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Tips for Vocalists

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Hoarseness: The Top Causes & How to Avoid It

by Tammy Frederick



songs that are not like your own. Think of it as cross training for your voice. A more immediate solution would be to lower the keys of your songs so as to avoid having to push and strain for the top notes. If you take time to develop your instrument you can increase your range and up the key again later.

Cause #2 – Inadequate or No Vocal Warm-up

It is shocking to me how many singers come into my studio with the complaint of chronic hoarseness and when asked if they warm-up before performing the answer is no! Always, always, always warm up your instrument! How long would an athlete last if they did not warm up their body prior to competing? Singing through your songs ahead of time is not a sufficient warm-up. You need to vocalize beyond the range of your songs.

Solution: Warm up your instrument before any performance, recording or practice session. If you work with a vocal teacher you should already have a vocal warm-up recorded. Otherwise, find a keyboard and run through some scales using liprolls or tongue trills and words such as “mum” and “woof”. The key to a good warm-up is to make sure you are breathing and not straining. Also include a physical warm-up. Do some general stretching to loosen up your limbs. Despite what some people may think going on stage “raw” only makes for inconsistent performances. And in any business, not just music, consistency is what makes for a successful career.

Maybe you are like many singers who have experienced a dry, gravelly voice the morning after a hard night of singing. You may not be too concerned about this vocal roughness if you are able to rest your voice for a few days, but what if you have to perform again tonight? What if tonight’s performance has to be the best of your life? Now, the state of your voice becomes all-consuming. There are five top causes in total, but we’ll only be able to touch on the first two causes this issue ... check out next issue for the remaining three.

How can I fix it? Is there some miracle liquid I can drink? How much water can I drink before the show?

Although there are some tactics that will help ease hoarseness, curing chronic hoarseness permanently begins long before it even happens and it involves dealing with the number of factors that cause it.

Cause #1 – Poor Vocal Technique

The number one cause of hoarseness and vocal fatigue is poor vocal technique. If you find you get hoarse after performing or rehearsing it is very likely that you

are singing with a high larynx. To make matters worse, you are probably forcing large amounts of air through this high larynx by shouting or singing loudly. The larynx goes up when the throat muscles or swallowing muscles engage and yank it up in their effort to help you reach those higher notes. When this occurs the larynx becomes unstable and tension sets in. Then, in your effort and determination to hit those high notes you force a lot of air through the larynx, increasing the volume, and essentially muscling your way through the range of the song. This sets you up for a prime case of hoarseness. All that pulling and pushing and forcing of air has fatigued your vocal cords and they have swollen. When this happens the cords are no longer able to connect properly, affecting the quality of your sound and seriously hindering your vocal range.

Solution: Seek out competent vocal training. *Competent* training is key, since there are many teachers out there who can do more harm than good. If you can’t afford training, try some practice techniques. Practice your songs quietly, but don’t hold your breath. Breathe while you sing. You will have more control over your sound if the vocal cords are able to adjust to the pitches you need without the extra-added musculature. Try singing other genres of music and

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Hoarseness: The Top Causes & How To Avoid It Part 2

By Tammy Frederick



Cause #3 – Smoking, Alcohol and Coffee

Smoking, alcohol, and coffee all do the same thing to the body – they dehydrate it. In order to function optimally, the vocal cords need a certain amount of lubrication. When the body is dehydrated, the vocal cords can become irritated. More specifically, with smoking the heat from the smoke causes the cords to swell. The cords then become thicker, making it more difficult to hit higher notes. I have heard horror stories of people who have started smoking to increase their bottom range – thicker cords produce lower sounds (because of the swelling) – but at what expense to the longevity of your vocal career, not to mention your overall health? *Competent* vocal training can also increase your range – healthfully. Even if you are a non-smoker but sing, reside, or work in a smoky environment, your vocal health will be compromised.

Solution: I know I may not be able to convince the smokers to quit, but my general advice to all is to stay hydrated. Drink water throughout the day. Drinking only during a performance or recording session isn't enough; your body needs to be hydrated long before you start singing. If you drink coffee and alcohol try to match your consumption, drink for drink, with an equal amount of water. If you like to drink tea for your throat, keep it as natural as possible. I suggest licorice root steeped in hot water and then cooled to room temperature. Drinking liquids at either end of the extreme is not good for the voice, so keep drinks as close to room temperature as tolerable.

Cause #4 – Excessive Throat Clearing

Excessive throat clearing can also cause hoarseness. When you clear your throat your cords slam together. If done excessively, they will swell and fatigue. The need to clear our throat is usually a result of excess phlegm or mucous sitting on the cords.

Solution: Avoid consuming phlegm-inducing foods such as dairy products, chocolate, and orange juice. Try to avoid eating right before a performance or practice session. After eating, extra mucous is produced. This makes it hard for the vocal cords to perform optimally. However, it takes a lot of energy to sing, so singing with no fuel in your body can be equally detrimental. Eat a regular meal a few hours before you have to perform and then eat a small snack about 45 minutes before you go on. If you need to clear your throat, cough and swallow instead. Follow up with a drink of water.

Cause #5 – Illness and Fatigue

It goes without saying that if you are sick with a cold or the flu you will not be able to sing at your optimum level. In the case of laryngitis (inflammation of the larynx), your cords are not able to stay connected due to the excessive swelling caused by a bacteria infection. If you suffer from chronic sore throats or laryngitis it is safe to say that you are physically run down. Fatigue will take a toll on the body and prevent it from being able to deal with the stresses faced throughout a day. Our bodies are exposed to bacteria and viruses on a daily basis, but if we are well rested our body has the ability to fight them off. If, however, we are fatigued, under-nourished, and dehydrated the body's ability to fight off these invaders is diminished significantly.

Solution: The key to good vocal health is overall health. It is imperative that you take care of yourself. Eat well, drink water, and definitely get an adequate amount of sleep. Even grabbing a quick nap can make a big difference in your body's defense system. If you find yourself battling a cold or flu remember to avoid singing with a sore throat. Singing with a sore throat is like walking on a sprained ankle; give yourself adequate time to rest and recover. It is completely possible to have a vocal career free of hoarseness, but it takes time and care to eradicate it permanently. Take the time to adjust your vocal habits and you will be able to deliver a consistent performance every time you sing. If you take care of your vocal health, it will ultimately take care of you.

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USING AND DEVELOPING VOCAL POWER

by Sass Jordan

Vocal power comes from the ability of the singer to control the diaphragm properly. It comes from exercising your instrument and using it regularly. The ultimate power in the voice is from the emotional commitment of the singer – when the singer truly believes and is part of the song, firmly entrenched in the moment. That is when the inherent power blooms.

The best voice teacher I ever had is in New York City, and he is the reason I made it through the insanely tough role of Janis Joplin off-Broadway – 19 Janis songs, four nights a week. That sounded like nothing to me until I actually tried doing it. The stamina and the discipline required were pretty new to me, having sung my own songs and knowing my way around them when things were in less than perfect working order. This was a whole new game, plus, there was dialogue. So, off to the first vocal coach of my life, Don Lawrence – a taskmaster extraordinaire. The first thing he showed me was where to place the sound in my head. This is quite tricky when you are not used to it. The sound has to come from the back of the mouth, where it opens into the throat, and through the middle of the head – basically, where the uvula is. The notes are reached and sustained through the use of the diaphragm, so you really need the whole body, more or less, to get the pitch and the tone right.

I had never before in my life heard the sound that I could generate when I got that combo right. My pitch got a whole lot better, too. The key with pitch (pardon the pun) is practice. The more you practice, the better your pitch gets. There is nothing more frustrating than being out of practice for anyone, be it athlete, singer, or instrumentalist. You know what you want to do, and you are just unable to physically do it, until you have been practicing for a while again.

I think that when you are going for power as a singer,



you have to know what it is that is inspiring you to sing. Is it anger? Is it confusion? Is it because no one else in the band can hold a note at all? Is it because you are just a ham and you crave the attention? Is it because you have a burning need to communicate? Is it a combo pack of all these things? Whatever it is, that is the emotion that will give you the raw power, the guts, and the momentum to really bring the house down, so to speak.

Once you realize that you can do this, and are doing it on a regular basis, you have to be sure that your usage of this particular asset is efficacious. A little goes a long way, and to really have power, you have to have the ability to sing softly. It is the fantastic juxtaposition of light with dark that makes all the difference to the listener. Listen to someone like Gladys Knight, or Chaka Khan, or Chris Cornell for great examples of this. The quiet makes

the loud 10 times more powerful than if you come out, full guns blazing, straight out of the gate. The knowledge of what is appropriate and at what time is a talent you are born with, or a skill you can approximate most of the time. Generally speaking, it's a blend of the two.

I suppose anyone can have adrenaline-fueled power for 10 minutes or so, but to be able to sustain that power and to use it to your advantage is something that is developed through hard work and dedication, just like anything else that is worthwhile. It is certainly a challenge to be able to have that sort of dedication in this age of instant gratification and thousands of distractions. That is why I titled my latest recording *Get What You Give* – the amount of energy you put into your voice and its power is directly proportionate to the energy you will receive for your efforts. May the Force be with you. Namaste.

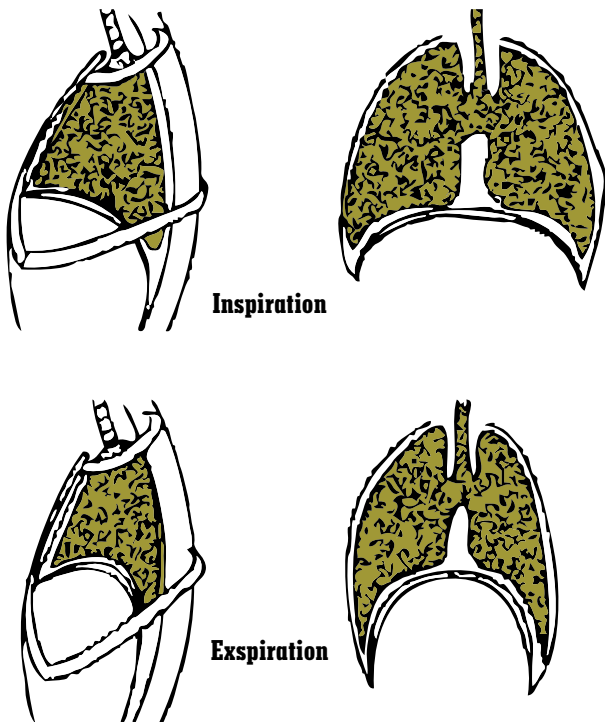
The Ins and Outs of Breathing

by Tammy Frederick

Breathing is our life support and an involuntary action that our body performs, so you would think we couldn't get it wrong. But, many of us do not breathe properly, especially when we start singing. This can lead to a host of problems including hoarseness, vocal fatigue, inconsistent performances, and it can even affect your pitching. Breathing should feel free and easy – extra musculature and tension only serve to drain you of your much-needed energy. The main elements involved in breathing are the diaphragm, your posture, the inhalation, and the exhalation. Once a basic understanding of these functions is developed, you can put it together to create superior vocal production.

Before reading any further, stop. Find a mirror and take in a deep breath. What does your reflection show? What are your shoulders doing? Do you look relaxed or tense?

Most people when asked to take in a deep breath will raise their shoulders and suck in their stomach. In reality your body requires the exact opposite action to happen – your shoulders should stay down and the stomach should expand outward allowing the diaphragm to drop. There should be no dramatic change in musculature and you should look relaxed. So let's consider the factors involved in achieving this.



The Diaphragm

The diaphragm is a dome-shaped muscle that separates the chest and abdominal cavities. It is attached in front to the bottom of the breastbone and attached in the back about three or four inches lower. The perimeter of the diaphragm is attached to the inner chest wall. When you inhale the diaphragm contracts downward giving the lungs room to expand. At this time the intercostal muscles between the ribs expand outward, creating a partial vacuum. When you do not allow the diaphragm to drop fully you restrict the airflow and only partially fill the lungs.

Your Posture

Good posture equals great sound. Proper body alignment will maximize your body's ability to breathe efficiently and effectively. So what is good posture?

Exercise: Finding Proper Alignment

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, weight evenly distributed. Looking straight ahead keep your chin parallel with the floor. Do not tilt it up or down. Envision a string attached to the top of your head pulling you toward the ceiling. Roll your shoulders around to loosen them up and then relax them down and back, they should feel inline directly over your hips. Relax your knees slightly and tuck your pelvis up.

Try to implement this posture into your practice routines. Although it may seem uncomfortable and odd at first, your body will soon adjust to this optimal alignment.



The Inhalation

When you inhale for singing open your mouth and drop your jaw. Don't force your jaw downward, instead think of unhinging it, and simply let it drop comfortably. Allow the air to fall in gently and fill your lungs. Think of yawning in your breath. It is important that the inhalation be inaudible. Do not gasp or suck in the air. If there is sound created on inhalation the vocal cords have come together and vibrated. This means that the vocal cords are never allowed to relax fully, putting unnecessary strain on them.

The Exhalation

It doesn't take muscle to exhale just relaxation. Do not push or force your air out, this will only cause more tension and strain. Pushed air causes too much air pressure to build up under the vocal cords making it much more difficult for them to maintain their connection. Keep your abdominal muscles relaxed. Rather than controlling the exhale, think instead of allowing the air to escape. When you exhale try to maintain a small steady stream of air.

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Sing With Power, Range, & Control

by Paula Shear

Why A Well-Trained Voice is Always a Natural Sound

The creative process is, on the one hand, a journey of self-discovery, and this always means there is an aspect of trial and error in the quest for vocal freedom. No one but you, can feel what is going on inside. However, for most aspiring singers, the pathway to unlimited possibilities comes from guidance that opens the doorways to a truly empowered voice.

What I always tell my students is that as a singer you have to think of yourself as an athlete. You want to develop vocal stamina and laser beam precision so that what you get is what you intended.

This brings me back to the issue of natural sound. As human beings, we learn through repetition, so we want to bring things to the conscious level to then be tucked away, back into the subconscious. You do the work to make it easy. You can't be thinking technically when you're performing; it's all about feel. At that point you want to lose yourself in the emotion and the lyric, a palette of colours and vocal range at your fingertips.

What is unnatural is anything that strains your voice; that feeling of reaching for a note, pulling with your throat, and forcing can all do damage. You want to rid yourself of all tension, and as Poverotti once said, "the enemy of the singer is the nerves." You need to have your energy radiating outward, not holding onto it, to be in flow. Understand that singing is an extension of speech. It should feel effortless.

So what brings us back to natural sound? First of all, you sing on the exhale of your breath, literally, so you want to develop immaculate breath control. The diaphragm is located beneath the lungs, and as you inhale, flattens down, causing the lower abdomen to expand. Exhaling, the diaphragm rises to a dome-shape and the rib cage contracts.

The most powerful, high, clear notes actually have less air being released. In varying degrees you bear down with your diaphragm, choosing how much air is being released, creating variance in tone, power, intensity, or subtlety.

So this is marriage of breath support and vocal placement.

Three Breathing Warm-ups

1) Inhale and exhale slowly. Lower rib cage expands around front, sides, and back. No expansion in upper chest or shoulders. Open mouth, smile – a relaxed jaw eliminates tension. Visualize drawing air up through the roof of your mouth, then long exhale diagonally down and out. Repeat eight times.



2) Inhale four seconds/hold four seconds/release four seconds. Repeat eight times. Then do same thing for eight seconds once.

3) This one is much more complex. Inhale slowly and keep your rib cage expanded, releasing air through slightly parted teeth by pressing the tip of your tongue against bottom teeth for a kind of 'tz' sound. Time yourself in seconds – the longer the better, for a slow, even, quiet, and compressed air flow.

Voice Placement

Now, here is where it starts to sound strange, but you literally want to learn to sing down to your high notes. If you put your hand in front of your mouth, smile with a relaxed open mouth, and

exhale a stream of breath onto your hand – notice the focus of that breath going downward. Trying to sing up is like swimming against the tide. Essentially, you can target from a low note down to a higher note by approaching diagonally down, and sound vibrates in the "mask" (forward through cheekbones, sinuses, etc.), creating overtones.

Sound Is 'Hung' In Four Basic Placements

1) **Hard palate (front roof of the mouth)** The chest voice resonates closer to spoken voice. This extends over an octave until you hit what is termed the first break. At this point you may feel that you want to reach up, but forcing your chest voice up is inviting disaster for your vocal chords. What you need to do is target down a higher area from above through the hard palate.

2) **Lower nose and sinuses** This may entail thinning the tone and targeting down to this higher area in the mask with a mixed tone, in the realm of the sinuses and lower nose. Note: This does not mean nasal! You become nasal if they are blocked off. Resonate a few notes, then move to placements 3) and 4).

3) **Bridge of nose/behind the eyes***

4) **Upper head***

*Highest vocal range.

Correct vocal warm-ups and exercises begin with sounds like humming, lip and tongue trills, scales, etc. These, however, are subjects for another day. With great technique together with developed phrasing, style, and artistry you can unleash a voice that literally soars.

Paula Shear is a Toronto Singer/Vocal Coach who has guided singers at all levels, from beginners to recording artists. She teaches how to open your voice to unlimited power, gain octaves, and discover the beauty of singing with ease in a diversity of styles: rock, R&B, pop, & jazz. She is soon releasing a CD featuring Bernie Senesky, Rob Poltel, Kieran Overs, Mark Kelso, Robi Botos, Frank Botos, and others. Contact: sedonah@sympatico.ca.

How To Make Your Songs Sing

by Tammy Frederick

Songs are simply stories put to music. When we learn a new song it is important to learn it technically, note for note, and how to navigate it properly. But, it is equally necessary to think about the story within the song. Doing so will breathe life, confidence, and emotion into it. Even if you are the songwriter, experimenting with the following suggestions can help make your songs sing. To make the most of these exercises, record yourself so you can note the differences and incorporate any worthy discoveries.

Speak Your Songs

Take your songs and read the lyrics aloud, out of tempo, as you would a story or letter. Remember how it feels and sounds as you speak each sentence. Now "speak" your song on pitch. This exercise will help the muscles around the larynx relax as we convince the brain that it is only speaking, not "singing." This helps the vocal cords maintain their connection and manages your airflow. Both effects lead to a stronger, more confident sound.

Emotional Intention

Listen to the lyrics of your song. What is the song about? Who is the song directed at? What is the songwriter trying to get across to the listener? Where do the emotions change? Knowing the answers to these questions is important in order to convey the story. Unlike the written word, a song has music to support the lyrics, so take your cues from the instrumentation as well. Take a song and type out a lyric sheet. Read through it and write out the answers to the above questions on it. Then sing through the song while incorporating all this emotional information. Does the song resonate with you more? If so, that will be felt by your listeners.

Exercise: Playing with Your Emotions

Now change it up. If it is a sad song about lost love, try singing it happily. And vice versa for a happy song, try singing through it as if you were sad. Take the following words and try singing your songs with these intentions: sad, happy, angry, flirtatious, commanding, excited, etc. How does playing with the emotions change the song's impact? You may discover a new energy to the song you never realized was there. Record yourself.



Phrasing

Sometimes a singer can get caught up in the structure of the notes. It is important to follow the basic melody line, but don't be afraid to play within it. Take your song and read the lyrics aloud again. Where are the natural inflections? What words did you emphasize? The English language has its own rhythms, so note them by recording yourself. Speak each phrase and then try to incorporate the pattern into the sung line. Experiment in your practice sessions with changing it up.

Word Modifications

The phonetics of any given word is not always the same from the written to the spoken in the English language. Often, when we sing songs, we sing the words the way they are written, not the way we would actually speak them. Go through the lyrics in your songs, phrase by phrase, and make sure you are singing the words as you would speak them. This can make a huge impact on the emotional connection of a song. For example: we would say the word "today" as "t'day" or the word "heaven" as "hea-ven." In general, pronounce "ion" endings as in the word "confusion," as "shin" instead of "shun."

Articulation

I know some artists have had no problem making it big as mumblers, but generally speaking, your listener will tune in emotionally if s/he can understand what you are saying. By articulation I do not mean you have to sound prim and proper, but

rather just bring attention to the consonants in the words you are singing. Start by speaking through the lyrics of your song, exaggerating each consonant. Imagine you are instructing a young child on how to say each word properly. Then sing through your song, maintaining the same exaggeration. Finally, sing through the song again "normally." This exercise will help bring more structure to the words, making the lyrics more understandable. When the listener can understand the lyrics, the emotional story of the song begins to unfold. Record yourself, before and after. Take the time to dissect your songs and get to know them better. Doing so will open the door to creating a stronger connection with your listeners and may rejuvenate stale material you have become bored with. The discoveries you will make doing these suggestions will go a long way in making your songs sing!

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Sing With Power, Range, & Control

Visualization & The Voice

by Paula Shear

Singing, in its very nature, is something both miraculous and mysterious. This ability of the body to produce sound is unique; you are the instrument, and unlike any other musician, you can't point to hand placement to get a visual take on what you are producing. At it's very best, the feeling you can experience is a sensation of flying with your voice – and I can tell you that it is truly exhilarating.

Sometimes, early in the path of discovery, you may experience sound production that surprisingly feels elevated and effortless and you may not truly have a grasp on what made this feel different. What you should ask yourself is, "What does it feel like when it sounds right, and what does it sound like when it feels right?" The interesting thing is, in many instances there are multiple ways of visualizing for a similar result. Conversely, there are approaches that are patently wrong and can seriously get you into trouble.

In my last article, I spoke about four basic placements for voice production. Additionally, you can focus on sending the notes out with variance by thinking long throw verses short throw. See the notes as if you are casting a fishing line, sending them out to the centre of the pond, so to speak. You need leverage, and what grounds you for this casting of sound is the diaphragm muscle.

The longer the throw, the more you bear down with the diaphragm muscle. When projecting you can also see yourself sending the notes to the centre of the room. For a shorter throw, you might imagine that the areas inside your head are like tiny acoustic rooms where sound can bounce against imaginary walls.

You need to find a balance between the technical and the abstract in your artistic approach. And it is incredibly empowering to really see yourself, in your mind's eye, as having achieved the desired result. We also learn through analogy, and invariably there are sounds we make or have made that

we can relate to. Singing is an extension of speech. Below is an exercise to better develop a sense of opening your voice from the vantage point of conversation.

The basic sounds, "ah," "a," "e," "o," and "oo" can be accessed in the most open way by relating to corresponding words. I call this talking on pitch. Choose a note that feels like the relaxed part of your range. For instance, in the female voice, this is often B below middle C.

You need only repeat on a few other notes moving up in semi-tones:

Father – ah
Hurray – a
Believe – e
Hello – o
Blue – oo

Say the word, and then the corresponding vowel with the same approach as when you said the entire word. Approach these words with a small crescendo in the vowel, and you will experience a sense of exhaling the sound. Send your voice downward, with a slight sighing attitude. Avoid a glottal attack on the entry of each vowel.

Always remember that it is emotion that propels sound. That means thinking about the words of the song and approaching the story like a monologue; it needs to be real to you. The sonic choices reflect not only the patterning of the notes, but the stories they tell. Doing exercises rewards you with the freedom of choice, so that many shades and nuances are at your fingertips.

Sounds can sometimes be perceived in terms of colours. Everything, in its essence, is vibration, and the co-relation between sound and colour is liberating to your creativity. You can also perceive tones and attacks in terms of different sizes and shapes. At this point, I'm going to segue into something that broaches on the metaphysical, but I believe when we are accessing our creative powers, we are tapping into something that is at once beyond ourselves and at the same



time part of ourselves.

We tap into this energy by letting go, and that is why I always speak in terms of releasing the sound: to be in flow.

Believing you can do something is essential to not setting up roadblocks. We absorb through observation, so when you get to watch a great singer or you are working with a voice teacher, start to imagine that you are feeling what they are in effect doing. This visualization can be a catalyst to new approaches.

Just as a dancer might use contrasting flowing and staccato moves, the voice can be emotionally choreographed, with results that can be beautiful, dynamic, and affecting.

*Paula Shear is a Toronto Singer/Vocal Coach who has guided singers in all levels, from beginners to recording artists. She teaches how to open your voice to unlimited power, gain octaves and discover the beauty of singing with ease in a diversity of styles: rock, R&B, pop, and jazz. She will be releasing a CD of her original words and music featuring: Bernie Senensky, Kieran Overs, Rob Piltch, Mark Kelso, Robi Botos, Frank Botos, and others.
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The Five Virtues Of Singing

by Liberty Silver

I can still remember holding mini-concerts after school in my parents' basement for change, chocolate bars, and homework answers. My brother Mark will tell you that as early as four I walked around the corner with my big hat, high heel shoes, and my portable record player to my best friend's house. My best friend, who is now the head of marketing for one of Canada's top jingle firms, will tell you that every time she hit a bad note, I would hit her on the back of the head with a broom.

Some are predisposed to being singers, others are born with a good voice and love to sing, and the rest love to sing for mere enjoyment and expression.

Even though I was born to sing, it took years to perfect what I call the five major virtues of the art. They are as follows: Breathing, Pitch, Projection, Control, and Performance. To become a "good" singer you must be able to breathe properly, sing with power (resonance), and sing in pitch. To become a "great" singer you'll need to add dynamics and develop a style that's all your own.

Breathing

The best way to start singing properly is from your diaphragm.

Find out your vocal range. If you're not familiar with your diaphragm, make it your new best friend. We use it when we cough, give a hearty laugh, child birth, and on occasion it's the muscle that helps relieve your stomach after a night of drinking too much or a bad case of food poisoning. Sing the words HA, HA, HA, one note per three HA's. Your tone should be round, rich, and airy when you're doing it right. Apply this exercise when you are doing your scales. Not only will you achieve pitch, but you'll expand your range in time. My students often tell me of their great bowel movements after a good practice. Oh yeah, we use the diaphragm for that too!

Pitch Is A Bitch

Simply just making a noise is not considered singing if it sounds like a cat serenading the moon.

If you have pitch problems, you can correct this by practicing scales; practicing scales will also strengthen the muscles used for singing and give you better control.



Pronounce and intonate your vowels. Words are truly nothing but a constant succession of vowels with consonants dropped in occasionally to create meaning. So practice all your vowels at every pitch (high, low, and in-between). In English – AH EH EE OH OO.

Control & Projection

If your voice is weak, this is usually caused by under-developed muscles. Muscles can be strengthened, and with training you can learn how to use your resonators to project a powerful voice. Again, the diaphragm is key.

Holding a note and exercising the note from soft to loud and then back to soft again in one breath teaches you the power of the diaphragm and control of the note.

Sing the things you enjoy, and while you're practicing, record yourself singing and be critical of the playback. Pick two or three songs to use as your benchmark: an easy song, and intermediate song, and a difficult song. Be reasonable with your self-expectations.

Performance

This is the final step and it's up to you. Listen well and learn well. Listening to other performers is a great way to learn; even bad performers show you what not to do. Go listen to the greats of jazz, R&B, soul, blues... Imitate them to learn, but

be you in performing them. This is a great way to learn scat, but as simple as some of the melodies sound in jazz, they require the ultimate pitch, control, timing, and tones. Also keep in mind this form of music will challenge you every time you sing. You see, jazz is one of the only forms of music which provides the musical framework but demands your utmost improvisational skills.

Remember that it's all up to you now. Your ability to perform is a direct result of your focus on practice and dedication. By knowing more, you are self-confident and prepared.

Find an image. This will often sell you before your voice does – just look at all the great looking stars who can't sing. Be professional. Drugs, alcohol, and late nights are singer's enemies – although a good glass of homemade Italian wine can warm up the show. If you want longevity in this business, take care of your instrument.

Sing from the heart and soul of your divine spirit, loving every moment, and if you're hired to sing a song you don't like ... do the job, get paid well, and sing all the way to the bank.

Liberty Silver has sold millions of records and CDs throughout the world, with all types of music ranging from R&B to jazz to multi-platinum dance tracks, and even country music. Contact: libertysilversings@yahoo.ca.

What Makes Your Voice Unique

by Paula Shear

Every singer wants to bring a stamp of individuality to the table – a recognizable quality that defines them. And this is all within the context of mastering a style, or styles, that they are passionate about. Musically, we live in interesting times; has there ever been a more welcoming time for musical diversity than now? We see successful singing careers in just about any style, reflected not only in the varied categories of pop, rock, jazz, country, latin, r&b/soul, classical, etc., but also in the combinations of those styles. Creative arrangements may be laced with colours and attitudes borrowed from different genres, and this melding of sounds creates something fresh.



So you want to set your voice free ... that means not just being able to hit the high notes, but to explore different tones, textures, and dynamics. With great breath control and solid technique, you have the leverage to experiment and get exactly what you are going for. But that's only part of the picture.

The question is, do you know what you're going for? When you're starting out, it is good to emulate and to

experiment with different styles and see what you are drawn to, and more importantly, what suits you. But let's roll back the camera. Just what does that mean, "what suits you?" You can be born with all the talent in the world, but if you're not exposed to a certain genre of music, you have to cultivate a feel for it. That means some serious listening and absorbing.

So tone, texture, dynamics, rhythm, timing, and phrasing all play a part in not only defining the type of music, but putting your own imprint on it. Having said that, everyone has influences that can be recognized; for instance, when you listen to Steve Perry's, soaring, impressive rock vocals and then hear Sam Cooke, it is clear that Perry was inspired by this legendary soul singer. But with other nuances thrown into the arena, and in the context of melodic, pop-rock arrangements and songwriting, the result is distinctive. If you listen to the great jazz singer Nancy Wilson, you will recognize aspects of Dinah Washington.

And how many of today's singers have been influenced by the brilliance of Stevie Wonder? The answer is countless. Certainly, Stevie Wonder's phrasing and impeccable use of licks and inflections cannot be separated from the recognizability of his sound. Case in point: I once heard him doing a spoof on a comedy show where he was singing straight, with no bends, licks, or soul inflections whatsoever. The result: if you closed your eyes, you would not know it was him.

The point is you have to decide what want to bring out and highlight, given the character of your particular instrument. For instance, certainly the use of vibrato is a great asset, particularly in sustained phrases. But I could cite singers who have little vibrato in their voice, and have artfully created a style where they add subtle bends and turns onto the ends of phrases, and it sounds in the pocket and pleasing to the ear. On the other hand, a more unadorned approach may be what works best for

you. A voice can be compelling in simplicity.

The essential thing is to always sing the lyric. To be a great interpreter, you have to know where to put the emphasis, and that will influence your sonic choices. If, for instance, the lyrical structure utilizes alliteration (a poetic device where words close to each other begin with matching consonants or vowels), it makes sense to emphasize them. Most importantly, the essence of the message inspires phrasing choices.

Understanding harmony, playing an instrument, and developing the craft of songwriting all potentially give rise to greater personal expression. Everything that enhances your musicality is invaluable to your creativity. And incidentally, it is the opinion of yours truly that every contemporary singer can only benefit from having a firm grounding in the blues. Being able to freely bend pitches, back-phrase, and improvise awards you more opportunity for originality.

Great singing is more than an expression of genre, but an extension of the spirit we bring to it; it is life experience, authenticity, and storytelling. Utilizing a range of emotion means not intellectualizing while you are in the moment. Learning to play with timing and vocal attacks means you can't be inhibited when making those spontaneous choices, and that's where great technique is so essential. All these elements come together to help you create a sound that is uniquely yours.

And it is always about singing from the heart.

Paula Shear is a Toronto Singer/Vocal Coach who has guided singers in all levels, from beginners to recording artists. She teaches how to open your voice to unlimited power, gain octaves, and discover the beauty of singing with ease in a diversity of styles: rock, R&B, pop, and jazz. She will be releasing a CD of her original words and music featuring: Bernie Senensky, Kieran Overs, Rob Piltch, Mark Kelso, Robi Botos, Frank Botos, and others. Contact: sedonah@sympatico.ca.

The Singer's Warm-Up

by Tammy Frederick

The number one thing you can do to make an immediate impact in your singing is to start warming up your voice before you sing. Rehearsing and performing with no warm-up is like a runner choosing not to stretch before hitting the pavement. Developing a warm-up routine can benefit you for more than physical reasons; by taking the time to connect to your voice and prepare, you will set yourself up mentally for a great performance, practice, or recording session.

The length of your warm-up can vary based on the demands of the performance. A minimum 15 minutes should be spent on your warm-up. If you are going to be performing all night, I would suggest upwards of 45 minutes or an hour including a physical warm-up, vocalizing, and running through your songs, or a few of them. For long recording sessions or multi-set performances, vocalize during your breaks to keep your vocal cords working efficiently. This is not the time to over-exert yourself. Take this time to slow it down and do some gentle exercises like liprolls, tongue trills, or "m's" as explained below.

Physical Warm-up

A physical warm-up could involve any number of activities including taking a yoga class, going for a walk, boxing, jumping on a mini-trampoline, swimming, etc... Ultimately, you want to get the blood pumping and the air flowing. If you don't have time for any of the above, you can achieve similar results in the confines of your own space.

Start by walking around your space and bring attention to your breathing. Place a hand on your stomach just above the belly button and make sure you are allowing your diaphragm to drop. As you continue walking start to roll your shoulders backwards and forwards. Loosen up any tension. Keep breathing. Stop walking and find a spot in the room that will give you space to move freely. Plant your feet hip-width apart, both feet pointing forward and parallel to one another. Imagine a string attached to the top of your head pulling upward.

This will help bring your body into proper alignment. Don't push yourself



into any position that feels uncomfortable. Do some easy stretching and movements. Be sure to target all major muscle groups. Don't be afraid to warm up as you would if you were going for a run or about to play a sport. Stretch your arms, shoulders, hamstrings, calves, quads, etc...

Vocalizing

Simply singing through your songs is not sufficient for warming up the voice. When you sing through your songs, you are only warming up your vocal cords to the range of your pieces. You want to vocalize beyond and below the range of your songs.

Keep the scales simple and short. Although there exists a number of "vocal gymnastic" type exercises that go backwards and forwards and all over the place, it is not necessary, and in a number of cases, is detrimental. A warm-up should be gentle and effective, hence the term "warm-up." Use a simple 5-note or one-octave scale. Start in your chest register and move up by semitones. Do not go further than is comfortable. (If you are not able to play an instrument, you can hire a pianist to record you some scales for warming up or begin seeing a voice teacher.)

Always start your warm-up with a lip-roll (this is air moving through slightly puckered lips – imitating a "motorboat") or tongue trill (air rolling over your tongue creating an "r" sound), which acts as a gentle massage for the vocal

chords. Then move onto words such as mum, moom, noo, no, nuh, woof, etc... You can also sing through the scales on an "m" sound.

Songwork

Once you have warmed up your instrument, sing through your songs in a similar order. Start singing through your songs with liprolls or tongue trills to get the air moving through your piece. Then sing through it on "m's", mum's, noo's, etc... Singing through your songs on one word manages the airflow making it easier for the vocal cords to stay connected. Once you are done this, start to practice with the words while maintaining the muscle memory from the vocalizing.

Warm Down

After a performance, practice, or recording session, always warm down for a few minutes. Simply do some liprolls or tongue trills for a few minutes. This will help re-connect the vocal cords and will help to alleviate any hoarseness that may creep in if you pushed too hard.

Taking the time to incorporate good practice habits will go along way in setting you up for vocal success.

A warm-up CD is available through the studio for the male and female voices. For more information please contact the studio via e-mail at voice@tammyfrederick.com.

Tammy Frederick began training with Bill Vincent in 1998 and became an associate teacher in 2002, at which time she opened her own voice studio. Tammy has been developing voices ever since with a vocal technique designed to connect the voice from top to bottom, increase range, endurance, and flexibility, and to develop a sound that is effortless to produce.

With Tammy Frederick's Voice Studio, she has worked to create an environment that is exciting, a vocal approach that is superior, and an attitude of success that she hopes is infectious to all who enter. Along with teaching private voice lessons, she also conducts voice workshops, musically directs, adjudicates, and, more recently, added the title of director to her credits. For testimonials or more information please visit www.tammyfrederick.com.

Warming Up Your Voice

by Paula Shear

When thinking about warming up your voice, you really want to avoid injury. There are many factors that contribute to vocal problems and abuse:

1. Using your voice incorrectly; this means bad technique, and forced throat singing.
2. Doing too much.
3. Not building up vocal stamina.
4. Fear creates tension.
5. Not getting enough rest; vocal chords can swell from lack of sleep.
6. Not pacing your voice.
7. Vocal fatigue from overusing speaking voice, i.e. long telephone calls, yelling, and whispering are all hard on your voice.
8. Bad speech habits where spoken words fall back into the throat and not forward on the hard palette.
9. Talking over a crowd extensively.
10. Being exposed to first- and second-hand smoke.
11. Dryness (lack of humidity) in the air.
12. Best to avoid dairy before singing.
13. Alcohol is an irritant; soft drinks and caffeinated drinks are drying. If you're gonna have that coffee, have it away from practice and performance times. Your vocal chords need water to function effectively. The best thing is room temperature water; drink sensibly throughout the day.
14. Practicing the same song over and over again is harder on your voice than the same number of repetitions in different songs, because you are using the same attacks repeatedly; this is more wear and tear.
15. Don't overdo your warm-up. It is essential to build up gradually. Always begin vocalizing on pitches close to your speech, moving up in semitones, gradually stretching the upper register, and then moving back down to below your starting note. Consider warming up hours before your performance.

To maintain your voice, you need to develop precision and discipline. You are an athlete, and your entire body is your instrument. This means some kind of physical activity, at the very least brisk walking daily. The energy and focus you bring to the table translates into creativity when you are free with your sound, and revved up to go.

Always begin with breathing exercises, and then ease your voice with something that is non-stressful, but gently stretching. In the May/June '07 issue of *CM*, I gave you three important breathing exercises where you learned to expand your lower rib cage as you inhaled without engaging the upper chest. I talked about having a sense of "bearing down" as you inhale. Here is another couple of exercises to add to the regimen:

Panting

1. This is sharp and even: inhale on the count of one second (lower rib cage expands), hold for one, breathe out for one second (lower rib cage contracts), and pause for one second. This is one cycle – do it eight times. Don't engage upper chest. Notice the breath is exhaled diagonally down and out.
2. In for eight seconds, hold your breath for 28 seconds, then release your breath slowly and evenly for 14 seconds. The bigger challenge is not the holding of the breath, but not letting the air out too quickly after holding it. It should be an even airflow, and the rib cage contracts as you exhale. Do this one time.

Humming

I call humming the "keys to the kingdom" because done correctly, not only does it help create "laser beam" precision, it teaches you where the correct slots for the notes are. It's been said if you go to a singing lesson and you're not making strange noises, you've come to the wrong place!

To show my students how to create a humming sound, I first get them to experiment with a kind of "fire engine" or "siren" sound. This has an obvious descending tone, with a "buzzing" approach. It's interesting that the sounds "n" and "mm" are



very similar. The first one has an open mouth, but if you create an "n" sound and then close your mouth, miraculously it transforms into an "mm."

Humming is like an exaggerated top edge of a sung note. A clear, glassy, full tone, say, on the sound of "ah" would actually have a subtle sound of "n" on the top edge, to create an overtone that adds crystalline clarity. Humming brings the voice forward on the vocal mask.

One Note Hum

A good starting note is often A \flat , B \flat , or Middle C, depending on your voice type. Sound on "mm" for a count of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, then open your mouth for a second without changing the sonic attack and you will get a nasal "muh". Then close your mouth again. Put the emphasis on the "mm" sound, not the "muh". In one cycle there will be four "mm"s and three "muh"s. Moving up in semitones, ease through the vocal bridges and then down in semitones to the bottom of your range. Lip and tongue trills, sighing sounds, arpeggios, and scales all prime your voice as well, but they are topics for another day.

Paula Shear is a Toronto-based singer/vocal coach who has guided singers at all levels, from beginners to recording artists. She teaches how to open your voice to unlimited power, gain octaves, and discover the beauty of singing with ease in a diversity of styles: Pop, Rock, R&B, and Jazz. She recently conducted a voice clinic for Long & McQuade. Contact: sedonah@sympatico.ca.

Scars

by Ivana Santilli

I like scars. I find them visually appealing. Aside from the fact that he's a brilliant bassist and songwriter, Mark King (of Level 42)'s facial scar is one of the additional reasons I have a crush on him.

I also love the SOUND of scars.

Allow me to explain. A short while ago, my family doctor explained to me the double-edged sword of my voice. Part of its character – part of my vocal style – is the result of some damage done: the wear and tear. The sound of my voice is fashioned by a certain amount of scarring.

Scars are what humanize us and endear us to one another. Now, let me endear you to some guerilla tactics that work for me:

Activities: Relaxation, Hydration, And Rest. These are often overlooked, but become most apparent in your voice when you're not getting enough of any/one of these three. They are also the most difficult to stick to when you're on the road. Exercise truly promotes proper circulation of blood. You don't have to be in the gym one hour a day to give your voice what it needs. Skipping rope for three minutes a day helps to condition your heart. Bits of yoga, such as the sun salutation, help to heat up your body internally and awaken the oxygen and blood flow. I find the "wheel pose" and "camel pose" to be instantly beneficial, in that they immediately juice up your body by redistributing the O² and reviving any energy you didn't know you had. It also helps to un-clench your throat. Various stretches, without jerking your body about, and being conscious of your breath, all help to relax, release tension, and re-energize your body, hence, your voice.

All-day vocal Massage: Vocal warm-ups are necessary, but if you've overworked your voice, or haven't gotten enough sleep, it really helps if you prepare your voice before preparing your voice. I learned a little trick from one of my favourite singers, Wade O Brown. It's something you can do all day long as you go about your day, without really annoying those around you. Rolling your tongue for 15 seconds at a time, and as many times during the day, really prepares your voice for any work it may need to do later on. It's more of a

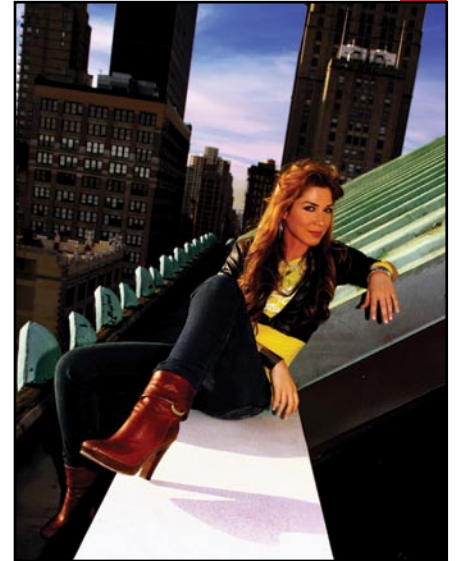
"Roh," not a "Ree." Eventually, add a vocal tone with this rolling "R." Then, on to the vocal warm-up of your choice 20 minutes before hitting the stage or the studio session.

Avoid: Steer clear of yelling, arguments, and tension. No whispering. Laughing or talking over loud music strains your voice. Keep quiet when there's anything else in the room that competes for sound. For rehearsal or performances, stage sound and monitors are a huge help in not blowing out your voice. A good sound check is important so that you don't strain to hear yourself over the accompaniment. As often as possible, have a monitor mix that is dedicated to your vocals, where you can have your vocals dialed at a 9 out of 10, with the harmonic instruments, such as keyboards or guitar, set at 6 out of 10. This keeps your tuning reference audible without straining your voice. Any other instruments you need to hear that are important for cues or groove, like hi-hat or bass, I'd say set at a 4 out of 10. You'll still hear the rest of the band in the room sound.

Tricks: Life happens – someone has upset you; you've stayed up all night at this dope party sipping on some Glenfiddich. This is living. When you've gotten yourself into trouble, you must still sing and gig.

During a set, try to riff downwards, as opposed to upwards. This gives your voice some intermittent vocal massages, relaxes your larynx, and, as well, it throws some surprises in your melodic path. It keeps the songs interesting and challenging while being kind to your voice.

Food & Drink: Room temperature water – nothing from the freezer. No ice. Warm, not hot, herbal tea. If you can't hold the cup in the palm of your hands, it's definitely too hot for your throat. Black licorice root tea has natural sugars in the spice that help soothe and coat your throat; also try ginger tea and the various throat comfort teas. Stash is a great brand at the health food store. If you're gigging in a bar, bring some tomato juice with tabasco sauce to cut any odd phlegm that interferes during a set, or try ginger ale (Canada Dry – because it has REAL ginger in it) or



ginger beer...

Before a show, eat a good plate of pasta with tomato sauce. The acid in the tomatoes cuts the junk and pasta serves up the carbs my vocal chords need to run their next mile. Zinc tablets are good throughout the day.

Tuning: When you get tired, pitch tends to waver. Like parallel parking your car after a 48-hour day, you won't be as precise. Being a musician first, before I ever sang, I'd say that learning a chordal instrument really helps anchor your tuning. Which is why, onstage, making certain the harmonic instruments like keys or guitar are dialed up in your monitors will help you find the centre of your notes.

Lyrics: Most important is evoking a message through your voice. If you have a hard time remembering lyrics, jot down some cheat notes on your set list. Write the key word from the more complicated verse you always forget. Learning by rote is not the way to go. Get into the meaning of the song. It has to be under your skin.

Above all, relax. You'll sound great if you mean it!

Ivana Santilli is an R&B singer and instrumentalist who is following up her long-standing success with a recent release entitled TO.NY.

Check out www.ivanasantilli.net.

Distinction

by Divine Brown

Over the years, people have asked me, "How do you hit those high notes?" The story is this: when I was 15, I went to a government-funded youth camp, created to discourage drug use among teens. A group of us were paid to create an anti-drug presentation using drama, dance, and music ... and we had three weeks to do it. The vocal coach (Bill Vincent) was the first person to let me know that I had what he called a "super head" register, or more commonly known as whistle tones. The thing is, I didn't make the connection, and actually forgot about it once the program had ended. Subsequently, I thought I was making mistakes during vocal warm-ups because every time I would hit a high Bb, my voice would flip to roughly a C# or higher in a really annoying tone. It wasn't until I laughed out loud one day and my voice flipped up into that annoying tone that I somehow made the connection! Mariah Carey's "Vision Of Love" was killing the airwaves at the time, and I had locked myself in a room trying to sing those notes in my regular head register (dummy) and that's when it finally sunk in. What Bill had told me three years earlier was actually real! I stuck with him for a few years after that to further develop this part of my voice.

My experience as a vocalist/performer didn't begin in music school. The bulk of my vocal style is pretty raw because I spent a lot of time emulating my favourite singers like Chaka Khan, Minnie Riperton, and Deniece Williams, to name just a few. It was very important to me that I retain rawness in my voice, and the route I chose was to strive to retain the natural talent by going out into the world and "pay my dues" singing in bands and auditioning for musicals and music reviews. My instincts told me that the more raw and unique I sounded, the more I would stand out at auditions. It worked well for me because I didn't have a "musical theatre" sound.

Tips For A Great Performance

Take a few minutes for yourself before each performance and do some deep breathing/meditation exercises. I find this helps to relax your body, mind, and voice.

Warming up before a performance and cooling down after is vital to vocal preservation. Your voice is just a lot like the muscles in your body. An athlete must warm up before the race, and stretch afterwards to avoid injury, right? The same applies to singers! Long hums in your low register are a great way to begin to open up the voice. I also find this to be a very meditative technique.

Avoid air conditioning – I know y'all, Canadian summers are at the top of the list when it comes to hot, muggy, and sticky! One of the most challenging aspects of being a vocalist for me is A/C. There is practically no avoiding it, but before a performance at a TV studio (one of the worst environments for this) bring a scarf and wrap that sucker around your neck! After a good warm-up, a scarf can help to keep your voice warm.

The key to holding long notes has to do partially with good cardio conditioning, and partly with great vocal technique. This is where vocal training has come into play for me. Although I don't have a vocal coach now, the techniques I learned years ago have proven to be invaluable! Research vocal coaches online or ask different singers their recommendations. Finding a vocal coach that suits your needs is like finding the right conditioner for your hair. You have to try a few of them until you find the right one that suits your needs.



Regular Exercise

Exercise plays an important factor on stage. Even the slightest movements on stage can make your voice sound wobbly and throw you off your game. Justin Timberlake is a singer that I love to watch – he dances while he sings, and although he does some pretty intense movements, his voice is unaffected! Any form of exercise at least three times a week can put you way ahead of the game.

Drink plenty of warm tea the day of a show. If you are a coffee lover like myself (I know ... not the best for a singer) it is even more important to stay on top of your water intake. Honey, a squeeze of lemon, and a sprinkle of cayenne pepper does the trick for me (the cayenne is optional). It's important not to put too much lemon – the acidity can be a bit harsh on the vocals, but just enough will help to keep phlegm (a singer's worst nightmare) at bay. To combat dryness, try raw licorice root tea. It is naturally sweet so there is no need to add any sweetener. Throat Coat (tea bags) is a great herbal tea that has licorice root in it and can be found at most health food stores.

Becoming You

The most important part of becoming a great performer, I feel, is to find your own unique voice. Taking things that I have learned from my broad scope of influences has helped me to develop a distinct sound. From the world of jazz, Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, and Sarah Vaughan are some of my favorites! Challenge yourself by stepping outside of your boundaries, and learn a song that people would never expect from you. Then sit in at an open mic jam, and try it out. The world is your oyster, the way I see it, and it is up to you to mould your God-given gifts in your own unique way.

Enjoy the ride every step of the way ... and keep on shining your truly distinct light!

Divine Brown is a veteran of the Canadian R&B and soul circuit. She honed her craft in the Toronto clubs before she was old enough to legally hang out in bars, then moved onto the musical theatre stage as a cast member of shows like Ain't Misbehavin' and Rent. Her latest record, The Love Chronicles, was released very recently by Warner Music Canada.

Harmonizing Part I: Creating Harmony

by Tammy Frederick

For some, harmonizing comes very naturally. You may have some naturally-harmonizing friends or colleagues, or you may be one of these people yourself. For example: you are at a birthday party and the cake comes out; everybody starts singing "Happy Birthday" and then you hear a voice singing different notes than the rest of the group, but it is not a terrible sound – it is a blending of the sound. That person has the ability to harmonize with the melody line of "Happy Birthday." Although it may seem unattainable if it doesn't come naturally, have no fear. Harmonizing is actually a very simple process that will just require some time and practice on your part. It is a skill that can definitely be learned.

Melody Line

To get started, it is necessary to establish what the melody line is for the part of the song for which you wish to create harmonies. Often harmonies are created through the chorus or bridge; however, you can put them wherever you want. The melody line is the sequence of notes that the vocalist sings. You will need to use a piano or guitar and write out the notes. You do not need to be able to write music to do this, just simply write out the letter names of the notes. Here is an example using the song "Happy Birthday":



Once you have established the notes for the melody line, you can now begin to build harmonies. This part is fun and experimental. You will need a piano or guitar to play with this. The following diagram can assist you with locating notes on the keyboard:



Building Harmonies

Basic harmonies are built from the chord structure in a given key – that is the first, third, and fifth note. The first note played up or down the octave is also a common harmony. This is a great place to start when starting to incorporate harmonies into your songs, so play around in any key to get a feel for creating harmonies, then move onto your song. From here it is simply a matter of playing with different combinations and seeing what sound you like best. Play the first note in your melody line and then choose another note and play them together. Do you like the way it sounds? Keep experimenting with different notes. When you find a combination you like,



write it down. Then move onto the next melody line note you wish to harmonize. Now string the notes together by playing through the phrase with the melody and harmonies at the same time. Here is an example with the song "Happy Birthday":



Don't look for perfection; just keep experimenting. The more time you spend experimenting with building harmonies, the more you will start to see how easy and straightforward the process is. Don't be overwhelmed when you sit down at the keyboard or pick up the guitar and think, "There are 100 different choices I could make with each note!" Really, there is only a handful of notes that will sound good with each other, so just start deciding which ones you like.

In part two, I will discuss how to vocalize your harmonies and simple ways to improve the way you blend your voice with that of another singer.

Tammy Frederick has been developing voices with a vocal technique designed to connect the voice from top to bottom; increase range, endurance, and flexibility; and to develop a sound that is effortless to produce. With Tammy Frederick's Voice Studio, she has worked to create an environment that is exciting, a vocal approach that is superior, and an attitude of success that she hopes is infectious to all who enter. Along with teaching private voice lessons, she also conducts voice workshops, musically directs, adjudicates, and, more recently, added the title of director to her credits. For testimonials or more information please visit www.tammyfrederick.com.

Harmonizing Part II: Singing Harmonies

by Tammy Frederick

Once you have created the harmonies, it is time to vocalize them. For some, being able to sing a different note than the other singer is fairly easy, but please be aware that the majority of people out there find it challenging to sing a different note than their singing partner. That is because it is not easy to override our built-in imitation mechanism. We are hardwired to hear and match pitches, but in harmonizing we are asking ourselves to ignore the note we are hearing and sing above or below it. Again, this is very doable – it just takes some practice.

The best way to practice harmonizing with your singing partner is to have each singer practice his or her vocal line separately with the piano or guitar playing the notes. This will begin to build vocal muscle memory for each singer with the individual vocal part. Once each singer feels comfortable with his or her part, it is time to put the two together. It is very important to have the piano or guitar play along so the singers can hear their notes. Don't be surprised if it feels like a bit of a train wreck at first; it is just a matter of time and practice, and of repeating this process until the two vocalists can sing together without throwing each other off. In the following example one singer would sing through the notes of the first line, and the other singer would sing through the notes of the second line.



Harmonizing is a lot of fun – when you feel confident with it, the voices will feel like they are pressing against each other, holding each other up.

Sounding Good Together

Everyone's voice is different, so it can pose a bit of a challenge if the two voices do not blend well singing in harmony. There are a few key things each vocalist can do to help blend better with the other vocalist. First, do not try to over-sing your vocal line. Both singers should start off practicing no louder than the volume you would talk at. This will manage your air pressure and ensure an easier sound. Then, analyze the way each vocalist says the lyrics. We all have slightly different diction based on our upbringing and cultural influences. Even though you think you are both saying the word, you may not be saying it the same way. This can easily interfere with how the voices will blend.

Practice speaking the lyrics together before singing them.



If there is a sustained or held note it will be very important to pay attention to the vowel of the word you are singing. We sing on the vowels so be sure you are both pronouncing the vowel correctly. For example, a lot of times the vowel "oh" is sung more like an "aw-oh,"; this will change the sound and interfere with the blending of the voices. Simply identifying what the vowel is that you are singing on will go a long way in improving your blend. Finally, it is always a good idea to sing with a straight tone on sustained notes when you are harmonizing as opposed to allowing your vibrato. The vibrato is the slight wavering of the vocal tone you may hear in a singer's voice while sustaining a note. Everyone's vibrato is unique and oscillates at different speeds; therefore, it can dramatically interfere with the sound of the blend.

Ultimately, harmonizing is very simple – it just requires the time and practice to make it all come together. Most of all, have fun! Allow yourself to play and make bad sounds – it doesn't matter. It is all a part of the process of creating a piece of music.

Tammy has been developing voices with a vocal technique designed to connect the voice from top to bottom, increase range, endurance and flexibility, and to develop a sound that is effortless to produce.

With Tammy Frederick's Voice Studio, she has worked to create an environment that is exciting, a vocal approach that is superior, and an attitude of success that she hopes is infectious to all who enter. Along with teaching private voice lessons, she also conducts voice workshops, musically directs, adjudicates, and, more recently, added the title of director to her credits. For testimonials or more information please visit www.tammyfrederick.com.

Developing Good Pitch by Tammy Frederick

Everyone has good pitch. Everyone's brain and ear is capable of hearing and matching pitches, so if this is the case, why do we sing out of tune at times – or a lot of the time? There are a few reasons why this occurs, and being able to sing on pitch is not as elusive to you as so many people think. The term "tone deaf" is thrown about very casually, but it is actually pretty rare for someone to actually be diagnosed with Amusia, the medical term for tone deafness. In the majority of cases, the inability to sing in tune is from a lack of musical training.

Let's define what one might describe as "good" pitch? First, your ear and brain interpret a pitch that is being played by a musical instrument, then the vocal cords match the pitch. In order to sing a note on pitch, the vocal cords simply need to maintain their connection on the note that is being called for. Your vocal cords are two folds of mucous tissue that extend horizontally across the larynx. When you are silent, the vocal cords rest in an open position. When you begin to speak or sing, they come together, or connect, and begin to vibrate. The main reason for pitching problems is lack of vocal flexibility. Two factors that greatly affect vocal flexibility are air pressure and muscle tension.

Air Pressure

We sing or speak on our exhalation. Sound is created when air passes through your vibrating vocal cords. Different vowels cause the body to exhale different amounts of air. A narrower vowel such as "e" or "oo" creates less air pressure. A broader vowel such as "uh" or "aw" creates greater air pressure. Likewise, if you sing loudly, you increase the air-pressure; and if you sing softly, you decrease the air-pressure. The more air pressure the vocal cords have to deal with, the more challenging it is for them to maintain their connection on a given pitch. When there is more air pressure than the cords can deal with, they either separate completely – that would be the dreaded "crack" in the voice or the cords start to peel open or adjust backwards. This results in a slightly under-pitched sound. Likewise, the cords can adjust to: far forward thus creating a slightly sharp sound. To help manage your air-flow, practice singing your songs on



one word such as "koo" or humming it on "m". We sing on our breath, so the smoother the inhalation and exhalation, the smoother your singing will be. Also, practice singing your songs at the volume you would speak at – supported but not pushed or breathy. Once you build consistent muscle memory, you can begin to increase the air pressure to add more dynamics to your voice.

Muscle Tension

Muscle tension is a big culprit of pitching difficulties. Muscle tension occurs when the neck, tongue, and jaw muscles start to grip onto the larynx as a singer ascends in pitch and begins to "reach" for notes. Once these larger muscles engage, they begin to pull the larynx up – making it very difficult for proper vocal cord connection. In order for the vocal cords to adjust easily to pitches, these larger muscles should remain relaxed, allowing the larynx to remain in the same easy position it sits in when you are speaking. Remember, the key to staying on pitch is maintaining the right vocal cord connection. Be sure your neck, tongue, and jaw muscles are relaxed as you sing through your songs. I suggest watching yourself in the mirror – this way you can see what kind of tension you may be exerting. Also, practice talking through the lyrics, then

try singing your songs as easily as you speak them. Minimizing muscle tension will allow the vocal cords to learn how to connect properly on each pitch.

Your ability to sing with "good" pitch has to do with how you are affecting your vocal instrument. If you can, seek out professional training and start training your voice. Also, start applying the tips provided above. We were all born awesome singers, and it will just take some time, practice, and patience – but success is inevitable. Comparison is a waste of time. Commit to your vocal development, and you will make all the right moves. Vocal flexibility is our goal – go slow, practice properly, and build your skills gradually. Most of all, have fun exploring your instrument!

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Expanding Your Range

by Paula Shear

In learning to sing with increased range, the best approach is a slow and steady one. The last thing you want to do is to try to force your way up. In fact, I touched on this in previous issues of *CM*; the best approach to singing higher comes from targeting “down” to higher levels in the vocal mask. The roof of the mouth, bone structure, and sinus cavities are all areas of resonance for freedom.

Learning to work through the “breaks” in your voice is somewhat like driving standard in a car and changing gears so that the vehicle doesn’t sputter and stall. Not learning how to make these transitions causes you to force the chest voice up; with no room for proper resonance, the showing of the sound will cause strain and damage to your instrument. If you’re constantly feeling it in the back of your throat, something is amiss.

The most relaxed part of your singing voice is comprised of the notes closest to your speaking voice. That’s why when you’re warming up and developing your ability to sing with increased vocal range, it’s imperative that you begin in the “middle of your voice” and ease your way up, then work your way back down past the starting note, easing into the lowest tones. You need to work through breaks in your voice and transition through chest voice, mixed tone, and head tones.

In theory, you want to be able to create uniform, smooth sound from bottom to top, somewhat like a “string of pearls.” Consistency, ideally at your fingertips, allows for fluidity and a relaxed sound. To create interesting and compelling phrasing, however, you also want to texturize and vary the tones. Sometimes breathy is effective, but what you don’t want is breathless. Remember: powerful notes have less air expelled. When breath is audible, it should be for emotional emphasis. Gasping, however, is never desirable or helpful!

In the beginning, you might find yourself going for it, sort of taking a wild leap of faith and flying by the seat of your pants. Sometimes, incredible adrenaline will help things fall into place, but consistency is not likely to develop when you don’t have a clear handle on what’s going on. Hitting great notes sometimes, but forcing at other times, can lead to problems like vocal nodes, swelling, and hoarseness. Left unchecked, the problems compound. Now, I feel I should also say that, beyond technique, just doing too much at a time can create problems, and sometimes we’re forced to sing when we’re not well. So recovery with down time is crucial, and in learning to strengthen methodically, we find the detours away from ongoing problems.

Essentially, a rich, open voice has an overtone system. It’s as if each vocal register has an appropriate slot for releasing the note down and out. Moving up, you’ll inevitably come to a point where the sound wants to flip up to another area. Anything with any amount of power will feel forced unless you learn to actually target down to a higher area. In the case of the first break, this moves from the roof of your mouth, to the second position, which is the lower nose and sinus cavities. Just try plugging your nose when you’re singing,



Photo by: Steve Carty

and you’ll realize how much nasal resonance adds to the sound – not falling back into the throat. If you feel you want to climb, rethink it, thin the note out, and slot down from a higher place.

Exercise

do/re/me/fah/so/
fah/me/re/
do/so/do

– sung to sound of “fah”

Make sure your jaw is relaxed. Divide the exercise into the three sections, and feel the notes being expelled down diagonally with crescendo.

Choosing the best key for a particular song is going to make a huge difference in your performance. Even when your range has increased by octaves, the foundation of your voice has to sit in a place that is comfortable, and best serves the tone in the middle of your vocal range. Remember, high notes are like icing on the cake, and having a relaxed lower end adds richness to your sound. This will also allow you the vocal stamina to bend, shade, and balance everything in a way that is compelling and helps unleash your highest creative potential.

Paula Shear is a Toronto singer/vocal coach who has guided singers of all levels, from beginners to recording artists. She teaches how to open your voice to unlimited power, gain octaves, and discover the beauty of singing with ease in a diversity of styles: rock, pop, R&B, and jazz. Her debut CD, So Talk To Me, features Bernie Senensky, Kieran Overs, Rob Piltch, Mark Kelso, Robi Botos, Frank Botos, Mark McLean, and others.

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by Paula Shear

SINGING

The Lyric & Emotion

More than anything, the thing that dictates choices in interpretation is singing the lyric. The meaning of the words should be the inspiration for the sonic approach. You are telling a story with your voice. You are playing off what the lyricist has so carefully constructed in tandem with the music. It is conversational. This means that you take your breaths not usually when you run out of air, but where it makes sense to the phrase. This will influence your rhythmic choices on words.

Of course, phrasing choices are also influenced by the style of music and voice type, but when you're going for a certain sound, style, or category for radio and so on, while you're developing it's a great idea to listen to singers both in and outside of your own genre.

Some singers stand out as role models for everyone. Tony Bennett, the singer that Frank Sinatra cited as "...the best singer in the business" is a great role model for just about any aspiring vocalist. Just listen to him singing "Come Rain or Come Shine" and hear a master at work. He incorporates impeccable taste, timing, feeling, and a great sense of crescendo. He is completely connected to the lyric.

The other pivotal thing you'll hear in his phrasing is the element of "surprise." This creates what I call the "ah" factor. It's the thing that elicits an emotional response from the listener. He most effectively employs contrasting peaks and valleys. His approach is extremely conversational, and if you watch a performance and note his facial expressions, the reflectiveness and the thought behind the words convey intelligence and nuance. The sounds

he chooses are spontaneous extensions of that thoughtfulness and feeling; they are precise colour expressions of those pools of emotion. At times, phrases may seem almost spoken; at others he soars with an openness and exquisite richness.

Now, the vocal technique that is so readily at his fingertips frees him to swoop and soar, or pull back the reins in contemplation. He's not going through the motions; he's living it. This is compelling to watch as well as listen to.

Looking at the opening stanzas for "Come Rain or Come Shine" and the brilliance of Johnny Mercer's lyrical composition, we can deconstruct and analyze the rhymes and alliterations that could and should influence the accents that might be applied. No singer worth his salt would not take this into account.

*I'm gonna love you, like nobody's loved you
Come rain or come shine
High as a mountain, deep as a river
Come rain or come shine.*

*I guess when you met me
It was just one of those things
But don't you ever bet me
Cause I'm gonna be true if you let me.*

Notice in the opening line, the word "I'm" is sustained but is punctuated with a defined "m" that is reprised in the word "come," repeated twice in the title and again in the next line with the word "mountain," with the title repeating again. The very style

of the lyric where words are repeated calls out for extra emphasis, and this is heightened by the play of matching consonants (alliteration).

In the following stanza Mercer again repeats "m" in the words "met me," "bet me," "I'm," and "let me." These matching consonants allow the singer to interpret with extra definition, or, depending on the intensity, "bite" with the consonant. Sinatra particularly liked to hang onto the ending consonant, savoured like a slow, dissolving sweet in his mouth.

Now, in the same stanzas, there are several times "n" is utilized in words. Additionally, in the opening line, "love," "like," and "loved" are repeated with matching sound for urgency.

It should be noted that Harold Arlen's beautiful music is essentially a torch ballad, which certainly allows for bluesy treatment if you are so inclined. Certain lush words could naturally be played up and sustained, like the jubilant use of "high" in "high as a mountain" and the drop implicit in "deep as a river." If you were doing a vocal bend on the word "deep," it might make sense to bend under the written note. This is not a hard and fast rule, but is a smart embellishment. Of course you can always sing the note as written straight.

It's always the sum total of what's going around a phrase that influences where you go. Reprising the song a second time around allows for more liberal improvising. Become adept at back phrasing, and if you sustain longer notes, the following lines might well use phrases that are sped up. The use of the triplet is particularly effective. It always helps to know the words like the back of your hand. Lose yourself in the lyric, soar with the melody, and the singer becomes the song.

RECOMMENDED READING



ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS: VOICE BY ANDRES ANDRADE

Absolute Beginners: Voice does a remarkable job of teaching an instrument that has traditionally been very difficult to learn from the printed page - the human voice.

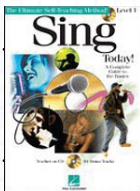
<http://musicbooksplus.com/babsolute-beginners-voiceb-p-9735.html>



HARMONY VOCALS BY MIKE CAMPBELL & TRACEE LEWIS

This private lesson covers: building your own harmonies; reading music; scales, chords and intervals; stage and studio techniques; drills for the advanced singer; and more.

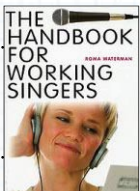
<http://musicbooksplus.com/bharmony-vocalsb-p-2926.html>



SING TODAY! LEVEL 1 BY JAMES SLEIGH, MIKE SHEPPARD

This book/CD pack is designed to teach you how to get the most out of your singing voice, whatever your taste in music is.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/sing-today-level-p-10873.html>



THE HANDBOOK FOR WORKING SINGERS BY ROMA WATERMAN

Finally, a book with everything you need to know about singing and looking after your voice.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/handbook-working-singers-p-11626.html>



THE ULTIMATE PRACTICE GUIDE FOR VOCALISTS DVD BY DONNA MCELROY

In this Master Class, McElroy shows you how to use the whole body to become the best singer you can be.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/bthe-ultimate-practice-guide-vocalists-dvdb-p-5190.html>



THE ZEN OF SCREAMING DVD BY MELISSA CROSS

This DVD provides information and step-by-step exercises to help you sing aggressively without damaging your vocal chords.

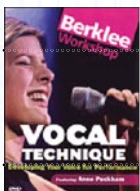
<http://musicbooksplus.com/the-zen-of-screaming-dvd-p-8235.html>



VOCAL AEROBICS - ESSENTIALS FOR TODAY'S SINGERS DVD BY JULIE LYONN LIEBERMAN

This system can help develop a vibrating palette that communicates spirit, emotion, and viewpoint – all riding effortlessly on the breath.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/vocal-aerobics-essentials-todays-singers-p-10748.html>



VOCAL TECHNIQUE DVD BY ANNE PECKHAM

Vocal Technique DVD features exercises that will help you gain technical and expressive command of your voice.

<http://musicbooksplus.com/bvocal-technique-dvdb-p-5242.html>

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