Male Ensemble Northwest Vocalises
submitted by: Dr. Howard Meharg, conductor

This exercise I stole from Robert Shaw. Beginning with a minor third, the choir sings "oo" on the lower pitch, moving up to "ah" twice, ending on the original pitch. The exercise is repeated singing a perfect 4th, then a perfect fifth, then a diminished fifth, perfect 4th, ending on the minor 3rd. Sometimes I go to a major or minor second.

Shaw had us close our eyes and slowly turn while singing to concentrate on the acoustic in which we were singing. The object is to get the choir to move between the vowels and pitches smoothly; therefore, the choir works on support, intonation, and unification of vowel sound.

This exercise is designed to help the student become familiar with the muscles that help to lift the soft palate at the back of the throat. You start on "ng" putting as much air through the nose as possible. As you open to "aw" be aware of what is happening at the back of the throat. As you finish "aw" keep the soft palate lifted and begin a slow breath. While the throat is still held open begin the five note descending scale.

This next exercise is designed to help the student maintain breath control throughout the phrase and to become aware of the diaphragmatic musculature. As you sing the ascending line of "va vee vaw" be sure to sing through each "vee" sound by lengthening each "v". Do not attack the "v" sound thereby destroying the line. Sing each new "haw" with a short and detached sound. You should have a strong sensation of your diaphragm at work during these notes. The last "haw" should be sung in a connected style as is the rest of the exercise.