



music
dynamics

German Pronunciation Guide
by Norbert Meyn

Ludwig van Beethoven
9th Symphony /
Choral Fantasia



Introduction

This ChoraLine pronunciation guide comes in three parts.

1 THE CHORALINE GUIDE TO SINGING IN GERMAN (Page 2)

with clear examples and symbols for vowel sounds, important consonants and inflection.

2 A LIST OF SOUNDS AND SYMBOLS (Page 7)

for reference and practice: using English word comparisons.

3 THE COMPLETE TEXT OF THE CHORAL WORKS

- Choral Fantasia (Page 11)
- 9th Symphony (Page 14)

with a word-for-word translation, phonetic (IPA) symbols for difficult vowel sounds and consonants, and clearly marked stresses of important syllables and words.

The introduction, the list of sounds and symbols and the textbook work in parallel with the ChoraLine Pronunciation CD, and we recommend using them together for combined aural and visual learning. You can find the CD trackmarks throughout the booklet.

Even if you do not speak any German, this guide will enable you to pronounce the text correctly and with confidence. With the word for word translation you can communicate the specific meaning of each word through your singing. It will also help you to enunciate the important words and syllables in each phrase, so that the audience can understand it clearly and enjoy the many expressive colours of the language.

Norbert Meyn

If you have purchased the ChoraLine Pronunciation CD, please play it now as you read on.



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CD TRACK 1

1 The ChoraLine Guide to Singing in German

In singing we use the highest and purest form of the German Language, **Hochsprache** or **Bühnensprache** (stage-language).

CD TRACK 2

VOWELS

German has a greater variety of vowel sounds than many other languages.

All German vowel sounds have both **open** and **closed** variations.

OPEN VOWELS

Open vowels are **usually short** (when spoken), and mostly followed by two or more consonants.

ɔ	u
Gott	Mutter
God	mother

CLOSED VOWELS

Closed vowels are usually long (when spoken).

o:	u:
groß	gut
great	good

In the ChoraLine pronunciation guide, open (or short) vowels are marked with capital letters and closed (or long) vowels are marked with lower case letters.

For clarity it is very important that when singing, open and closed vowels are clearly differentiated. The only exception is the letter a, which can be spoken short or long, but is always sung as a bright Italianate a.

THE WRITTEN VOWELS e AND i

The open and closed versions of these vowels are formed mainly by the tongue, which gradually assumes a higher position in the mouth.

	IPA SYMBOL
	A colon after a vowel means it is pronounced long.
open e	ɛ
closed e	e:
open i	ɪ
closed i	i:

THE WRITTEN VOWELS o AND u

Here the open and closed versions are formed mainly by the mouth and lips, which gradually close.

	IPA SYMBOL
open o	ɔ
closed o	o:
open u	u
closed u	u:

UMLAUTS ä, ö AND ü

Open or closed, they are formed with the same mouth shape as their counterparts without the two dots, by raising the tongue inside the mouth.

	IPA SYMBOL
ä	ɛ (this is the same sound as the open e)
open ö	œ
closed ö	ø:
open ü	ʏ
closed ü	y:

CD TRACK 4

THE SCHWA SOUND

This is a very neutral sound, which is used when the letter e occurs in an unstressed position. An example would be the first syllable in the word **Geduld** (patience) or the last syllable in the word **Leben** (life). In singing this sound is usually bright and never strongly projected.

	IPA SYMBOL
e (schwa) as in Leben (life)	ə

THE SCHWA SOUND II

This sometimes replaces the letter r, for example in the German word **mehr** (more). This sound can also replace the ending -er, exactly as in the English word 'better', or in the last syllable of the German word **Butter** (butter).

	IPA SYMBOL
-er, r (schwa II) as in Butter (butter)	ɐ

DIPHTHONGS

Diphthongs are made up of two vowels. In singing the second vowel is only sounded at the very last moment.

CD TRACK 5

	IPA SYMBOL
ai as in Mai (May)	a ^e
au as in Traum (dream)	a ^o
eu as in heute (today)	ɔ̯

The second vowel is not as closed as the spelling suggests, and closes only partly.

CD TRACK 6

IMPORTANT CONSONANTS AND GROUPS OF CONSONANTS

h		This is always silent after a vowel, and the preceding vowel is always long and closed, as in the word gehen (to go).
ch 1	(ç)	as in the word ich (I). This sound can be difficult. It is produced by touching the edges of your tongue against the upper teeth at the sides of your mouth, and the tip of your tongue touching the lower teeth at the front of your mouth. The sound is then made quite high up in the mouth by passing air over the tongue. It is similar to the first part of the English word 'huge', but stronger and more projected.
ch 2	(x)	'ch' can also be pronounced in the throat as in the word Nacht (night). It is made by air friction quite low in the throat and is the same sound as that in the Scottish word 'loch'.
chs	(ks)	If 'ch' is followed by an 's', then it is pronounced as a 'k' – as in the word wachsen (to grow).
-ig	(ç)	When words end in -ig, this is pronounced 'ich' – as in the word for king – König .
-iglich		If the '-ig' is followed by -lich the 'g' becomes a 'k' as in the word königlich (royally).
ng	(ŋ)	This is always pronounced with a soft 'g' as in the English word 'sing', and not with a hard 'g' as in 'finger'.
nk		is pronounced as in English 'thank', or in German, Dank .
qu		is pronounced 'kv' as in the word for Quelle (source), not 'kw' as in the Italian word 'quella'.
s		If the letter 's' is followed by a vowel, then it is voiced like an English 'z' as in the word Sonne (sun).
st	(ft)	is mostly pronounced 'sht' as in the word Stille (silence).
sp	(fp)	becomes 'shp' as in Spiel (a game).
sch	(ʃ)	is pronounced 'sh' as in schön (beautiful).
z		is pronounced 'ts' as in Zimmer (a room).
v		is generally pronounced 'f' as in Vogel (bird).
w		is pronounced as the English 'v', as in the word Welle (a wave) or Wasser (water).

CD TRACK 7

Voiced consonants like b, d and g become de-voiced if at the end of a word or before another consonant.

b	becomes 'p' in gab (gave),
d	becomes 't' in und (and),
g	becomes 'k' in Schlag (strike).
r	When singing, the letter 'r' is rolled with the tongue, and quite strongly in expressive words like Rache (revenge). But it may also be just flicked as in a word like kurz (short). When the letter 'r' occurs at the end of a word, it is often replaced by the neutral schwa sound as in the word der (the), as described above – schwa sound II.

CD TRACK 8

THE GLOTTAL STOP

When singing in German the “glottal stop” is important, as it helps to achieve clarity. This means that words beginning with a vowel have to be separated from the previous word with a re-articulation.

Example: **Am Abend** (in the evening).

In a glottal stop the vocal folds are closed for a moment and then opened again with a gentle explosion. In singing this should be quite smooth and should hardly interrupt the line.

INFLECTION

All German words have one stressed syllable, and this is often the first syllable. When singing in German, inflection is the key to a beautiful line. Unstressed syllables are projected less than in other languages, and this results in a lilting line that moves from one stress to the next.

In the text of the ChoraLine pronunciation guide, we have underlined stressed syllables and we have also underlined the important words in a phrase. This is because German is a very onomatopoeic language, and the stressed syllables or words often carry the expression. This is especially true in singing.

CD TRACK 9

2

List of Sounds and Symbols for Reference and Practice

VOWELS

SPELLING	IPA SYMBOL	EXAMPLE	ENGL. COMPARISON
a	a, a:	Vater (father)	-
ä, open e	ɛ	Bett (bed) Träne (teardrop)	bed, better
closed e	e:	Leben (life)	eh?
open i	ɪ	Bitte (please)	it
closed i	i:	Liebe (love)	see
open o	ɔ	Gott (God)	cough
closed o	o:	Rose (rose)	-
open u	ʊ	Mutter (mother)	book
closed u	u:	Ruhe (rest)	two
open ö	œ	Göttin (Goddess)	-
closed ö	ø:	schön (beautiful)	-
open ü	ʏ	Glück (happiness)	-
closed ü	y:	süß (sweet)	-

Remember: a colon after a symbol means the vowel is pronounced long.

CD TRACK 10

Schwa sounds I and II:

e	ə	Geduld (patience) Leben (life)	the
r, -er	ɐ	mehr (more) Mutter (mother)	better

CD TRACK 11

DIPHTHONGS

ai, ei	a ^e	Mai (May)	try
au	a ^o	Traum (dream)	house
eu, äu	ɔ ^ø	heute (today)	boy

IMPORTANT CONSONANTS

CD TRACK 12

SPELLING	IPA SYMBOL	EXAMPLE	ENGL. COMPARISON
ch	ç	ich (I)	<u>h</u> uge
ch	x	Nacht (night)	(Scottish) lo <u>ch</u>
chs	ks	wachsen (to grow)	a <u>x</u> e
-ig	g becomes ç	König (king)	-
-iglich	g becomes k	königlich (kingly)	-
h		gehen (to go)	-
j	j	ja (yes)	-
l	(always forward)	Himmel (heaven)	<u>l</u> ove (not: all)

CD TRACK 13

VOICED CONSONANTS AT END OF WORDS

d	becomes t	und (and)	-
b	becomes p	gab (gave)	-
g	becomes k	Schlag (strike/ hit)	-

FURTHER CONSONANTS

ng	ŋ	Klang (sound)	do <u>ing</u> , (not: <u>finger</u>)
nk	ŋk	Dank (thanks)	than <u>k</u>
qu	kv not kw	Quelle (source)	-

CD TRACK 14

s	z	Sonne (sun) ansehen (to look at)	<u>z</u> ip
st	ft	Stille (silence)	fish- <u>t</u> ank
sp	fp	Spiel (game)	fish- <u>p</u> ond
sch	ʃ	schön (beautiful)	<u>sh</u> ip

CD TRACK 15

z	ts	Zimmer (room)	ne <u>t</u> s
v	f	Vogel (bird)	<u>f</u> un
w	v	Wasser (water)	<u>v</u> ase

r	rolled strongly	Räuber (robber)
	flicked with tongue	kurz (short)
	replaced with schwa	der (the)

CD TRACK 16

GLOTTAL STOP (GENTLE RE-ARTICULATION):

Between words: **am / Abend** (in the evening)

Within a word: **un/ausgeglichen** (unbalanced)

INFLECTION (STRESSING UNDERLINED SYLLABLES):

und kommen mit Freuden (and come with joy)

Note about Word for Word Translations

The syntax (word order) of English sentences differs considerably from German. For this reason most singing translations or other available translations of poetic texts are not enough to identify the meaning of individual words in a text.

Word-for-word translations work around this problem, and they save you having to look up many individual words in the dictionary. Most of the time the meaning of a phrase is still obvious although the word order is unusual. If you cannot make sense of a line it is worth referring to a normal translation as available on the Internet or in a CD booklet. You should be able to piece together a coherent picture that way.

Knowing the exact meaning of individual words, which are often drawn out and repeated in music, is important for singing with the right expression and with confidence.

3 The Complete Text of the Choral Works

9th Symphony

CD TRACK 17

o: ɔø lç i: z ø:
O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!
 Oh friends, not these tones!

Zɔ st U n/g e: ʃtl
Sondern laßt uns angenehmere anstimmen,
 but let us more pleasant ones intone,

U t ɔø fɔ
und freudvollere.
 and more joyful ones.

CD TRACK 18

ɔø
Freude!
 Joy!

ɔø ʃ ø: æ ŋk
Freude, schöner Götterfunken
 Joy, beautiful spark of the gods

ɔ x aø e: yziU
Tochter aus Elysium,
 daughter from Elysium,

vi: e: ɔø Uŋk
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
 we enter, drunk with fire,

l lʃ aē aēlç u:
Himmlische, dein Heiligtum!
 Heavenly one, your shrine!

CD TRACK 19

a ^e	tsa ⁰	l	vi:	
Deine	Zauber	binden	wieder	
Your	magic	binds	again	
va	i: o:	ʃt ɛŋ	a ^e	
was	die Mode	streng	geteilt;	
what	the custom	strictly	divided;	
	ɛ ʃ	ve:	y:	
Alle	Menschen	werden	Brüder,	
all	men	become	brothers	
vo:	a ^e	z	y:	va ^e
wo	dein	sanfter	Flügel	weilt.
where	your	soft	wing	dwells.

CD TRACK 20

ve:	e:	o:s	vU	Uŋ
Wem	der	große	Wurf	gelungen,
Who (with)	the	great	throw	succeeded,
a ^e	ɔ̃	ɔ̃ t	tsu:	za ^e
eines	Freundes	Freund	zu	sein;
a	friend's	friend	to	be,
ve:	a ^e	ɔ̃	va ^e p	ɛ Uŋ
wer	ein	holdes	Weib	errungen,
who	a	lovey	wife	(has) won,
	l ʃ	za ^e	ju:	a ^e
mische	seinen	Jubel	ein!	
(shall) contribute	his	jubilation	in.	

CD TRACK 21

ja:	ve:	a ⁰ x	u:	a ^e	ze:
Ja,	wer	auch	nur	eine	Seele
Yes,	who	even	but	one	soul
za ^e	ɛ	a ⁰	e:	e:	U t
sein	nennt	auf	dem	Erdenrund!	
his (own)	calls	on	the	Earth (round)!	
U t	ve:	i:	ɔ̃	e:	ʃte:
Und	wer's	nie	gekonnt,	der	stehle
And	who (it)	never	could,	he (should)	steal (away)
va ^e	t	zɪç	a ⁰	i:z	U t
weinend	sich	aus	diesem	Bund!	
crying	himself	from	this	brotherhood.	

CD TRACK 22

ɔ̃	lŋk	ve:z		
Freude	trinken	alle	Wesen	
Joy	drink	all	beings	
	e:	Y	e:	u:
an	den	Brüsten	der	Natur;
on	the	breasts	of	nature;
	u:		øz	
alle	Guten,	alle	Bösen	
all	good,	all	evil	
	ɔ̃	i:	o:z	ʃpu:
folgen	ihrer	Rosenspur.		
follow	her	rose-trail.		

CD TRACK 23

Y a:p zi: U U t e:
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,
Kisses gave she us and grapes (wine)

a^e ɔ̯ t y: l o:t
einen Freund, geprüft im Tod;
a friend, proven in death;

vɔ̯ U v t e: vU e:
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,
lust was to the worm given,

U t e: ke: Up fte: fo: ɔ̯
und der Cherub steht vor Gott.
and the cherub stands before God.

CD TRACK 24

o: vi: za^e zɔ̯ i:
Froh, wie seine Sonnen fliegen
Gladly, as his suns fly

U ç ε l εç a:
durch des Himmels prächt'gen Plan,
through the heaven's magnificent plan,

CD TRACK 25

a^o y: ɔ̯ a:
Laufet, Brüder, eure Bahn,
walk, brothers, your path,

ɔ̯ lç vi: a^e ε t tsU Zi:
freudig, wie ein Held zum Siegen.
joyfully, as a hero to victory.

CD TRACK 26

Za^et U ʃ Uŋ l i:o:
Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Be embraced, millions!

i:z Us e: ts vɛ
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!
This kiss to the whole world!

y: y: ʃtɛ tsɛ
Brüder, über'm Sternenzelt
Brothers, above the starry dome,

Us a^e i: fa: o:
muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.
must a loving father dwell.

CD TRACK 27

i: ʃtY tst i: l i:o:
Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
You fall down, millions?

a: u: e: ʃœ vɛ
Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
Sense (do) you the creator, world?

zu:x i: y: ʃtɛ tsɛ
Such' ihn über'm Sternenzelt!
Seek him above the starry dome!

y: ʃtɛ U e: vo:
Über Sternen muss er wohnen.
Above stars must he dwell.

Choral Fantasia

CD TRACK 28

ʃ a^e ç t ɔ t U t i:p lç lŋ
Schmeichelnd **hold** **und lieblich** **klingen**
Flattering, charming and lovely sound

U z e: o: i:ə
unsers Lebens Harmonien,
our life's harmonies,

U t e: ʃ ø: z ʃ vlŋ
und dem Schönheitssinn entschwingen
and (from) the sense of beauty arise

u: zlç i: e:vlç y:
Blumen sich, die ewig blühh.
flowers (themselves) which forever bloom.

CD TRACK 29

i: t U t ɔø a^e ɔø t lç
Fried und Freude gleiten freundlich
Peace and joy glide friendly

vi: e: vɛ vɛ k ʃpi:
wie der Wellen Wechselspiel.
like the waves' changing play.

v zlç ɛŋ a^o U t a^e t ç
Was sich drängte rau und feindlich,
What (itself) pushed rough and hostile

ɔ zlç tsu: o:x y:
ordnet sich zu Hochgefühl.
orders itself to high feeling.

CD TRACK 30

vɛ e: o: tsa^o v
Wenn der Töne Zauber walten
When the music's magic(s) prevail

U t ɛ vɔ va^e ʃp lç
und des Wortes Weihe spricht,
and the word's solemnity speaks,

U zlç ɛ lç ʃt
muss sich Herrliches gestalten,
must (itself) something glorious create,

x U t ʃt Y ve: lç
Nacht und Stürme werden Licht.
night and storms become light.

ɔø u: l vɔ
Äuss're Ruhe, inn're Wonne
Outer peace, inner bliss

ɛ ʃ y: e: Yk lç
herrschen für den Glücklichen.
reign for the happy one.

CD TRACK 31

ɔx e: Y y: i zɔ
Doch der Künste Frühlingssonne
But the art's spring sun

ɛ a^o a^e lç ʃte:
lässt aus beiden Licht entstehen.
let from both light emerge.

CD TRACK 32

o:s l ɛ ts Uŋ
Großes, das ins Herz gedungen,
Greatness, which into (the) heart entered,

y: ɔø U t ʃ ø: ɛ o:
blüht dann neu und schön empör.
blooms then new and beautifully upwards.

a^e a^e zɪç a^o ʃ v Uŋ
Hat ein Geist sich aufgeschwungen,
Has a spirit itself taken off,

i: ʃte: a^e a^e ko:
hallt ihm stets ein Geisterchor.
Resounds him always a choir of spirits.

CD TRACK 33

e: ɛ l i: ʃ ø ze:
Nehmt denn hin, ihr schönen Seelen,
Accept then, you beautiful souls,

o: i: a: ʃ ø U
froh die Gaben schöner Kunst.
happily the gifts (of) beautiful art.

vɛ zɪç i: p U t fɛ ɛ
Wenn sich Lieb und Kraft vermählen,
When (themselves) love and strength unite,

o: e: ɛ ʃ œ U
lohnt den Menschen Göttergunst.
Rewards the people God's favour.

Note about IPA Phonetic Symbols:

The symbols in this booklet conform with the book *Deutsche Aussprache (Hochsprache-Bühnensprache-Alltagssprache)* VMA Wiesbaden 2000, ISBN 3-928127-66-7

Most dictionaries use similar symbols, but occasional variations are to be expected. This does not diminish the immense usefulness of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Once learned, these symbols can be applied to any other language and are invaluable to the amateur or professional singer.

Acknowledgements

This pronunciation guide has been devised by **Norbert Meyn**.

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