

# *Changing* VOICES

songs within an octave  
for teenage male singers

*compiled and edited by*  
*Liza Hobbs and Veronica Veysey Campbell*

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








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# YOUR VOICE: NOT BREAKING BUT CHANGING

At some point, usually during the early teens, all voices begin their change from childhood treble to that of an adult. Until recently, this was normally referred to as the “breaking” voice. To describe it this way unhelpfully conveys a sense of crisis or trauma about what is a natural phase of vocal development, and it is now more commonly – and accurately – known as the “changing” voice. Both boys’ and girls’ voices undergo this transformation, the only difference being that the change in a boy’s voice is usually very much more noticeable and can sometimes be rather dramatic. This book is primarily conceived as being for the young male singer, but it contains material which can equally well be used whenever a song with a smaller range is required.

Beyond the simple fact that the voice does change, it is difficult to say anything more definite or categorical since no two singers are the same. This is true not only of the voice, but also of musical tastes, background and experience. What we have tried to do is to provide a book of songs that will meet the needs of as many young singers as possible.

## why does the voice change?

Quite simply, like the rest of the body, the larynx (voice box) grows. Its size can increase by as much as 60% within a two-year period, and the two vocal folds (or cords) within the larynx become longer and thicker as a result of the testosterone which floods the body at this time. This new larger size accounts for the lower pitch range. Just as a cello makes a lower sound than a violin, so also do the larger vocal folds in a large larynx make lower sounds than smaller ones. The whole process of change normally takes about two years but, in the same way that there can be growth spurts in the body generally, so also can there be spurts in the growth of the larynx, with periods of stability in between. Some voices therefore can appear suddenly to “clunk” into a lower gear, while others make a more gradual slippage downwards. Once this rapid part of voice change has happened it takes many more years for the voice to develop fully. During the teenage years and the early twenties it is crucial for the future health and development of the mature voice that the young voice is handled sensitively and without being strained.

## what are the consequences for you – the young singer?

While this process of change is going on a number of new challenges arise. The first thing that usually happens is that you may notice the loss of your high notes. Or sometimes it could be that the top of the voice becomes breathy or requires more effort, or the middle of the voice may become weaker. It is possible that you may be the first person to notice anything new. Perhaps your voice simply feels different. It will, after all, take a while to get used to handling your newly enlarged instrument. It is rather like learning to ride on a bicycle instead of a tricycle, or going from a small size violin to a full-size one. Another possibility is that your voice will become a bit unpredictable and have more “off” days. It is very likely to take longer to warm up, and it is important that you allow yourself the necessary extra time for this.

As the higher notes become more erratic, or parts of the voice seem weaker, you will become aware that you can sing a little lower. This is a time when there is generally a growth spurt, and people may begin to notice a change of colour in your voice. You must also get used to hearing (and being physically aware of) this new sound, and appreciate its new tone quality and pitch level.

There are differing views on how long to remain singing in the treble range and no doubt your teacher will have an opinion on what is best for you. If you have had a lovely treble voice it may be that you want, or are encouraged, to sing in the treble range for longer than may be healthy for the development of your ‘new’ voice. Often, as the voice changes, it can initially go into a sort of ‘mini-baritone’ range, and notes just above middle C can feel difficult and awkward for a while. The most important thing is always to sing comfortably, so don’t be afraid to explore gently your new and developing pitch range. These songs may be treated with flexibility regarding choice of key, and by using alternative notes where necessary. When there are no printed dynamics choose appropriate dynamics yourself to suit the text.

When you have enough notes to sing a whole song an octave lower than you used to, then this is generally considered to be the time to stop singing as a treble and concentrate on your ‘new’ voice. There will of course always be exceptions and, while many boys will stop singing treble before this time, others may continue a little longer. The over-riding factor is the comfort and ease of your singing, and the health of your voice. It is generally recommended, for the healthy development of your future voice, that you should always try to sing in the lowest comfortable range.

This is where *Changing Voices* will help you. Find the songs that have the lowest, most comfortable range and adjust them accordingly as your voice-change progresses. When deciding what key to sing in, the most important thing is always that the whole song lies comfortably within your vocal range. Expressed another way, make certain that the tessitura of the song is right for you. (Tessitura is an Italian word meaning, literally, “texture”, and refers to the general ‘lie’ of a song. If there are a lot of high notes in a piece then it is said to have a high tessitura; if it has many low notes it has a low tessitura.)

If you like studying diagrams and charts, have a look at page 6, which shows very clearly the five stages of voice-change. You can use this chart to track your own development.

## the songs

In order to cater for all these new conditions, the songs in this book have been chosen for the following reasons:

- They are, or can be, restricted to an octave range or less.
- They contain no vocal gymnastics. This will help the handling of your new, larger and temporarily less responsive instrument.
- They provide interesting material, both musical and poetic.
- They cover a range of musical standards, periods and styles.

## the text pages

To help choose suitable songs and enjoy them to the full, each song is preceded by useful information:

- The text, presented as a poem – because the text is ALWAYS important, and the best place to start.
- For songs in foreign languages, a guide to how to pronounce the text using the International Phonetic Alphabet, or IPA (see page 110), and a poetic translation of the text. There is also a word-for-word translation immediately under the text in the music.
- The vocal range of the song. Most songs are printed in more than one key and with alternative note suggestions, so that it is often possible to keep singing it, even as your voice descends.
- Background information about the song and composer.
- Performance notes, which suggest ways in which you might develop technically, and as a performer.

Given the right songs and a good teacher there is absolutely no reason why every singer should not continue to sing with confidence and enjoyment right through this period of change.

## **FURTHER NOTE FOR TEACHERS**

In recent years there has been a change in attitude towards the question of whether or not to sing through voice change, with the prevailing wisdom now being that it is both safe and advisable to do so. As singing teachers, we know (from regularly teaching adolescent boys ourselves and from conversations with colleagues) how difficult it is to find suitable songs for this crucial stage of vocal development. We have long wished for a volume of appropriate songs and finally decided to do the job ourselves. We have spent many challenging and enjoyable hours seeking out these songs.

Here then was our task: to provide interesting, quality pieces (including new commissions) within a suitably small vocal range, presented in appropriate keys, which enable the young male singer with a changing voice to remain engaged with his singing activities in an enjoyable and, above all, safe manner. Our selection has been guided by the fact that no two boys will have the same speed of vocal change, usable range, musical tastes or level of experience.

Each song is presented in one or more keys that we feel appropriate to the changing voice. When sung down an octave, they avoid the area above middle C which is often so difficult for a young male voice.

As the voice changes, notes slip out of, or into, reach. This is no reason to stop singing a particular song. It is better, if possible, to transpose it. When deciding the appropriate key for the singer, it is advisable to err on the side of caution and opt for the lowest comfortable key.

Generally speaking we have limited the repertoire to songs within an octave range. Some singers keep a workable range of more than an octave, but for the many who do not we have made suggestions for altering occasional notes to bring the melody within a manageable range. After all there is no reason why a singer should miss out on a really good song, merely for lack of one note! We have also tried to avoid awkward intervals and the need for vocal agility. The changing voice has enough to cope with without adding such obstacles. The number of appropriate songs with a range of a fifth or sixth is remarkably small, and we are delighted that two composers have taken up the challenge of creating good material of this type with exciting results. We hope these new commissions will encourage other composers to do likewise.

We have tried to select a great variety of material, with an eye for text as well as music, and ranging from simple folk and traditional tunes (in imaginative new arrangements) through to some quite sophisticated songs. In the mix are songs from musicals, comic songs, songs from different centuries, songs mostly in English but also some in French, Italian, German and Spanish. Our main criteria have been that the songs should be enjoyable and challenging, without placing strain on the voice, and that they should be stimulating and inspiring.

Although most of the songs are printed in the treble clef it is our intention that the teacher will guide the singer to sing an octave lower than printed as soon as he comfortably has the notes. In order to provide musical challenges, we have also included some songs in the bass clef, and one song which can be used as a duet. Learning to sing in a different clef can provide a sense of musical progression at a time when vocal progress may feel compromised. And there is nothing like duet singing for helping to make music-making more sociable. The duet could be used equally well for a group of singers, for a male and female, or for two males.

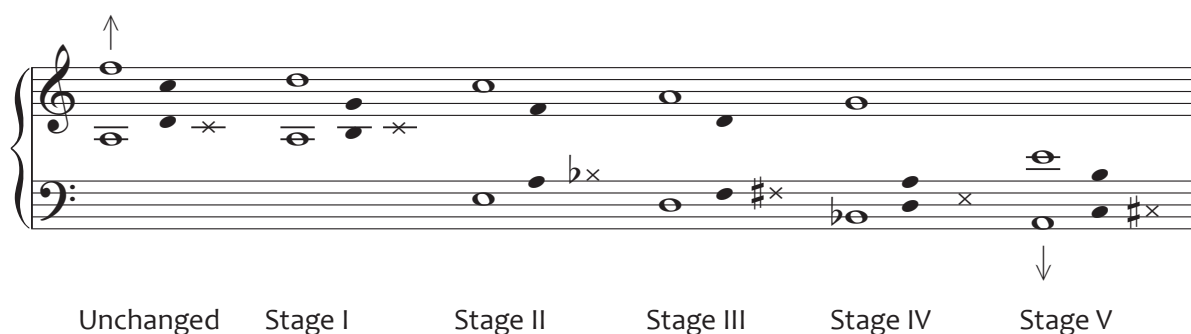
We believe that by encouraging boys with changing voices to continue their singing of good repertoire which avoids overstretching the voice, there is a stronger probability that they will continue to sing in later life. The songs we have chosen avoid the extremes. They are not too high, too low, too loud or too quiet, but are intended to challenge and inspire. We trust and hope that we are thereby helping the young singer to enjoy a long, healthy and fulfilling musical life.

For this particular period in a young male singer's life we believe the song must fit the singer rather than the singer fit the song.

Liza Hobbs  
Veronica Veysey Campbell

## COOKSEY'S VOICE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

This table is useful for illustrating the way a voice develops from a treble into a young adult voice, and was devised by the American voice researcher John Cooksey. It is useful, but always remember that it is **only a guide**.



1. The unfilled notes show the usual full possible singing range.
2. The filled notes show the comfortable “modal”, or speaking pitch range, in which it is usually safe to sing.
3. The cross indicates what is known as the speech fundamental frequency. It can be found easily. Simply count backwards from 20, in a normal unforced way, and the voice will settle comfortably on a certain pitch by the time you reach “one”. This pitch is usually three or four semitones above the lowest possible sung pitch. By using this simple procedure from time to time the gradual descent of the voice can easily be plotted.

It is generally far better to work out where the voice is by working from the bottom upwards. The top of the voice can be unpredictable and therefore more confusing to assess.

### Acknowledgements

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Photo credits, back cover: Victoria Carew Hunt (Veronica Veysey Campbell); Adrian Pope (Liza Hobbs).



in E $\flat$   
(page 8)in B $\flat$   
(page 11)

# Leave her, Johnny

TRADITIONAL

ARR. JOHN OWEN EDWARDS

This is a fine example of a sea shanty, which is a sailors' work song. All sea-faring nations have a rich heritage of sea shanties and the English-speaking world has its fair share of them. Sea shanties were developed partly to relieve the extreme boredom of long, lonely voyages, and partly to help keep large groups of men working rhythmically together on various physical tasks: hoisting sails, hauling lines, raising the anchor. This particular shanty was used when pumping water out of a wooden ship's bilge hold – a regular chore for sailors. Often sung towards the end of a voyage, it airs grievances about conditions on board. There are dozens of different verses to this song and here you will find a small selection that will give you a flavour. The "her" of the song is the ship itself.

## text:

*Oh the times are hard and the wages low,  
Leave her, Johnny, leave her,  
But now once more ashore we'll go,  
It's time for us to leave her.*

*The winds were foul and the work was hard,  
Leave her Johnny, leave her,  
From the Liverpool dock to the London yard,  
It's time for us to leave her.*

*The mate was a bucko\* and the old man a Turk\*\*, etc.  
The boatswain\*\*\* was a beggar  
with the middle name of "Work", etc.*

*I hate to sail on this rotten tub, etc.  
No grog was allowed, there was mouldy grub, etc.*

*There was rotten meat and weevily bread, etc.  
"You can eat it or starve," the old man said, etc.*

*The cook is a drunk, he likes to booze, etc.  
'Tween him and the mate there's little to choose, etc.*

*The old man swears and the mate swears too, etc.  
The crew all swear, and so would you, etc.*

*I thought I heard the old man say, etc.  
"You can now go ashore and spend your pay", etc.*

\*a "bucko" is a swaggering fellow

\*\* a "Turk" is an unmanageable, unpredictable man

\*\*\* a "boatswain" (or "bosun") is a crew's foreman

## performing advice:

The two most important elements in this song are the rhythm, which must remain consistent throughout, and the words. Learn the first verse thoroughly before you begin the subsequent verses since – as with all such traditional songs – note values are adjusted in order to make the words fit the tune.

Always think about how you stand when you sing. Stand tall with a feeling of lengthening the back of your neck. It will help you avoid letting your head drop forward as you sing. This would adversely affect the quality of the sound and is a difficult habit to break once established.

# Leave her, Johnny

Traditional  
arr. John Owen Edwards

**Con brio**

Oh the times are hard\_ and the  
mate was a buck-o and the  
rot - ten\_ meat\_ and\_

6

wa - ges\_ low,  
old man a Turk  
wee - vil - y bread,

*Leave her, John - ny, leave her,*

But now once more a -  
The boat-swain was a beg-gar with the  
“You can eat it\_ or starve”, the\_

10

-shore we'll go,  
mid-dle name of “Work”, *It's time for us to leave her.*  
old\_ man\_ said,

The\_  
I\_  
The\_



15

winds were foul\_\_ and the work was\_\_ hard, From the  
 hate to sail\_\_ on this rot - ten\_\_ tub, Leave her, John - ny, leave her, No\_\_  
 cook is a drunk, he\_\_ likes to\_\_ booze, 'Tween

19

Li - ver-pool dock to the Lon - don\_\_ yard,  
 grog was al - lowed, there was mould - y\_\_ grub, It's time for us to leave her.  
 him and the mate there's lit - tle to choose,

23

The  
 There was The\_\_ old man swears and the

29

mate swears too, *Leave her, John - ny, leave her,* The crew all swear, and so would you. *It's*

This system contains measures 29 through 33. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: "mate swears too, Leave her, John - ny, leave her, The crew all swear, and so would you. It's". The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff with a key signature of two flats. It features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand.

34

time for us to leave her. I\_\_\_ thought I heard the\_\_\_ old man\_ say

This system contains measures 34 through 39. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "time for us to leave her. I\_\_\_ thought I heard the\_\_\_ old man\_ say". The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic support, including some arpeggiated figures in the right hand.

40

*Leave her, John - ny, leave her,* "You can now go a - shore and spend your\_\_\_ pay", *It's*

This system contains measures 40 through 43. The vocal line begins with the lyrics: "Leave her, John - ny, leave her, 'You can now go a - shore and spend your\_\_\_ pay', It's". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

44

time for us to leave her.

This system contains measures 44 through 48. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "time for us to leave her.". The piano accompaniment concludes the phrase with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a final cadence in both hands.