

ENERGIZED VOCAL SOUND

Dede Nibler

Singing is very personal. Singers who feel safe and confident tend to have a positive energy.

This energy creates a spark of internal motivation. Inner motivation fuels us and makes us want to excel and work toward achieving rehearsal and performance goals.

Inner motivation is probably the most important non-musical skill needed for a successful chorus or quartet.

Motivation leads to the desire to learn and perform with energy.

It is a circle: energy leads to inner motivation which leads to more energy.

Ways to help our members feel safe and confident, thus building energy

- Directors feel safe and confident and bring this attitude to each rehearsal.
- Directors are demanding but not highly critical. They are encouraging rather than discouraging which brings about positive change
- Directors are prepared to educate members with known goals and teaching strategies in place. Goals and direction are a shared vision
- Directors are familiar with the ebb and flow of energy and teach accordingly. They know how to reach the peak at the appropriate moment through interesting incentives and experiences
- Directors have education and musical performance as their primary goal. They avoid confrontation, criticism, factions, and know that the buck stops with them
- Singers feel welcome and are provided the basics: music, instruction, sectionals, time to socialize, information in a timely fashion, equal treatment
- Environment is conducive to learning and feeling happy and comfortable. Everyone works better in a positive environment. Rewards reinforce learning and provide the motivation for further learning
- Social mores are such that no one is left out of the team/chorus loop. Everyone is an important link in the chain and has responsibilities to the whole
- Recruiting, acceptance of, and orientation/education of new members is an important step toward building a firm foundation early on in a member's chorus experience

Energy comes from participating in learning experiences that build synergistically

- Learning must be done actively
- Learning must be experienced repeatedly for it to make an impact on performance level
- Learning must lead logically from point A to point B and so on
- Teaching and learning are in line with one another; one leads to the other

Energy comes from teaching strategies that produce known results

- Basic music instruction is done with creativity and a known plan
- Learning opportunities are provided to address the mastering of a known goal

- Teaching moments are integrated with performance moments; a connection is established
- Many opportunities are given to try and succeed/fail without judgment
- Many more opportunities are given that ensure success; praise and identification of the successfully attained goal(s) always follows these opportunities

Energy and the Breathing Process

1. Breathing must be hooked up and a full body experience
2. Inhalation is done quickly, quietly and completely (lateral breathing vs diaphragmatic/abdominal breathing)
3. Exhalation, measured, controlled and slow, is managed by the abs/diaphragm
4. Mouth space on inhalation is open, high soft palate, tongue flat, lips and jaw relaxed and in the space of the vowel to come
5. Abdominal muscles release on the inhalation; assist the upward movement of the diaphragm on the exhalation
6. Breathing is an active process. The energy in the breathing process sets up the energy of the voice.

Energy and Phonation

1. Phonation, the hook up of the breath to the larynx/voice box, does not need to involve hard work.
2. Phonation should feel easy, without tension or use of unnecessary muscles.
3. We use three vocal onsets when we phonate:
 - a. Breathy
 - b. Glottal
 - c. Coordinated
4. The coordinated onset is the one we use the vast majority of the time.
5. Bubbling, humming, sirens, slides are all beginning phonation exercises

Energy and Resonance

1. The goal is to have all vowels sound like they are coming from the same space. At opposite ends of the vocal tract expansion are AH and EE. Say each and compare the space for each. AH is naturally the more open vowel. EE needs to live close to the AH space. Practice these two vowels until they feel “related” to one another.
2. Open resonance is achieved by:
 - a. A constant flow of air through the vocal instrument
 - b. Tongue down and tension free
 - c. Relaxed jaw, neck, lips; lips slightly off of the teeth
 - d. The space between the back molars and the soft palate lift
 - e. Use of the inner smile
 - f. Singing in the hum/buzz spot (Singers Formant)
3. An energized sound is a resonant sound and the resonant ring needs to be heard in all vowels

4. All vowels need to sound like they belong to the same vowel family. Each vowel is distinct from the others, but all need to be produced in the same resonating space and not pop out of the fabric of the musical line

Energy and Articulation

1. The challenge is to bring the lyrics to life without over articulating
2. The face (mouth, lips, jaw) should appear normal when we sing and not be overly active
3. The face is not, however, passive. Ideally it reflects the emotion of the lyrics. Cheek muscles are lifted a bit, the lips are slightly off the teeth, and the eyes sparkle and connect honestly with the audience
4. Singing should be done so vowels are vertical and consonants are lightly touched upon
5. The delivery of the lyrics allows a consistent resonance (ring) to occur throughout the entire song

Energy and Excitement – excite performers and audiences alike by taking the opportunity to sing the music appropriately

1. Seventh scale step “ti” is the leading tone to “do” and should be sung high
2. Octaves need to lock immediately and cleanly – top note lives in the overtone produced by the lower voice
3. Interval of a major 2nd – both voices need equal press, matching vowels and timbre to create the buzz and tension
4. Bass/bari close notes – bass match baritone space but baritones need to match bass timbre
5. Bass note close to lead – bass matches lead timbre
6. Tenor note close to lead – tenor match lead timbre
7. Descending intervals need to be tight, small intervals; all notes in the line should be sung in the “same voice”
8. Ascending intervals need to be large; sung smoothly in the resonance of the highest note in the line
9. Find the exciting embellishments in the song and use them to create tension and release, mood, emotion. Look for: swipes, contrary motion, places to change vocal texture, places to change dynamics or tempo, etc
10. Rehearse key changes slowly and build power as you increase the tempo. Understand the function of all notes in the key change
11. Lift the ends of all phrases using air and not force. “Dairy Queen” each ending

Energy is palpable. You can feel it; you can hear it; you can see it.

- The body
- The face
- The voice
- The motions
- The emotions
- The message
- The confidence
- The fun
- The vulnerability
- The performance

Energy Building Musical Experiences

1. Sing “vvvv” to any popular song and swing your arms side to side
2. March to just about any fun vocalize or song; try the Wizard of Oz “Yoh Ee Umph” and go up by half steps
3. Split the chorus in half; have half clap the steady beat and half clap the rhythm of the words
4. Sing an uptune on staccato “doots” – don’t hold anything but feel the steady beat
5. Play a violin while you sing your ballad; feel the ends of the phrases extend
6. Bring one section out in front of the chorus and have them sing their part to the rest of the chorus
7. With the section still out in front, have the three parts on the risers sing back to the section out in front
8. With the section still out in front, have everyone sing – no director; change the section out in front
9. Enjoy making and listening for overtones
10. Sing fun, but meaningful vocalizes:
 - a. William Tell/Ping Pong Ball
 - b. Phantom of the Opera
 - c. Les Miserable
 - d. Star Wars
 - e. You Needed Me
 - f. One, One, One, One
 - g. Messa Di Voce
 - h. Chugga Chant
11. Use vocalizes that test the brain as well as the voice
 - a. 1-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 (leave out different numbers; clap where the left out number goes)
 - b. Everyone on a unison note; director gives instruction for section movement
 - c. Bubble/lip trill your contest ballad
 - d.
12. Add movement to your vocalises
13. Do the choreography to a song with no singing but keeping the precision in place
14. Combine silent singing with actual singing; follow the director’s hand signs

**People with energy are said to:
Have drive, be passionate, move with purpose,
take chances, and meet challenges**