

Breath Studies

for SSAATTBB chamber choir

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Rules and Terms

-All pitches are to be articulated with the word "breathe".

-The instructions for each study will indicate how to begin and end the piece. The following rules explain the principles of what happens within each study:

-A **lead articulation** is given when a **leader** articulates the "br" of "breathe," then sustains his or her pitch. After this lead articulation, **followers** continue singing or resting (whichever they are doing at that point in time), for one second. Next, followers rest (or remain resting) for one second, taking a quiet breath. Finally, followers **re-articulate** the word "breathe". Throughout the followers' process, the leader sustains his or her pitch. Note that the time elapsed between a lead articulation and the followers' rearticulation is always two seconds.

-The instructions for each study will indicate who may lead and follow.

-A leader should articulate using the same pitch he or she was previously singing, unless entering from silence, or unless otherwise instructed. The pitch on which followers re-articulate will be determined by the instructions for each study.

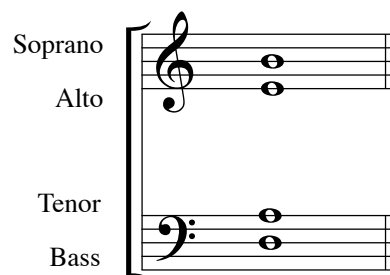
-If multiple vocalists perform lead articulations simultaneously, all are considered leaders.

-When resting after a lead articulation, followers should **not** finish the word "breathe" with the voiced fricative "th". The word should remain unfinished unless otherwise indicated in the given instructions.

-When not leading or following, all vocalists should sustain their pitch on the "e" vowel of "breathe".

-If a vocalist needs to breathe, but does not wish to, or cannot, give a lead articulation, he or she should exit and re-enter as smoothly and indiscernably as possible. Vocalists in each voice part should stagger breathe, to further mask these pauses.

Initial pitches (same for all studies):



Breath Study No. 1

-Each vocalist is assigned a number, 1-8. The ensemble, however, should **not** stand in this order.

-Vocalist 1 begins the piece by articulating and sustaining his or her initial pitch. This should be interpreted as a lead articulation, with vocalist 2 as the follower. When vocalist 2 articulates his or her initial pitch, vocalist 3 will follow. Vocalist 3's articulation will be a lead articulation with vocalist 4 following. And when vocalist 4 articulates, this will be a lead articulation with vocalist 1 following.

-One second after vocalist 1 articulates, vocalist 5 should articulate. This will be a lead articulation for vocalist 6, and so on, through vocalist 8, whose articulation will be a lead for vocalist 5.

-Both groups, 1-4 and 5-8, continue rotating lead articulations in this manner. Pitches do not change.

-Each individual sustained note should be performed as a gradual crescendo, so that an abrupt cut-off is made in order to take a pause and breath.

-After some number of rotations (must be at least 10), vocalist 1 does not re-articulate after vocalist 4. This non-articulation will serve as a cue to vocalist 5, who in turn does not re-articulate after vocalist 8. Vocalists 2-4 and 6-8 also interpret non-articulations as cues to do the same. All non-articulations are performed in the rhythmic order in which articulations would have occurred. In this way, vocalists come to rest in a sequential fashion.

Breath Study No. 3

-A preselected "conductor" cues the beginning, and all voices enter on and sustain their initial pitches.

-Anyone may give a lead articulation. Although only one singer gives the lead articulation, both vocalists of the leader's voice part should sustain their pitch during the followers' process. All vocalists who are not in the leader's section are followers.

-For the 1st, 3rd, 5th, etc. (all odd) lead articulations, followers re-articulate one half-step above their previous pitch. For the 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc. (all even) lead articulations, followers re-articulate one half-step below their previous pitch.

-The elapsed time between the first following re-articulation and the next lead articulation should be about 12 seconds. With each new lead articulation, the elapsed time between the followers' re-articulation and the next lead articulation should gradually decrease, until it has reached one second. Then, this elapsed time should gradually increase, until it has reached about 12 seconds.

-As the elapsed time between a following re-articulation and the next lead articulation decreases, the group dynamic level should increase from soft to loud. As this elapsed time increases again, the group dynamic should decrease back to soft.

-The "conductor," having judged this process to be complete, cues a cutoff. At that cutoff, all singers briefly articulate the voiced fricative "th" to signal the end of the word "breathe."

Example,
Breath Study No. 3

The musical score is written for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are "bre - (rest) bre - (rest) bre - (rest) bre -". The score includes lead articulations for the alto and bass parts, labeled "LEAD: alto" and "LEAD: bass" respectively. The alto part has lead articulations on the first, third, and fifth notes. The bass part has lead articulations on the second, fourth, and sixth notes. The tenor part has lead articulations on the first, third, and fifth notes. The soprano part has lead articulations on the first, third, and fifth notes. The score is written in a single system with four staves. The lyrics are written below the staves. The lead articulations are written above the staves. The score is in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is not specified. The score is for a breath study, so the notes are sustained for a long time.

Breath Study No. 4

-A preselected "conductor" cues the beginning, and all voices enter on and sustain their initial pitches.

-The dynamic level is medium throughout.

-Although only one singer gives the lead articulation, both vocalists of the leader's voice part should sustain their pitch during the followers' process. All vocalists who are not in the leader's section are followers.

-Elapsed time between a following re-articulation and the next lead articulation may range from 4 to 12 seconds.

-The 1st, 3rd, 5th, etc. (all odd) lead articulations must be performed by a bass or tenor. Followers for these lead articulations will re-articulate one half-step below their previous pitch. The 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc. (all even) lead articulations must be performed by an alto or soprano. Followers for these lead articulations will re-articulate one half-step above their previous pitch.

-Once a voice part reaches its goal pitch, their re-articulations, whether leading or following, remain on that same pitch. The goal pitches are: soprano - middle C; alto - Bb below middle C; tenor - D above middle C; bass - middle C.

-Once all voice parts have reached their goal pitches, the next four lead articulations and corresponding pitch alterations for followers are: 1) a tenor leads; followers move up a half-step; 2) an alto leads; followers move down a half-step; 3) a tenor leads; followers move up a half-step; 4) an alto leads; followers move down a half-step. As before, all vocalists not in the leader's section are followers. These articulations should be cued by the "conductor."

-At the end of this process, all vocalists should be sustaining the pitch middle C. The "conductor" allows the group to sustain this pitch for at least 16 seconds, and then cues a cutoff. At that cutoff, all singers briefly articulate the voiced fricative "th" to signal the end of the word "breathe."

Breath Study No. 5

-A preselected "conductor" cues the beginning, and all voices enter on and sustain their initial pitches.

-Although only one singer gives the lead articulation, both vocalists of the leader's voice part should sustain their pitch during the followers' process. All vocalists who are not in the leader's section are followers.

-Elapsed time between a following re-articulation and the next lead articulation may range from 2 to 4 seconds.

-This study is divided into eight time-segments. The process for time-segments 1, 3, 5 and 7 is as follows: lead articulations are performed in alternation by altos or sopranos (either may perform the first, after which the sections alternate). When an alto leads, sopranos will follow, re-articulating one half-step lower than their previous pitch. When a soprano leads, altos will follow, re-articulating one half-step higher than their previous pitch. Basses and tenors will be followers throughout the section, re-articulating on their previous pitch. Alternation between altos and sopranos continues until they reach a unison. Then, a soprano leads (regardless of whose turn it is in the alternation), and altos re-articulate a perfect fifth below their previous pitch.

-The process for time-segments 2, 4, 6 and 8, is similar, with lead articulations alternating between basses and tenors, while altos and sopranos re-articulate on their previous pitch. Once basses and tenors reach a unison, a tenor leads, and basses re-articulate a perfect fifth below their previous pitch.

-For each time-segment, the dynamic level should increase from soft to loud as the moving voice parts approach unison. When the lower voice part re-articulates a perfect fifth down, the dynamic should drop quickly back to soft (*p sub.*).

-When at the conclusion of section 8 the basses re-articulate a perfect fifth down, all vocalists, after re-articulating, sustain for four seconds. Then, all vocalists briefly articulate the voiced fricative "th" to signal the end of the word "breathe". The "conductor" may cue these changes to facilitate simultaneity.

Example,
Breath Study no. 5

LEAD: *soprano* LEAD: *alto* LEAD: *soprano*

S
A
T
B

bre bre - - - (rest) bre bre - -
bre - (rest) bre bre - - - (rest) bre
bre - (rest) bre - (rest) bre - (rest) bre
bre - (rest) bre - (rest) bre - (rest) bre

Breath Study No. 6

-A preselected "conductor" cues the beginning, and all voices enter on and sustain their initial pitches.

-Anyone may give a lead articulation. All non-leaders are followers, including those in the same section as the leader.

-For the 1st, 3rd, 5th, etc. (all odd) lead articulations, followers re-articulate one half-step above their previous pitch. For the 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc. (all even) lead articulations, followers re-articulate one half-step below their previous pitch.

-The elapsed time between the first following re-articulation and the next lead articulation should be about 8 seconds. With each new lead articulation, the elapsed time between the followers' re-articulation and the next lead articulation should gradually decrease, until it has reached one second.

-As the elapsed time between a following re-articulation and the next lead articulation decreases, the group dynamic level should increase from soft to loud.

-The "conductor," having judged that the elapsed time between a following re-articulation and the next lead articulation has decreased to one second, cues a cutoff in place of a lead articulation. At that cutoff, all singers articulate, loudly, the voiced fricative "th" to signal the end of the word "breathe."