

PERSONAL **V**OCAL **I**NSTRUCTION

** INSTRUCTION FOR INSTRUCTORS **

Because you have such a short amount of time with each singer, it's important to make her feel relaxed and comfortable right away.

A good way to start is to ask her what she likes about her voice and what she wants to improve about her voice.

You could ask her if she came to the PVI with a specific challenge or problem. She may or may not have thought of this in advance. Many singers don't have this level of self-awareness, and many are highly self-critical.

Encourage her to record the PVI so she can hear the difference afterwards, and be reminded of the specific instruction you gave her.

When it's time for her to sing, you could ask her to sing a few phrases of one or two of the contest songs. You could even choose a specific phrase in a song if you have limited time. Be prepared with a pitch pipe or access to a piano to get her started. And if she's really nervous, you may need to quietly sing along with her to get her started.

- If she's especially nervous, have her face the furthest away point of the room so she projects more, plus it turns her slightly away from you so she isn't distracted or unnerved by you staring at her. You can always watch her whole body if she is turned on a slight angle to see if she is breathing correctly, or her posture needs work, or she is singing with excessive tension.

While she is singing, be very aware of your body language and facial expression.

Listen for good things you can say about her voice / performance, as well as one or two things you can say for her to improve.

Samples of positive things you could say to her. Of course, you should find something that is specific to her voice, but these are just examples of things to say if you're searching!

- You have wonderful clarity to your voice in your upper (or lower, or mid, or all) range
- There is a nice warmth in your voice (be specific about where in her range you heard this)
- You sing with so much passion (or authority, or command, or joy, or abandon, or _____)

- You are very accurate and obviously understand the finer points of Pythagorean tuning
- You have a very solid understanding of the musical plan for the song

When you give her feedback on the one or two things she needs to work on (pick the most important things first, the things that will make the biggest improvement in her vocal performance), be as specific as you can. Remember to use the feedback sandwich: 1st, a positive. 2nd, an area to improve. 3rd, a positive.

Demonstrate with your own voice and body to show her what you mean.

Things to listen and look for:

- Breath - is she breathing correctly? Fix this first if she's not.
- Breath Management – maximizing her breath for full phrase length and vocal energy. Make sure she's hooking up her breath to producing the sound.
- Make sure she's singing with enough breath pressure behind all the notes. This fixes lots of other fundamental problems.
- Tone production – is the tone freely produced and appropriately resonated? Is she singing with tension? Watch for the tongue/jaw getting in the way. This is one of the most common problems.
- Is she singing with the correct amount of head/chest mix? Is she trying to sing too high in her full chest voice, or too low in her full head voice? Is she negotiating her break smoothly?
- If pitch is a problem, it's either because of poor tone production (intonation problems because of an inappropriately resonated tone, or tension filled production), or because of a poor ear or incorrect intervals (tuning problems). You should be able to figure out which one it is and go from there.
- Work on keeping her face lifted, her tongue forward, her breath support consistent, and explain (and demo) how this changes her sound.
- Completing phrase endings with energy and lift

Again, there are many other things that you could coach her on. Be creative, but stick to just a few things in one session. And keep praising her throughout.

When in doubt, don't make something up just so you look good! This could cause more damage. Just admit you don't know how to fix something and then tell her you will find out more tools and get back to her. This is especially true if you suspect something that may be only addressed by a speech therapist or doctor.

If you know her well, use the appropriate ratio of left vs. right brained explanations for things. It's always best to know more than one way to explain something to a singer. Teach it to her technically, and also give her a metaphorical analogy to help her visualize something. For instance, when I want a singer to sing with more upper range resonance

and pitch, I would say exactly what the desired result is: “I want you to sing with more upper range resonance and pitch”. Then tell her a left brain way to achieve it: “lift your soft palate more while keeping your tongue relaxed and forward”. Then give her a right brain explanation of the same thing: “sing with a more velvety tone, like you’re an opera singer, and imagine that you need to vibrate your upper molar fillings”.

Summarize the session and thank her for trusting you!

Vocal Instructor - Critique

Name: _____ Part: _____

PVI Instructor: _____ Date: _____

The following indicates areas that are good as well as areas that need improvement:

<u>AREA</u>	<u>NEEDS TO IMPROVE</u>	<u>GOOD</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
Breath support:			
Expanded	_____	_____	_____
Head flexible	_____	_____	_____
Posture	_____	_____	_____
Resonance:			
Palate Lifted	_____	_____	_____
Vocal Prod.	_____	_____	_____
Miscellaneous:			
Lift phrases	_____	_____	_____
Sing open vowels	_____	_____	_____
Vowels too soon	_____	_____	_____
Consonants-flow	_____	_____	_____
Dynamics	_____	_____	_____
Over singing	_____	_____	_____
Energy in voice	_____	_____	_____
Lyrical	_____	_____	_____

Additional comments: _____

