A CAPPPELLA. Singing without instrumental accompaniment.

ALTO. The lowest pitched female singing voice; CONTRALTO.

APHONIA. No voice; loss of voice.

ARIA. Song, especially an operatic solo.

ARPEGGIO. Notes of a chord sung (or played) in succession.

ART SONG. Song, usually composed to erudite poetry, generally intended for formal performance.

ARTICULATION. Pronunciation of vowels and consonants.

ASPIRATE. Breathy.

ATROPHY. Withering or wasting away of a tissue or organ, as may occur in paralysis or aging.

ATTACK. Beginning of the vocal tone; ONSET.

B

BARITONE. A male voice having a lighter tonal quality than a bass and extending a few notes higher.

BASS. The lowest pitched male voice.

BEL CANTO. A style of singing prevalent in the 17th-18th centuries, characterized by beautiful tone, lyricism, and brilliant, florid vocal technique.

BELTING. Style of singing that uses an adjustment producing heavy tones throughout the vocal range.

BILATERAL. Pertaining to two (or both) sides.

BLEND. 1. The combination of voices in group singing so that individual performers are indistinguishable. 2. Smooth transitions between the registers of the singing voice.

BRAVAURA. Brilliant style or technique in performance.

BOGART-BACALL SYNDROME. A syndrome of vocal misuse, occurring most commonly in professional voice users and characterized by pitching the speaking voice too low.
BOTOX. A popular acronym for Botulinum toxin.

BOTULINUM TOXIN. A neuromuscular toxin that frequently is used to treat dystonias, specifically spasmodic dysphonia, by being injected into the affected muscles.

BREAK. A sudden shift in vocal registration; "crack" in the voice.

BREATH SUPPORT. Efficient and appropriate use of the breath stream for phonation.

BREATH STREAM. Column of exhaled air released from the lungs and used to activate the vocal cords to produce phonation.

BREATH SUPPORT. Efficient and appropriate use of the breath stream for singing.

BRIGHT. Tone abundant in high harmonic partials.

C

CANTOR. The official soloist or chief singer of the liturgy in a church or synagogue.

CARCINOMA. A generic term for some forms of cancer arising from the lining membranes of the body.
See also squamous cell carcinoma.

CASTRATO. Male singer castrated in boyhood in order to retain his alto or soprano voice (18th century or earlier).

CHEST REGISTER/TONE/VOICE. Adjustment that produces heavy tones suitable for loud singing and the lower range of the voice.

CLAVICULAR BREATHING. Inhaling by means of the muscles which normally move the shoulders; does not provide adequate control over exhalation.

COLORATURA. 1. Ornate embellishment in vocal music. 2. A singer specializing in coloratura, i.e., "coloratura soprano."

CONVERSION REACTION. Transformation of an emotion into a physical manifestation, as in conversion hysteria (e.g., conversion aphonia).

COUNTER-TENOR. A male singer who sings at the same pitch as an alto, either by extending his tenor voice or by singing falsetto.

COVERING. The technique of "darkening" the tone (increasing pharyngeal space), especially at register transition points.
CROONING. Style of singing popular during the "Big Band Era," characterized by a "smooth" tone that is light in intensity and depends upon a microphone for projection.

D

DARK. Tone lacking high harmonic partials.

DEPRESSED LARYNX. Adjustment produced by dropping the jaw and pressing it against the larynx, used to artificially deepen the voice.

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING. Technique of breath support in which the muscles of the lower back and abdomen are consciously engaged, in conjunction with the lowering of the diaphragm.

DIPLOPHONIA. A double-tone, usually associated with differential tension of the vocal folds, as in unilateral vocal cord paralysis.

DRAMATIC. A term used to designate a large operatic voice, especially suited to the performance of Verdi or Wagner; i.e., "dramatic soprano."

DYNAMICS. Variations in amplitude, or loudness/softness in musical performance.

DYSPHAGIA. Difficulty swallowing.

DYSPHONIA. Abnormal voice; a disorder of phonation; hoarseness.

DYSRESONANCE. A disorder of phonation characterized by reduced or abnormal resonance.

DYSTONIA. A disorder of muscle tonicity; spasmodic dysphonia is a focal laryngeal dystonia.

E

ELECTROMYOGRAPHY. A laboratory test in which the electrical activity of a muscle or of muscle groups is measured. Useful in determining the prognosis of vocal cord paralysis.

F

FALSETTO. The highest register of the voice.

FALSETTO. The lightest register; adjustment especially conducive to the production of the highest notes of the male voice.
FIORITURE. Embellishment to ornament the music.

FLORID. Ornamented, embellished, virtuosic.

FOCUSED. A singing tone that is acoustically efficient.

FORCED RESIDUAL CAPACITY (FRC). The amount of air that remains in the lung after the tidal volume (that used for quiet breathing and speaking) is expelled.

FORCED. Singing produced without excess muscular tension, "released."

FREE. Singing produced without excess muscular tension, "released."

FREQUENCY RANGE. 1. Distance between one's highest and lowest frequency; usually determined by instructing the individual to sing the highest note possible and then the lowest note possible. 2. A synonym for pitch range.

FREQUENCY. In acoustics, the number of repetitions of compressions and rarefactions of a sound wave that occur at the same rate over a period of time, usually expressed in Hertz (Hz) or cycles per second.

FRY, GLOTTAL/VOCAL. Toneless "rattle" produced by the vocal cords.

FULL VOICE. Highly resonant singing at maximum volume and capacity.

FUNCTIONAL VOICE DISORDER. A voice disorder that is caused by misuse or abuse of the anatomically and neurologically intact vocal apparatus.

G

GASTROESOPHAGEAL REFLUX (GER). Condition in which stomach contents flow in a retrograde fashion into the esophagus or upper aerodigestive tract. See also laryngopharyngeal reflux.

GLISSANDO. A "slide" through a series of consecutive pitches.

GLOBUS HYSTERICUS. The sensation of a lump in the throat supposedly due to hysteria.

GLOBUS (GLOBUS PHARYNGEUS). The sensation of a lump in the throat.

GLOTTAL ATTACK. Onset of phonation produced by excessive tension in the closure of the vocal cords; hyperadduction.

GLOTTIS (adj: GLOTTIC). The larynx or vocal apparatus, particularly the vocal cords themselves.
GRANULOMA. A benign growth resulting from infection and/or chronic irritation, most commonly due to gastroesophageal reflux.

GRANULOMATOUS DISEASE(S). Uncommon infectious and non-infectious inflammatory causes of laryngeal dysfunction, including fungal infections and tuberculosis.

H

HARMONIC PARTIALS. Frequencies (vibrations) that result from subdivisions of a fundamental pitch, and that occur simultaneously with the fundamental vibration, resulting in a complex or resonant tone, (see OVERTONE).

HEAD REGISTER/TONE/VOICE. Adjustment producing light, flute-like tones, conducive to soft and high singing.

HELDENTENOR. Tenor whose voice is powerful enough for Wagnerian operatic roles.

HEMORRHAGE. The escape of blood from the vessels; bleeding.

HEMATOMA. A localized collection of blood, usually clotted, in an organ, space, or tissue, due to a break in the wall of a blood vessel.

HYPOTHYROIDISM. A condition caused by the underproduction of thyroid hormone, and one of the causes of Reinke's edema (see below).

I

IDIOPATHIC. Of unknown cause.

INFECTION. Invasion and multiplication of microorganisms in body tissues.

INFLAMMATION. The protective response of a tissue or organ to injury, destruction, or infection.
K

L

LARYNGEAL WEB. A localized band of scar tissue between the vocal cords.

LARYNGITIS. Inflammation of the larynx.

LARYNGOLOGIST. An otolaryngologist who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of problems of the larynx and voice.

LARYNGOLOGY. The study of the larynx.

LARYNGOPHARYNGEAL REFLUX. Gastroesophageal reflux into the larynx and pharynx.

LARYNGOPLASTIC PHONOSURGERY. Plastic surgery of the laryngeal framework to alter (usually improve) the voice, such as for vocal cord paralysis.

LARYNGOPLASTY. A generic term for surgery of the laryngeal framework.

LARYNX. The voice box, the glottis, the vocal apparatus.

LEAD. In barbershop quartet singing, the second part from the top; the most prominent voice, generally the one carrying the melody.

LEGATO. The quality of being smooth and connected.

LIEDER. German art songs.

LINE. An essential of musical artistry, implying legato and consistency of timbre.

LYRIC. Poem especially suited to music.

M

MARKING. An aphonic rehearsal technique used by singers to preserve the voice.

MARKING. Rehearsing without using full voice.

MEDIALIZATION LARYNGOPLASTY. A laryngoplastic procedure performed to restore the voice after unilateral vocal cord paralysis.

MELODIE. French art song.
MESSA DI VOCE. A prolonged crescendo and decrescendo (increasing and decreasing amplitude) on a sustained tone.

MEZZA VOCE. Singing with only "half voice."

MEZZO SOPRANO. A voice slightly lower than a soprano, with a "darker" tone quality.

MIXED REGISTRATION/TONE/VOICE. Vocal adjustment having qualities of both light and heavy register.

MUSCLE TENSION DYSPHONIA. 1. A voice disorder characterized by abnormal or excessive laryngeal muscle tension. 2. A functional voice disorder associated with the vocal abuse and misuse syndromes.

N

NASAL. Tone produced by lowering the soft palate (velum) and using the nose as a resonator.

NEUROMUSCULAR. Pertaining to nerves and muscles.

NODULE. A small knot. See also vocal nodule.

O

ODYNOPHAGIA. Painful swallowing.

ODYNOPHONIA. Painful phonation or speaking.

OPEN THROAT. Condition considered desirable for resonance; large pharynx.

OPERA. Large musical work in which drama and music are combined, and performers sing and act.

OPTIMAL FUNDAMENTAL FREQUENCY (OFF). The frequency at which the vocal folds vibrate with the least amount of external force.

ORATORIO. Large musical composition for voices, narrating a story (usually sacred), without dramatic action.

ORGANIC VOICE DISORDER. A voice disorder that is not functional; that is, one that is caused by an abnormality of the organ, be it congenital, inflammatory, traumatic, or neoplastic.
OTOLARYNGOLOGIST. A physician specializing in problems of the ears, nose and throat. Also termed an otorhinolaryngologist.

OVERTONE. Harmonic partial higher than the fundamental frequency, which contributes to the resonant quality, or timbre of sound.

P

PAPILLOMA. A benign wart-like growth occurring in the larynx as a result of infection with a herpes-like virus.

PARALYSIS. Loss or impairment of motor function due to lesion of the neural or muscular mechanism.

PARESIS. Slight or incomplete paralysis.

PARKINSONISM. A group of neurological diseases characterized by weakness, tremor, and muscular rigidity. Believed to be due to a deficiency of dopamine in the basal ganglia of the brain.

PASSAGGIO. Transition ("passageway") from one vocal register to another.

PASSAGIO. That part of the pitch range of a singer's voice ("the passage") that is transitional between registers, especially the transition to the "head voice."

PATTER SONG. Song with many rapid words.

PHONATION. 1. Physiological process whereby the energy of moving air in the vocal tract is transformed into acoustic energy within the larynx. 2. Production of voiced sound by means of vocal fold vibration.

PITCH RANGE. 1. Distance between one's highest and lowest pitches; usually determined by instructing the individual to sing the highest note possible and then the lowest note possible. 2. A synonym for frequency range.

PITCH. The subjective quality of frequency.

PITCH-LOCKED. Inability to produce significant variations in the pitch of the voice.

PLACEMENT. Technique of singing guided by sensations of vibrations in the face, behind the teeth, in the nose, etc.; i.e., "forward placement."

POLYP. A protruding growth from a mucous membrane.
POLYPOID DEGENERATION. Markedly swollen vocal cords due to the accumulation of gelatinous material in the subepithelial (Reinke's) space. Reinke's edema is a synonym.

PORTAMENTO. "Carrying" the voice through all the pitches between the first and last sounded.

PRESBYLARYNX. Old age larynx; often associated with bowing and/or atrophy of the vocal cords.

PRIMA DONNA. Soprano soloist, especially the lead in an opera; "first lady."

PROJECTION. The ability of a voice to be heard without amplification.

PSYCHOGENIC. Produced or caused by psychic or mental factors rather than organic factors.

PURE TONE. Tone having no overtones; "simple tone."

RANGE. Frequency compass of the voice which is most efficient and aesthetically pleasing.

REFLUX LARYNGITIS. Inflammatory condition of the larynx resulting from gastroesophageal reflux, specifically from laryngopharyngeal reflux.

REFLUX. A condition in which stomach contents flow in a retrograde fashion into the esophagus or upper aerodigestive tract. See also gastroesophageal reflux and laryngopharyngeal reflux.

REGISTER. A series of tones that are produced by similar mechanical gestures of vocal fold vibration, glottal and pharyngeal shape, and related air pressure, with resulting similar tone quality.

REINKE'S EDEMA. Markedly swollen vocal cords due to the accumulation of gelatinous material in the subepithelial (Reinke's) space. Polypoid degeneration is a synonym.
RESONANCE. Intensification of sound by sympathetic vibration, resulting in harmonic partials, or overtones.

RICH. Tone containing many harmonic partials.

RING. Acoustic resonance at 2,500-3,000 Hz that enables a singer's voice to project over a full orchestra, in a large hall; "EDGE."

---

S

SCAT. Improvisational technique used in jazz ("bop") singing, consisting of wordless variations of sounds, often in imitation of instrumental jazz passages.

SCOOP. Undesirable singing habit of beginning a note beneath, then sliding up to the desired pitch.

SOPRANO. The highest pitched female singing voice.

SOTTO VOCE. In a soft voice.

SPASMODIC DYSPHONIA. A focal laryngeal dystonia. Spastic dysphonia and focal laryngeal dystonia are synonyms.

SPASTIC DYSPHONIA. A focal laryngeal dystonia. As above.

SPEAKING FUNDAMENTAL FREQUENCY (SFF). 1. The fundamental frequency most often used in spontaneous speech. 2. the central tendency of the pitches used by an individual. 3. the measurement or estimation of the habitual pitch.

SPEECH PATHOLOGY (PATHOLOGIST). 1. The study of abnormalities of speech and voice. 2. A specialist in speech, language and voice disorders.

SPREAD. Tone containing inharmonic partials; unfocused tone.

SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA. A malignant neoplasm (new growth) made of epithelial cells tending to infiltrate the surrounding tissues and give rise to metastasis (distant spread). (the most common type of cancer of the larynx and lung).

STACCATO. Each note separate, detached by a brief silence.

STENOSIS. Narrowing or stricture of a hollow organ, usually due to scar-tissue formation.

STROBOSCOPY. Use of an instrument by which the successive phases of vocal cord vibrations may be studied; motion may appear to come to rest.
SUBGLOTTIC STENOSIS. Narrowing or stricture of the larynx in the area just below the vocal cords.

SUBGLOTTIS (adj: SUBGLOTTIC). An anatomic term for that part of the larynx below the vocal cords, but above the trachea.

SUPRAGLOTTIC CONTRACTION. A term used to describe the finding commonly observed in muscle tension dysphonia and vocal cord paralysis in which the supraglottic structures appear to come together, often obscuring the vocal cords.

SUPRAGLOTTIS (adj: SUPRAGLOTTIC). An anatomic term for that part of the larynx above the vocal cords, including the ventricles, false vocal cords, aryepiglottic folds, and epiglottis.

SWIPE. In barbershop singing, a simultaneous glissando of four voices from one chord or harmony to a new one.

TEFLON INJECTION. A technique used to augment the vocal cord for vocal cord paralysis.

TENOR. Highest pitched of the male voices, except for the counter-tenor.

TESSITURA. 1. The general range of a melody or voice part. 2. The part of the register in which most of the tones of the melody or voice part lie.

TESSITURA. 1. That portion of a singer's range in which production is easiest and most beautiful. 2. Pitch compass of a composition in which most of the notes lie; if this is high, the piece is said to have a "high tessitura."

THROATY. Characterized by too much pharyngeal resonance and/or excessive pharyngeal tension; "swallowed", "dark" or "tight" tone.

TIDAL VOLUME. The amount of air that is inspired and expired during one respiratory cycle at rest or during quiet phonation.

TIMBRE. A subjective aspect of the harmonic structure of musical tone; resonant quality, tone-color.

TRANSNASAL FIBEROPTIC LARYNGOSCOPY (TFL). A technique for examining the larynx in which a small fiberoptic instrument is placed above the larynx, through the nose. The technique allows examination across the dynamic range of the voice and during connected speech.

TRAUMA. A wound or injury.
TREMOLO. Any vocal vibrato that is undesirable; i.e., too fast or too slow.

TREMOR. An involuntary trembling or quivering.

TRILL. A form of vocal ornamentation in which there is a rapid alternation between two notes, usually a step or half-step apart.

UNILATERAL. Affecting one side only.

UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION (URI). A viral or bacterial infection involving the nose and/or throat.

VENTRICLE. The anatomic recess between the true and false vocal cords.

VENTRICULAR CYST. An abnormal benign dilation of the laryngeal ventricle, usually caused by obstruction of the opening of the laryngeal saccule.

VIBRATO. A pulsating characteristic of tone due to regular, barely perceptible, rapid fluctuations in pitch, timbre, and/or intensity.

VIBRATO. Rhythmical fluctuations in amplitude and pitch of the voice, used most by classical singers.

VIDEOSTROBOSCOPY. A technique for evaluating laryngeal biomechanics in which a stroboscope and videotaping are used.

VOCAL POLYP. A unilateral pedunculated or sessile (broad based) polyp (not Reinke's edema).

VOCAL FOLD. The vocal cord.

VOCAL MISUSE. Incorrect use of pitch, volume, breath support, or rate which may occur singly or in combination.
VOCAL ABUSE. Mistreatment, usually by overuse, of the vocal cords, without regard for the consequences of improper treatment.

VOCAL NODULES. Bilaterally occurring thickenings at the junction of the anterior and middle thirds of the vocal folds, resulting from vocal misuse or abuse.

VOCAL CONSERVATION. Technique(s) used to preserve or improve vocal function.

VOCALISE. 1. (v.) To exercise the voice. 2. (n.) A passage practiced to maintain or develop technical skill in singing.

VOICE REST. Abstinence from phonation.


VOICE. The external phonatory output of the vocal tract.

VOWEL MODIFICATION. Adjustments in the usual pronunciation of vowels for more favorable resonance throughout the singing range.

WHISPER. Completely breathy sound.

WHISTLE REGISTER. The highest female register.

WOBBLE. Excessive vibrato.

YODELING. Singing characterized by obvious shifts in registration.