

Source: Phillips, *TKTS*, pp.10-11.

Source:

Phillips, Kenneth. *Teaching Kids to Sing (TKTS)*, 2nd ed. U.S.: Schirmer CENGAGE Learning, 2014.

The Art of Choral Techniques

In-class Review of *Teaching Kids to Sing*: **Chapter 1- Vocal Pedagogy for Young Singers**

Singing:



“Means” and “Ends”

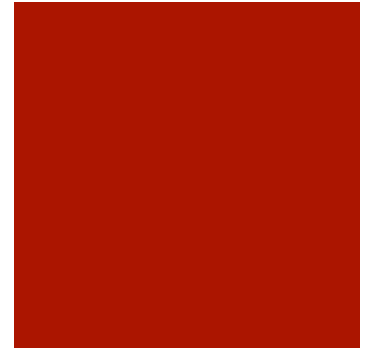
- Singing is an expressive means of communication that transcends both spoken and written words [*“ineffable” is the best way to state it!*].
- Expression is uniquely human and binds humanity together as a people and as a world of cultures.
- Considerable pleasure is derived from it; it is an end in itself and a means to many ends. [*From our philosophy discussion: remember “means” vs. “ends.”*]
- It is a learned behavior.
- It is not a “tin ear,” but rather a lack of psychomotor coordination that keeps many children from finding their voices.

Philosophical and Historical Perspective

- Private Instruction vs. Group Lessons
- Employ a program of systematic vocal instruction
- Protect children and adolescent voices from extended use.
Endurance is key – young voices must be protected from long periods of singing.
- Healthy singing is one of the primary goals of systematic vocal instruction.



Why Sing?



- Benefits include personal, social, and educational outcomes. See list on pp. 4-5.
- Of course, my favorite is: Singing develops the **aesthetic response**: it cultivates appreciation for the intrinsic value of art and the creative achievements of humanity.
- The first of the National Standards states that all children should be able to sing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.



Systematic Vocal Instruction vs. The Song Approach

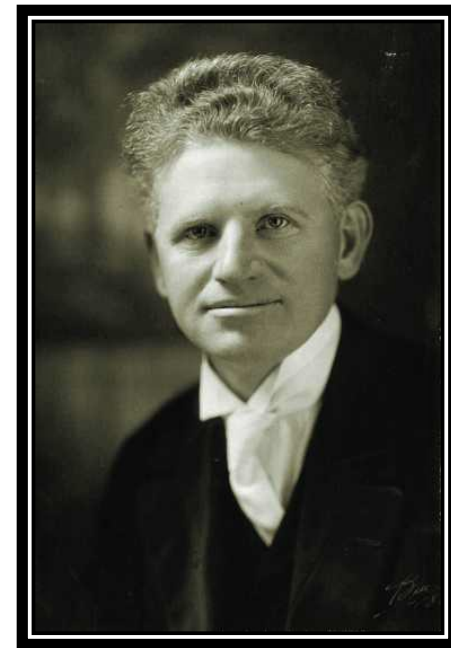
- For almost 100 years (1830s to 1930s) singing was taught using system based on the **Italian *bel canto* method**.
 - Voice developed through exercises and as technique was learned, song literature was introduced.
 - Possible problem: too many exercises, not enough songs.
- Gradually teachers moved away from this to an approach that dominated the 20th century from the 1930s on: the **song approach**.





The Song Approach

- Primary emphasis on songs; secondary emphasis on technique.
- Neglected technical areas of vocal quality, registers, breath management, dynamic levels, duration, and range; the mastery of singing was not presented as a developmental skill.
- A cappella choir movement, based upon model of F. Melius Christiansen, was gaining popularity at the same time. Emphasis was on performance and a limited repertoire produced to polished perfection.



F. Melius Christiansen,
Founder/Director of the
St. Olaf College Choir

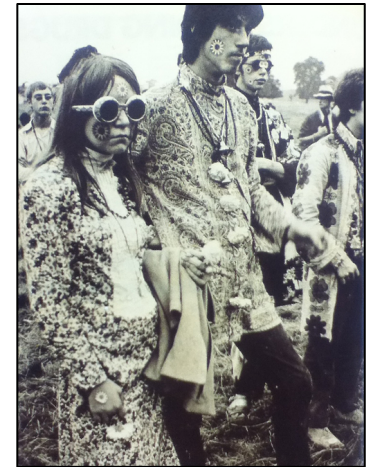
Sputnik (1957) Inspires Curriculum Reform



- The 1957 Sputnik launch shocked America out of a false sense of security regarding its technological edge and educational system.
- Woods Hold Conference (1959) and Yale Seminar (1963), mostly devoid of music educators, led to calls for complete restructuring of American education, including the music curriculum.
- Same period, other approaches were becoming popular in the U.S.: Hungarian **Zoltan Kodály** inspired method of vocal music literacy; German **Carl Orff** pioneered an approach that emphasized child-suitable instruments; Swiss educator **Emile Jacques-Dalcroze** inspired curriculum involving movement as a mode of music learning.

The Lost Generation

- Voice instruction was not a major part of the new music curricula that appeared in the 1960s.
- Song approach considered form of instruction; some educators even warned against it.
- “The tradition of child vocal training in the U.S., which was rooted in the boy choirs, community children’s choirs, and early public school music programs, was mostly lost to a generation of vocal music educators in the second half of the 20th century, and music education suffered for it.”
- Fortunately, systematic vocal instruction for children and adolescents began to reappear in the 1980s. *[The pendulum always swings back!]*



The Roots of Systematic Vocal Instruction

- Began with the early “Singing School” movement in the 18th century. Itinerant singing masters taught the rudiments of music to both children and adults.
- William Billings (1746-1800) was perhaps the most famous “singing master.” He trained as a tanner and was mostly self-taught as a musician. He had an unusual appearance and a strong addiction to snuff. A contemporary wrote that Billings “was a singular man, of moderate size, short of one leg, with one eye, without any address & with an uncommon negligence of person.” He died in poverty in Boston in September 1800, leaving behind a widow and six children.



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- Here the original version of the canon, *Wake Ev'ry Breath*, as published on p. 1 of Billings' *The New-England Psalm-Singer* (1770). Engraved in circular form by Paul Revere.



THE

Continental Harmony,

CONTAINING,
A Number of ANTHEMS, FUGES, and CHORUSSES, in several PARTS.
NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

COMPOSED BY WILLIAM BILLINGS,
AUTHOR of various MUSIC BOOKS.

Psal. lxxxvii. 7. As well the Singers as the Players on instruments shall be there.
Psal. lxxviii. 25. The Singers went before, the Players on instruments followed after, amongst them were the Damfels.
Luke xix. 40. I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.
Rev. xix. 5. And again they said Alleluia.

Come let us sing unto the Lord,
And praise his name with one accord,
In this design one chorus raise;

From east to west his praise proclaim,
From pole to pole extol his fame,
The sky shall echo back his praise.

Published according to Act of Congress.

PRINTED D, Typographically, at BOSTON,
BY ISAIAH THOMAS and EBENEZER T. ANDREWS.

Sold at their Bookstore, No. 45, Newbury Street; by said THOMAS in WORCESTER; and by the BOOKSELLERS in BOSTON, and elsewhere.—1794.

Musical Characters.

Semibreve. Minum. Crotchet. Quaver. Somiquaver. Demisemiquaver. Semibreve refl. Minum refl. Crotchet refl. Quaver refl. Semiquaver refl.

Demisemiquaver refl. Point of Addition. F Cliff. G Cliff. C Cliff. A Flat. A Sharp. A Repeat. Slur. A bar. Direct. Natural.

Mark of Distinction. Clof. Adagio. Largo. Allegro. 2 from 4. 6 to 4. 6 from 8. 3 to 2. 3 from 4. 3 from 8.

Syncope. Example 1st. The fame. Example 2d. Syncopation, Exam. 3d.

The fame. The fame another way. Syncope, Example 4th. Example 5th.

The fame. Example 6th. Example 7th.

The fame. The fame.

To the several TEACHERS of MUSIC, in this and the adjacent States.

My BRETHREN,
I HAVE drawn up the rules of practical music, as concise as the nature of the thing would admit, and have inserted them in course, as they should be taught; I recommend it to you to teach after the manner they are inserted; it being the best method I have yet found, from long experience.

THE G A M U T.

LESSON I. FOR TENOR OR TREBLE.		FOR COUNTER.		FOR BASS.	
G	fol.	A	la.	C	fa.
F	fa.	G	fol.	B	mi.
E	la.	F	fa.	A	la.
D	fol.	E	la.	G	fol.
C	fa.	D	fol.	F	fa.
B	mi.	C	fa.	E	la.
A	la.	B	mi.	D	fol.
G	fol.	A	la.	C	fa.
F	fa.	G	fol.	B	mi.
E	la.	F	fa.	A	la.
D	fol.	E	la.	G	fol.
				F	fa.

Observe, that from E to F, and from B to C, are half notes ascending, and from F to E, and from C to B, descending; so that an octave consists of five whole, and two half notes. Likewise be very careful to make a proper distinction between the sound of B mi, and C fa; for many singers, who have not curious ears, are apt to strike B mi, as high as C fa, in sharp keyed tunes, which ruins the composition.

LESSON II. ON TRANSPOSITION.

The natural place for mi is in B; but if B be flat, mi is in E; if B and E be flat mi is in A; if B E and A be flat, mi is in D; if B E A and D be flat, mi is in G. If F be sharp, mi is in F; if F and C be sharp, mi is in C; if

A COMMENTARY on the preceding RULES ; by way of DIALOGUE, between MASTER
and SCHOLAR.

Scholar. SIR, I have for some time past been wishing for a favourable opportunity to be better instructed by you ; I have read over your rules, and although I think that they are very explicit, yet I confess I am not so well versed in the fundamental parts of music as I wish to be ; therefore (if it be not intruding too far upon your patience) I should be very glad to ask you some questions, and I doubt not but your answers will be gratefully accepted by many of your attentive readers, and in a particular manner by your inquisitive Pupil.

Master. It gives me great pleasure to see you so desirous of being better informed, and I can truly say, I never am happier than when I am communicating happiness to others ; you may be assured your proposal is so far from being an intrusion, that it gives me great satisfaction ; therefore, without any more preface, you may ask as many questions as you please, and I will endeavour to answer them as plainly and judiciously as I possibly can.

Scholar. Sir, I thank you, and as I have your approbation, I will begin with the gamut, and so go on, in the order in which you have laid the rules down, for I think I have something to ask upon almost every chapter.

Master. I like your method of beginning, and as we have agreed upon the *manner*, let us come to the *matter* in hand without any further ceremony.

Scholar. Sir, I should be glad to know how long the Gamut has been invented, and who was the first inventor ?

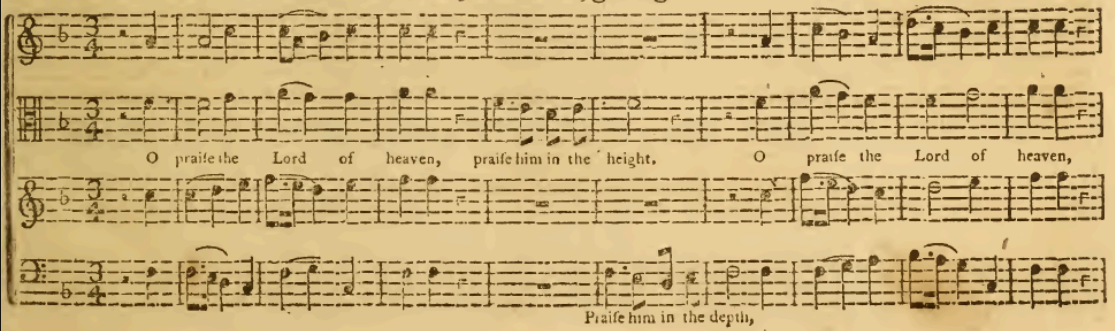
Master. The first invention is attributed to several Grecians ; but the form in which the scale now stands, is said to have been projected between 7 and 800 years ago, by *Guido Arctinus*, a Monk ; whose name deserves to be recorded in the annals of fame, in capitals of gold : and here I think it worthy of remark, that though this invention of *Guido's* can never be sufficiently admired, yet it appears from history, that he did not see its extensive use in composition ; and as it is said the letters of the alphabet (by which are expressed all words in nature) were handed down to *Moses*, the great Lawgiver of Israel, by God himself, I think we may with equal propriety say, that it is probable that *Guido* was inspired with this invention ; by Him, who is the Author of harmony itself.

Scholar.

T H E

CONTINENTAL HARMONY, &c.

:S: *An Anthem, for Thanksgiving.* Psalm 148.



O praise the Lord of heaven, praise him in the height, O praise the Lord of heaven,
Praise him in the depth,

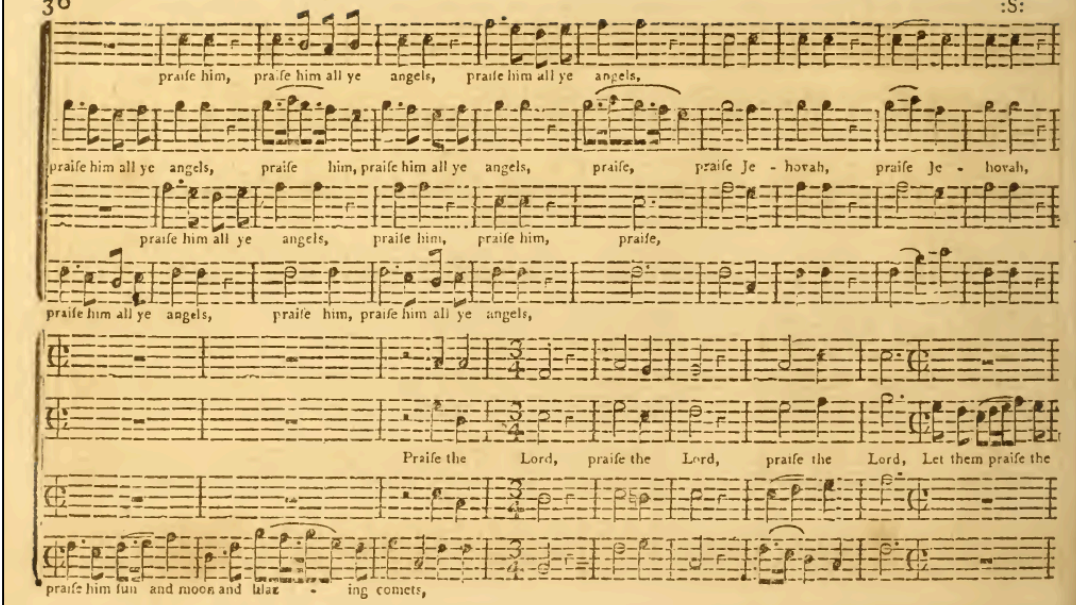


Listening.

Billings: *An Anthem for Thanksgiving* (Ps. 148).
Performed by University of Colorado Boulder
University Choir, Fall 2012.
Dr. Jeffrey S. Gemmell, conductor

:S:

36



praise him, praise him all ye angels, praise him all ye angels,
praise him all ye angels, praise him, praise him all ye angels, praise, praise Je - hovah, praise Je - hovah,
praise him all ye angels, praise him, praise him, praise,
praise him all ye angels, praise him, praise him all ye angels,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let them praise the
praise him sun and moon and waxing comets,

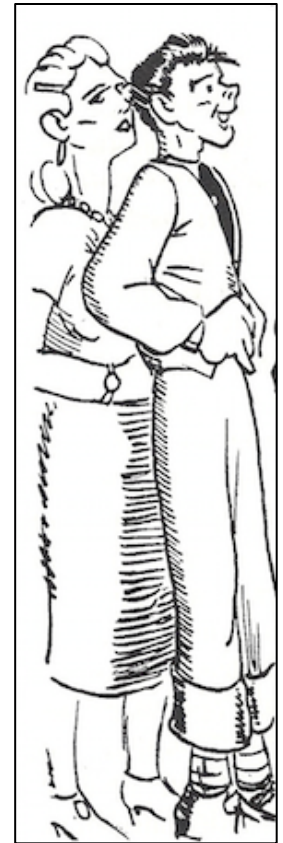
Lowell Mason (1792-1872)

- America's first public school music teacher was an advocate of systematic vocal instruction for children.
- Considered the “father of singing among children.”
- Responsible for the first formal inclusion of music in the Boston public schools in 1838.
- Helped to form the Boston Academy of Music in 1832.

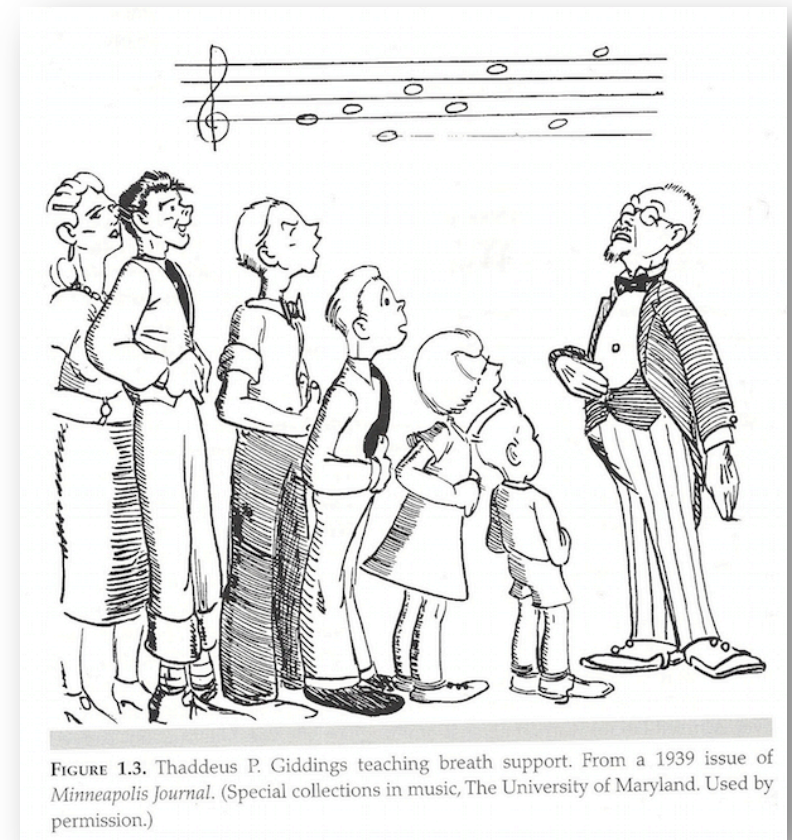
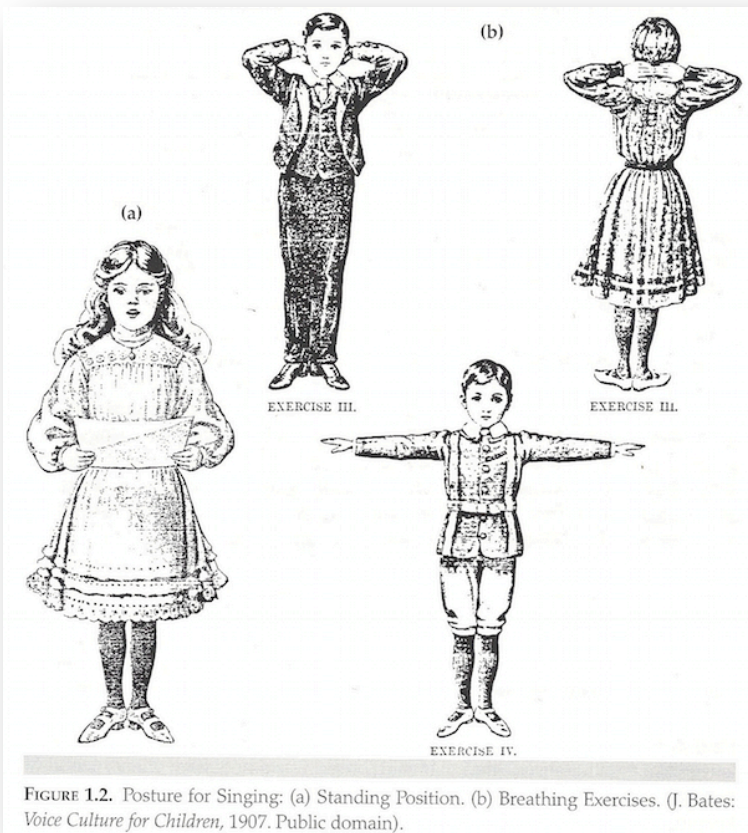


Late 19th- and Early 20th- Century Writers

- Numerous authors following Mason advocated systematic singing instruction, especially in the late 19th- and early 20th-century, where instruction stressed singing as a learned behavior.
- Warned against “collarbone” breathing; recommended “midriff” or “rib” breathing. Some, based on English choirboy system, recommended that children only sing at soft dynamics and only in head register.
- Approach remained strong until the 1930s.
- Also much emphasis on learning to read music using moveable-do system.



Notice Similarities to Today's Strategies!



Source: Phillips, *TKTS*, pp. 10-11.

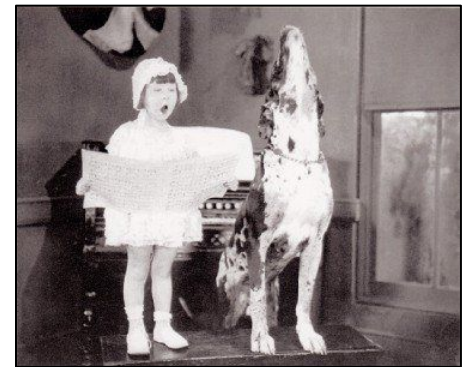


A Misguided Philosophy

- By the 1930s, many music educators, swayed by the philosophical writings of John Dewey on aesthetic education, turned against formal vocal instruction in the classroom.
- In general, there was a movement away from Pestalozzianism, with stress on instructional side of teaching (skill/drill), to a more creative/expressive focus and the need for children to experience “real” music – more songs with charm and beauty.
- Pendulum swung from systematic approach to a more creative one centered on “song for art’s sake.” Phillips writes: “This shift in attitude toward singing instruction was perhaps the most misguided effort ever to influence the teaching of music.”
- I couldn’t disagree more with this latter statement. Please read the article on my blog, “Is Bennett Reimer’s MEAE Philosophy Dead,” for my opinion. Things don’t have to be quite so black-and-white as this author assumes; there is room (and a necessity) for coexistence of systematic vocal instruction AND the aesthetic approach.

Advocates of Systematic Vocal Instruction in the 1930s

- Some believed that children acquired good habits more easily and quickly than adults; all children could be taught the essentials of deep breathing.
- Singing as both art and science. “There is no doubt that the actual singing of songs should be the artistic side of singing. However, when a singer is unable to meet the demands that the literature for his particular voice calls for, then he must call on science for the development of a physical skill that will meet those demands.”



Another Balanced Approach of the 1930s

- Some authors in the mid-1930s recommended devoting one minute to proper breathing exercises at the beginning of each music period.
- Emphasized exercises in the form of games, e.g., smelling a flower, mooing like a cow, or buzzing like a bee.
- They believed the best way to teach breathing for singing was through the emotional meaning of the lyrics and proper phrasing.
- This was an approach that embraced BOTH vocal exercises and the song approach. [Yea!!]



The Reemergence of Systematic Vocal Instruction

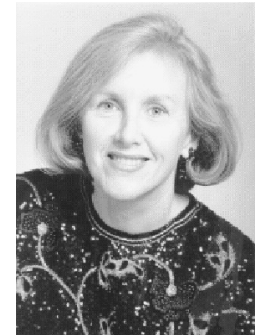
- Children's choir movement among main-line churches never abandoned systematic vocal instruction for children.
- Helen Kemp: "Singing is a learned behavior."
- 1980s reemergence of systematic vocal instruction influenced by:
 - Growing interest by ACDA
 - Series of influential publications and choral series
 - Growing body of research on effects of systematic vocal instruction



Helen Kemp

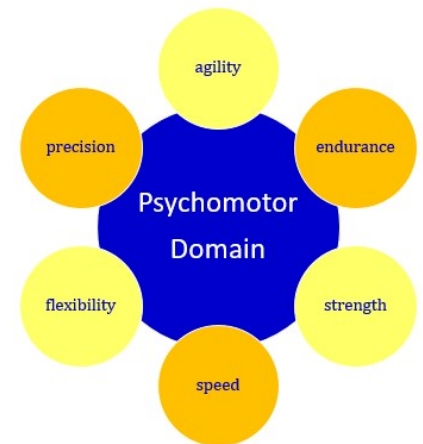
Three Women Led the Charge

- **Jean Ashworth Bartle** (former director of Toronto Children's Choir)
- **Mary Goetze** (former director of Indiana University Children's Choir)
- **Doreen Rao** (former director of Glen Ellyn Children's Choir (Illinois); received Ph.D. from Northwestern University, where she studied with Bennett Reimer!)
- It was mainly through their work with ACDA and MENC, the appearance of their choirs at these conferences, and their publications of high-quality repertoire that inspired [educated] the field regarding the artistic possibilities of children's choirs!



A Psychomotor Skill

- Singing is a psychomotor skill requiring systematic vocal instruction.
- Physiological understanding of voice production greatly aids in teaching of singing.
- Five component parts of Phillips' method include:
 - Respiration
 - Phonation
 - Resonant Tone Production
 - Diction Expression
- Current book streamlines method to be used in general music setting "to move more quickly to the goal of all singing instruction: the singing of songs!"



When, Who and How Long?

- Systematic vocal instruction should begin about age 8 (second grade), preferably in a group setting
- Important that this instruction consume no more than 5 to 6 minutes of a 30-minute elementary music class. Up to 10 minutes is acceptable in classes lasting 45 minutes. High school level: c. 10% of choral rehearsal time is adequate.
- At no time should the entire class be given to systematic vocal instruction. The goal is to make music!



The Select Choir

- Careful of dangers: can foster elitist attitudes; children may be told to only be “listeners” or to not sing at all
- Select choirs do have a place, but not if these provide the only opportunity for children to experience the choral ensemble. Provide a place for ALL children to experience the joy of GROUP singing.
- All children should have an equal opportunity to group musically. One option: establish a training choir.



In Conclusion...

- Lowell Mason demonstrated in 1838 that all children were capable of singing. What was true then is true today; singing is a learned behavior.
- Let's get back to basics – let's teach everyone to sing!

