Here is an example of how to split this lesson up:

- Five-minute warm up
- Fifteen-minute repertoire

TIP: I've found that within school pupils have a lot to learn for concerts, school shows, exams etc. so it's better to concentrate on technique within pieces rather than exercises, hence giving more time to repertoire.

Generally, you won't be as lucky to have thirty and sixty minute lessons in schools or with the music service, however in a sixth form college or private school you may.

Here are some ideas of how to split those lessons:

Thirty-minute lesson:

- 10-minute warm up
- 20 minutes' repertoire (10 minutes – song from last week and 10 minutes' new song)

Sixty-minute lesson:

- 20 minute warm up (Here you have lots of time to focus on technique)
- 20 Minutes work on the song from last week
- 20 minutes on a new song

All of the above are in reference to one to one lessons. More so within a school setting, I have found some lessons are small group sessions. Below is an FAQ on group lessons in a school/music service setting:

How do you manage if the people in the group aren't at the same level?

Generally, people in group lessons aren't going to be exactly the same level, as everyone is working at a different pace to each other. If the experience level is too broad, i.e an eleven-year-old with a confident sixteen-year-old, make your worries known to the school.

If the levels are too different as mentioned above, I would suggest warming them up together and then suggesting different songs to learn. If they are around the same age and able to sing the same song, it's a good idea to do this. Then you can do the whole lesson together and no one is sitting out. Give separate advice for anything you hear in the warm ups and the piece for the pupil to work on.

Do they sing the same repertoire?

They can, as mentioned above, it's completely up to you as the teacher. If you think they can all learn the same song and work together, it's a nice idea to give them solo lines, so they're not just singing in a group together.

How do you warm them up?

I warm the group up together but if somethings not working or needs work, I ask to do that warm up separately so I can give advice to the person who needs it. If the pupils have different ranges, just tell them to drop out when they can't go any higher or lower, it's important to make sure you aren't stopping if any of them have bigger ranges that need to be worked.

What if your group doesn't get on?

There can be a lot of drama at school and sometimes your group members can come in to the room not talking to each other. I choose not to ignore this and ask what the problem is and we usually sort it out within a few minutes. I've found that if I've left it, the pupils haven't concentrated within the lesson.

How do you make the lesson fair?

That is where your watch comes in! Make sure that if members of your group have different songs, split the lesson time up evenly so all members of the group have time to sing.

What do you do with a larger group?

I have a number of large year seven classes whom I teach in school. I've found that duets work well, so 2 groups learn one of the characters and then the other 2 groups learn the other character of the duet and then they're able to come together for concerts and work on the harmonies. It's always good to include pieces with harmony, as there are enough people in the one group for the harmony splits. It's also nice to include solo lines for any pupil who would like them.

How much do I charge for group teaching?

If you're in a school setting, you will be on your hourly rate or the music services hourly rate for group lessons. However, if a member of a family comes to you and asks about your rates for a two or three-person lesson. I would suggest upping your hourly rate. It's much harder to teach more than one person and also you have to

print more music off. It's up to you of course, as to whether to charge more, however most people expect you too.

What to charge, cancellation policies and Invoicing

This is a very complex question, because ultimately it depends on your experience and the area that you live in. The Musicians union have issued some great guidelines on payment. It is listed below:

Teaching Rates September 2018-2019

- £34.00 per hour

Group teaching and directing ensembles rate to be negotiated and increased pro rata when preparation time is needed and/or large groups (whole class) involved.

Workshop Rate

- £196.75 per day (pro rata)
- Your day should be a maximum of 5 hours.

Schools & Concerts Rate

- £84.50
- Including concert plus rehearsal.

The majority of teaching work you will do will be self-employed work. For tax purposes, you must register as self-employed with HMRC within three months of starting your self-employed work and pay your tax and national insurance each year to them. Being self-employed is also slightly different to being employed, as you

have to do your own tax return. This is due every year by the 31st January and can be submitted online. If it's late you will receive a penalty of £100.

Cancellation policies are something that you really need to think about before you start teaching. I didn't have one in place when I first started and you do end up wasting a lot of time and not being paid for your planning time if someone cancels. I recommend a 24 hour notice period, this then allows you enough time to rearrange a lesson if someone is ill, has a show etc. Your time is precious and you need to rely on your pupils turning up for their slots. I've found pupils to be much more organised, once they are aware of my cancellation policy.

There are a number of ways to take payments for lessons, I invoice pupils at the beginning of the month for the whole month. With this I am never chasing payments from someone should they not show up for a lesson and they become more reliable because they've already paid for the lessons in advance. I've heard other teachers say they don't invoice as it takes too much time, so they ask for payment of the lesson before the lesson by BACS weekly. Obviously, you decide on how you would like to take the payment, these are just some ideas.

Group Lessons



The planning and approach to Group lessons is completely different to that of one to one lessons. A lot more planning needs to be given to the warm ups and planning of the times activities take is very important.

With one to one lessons, you are able to hear straight away what needs to be worked on with that voice, however with group lessons you may have up to 20 children in one class, therefore the work can't be as specialist. More emphasis is put upon teaching songs and harmonies. I like to try and include a bit of technique within my classes as food for thought but you are unable to teach the whole class with a one to one feel.

Another important point to raise with group lessons is the need for crowd control. Keeping the classes attention for the whole hour is hard and you must have a good plan in place to keep their attention.

Here are a few tips to help you gain control quickly and gain their trust.

- When they become a little too loud clap a rhythm and wait for them to clap it back, keep doing this till you have their attention
- When you enter the class for the first time, tell them what you expect from them and what you would like to achieve in the lesson
- Always remain calm and don't raise your voice, keep your speech slow and soft

- If something isn't working and the students are becoming distracted, move on and come back to the activity
- Think about introducing a star of the week for the best behaved person in the class

Group lesson warm up ideas

You always want to start the lesson with a few fun exercises and warm ups to engage the children straight away. Here I've written my favorite games and warm ups to give you a few ideas.

TIP: Remember if you run out of songs and rounds, you can always make up your own!

Round Ideas:

A round is when you split the class into different groups and they each start the song at a different time, i.e the first group sings the first line of the round and then the second group joins in starting the song at the beginning. It's a great way to teach ensemble skills and group singing. Below are a few of my favourite rounds:

Bella Mamma

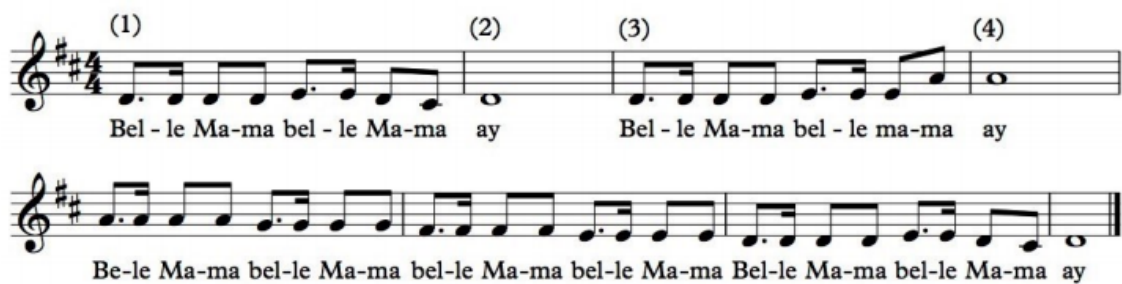
Lyrics: Bella Mama Bella Mama hey (2nd group joins in after this line and so on)

Bella Mama Bella Mama hey

Bella Mama Bella Mama Bella Mama Bella Mama

Bella Mama Bella Mama hey

Bella Mama is a good one for the children aged ten and over. To make it harder, split the groups into smaller groups till you end up with one per part.



(Traditional Melody, Composer and date unknown)

My Bonney lies over the ocean

Lyrics: My Bonney lies over the ocean (2nd group joins after this line and so on)

My Bonney lies over the sea

My Bonney lies over the ocean

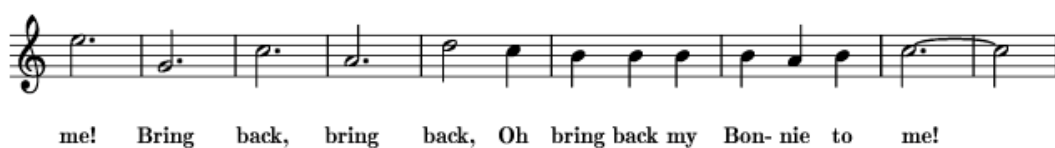
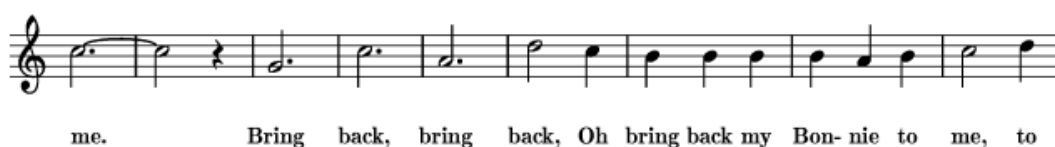
So bring back my Bonney to me

My Bonney lies over the ocean is a great round to perform with all ages and you can also add in movements should you wish.

Get the class to sit down and when they sing a word beginning with B they stand and for the next word beginning with B, they sit and so forth.

You can also change the stand/sitting to hopping/jumping or anything you wish, when they sing a word beginning with B.

My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean



(Traditional Melody, Composer and date unknown)

London's burning

Lyrics: London's burning, London's burning

Fetch the engine, fetch the engine

Fire, Fire

Pour on water, pour on water

London's Burning

Traditional round in four parts. Traditional English Folk Song
Arrangement: Jilly Jarman

1. F C F C 2. F C
Lon-don's burn - ing, Lon-don's bur - ning, Fetch the en - gines, Fetch the

5 F C 3. F C F C 4. F C F C
en - gines, Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire! Pour on wa - ter, Pour on wa - ter. Lon-don's

(Traditional, arrangement Jilly Jarman)

This is a great round to do with young children. Teach the song and then add in actions for every line that you have thought of together as a class.

Picking up a Pepperoni Pizza

Lyrics: Picking up a Pepperoni Pizza

Lots of Mozzarella and Lotsa Meatsa

I love a Pizza Pie, Biga Bitea Pizza Me oh My!

Pickin' Up a Pepperoni Pizza

A fun choir warm-up from Heather & Cheryl

A 3-pt round



(2nd part begins)



(3rd part begins)



(Heather Stenner & Cheryl Miller Thurston, 2006)

The younger children love this round, why not add actions too!

Warm up songs

Mango, Mango, Mango:

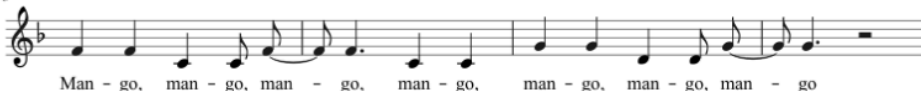
Split the class into three parts and explain each group is going to learn a part of the song that is sung at the same time.

1



Man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go

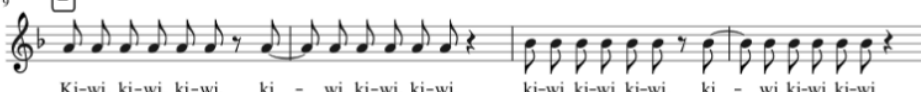
5



Man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go, man - go

2

9



Ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki - wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki - wi, ki-wi, ki-wi

13



Ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki - wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki-wi, ki - wi, ki-wi, ki-wi

3

17



a - na - nas, ba - na - na, a - na - nas uh!

(Composer and date unknown)

All of these melodies occur at the same time and allow all groups to sing all the different parts by sending the melodies clock wise.

Oh When the saints/I wana sing/Swing low:

These three songs are similar to Mango, Mango, Mango as they can all be sung at the same time. Start by teaching one song and once the first song is mastered move onto the second. All three of these songs also work as a round, so you may wish to teach them as a round first and then over the weeks work up to putting the three songs together. When teaching these songs, It's also a great idea to talk about Tempo and what it means, and the fact that all groups must sing in the same tempo to end up finishing their songs together.

The musical score is written for three voices (Soprano, Alto, and Tenor/Bass) in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are as follows:

Swing low, sweet cha - riot
When the saints go mar - ching in, O when the
I wan - na sing, sing, sing, I wan - na dance, dance, dance, I wan - na
Co - ming for to car - ry me home, Swing low, sweet
saints go mar - ching in, I wan - na be in that
sing, I wan - na dance, Ha - le - lu! When those gates are op - en wide, I'll be
cha - riot Co - ming for to car - ry me home.
num - ber, when the saints go mar - ching in.
stan - ding by your side, I wan - na sing, I wan - na dance, Ha - le - lu!

(Wallis Willis & Traditional, dates – unknown)

I especially enjoy taking a pop song and making an acapella version. You can decide on a song at home and add different parts to it or you can also in class ask for song ideas and work it out together.

Penguin Song and Hey my names Joe

With these two songs, you add in an action/part of the body every time you sing the song. Please see the videos for more information on the melodies and actions.

These songs are great for younger children.

Penguin song lyrics:

Have you ever seen a Penguin come to tea,

Take a look at me, a penguin you will see.

Penguins attention, penguins begin...right arm.

(Action – hit your right hand against your right leg)

You then repeat and add a body part every time after right arm. For example, Left arm, right leg, left leg, nod your head, stick your tongue out.

Hey my names joe:

Hey my names joe and I work in a button factory.

One day my boss came up to me and said

“Joe are busy” I said no, can you that button with your right hand..

(Action – you then press the button with your right hand)

You then repeat and add a body part every time after right arm. For example, Left arm, right leg, left leg, nod your head, stick your tongue out.

1-1-2-1

With this warm up game, we begin on middle C and count up and down the scale with numbers. This is a game more suited to the older groups and can also be sung as a round.

The Telephone Song:

This song is a great start to the first lesson with the younger age group and a good way to start learning their names. It's a game between a solo singer and the group, everyone in the group takes it in turn to be the solo singer.

Song lyrics:

Class – Hey (Name of solo singer)

Solo singer – I heard you calling my name

Class – Hey (Name of solo singer)

Solo singer – I think I heard it again

Class – You're wanted on the telephone

Solo singer – Well if it isn't (name of someone else in the class) then I'm not at home.

All – with a ring-ding-dingy di ding, oh ye

with a ring-ding-dingy di ding, oh ye

Some children may not wish to sing on their own so help them out, you will find this game is great for confidence building with regards to solo singing.

TIP: Watch my videos of these songs to learn them.

Link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9rg223z1yxi0u2d/AADBq89Kdn6iDMhLSM517yy3a?dl=0>

Games are a great way to begin or end the lessons. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Boom Chicka Boom

The game Boom chicka Boom is a repetition game. The teacher begins by saying the first line and the class repeats all the line after the teacher. You are able to say the words in all types of ways, for example, in different dynamics, accents, different pacing. Before you start the game, it's a good idea to ask the class to each think of a way to say lines and then go around the class after each go allowing the child to say the lines in their way with the class responding.

Boom Chicka Boom

Boom chicka rocka chicka rocka chicka boom

Ah ha

I He

Zip Zap Boing

Zip Zap Boing is a game to get their concentration up and is a great lesson starter!

Ask all the children to stand in a circle, with a little bit of space between each other so as you can all turn quickly and bring your hands together. For all the movements, you need to bring your palms together to make a V shape.

Zip: You can Zip your neighbours, i.e. the person to the right of you or left of you.

Zap: You can Zap anyone else in the group, i.e anyone apart from your neighbours.

Boing: A Boing Is when you block the Zap coming to you, it then goes back to the person who has zapped you. You can not Boing A Zap.

Note: Whichever move you are making, remember to say It nice and clearly so everyone can hear and make eye contact with the person you are Zap/Zip/Boinging.

The aim of the game is to be the last person standing, so if someone is too slow at responding or they say the wrong word, they are out.

Hum that Tune

This game is a crowd favourite with my Stagecoach classes, they love to finish off the lesson with it and it gets them singing!

Ask the class to split into groups and choose a song together. They must then perform the song to the group by humming the melody line. The class then guess the tune. Sometimes it's too hard/ nobody can recognise the tune, I then ask them to La the tune or give the class a clue, i.e is it from a musical.

Word Game

I've found that group classes love tongue twisters, so why not ask your class to make up their own! Give them a minute to think of a word or a phrase and then put their words into notes form, repeating the words on every note. I usually start with G to C and then work up the scales in semitone increments.

Guess the Song

We start with one word and then you have to think of a song that has that word in it. For example, one of the class says Window and then a pupil could put their hand up and sing Waving through a window from Dear Evan Hansen. The key is to sing the line from the song that the word appears in.

Apple pie

One person is on and goes to the corner and closes their eyes, while you choose someone in the room. The chosen person then says apple pie in a different voice to their own and the person who is on has to guess who's voice it was.

Breathing Exercises

Sumo Breathing:

- Step one – Get the class to stand up tall
- Step two – Exhale loudly while going to assume the sumo position with the knees bent
- Take a quick small breath in
- Staying in the stance breath out right to the end of the breath
- Then stand up and allow the breath to come in naturally
- Repeat a few times

This exercise is great for showing that the breath naturally sits low and it will instinctively refill after the exhale. Many people think they need to take a big breath before singing and fill up into their chest and shoulders. This exercise shows this is not the case.

You can also watch the YouTube video here on this exercise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0da8MIDjHA>

In a similar vein, you could allow your pupil to exhale till they have no more breath left and tell them to relax as they feel the breath refilling naturally.

I hope these ideas for Warm up Rounds, Songs, breathing exercises and games will help you in your teaching and don't forget if you don't read music, you can watch the videos of myself performing the rounds and songs.

You can also use the warm up ideas from the one to one lessons ideas

Repertoire Ideas to teach in group lessons

The majority of group lessons take place in musical theatre schools such as Stagecoach and Little Voices, so the repertoire suggested here is all Musical Theatre/Disney. These songs are a starting place to give you an idea of what to prepare for different age groups.

Children aged 5-8:

Under the Sea – The Little Mermaid

The Bare Necessities – The Jungle Book

Castle on a cloud – Les Miserable

Hard knocked life – Annie

Maybe – Annie

Where is love – Oliver

Supercala – Mary Poppins

Let's go fly a Kite – Mary Poppins

Edleweiss – The Sound of Music

Do, Ray, Mi – The Sound of Music

I whistle a happy tune

Bali Hai

So long farewell – The sound of music

Children aged 9-13

Do you hear the people sing – Les Miserable

The stars looked down – Billy Elliott

My favourite things – The sound of music

A cockeyed optimist – South Pacific

Oh what a beautiful morning

Oklahoma

Naughty – Matilda

When I group up – Matilda

Food Glorious Food – Oliver

I'd do anything - Oliver

Children aged 13-18

At the end of the day – Les Miserable

What is this feeling – Wicked

You'll never walk alone – Carousel

Seasons of love – Rent

Skid Row – Little shop of horrors

Lesson Plan guide for first one to one lesson



- Introduce yourself to the pupil and give a bit of background on your training/performance history
- Ask the pupil about their own history of singing, what they would like to achieve from singing and what they enjoy singing

Start with a simple warm up on La – Begin on Middle C to G and then go up in semitones to assess the top range and then take them down to see the bottom of the range. (Make sure you are constantly positive as this is usually unfamiliar to people)

Ask them if they've ever done any tongue twisters and start in the middle of their range with something simple like Butter Jelly.

It's always good here to praise people for committing to the exercises and saying something about their voice and what you would like to work on over the coming months. Use the remainder of the lesson to either hear a song they have prepared to sing for you and work on that or give the pupil a piece of new repertoire and start working on that.

At the end of the lesson, ask if the pupil enjoyed the lesson and whether they would like to book in again.

Well done on completing your first lesson and make sure you take your lesson plan with you to the first lesson. Refer to it if you need too.

Conclusion

I hope this teaching guide will aid new teachers in their new career as a singing teacher. I've covered many aspects of teaching, one to one and group work, as well as ideas for warm ups etc. Always be prepared with lots of new warm up ideas, these can be found in books or simply searching online and keep learning yourself with regards to your own voice and vocal progress.

My last piece of advice is to stick to your instincts and always seek advice from a colleague or your own teacher if you are unsure of anything.

I wish you every success in your teaching career....

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