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The Contemporary Singer
Elements of Vocal Technique
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Chapter 8
Maintaining Vocal Health
Marking for Voice Conservation

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MARKING FOR VOICE CONSERVATION

Marking is a way of singing that helps you save your voice during rehearsals. To mark a melody, sing just the first few notes of a phrase, and mentally sing the other notes. Raise the lowest and lower the highest notes in your song by an octave (octave displacement) to avoid the extremes of your range. Men can use falsetto to approach high notes. All singing should be light when you are marking.

Marking saves your voice by minimizing its use. It should be used when you are not feeling well, or during rehearsals scheduled just before a performance. Too much practicing before a performance can take the freshness out of your voice. In theater music, singers mark during lighting and technical rehearsals, when it is not important for them to sing at full volume.

Singers often have strong emotions when performing and become carried away by the moment, losing self-control and singing full voice when they should be resting, so listen to your body.

The marking examples are intended to give singers an idea of how to conserve their voices. Notice how the examples eliminate high notes, condensing the melody to a smaller range and omitting every other phrase.

The altered melodies suggested for marking might be too low for tenors and high sopranos. Adjust markings and song keys to suit your voice. There are no set rules. Marking is successful if you benefit from rehearsal while conserving your voice.

TIPS FOR MARKING

What to do when marking

1. Warm up lightly first.
2. Maintain energetic breath support.
3. Sing only the first few words of a phrase, singing the rest mentally.
4. Displace notes at the high and low extremes of your range by an octave to avoid straining. Plan this in advance.
5. Men can sing high notes in falsetto when marking.
6. Always sing lightly when marking.

What to avoid when marking

1. Don't sing everything down an octave.
2. Don't whisper or withhold breath support.
3. Don't lose concentration.
4. Don't succumb to pressure from peers or directors and sing full voice against the advice of your doctor.
5. Don't mark all of the time. You should sing a concert, recital, or other long performance using your full voice several times over a period of several weeks or longer to make sure you are familiar with phrasing and breath pacing, and to help you develop stamina.

Marking example: “Shenandoah”

The melody of “Shenandoah” has a range of an octave and a fourth and marking reduces it to a sixth. Van Morrison’s recording of “Shenandoah” from *The Long Road Home* is a pop version of this traditional song.

Example 8.1

American Folksong

$\text{♩} = 69$

Oh, Shen-ah - doah I long to

see you a - way you roll - ing riv - er. Oh,

Shen-an - doah I long to see you a - way I'm bound to

roam 'cross the wide Mis - sou - ri.

Chord markings: F/C, Bb/C, F/C, C7, F, Bb, Am, F, Bb, Gm7, C7, F, Gm7, C7, Dm7, F/C, Bb, Am, Dm7, F/C, Bb/C, F.

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“Shenandoah”

Example 8.2

American Folksong

♩ = 69

F/C B \flat /C F/C C7 F B \flat *don't sing*

Oh, Shen-ah - doah___

altered melody

Am F B \flat Gm7 C7 F

a - way___ you roll-ing riv - er. Oh,

Gm7 C7 *don't sing* Dm7 F/C B \flat *don't sing*

Shen-an - doah___ a - way___

Am Dm7 F/C B \flat /C F

'cross the wide___ Mis - sou - ri. ___

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Marking example: "The Water is Wide"

"The Water is Wide" has a range of an octave while marking reduces it to a sixth. James Taylor's recording of "The Water is Wide" from *New Moon Shine* may be of interest to you. Pay special attention to the way he rhythmically embellishes this song. This recording is a good study in vocal embellishments in a pop style.

Example 8.3

English Folk Song

$\text{♩} = 63$

Intro (no chord) Am7 C7sus

The wa - ter is

F C7sus F F F/E

wide _____ I can-not get o'er And nei - ther
 ship _____ sail - ing on the sea she's load - ed
 back _____ up a - gainst some oak think - ing that
 hand - some and love is kind and love's a

Dm Bbadd2 Gm7 C7sus C7 C7/Bb

have I _____ wings to _____ fly Give me a
 deep as _____ deep could be. But not so
 he was a trust - ty _____ tree But first he
 jewel when _____ it is _____ new When it grows

Am7 Cm7 F7 Bb Bb/A Gm7

boat _____ that can car - ry _____ two and both shall
 deep _____ as the love I'm _____ in. I know not
 bend - ed and _____ then he _____ broke so did my
 old _____ it _____ wax - es _____ cold and fades a -

Am7 C7sus F F Bb C7

row my love and _____ I. There is _____ a
 if I sink or _____ swim. I leaned my
 love prove false to _____ me. O love _____ is

Am7 C7sus Dm Bb
 way like morn - ing dew. And fades a -

Am7 C7sus F Bb F
 way like morn - ing dew.

“The Water is Wide”

Example 8.4

English Folk Song

♩ = 63

Intro (no chord) Am7 C7sus

The wa - ter is

F C7sus *don't sing* F F/E

wide _____ And nei - ther

don't sing **altered melody**

Dm Bbadd2 Gm7 C7sus C7 C7/Bb

have Give me a

don't sing

Am7 Cm7 F7 Bb Bb/A Gm7

boat _____ and both shall

Am7 C7sus F

row my love and _____ I.

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Learning to keep your voice healthy is an important part of your studies. If you take care of your instrument and follow common sense, you will stay healthy and sing well.

