

Love and Nurture Your Vocal Folds!

10 minutes a day to improve your singing (and help you get through Dixit intact!)

1. Take a deep breath (or several)

- Stand feet shoulder width apart (which is usually slightly wider than you think!)
- Imagine a pebble beach and a gentle incoming tide.
- As you picture the water coming, breath in slowly and imagine the air filling all the deepest and furthest nooks and crannies of your lungs. Your lower abdomen should relax and move outwards (remember SPLAT?).
- Now SLOWLY reverse the process, breathing out through your mouth in a slow and steady stream, imagining the water retreating from all of those nooks and crannies. Your lower abdomen will move inwards to gently push all of that air out.
- Do 5 of these deep breaths;- takes just a minute or so.
- Afficionados of yoga/Tai chi/meditation will recognise this exercise! It will relax your whole body.

Tip:- do this in front of a mirror. If your shoulders move upwards when you breath in, imagine that you're carrying a heavy bag in each hand. This should stop the 'shoulder twitch'!

1. Getting your vocal folds into tip top shape

- Your vocal folds are muscles. They're also where sound is made.
- As we get older, muscle tissue generally gets stiffer and a bit creaky (and don't we all know that to be true!)
- Exercising your vocal folds will help to keep them in tip top condition ready for Dixit.

Exercise 1

- Take a deep breath as above
- On the exhale, make an 'f' sound. Do this twice.
- Take a deep breath but this time, exhale with a 'sh' sound. Do this twice.
- Take a deep breath but this time, exhale with a 'sss' sound. Do this twice.
- Take a deep breath but this time, exhale with a 'vvv' sound (this is a 'voiced' sound). Do this twice.
- Take a deep breath but this time, exhale with a 'zzz' sound (this is a 'voiced' sound). Do this twice..
- Take a deep breath but this time, exhale with a 'jjj' sound as in pleasure. Do this twice.

Why is this a good exercise?

By giving slightly increasingly levels of resistance to the air coming through your vocal folds, you're gently stretching the muscles and warming them up.

Exercise 1 takes about 4 minutes.

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Exercise 2

- Take a deep breath and, with your lips just touching, make a gentle hum in the middle of your range, sliding around a few pitches (this is called a 'siren')
- Gradually increasing the range of pitches – both up and down - but keep it in your comfort zone
- If your lips are just touching you'll feel a 'buzz' on some pitches
- Do this for about 1 minute then move straight on to exercise 3

Exercise 3

- To make a 'ng' sound, raise the back of your tongue so that it touches your soft palate (roof of your mouth at the back) and open your mouth. The 'ng' sound is very similar to a hum.
- Now gradually extend the range of your siren to the outer reaches of your range.
- Always slide and glide and remember to breath!
- Once you've done about 30 seconds just on 'ng', start releasing the sound at the top of the range to an open 'ah'. 'Ng' on the way up, 'Ah' on the way down.
- Repeat for another 1 minute.

Tip:- make sure that you keep making the 'ng' sound by raising your tongue at the back of your mouth. This makes sure that everything is relaxed and in the right place!

Exercise 4

- Now to add some actual pitches! Use the warm-up we've done regularly (1, 5, 1,3,5,3, 1,2,3,4,5,4,3,2,1 then up a semitone and repeat) but focus on keeping all that relaxation in place. Use the 'ah' vowel sound.
- If you've got a means of pitching to hand then I'd suggest that sopranos and tenors start somewhere around an F (F, C, F, A, C, A, F, G, A, B, C, B, A, G, F etc) and go as high as you can – QUIETLY! Altos and basses start on a C. Basses could also expand the bottom of their ranges by going down a semitone each time.
- This will take 2 minutes.

Final breathing

- Take 30 seconds just to do a couple of deep breaths on their own to bring everything back together again.

And that's your 10 minute daily vocal fold workout!