

# MUSIC PREPARATION

Always approach learning and polishing music one chunk at a time and only at a tempo that it can be perfectly executed.

Once it can be cleanly/precisely executed at a slow tempo then you will be surprised at how fast you can progress to a faster tempo AND the control you'll have if the conductor decides to alter tempo.

***Always be mindful of phrasing (push/pull), general dynamics, and tone quality throughout ALL of these steps.***

## Text

- **Interpret the text.** Before you begin working out the sounds, figure out what it's trying to say. That way you can attach meaning and emote while you work through these next steps. You'll save time later.
- **Identify your syllabic stress**, just say the word and you'll probably know where to put weight.
  - But, there are some rules you can try that English often breaks anyway...
    - Nouns/Adjectives – stress the first syllable of two syllable words.
    - Verbs – stress the second syllable of two syllable words.
- **Speak all of the text** with no tempo.
  - Make decisions about the use of vowels and pronunciation.
  - Make decisions about what consonants will be elided.
  - Make decisions about where breaths/releases will occur
    - Vowels release with breath. Most of the time it's after a rhythm has been fully sustained BUT sometimes if it's the end of the text phrase, you have to steal some time from the note to breathe.
    - Consonants should usually end on the beat following the sustain. Again, if it's the end of the text phrase then sometimes you have to steal time.

## Rhythm

- **Sing all rhythms with a metronome.**
  - If there are meter changes, set metronome to the common denominator (eighth note is constant)
- **Chant Text**
  - Begin at slow tempo and gradually increase until it's to performance tempo.
  - Be careful to use the vowels and diction established when you studied the text.
  - Remember rules about consonant to vowel ratio.

## Pitch

- **Sing all pitches on solfege.**
  - This is necessary to maintain tonal center.
  - Begin a cappella, getting pitches from a pitch pipe or piano app on your phone.
- **Sing all pitches on neutral syllable.**
  - This will challenge you to hold intonation without solfege.
  - Try doo, loo, dee, poh, or other neutral syllables the style of the piece.
- **Sing Text**
  - Begin at a slow tempo and gradually increase until it's to performance tempo.

## **Music - Follow the rules below for a more musical performance!**

### **The Rule of the Steady Beat**

When singing any note value longer than the steady beat value, singers should crescendo slightly. This rule applies more often than not, but exceptions may include the taper at the end of a phrase.

### **Rule of Prep Breath**

#### **Inhale...**

**Where:** Low breath, below the ribcage with expansion all-the-way around.

**When:** In tempo; the beat before you sing.

**How:** In the shape of the vowel you're about to sing.

### **Rule of Placement**

Prepare your voice to resonate in the placement of the highest note in the phrase.

### **Rule of Punctuation**

This rule requires a lift or break for every punctuation mark throughout the piece. The reverse is also true: do not break if no punctuation exists (perhaps the greatest benefit).

### **Rule of OMCO (Open Mouth Cut-Off)**

Whether it's a vowel or a consonant release, your mouth should be open directly following the release.

**Vowels:** Reverse the airstream (inhale) to release.

**Consonants:** Utilize Rule of Consonant Release then open mouth to ensure clarity.

### **The Rule of Consonant Releases**

Be deliberate in the rhythmic placement of a consonant release at the end of a phrase.

In a phrase followed by a rest, place the consonant on the rest.

In a phrase followed by another phrase, place the consonant on the last beat or half beat of the last note. \*Full beat or half beat depends on how much time is needed for breath\*

### **The Rule of Diphthongs**

Identify diphthongs.

In words with a diphthong, such as "sky," sing the first sound (ah) throughout most of the value of the note and then quickly add the second sound (ih). For example, "skaaah+ih".

The Rule of Consonant Release can also be applied to determine where to place the second sound.

### **The Rule of the Slur**

Emphasize the first note of the slur then deemphasize the following note(s).

### **The Rule of Word Stress**

Expressive speaking (inflection) and expressive singing both place emphasis on certain words in a sentence or phrase. Sing louder or with slight emphasis on important words or syllables.

### **The Rule of Dynamic Diction**

In louder dynamics, focus air more on the vowels.

In softer dynamics, focus air more on the consonants.

### **Rule of Passaggio**

In areas of the voice that are prone to breaks (between registers: SA = C5-F5; TB = C4-F4), experiment with space and vowel modification (open to the next vowel).

The word chain, for example, is pronounced "chayn." If it has tension, try "chehn."