Building a Beautiful Sound with Young Tenors

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- Understand the instrument’s registers: (fry)/ Modal (chest) / Mixed / Head / Falsetto
- Who is a tenor?
  SATB choral categorizations versus biology - Bell Curve versus 50/50
- Diagnosing Voice Types:
  - Leggiero tenor
  - Tenor di grazia
  - Light lyric tenor
  - Full lyric tenor
  - Dramatic Tenor

  Diagnosis Strategies:
  Sing down on /i/, reminding the student to stay relaxed
  Sing up on /a/ or /ɛ/, and let the voice turn over where it wants to
  Sing “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” in F, Ab, and C (give or take)
  Pay attention to how he sounds and feels in each key.

- Who is a young tenor?
  Not necessarily your highest ‘hit note’ or lightest instruments
  Follow the registration events of the voice; pay attention to how he manages tessitura.
  Write nothing in ink while the voice is changing

- What do I do with a ‘baritenor’?
  (He sings down to about Ab2, up to about F4. His voice transitions around Db and Gb.)

  What challenges does a young tenor face?

  What techniques can we build?
  Nothing immediate. Neither the high school teacher nor college teacher should expect the same refinement we would hear in their soprano peers.

  Build a clear, effortless, beautiful head voice - A good head voice is different than chest voice, and different than falsetto
  “voce piena in testa” – it.: “full voice in head”
  Teach good posture
  Focus on breath support
  Diction and placement techniques
Good warm-ups for young tenors

Starting around D3, up to middle C

Starting around Bb4, down to Bb3

Starting around F3, up to D4

Starting around A3, down to Eb3

Starting around C3, up to F#3

Starting at A4, down to D4

lip trills, raspberries, tongue trills

Three classic problems

1. Lifting the larynx
   Review deep and relaxed breathing. Where the larynx is on a good inhalation is where the larynx is on a good phonation.
   Address tongue position by taking it away – sing on /v/, e.g.
   Set the passage up a third, so that the singer must engage head voice. Then, work down.

2. Spreading the vowel/calling
   Hum, or buzz on /v/, /n/, or /m/
   The singer needs to know that his voice can produce this pitch without so much pressure.
   Over-round the vowel, e.g. turn [a] into [ɔ], [ɛ] into [a]
   Set the passage up a third, so that the singer must engage head voice. Then, work down.

3. Nasalizing the timbre
   Remember that you’re never actually singing in the nose:
   “the sinuses themselves do not contribute in any major way, if at all, to the actual resonance of the voice” (R. Miller, Training the Tenor Voice, p. 120).
   Have the student pinch his nostrils – he’ll feel it if he’s nasalizing the sound.
   Have the student sing “ng-a”. As he releases the soft palate up, he’ll feel and hear the richer timbre.

Rehearsal Strategies

1. An ounce of prevention... Thoughtfully sequenced, consistent, deliberate vocalizations go a long way to a healthy rehearsal.
2. It’s not always about pitch... Let us speak the text or sing it down an octave.
3. Take deliberate measures off within the section so everyone stays low-larynxed and healthy.
4. Be intentional about which register you want them to use, or they will choose on their own.
5. Bend (discretely) in the direction of [u] in upper notes so they feel an easier access to head tone.
6. Listen to great tenor sections! The Sixteen, Tenebrae, Chanticleer, etc. We need aspirational models to develop our instrument.