

The Classical Sound - Lower Mix

(Techniques CD track 31-32 / DVD chap 12)

The Classical or legit soprano, mezzo and contralto use primarily the upper register (head voice). The lower mix is used as a downward extension of the upper register sound to give substance and strength to the lower notes so that they match the strength and quality of the upper voice. The lower mix usually begins somewhere between the E_b and A_b above Middle C and extends downward to the lowest notes of the range. The area where the mix begins and ends varies with each singer.



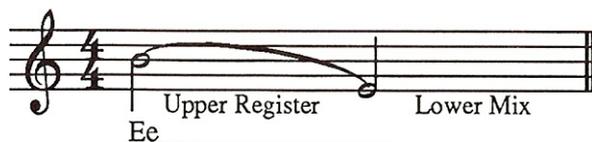
Liz Howard
in concert
with the
Bellflower
Symphony

EXERCISES:

In the following exercises, as you move downward into the lower mix, maintain good support and mask resonance. Gradually add focusing strength to the vocal cords. Widen the throat space to avoid squeezing the throat. Don't allow the tone to get breathy.

1. Using the vowel "ee" (as in see), begin in upper register and move gradually into lower mix.

Sing: (Tech CD trk 32)



2. Repeat, beginning a half step lower each time. Then repeat, beginning a half step higher each time.

3. Repeat, using "ah" (as in far).

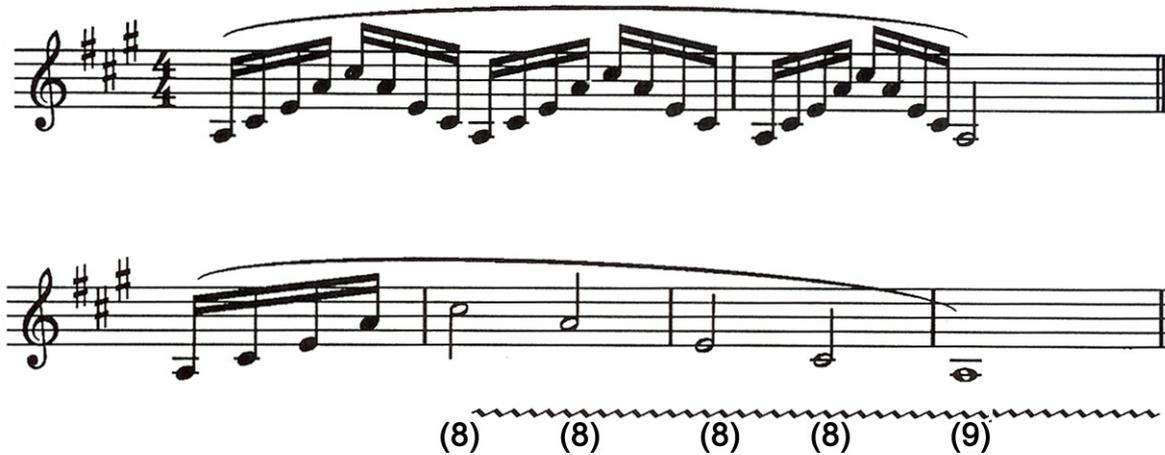
4. Using the vowel "ee" (as in see) and "oo" (as in you), begin in upper register and move gradually into lower mix.

Sing:



5. Repeat, each of the above exercises using "ah" (as in far), beginning a half step lower each time.
6. Using the following exercise, first sing single vowels and then the practice phrases from page 46.

Sing: (Tech CD trk 33)



Helpful Hints

1. Increase the open jaw space for the higher notes but don't stretch to the limit. Opening too wide will cause tension in the jaw and tighten the throat, cutting off forward placement. Open comfortably wide (about 2 finger widths).
2. Feel a smile in your sound. Not so much a real smile, but a lift in the muscles of the mask area which should slightly expose the upper teeth. The feeling is like you are about to bite an apple. This inner smile helps activate the mask resonance.
3. Use a mirror, now and then, to be sure your tongue is relaxed and forward. Pulling your tongue back destroys the forward placement and vowel purity and produces a tight vocal sound.
4. Don't think in terms of reaching up or down for a note. Think smooth, continuous outward flow of sound.
5. There is a tendency to over-emphasize or accent the highest note of a scale or phrase. Practice a smooth, even vocal line. Reserve accents for emotional impact.
6. Keep the support steady and firm on the descending scale or phrase.
7. If there is an abrupt change into the chest voice, this could be due to sudden tightening or grabbing of the vocal cords or throat muscles, often the result of trying to add too much chest voice too high in the range.
8. When moving up from the lower mix, if there is an abrupt change into the head voice, you may be singing too loud or bringing too much chest voice too high. This is usually the result of holding too much focusing strength in the vocal cords.

