

Breath Management - Shenandoah

Big Idea:

Music is a process that relies on the interplay of the senses.

Objective:

Given a demonstration and modelling of the four phases of breath action (inhalation, turnaround, exhalation and recovery), and guided practice of breath management exercises, the student will demonstrate the ability to use proper breath management to sustain a legato line of a musical phrase, as assessed by the teacher in a solo performance where the student will demonstrate proper inhalation, turnaround, exhalation and recovery in at least four of the five musical phrases in the first verse of the folk song, “Shenandoah”. (S/NS)

Equipment & Resources:

- Teacher will need a piano/keyboard to lead warm ups
- Projector & speakers to listen to/watch Youtube recording of “Shenandoah”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NmKp5A8i3M>
- Vocal warm-ups sheet
- Score for “Shenandoah” arr. by Rawson (Choral Public Domain Library)
<http://music.rawson.me.uk/catalogue/choral/freescores/shenandoah.pdf>
- Sharpened pencil to make score notes
- Chair with no arms, suitable for singing

Methodology:

AS Students (Ss.) listen to a recording of “Shenandoah”. Teacher asks them to listen for where the singer breathes.

I Teacher (T.) explains that this class will include reviewing the four phases of breath action (inhalation, turnaround, exhalation and recovery) by going through a couple breath management exercises together, and then applying this technique to the first verse of the American folk song, “Shenandoah”, which they just heard in the recording. T. also explains the importance of understanding music as a process that is made up of the interplay of the senses, which we will experience throughout today’s lesson.

M T. demonstrates/reviews the first phase of breath action: inhalation.

GP T. helps Ss. to establish this for themselves. Ss. will place their hands around their stomach in order to feel the expansion of their breath. T. monitors for correctness.

M T. explains that the second phase will happen just as the diaphragm has reached its lowest point and the abdominals begin to resist it. Once this phase occurs, our instrument (voice) is ready to sing! This is one example of the interplay of the senses at work during breath action.

M T. further demonstrates the third and fourth phase, exhalation and recovery, by inhaling and then singing the “Brr” lip trill exercise on the warm-up sheet. T. then allows lungs to fill back up with air at the end of the exercise (like a bucket filling up with water in the ocean).

GP T. checks for students’ understanding by having them do the lip trill exercise. T. looks to see that students are able to do the entire exercise in one breath and feel their lungs filling up at the end. May need to repeat the exercise a few times to ensure Ss. are demonstrating/feeling all four phases properly.

M T. demonstrates the second warm up activity, “Laughing is Contagious”.

IP Ss. are given time to practice this exercise in pairs. One partner will sing the exercise while the other student checks to see that all four phases are being modelled correctly. T. monitors progress and offers suggestions as needed.

M T. demonstrates the first verse of “Shenandoah” (mm. 2-12), and explains where the four phases of breath action are happening in this piece (i.e., taking a breath during the rests).

IP Ss. are directed to practice the first verse independently, ensuring that all four phases of breath action are being implemented properly and efficiently. T. monitors progress and offers suggestions as needed.

FA One at a time, Ss. are asked to sing the first verse of “Shenandoah” (mm. 2-12) acapella, demonstrating proper inhalation, turnaround, exhalation and recovery in at least four of the five musical phrases. Grading of student accomplishment of the instructional objective of this lesson is done on a Satisfactor/Non Satisfactory basis.

C Ss. are congratulated on their efforts and progress, given suggestions of what aspects of breath management they may need to continue working on, and feedback on what they did well. Class concludes by answering any lingering questions students may have. Ss. are encouraged to look at the rest of their part before the next class, as they will continue to learn the entire piece.

Warm Up Exercises

Laughing is con - ta - geous and is ad - van - ta - geous ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha
Increase by one measure with each key change

Brr _____
Alternate Ending