

Singing for performance

Tutor: Natalie Duncan

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Hello singers! Welcome to your first handout for your singing class from home.

This is a really good time to focus on developing your singing technique in order to practice the songs that you love to sing, at home.

I'm now going to guide you through an extensive vocal warm up! Each week, we will look at a different aspect of singing.

Today we're going to look at:

Vocal Range (you're all going to sound like Aretha after this)

- **Stretching**

Let's begin by standing up.
(or sitting up with your back straight)

Place your feet shoulder width apart.

Now extend your arms up to the sky and touch your hands at the top whilst taking a deep breath in through the nose... then slowly bring them back down to your sides whilst breathing out through the mouth. Repeat this twice.

- **Neck Rolls**

Rotate your head slowly in a circular motion to the left. Now again to the right. Repeat this 2 or 3 times until you have released any tension you may be holding in this area.

- **Lip Trills**

Now that we have warmed up your body a little bit, you are ready to warm up that voice!

Some of you know about lip trills but for those of you who don't, I will walk you through it now.

A lip trill is every singer's best friend. All the singers you love, do this exercise before any performance or recording. It does sound ridiculous BUT, it is the best way to warm up your vocal cords for singing and to hit every note in your range without having to belt it out!

The trill can be done 2 ways.

1. Using your lips to create a 'brbrbrbrbrb' sound. Imagine your head was underwater and after coming up from the water, you blew out air from your lips. Allow them to vibrate naturally. If you keep losing the flow, place a finger on each cheek, where your dimples would be and push in. Now try the exercise again.
2. The rolled R. Someone who thinks that they are very sophisticated might roll the R at the beginning of a word. Try saying 'How very RRRRuuude' with a rolled R. It should be done using your tongue. Now try the rolled R by itself a few times until you are able to do it comfortably.

Ok, using one of these trill techniques, we are going to try it with a note. Find a comfortable note in the middle of your range and make a trill.

Now we're going to look at breath control.

Everything to do with hitting very high notes as a singer or even very low notes, comes from breath control.

Start the trill with your tummy pushed out.

Whilst making the sound, slowly pull your tummy back in.

This takes a little while to master and it isn't the most interesting

exercise but don't give up!

Trust me, once you have nailed this and can apply it to your actual singing, it will totally change your life as a singer.

So lets try the trill for 4 seconds, using the diaphragm.

Get the trill going and now, pull in for 1,2,3,4. Count in your head as you are doing this.

Now lets try it for 5 seconds. 1,2,3,4,5

Now do it for as many seconds as you can manage. You should be able to make quite a long trill if you are doing it right.

If you can't, just focus back on the breath. Remember, start with your tummy out, then control it back in with your breath.

Sirens

Next on the menu is sirens! Ok, we know what a police siren or an ambulance siren sounds like.

The noise you're about to make isn't actually that different.

Start with your lips closed and you want to begin on the absolute lowest note you can hit. Now hum (siren) from that note, right up the the highest note you can hit.

Ok, now lets apply our breath control. Start with your tummy out (on the low note) and as you swoop up to the high note, pull your tummy in.

You should now be able to hit an even higher note than before!

It may not feel like proper singing at this point but by doing these exercises, you are increasing your vocal range and you are preparing your voice for singing. The same way an athlete might do a physical warm up before they compete.

The key is to constantly be aware of your breath when you are singing.

If you are about to hit a very high note, don't listen to that voice that tells you, 'you can't hit that! Don't do it!' instead, pull your tummy in as you approach the note and you'll be surprised what you can really achieve.

So let's apply this to a song. You will find lyrics to 'Stand by me'- Ben E king.

I've chosen this song because it is very familiar and it is a great song to practice your breathing as it has a broad range. Practice singing it acappela and use the points in red to remember where to use your breath control.

"Stand By Me"

When the night has come

(pull tummy in on the word 'night')

And the land is dark

And the moon is the only light we'll see

No, I won't be afraid

(tummy in for the word 'wont')

Oh, I won't be afraid

Just as long as you stand

Stand by me

So darlin', darlin'

(Pull tummy in after the first 'darlin')

Stand by me, oh, stand by me

Oh, stand, stand by me

Stand by me

If the sky that we look upon

(tummy in for the word 'sky')

Should tumble and fall

Or the mountain should crumble to the sea

I won't cry, I won't cry

(tummy in for the first 'cry')

No, I won't shed a tear

Just as long as you stand

Stand by me

And darlin', darlin'
(tummy in after the first 'darlin')
Stand by me, oh, stand by me
Oh, stand now, stand by me
Stand by me

Darlin', darlin'
Stand by me, oh, stand by me
Oh, stand now, stand by me
Stand by me
Whenever you're in trouble, won't you stand by me?
Oh, stand by me
Won't you stand now?
Oh, stand, stand by me

Well done for getting through the song and for focussing on your breath!

It might feel a bit unnatural at first but the basic principle is to train yourself to sing from your diaphragm instead of from your throat.

My homework for this week is just to be mindful of this singing technique.

If you find yourself singing along to music you hear, try hitting the high notes using your diaphragm.

If you're in a space by yourself, try the trill and siren exercises using the diaphragm.

The goal is to make it second nature, so you're not even thinking about the breathing anymore, it's just naturally happening whilst you sing.

This will ultimately make you into an incredible vocalist and you can stun the world with your talent ;)

Good luck with your rehearsing, see you soon!