

Vocal Keep Fit

Here are a few of the exercises covered in this session. You will learn or already know many, many more exercises from your vocal leaders, conductors, singing teachers and fellow singers. It is useful to understand the reason for all of these exercises and the importance for each one and how it relates to the different elements of your vocal technique. Don't just do the exercise, think about how it relates to the way you sing and the sound you make.

Posture and getting the body ready to sing:

It is important to get the muscles around the mouth nicely warmed up and moving, so lots of facial stretching and horsey 'brrrrrrr's and chewing is really good practice before singing. You want the blood flowing and that sense of being warmed up and awake so other examples of this for the body are: Wake-up slaps – Gently pat head, face, shoulders, arms, tummy and legs. You can also make big circles with shoulders forwards and backwards.

Stand with feet at shoulder width apart with your arms by your side. Imagine you are a pendulum in a clock and feel the weight shift from one foot to the other, quite extreme at first but gradually slow down and find a still, standing point where the weight is equally distributed on both feet.

Breathing:

Interlock fingers and place your arms above your head with palms facing upwards. Take a deep breath imagining it filling into your abdomen (think down and out) and stretch over to your left, holding the breath and feeling the stretch down the ribcage. Return to starting position (arms still above the head) and gently breath out. Repeat the process three more times: to the right, backwards (very gentle stretch) and finally bringing the arms down by your side.

Set a steady pulse. Breathe in for four beats (down and out) and hiss out for four beats. Feel the resistance of the "sssss" against the breath as you use engage your lower support muscles. Make sure you have completely expelled all the air after four beats and hold (feeling that tension in your support, not your throat). Release and repeat the process. Try breathing in for fewer beats and out for longer.



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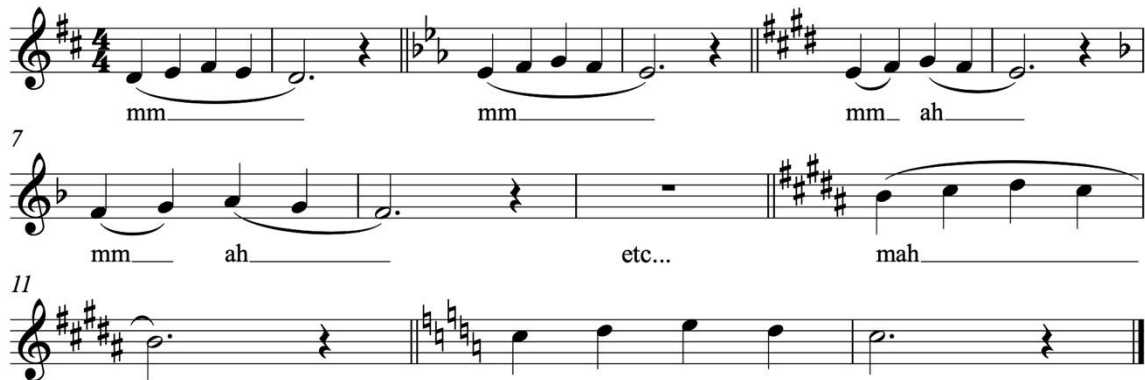


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Vocalising and vowels:

Start at a comfortable, low pitch and gently hum up and down a three-note scale, really engaging the support muscles to gently drive the sound. Start to open up to an “ah” at the top. Eventually, when you reach the upper part of your range, sing it to “mah” but use the “mmm” to help you connect to your support.



7

11

mm mm mm ah

mm ah etc... mah

Think about the vowels in this exercise and ensure they are nice and open, particularly on the ‘ah’ of the word “love”. As you reach the upper part of your range, hold this word and enjoy the space and resonance:



5

Oh, I love to sing Oh, I love to sing

Oh, I love to sing etc... Oh, I love to sing

Get the mouth moving:

Try and keep this as energetic but smooth as possible. Keep the space open in the back of the mouth rather than tensing the jaw and closing up, making the front of the mouth do all the work. Keep the support nice and steady:



mi-ni mi-ni ma, mi-ni mi-ni ma, mi-ni mi-ni ma ma ma ma ma

3
mi-ni mi-ni ma, mi-ni mi-ni ma, mi-ni mi-ni ma ma ma ma ma etc...

Make sure that you articulate the ‘Buh’ sound at the start of each quaver in this exercise but keep it nice and legato so you don’t start to sound like a chicken!



ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba bah. ba bah ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba ba bah. ba bah etc...

Open up the voice:

Keep this Swedish vocal exercise* lively and bouncy, with lots of energy on the first note. Practise it legato (smooth) and staccato (detached) and play around with the dynamics (strong and soft) to really develop flexibility and control:



Bra____ eh____ Bra____ eh____ Bra____ eh____ Bra____ eh____

5
Bra____ eh____ Bra____ eh____ Bra____ eh____ Bra____ eh____ etc...

*"Bra" means "good" in Swedish, but I don't know what "eh" means so it's just a nice useful word to link each phrase.

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