

AGO 2008 Tune Your Pipes!

Healthy Vocal Technique and Warm-ups for your Choir

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Richard Miller on “Healthy Singing”

“The singer has an instrument that does not have to be tuned in public, needs no carrying case, requires no early shipment, cannot easily be sat upon or dropped, and is in no danger of being stolen.

“However, the singer cannot purchase a finely constructed instrument that 200 years of aging and playing has mellowed, nor can the singer keep “trading up,” eventually becoming the possessor of a fine Cremona instrument.”

Richard Miller

“Major repair of the structure and actual rebuilding are not possible with the vocal instrument. Furthermore, heat, cold, precipitation, digestion, toothache, bad back, cocktail party, hernia, nosebleed, domestic quarrel, and especially respiratory ailments may be totally incapacitating.”

The Human Voice

“The universality of the human voice as an instrument is its greatest joy and its major disadvantage.”
(M. Bunch)

About the Voice

- The voice is an acoustic instrument.
- Singing is a “myoelastic-aerodynamic phenomenon” (William Vennard)
- Singing is an athletic event, with the potential to burn more calories per hour than boxing, ballet, football, or soccer. (Robert Sataloff)

The Larynx

- The larynx sits at the top of the trachea, at the base of the tongue.
- Suspended by 54+ muscles, tendons, cartilage
- Vocal folds: $\frac{3}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length
- Vibration from 55 Hz to 1760 Hz (per second!!!)

Phonation

- Occurs as air moves through the glottis (opening of the vocal folds)
- The vocal folds are drawn together by the adductor muscles:
moving air causes them to vibrate.
- Rate of vibration determines pitch

Vocal Resonators

- The Larynx
- The Pharynx
- The Nose (sometimes)
- The Vibrating Column of Air

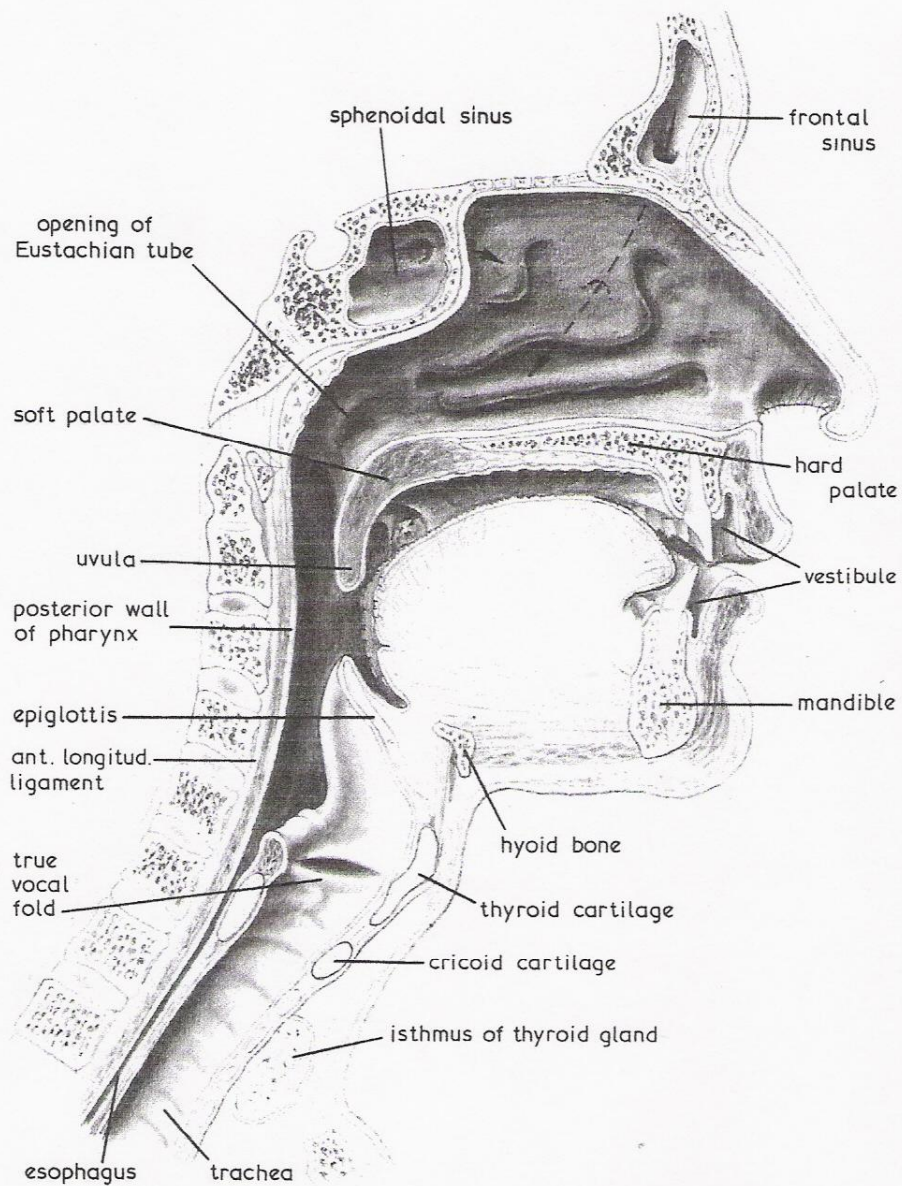


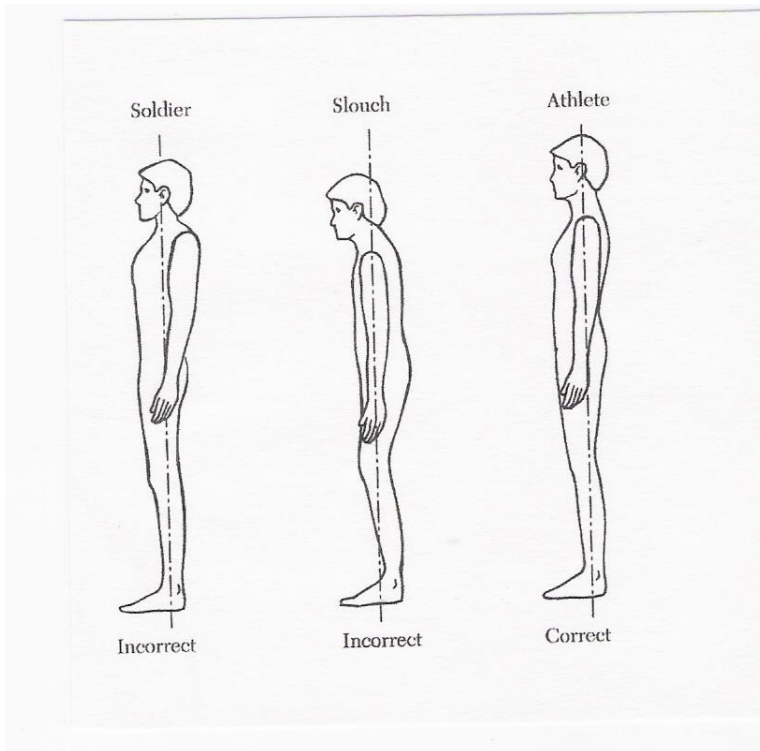
Fig. 33. Midline section of head and neck showing structures of the left half.
 Note: 1. The communication of the nose and mouth with the pharynx. 2. The crossing of the pathways for air and food. 3. The extensive area of tongue facing the pharynx and normally invisible from the mouth.

(From Bunch, Meredith "Dynamics of The Singing Voice")

Posture and Alignment

- Posture of the body determines alignment.
- Body alignment is essential for efficient breathing (and free phonation).

Posture and Alignment

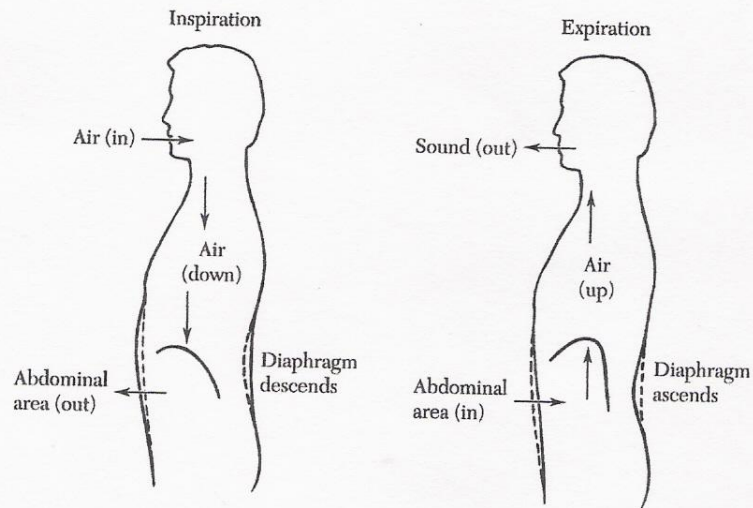


Breath Management

- Uses lungs, intercostal muscles, diaphragm, abdominal muscles
 - The diaphragm is the largest muscle in the body.
 - The abdominal wall is the largest and strongest group of muscles.
- (FYI: The tongue is the single strongest muscle in the body.)

Breathing

Figure 5-3
Air Movement during
Inspiration and Expiration



Adventures in Singing

Four Stages: Inhale – Suspend – Exhale – Recover

(Clifton Ware: *Adventures in Singing*)

Vocal Priority

Breath
Space
Vowel

Breath

- silent
- low (abdominal expansion)
- expanded lower ribs
- elevated sternum
- relaxed shoulders

Space

- released jaw (jaw falls back and down)
- tip of the tongue on the lower teeth
- feeling of “yawn” or “sigh” (pharynx)
- soft palate will lift
- back of tongue free to shape vowels

Vowels

- Freely produced and matched vowels provide the key to choral blend (and promote excellent resonance!)
- Generally, vowel shapes should be tall and slender (a vertical space). (*except [i] [e] [u] in middle and low register)

Vocal Registers

Trained Voices – three-register approach

- “head” voice (light mechanism)
- “middle” voice (mixed register)
- “chest” voice (heavy mechanism)

Registers blend most easily top to bottom (rather than the reverse).

Physical Warm ups I

- toe raises
- extend arms and twist (or hands on waist and twist)
- shoulder hugs (look over shoulder)
- side stretch – arm overhead (let arm weight pull you)
- chop wood
- head/neck rolls (use caution)
- chewing – massage jaw
- cross marching – alternate same and opposite
- shrugs – rock head
- corkscrew
- leg-swing (alignment)
- overhead stretch (sniff-inhale, blow exhale)

Physical Warm up II

- forehead lifts (to release tension)
- rub “eyepoints” (back of head)
- massage ears gently (awareness/clarity)
- check body alignment (neck - sternum – ribs - abdominal muscles)
- four stage breathing
- ‘Farinelli’ breathing exercise (5-10 counts)
- [f] & [s] (easy breath pressure)

Glides III

- say [fa] or [sa] (glide up/down) (let the motion of the breath glide the pitch)
- “(h)n” and hold the “n” (glide) “(h)m”
- “sing” and hold the “ng” (glide)
- lip trill / tongue trill (up and down)
- oo-oh-ah-ay-ee (glide up/down)

“Healthy Voice” Tips

- “On the breath” approach
- All motion of sound is on the sigh of the moving air.
- Ascend each exercise and then descend.
- “Tall tree, deep roots”
Always think down as you ascend. Think up as you descend.
- Don’t feel bad if it seems too easy.
- If it feels too difficult, it is probably incorrect.

The image displays four musical exercises on a single staff in C major, 4/4 time:

- 1a:** An ascending eighth-note scale from C4 to G4, followed by a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to C4. A bracket underneath is labeled "(liptrills and tonguetrills)".
- 1b:** An ascending eighth-note scale from C4 to G4, followed by a descending eighth-note scale from G4 to C4, with a more complex rhythmic pattern in the final two notes.
- 2a:** A series of eighth-note trills starting on C4 and moving up to G4.
- 2b:** A series of eighth-note trills starting on G4 and moving down to C4.
- 3:** A series of eighth-note trills starting on G4 and moving down to C4, with a final whole note C4.
- Glides:** A series of glides between notes, with phonetic labels: (h)[i], [si], (h)i, i, i, i, i.
- 4a:** An ascending eighth-note scale from C4 to G4, with phonetic labels: (h)[o], a, o, a, o, a, o.
- 4b:** A descending eighth-note scale from G4 to C4, with phonetic labels: yaw, yaw, yaw, yaw.

5a 5b

[u i u i u i u i u] [o i o i o i o i o]

6a 6b

(h)[wi o wi o wi o wi o wi] (h)[o i o i o i o i o]

7a 7b

yaw saw yaw zee ah - - - - -

8 9

(h)m - m (h)m - - - - - wing wing wee

10a 10b 10c

(h)ng - - - ah. (h)ng - - - - ah. (h)ng - ah - ng - ah - ng - ah.

11

sing [i] sing [e] sing [a]

12a 12b 12c

flee-ah - - - - I love to sing! (h)yaw yaw yaw yaw yaw
(thee-ah, zee-ah) (long, live)

13a 13b

bid-dy bid-dy bee bid-dy bid-dy bee bid-dy bid-dy bid-dy bid-dy bee zing-a-zing-a zee - (etc)

14a zee - - - aw - - - yaw

14b zee - aw - - ee - -

15a yaw saw

15b hyaw [i] aw [i] aw

15c see [u-a-u-a-u-a] aw ee aw ee aw

16a kyaw kyoo kee dee kee

16b jaw - jew jee
(zhaw-zhew-zhee)

Vocal/Pedagogy Sources

The Structure of Singing

Richard Miller, Schirmer Books

On the Art of Singing

Chapter 19: "The Choral Conductor as Teacher of Vocal Technique"
Richard Miller, Oxford University

Adventures in Singing

Clifton Ware, McGraw Hill

Dynamics of the Singing Voice

(*Disorders of Human Communication, Vol. 6*)
Meribeth Bunch, Springer-Verlag Wien New York

Choral Resources

Voice Builders for Better Choirs

Emily Crocker, Hal Leonard

Group Vocal Technique

Haasemann/Jordan, Hinshaw Music

Sing Legato

Ken Jennings, Neil A Kjos Music

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