



Vocal tone therapists

Free Online Lessons
An Introduction
to
The Inner Vocals
Technique
Lesson 1



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Lesson 1: How the Voice Works

Firstly, we must ask the question: What is singing? Here are a few definitions:

- Oxford concise dictionary; Make musical sounds with the voice, especially words, with a set tune
- Cambridge dictionary; to utter melodious sounds in musical succession in articulating words
- The American Heritage Dictionary; to utter a series of words or sounds in musical tones; to vocalize songs or selections; to perform songs or selections as a trained or professional singer; to give or have the effect of melody; to proclaim or extol something in verse.

In other words, singing is a sound produced from a part or parts of the body by air vibrating and resonating in different chambers or cavities omitted in a melodic and rhythmical manner with words – now that's singing. Let's do away with all the technical jargon for a minute and concentrate on the first line, the word sound. By this we mean the voice, it is this area of singing that we focus on.



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Now, I believe for us to maximise the use of our voices, we must first understand how the voice works and how other elements can come into play to help us when singing.

Basically, the voice works by air hitting the vocal folds causing them to vibrate and create a sound that resonates in the head or chest to give it body and depth like when we hum for instance. But for singing we control the vibrations of the vocal folds, determine places of resonance as well as the amount of air to be issued.



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Using our voices to sing

I believe singing to be 80% airflow, that means if you can control the air flowing through your body and reaching the vocal folds, then you are more than halfway to being a good singer. Let's examine this.

The air is housed and processed by our respiratory system in a part of the body called the Thoracic Cavity (the chest). The main job of our respiratory system is to extract oxygen from the air that we breathe in and to omit carbon dioxide as we exhale. But when singing, we interfere with this natural bodily function as we control the speed in which the air leaves our lungs for use in vocal production.



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For us to begin to control the air we must first learn how to breathe correctly and this is called Diaphragmatic Breathing (see Breathing). The next stage is, when the air reaches the vocal folds housed in the Larynx (voice box) situated at the top of the Trachea (windpipe), where on arrival the air causes the vocal folds to vibrate in one of three ways to make one of the three tones called:

1. **FALSETTO** (a soft breathy sound e.g. when a man sounds like a woman)
2. **MODLE** (most of us use this sound to speak with: our natural voice)
3. **CREAK** (a sound that is very tight like a Dalek, we make this sound first thing in the morning)

These three tones can vary in sound, according to the amount of air mixed with any one of these three movements made by the vocal folds. So once again, we notice that airflow is very important.



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The air has now made a raw and basic sound that has to be amplified in a place called the Pharynx (throat), which I call pre-word resonance and then manufactured into a word by the mouth. We can further enhance the manufactured sound/air in the mouth in a series of shapes, domes, routes and positions used to contain or package the sound/air for delivery, just like with different accents.

Now, only one last thing remains and that is resonance, which I call Post-word Resonance. Just like a tuning fork, you tap the fork, which causes it to vibrate. Then you place the fork on a solid object, like a table for instance and by doing this you allow the fork to resonate against the table and that's when you hear the sound of the fork.

We can also do this with our voices by directing the packaged sound to various parts of the body making the sound solid, tight, hallow, bright or whatever the desired sound is. So you see, by reading this there is a little bit more to singing than just opening your mouth – and just think, all this happens in a matter of seconds!



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Practice and Warm Ups

Practice once or twice daily but not for two hours after a meal.

We recommend that you practice at performance level for at least one (1) hour a day after a good warm up session and scales for anything from thirty minutes to an hour.

It often helps to decide on regular practice time and stick to it. It is easy to miss your practice if you do it at a different time each day.

You could visit our website and practice with our Free Online Lessons, where you can find our vocal gymnasium.

REMEMBER:

The voice is a living instrument and is just as important as any other organ in the body. And just as our bodies need some form of exercise so do our voices.

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