

# HOW DO I SING THAT?

## Basics of Voice Pedagogy for the Choral Director

IMEA 2013

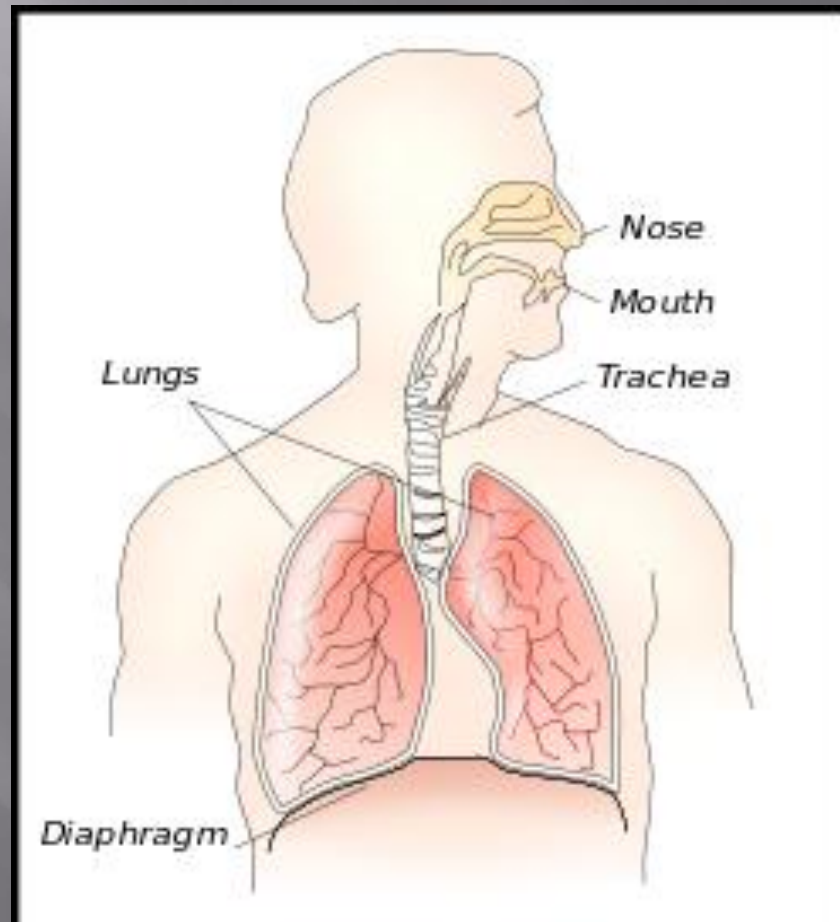
Neal Woodruff, DMA  
Olivet Nazarene University

# NATS at ACDA 2011

*Two-thirds* of American colleges and universities do not require any voice pedagogy training in undergraduate, choral Music Education curriculum.

# CONCEPT 1: SUPPORT

## Breathe from the Diaphragm?



*How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy*  
*Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene University*  
[nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

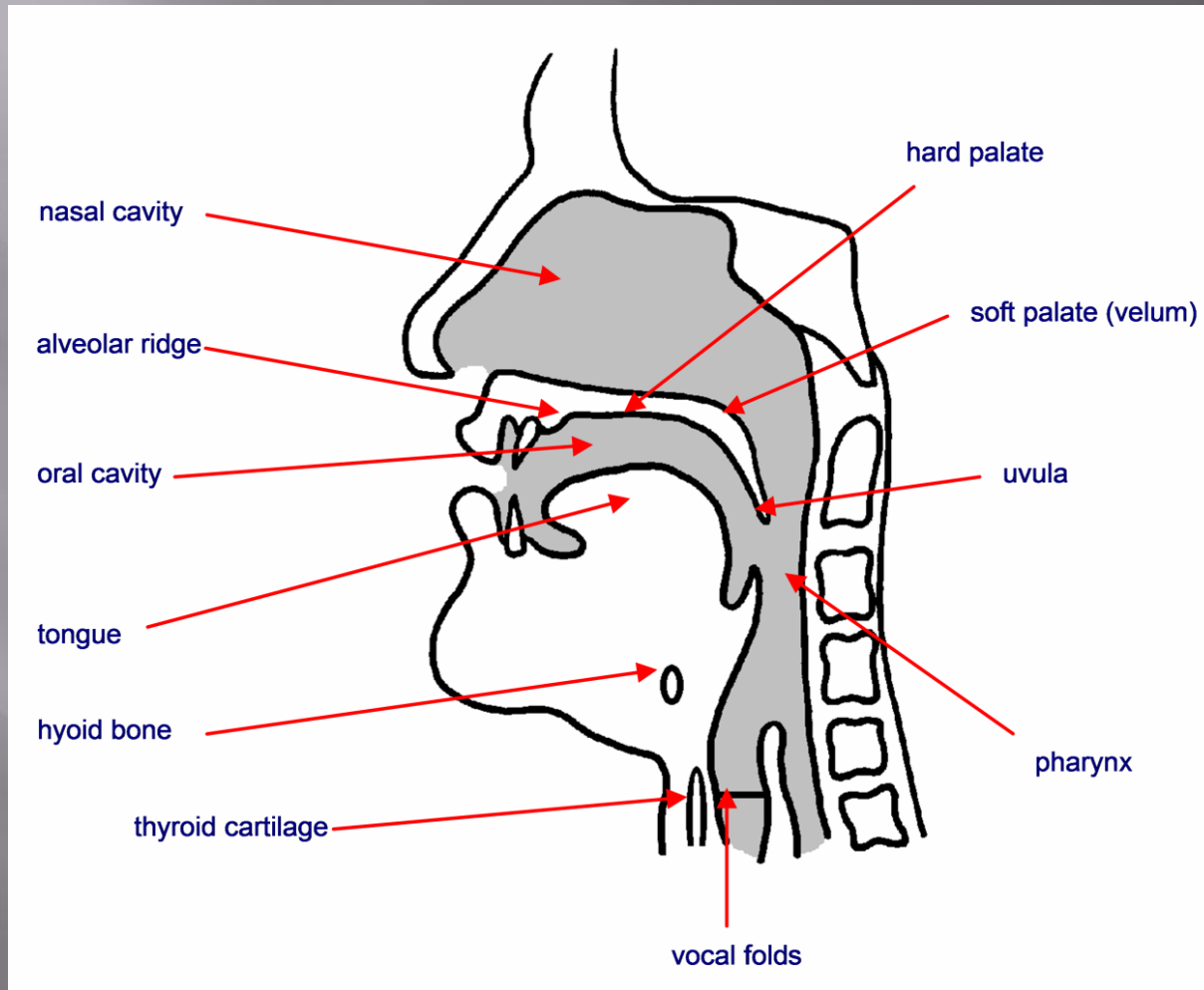
# Breath + Support

APPOGGIO: Support is a  
breath sensation,  
not the breath itself.

# CONCEPT 2A: Larynx Stability

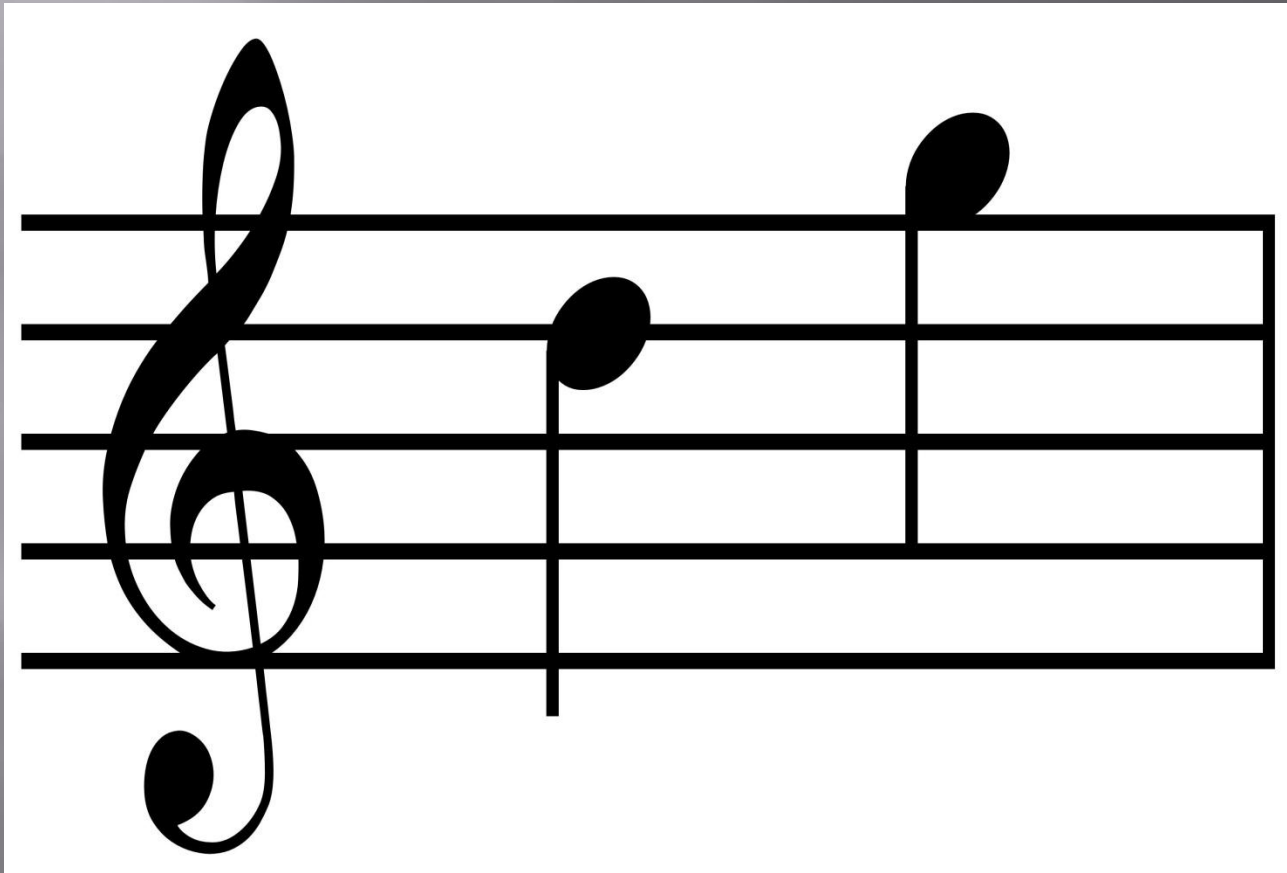
How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy  
Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene  
University [nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

# Vocal Tract Anatomy



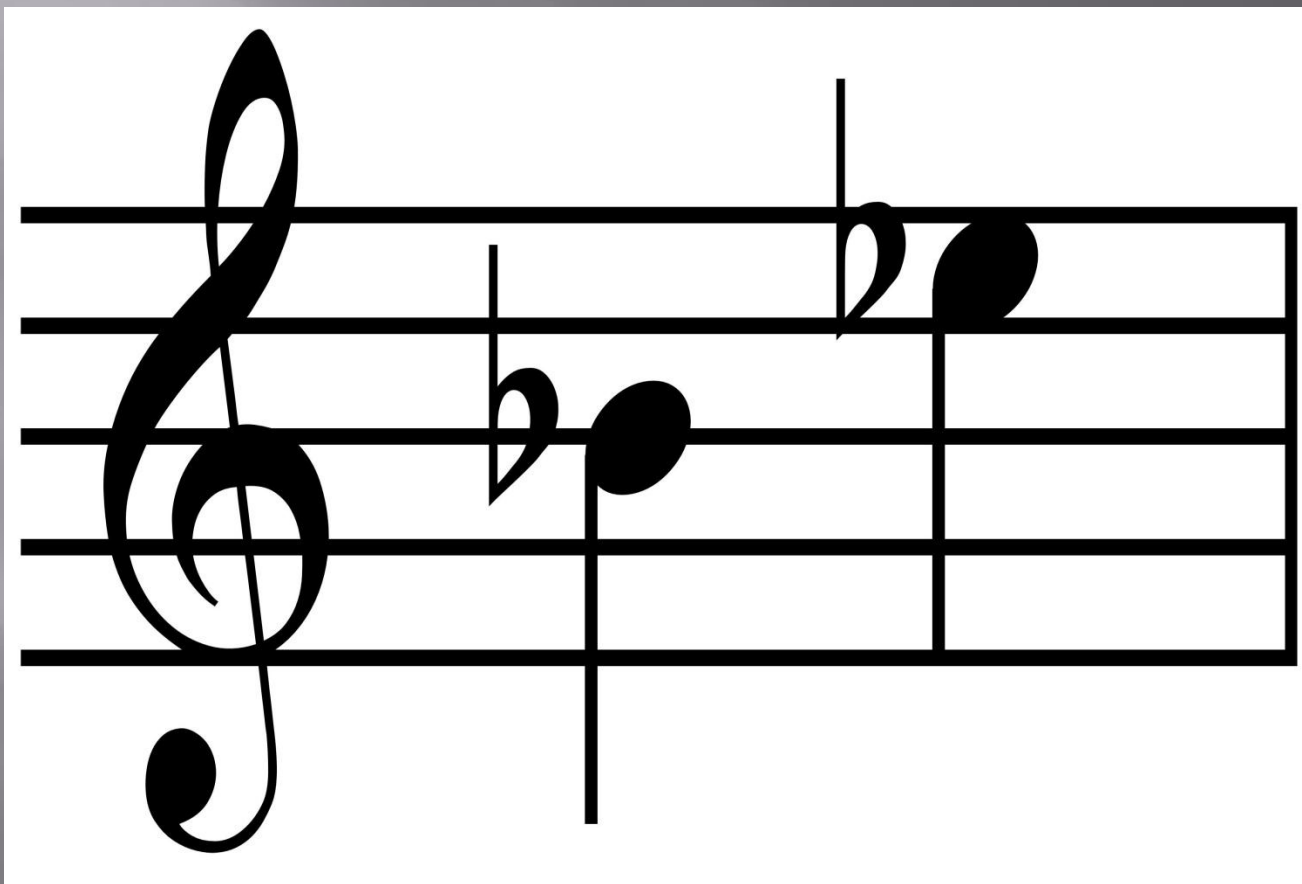
*How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy*  
*Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene University*  
[nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

# Average Soprano Transitions



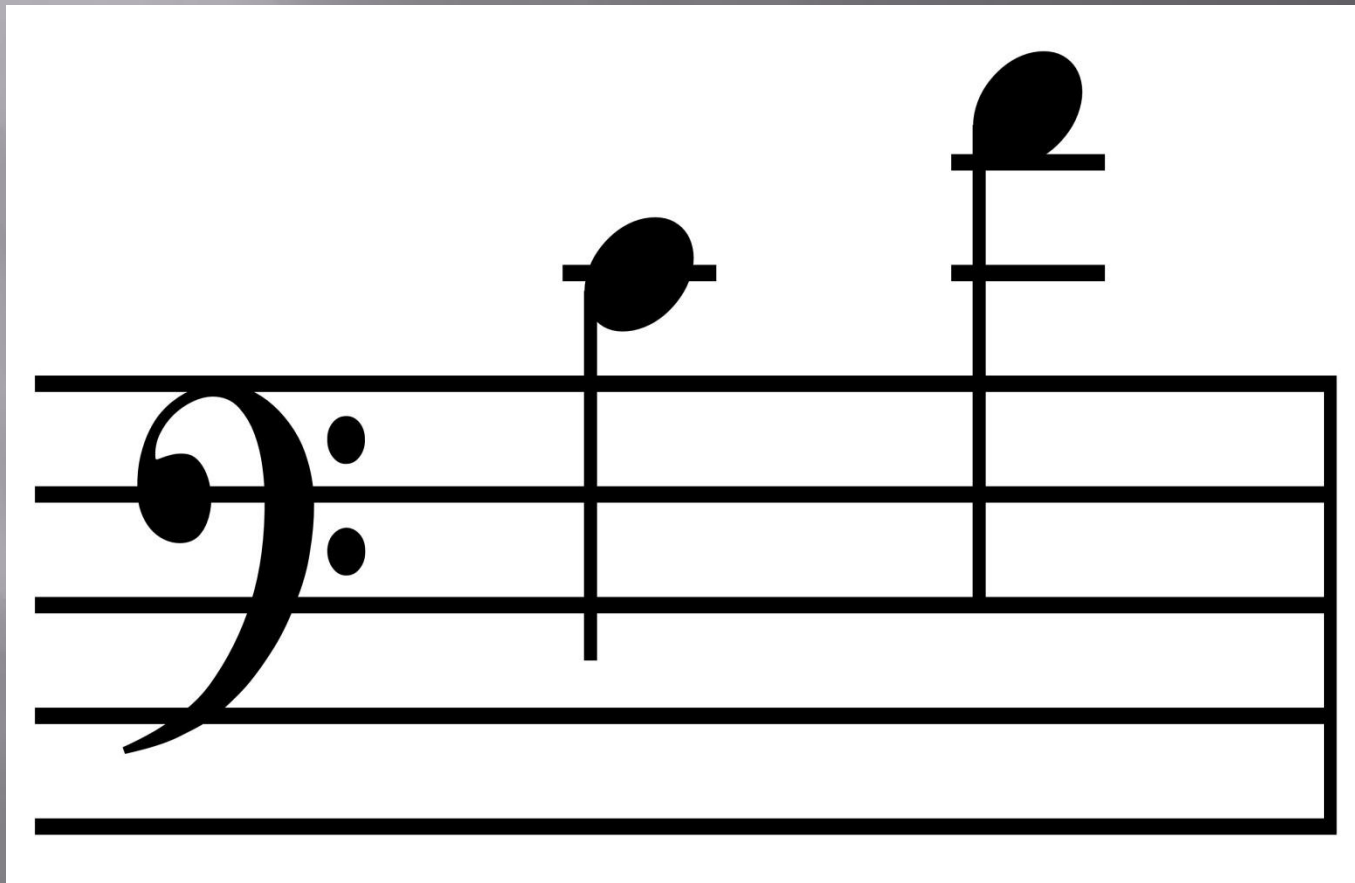
*How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy*  
*Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene University*  
[nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

# Average Mezzo/Alto Transitions



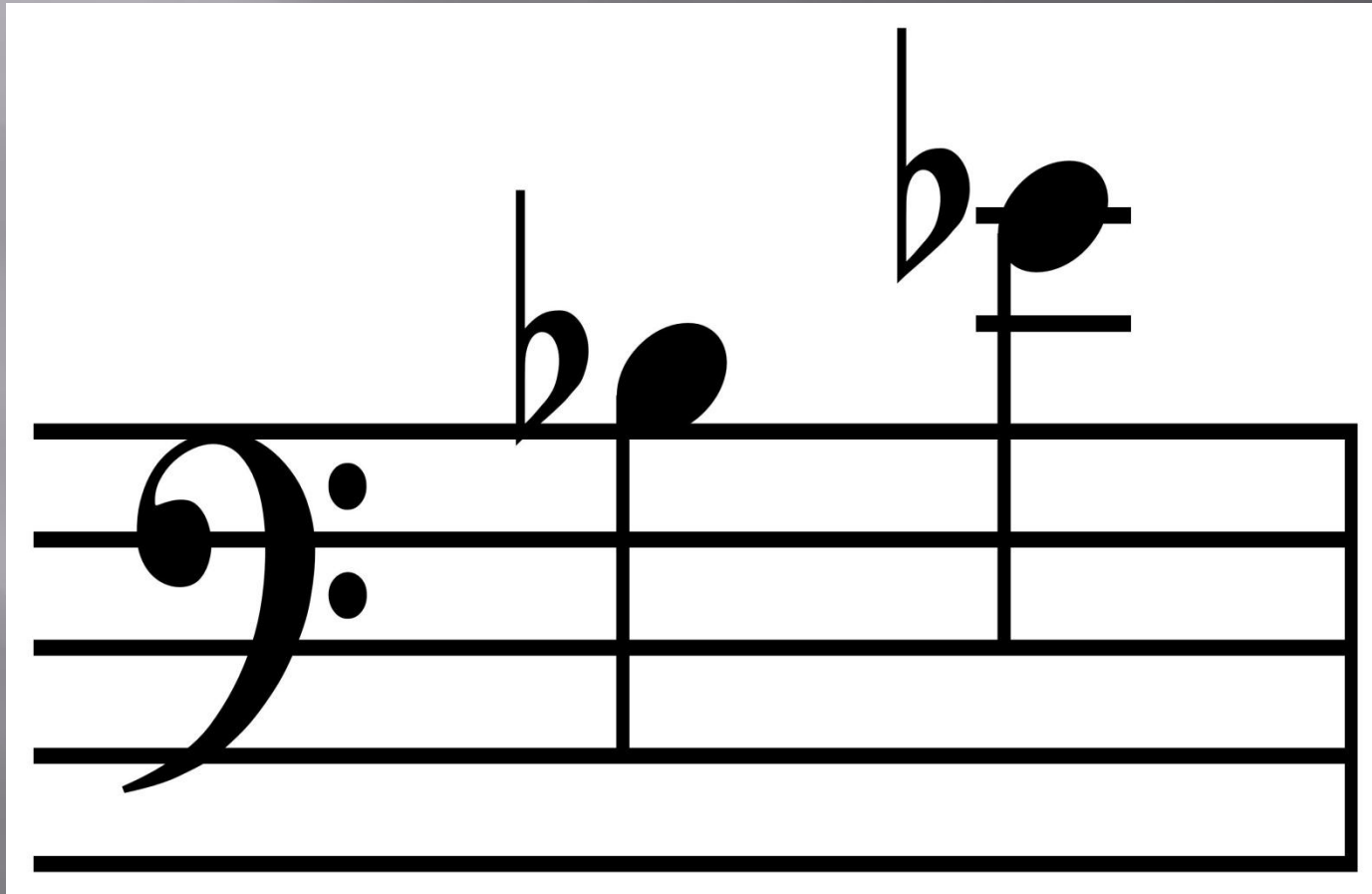
*How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy*  
*Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene University*  
[nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

# Average Tenor Transitions



*How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy*  
*Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene University*  
[nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

# Average Baritone Transitions



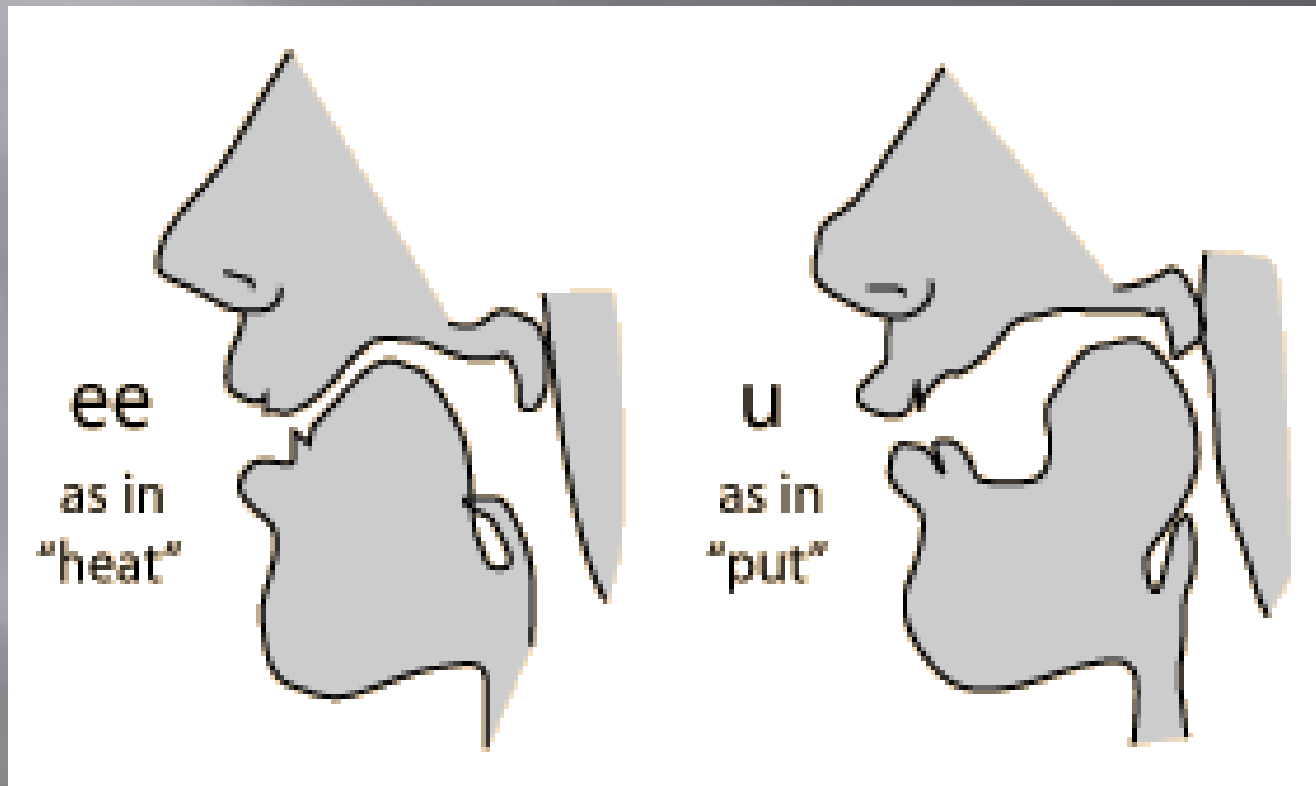
*How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy*  
*Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene University*  
[nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

The specific goal of knowing and addressing registers and register transitions is to minimize their audible presence in the singing sound.

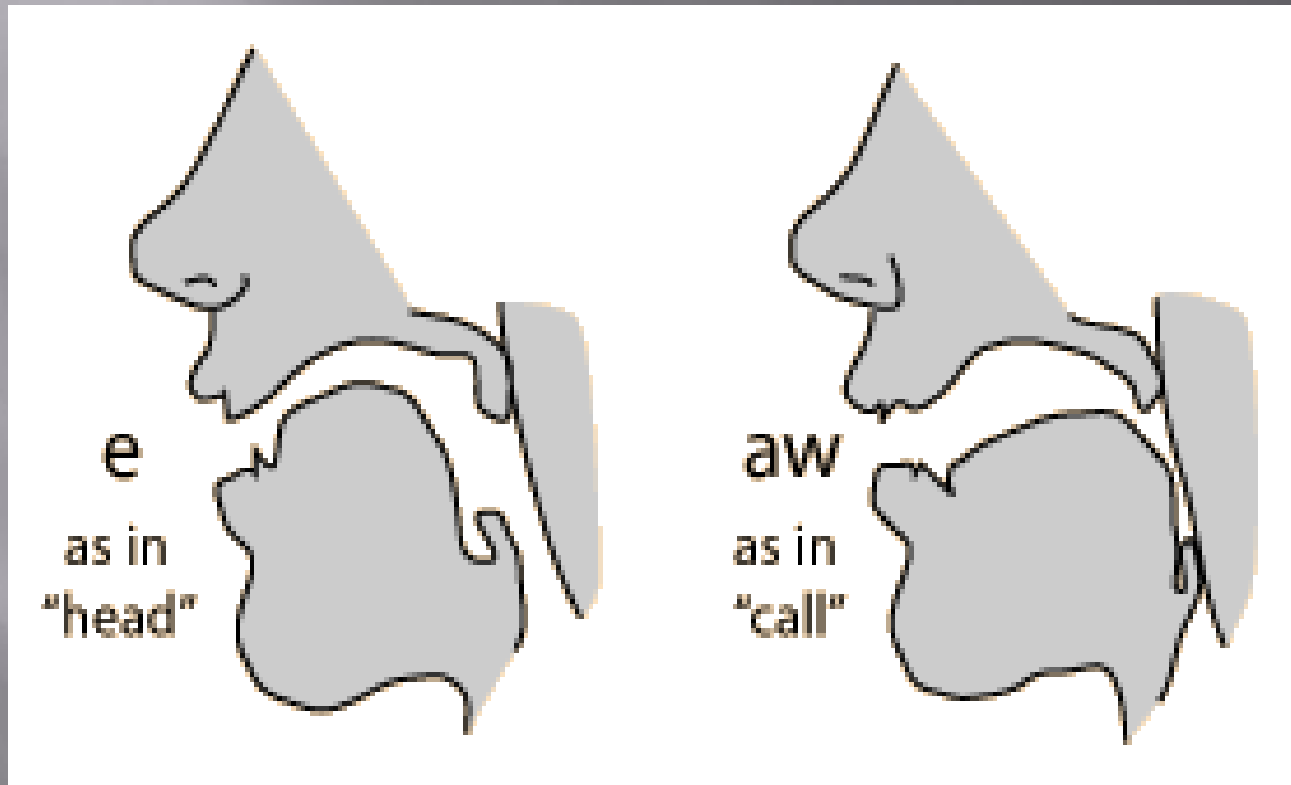
# CONCEPT 2B: VOWELS

How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy  
Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene  
University [nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

# Vocal Tract Vowel Shapes



# Vocal Tract Vowel Shapes



# RESONANCE: FREE vs. FORCED

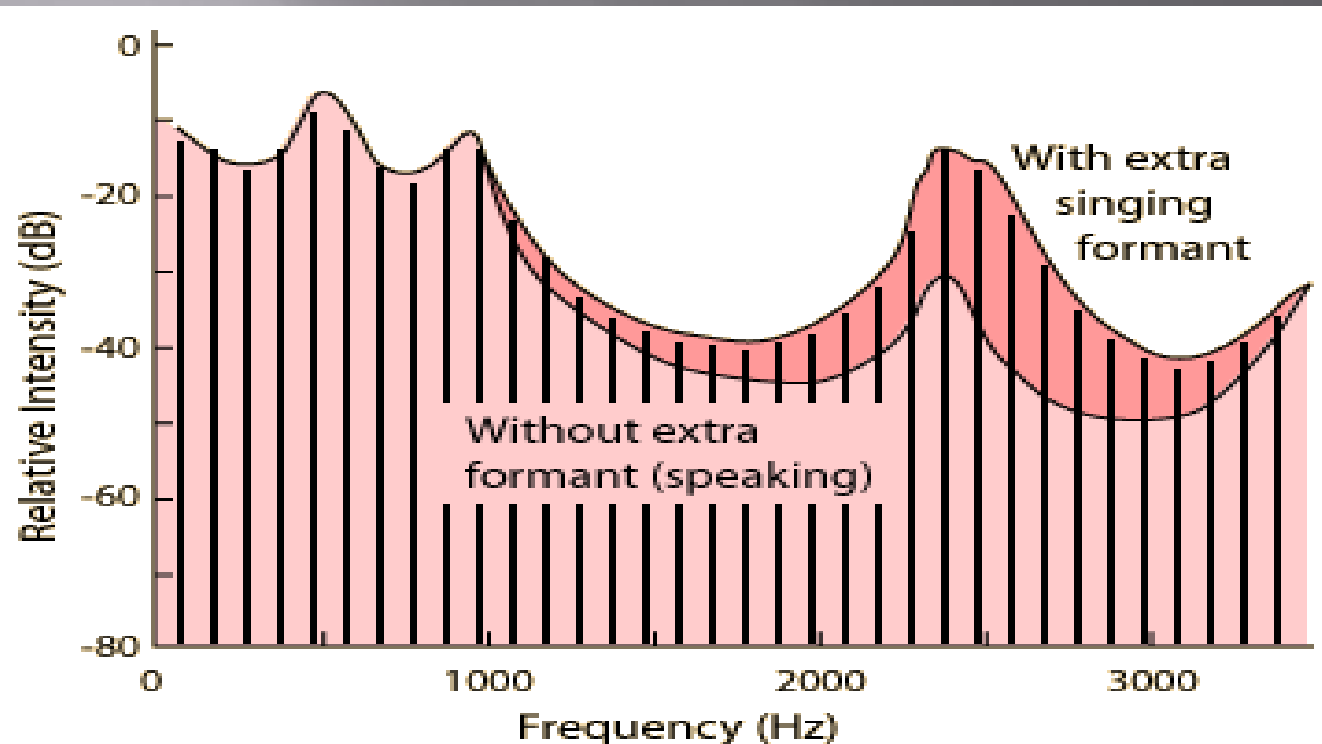
- ▣ All objects have a resonant frequency.
- ▣ The vocal tract is the primary resonator, amplifying or dampening the fundamental (pitch) produced by the vocal folds.
- ▣ The vocal tract shape is malleable – the vowel shape is a primary variable. The shape of the vowel is used to “tune” the vocal tract to the harmonics (overtones) of the fundamental.

# Primary Vowel Modification

MODIFY TO KEEP THE TONE PURE!

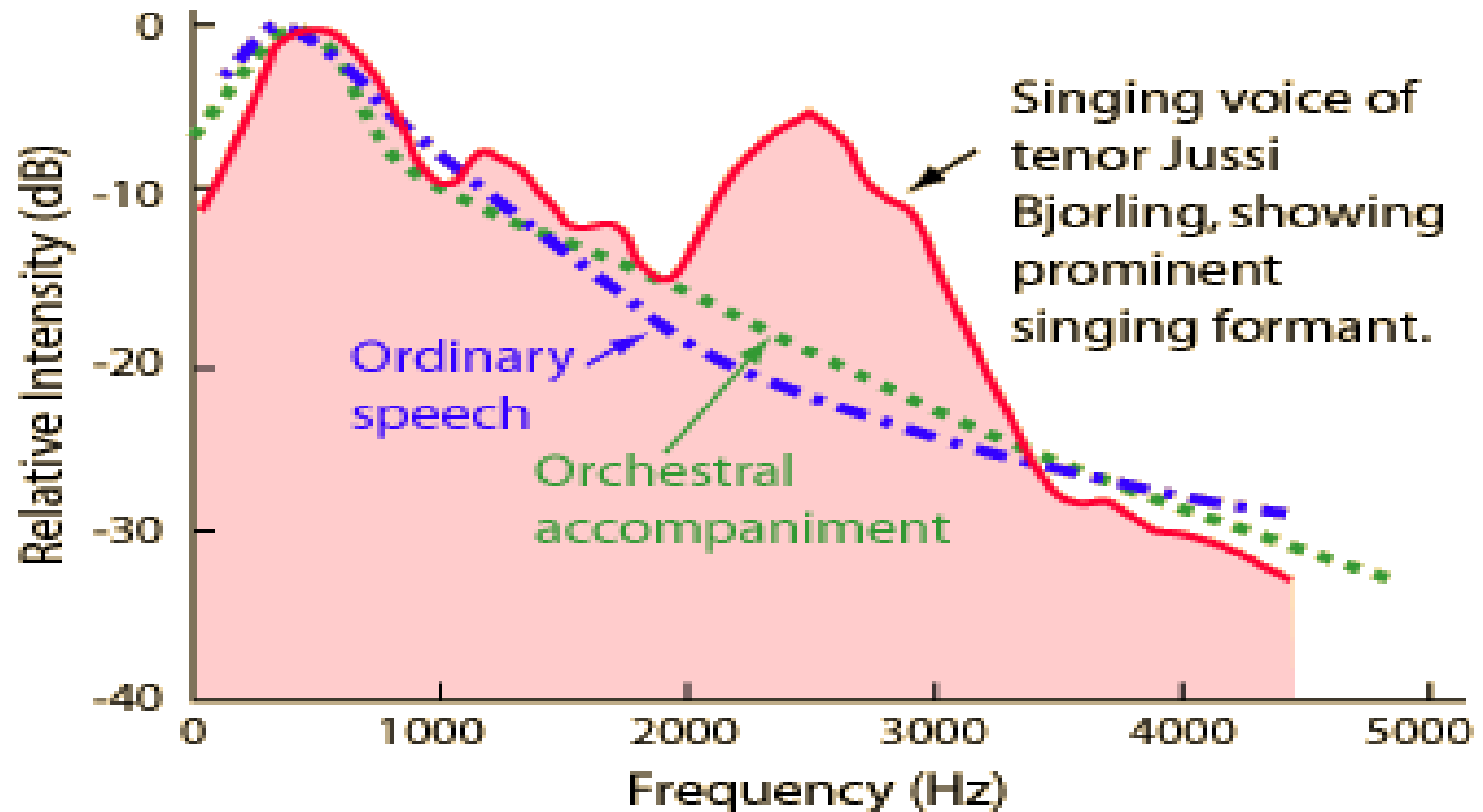
|   |         |           |                       |
|---|---------|-----------|-----------------------|
| ▣ | EE – IH | [i] – [ɪ] | beet/bit              |
| ▣ | AY – EH | [e] – [ɛ] | cha <u>u</u> otic/bet |
| ▣ | AH – AW | [a] – [ɑ] | by/father             |
| ▣ | OH – OW | [o] – [ɔ] | pillow/awe            |
| ▣ | OO – UH | [u] – [ʊ] | boot/book             |

# Voice Formants



After Sundberg, *The Acoustics of the Singing Voice*

# Voice Formants



After Sundberg, *The Acoustics of the Singing Voice*

# CONCEPT 2C: VOCALIZING

How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy  
Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene  
University [nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)

# Vocalization Tendencies

## ASCENDING VOCALIZES

- ▣ 80%; most move low to high only (Jrnl of Singing)
- ▣ Emphasize chest-dominant sounds
- ▣ Magnify differences between registers

## DESCENDING VOCALIZES

- ▣ 20%
- ▣ Emphasize head-dominant sounds
- ▣ Minimize differences between registers

# Vocalizing for traditional choral singing

- ▣ Start the exercise in the mid-range
- ▣ Bring the exercise lower
- ▣ Restart the exercise slightly higher (3<sup>rd</sup>, etc)

This tends to smooth register transitions, and allows the muscles of the voice to progressively stretch and relax, instead of stretching to the “point of no return.”

# Loud Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Strength
- ▣ Stamina
- ▣ High note production
- ▣ vibrato

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Forcing/straining
- ▣ Magnify problems
- ▣ Tension
- ▣ Mask small problems

# Soft Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Relaxation
- ▣ Ease of tone
- ▣ Warmth
- ▣ Beauty of line

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Collapse vocal tract
- ▣ Magnify tensions
- ▣ Breathiness
- ▣ Dampen resonance

# Fast/Staccato Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Flexibility
- ▣ Lighter production
- ▣ Articulation
- ▣ Decrease breathiness
- ▣ Pitch accuracy

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Out of control
- ▣ Limit openness
- ▣ Too fast; muddy articulation

# Slow/Legato Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Control
- ▣ Highlight specific areas of tension
- ▣ Steady breath flow
- ▣ Even vibrato

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Increased “weight”
- ▣ Too much demand on breath
- ▣ Fatigue
- ▣ Straight-tone
- ▣ Lack of mobility

# High Pitch Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Stretch vocal folds into upper range
- ▣ Bring head register sounds lower (classical production)
- ▣ staccato

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Vocal strain
- ▣ Eliminate ease of low pitches
- ▣ Difficulty switching to chest/belt registration

# Lower Pitch Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Stretch vocal folds to lower register
- ▣ Establish chest/belt sounds
- ▣ Relaxation
- ▣ Legato

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Limit upper range
- ▣ Pushed sounds
- ▣ Amplify register breaks
- ▣ flatting

# Bright/Forward Vowel Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Increase high frequencies
- ▣ Establish “ring”
- ▣ Eliminate breathiness
- ▣ Staccato
- ▣ Text intelligibility
- ▣ Speed/flexibility
- ▣ Release back jaw tension

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Adds harshness or nasality
- ▣ Constriction
- ▣ Raised larynx
- ▣ Magnify register changes
- ▣ Difficult open vowels
- ▣ Lack of line/legato
- ▣ Nasality
- ▣ Tongue tension

# Dark/Back Vowel Vocalizes

## BENEFITS

- ▣ Warmth of tone
- ▣ Lower larynx
- ▣ Legato
- ▣ Decrease “edginess”
- ▣ Relax throat

## CONCERNS

- ▣ Muffled/swallowed tone
- ▣ Flatting
- ▣ Too much “weight”
- ▣ Difficult to articulate consonants

# Application for Young Voices



- 5 and below: large motor skill classes, Music Together, Kindermusik

- ▣ 6-8: development of head register; posture, breathing (gentle). Simple, easy English songs, fun to sing.. Sounds are likely to be breathy and straight-tone. Range will be limited, but will go up more than down. Not much rib/abdomen control, so air is crucial. Technical vocal practice 15-20 minutes.
- ▣ 8-10: as above, but a bit more range, volume, breath control. Work for flexibility and increased sensory awareness. If breathiness persists begin to suggest that it is not necessary, but not too much pressure in the larynx. May begin to address “chest” sounds. 20 minutes, but at modest volume and pitch.

# Application for Young Voices

- ▣ 10-12: Begin to address smoothness of vowels/registers. Stretch the range upward. Work for clarity of tone without forcing. Begin attention to rib/abs control. “Legit” and classical are similar; chest more distinct. 20-25 minutes
- ▣ 13-15: Many teens are physically mature. Continue to train “ears” to recall a particular kind of sound ideal. Gradually separate “legit” and classical. 30 minutes
- ▣ 16-20: Still young for heavy classical singing. CCM is doable, but should be limited. Continue to develop and encourage head register. 30-60 minutes

# Suggested Reading

Edwin, Robert, and Barbara Arboleda. *The Kid and Singing Teacher* [DVD-Rom]. VoiceWise, 2008. ASIN: B008YGX53Q

Emmons, Shirlee, and Constance Chase. *Prescriptions for Choral Excellence: Tone, Text, Dynamic Leadership*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. ISBN-10: 0195182421

Gould, A. Oren, and Edith J. Savage. *Teaching Children to Sing*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1972. ISBN-10: 0840305877

McKinney, James C. *The Diagnosis & Correction of Vocal Faults*, 3rd ed. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 2005. ISBN-10: 1577664035

Moore, Martha Ruth. *Teaching Children to Sing*. Nashville, TN: Convention, 1989. ASIN: B0007207JU

# Suggested Reading

Olson, Margaret. *The Solo Singer in the Choral Setting: A Handbook for Achieving Vocal Health*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2010.

ISBN-10: 0810869136

Patenaude-Yarnell, Joan. “The Most Frequent Technical Problems Found in Young Singers.” *Journal of Singing*. Vol.50 No.5 (May/June 2004) pp.491-95.

Phillips, Kenneth H. *Teaching Kids to Sing*. New York: Schirmer, 1996, 2013. ISBN-10: 1133958508

Smith, Brenda, and Robert Thayer. Sataloff. *Choral Pedagogy*. San Diego: Singular, 1999. ISBN-10: 159756043X

Ware, Clifton. *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy: The Foundations and Process of Singing*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998. ISBN-10: 0070682895;

ASIN: B008UYLJO4

*How Do I Sing That? Basics of Voice Pedagogy*  
Neal Woodruff, DMA Olivet Nazarene University  
[nwoodruf@olivet.edu](mailto:nwoodruf@olivet.edu)