



VOCAL TECHNIQUE – looking after your voice

- Many singers fail to use common sense when dealing with their voice. The physical demands on all singers, whatever genre, necessitate good health beginning with an awareness of your overall physical well-being.
- Do not attend a rehearsal/concert if you have a throat, ear or chest infection. Resting the voice means exactly that. Do not talk, (that includes a forced whisper) take the necessary medication and stay in a warm, but not too dry, atmosphere.
- Avoid the use of alcohol, caffeine and chocolate especially before or during a rehearsal or concert. Wait 45 mins after a meal to sing/rehearse. No singer should smoke.
- Always warm up the vocal chords. The type of warm up should reflect the demands of the concert/rehearsal.
- Pace yourself. Be aware of the length of concert/rehearsal and never sing a programme at full volume.
- Always check your posture throughout all performances. Poor alignment can produce problems especially for breath control whilst also introducing tension throughout the body. Both will affect the quality of sound.
- Poor breathing and inappropriate support along with a 'closed' throat will produce poor tonal quality in the voice.
- Listening is one of the most important skills a singer should have and is often not mentioned in articles on voice production. Tuning the ears, as well as the voice, is integral to producing vocal sounds that enhance the tonal quality of a song. Only by 'listening' will you come to realise the sound you are trying to achieve.
- Sitting in rehearsals demands sitting on the front half of a firm chair, with your feet in contact with the floor. Shoulders should be drawn down, spine straight and there should be space for your diaphragm to descend fully and your ribcage expand. Never cross your legs!
- The attack or onset of a note should be produced without too much breath or a hard glottal attack. Over use of a glottal attack can result in nodules on the vocal chords.
- All singers have an optimum vocal range. The untrained voice will normally have a narrow range due to a lack of register use. i.e. head, chest or falsetto. It is necessary to train the voice to run smoothly from one to the other without a 'break' and to extend the voice where applicable. Never force the range of a voice.
- Tension in the jaw, lips and palate will affect and result in poor articulation as well as tonal production.
- Lack of confidence is quite common even though we often hear of the 'prima donna' temperament! Most singers remember what they believe to be a poor performance rather than the more successful outcomes. It is the teacher's/conductor's role to ensure that singers feel confident in the programme they are to perform and have the necessary skills to perform it well.

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