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AMERICAN ACADEMY OF TEACHERS OF SINGING

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SOME PRINCIPLES IN THE CARE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN VOICE FROM CHILDHOOD THROUGH ADOLESCENCE TO MATURITY.

Among teachers in charge of the training of the child and adolescent voice there is at present serious disagreement concerning the nature of the physical structure of the voice mechanism, its use, and its treatment during these periods.

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing presents the following beliefs regarding this important subject, which beliefs, in consultation with various authorities, have received definite substantiation.

WE BELIEVE that the functioning of the voice of the child, of the adolescent, and of the adult is governed by identical physical laws; that the principles governing the use of voice are the same in all three stages.

From childhood to maturity there is a development of the body structure, but no change in position or muscular action.

WE BELIEVE that these principles demand a balance in the posture of the body, in the position of the vocal organs, and in their muscular activity, and, a coordination of the whole. The ideal procedure is to teach the child correct habits in these matters during the early years. The habits of the early formative period then will carry through the various changes as the individual and the voice grow and mature. In any physical activity, golf, swimming, etc., correct form acquired in childhood is retained as the child matures.

WE BELIEVE that the principles of balance in the posture of the body, in the position of the vocal organs and in their muscular activity should be taken up in that order, as the first steps in formative training at any stage of the individual's development, whether child, adolescent or adult.

Such instruction might well be incorporated in the child's physical education.

WE BELIEVE that, notwithstanding the significance and benefits of mass singing and the need for it, the primary stress in the early years in vocal matters should be on the correct use of the voice. This will not necessarily be brought about by mass singing. In fact, all too often the contrary is true; the stress on effects from the group—with little regard to the use of the voice—generally proves antagonistic to the vocal welfare of the singer.

We submit that only through sufficient attention to the correct use of voice may the joy of singing, the chief aim of mass singing, be fully realized. It is axiomatic to say that a certain degree of skill in any physical endeavor is necessary for any considerable degree of pleasure.

WE BELIEVE that the practice of inducing young people to sing in a way commonly and inaccurately described as "soft", which should be termed "devitalized", will result in the presence rather than in the absence of strain; and therefore, children and adolescents should be taught the vitalization and coordination of the body in singing.

WE BELIEVE that the director of a choral group should know the technic of voice.

No dean of music or school principal would think of putting a choral conductor in charge of the training of an orchestra or band but, it is a common practice to place the choruses under the direction of a band leader, orchestra conductor, organist or pianist who has no technical knowledge of the voice.

Copies of this and other publications may be had on application to Harold C. Luckstone, 17 East 96th Street, New York 28, N. Y.

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