

TEACHING TRANS*+ SINGERS

Trans*+ singers, especially those undergoing gender-affirming hormone treatment (GAHT) must treat their voices with care as they experience physical and vocal changes. **It is essential that voice teachers, choral directors, and music educators are aware of the vocal training required to maintain a healthy singing voice during and after transition.** Trans*+ men taking testosterone can experience unpredictable changes as their vocal cords thicken. Trans*+ women do not experience significant vocal changes during or after estrogen treatment, but vocal exercises are available to achieve a higher vocal range if desired.

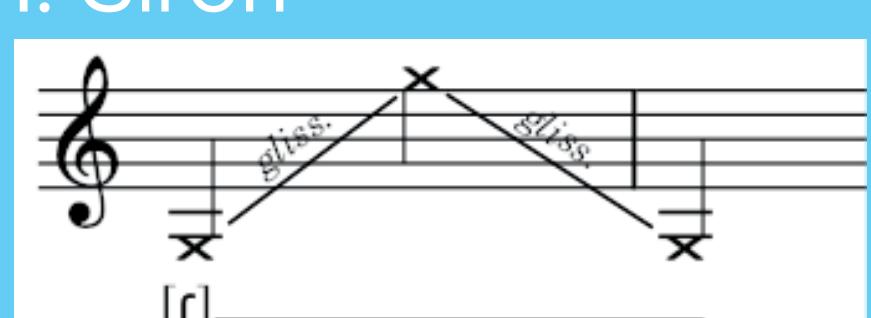
ESTROGEN / ANDROGEN THERAPY

- Trans*+ women do not experience significant vocal changes due to hormone therapy. Some trans*+ women choose to receive vocal surgery to reduce the size of their vocal folds, resulting in a higher voice. Other trans*+ women train their falsetto, or continue to sing in their most comfortable voice.
- Sometimes, an overly-breathy sound can occur if a “feminine” voice is forced. SOVTs and closed vowel exercises can help to correct an overly-breathy sound.

VOCAL EXERCISE SEQUENCE

Remember: start with posture alignment and breath engagement exercises.

1. Siren

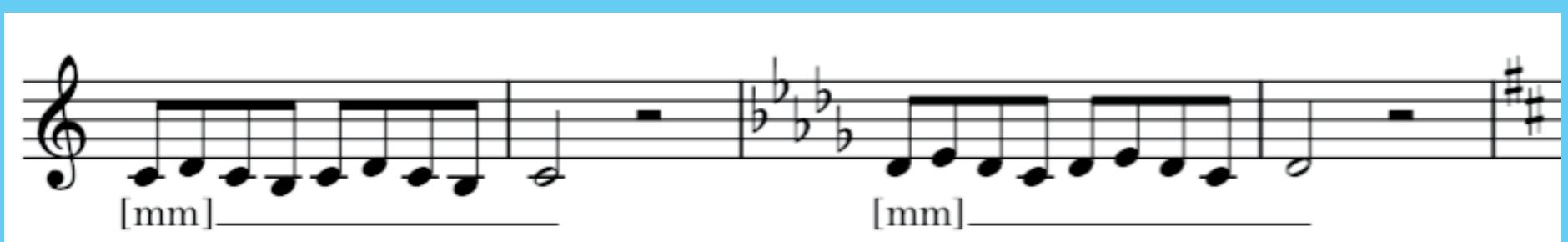


SOVTs train the vocal folds to close smoothly.

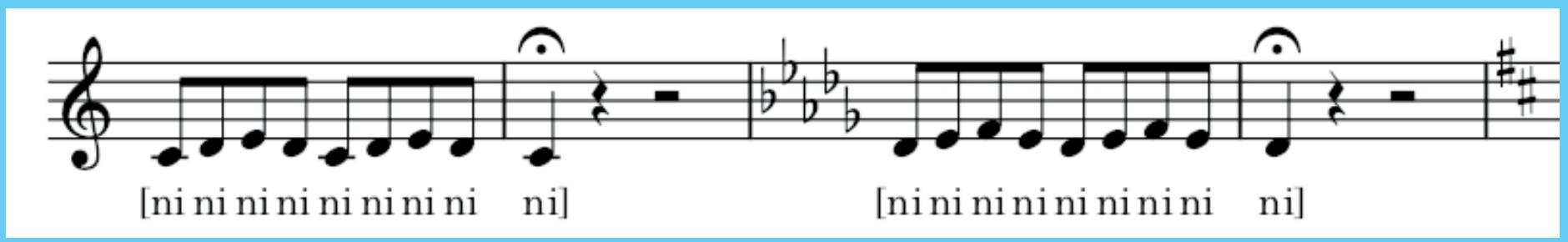
2. Semi-occluded vocal tract (SOVT) exercise



3. Hum



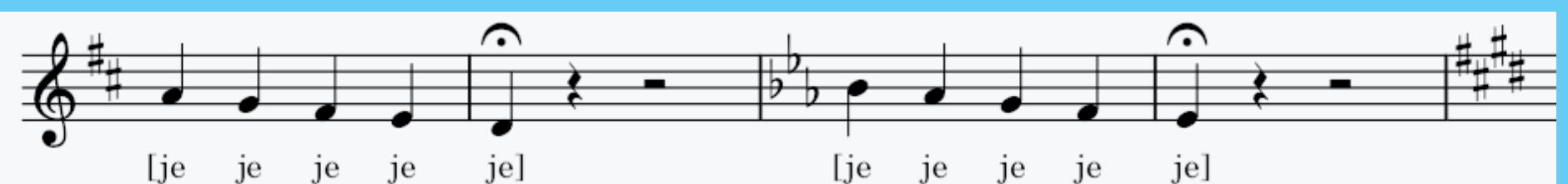
4. Closed vowel 1



5. Closed vowel 2



6. Closed vowel 3



Key signatures are for reference. Start in a comfortable key and do not force low or high notes.

TESTOSTERONE THERAPY

- Because of the several types of testosterone administration methods, physical and vocal changes are not always predictable.
- Sometimes, even if the vocal folds thicken, the voice does not lower significantly.
- The biggest changes in the voice typically happen within 1 year of treatment.
- Vocal entrapment occurs when the vocal folds thicken but the laryngeal cartilage is not able to accommodate. Entrapment happens more often to testosterone recipients over age 40. This can cause permanent hoarseness and/or lack of vocal flexibility.

TESTOSTERONE

Thickening vocal folds

Changes within 1 year

No laryngeal cartilage growth

MALE PUBERTY

Thickening and lengthening vocal folds

Changes over several years

Laryngeal cartilage grows to accommodate larger vocal folds

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- It is important to know your singers' specific situations and structure your teaching around their individual desires and vocal goals.
- There are barriers to medical and mental health care for LGBTQ+ individuals, and the cost of hormonal treatment or vocal surgery can be prohibitive.
- Gender dysphoria is ‘associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning’ as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
- There is sufficient evidence that alleviating gender dysphoria can significantly improve one’s mental and physical well-being.
- Not all vocal issues are caused by hormones - stress, lack of support, depression, and fear can cause vocal problems.



scan here for exercise instructions



scan here for bibliography