Marking is an international theater term for the technique of sparing the voice during rehearsal. Volume is reduced, high pitches may be lowered an octave, and very low pitches raised an octave (a practice sometimes termed *punktieren*, or pointing). At times only the cues needed by one's colleagues or by the orchestra are sung, the remainder of the phrase being merely lightly indicated. In the male voice, pitches in upper range may be sung in falsetto in substitution for *voce piena* (full voice).

Caution must be exercised in both male and female voices that not everything be sung an octave lower, because this practice can be more harmful than singing the passage as written. In no event should any form of stage whisper or loud speaking above other voices or over the orchestra be part of the marking process.

Marking should be limited to those periods of rehearsal when saving vocal energies for other tasks is of primary concern, or when the singer is not in good vocal or physical condition. It is a mistake to adopt marking as a standard rehearsal procedure. One of the problems of advising a student to mark is that he or she may then wait until too near the performance date to have fully sing the role, and have little notion of how best to pace it.

Many conscientious stage directors and choral and orchestral conductors want to spare the singer, but they also want as much rehearsal preparation as possible. Sometimes they request that the singer sing the role, or strenuous choral work, at *piano*-dynamic level, without realizing they are requesting feat that few seasoned artists could accomplish. Sustaining a role, or a choral line, that contains long phrases and high tessitura frequently demands more energy and technique at *piano* than at the printed dynamics.

Although indisposed singers should cancel whenever possible, there are occasions, especially in the professional world, when cancellation can be avoided if sufficient care is taken, and marking can be part of the process. However constant marking for an ill voice is not advisable. Rest is.

**How do you mark?**

As has already been indicated, some volume and pitch changes are crucial. Yet only changes that actually save the instrument should be incorporated into marking. Singing a large part of a role in the wrong octave is far more dangerous than singing most of it where written. In all cases, decisions as to when and where to mark should be made in advance and should not be spur of the moment searches for improvisatory pitch adjustments.

Before the singer marks a rehearsal he or she should mention that fact to the stage director and/or conductor, and the other singers. Or if, in mid rehearsal, a change seems advisable, a statement should be made.
Sometimes an insecure singer will use marking as a shield against performance. Anxiety. In such cases, it becomes a detrimental device. Equally disturbing is the singer who always marks so that his/her colleagues never know what to expect in performance.

A number of singers who have long careers, it should be pointed out, almost never mark rehearsals; they always sing. When technique is solid, and the vocal instrument healthy, singing a reasonable number of rehearsals is not a problem.

Marking, for the student singer, should be examined as a technique with the teacher before the singer attempts it in rehearsals. Teacher and student should identify the specific phrases and pitches at which marking is to occur. By using this approach the risk of the common experience of tiring the voice through incorrect marking, done in the hope of saving it, will be considerable reduced.

Added by Dr. Mungo:

1) If you choose to mark, be consistent. During heated or inspiring rehearsals you may be tempted to sing out when you need to be marking. Be aware of this.
2) While you may mark the voice, there is no such thing as marking acting.