

Vocal Technique Lesson with Romain – Handout Friday 5 June 2020

Sing with more precision, power, volume and length/Exercises for the diaphragm

Hi everybody, I hope you are keeping well.

A few weeks ago, we talked about the importance of the diaphragm, or the tummy muscles. In today's lesson, we'll see exactly how controlling the diaphragm helps improve your voice.

And for that, we'll work on different fun exercises. We have done some of them before, and some others are new.

1/ SING WITH MORE PRECISION

The diaphragm gives energy and precision to your voice, especially for each start of word or line that you sing. It's all about articulation. If you say that sentence without thinking of the diaphragm, it will sound uniform, without energy or precision: 'It's all about articulation.' If you think of it while talking, it will give life to that sentence: 'It's all about articulation!'

a/ Dog breaths exercise

Do you remember the silly exercise imitating short dog breaths?

Imagine you are a dog, let your tongue stick out of your mouth and put one hand on your tummy. Now breath like a dog, with short breaths, and feel the movements of your tummy and diaphragm with your hand.

b/ Coughing

Another quick warm-up we mentioned a few weeks ago is just coughing. The simple act of coughing makes you feel connected with your diaphragm. A great thing to do before any singing or public speaking!

c/ 'Ff', 'sh', 'ss'

Now, let's try a new exercise.

Say 'ff' while looking at your tummy. Try to spot the movements created by your diaphragm.

Now, same thing with the sound 'sh' as if you were shushing someone.

And same thing with the sound 'ss'.

Then, do all the three different sounds, one after another, and mix them up if you want to.

Focus on doing short ones, as we'll use those sounds a bit later in a different way.

2/ SING WITH MORE POWER AND VOLUME

The diaphragm is also a precious tool for singers and actors when they need to project their voice to a big audience and sometimes without any amplification.

Whenever you want to sing louder or with more power, you need to focus or contract your tummy muscles with more energy and also more speed as well as breathing more deeply.

a/ Laugh out loud

The most natural thing you can do to understand how it works is laughing out loud. Do so, and observe the big and sudden waves on your tummy.

Vary the sound and the pitch you laugh. Try to sing your laugh and sing at the same time on different notes: short 'Ha' or 'ho'.

Swap 'Ha' or 'Ho' with words or a line from a song

b/ 'Ff', 'sh', 'ss'

Get back to that exercise. This time you are going to say these sounds with more energy and volume. You should see your tummy moving in the same way, making big waves.

c/ Short lip rolls

The 'lip roll' exercise may be the most known and the most efficient of all, but possibly the most challenging too.

It is about making your lips roll and vibrate.

Some people find it quite natural and easy while others struggle to get it right.

The best way to get it right is to take it easy because you need to keep your mouth and lips relaxed.

Try it.

If you don't get it first, try saying 'b' before it.

Keep it short for now and without trying to sing any note.

3/ SING WITH A LONG AND REGULAR FLOW OF AIR

Many of us find it hard to sustain our voice and breathing for a long time while keeping the volume up. Again, the diaphragm is here to help you with that!

a/ Blow up a balloon

Imagine you are blowing up a balloon with a flow of air regular going out

You should see your tummy looking like a balloon itself with its size slowly diminishing while you blow your air out.

It is alright to fail at it the first time.

Just try to break a new record every new attempt you make, but don't be impatient. This is way more tricky than it seems.

If you manage to control a slow and even flow of air, then you will find long lines are easier to sing.

b/ Long 'Ff', 'sh', 'ss'

Same exercise we did earlier, but this time for as long as you can.

c/ Long lip rolls

Start by doing again the short lip rolls, and try expanding each of them, and making them longer each time.

If you have done the two previous exercises, balloon and 'ff', 'sh', 'ss', it should feel easier than doing it straight away.

You don't need to do very long ones as this is a more challenging exercise. But once you are more confident, try and sing them. Vary the pitch, and even practise your warm-up scales like that.

Take it easy guys and have a nice week!