



Voice feminization and masculinization techniques for singers

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Use of the term “transgender”

In an attempt to maintain cohesiveness and simplicity, this presentation will use “transgender” as an umbrella term that encompasses any individual whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex and/or gender they were assigned at birth.



What do we perceive in a voice?

- Accent/dialect
- Age
- Physical image of the person
- Level of education
- Race & Ethnicity
- Health
- Gender



Cues that lead to gender perception in voices

Masculine-perceived sounds and performance practices:

- Low pitch
- Dark resonance
- TA-dominant production
- Percussive inflection and emphasis
- More abrupt cutoffs and onsets
- Gestures originate from shoulders and hips



Cues that lead to gender perception in voices

Feminine-perceived sounds:

- High Pitch
- Bright resonance
- CT-dominant production
- More fluid inflection and emphasis
- Less abrupt cutoffs and onsets
- Gestures originate from elbows, wrists, and knees



Meet Q!

<http://www.genderlessvoice.com>

- What are our biases and how do we hear gender as individuals?
- Where do you hear gender neutral, feminine, masculine? Is it different from your neighbor?
- What aspects of voice do you hear that lead you to hear feminine, masculine, or neutral?



The collision of singing and gender

- Repertoire
- Voice part and Fach assignments
- Choral titles and voice parts
- Singing competitions
- Auditions and casting
- Bathrooms/dressing rooms



Gender dysphoria and voice

Gender dysphoria:

The feeling that one's assigned sex and/or gender is not congruent with one's experienced gender. Dysphoria can manifest as discomfort or distress about various aspects of gender identity, expression, and perception, including voice.

Voice dysphoria:

The discomfort that arises when some aspect(s) of voice, speech, and communication are not congruent with how someone wishes to express themselves or be perceived as they move through the world.



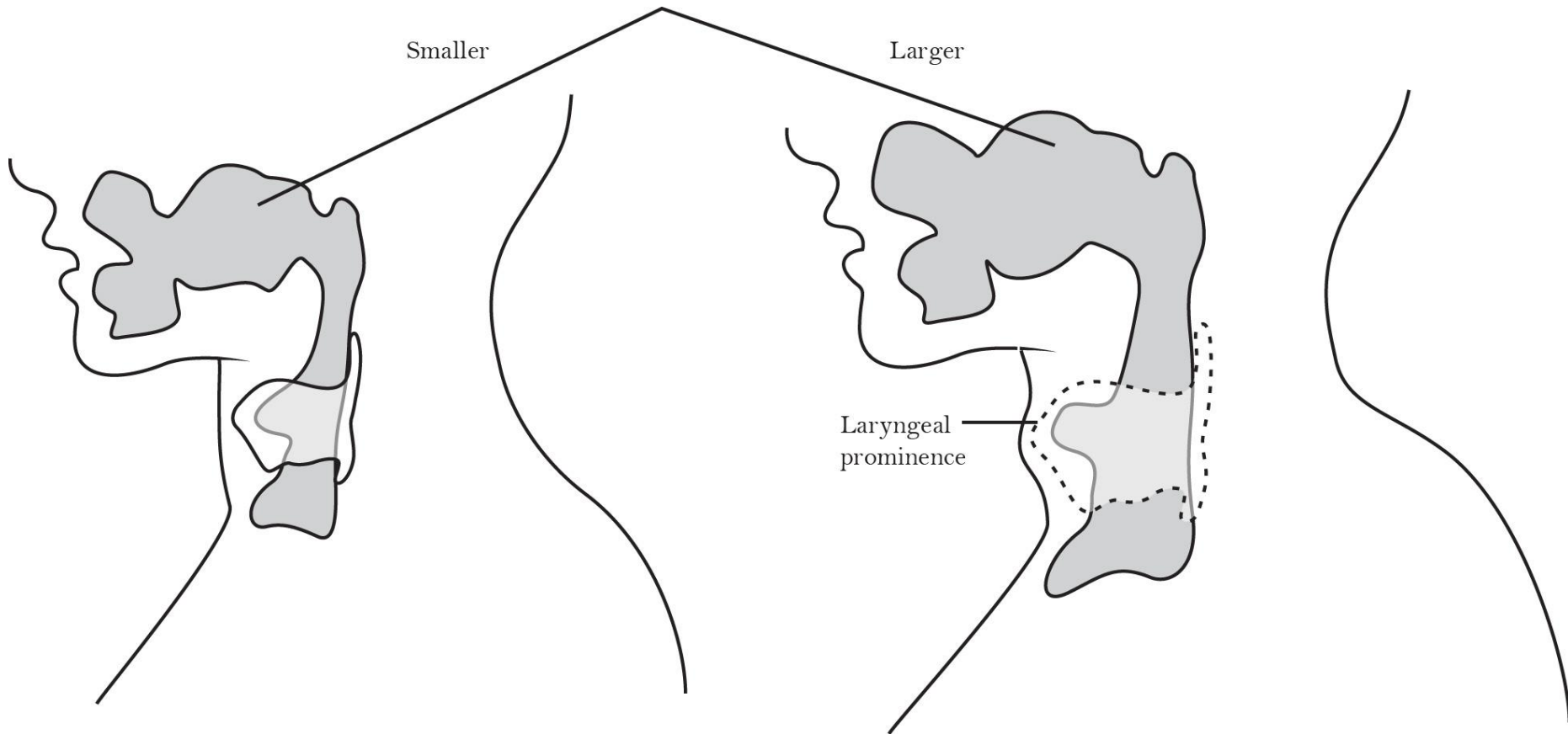
We can't assume what our students want

- What are your pronouns? (Groovy! Mine are _____)
- What do you like or dislike about your voice?
- How do you feel about the high and low parts of your voice?
- Are there times when you feel disconnected from your voice?
- How is it for you to sing certain [gendered] roles?
- What kinds of repertoire do you envision yourself exploring?
- How would you describe your ideal voice?



Influencing gender perception in singing voices

Physical and physiological factors that influence gender perception in voices





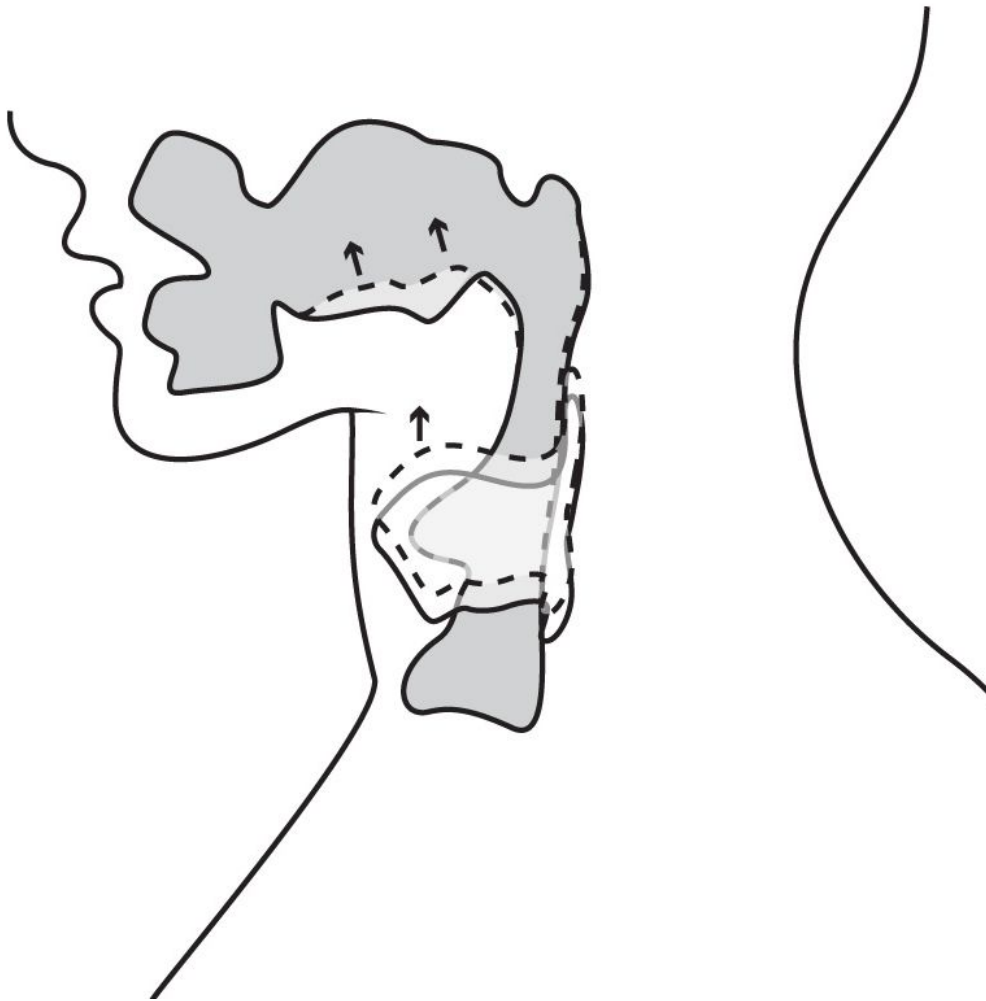
Voice Feminization

The process of changing aspects like pitch, resonance, registration, prosody, articulation, musicality, interpretation, characterization, gesticulation, etc. in order to influence the listener or audience member to perceive a *more feminine*, though not necessarily or exclusively “female,” voice.



Breanna Sinclair (she/her)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WaUTmg9XbE>



Voice feminization

- High, forward tongue position to achieve:
- Higher larynx position
- Smaller resonance tract
- Wider lips /i/ shape
- Resonance toward middle and front of mouth
- Articulation at tip of tongue:
 - Light, distinct, aspirated
- Light cutoffs and onsets
- Head voice/CT-dominant registration
- Higher Qo
- Release tension in tongue, jaw, thyrohyoid, palate



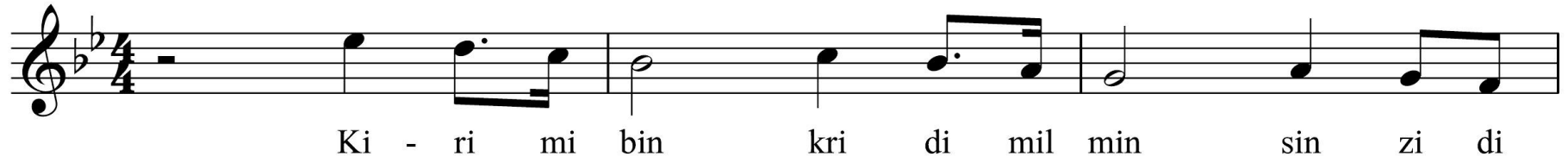
Common challenges in voice feminization

- Unfamiliarity with sensations of head voice
- Dysphoric disconnection from sensations of resonance in head or face - proceed with care
- Tension at back/root of tongue, thyrohyoid muscle, and palate
- Association between larynx position and pitch
- Percussive onsets and cutoffs



Exercises for voice feminization

- Soft onset and/or pant-singing
- Abrupt, intentional register shifts
- Tongue release exercises
- i-ification (thank you, Sandy Hirsch!)
 - High, forward tongue position
 - Forward-feeling resonance
- Tongue twisters



Musical staff in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The lyrics are: Ki - ri mi bin kri di mil min sin zi di



Musical staff in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The lyrics are: ti liŋ gwi fil kir____



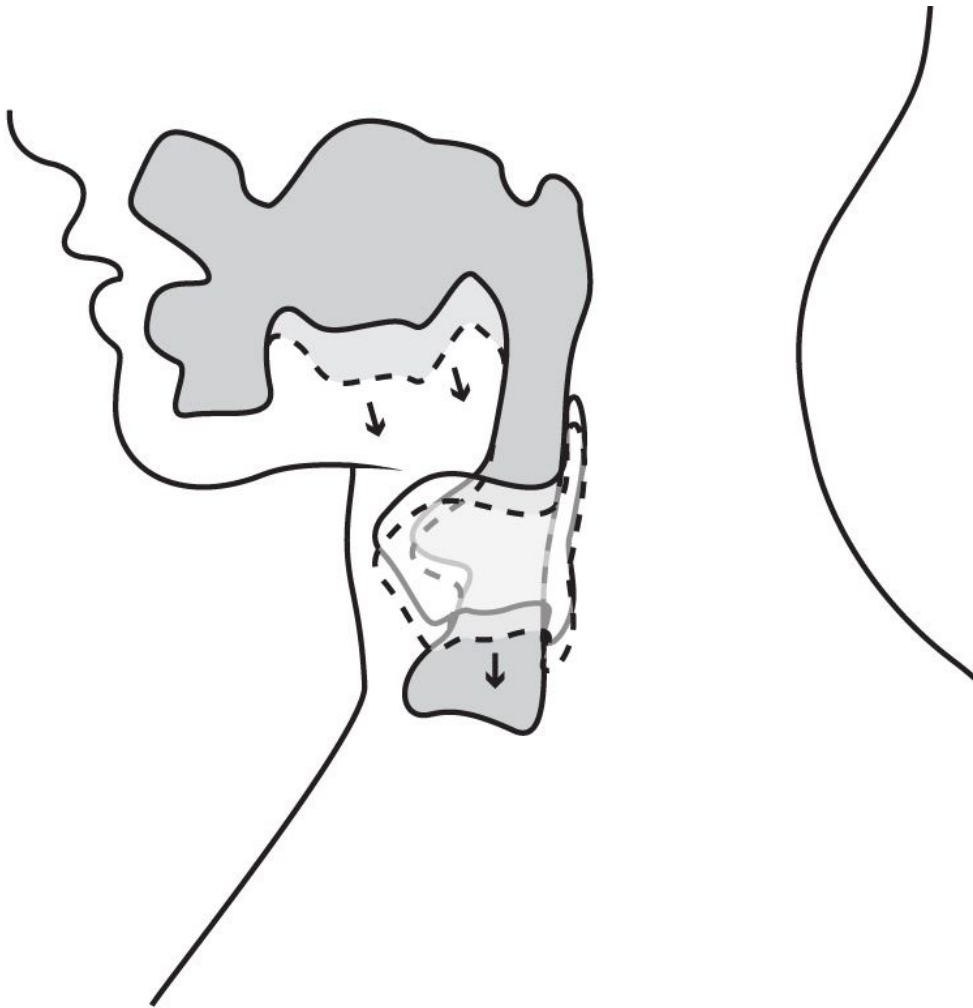
Voice Masculinization

The process of changing aspects like pitch, resonance, registration, prosody, articulation, musicality, interpretation, characterization, gesticulation, etc. in order to influence the listener or audience member to perceive a *more masculine*, though not necessarily or exclusively “male,” voice.



Holden Madagame (he/him)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kr87n4SKAs0>



Voice masculinization

- Low, back tongue position to achieve:
- Lower larynx position
- Broader, longer resonance tract
- Narrower lips /u/ shape
- Resonance toward back and top of mouth
- Articulation at back of tongue:
 - Clear, percussive, not aspirated
- Percussive cutoffs and onsets
- Chest voice/TA-dominant registration
- Lower Qo
- Release tension in tongue, jaw, constrictors



Common challenges in voice masculinization

- Unfamiliarity with sensations of chest voice
- Dysphoric hypervigilance or disconnection from sensations of resonance in chest/body - proceed with care
- Tension at chest/head break - difficulty navigating chest/head break
- With testosterone: remapping vocal range and passaggi
- With testosterone: raspiness in chest voice



Exercises for voice masculinization

- Glottal onset, low-volume, chest voice exercises
- “Chet” laughing/staccato
- Abrupt, intentional register shifts
- Uh-ification
- “One Weird Trick” articulation exercise

ka - ra ma ban kra da mal man san za da

ta lan gwa sal kar_____



i-ification and uh-ification

When the sunlight strikes raindrops in the air, they act like a prism and form a rainbow.



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