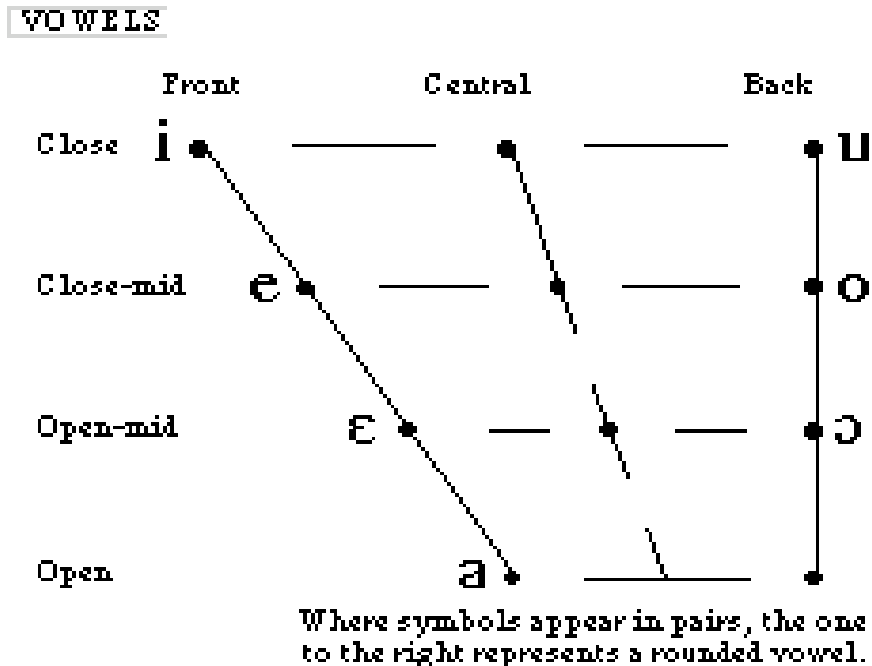


Nebraska Wesleyan University
High School Solo Singers Workshop
15-Minute Italian Diction

Dovrò dunque morire: che di nuovo io miri Voi bramata cagion de
miei martiri mio perduto tesoro non potrò dirvi pria ch'io mora io moro? io mo ro?
O' mi fersa in audita Non poter dir a voi moro romia vita
O' miseria in audita Non poter dir a voi moro mia
vita Non poter dir a voi moro romia vita moro romia
vi ta.

“Dovrò dunque morire”, from *Le nuove musiche*, Caccini, Florence, 1601



General Guidelines for Italian Vowels

- ◊ Italian is a **legato** language in which the words are carried on the vowels.
- ◊ in general, Italian vowels are “brighter” than vowels in American English.
- ◊ **avoid nasality** in vowels.
- ◊ **no glottal attacks** on vowels; coordinate the onset of the breath with the articulation of the vowel.
- ◊ lips must be **rounded** for [u], [o], and [ɔ].
- ◊ vowels are **pure**; all single vowels in Italian have the same sound from beginning to end—don't add diphthongs.
- ◊ **avoid** the replacing Italian pure vowels with the more American-sounding [ɪ] (“in”), [ʊ] (“book”) and [ʊ] (“up”).
- ◊ the vowels e and o have **“open”** and **“closed”** versions. Closed vowels generally have a more closed mouth; open vowels are articulated through a slightly larger space. Whether open or closed, e and o have a particularly Italian sound and do not correspond well to English. E and o are never pronounced as diphthongs, as is often the case in English.
- ◊ avoid intrusive vowels and extra syllables in consonant clusters or on final consonants (grande, sebben).
- ◊ **vowel stress**: when two or more vowels occur in succession (either within one word or between contiguous words) they often function as a single

- syllable and are typically allotted a single note of music. Some tips on which vowel to stress in these cases (diphthongs, triphthongs, and glides):
- ☞ **diphthongs**: a pair of vowels that is treated as one syllable. May be recognized in Italian through their spellings (**ai, au, ei, oi, eu**). The first vowel of the pair is stressed (**strong-weak**).
 - ☞ **glides** (also known as “**semiconsonants**”): a pair of vowels that are treated as one syllable. The second vowel of the pair is stressed (**weak-strong**). The first vowel has partial characteristics of both vowels and consonants. In Italian, these are the written letters **i** and **u** in unstressed syllables or preceding the stressed vowel (siamo, languisce, più, può).
 - ☞ **triphthongs**: three vowels that are treated as one syllable. May be recognized through their spellings (**iei, uoi, uai, uei, iai**). The middle vowel is stressed (**weak-strong-weak**). Could be thought of as glide + diphthong (miei, tuoi).
 - ☞ accent marks: if an accent mark occurs over a vowel, that vowel gets the stress (più).
 - ☞ **i** is generally silent when it follows c or g unless there is no other vowel (bacio, raggio), or unless the i is accented (Lucia).
 - ☞ io, dio, Dio, mio, mia, mie, sia, zio, tuo, tua, tue, sua, suo, sue, sui, cui, lui, due, pio, pia, pie, dia, fia, stia, spia, spie, brio, trio: common words that are treated as two-syllable words, with the stress on the first vowel.
 - ☞ vowel duration in adjacent words (credimi almen): **strong vowels (a, e, o)** will receive longer duration than **weak vowels (i, u)**.

General Guidelines for Italian Consonants

- ☞ consonants are articulated clearly but quickly in Italian.
- ☞ b, f, m, and v are pronounced as in English.
- ☞ d, n, t, and l are pronounced as in English, but with the tongue contacting the upper top teeth ridge.
- ☞ “dry” consonants: **b, p, d, t, k, g**—nonaspirated.
- ☞ double consonants: “stop-consonants” (bb, cc, dd, gg, pp, tt, zz) and “continuing consonants” (ff, ll, mm, nn, rr, ss, vv). For “stop-doubles,” stop briefly on the first of the double consonant pair, then re-articulate the second consonant of the pair. For “continuing double consonants,” double the length of time you would spend for one consonant only.
- ☞ **z**: sometimes voiced ([dz]), sometimes non-voiced ([ts]). No rule for this, each written z is taken on a case-by-case basis. Consult your teacher or a phonetic dictionary.

- ↔ **r**: rolled or flipped; never slurred or American-sounding. R is a consonant, not a vowel.
- ↔ **h** is always silent; it functions to “harden” the preceding consonant.
- ↔ **g + l/g + n**: “ly” [l̥]/”ny”[n̥]. The written g is **silent** (the two consonants together function as a glide).

Sample Italian Texts

1. Amarilli, mia bella
 non credilo del mio cor, dolce desio
 d’esser tu l’amor mio.
 Credilo pur, e se timor t’assale
 Prendi questo mio strale,
 Aprimi il petto, e vedrai scritto il core: Amarilli!

2. Star vicino all bell’idol, che s’ama,
 e il più vago diletto d’amor.