

Steps to Learning Your Part

Feel free to let me know of your questions & suggestions

Get a feel for the whole song.

- Find a comfortable place to work and focus.
- Take out the score (sheet music) of the piece you want to work on.
- Follow the score as you listen to the recording of the song - even if you don't read music.
- Let the music sink in visually and aurally - don't try to sing along until you've heard the whole song at least once.
- Look at how the song is organized from beginning to end - the 'map' of the song.
- Make note of the most challenging sections; you'll give those sections priority focus
- Then work through the song section-by-section, focusing separately on breath, text, rhythm, and tone.

Focus on the Breath.

- Some music editors include breath marks; some do not. Usually, we will breathe according to punctuation, and virtually never in the middle of a word (unless you stagger - breathe when no one else around you breathes). I will give you specific breaths to mark in your music during rehearsal so you can practice breathing in the right places.
- Choose to breathe early and often enough to allow for the most relaxed, free, efficient, energized, coordinated breath/tone possible. The way you breathe should reflect the kind of tone and phrase you intend to create. We will be working on breath technique throughout this process.

Focus on the Text.

- Speak the text as if the words are your own thoughts, conversationally, for natural inflection, meaning, and character (not in musical or poetic rhythm).
- For text in a language other than English (in this case, Spanish)
 - Work with the translation provided in Member Resources. Do your best to match up the Spanish words with the corresponding English words so you understand every word of the Spanish.
 - If you are able to do so, transliterate text into IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet).
 - Work with the Pronunciation recording provided in Member Resources. First, listen to the recording and follow the text without speaking. Then, take the text in sections, listening and repeating back what you hear.
- For unfamiliar English words or phrases, make note of those; follow your curiosity and do some research; if you still can't find what you're looking for, send me an email. Or if you come across something fascinating about the text, send me an email! 😊
- Paper and pencil: write out the text, repeatedly, until you can write it by memory.
- Once you've Focused on Rhythm, come back to Focus on the Text, intoning* the text in rhythm, not singing** the melody, but streaming your spoken tone in rhythm across a clear, fluid line.
*Intoning: vocal sound between speech and singing; focus on accurate diction, continuous resonance from syllable to syllable **Singing: fully energized, vibrant tone, accurate diction, continuous resonance

Focus on the Rhythm.

- **If you do not read music**, rely on listening to the music and watching the text.
 - Work in brief sections, first listening without trying to do any rhythm, then clap or tap the rhythm you hear. For instance, we could listen to the song from *The Wizard of Oz*, "Follow the Yellow Brick Road." If you've heard that song before, you can hear the rhythm of the music even as you read the text. Clap that rhythm.
 - After you have gotten good at clapping or tapping the rhythm of the text in a section, then speak the text in rhythm.
 - If certain rhythms continue to elude you, make a note of them, and let me know in rehearsal or send me an email - always include measure numbers so I can quickly find where you are.
 - Once you've Focused on the Melody, come back to Focus on the Rhythm, singing the text on the melody.

Focus on the Rhythm, continued.

- **If you read music:**
 - Use subdivision to work out dotted and syncopated rhythms. To use subdivision, find the smallest rhythmic unit in the section of the song you're working, and use that rhythmic unit to keep track of the notated rhythm.
 - For triplets, use words such as 'Wa-shing-ton' to feel the even distribution.
 - For instance, if the eighth note is the smallest rhythmic unit in a particular measure, and there is a dotted quarter and an eighth note followed by a quarter note triplet, you will count "ONE-and-two-AND 'Wa-shing-ton' while tapping the notated rhythm.
 - Work in brief sections, first listening without trying to do any rhythm, then clap or tap the rhythm you hear. For instance, we could listen to the song from *The Wizard of Oz*, "Follow the Yellow Brick Road." If you've heard that song before, you can hear the rhythm of the music even as you read the text. Clap that rhythm.
 - After you have gotten good at clapping or tapping the rhythm of the text in a section, then speak the text in rhythm.
 - If certain rhythms continue to elude you, make a note of them, and let me know in rehearsal or send me an email - always include measure numbers so I can quickly find where you are.
 - Once you've Focused on the Melody, come back to Focus on the Rhythm, singing the text on the melody.

Focus on the Melody.

- **If you do not read music**, rely on listening to the music and watching the text.
- **If you read music**, use solfegg' (do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do) or alphabet note names or scale degree numbers to sing through the melody.
 - Work in brief sections, first listening without trying to sing along.
 - When you do sing along, sing on a comfortable vowel - not the text, and make sure you're breathing in the right places.
 - When you are able to sing the melody on a comfortable vowel, sing on alternating vowels such as 'oh-ee' ([o i] in IPA).
 - When you are able to sing the melody on alternating vowels, and you have already Focused on the Text and Focused on the Rhythm, sing the melody on the text.

Focus on Your Vocal Tone.

- Start the tone as freely, clearly, and vibrantly as you can - not muscled and not breathy.
- For 'high' notes, think down, or across a infinite horizontal plane or circle.
- Hear the quality of sound you want to create, including the specific vowel sound, before you sing it, and when you sing it, sing IT.
- Work with Vocal Exercises provided in Member Resources.
- Also in Member Resources, refer to The Care of Your Voice.

Generally.

- **Work Smart**
 - Set specific, achievable goals for each practice session.
 - Take slow tempos - you'll know it's slow enough:
 - if you can easily look and think ahead, and if you become consistently accurate.
 - Break up the music into sections, and repeat the section until you are consistently accurate.
 - Only speed up the tempo, and only move on to the next section when you are consistently accurate at least five times in a row.
 - Take breaks; working for more than 30-60 minutes at a time can be counterproductive.
 - Take credit for your accomplishments.
- **Work with a Buddy.**
- **Get plenty of rest, eat well, drink plenty of water.**
- **Warm up and warm down.**