

The Purpose and History Behind the Term, *Cambiata*

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The purpose:

The term *cambiata* offers the teacher and the student a label that promotes a special understanding of the unique timbre and range of the early adolescent male changing voice. The early adolescent male voice is not the voice of a child (soprano, alto) or the voice of an adult (soprano, alto, tenor, bass). The term, *cambiata*, eliminates any unnecessary connotations associated with these typical classifications and appropriately acknowledges the special pedagogical considerations that should be observed when working with adolescent changing/transitioning/mutating male voices.

The history:

Phase One: The Cambiata Concept was researched, devised, and promulgated by Irving Cooper, Professor of Music Education at Florida State University, 1950-1970. The term *cambiata* comes from the theoretical terminology *nota cambiata*; meaning *changing note*. Cooper adapted it to *cambiata voce*; or *changing voice*. Originally, the "cambiata concept" identified a method for dealing with boys' changing voices; however, since Cooper's death, it has grown to encompass a comprehensive philosophy and methodology of teaching choral music to early-adolescents.

Born in England, Cooper emigrated to Canada after college to teach music in the public schools. For fifteen years he taught at the high school level in the Montreal. After earning a doctorate from McGill University, Cooper became the music supervisor for the entire Montreal system. While supervising middle-level classrooms, he observed that instead of singing in music class, many boys were assigned to study period. This lack of musical involvement by these adolescent males led him to investigate ways to improve participation. Through in-depth study of early-adolescent voices, he determined that adolescent males could sing throughout the period of vocal mutation, as long as the music matched their unique vocal range.

Cooper devoted the last 30 years of his life to learning the unique properties of the early-adolescent voice. His concepts have been recognized throughout the United States, Canada, England, France, Russia, Brazil, Japan, and Hungary. His publications include 22 books of song collections arranged for changing voices; *Letters to Pat*, a professional book for middle-level school music teachers; *Teaching Junior High School Music*, a college textbook; *The Reading Singer*, a sight-reading method for adolescents; and a sound-color movie, *The Changing Voice*, which was a blue-ribbon winner at the American Film Festival. At the time of his death in 1971, he was chairman of the International Research Committee for the Study of Changing Voice Phenomena with the International Society of Music Education.

Phase Two: Many students were profoundly influenced by Cooper's work during his 20-year tenure at Florida State University. One such student was Don L. Collins, a Florida State doctoral candidate, who studied with Cooper from 1967-1970. In 1979, eight years after Cooper's death, Collins, a native Texan, founded and became the first director of the Cambiata Vocal Music Institute of America, an incorporated, non-profit, state-chartered educational institution, located in Arkansas.

Dr. Collins joined the music faculty at the University of Central Arkansas in 1970, and for the next 35 years, he taught a full range of courses in choral music education and coordinated the music education program. An active presenter and conductor, he established the Arkansas Boys Choir which would ultimately perform for both the Music Educator's National Conference in Chicago and the regional meeting of the American Choral Director's Association in Lawton, Oklahoma. Under the auspices of the Cambiata Institute, his research resulted in the publication of several books: *The Cambiata Concept, A Comprehensive Philosophy and Methodology of Teaching Music to Adolescents*; *The Adolescent Reading Singer*, and *The Changing Voice Choral Library*, a set of five volumes of literature for adolescent singers. The second edition of his textbook, *Teaching Choral Music*, released in 1999 by Prentice-Hall, is currently being used in music education methods classes throughout the United States. Today, Dr. Collins continues to remain active with the original publication arm, Cambiata Press. In 2012, at the first MS/JH National Conference for Choral Music (Dallas, TX), Collins was awarded the Lifetime Achieve Award for his work with adolescent voices.

Phase Three: In spring 2008, I received a telephone call from Dr. Collins. He asked for a meeting to discuss the future of the Cambiata Institute. He had become

acquainted with my work with the cambiata voice and middle school choral music through a series of articles published in the *Choral Journal*, the official publication of the American Choral Directors Association. Following our meeting at UNT, and after several written correspondences, he invited me to become the new Director of the Cambiata Institute, a move that would include the relocation of the Institute to the campus of the University of North Texas.

The Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex is recognized throughout much of the United States for its rich choral tradition. Hundreds of north Texas choral music educators strive daily to give their best to thousands of middle school students. Similarly, the Cambiata Institute is recognized throughout the United States for contributing to the vocal music education of the early adolescent student. My extensive experiences with early adolescent/cambiata voices, secondary choral music education for grades 7-12 (19 years), administrative obligations, college teaching (20 years), research and publications, including the 2007 release of my textbook, *Movable Tonic, A Sequenced Method for Sight-Singing* with GIA Publications, have prepared me for this administrative challenge. I am grateful for having been recognized as a leader in this field and as Dr. Collins' choice to carry the Institute's work forward.