



The United States Army Field Band

The Joy of Singing

Companion Lesson Plans

THE JOY OF SINGING: EFFICIENT BREATHING

This lesson is suitable for inclusion in a high school choral or collegiate “class voice” environment.

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will demonstrate the ability to sing with a free-flowing and unforced stream of air while utilizing correct body alignment.
- Students will transfer this task from warm-up exercises to *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

MATERIALS:

- *Battle Hymn of the Republic* (SATB/arr. Wilhousky), in enough copies for the entire group
- *The Joy of Singing* video

PROCEDURES:

1. Have students assume a position of correct body alignment, learned during previous lesson.
2. Have students breathe in, beginning the breath with a snore, making sure they actually make the sound of a snore.
3. Notice how the top of the mouth (*palate*) lifts during the snore.
4. Have students stick their tongues out, fairly far from the mouth. During the exhale, have students vibrate their tongues, creating a “raspberry” sound. This may take some practice!
5. Now, combine the two exercises. Have students inhale with the snore, and exhale on the buzzing tongue. This exhale can be a simple five note warm-up, either up or down the scale.
6. Have students focus on where their breaths are originating. Is it in the upper or lower abdomen? The correct placement should be the lower abdomen.
7. Now have students place their hands against a wall, with one foot in front of the other. Keep their heads in line with their spines. Have students push against the wall with force. Quickly, have them perform the above warm-up while pushing against the wall. This forces the airflow to come from the lower abdomen and helps the student feel the exact placement of the air flow.
8. Do these exercises during warm-ups as often as needed to solidify the ideas and physical sensations.
9. Slowly, add these ideas to actual music. Have students begin at rehearsal number seven in *Battle Hymn*. Perform each phrase using the exercises above. Begin by having students utilize the “raspberry” sound on each phrase, then actually sing each phrase pushing against the wall. Relax between phrases, reset the body, then continue with the next phrase.
10. Eventually, perform the entire piece using these exercises. Finally, perform the piece as normal, asking students to think of the “snore placement” with each breath as well as the lower abdominal breathing.

EXPLORATION:

1. Consider developing a unit with a physical therapist or a massage therapist. Both professions specialize in the relationship of muscles to each other and both emphasize breathing in a relaxed way from the lower abdomen.

2. Consider team-teaching this lesson (or the *Body Alignment* lesson) with the physical education instructor and/or the drama instructor to promote physical relaxation, deep breathing, and posture awareness.

ASSESSMENT:

- Did students demonstrate correct body alignment?
- Did students sing with a free-flowing and unforced stream of air?
- Did students improve their singing of *Battle Hymn* following the related warm-up exercises?

RESOURCES: *Bel Canto: A Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method.* Marchesi, Mathilde. Dover Publications, Inc.: New York, 1995.
Discover Your Voice: How to Develop Healthy Voice Habits. Brown, Oren L. Singular Publishing Group, Inc.: San Diego, 1996. (Includes audio CD).

NATIONAL STANDARDS*:

- 1b. Sing music written in four parts, with and without accompaniment.
- 8c. Explain ways in which the principles and subject matter of various disciplines outside the arts are interrelated with those of music.

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