

The Naked Voice

The challenge and the beauty of Barbershop is that the music created is built with only the naked human voice. No instrument to hide behind, just the unique and beautiful tone which is unlike any other instrument.

We therefore strive to make that voice as beautiful and pleasurable to hear as possible. There are a number of ways to approach our vocal skills in order to improve them.

Ladder of Skills

- ☞ Posture - our posture defines the shape of our instrument
- ☞ Breathing - without breath, we cannot make sound
- ☞ Phonation - this is the act of turning air into sound
- ☞ Resonance - we must give the sound space to vibrate in
- ☞ Articulation - how we form different shaped sounds (vowels)

Ideal Sound

In order to improve, we must define the “ideal sound” which is our goal.

- ☞ Clarity - sometimes called “focus”, this is efficient phonation
- ☞ Depth - the tone needs dimension, created through resonance
- ☞ Sonority - good support is needed to carry the tone through a phrase
- ☞ Lift - this upward pull gives life to the sound and helps to ensure the sound doesn’t become “squashed”
- ☞ Consistency - we are rewarded for how much of the time we display our skills. This is not just a stamina issue – lasting the whole song – but also a character of our voices. How consistent are the above 4 elements throughout your range? Do you have as much clarity at the top of your range as at the bottom? “Chest Voice” and your “break” are fallacies – if you sing with clarity, depth, sonority and lift, you will never have problems with a break, or sink to singing in “Chest Voice”.

You can use any vocalise to practice your skills – don’t think of “warm-ups” as something you do to get in gear for a rehearsal. They are actually vocal studies – do them with concentration or you’re simply wasting time.