

Handout—Class 2: Tips & Tricks for Showing Musical Interpretation

Though the principles covered in these classes are general in nature and widely used by conductors of various training backgrounds, much of the terminology used in this class is closely aligned with the BYU school of conducting training. For more information on the BYU method, refer to the DVD series “Masterful Choral Conducting,” by Ronald Staheli and Rosalind Hall (as described online at creativeworks.byu.edu/mcc).

Two Types of Breaths:

- Breaths **ON the Beat** (“*Breathe ON beat 1*”—or beat 2, 3, or 4)
- Breaths **BETWEEN Consecutive Beats** (“*Breathe on the AND of beat 3*”, etc.)

Showing Breaths **ON the Beat**:

- First, **linger on the ictus** of the beat *before* the breath
- Second, ***slowly* begin the rebound** of that beat
- Third, **accelerate downward** into a **clicked ictus** on the beat where singers should breathe

Showing Breaths **BETWEEN Consecutive Beats**:

- First, completely ***stop* fingertips on the ictus** of the beat *before* the breath
- Second, ***flick* the fingertips upward** to show the breath
- Third, **continue smoothly through the rebound**, preparing singers to sing the next beat

Melding—Showing Sustained Singing throughout Held Notes:

- For notes held two beats or longer, **de-emphasize all motion** *after* the ictus of the first beat
- Conduct a **full-size rebound after the last beat** of the held note, in preparation for the next sung note

Off-Beat Singing—Showing Syncopated Rhythms:

- Use when a held note (longer than one beat) is followed by a note that occurs on a subdivision of the beat
- First, use a **melded (de-emphasized) preparation** before the held beat
- Second, give an **energized “superclick” on the ictus** before the off-beat note
- Third, keep the resulting **full-size rebound** of the superclick controlled and smooth
- Hymn examples: #98, 338, 259, 237, 220, 130

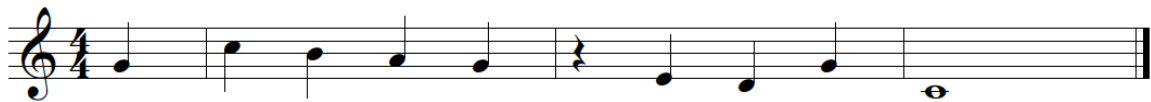
Showing **Word Emphasis**:

- Remember, the more preparation you give for a beat, the stronger your singers will tend to sing that beat
- Remember also that the size of the preparation gesture before a beat is largely *determined by the size of the rebound following the previous beat*
- For words/syllables that warrant *less* emphasis, give less preparation! For those that need *more* emphasis, give more preparation!

Class 2 Exercise A—Indicating a Breath Release *on the Beat*

Practice the following examples until comfortable with each. Remember to:

- After *lingering* on the ictus of the beat before the breath, *slowly* begin the rebound of that beat, *accelerating* into a *clicked* ictus on the beat for the **breath release**



Class 2 Exercise B—Indicating a Breath Release *between* Consecutive Beats (using the “stop/flick” technique)

Practice the following examples until comfortable with each. Remember to:

- Completely **stop** fingertips right on the ictus of the beat before the breath
- Indicate the breath by quickly “**flicking**” the fingertips up and away from the ictus, as one might react after having touched a hot iron
- Continue smoothly through the rebound, preparing singers to sing the next beat

