

VIA SATELLITE



Money

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Ex-choir director helps traders save voices

From outside the door of Bill Rush's office on the 20th floor of Chicago's Lyric Opera building, two baritones can be heard singing a strange song: "65s at a half, 65s at a half ... six on 60, six on 60 ... three bid 70s, three bid 70s."

This is where traders come to learn to sing in the pits.

Or to shout, as Jim Downs puts it bluntly. Downs has just finished a day of trading Standard & Poor's 100 options, and his voice sounds like a bullfrog's. He says it was worse a month ago. He speaks quietly off the floor, an occupational necessity. He dreads vacations because the first two days back are like vocal purgatory.

Rush, Downs' teacher, was a high school choir director 20 years ago. "Every Monday, my two best sopranos would be hoarse from cheerleading," he recalls. "I couldn't have that, so I taught them to cheer without ruining their voices."

Sixteen years later, Rush, 43, visited the Chicago Board of Trade. Traders, he found, had the same problems as cheerleaders. "They aren't disciplined," Rush says. "When the pressure's on, reflex takes over. They push their voices." In 1980, Rush began helping traders shout louder.

Do his techniques work? Downs, 28, a trader for 3½



By Richard Derk

RUSH: Singing techniques help traders project voices.

years, thinks so. "Today a broker wanted to buy December 160 calls at \$2," he says. "I was about halfway across the pit, but I'm the one he heard. I sold him 25."

Three of Rush's tips:

■ Breathe from the diaphragm; it sets up a high-volume column of air.

■ Use a higher pitch.

■ Use hands and arms to keep the upper body relaxed.

Would Rush like to try trading himself? "No," he says. "The pit reminds me of Dante's rings of hell."

— Kevin Johnson

Reported by Marilyn Balamaci and Charley Blaine