



THE ABC'S OF IPA

Benefits of Using IPA in the Choral Rehearsal

❖ Italian, Latin and English

WHAT IS IPA?

- International Phonetic Alphabet
- Phonetic symbols which provide universal pronunciation of vowels and consonants for multiple languages

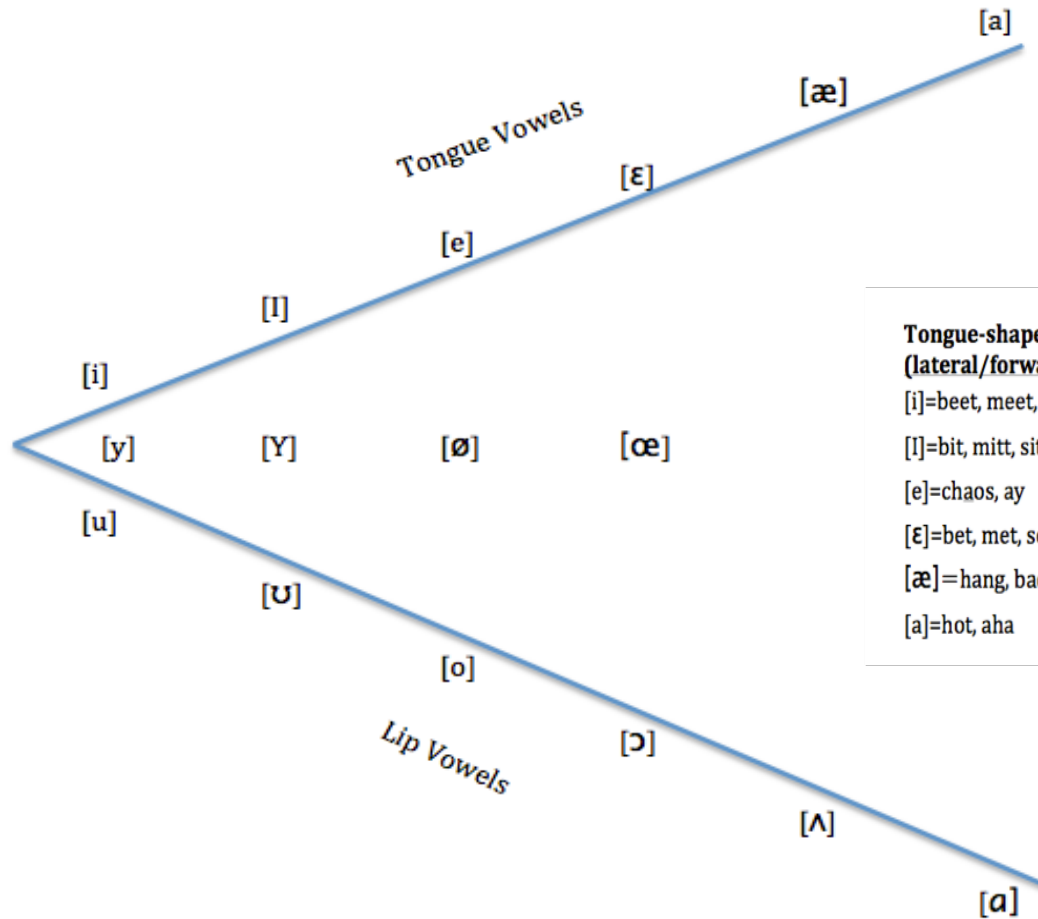


WHY SHOULD YOU USE IPA?

- Teach correct formation of vowels and consonants with knowledge of major articulators (tongue, teeth, lips, and jaw)
- Improve singers' technique and tone quality
- Use IPA charts in warm-ups to unify vowels and vibrato of your choir
- Correct (unrecognized?) dialects, lazy pronunciation, incorrect pronunciation, speech impediments, or incorrect technique
- Prepare future vocal music majors



COMMON VOWEL CHART

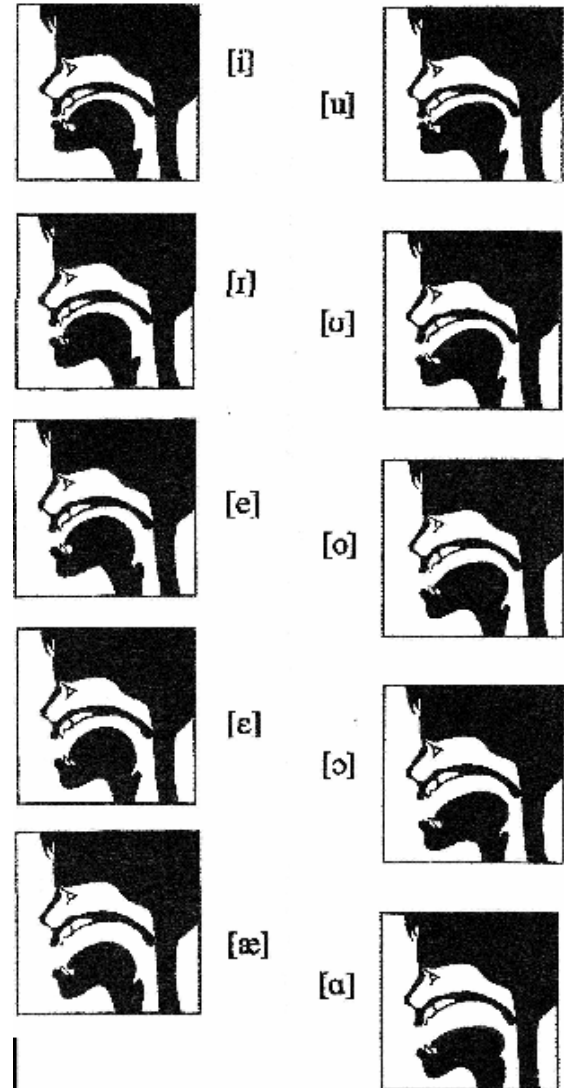


Common Vowel Symbols			
Tongue-shaped (lateral/forward)	Lip-Shaped (rounded/back)	Neutral (central)	Mixed (German/French)
[i]=beet, meet, see	[u]=boot, cool, soon	[ə]=appeal, aware	[y]=blüht
[ɪ]=bit, mitt, sit	[ʊ]=book, put, foot	[ɐ]=butter	[Y]=Sünde
[e]=chaos, ay	[o]=so, pillow, boat	[ɜː]=herd	[ø]=lösen
[ɛ]=bet, met, set	[ɔ]=bought, fought	[ʌ]=up, sun, love	[œ]=coeur
[æ]=hang, bad			
[a]=hot, aha	[ɑ]=father, box, fox		



ANOTHER LOOK AT VOWEL SHAPES

- ✓ Vowels are classified by tongue position
- ✓ “Acoustic distortion” (Miller, Structures of Singing) of the vowel will occur if tongue is in the wrong position (tension in root of tongue, tongue thrust forward, blade of tongue not resting against lower gumline); result is unbalanced resonance and lack of unified sound
- ✓ Freedom of jaw is paramount
- ✓ Explore homogenizing vowels
 - [e]-[a], [u]-[i]



Images from Joan Wall's International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers

Common Consonants

Common Consonant Sounds

Stop plosives (unvoiced)

[p] = pet

[t] = toe

[k] = kit

(voiced)

[b] = bet

[d] = doe

[g] = give

Nasals

[m] = man

[n] = no

[ŋ] = hung

[ŋ] = canyon

Fricatives (unvoiced)

[f] = fall

[θ] = think

[s] = sew

[ʃ] = shall

(voiced)

[v] = veto or weltshmerz (Ger)

[ð] = than

[z] = zebra

[ʒ] = azure

Glides

[r] = rose

[hw] = when (unvoiced)

[j] = yes

[ɹ̥] = flipped r

[w] = water (voiced)

Combination Consonants

[tʃ] = church, chip (unvoiced)

[ks] = x-ray

[dʒ] = judge (voiced)

Misc.

[h] = hallow, high (aspirate)

[l] = lift (lateral)

Common Diphthongs

Common Diphthongs

[a:I] = high, my, thy, by, I

[e:I] = day, they, play, wait

[o:ʊ] = boat, those, know, show

[j:u] = you, use

[a:ʊ] = house, now, how, thou, our

[ɔ:I] = boy, toy, joy

[u:I] = with, will, wind, whither



ANATOMICAL TERMINOLOGY FOR CONSONANTS

		Place of Articulation													
		Both Lips		Upper Teeth and Lower Lips		Tongue and Upper Teeth		Tongue and Teeth Ridge		Tongue and Hard Palate		Tongue and Soft Palate		Glottis	
		unv.	v.	unv.	v.	unv.	v.	unv.	v.	unv.	v.	unv.	v.	unv.	v.
Manner of Articulation	Fricative			f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ				h
	Stop-Plosive	p	b					t	d				k	g	
	Nasal		m						n					ŋ	
	Lateral												l		
	Glide	hw	w										r	j	

❖ Fricative is when breath passes through constricted articulation space

❖ Stop-plosives occur when air “explodes” through fully-closed lips

❖ Nasal is a sound produced by vibration of breath through the nose

❖ Laterals – always use an Italianate [l]

❖ Glides relate w to [u], j to [i] and r to the r-colored vowel

“Place of Articulation” chart from Joan Wall’s International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers



HOW TO USE CONSONANTS IN WARM-UPS TO IMPROVE TONE

- Voiced consonants to increase connection and sensation of embodied breathing

Voiced	Unvoiced
<i>B</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>T</i>
<i>G</i>	<i>K</i>
<i>V</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>Z</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>ʒ</i>	<i>ʃ</i>
<i>ð</i>	<i>θ</i>
<i>dʒ</i>	<i>tʃ</i>
<i>ɹ</i>	<i>h</i>

To increase resonance, utilize nasal consonants [m], [n] and [ŋ]



COMMON PRONUNCIATION/DICTION “ISSUES”

- American “R”
- Lazy Lips
- Full tongue “l”
- Not enough presence in voiced consonants
 - Especially [m], [n], [v], [ŋ], [ɹ], [ð], [ʒ]
- Lazy middle consonants
 - Especially [d], [b], [p], [k]
- Italian dentals
 - [d], [t], [l]
- Overly dark vowels
- Overuse of [a] vowel
- Chewing consonant elisions
 - Did you = didjew
 - Can’t you = canchew
- Not enough differentiation in pronouncing similar words
 - Are, our, hour
 - Merry, Mary, marry



Substitute
initial g
with k

For more ideas, see Kathryn
LaBouff's excellent book,
Singing and Communicating
in English

Switch dz to tʃ, as in rejoice

Switch final f and θ to v and ð at last second

Substitute t for final d

TIPS FOR VOCAL EASE

DICTION RESOURCES - BOOKS

- Adams, David. *A Handbook of Diction for Singers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Castel, Nico. *A Singer's Manual of Spanish Lyric Diction*. New York: Excalibur, 1994.
- Colorni, Evelina. *Singer's Italian*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1970.
- Grubb, Thomas. *Singing in French*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1979.
- Jeffers, Ron. *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*. Corvallis, OR: earthsongs, 2000.
- Johnston, Amanda. *English and German Diction for Singers*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011.
- LaBouff, Kathryn. *Singing and Communicating in English*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Marshall, Madeleine. *The Singer's Manual of English Diction*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1953.
- May, William V., and Craig Tolin. *Pronunciation Guide for Choral Literature: French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Spanish*. Reston, VA: Music Educator's National Conference, 1987; reprint, Denton, Texas: University of North Texas, 1988.
- Miller, Richard. *The Structure of Singing*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning, 1996.
- Moriarty, John. *Diction*. Boston, MA: E.C. Schirmer Music Company, 1975
- Odom, William. *German for Singers*. 2nd ed. New York: Scirmer Books, 1997.
- Paton, John Glenn. *Gateway to German Diction*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1999.
- Wall, Joan. *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers*. Dallas: Pst...Inc., 1989.
- Wall, Joan, et al. *Diction*. 2nd ed. Dallas: Pst...Inc., 2012.
- Wicklund, Karen. *Singing Voice Rehabilitation*. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage Learning, 2010.



DICTION RESOURCES - ONLINE

- www.ipasource.com
- www.thedictionpolice.com
- www.dictionforsingers.com
- www.ipa.typeit.org/full.com
- www.russianartsongs.com (Diction Guide)
- www.ipanow.com (\$19.99 for transcription software, free trial)
- www.dictiondomain.com



DICTION RESOURCES - APPS

- PhoneticSoft – makers of IPA Now! software
 - IPANow! Latin (free!)
 - IPANow! Italian (\$1.99)
 - IPANow! German (\$1.99)
 - IPANow! French (\$1.99)
- Blue Tree Publishing, Inc.
 - Vowels Front Back (\$4.99)
 - Vowels Central Diphthong (\$4.99)
 - Semivowels (\$4.99)
 - Fricatives (\$4.99)
 - Affricates Stops (\$4.99)
 - Vocal Folds ID (\$2.99) – Good way to introduce anatomy!
 - Larynx ID (4.99) - Good way to introduce anatomy!

