

## FUNDAMENTAL VOWELS

Proper breath support and proper vowel formation are essential for good tone. If the tone is bad, something is wrong with the breath support or the vowel form is incorrect. To produce a pure sounding vowel in vocal art requires skillful blending or mixture of other vowels. Each vowel has its own form which demands a certain position of the muscles involved in singing to give it the proper coloring. If we distort this vowel form, the coloring will change, necessitating the blending of two or more vowels to produce the desired tonal coloring.

### Vowel Coloring

For instance, if the vowel "ee" sounds shrill, it needs the blending of "oo" to give it the proper color. The coloring is obtained by first singing "oo", then with as little change of the vowel position as possible, singing "ee". Vowels which are too bright or shrill lack the "o" or "oo" coloring, and vowels which are too dark and somber lack the "ee" and "a" coloring. Proper coloring cannot be achieved merely by changing the tongue, lips, or jaw, but by a coordinated effort of all the singing muscles. Therefore, thinking of these vowel modifications brings all necessary muscles into action. (See exercise 10.)

### Drills

In these drills for vowel blending we recommend beginning with the vowel "ee" because it is a naturally "covered" vowel and is much easier than any other vowel to place correctly. Figure 6 shows the correct placement of the tongue. Care must be exercised that part of the escaping breath is directed towards the post-nasal and head cavities, for this will keep the tones from getting "chesty". This thought of post-nasal and head resonance must be accompanied by an open throat (the thought of yawning), otherwise the tone becomes nasal and thin.

In passing from the vowel "ee" to the vowel "a", the position of "ee" should change very little, thereby the "a" retains the coloring of "ee", giving the tone carrying quality. The use of the "y" will aid in making a smooth connection between "ee" and "a".

### The Vowel Sound "Ah"

The next step, passing from "a" to "ah", is more difficult. Here the back of the tongue is usually lowered or depressed too much, consequently taking away the "ee" and "a" coloring, causing the "ah" to become dull and often out of tune. During the first stages of development, the back of the tongue must be lifted well out of the throat with the sides of it resting against the upper back teeth and the tip of it against the lower front teeth. This position immediately places the larynx and the palate in the proper position.

Many singers do not realize that the vowel "ah" is most difficult to master. The major reason is that the thought of it tends to relax all vocal organs. The vowel "ah" needs the blending of "ee" to give it carrying quality, "a" to give it strength, and "oo" to give it depth. Keeping the back of the tongue up will bring the desired colorings.

The vowels "o" and "oo" are naturally "covered" vowels. When built from the "ee" form, very little trouble will be encountered if the tongue is not moved any more than is absolutely necessary to place the new vowel form.

# FUNDAMENTAL VOWELS

The fundamental vowels used in vocal study are *ee-a-ah-o-oo*. A perfect tone is made by the skillful blending of several vowels. The vowel sounds are thought of as they appear in the order given in the diagram, from the front to the back of the palate.

Balanced vowel coloring is impossible without correct breath control. A tone is made by the co-ordinated effort of all the vocal and breathing muscles.

For "ee" place the tip of the tongue against the lower front teeth and feel the sides of the tongue against the upper back teeth.

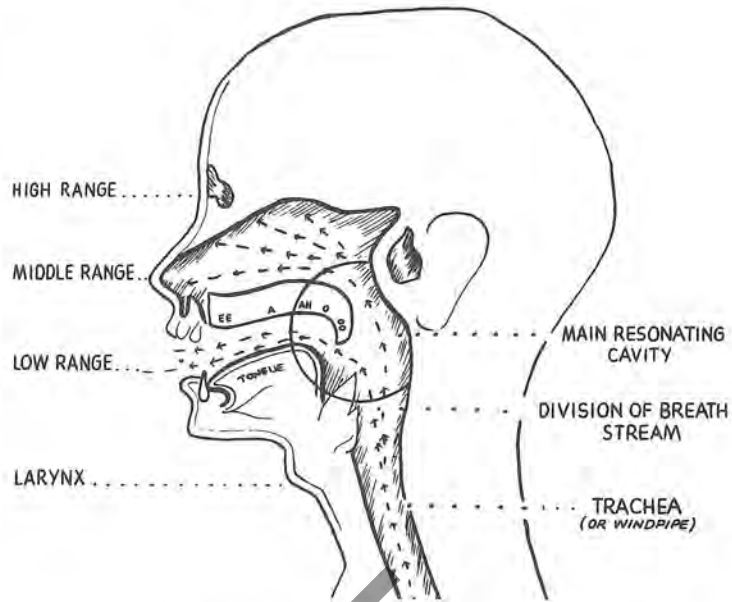


Fig. 6  
RESONATING CAVITIES

## VOCALISES

10 Repeat ascending and descending.

When singing "ee," the tongue is arched high in the mouth with little space between the tongue and palate.

11 etc.

The use of the "y" will aid in making a smooth connection between the "ee" and "a."

12 etc.

Extreme care must be taken not to move the tongue too far out of the position held for "ee" when singing "a" and "ah."

13 Repeat ascending and descending.

In the transition from "yah" to "yo" be careful not to exaggerate the change in lip formation.

14 etc.

Think of the "oo" formation in the back of the mouth with slight lip change from the "o".

Remember to keep the sides of the tongue against the upper back teeth in all these exercises.