

PST! **Practical Singing Techniques for All Ages**

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MA, Voice and Performance Pedagogy

Robin Tercero Montgomery holds a Master of Arts degree in Voice and Performance Pedagogy from Texas Woman's University where she studied with Joan Wall, a nationally recognized vocal pedagogue and former principal performer at the Metropolitan Opera. She received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from Southern Methodist University where she studied with modern classical music specialist Linda Anderson-Baer.

Among the roles Ms. Montgomery has performed are Adele ([Die Fledermaus](#)), Papagena ([The Magic Flute](#)), and Monica ([The Medium](#)). She has concertized at various venues including the Mendelssohn-Haus Musiksalon in Leipzig, Germany, the Seminari di Fine d'Estate in Mattinata, Italy, and The Modern Museum of Art in Fort Worth. Recently, she presented a recital and a masterclass at Southeastern State Oklahoma University. Other performances include soloist with the Texas MEA Region 2 choirs singing Haydn and Duruflé and with the Sherman Symphony singing excerpts from Mozart's [Le Nozze di Figaro](#).

She has taught voice lessons for over 25 years. More than 80 of her students have performed in a Texas All-State Choir. Her students have earned acceptance to study classical voice, contemporary commercial voice, music theatre, and theatre at various schools including Indiana University, Belmont, Southern Methodist University, University of North Texas, and Kansas State University. She coauthored [Music Appreciation: A Guide for the Active Listener](#) which was published in August 2019 and a second edition in August 2020.

What Warm-ups Really Work?

Transition from Speech to Song using Accessible Warm-ups

- **Ascending-Descending glides** using lip-trill, tongue trill, [u], [o], [i] before [a]
- **Messa di voce** using lip-trill first
- **Accents** (hills and valleys) with lip-trill
- **Lip Trill using Tongue Twisters such as alphabet sung on repeated pitch;** alternate text phrase with lip-trill phrase starting in a comfortable range
- **Patterns:** Major Key Patterns | Steps/Skips (major chords) | short phrases first in a comfortable range; practice chanting text of phrases in rhythm before singing; rhythmic breaths and healthy tone pitched slightly above general speaking range.

General Singing Ranges

- Students may have a more comfortable range within the General Singing Ranges (SR) below; listed by age group.
 - **5-11:** (A3) B3-F5 (A5)
 - **Treble Voices 11-Adult:** (G3) A3-A5 (B5)
 - **Tenor:** (D3) E3-G4 (A4)
 - **Bass:** (E2) F2-D4 (E4)
- Use Accessible exercises to explore singing range; regularly use warm-ups as a part of auditioned groups to determine range before placement in any chorus; evaluate students' range frequently and be flexible with their voice part assignment.

Tristan the Tenor

Charismatic 16 year-old: Vibrant Tone – SR: (A2) B2 to G4 (A4)

- Choir since 4th grade, no private lessons; January 2021: 14 virtual lessons, August 2021 in-person.
- Goal: 2nd in-person lesson – **Practice “Shenandoah”** (J. Althouse) assigned to him and two additional tenors (lighter voices) new to my studio.
- Repertoire: Sonntag (Brahms), Mi Sueño (arr. Kilenyi),
- **Performance in four days** for middle school tenor-bass choir.
- **One, 13-minute practice with me** and the Three Tenors.
- **Practical Singing Techniques**; “Shenandoah” – apply PST! to song.

Number Warm-ups with Tristan

**Accessible exercises: Conversational Tone to Choral/Classical Tone
(ca. 95 BPM)**

- **TEXT:** Rhythmic breaths; legato, progress healthily from speech to song.
- **SING:** Rhythmic breaths; [1-2-3-2-1] – SR: D3-F4; lip-trill as needed.
- **POSTURE:** Review Body Alignment; include shoulder/head rolls.
- **TEXT/SING:** Rhythmic Breaths; [5-4-3-2-1] – SR: A2-E4; rit. to 66 BPM.
- Focussed on **rhythmic breaths** and **unified tone** with good “**Singlish**” instead of conversational English—especially for the tenor with a lot of music theatre experience.
- **LIP TRILL GLIDE:** 66 BPM – 4 beat sniffs; 4-beat ascending/4-beat desc.

SHENANDOAH

pulsed [s] | lip-trill | [vo] | side steps to check beat/tempo



Musical score for the song "Shenandoah". The score is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of ♩ = 60. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "1. Oh, Shen-an - do', ___ I long to hear you A - way ___ your roll - in' riv - er. Oh, Shen-an - do', ___ I long to hear you. A - way, ___ I'm bound a - way 'cross the wide Mis-sou - ri."

RESOURCES

- **Class Voice Books:** Adventures in Singing (C. Ware); Sing! (P. Stout & J. Wall)
- **UIL/PML List:** Class Three
- **Online Resources:** MuseScore, Music for Music Teachers, Sheet Music Direct, Notability

Amari the Alto

Cheerful 12 year-old: Flute Tone – SR: (A3) B3 to E5 (F5)

- Choir since 6th grade, no private lessons; January 2022: 1st lesson
- Goal: Could not be in choir 7th grade, wants to join again in 8th grade without losing too much ground.
- Repertoire: Dance Song (Czech), A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes
- **Choir teacher will allow participation in S&E contest if enrolled in voice lessons;** plans to sing duet with a friend for the Spring recital.
- **Ten, 30-minute lessons before S&E contest;** supplement 8-16 measure melodies.
- **Practical Singing Techniques:** Use number warm-ups to establish lip-trill.

Number Warm-ups with Amari

Accessible exercises: Conversational Tone to Choral/Classical Tone (ca. 95 BPM)

- **TEXT:** Rhythmic breaths; legato, progress healthily from speech to song.
- **SING:** Rhythmic breaths; [1-2-3-2-1] – SR: D4-F5; lip-trill as needed.
- **BREATH:** Short, open breath, practically silent breath like the vowel [a]; use hand movements (“puppet hands”) that mimic the jaw dropping and abdominal Muscles releasing for rhythmic breaths.
- **TEXT/SING:** Rhythmic Breaths; [5-4-3-2-1] – SR: G3-F5
- Focussed on **rhythmic breaths** and **exploring range** as I listened to **articulation/pronunciation**—student sang with more conversational pronunciation and placement.
- **LIP TRILL:** After learning warm-ups, establish lip-trill and apply; [brrrm] can help.

Niño precioso

numbers and/or solfeggio/solfège | lip-trill | breath movements | latin vowels



1. Ni - ño___ pre - cio - so, Más qué el ar - mi - ño,



Ri - sue - ño___ ni - ño, Dios del a - mor;



Ni - ño___ pre - cio - so, Más qué el ar - mi - ño,



Ri - sue - ño___ ni - ño, Dios del a - mor; Duer - me, chi - qui -

Baratunde the Bass

Clever 14 year-old: Smooth Tone – SR: (G2) A3 to B4 (C4)

- Choir one semester, no private lessons; January 2024: 1st lesson
- **Goal: Advance to JV Mixed Choir** – includes The Star-Spangled Banner (Bass part) and Sight Singing for a panel of three judges.
- Repertoire: The Song of the Flea (There Was a Mighty Monarch - Beethoven)
- Audition: **Skye Boat Song in F; practice in G** to prepare to sing D4 in songs.
- **Practical Singing Techniques:** Use number warm-ups to improve directional singing and intonation, Apply PST!

Number Warm-ups with Baratunde

**Accessible exercises: Improve Sight Singing with Good Choral/Classical Tone
(ca. 95 BPM)**

- **SING:** Rhythmic breaths; [1-2-3-2-1] – SR: G2-F4; transition to lip-trill always needed on highest pitches.
- **DICTION:** Initial [w] sound for the word “one” and English [r] in “three” was under pitch; improve “three” by alternating removing the [r] (“thee” as in “think”) in one phrase with “three” for the next phrase throughout the exercise.
- **TEXT/SING:** Rhythmic Breaths; [5-4-3-2-1] – SR: E2-F5 (if falsetto is healthy)
- Focussed on **rhythmic breaths** and **exploring range** as I listened to **intonation** and **articulation/pronunciation**—especially tuning consonants and semi-vowels.
- **LIP TRILL:** Start exercises octave higher to find falsetto...eventually.

Skye Boat Song

numbers | solfeggio/solfège | lip-trill | breath movements | diction

5

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone. Say, could that lad be I? _____

13

Mer - ry of soul, he sailed on a day o - ver the sea to Skye. _____ Fine

21

Give me a - gain all that was there, give me the sun that shone. _____

Saskia the Soprano

Bright 17 year-old: Flexible Tone – SR: (A3) B3 to A5 (B5)

- Choir since 4th grade, private lessons since 7th grade; Aug 2020, 32 virtual lessons.
- Spring 2024: 93rd in-person lesson – **Practice “Vieni, vieni o mio diletto** (A. Vivaldi) for college-prep repertoire list (music education).
- Goal: More **consistent clarity, freedom, vibrancy** from middle voice to above staff; **memorized by the third lesson after assignment date.**
- Repertoire: Star Vicino (att. Rosa); Le charme (Chausson); O del mio amato ben (Donaudy); Can You Feel the Love Tonight, My Funny Valentine.
- **Practical Singing Techniques:** Use PST! to review comments from S&E contest judge while reviewing foundational techniques to apply to “Vieni.”

Number Warm-ups with Saskia

Accessible exercises: Shorter Breaths before Higher Pitches (ca. 95 BPM)

- **BREATH:** Short/punctuated, open breath; practically silent breath like the vowel [a].
- **SING:** Rhythmic, intentional preparing for high note; Sing [3] first; [1-2-3-2-1] – SR: D4-F5; use lip trill as needed.
- **tone:** Open/relaxed throat with vibrancy; lip-trill - “Double Bubble”/“trumpet lips”; lead to brighter tone quality in lip trill such as the vowel in the word “bien.” “Bien” can be used as a neutral syllable.
- **SING:** Rhythmic Breaths; [5-4-3-2-1] – SR: G3-F5; no rit.
- Focussed on **kinesthetic memory** of **well supported/open throat high notes** to transfer to **breath** with **yawn-sigh sensation**; use other references as necessary. Singing is an infinite loop from breath to song and back again.

Vieni, vieni o mio diletto

lip-trill | lip-trill to [o] | [vi] & [vu] neutral syllables

4

Vie - ni, vie - ni, o ___ mio di - let - to, che ___ il mio cor ___

tut - to af-fet - to già t'a - spet-ta e o-gnor ti chia - ma. Vie - ni, vie - ni,

RESOURCES

- Notability: Online notation application; can export as an mp3 with metronome; coaching recordings - use a different instrument sound for vocal part to distinguish from piano part.
- **PlayScore2**: MIDI, Music XML; No mp3 export, but accurate with a clear PDF and the instruments often sound better than other applications.
- Newzik: Transpose Live Scores with limits; many features.

What are Practical Singing Techniques?

Accessible Exercises to Build Foundational Technique

- **Choral warm-ups can seem intimidating**—start with easy text, short phrases/comfortable range; widen ranges with more advanced phrasing at your discretion.
- **Foundational Technique:** Balanced Body Alignment, Rhythmic Breaths, Supported/Healthy Tone (open throat), Clearly Articulated/Pronounced Text, Dynamics/Musicality
- **Body Alignment:** Adjust alignment from feet through knees, back, shoulders, etc.
- **Breaths:** Movements for Short vs. Long breaths; students learn movement to physically connect to the rhythmic breath
- **Tone:** Lip-Trills for glides, messa di voce, accents, songs—even for speaking or prosody (semi-occluded vocals tract)
- **Diction:** Tongue-twisters while listening for tension and tuning—[l] and [r] for example.
- Frequent use of **Alternating Practice:** Phrase singing text then phrase singing lip-trill for example.

Number Warm-ups

- **My six Number Warm-ups** last between 37 seconds to 1:15 per warm-up. Students practice to my recorded tracks.
- My Number Warm-ups—including selected sustained pitches to encourage support for long notes—are **foundational to explore good technique, musicianship, and artistry at any time.**
- **Underlined numbers are sustained tones** in 4/4 with one beat to breathe before every phrase—including the first phrase. The singing suggestions can work for all variations.
 - [1-2-3-2-1] – Sing on solfeggio syllables.
 - [5-4-3-2-1] – Sing neutral syllables
 - [1-2-3-2-1] – Sing staccato
 - [5-4-3-2-1] – Alternate phrases singing piano and mezzo forte dynamics
 - [1-2-3-2-1] – Gradually bend knees while singing [1-2], stay bended on [3], then rise gradually [2-1]
 - [5-4-3-2-1] – Alternate phrases singing joyfully and sweetly to connect to artistry.

Additional Resources

- **Excellence in Singing:** Multilevel Learning and Multilevel Teaching (R. Caldwell & J. Wall)
- **Semi-Occluded Vocal Tract Exercises with Dr. Ingo Titze**, New York Singing Teacher's Association (NYTSA: <https://nyst.org/event-video/semi-occluded-vocal-tract-exercises-with-dr-ingo-titze/>)
- **The Choral Warm-up Collection** (ed. Sally K. Albrecht)
- **Jerry Silverman Books from Mel Bay Publishing:** Italian Songs & Arias, Songs of Latin America; many songs are folk songs; chord charts included.

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