

BECOMING A MUSICIAN

A Series of Skills for the 7th/8th Grade Singer

SCALES (to be sung in tune, with no accompaniment or vocal help)

MAJOR: one octave, up and down, Do to Do

MINOR: same, La to La

IN 3RDS: one octave, Do to Do, with skips of a third

IN 4THS: one octave, Do to Do, with skips of a fourth

TWO-PART: one octave, Do to Do, 2nd person 2 beats later

2-OCTAVE descending scale: for basses, falsetto to full voice

RHYTHMS (to be counted with a steady beat, all the cards in the set)

LEVEL 1: (green cards) includes whole notes, dotted half notes, half notes, quarter notes, and pairs of eighth notes

LEVEL 2: (blue cards) adds dotted quarters and single eighths

WRITTEN SKILLS (to be passed in a timed setting, usually 20 notes or symbols in 60 seconds, with 100% accuracy)

TREBLE CLEF 1: identify by letter name the nine pitches on the treble staff

BASS CLEF 1: same, in bass staff

KIND: naming notes and rests: whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth and dotted

SOLFEGE or SYLLABLES: given Do, find solfège name of different pitches

TREBLE CLEF 2: adds pitches up to two ledger lines above and below the treble staff

BASS CLEF 2: same, in bass staff

KEY SIGNATURES: name Do, up to five sharps or flats, either clef

PITCH PATTERNS (to be sung by memory, with correct tuning, solfège and phrasing)

P.P. 1: five step-wise phrases in 3/4 time.

P.P. 2: eight patterns with the most common skips

P.P. 3: same as P.P. 1, but using melodic minor scale

P.P. 4: same as P.P. 2, but using natural minor scale

MELODIA: A series of four sight-singing drill books, progressing from step-wise whole notes in the key of C, through all major and minor keys, modulations, time signatures, rhythmic patterns and skips. We use only Book One of this four part sequence. Pioneer Choirs start in Book One and progress into Books Three and sometimes Four in the advanced choirs. To pass a level, the student must be able to sing accurately any three exercises of my choosing from that level with less than a minute to prepare. It is assumed that the student would have practiced all exercises at home before asking to be tested.

pp 1-5: All step-wise, key of C, no divided beats, all treble clef. Time signatures use quarter, eighth and half notes for the beat.

pp 6-10: Adds keys up to two sharps or flats

pp 11-17: Adds bass clef and keys through five sharps and flats. Introduces rests.

pp 18-20: Introduces divided beats.

pp 21-30: Adds second part, increases length of exercise.

pp 31-40: More complex use of all of the above.

The goal for each seventh grade student is to master three skills each nine weeks. For the eighth graders, four each quarter, but eighth graders are required to repeat any skills passed the year before to assure that the basics are still there and the student is ready for the more advanced skills. The top students may pass all of these, but it is unusual. Most students who have done well in choir will have mastered 16-18 of these skills after two years. The underlying goal is to help singers develop both their individual voices and their musical skills so they can be knowledgeable and contribute in any musical situation during their lives.

JURIES: A jury is like a test or quiz, but sung for Mr. Steck (either live or recorded) rather than written with paper and pencil. Its purpose is to determine whether individual students have mastered the presented material, i.e. singing the right notes at the right time in their concert pieces and Melodia. Students receive an A for each part sung accurately on the jury. If it is close and show some preparation, a B. Those who are unable to sing the parts are asked to come see me for individual help outside of class. It is up to them to arrange this time with me. After this session, they will be given a B for this grade.

Feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Andrew Steck

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