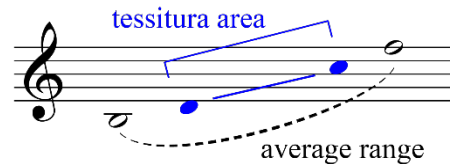


Appendix 13.3

THE ADOLESCENT MALE SINGER: UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGE

Adapted from an article by Anthony L. Berrisi
From *Choristers Guild Letters* – January, 1996, used with permission

UNCHANGED VOICE (boy soprano)



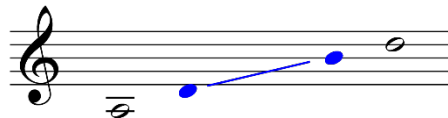
With the onset of puberty, the boys' voice undergoes a change that is, for some, dramatic in its speed of progression, and for others, so gradual as to be almost unnoticed. During the process, the larynx grows in size and the vocal folds within it thicken to approximately double in length accounting for the vocal transformation in range and tone quality. As the voice progresses through the process, the range lowers (approximately an octave) and the tone moves closer to that of an adult male.

FOUR MAJOR STAGES OF CHANGE

While the speed and pace of the process may be unpredictable, the unfolding stages of the change are predictable:

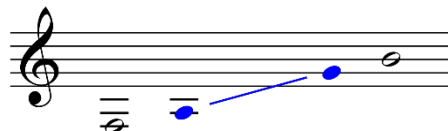
Stage 1: **Beginning mutation stage** (boy alto or sing specially written part)

Many of the boy soprano characteristics remain. In the lower register, the voice remains clear and retains flexibility. However in the higher register, the tone becomes increasingly unclear and the range narrows as this stage progresses. Because the areas of the vocal range sung with relative ease (known as *tessitura*) is similar to those of the unchanged voice, there is often confusion with part assignment. The following represents a "safe" average performance area comparing the unchanged voice with the changing voice at this early stage.



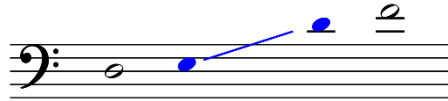
Stage 2a: **High mutation stage** (often called the *cambiata* stage, sing alto or high tenor part)

Drastic vocal alterations, which include the vocal range lowering and narrowing, characterize this phase. The lower half of the range assumes a more mature tone quality, while the top half retains childlike qualities. Vocal flexibility is reduced and the overall tone takes on a huskier quality caused by the thickening of the vocal folds. Even boys who formerly matched pitched well are, for a time, plagued with a hesitancy and disorientation with placing pitches in their "new" emerging voice. Further along in this stage, they achieve greater stability with range, tone quality and the ability to match pitch resumes.



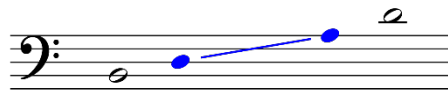
Stage 2b: **Transitional mutation stage** (sing tenor part)

In this brief stage, the alteration of a more mature tone quality covers the entire range. Notably there is a range slide to the new baritone range and the voice becomes more flexible.



Stage 3: **New baritone stage** (sing limited baritone part)

Initially the “new baritone” singer has a tone color like a young tenor, but from this stage voices mature to either tenor or bass. The falsetto voice becomes usable although the shift between the full voice and falsetto can still be dodgy.



From Anthony L. Berrisi, *Chorister Guild Letters*, pp.8-9.