

# 10 STEPS TO LEARNING A SONG

- 1) Listen to the song – best if you listen to someone who is a native singer of the language.
- 2) Chatter the words/lyrics so you can speak them quickly taking care to speak the text with proper linguistic emphasis. This can help develop your muscle memory in articulation. If the text is in a foreign language – write out the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) and the word-for word translation (Also know a poetic translation so the language makes sense and has meaning to you.)
- 3) Speak the text emotionally using dramatic emphasis as reflected in the lyrics. Speaking the text will help you know the phrasing and also when to take breaths – typically at punctuation and rests. Take care to know the proper linguistic emphasis. Be aware of voiced and unvoiced consonants and the syllabic emphasis of words and phrases.
- 4) Speak the rhythms without pitches to make sure you have correct pronunciation and that your rhythms are accurate.
- 5) When you have mastered the pronunciation/diction and the rhythm – sing the piece on a neutral vowel (Usually on [u], [i] or [a]). Slow down the rhythm at first to be sure you have the melody and rhythms. You might sing using [lu], [li] or [la]. Then sing the text on the vowels that are part of the lyrics omitting the consonants. These approaches help develop a legato line.
- 6) After you have mastered the melody and rhythm and know the vowels that are part of the lyrics, add the consonants – sing the lyrics.
- 7) Work the piece from a slower tempo, taking care with each phrase. Carefully write in your breath marks.
- 8) Examine the form so that you understand the style of the music and the key structure and relationships between keys. Understand the role of the accompaniment. You may need to do some research to fully understand the work, the composer, the lyrics, style, etc.
- 9) Learn your song in sections – sometimes starting in the middle of the song or at the end can help you learn how the phrases support one another. If there is a difficult section, circle it and work it separated out from the music, then add it in so that you have smooth transitions throughout the piece.
- 10) Add in the dynamics and be sure to differentiate if you repeat a word, repeat a musical line or if you return to a similar musical phrase as in an ABA form.



**For both songs and arias, consider all aspects and be specific to bring life into your song:**

**Who:** Your character's name, age, occupation, relationships, attitude on life, etc.

**Where:** The country (culture), city, room, and/or other location where your character is singing.

**When:** The year, season, time of day that your character is singing.

**Why:** What happened just before your character started singing?

**What:** What is your character trying to accomplish with this song?

**How:** Pick one or several verbs to describe how your character is going to achieve the goal of the song