

Self-Assessment Protocol for Singers

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“Stop comparing yourself to other singers! Focus on your own growth.”

Okay, but *how*?

Students have few alternatives to the common top-down judgements of their singing: casting results, competitions, NATS audition scores, juries, and what their teachers and coaches tell them. By using a **repeatable self-evaluation tool**, singers can chart their own progress better and work on their issues more logically and confidently, no matter where they compete.

The SAPS has been developed for all singers, regardless of genre. In plain language, it explains how to record and evaluate oneself via audio and video media, using quantitative and qualitative measures.

Part 1: Recording Audio and Video

Targeted, genre-agnostic vocal tasks address these primary functional domains:

- agility: scalar and arpeggiated passages
- pitch range: compass and relative strengths of different pitch regions
- pitch change: using fifths across the range to check for ease and connection
- dynamic change with *messa di voce*
- articulation: *staccato*, *legato*, and *portamento*
- vowel formation: intelligibility, optimal migration for high pitches

Performance aspects are also addressed:

- stage presence and self-confidence
- artistic impression
- expression
- style
- use of language
- use of the body

There are six singing tasks to be recorded. The first five are exercises of a technical nature and can be recorded with audio or video. The sixth is a complete performance of a piece from the singer’s repertoire, captured on video.

Task 1: Scales (adapted from Rossini, 1827)

Agility, Small Intervals



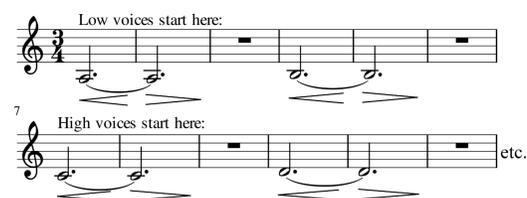
Task 2: Arpeggios (adapted from Rossini, 1827)

Agility, Passage Work, Intonation



Task 3: Dynamic Changes—*messa di voce*

Sustaining, Flexibility



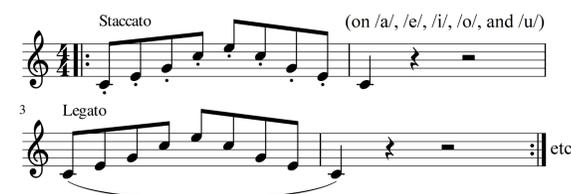
Task 4: Pitch Connections and Range

Functional Range Limits, Portamento



Task 5: Vowels

Vowel Clarity, Staccato and Legato



Task 6: Video Recording of a Performance

Artistic effect, General Impressions

A complete song or aria is recorded on video for evaluation of performance aspects and holistic issues. Visual issues are considered along with the actual singing.

Part 2: Scoring and Comments

The scoring and comments document allows for the first five (technical) tasks to be scored in a way that is personally meaningful to the singer, while still containing enough structure to address important technical criteria. There is also space for written comments.

After observing the performance video (Task 6), the singer is asked to respond to structured “I statement” questions, followed by prompts for capturing more general responses to the recordings, using any suitable medium.

Part 3: Reflection and Planning

A final free-form statement is encouraged. This could be in the form of an essay, a journal, a letter, bullet points, recorded oral statements, sketches, or any manner of expression that suits the singer. This is an opportunity to bring the formal and informal parts of the evaluation together, and generate ideas for next steps in voice training and care.

Benefits

- Singers who feel better able to measure their progress can take a stronger self-advocacy role in their vocal study. They can increasingly “study with” rather than “take from” a teacher.
- Singers can better refine the purpose of voice lessons with clear goals for skill development.
- Better self-evaluation can help experienced singers with career planning and personal well-being.
- Clearer descriptions and measurements of successes and failures can help singers to evaluate their work with a teacher, and to determine when a change of teacher may be desirable.
- The SAPS will work for any level of singer. The SAPS document contains suggestions for accommodations for vocal limitations as well as extensibility for the virtuoso.

Download the SAPS

The complete instructions, scoring document, and optional videos are available at:

sanesinging.com/saps

More discussion of the SAPS and self-assessment is available in the book *Sane Singing: A Guide to Vocal Progress*.

Bibliography and Inspirations

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