

INNER SINGING

The Role of Intonation

In the PianoWell approach, intonation refers to the internal act of singing between notes with glissando and a sense of resistance—similar to legato in instrumental playing or portamento in vocal technique.

Traditionally, intonation describes the precision of pitch in instruments like strings or in the voice, where the performer must actively sense and shape the distance between pitches. Although pianists press fixed keys, this same inner awareness is just as essential.

Without it, a pianist may struggle with technical stiffness, lack of expressiveness, and disconnection from the musical line. With it, however, you gain access to natural arm weight, nuanced articulation, tonal color, phrasing, and expressive energy when performing on stage.

Resistance: The Hidden Key to Intonation

Adding a sense of resistance to glissando-style internal singing is essential for developing control over the finger muscles of the palm—both in slow and fast tempos.

The energy you feel in this resistance directly translates to the energy and responsiveness in your finger muscles.

This resistance is also key to shaping musical expression. When you sing intervals with gentle resistance, it creates a subtle vibrato and frequency of energy, allowing your musical intention to be fully embodied.

Through this, you gain the ability to express:

- Arm weight
- Articulations
- Harmony
- Dynamics and voicing
- Musical speech and phrasing
- Musical form
- Your authentic voice
- Creativity and a sense of confidence



INTONATION

How Intonation Guides Technique

Intonation directly shapes touch, touch influences time and energy, and together, time and energy determine the quality of tone. You can clearly hear this when you sing with different articulations, musical characters, or structural elements—each one alters the timing and energy of your sound.

The same is true when you play. The sensations of intonation—especially the resistance you feel while singing between notes—send impulses to the finger muscles of the palm, which then guide your physical touch at the keyboard.

Because of this, intonation helps your hands remain relaxed and free of excess tension. The expressive energy of dynamics, articulations, and phrasing flows into the hands through the small, responsive muscles of the palm, rather than through force or rigidity in the larger muscles of the hands or arms.

This leads to a fluent, efficient technique, where fingers no longer need to lift excessively or work in isolation. Instead, movement becomes compact, natural, and expressive—centered in the core of the hand and fully guided by inner singing.



RESISTANCE IN INTONATION

The Evolution of Intonation

It's important to recognize that while resistance in the vocal cords is an essential starting point for developing intonation, this sensation will naturally begin to fade as your practice deepens and more musical elements are integrated.

This fading is not a loss of skill.

In fact, the sense of intonation remains fully present, just in a more refined and subtle form.

If you try to sing without inner singing or any sense of resistance, you'll quickly notice the difference—revealing how much is still active beneath the surface. What was once a physical feeling becomes more like an energetic awareness or an internal current. This is a natural and necessary shift.

You can compare it to the development of wrist motion at the keyboard:

In the beginning, 2D motion is distinct and deliberate—just as early vocal resistance is clearly felt. But as you integrate more advanced layers further along, this motion becomes 3D, more fluid and expressive. The original 2D gesture doesn't disappear—it becomes subtle, embodied, and intuitive, stored in muscle memory. What was once obvious now serves as an invisible foundation for greater freedom and complexity.

In the same way, as you begin using inner singing to express richer dimensions—such as sound texture, harmony, dynamics, or phrasing—the initial sensation of vocal resistance begins to dissolve, making space for a more subtle, internalized sense of intonation. This evolution is a sign of growth, and a sign that your inner voice is becoming more fully aligned with your instrument.

How to Avoid Flat Vibrato in Intonation

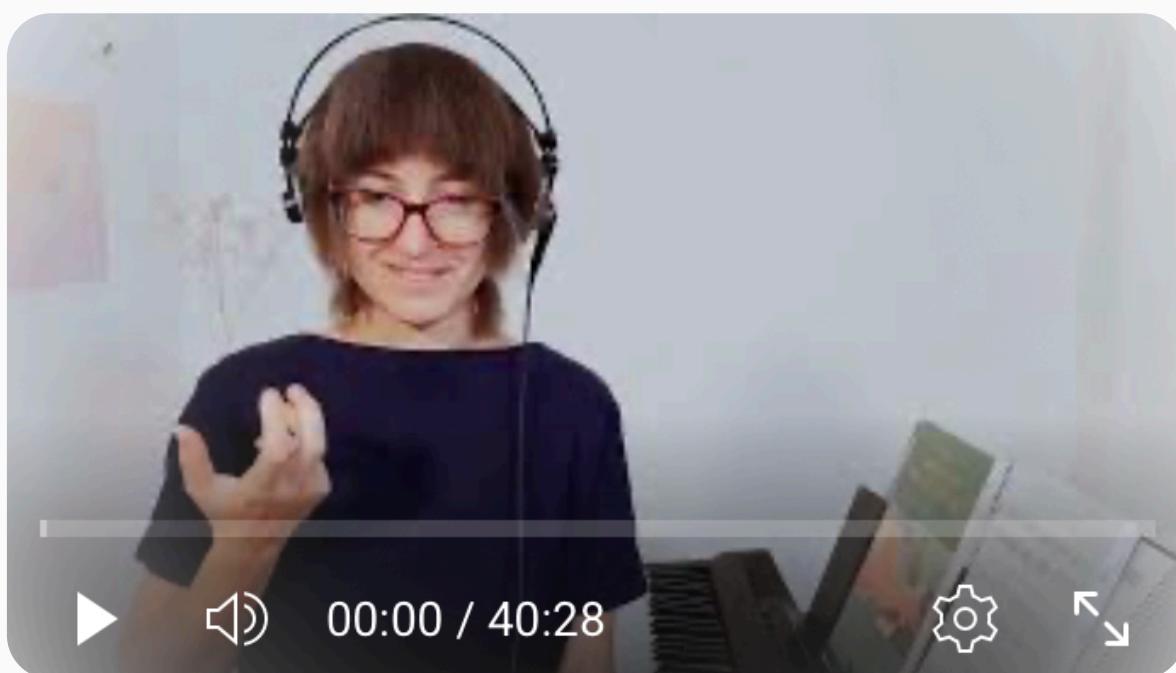
At times, students find themselves stuck trying to force vibrato through vocal resistance alone, which often results in a flat, pressured sensation while singing. The sound may feel compressed—lacking amplitude and openness—producing vibrations that remain narrow and low. This can feel similar to working with 2D wrist motion, where something essential—depth, freedom, dimension—is missing.

One common cause is placing too much emphasis on achieving a perfectly smooth glissando. While glissando is an important foundation, over-focusing on it can limit the energy of the sound and prevent natural vibrato from emerging.

Once the sensation of glissando is well internalized, it's time to shift your focus. Direct your attention to keeping the voice relaxed and free, while allowing the movement of the hands to gently guide the flow of energy. Let the voice stay soft and open—free from any tension.



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