

Tone Flow & Articulation

Judging Category Description Book

Sound Category

Vowel Production

“One of the common faults of the untrained singer is the attempt to form vowel sounds by altering, or even contriving, the external mouth position. When this occurs, formation of vowels is moved from the pharyngeal area, where it occurs naturally in the properly produced voice, to the mouth cavity, where proper resonance cannot occur. Vowel sounds produced in this contrived manner will lack the consistency of quality achieved when vowels are produced in the pharynx.”

Tone Flow

“Tones must move easily from syllable to syllable and from note to note with as little interruption of the sound as possible. The effect of singing a flowing phrase should be similar to the kind of connection of tone that would be achieved if a melodic line were sung on a sustained ‘ah.’ Many singers overuse the lips and jaw, making tone flow impossible. Flowing tones supported to the end of each phrase are a requirement of the sound category.”

Expression Category

Consonants

“If vowels are the basis of musical sounds, consonants can be considered the punctuation. In speech, consonants are articulated in a manner that will add distinction to the spoken word and vowels are not sustained. Singing requires an opposite approach; consonants must be adequately articulated so that lyrics are understandable, but not to the degree that tone flow is noticeably interrupted.

The manner in which consonants are delivered can add style, meaning, artistry and individuality to a performance. This is particularly true of the pitched consonant sounds – ‘m’, ‘n’, ‘l’ and ‘ng’ – and the performer can often sing through these sounds to articulate words effectively without disturbing the musical line. Other consonants can be classified as voiced or unvoiced – those that have pitch and those that do not. Proper treatment of voiced consonants requires that they be produced at the same pitch as the vowel sound contained in the syllable in question.”

So What Do We Do?

- ☞ Produce vowels in the pharynx – let the mouth follow, not lead!
- ☞ Use Vowel-to-Vowel delivery (consonant goes at the beginning of each syllable, not at the end, except possibly at the end of a phrase!) and sonority to enhance tone flow and thus forward motion / energy
- ☞ Articulate the vowels firmly, consonants clearly but not explosively, so that vowels lock for as long as possible while the words are still clear.