Unit 30

Singing Techniques and Performance

Don’t be afraid to ask if you have a question!

**It’s important to learn to be aware.**

We experience feed back from our voices in two main ways

Aurally

Physically

Also, friends, teachers, recordings, computer feedback etc….

Vocal Technique – What you need to know.

1. Becoming aware – physical/mental warm up.
2. Posture
3. Breath Control In

* Breathing in (abdominals and diaphragm)
* Breathing in (chest and back)

1. Breath Control Out

* Supported breath out for singers.

1. Intonation/Range
2. Resonance.
3. Voice Placement/Tone
4. Projection
5. Flexibility/Musicality
6. Diction
7. Vocal Health Care

TEST 1: Recorded presentation. Perform technical exercises with confidence and attention to detail.

TEST 2: Written Log book and Tutor assessment showing set targets and reviewing progress in improving vocal technique.

Why is singing technique important?

* Vocal health – your voice is your ‘business’
* Stamina – 6 shows and 2 matinees a week?
* Creativity – what you can imagine, you can then create.
* Making the best of what you got – sounding good.

Great website: [www.singwise.com](http://www.singwise.com) - see “Anatomy of the Voice”.

1. Becoming Aware – Physical and Mental warmup

You can’t learn to sing unless first you know what you already do. Become aware to find out!

Then being aware in the moment of what you do – you can change it at your will. You’re in control.

To become aware in the moment can massively enhance your learning and performing experience.

ALWAYS do mindful exercises preliminary to singing lessons, practices and performances.

Breathing Exercises

Sitting or standing. Close eyes if helps.

* Become aware of your normal breathing – all the sensations.
* Look around your body for unnecessary tensions.
* Breath into those tensions.

Movement Exercises (Gentle Yoga)

* Standing tall – become aware of breathing and posture
* Raise arms slowly over head. Hold. Return arms slowly to sides. Feel all the physical sensations.
* Raise arms again – bend to one side. Bend to the other. Return and lower arms (improves posture)
* Roll shoulders slowly feeling all sensations (loosens shoulders)
* Drop head to chest, stretch back of neck, roll head from side to side (loosens tensions in the neck)
* Drop head to chest, curl forwards at waist, loose arms. Hang and breath into lower back. Return to standing. (encourages deep breathing for singing).

These types of exercises are the first ones you should always do before singing.

2. Posture

Important for:

* Good skeletal frame to support good vocal and breathing muscle alignment.
* Blank canvas on which to create a character.
* Good basis for learning singing technique.
* Looks great!

Posture:

* Feet hips width apart and ‘grounded in the earth’.
* Head drawn up to the heavens from the crown (long neck)
* Shoulders dropped back and down.
* Ribcage open.
* Pelvis in the middle (not thrust forward or arching spine)
* Soft knees.
* Arms relaxed and just hanging loose. Hands relaxed.

How to get a better posture:

* Yoga exercises can help.
* Back against a wall. Heels/Buttocks/Shoulders touch the wall. Don’t arch the back.
* Singing whilst lying on the floor.
* Stretching

3. Breath Control - In

Why do we need good breathing?

* We sing on the breath – there is no sound without breath.
* Singers need deep breaths for long phrases.
* Good breathing supports good vocal tone.
* Good breathing refreshes the voice (stamina)
* Good breathing helps with nerves.

3a. Breathing In (abdominals and diaphragm)

The lungs are like balloons. They expand both sideways and downwards on inhale.

The diaphragm contracts to draw air into the body (compare with CPR).

The abdominal muscles – if firm – restrict this contraction and affect the ‘downwards’ movement of the lungs.

Singers need lots of breath so relaxing the abdominals on the in-breath allows the diaphragm to descend a bit further.

Dancers rarely ‘let go’ of their abdominal muscles.

Singer’s breath is like a sleepers breath only standing up and conscious!

How to do it:

1. Good posture.
2. Relax abdominal muscles (until you could not make a sound)
3. Hands on belly. Feel the normal breathing you do
4. Deepen that ‘normal breathing’
5. Drop jaw to breathe in.

This technique is particularly useful for dealing with nerves.

It is also particularly useful as it refreshes your voice on (pretty much) every in-breath to promote stamina and healthy singing.

IT IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE!

3. Breath Control – In - Continued

3b. Intercostals and back

This is to help the lungs to expand sideways.

It’s still an expansion of what we do normally.

Intercostals:

1. Good posture.
2. Finger tips touching over ribs.
3. Feel fingertips move apart a little on in breath.

Combine with abdominal breathing.

Back breathing:

1. Sit on chair (or crouch like a skier)
2. Feel back open when breathing in.
3. Hold breath and stand up normally.
4. Sing or ‘ssss’.

Create a similar feeling in the back when breathing in standing position.

Practice:

Be **aware** of one area of breathing (abdominals/diaphragm) to start with.

When that becomes easy, try combining abdominal awareness with intercostal awareness.

Finally add in the back to be aware of all breathing principles to give you the best breaths.

Mouth breathing.

Breathe in through mouth (not nose)

Relax vocal cords – breath goes in quicker – no sound.

Just feel the breath in the body – don’t need to hear it.

Loud breathing comes across microphones.

Use audible breathing sounds in songs for character development.

1. Breath Control – Out

Singing Support

It takes effort to sound effortless. But it needs to be the RIGHT sort of effort! Muscular balance is the answer.

Vocal folds and vocal resonators are excited by sub-glottal air pressure.

Air pressure affects the quality of sound and pitch.

Babies are chaotic Masters of sound production.

Babies have 3mm long vocal folds but can scream in an intense and projected way for hours and never lose their voices – you were a baby once!

They are subconscious – we have unguidedly learnt to control our voices and bodies due to our culture.

Listen to your own body. You already know how to do this.

You already have every muscle you need ready to do this.

Explore and experiment.

So let’s explore what we already do that hasn’t been ‘tampered’ with that can help us to support our singing voices.

* Start from totally relaxed abdominals.
* Laugh, cough, whoop to find awareness of muscles we use.
* Have a go at using the muscles soundlessly with control.

Using the right muscles in the right way.

1. Pulling up pelvic floor engages the
2. Abdominals which stops the relaxation of the
3. Diaphragm which keeps air pressure high in the
4. Lungs which are also controlled by the
5. Ribs to create high air pressure under the
6. Glottis (vocal folds) and onwards…..to the next lesson!

Do SSSS, Brrr and RRrrr exercises to work on breath pressure awareness, muscular control awareness and breath control.

**Remember to always relax abdominal muscles on breathing in!**

(Same muscles used on inhale and exhale. Don’t worry, can be confusing for a while but you’ll get it.)

1. Intonation/Range

Intonation is a posh way of saying “singing in tune”.

* Children’s start to develop pitching skills from the age of 7. It slowly develops over time with practice.
* Some people can do it more easily than others. Some have to learn.
* Some people (about 4% of the country only) are amusiacs and can’t sing in tune – aka ‘monotones’.
* Some people can hear if someone else is singing out of tune but not themselves!

The best way to self-enhance your intonation is to concentrate and be very aware of yourself when singing. Be self-critical.

Singing teachers can help by doing the following:

* Demonstrating with a voice rather than keyboard
* Using a voice that is the same as yours (man/woman)
* Not starting to learn a song with words – just on la.
* Plenty of simple repetition.
* Improving your technique (breathing etc)

Range

Range is the range of your voice. Also known as the ‘tessitura’

To find your range:

* Sing down to your lowest note. Check it on a tuner or piano.
* Swoop up to your highest note and check that on a tuner or piano.
* You have your vocal range.