



*Music Exercise 11: Vowels Series Encouraging Messa di Voce*

**5. Messa di Voce with Vowels**

The previous exercises give your singers the opportunity to hone their crescendo/decrescendo skills on the [a] vowel. This is a great exercise and one that should be in every conductor's bag of tricks.

In line with the theory that vowels do impact the vocal-folds, the series of vowels shown above (#11) will lead your singers from a thinner vocal-fold production on the beginning pianissimo, to the thicker vowel for the forte, then back to lax for the final pianissimo. (See Music Exercise 11.)

**6. Good Tension/Bad Tension**

How does a sound go from piano to forte? Ask this of your singers and you will get blank stares and then a host of answers – like the mouth, the

jaw, the diaphragm, air, etc. Then have them do the messa di voce again. When they do this and begin to actually think about what makes a sound crescendo, they realize that it is indeed two things at once: increased air and increased tension (of the good sort) in the vocal folds. Any imbalance in this delicate adjustment will cause the tone to either become tight or breathy. Ask them to do that as well just to feel the difference. If they experience what it feels like to do it wrong, they are less likely to repeat it.

**7. Denial**

Denial is not just a river in Egypt. Too many singers are in denial that there are such things as register problems in their voices. In many ways, the messa di voce does wonders to help singers understand dynamics. This exercise highlights for them the difference in heavy, mixed, and light mechanism. It is also

*Music Exercise 12: Mixing Mechanisms.*

