

Euphony

Euphony: an harmonious succession of words having a pleasant sound.

Euphony is largely a matter of personal discrimination, and what sounds euphonious to one listener might not please another. However, some general concepts might be useful to consider when trying to make a passage contribute to the flow of syllables:

sounds formed by the similar regions of the singer's lips or mouth (e.g. *consonants* are all formed with the tongue placed in a very similar position, as in "Not a Todd, a Donatello" or *vowels* all emanate from similar positions, as in "Oh, the old folks of yore") This is where consonance and assonance can be of enormous assistance.

Sufficient duration of notes to allow pronunciation of the syllables. A rapid patter song, for instance, might benefit from "tiny" syllables which are easily articulated with the tip of the tongue or the front of the lips (e.g., pit a pat o' butter, bitter batter bitter batter) rather than clustered consonants. (e.g., pit a pat o' scotch torch, bitter batter lobster bisque stirred)

initial consonants repeat preceding consonants. For example: "lonely yellow window washer." However, please see the caution immediately below in *Clustered Consonants*, however...often the meaning of a phrase is unclear, or worse, means something *else*, if the consonants are elided rather than articulated. (e.g., "big guy" = "big eye")

Unsuccessful Euphony Interrupting the flow of syllables

Clustered consonants

If there are too many consonants clustered near each other, or if the consonants require a great deal of articulation, then either the singer must apply overly-percussive diction, or under-percussive diction. Too much spitting of consonants, and the audience will be distracted by the sound *and not the meaning* of the words. Too little spitting of consonants, and the

audience might not understand the actual syllables themselves.

Consider these examples of clustered consonants, which probably require a distracting amount of diction in order to be understood:

couch scratch (singer needs to finish the word "couch" and take a tiny pause before beginning "scratch")

my palms should sweat (might sound like "my palm sh'sweat")

passengers' luggage glides (although on the surface, looks like it ought to be effective consonance, the *guh* of "luggage" and the *guh* of "glides" have a cumulative gulping effect which, although understandable, is not very pleasing to the ear.)

The mask must see (risks sounding like "mask mussee")

big guy (might sound like "big eye")

last time (hard to separate words without sounding stilted)

Diction/Syntax

Good euphony might be undone by the actual *words themselves*. Words which are not consistent with a character's background might jump out of context and be distracting. Inverting word order in order to accommodate a rhyme might interfere with the meaning of a phrase. Too much alliteration or consonance might call attention to the cleverness of the lyricist.

Examples of Euphony

1. Real Live Girl

(Carolyn Leigh)

Pardon me, Miss,
But I've never done this
With a real live girl.
Strayed off the farm
With an actual armful of real live girl.
Pardon me if your affectional squeeze
Fogs up my goggles and buckles my knees.
*I'm simply drowned in the sight
And the sound and the scent
And the feel of a real live girl.*

2. Another Hundred People

(Stephen Sondheim, *Company*)

*Another hundred people just got off of the train
And came up through the ground,
While another hundred people just got off of the bus
And are looking around
At another hundred people who got off of the plane
And are looking at us
Who got off of the train
And the plane and the bus
Maybe yesterday.*

3. Together Wherever We Go (Tr.#2)

(Stephen Sondheim, *Gypsy*)

Wherever we go,
Whatever we do,
We're gonna go through it
Together.
Wherever we sleep,
If the prices are steep,
We'll always sleep cheaper
Together.
*Whatever the boat I row, you row.
Whatever the row I hoe, you hoe.
And any I.O.U. I owe, you owe,
No, we owe together.*

4. One

(Edward Kleban, *A Chorus Line*)

She walks into a room
And you know from her maddening poise, effortless
whirl,
She's the special girl strolling.
Can't help all of her qualities extolling.
Loaded with charisma
Is my jauntily, sauntering, ambling shambler.

5. Long Ago and Far Away

(Ira Gershwin)

Long ago and far away
I dreamed a dream one day.
And now that dream is here beside me.
Long ago the skies were overcast,
But now the clouds have passed:
You're here at last!
Chills run up and down my spine,
Aladdin's lamp is mine;
The dream I dreamed was not denied me
Just one look and then I knew
That all I longed for long ago was you.

6. Cocktail Party

(Oscar Hammerstein, *Allegro*)

*Yatata, yatata, yatata, yatata,
Yatata, yatata, yatata, yatata,*

Doctor, Doctor,
I need another shot!
(The shots he gives are too divine!
He fills a little needle and he gives you all it's got.
Your fanny hurts, but you feel fine.)

*Broccoli, Hogwash, Balderdash,
Phony, Baloney, Tripe, and Trash!
Goodness knows where the day has gone!
The years of a life are quickly gone,
But the talk, talk, talk goes on and on
And on and on and on.
The prattle and the tattle,
The gab and the gush,
The chatter and the patter,
And the twaddle and the tush
Go on and on and on and on and on.*

7. Color and Light

(Stephen Sondheim, *Sunday in the Park with George*)

GEORGE

More red...

And a little more red...

Blue blue blue blue

Blue blue blue blue

Even even...

Good...

Bumbum bum bumbumbum

Bumbum bum...

More red...

More blue...

More beer...

More light!

Color and light.

There's only color and light.

Yellow and white.

Just blue and yellow and white.

Look at the air, miss-

See what I mean?

No, look over there, miss-

That's done with green...

Conjoined with orange...

[...]

Red red red red

Red red orange

Red red orange

Orange pick up blue

Pick up red

Pick up orange

From the blue-green blue-green

Blue-green circle

On the violet diagonal

Di-ag-ag-ag-ag-ag-o-nal-nal

Yellow comma yellow comma

Numnum num numnumnum

Numnum num...

Blue blue blue blue

Blue still sitting

Red that perfume

Blue all night

Blue-green the window shut

Dut dut dut

Dot Dot sitting

Dot Dot waiting

Dot Dot getting fat fat fat

More yellow

Dot Dot waiting to go

Out out out

No no no George

Finish the hat finish the hat

Have to finish the hat first

Hat hat hat hat

Hot hot hot it's hot in here...

Sunday!

Color and light!

8. We're Off to See the Wizard

(E.Y. Harburg, *The Wizard of Oz*)

Follow the yellow brick road,

Follow the yellow brick road,

Follow, follow, follow, follow,

Follow the yellow brick road.

Follow the rainbow over the stream,

Follow the fellow who follows a dream,

Follow, follow, follow, follow,

Follow the yellow brick road.

We're off to see the wizard,

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.

We hear he is

A whiz of a Wiz

If ever a Wiz there was.

If ever, oh ever a Wiz there was,

The Wizard of Oz is one becoz,

Becoz, becoz, becoz, becoz, becoz,

Becoz of the wonderful things he does.

We're off to see the wizard,

The wonderful Wizard of Oz.

9. If I were a Rich Man (Tr.#3)

(Sheldon Harnick, *Fiddler on the Roof*)

If I were a rich man,

Daidle deedle daidle digguh digguh deedle daidle dum.

All day long I'd biddy-biddy-bum,

If I were a wealthy man.

I wouldn't have to work hard,

Daidle deedle daidle digguh digguh deedle daidle dum.

If I were a biddy-biddy-rich

Digguh digguh deedle daidle man.

Etc.