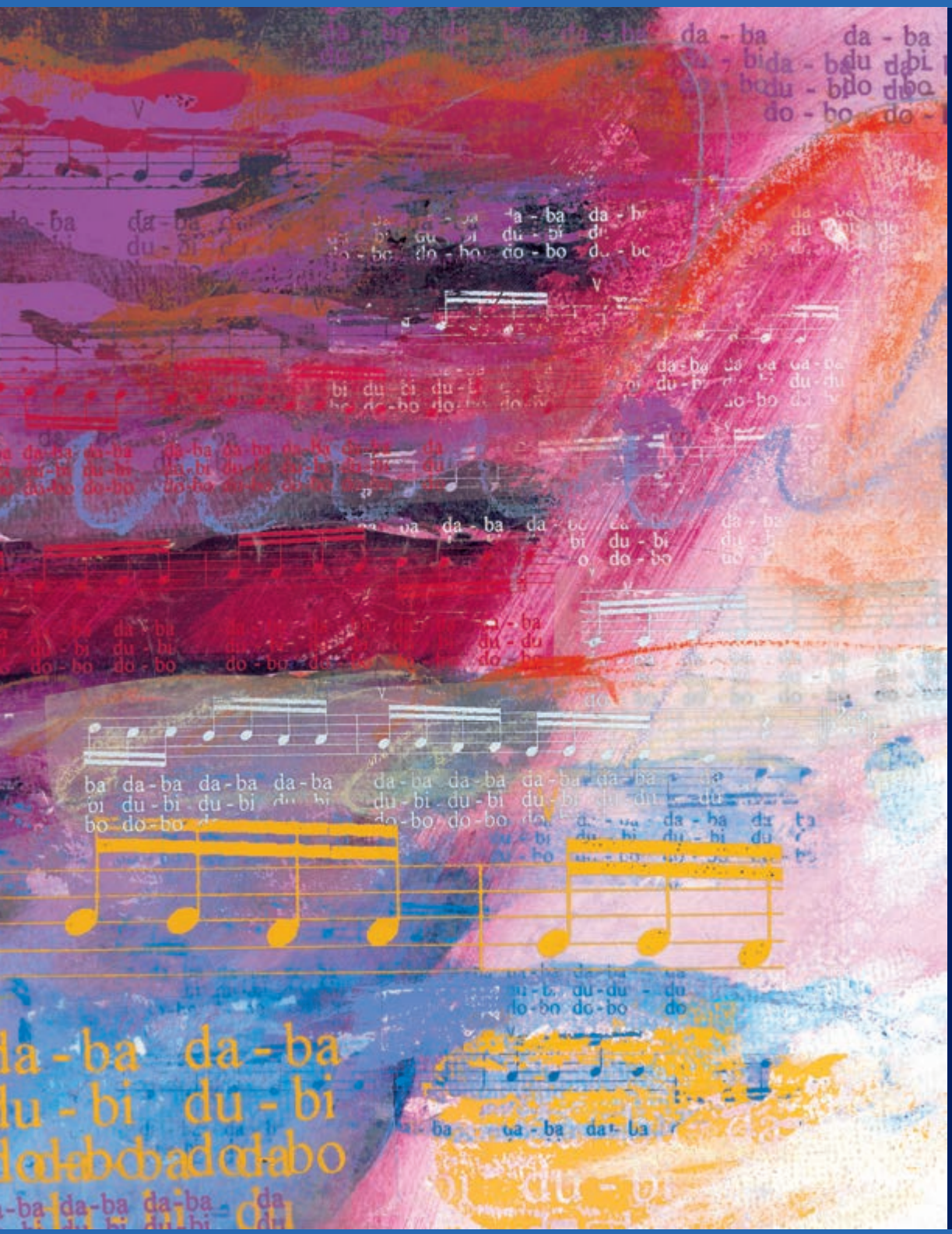
Vocals

Klaus Heizmann

Vocal Warm-ups



200 Exercises for Choral and Solo Singers

ED 9564

SCHOTT

Klaus Heizmann

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200 Exercises for Choral and Solo Singers

With an introduction by
Simon Carrington

ED 9564

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Introduction

When I retired from The King's Singers after my 25-year career, I had probably never sung a proper vocal warm-up in my life! Our idea in those days was to turn up for rehearsals or concerts having warmed up thoroughly on our own. As a teacher, it did not take me long to learn that this is wishful thinking. After ten years of teaching choirs, I have now used almost every warm-up technique known to man or woman!

Klaus Heizmann's collection is a wonderful new resource of ideas and techniques: practical, varied, challenging, relaxing and stimulating. I am always looking for new ideas, as I like to use a different set of warm-ups at every rehearsal with my choirs, and I tend to choose specific exercises to suit the repertoire for the day.

This collection gives us 200 excellent "tools-of the-trade"; they are clearly labeled, intelligently set out, well-designed and extremely useful. I can't wait for the new semester so that we can get to work stretching ourselves in all these new directions, physically, mentally and vocally.



Simon Carrington

Director of Choral Activities, New England Conservatory since 2001
Director of Choral Activities, The University of Kansas 1994-2001
Founder and co-director of The King's Singers 1968-1993

Preface

A chorus does not produce a balanced, homogeneous and natural sound automatically. It must learn to create this sound and develop an ear for it through targeted exercises. The purpose of choral voice training is not to provide singers with artistic singing instruction, but merely to give them the "tools" they need for fruitful collaboration in a chorus.

Fortunately, the importance of choral voice training has received increased recognition over the last few years. This publication is intended to provide chorus directors with a host of exercises to choose from. I collected them on the numerous trips I have taken to visit professional and amateur choruses in Germany and abroad. All chorus directors I consulted concerning this project had one thing in common: they were constantly in search of new and interesting warm-up exercises, because singing the same ones year in and year out results in lack of concentration and boredom. Consequently, I hope that these warm-up exercises can breathe some life back into chorus practice and make the singers curious about what their director will come up with for warming up at the next rehearsal.

The importance of these warm-up exercises must repeatedly be explained to singers. They are just as important as the warm-ups an athlete does before training or competition. Even if some individuals do not notice any great progress in the beginning, the small improvements each singer makes will considerably enhance the sound of the chorus as a whole. Signs of fatigue will become less frequent and the volume and sound of the chorus will gain intensity, homogeneity and versatility. Moreover, the voice will become stronger, smoother and more resilient. It is also important for a chorus director to work intensely on his own voice, experimenting with all of the suggested exercises several times himself first and using only those exercises he feels comfortable with when appearing in front of the chorus.

Because this book is also to be marketed internationally, conventional international notation is used: eighth-note beams instead of flags. The small guide notes that appear at the end of each warm-up exercise indicate how high and low the exercise should be sung. However, they are only suggestions and can be raised or lowered as needed. Similarly, all of the dynamic symbols are merely intended to provide guidelines and are not binding instructions.

The objectives of the warm-up exercises overlap in numerous instances. For example, an exercise for vowel modification is also good training for expanding vocal range or dynamics. Some of the exercises will inspire children's choruses to sing with great enthusiasm (e.g. 7.22), while eliciting only a tired grin from adults. Therefore, you should select the right combination of exercises for your special needs from this veritable treasure chest of experience collected from numerous choruses and soloists.

The human voice is the most sensitive and delicate of all instruments. Only with careful and responsible use over the years can it be kept healthy and strong. Choral voice training and these warm-up exercises can make a valuable and long-lasting contribution to achieving this goal.

Wiesbaden, Germany



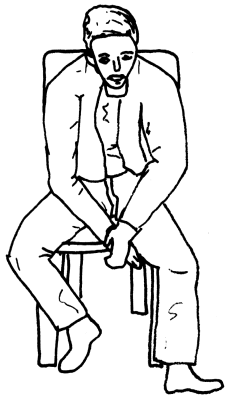
Klaus Heizmann

Singing is the foundation of all music.
He who aims to compose must sing in his compositions.
He who plays instruments must be a master of song.
Thus, young people must be given thorough instruction in singing!

Georg Philipp Telemann
1681 – 1767

1. Physical warm-up exercises

After a long day at work or school, chorus members often come to practice tired. Some are tense, others feel exhausted.



The "posture" of some chorus singers

For this reason, warm-ups or voice training should always start with several relaxation exercises in order to prepare the chorus for singing and rehearsal.
The following exercises are intended to make singers aware of how damaging bad posture can be (see figure above) and demonstrate the posture that should be maintained when singing.
Although some singers might consider it childish to perform physical exercises, do not let this compromise your plans as chorus director. During my travels in countries outside Central Europe, I have often been surprised by the joyful and enthusiastic way physical exercises are performed at chorus rehearsals. We, more subdued, Central Europeans – particularly the older singers – have difficulty feeling natural and uninhibited during such exercises. Explain to your chorus that these exercises have the following goals, so that they will gradually come to understand how rewarding it is to participate:

- To create a cheerful atmosphere
- To loosen up and relax the entire body
- To promote body awareness
- To promote a feeling of well-being
- To increase awareness of diaphragmatic action and the breathing process
- To activate the resonance capacity of the body
- To illustrate the fact that music and motion belong together

Physical exercises should be performed in a relaxed atmosphere. The practice room should be well-ventilated, because having plenty of oxygen is important.

Basic position:

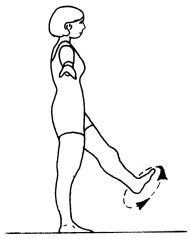
- Stand up straight with feet comfortably apart and firmly on the ground (see page 12)
- Let your arms hang loose at your sides
- Keep your back straight

Use images to describe the following exercises so that singers understand them properly. The instructions should be concise and illustrative.

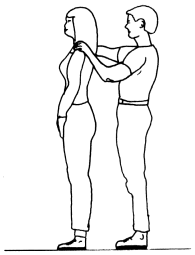
Exercise 1 You are picking apples from a tree and placing them in a basket in front of you. Some of the apples are so high that you can only reach them by standing up on your toes and reaching as high as possible.
Or:You are lifting bricks onto scaffolding.
You are hanging curtains.



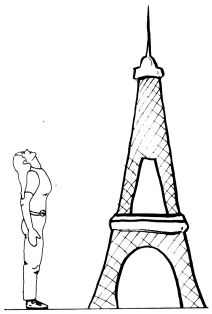
Exercise 2 Stand on one leg, lift the other leg slightly and rotate your foot: first to the right a few times, then to the left. Switch legs and repeat.



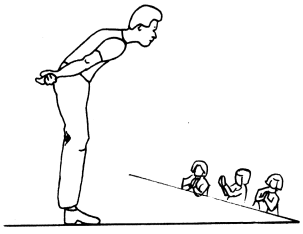
Exercise 3 The singers massage each others backs and shoulders. Not too firmly!



Exercise 4 You are standing in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris watching the elevator move slowly from the ground floor up to the top platform. After a brief pause, follow it back down again.



Exercise 5 You are on an opera stage receiving a round of applause from the audience. Take a deep bow, making sure your knees are slightly bent. Then stand up straight again to acknowledge the applause from the upper balconies. Your hands should be clasped behind your back.



Exercise 6 Lift your left shoulder up to your ear and hold the position briefly. Then let your arm and shoulder drop as if they were made of lead. Repeat with the right side. Breathe normally during this exercise, not in time with the raising and lowering of your shoulders.



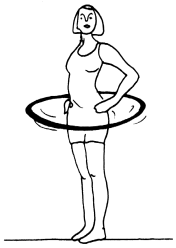
Exercise 7 Slowly lower your head onto your right shoulder and hold the position briefly. Then swing it in a semicircle over your chest to the left shoulder, hold the position briefly and then return. Repeat about ten times.



Exercise 8 You are standing at the edge of a swimming pool in starting position for diving in. Your knees should be straight and whoever wants to can touch the floor or their toes with their hands.



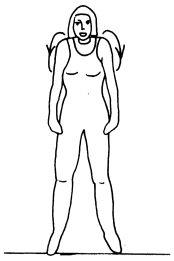
Exercise 9 You are swinging an imaginary hula hoop around your hips. Both hands should be on the hips, the feet in fixed position.



Exercise 10 Stand like a stork. Bend your right leg and raise it as high as possible up to your stomach. Repeat four times and then switch legs.



Exercise 11 Lift both shoulders and then let them drop loosely. Repeat about five times. Continue by rotating the left shoulder a few times and then the right. Finish by rotating both shoulders.



Exercise 12 This exercise should be part of every warm-up session. Have everyone yawn heartily and stretch all over. Then have them sigh several times from the highest to the lowest note. Shake out the arms.

