

Writing for Voice



THE **VOICE** PREDATES ANY OTHER INSTRUMENT...
EARLY HUMANS WERE **SINGING** EVEN
BEFORE THEY DEVELOPED **LANGUAGE!**

FROM **MOTETS** TO **OPERAS** TO **POP MUSIC**,
MUCH OF THE MOST **IMPORTANT** MUSIC
IN ALL OF HISTORY USES THE **VOICE**.

AND WHILE SOMETIMES JUST **SPEAKING TEXT OUT
LOUD** IS ENOUGH TO COME UP WITH A **FITTING MELODY**,
SETTING WORDS TO MUSIC CAN OFTEN BE A MUCH
MORE **DIFFICULT PROCESS!**

HAVEN'T COME UP WITH THE
WORDS YET? IF YOU'RE
WRITING THE MUSIC AND THE
LYRICS, THERE'S MORE WORK...
BUT ALSO MORE **FREEDOM!**

IT'S USUALLY EASIEST TO COME UP
WITH THE WORDS **FIRST** AND THEN
SET THEM TO **MUSIC**... THAT WAY,
THE **MELODY** AND **RHYTHM** WILL BE
MORE LIKELY TO **FIT THE TEXT**.

BUT THERE ARE SOME **GREAT SONGS**
WHERE THE **MUSIC** AND **LYRICS** CAME
ABOUT **SIMULTANEOUSLY**, OR EVEN
WHERE THE MUSIC WAS WRITTEN **FIRST**...
SO IT NEVER HURTS TO **EXPERIMENT!**

THE FIRST STEP IN SETTING TEXT IS **SCANSION**: THE PROCESS
OF IDENTIFYING ACCENTED AND UNACCENTED SYLLABLES.

ACCENTED
SYLLABLE

UNACCENTED
SYLLABLE

The Gilded Palace of Flying Burritos

THIS RHYTHM MATCHES
THE TEXT'S **SCANSION**,
BUT IT'S A BIT **DULL**...

LONG NOTES AND DOWNBEATS
ARE PERFECT FOR ACCENTS!



The Gild - ed Pal - ace of Fly - ing Bur - ri - tos

AN UNACCENTED SYLLABLE
ON A LONG NOTE? WILD!

OOH, A **REST!**
SINGERS LOVE TO **BREATHE!**



The Gild - ed Pal - ace of Fly - ing Bur - ri - tos

ADDING **RHYTHMIC VARIETY**
AND **TWEAKING THE
SCANSION** A BIT HELPS!

THEN IT'S TIME
TO ADD **MELODY!**



GOOD MELODIES ARE PREDOMINANTLY **STEPWISE**,
BUT OCCASIONAL **LEAPS** ARE **GOOD**... ESPECIALLY
LEADING INTO AN **ACCENTED SYLLABLE!**

OF COURSE, THE **RANGE**
AND **SHAPE** OF THE MELODY
SHOULD REFLECT THE **TONE**
OF THE **TEXT!**

AS FOR **NOTATION**, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS SPECIFIC TO **VOCAL MUSIC** TO BE AWARE OF:

MUSICAL DIRECTIONS LIKE
DYNAMICS GO **ABOVE** THE
STAFF TO AVOID LYRICS!

mf

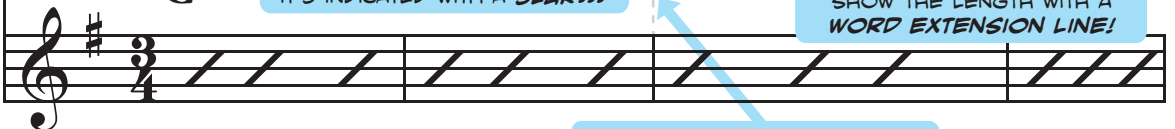
SEPARATE **SYLLABLES** IN
A WORD WITH A **SINGLE
CENTERED HYPHEN!**

Ex - cel - lent Nou - veau Mex - i - can Cui - sine

A **SINGLE SYLLABLE** SUNG
OVER **MORE THAN ONE NOTE**
IS CALLED A **MELISMA**, AND
IT'S INDICATED WITH A **SLUR**...

...AND IF THAT SYLLABLE IS AT
THE **END OF A WORD**,
SHOW THE LENGTH WITH A
WORD EXTENSION LINE!

Guitar



DON'T DRAW **BARLINES**
BETWEEN STAVES ON VOCAL
PARTS... IT MAKES THE LYRICS
HARDER TO READ!

LASTLY, WHEN WRITING
AN **ACCOMPANIMENT**,
THE **GENERAL GUIDELINE**
IS TO GIVE THE VOCAL PART
ROOM TO BREATHE!

LOOK FOR WAYS
TO BALANCE THE
VOICE PART'S **RANGE**:
IF IT GOES **HIGH**,
TRY GOING **LOW!**

AVOID **DOUBLING**
THE VOICE PART IN
THE ACCOMPANIMENT:
MOVE IN **PARALLEL THIRDS**,
OR IN **SIXTHS**, OR IN
COUNTERPOINT!

ADD MOTION DURING
THE VOICE'S **LONG
NOTES** OR **RESTS**...
AND WHEN THE VOICE IS
MOVING, HOLD BACK
AND **LET IT SHINE!**