

## Vocal Technique Lesson with Romain – Handout Friday 21 August 2020

### ‘That song is too high or too low for my voice’

Hello everybody! I hope you had a good break.

In today’s lesson, I will try and help you solve a very common problem that you must have encountered a few times when singing a song: **the song is too high or too low for your voice, which means that you need to change the key.**

There must be songs that you love listening to on your radio or music player. You enjoy singing along to them. But there is one frustrating thing: you are not able to sing the whole song, as it gets too high or too low at some point. Or you may have written a song yourself, and you may be struggling to sing some notes. When this happens, it means that you need to sing the song in a different key, which will be more comfortable for your voice. I am not talking about a very challenging song which requires a very big vocal range. In that case, you will probably have to jump down or up an octave anyway in the middle of it. I am talking about the sort of average song, which spans over 1 or 2 octaves. As most of us have a vocal range which spans over a minimum of 1 octave and a half or 2 octaves, it means that these ‘average’ songs can be sung by most of us. We just need to find the right key to sing them in.

Before going any further, **you must have done a good warm-up.** If your voice is not warmed up, singing the highest and lowest notes will be more challenging, and therefore you may get the wrong idea about which key is the right one for your voice. You would be thinking: I cannot sing these high notes well, so this is not the right key for my voice. But actually, with a good warm-up, your voice would be able to hit these high notes, and it would reveal that the key is actually perfect.

Every time you sing a new song, ask yourself: **is it comfortable for my voice?**

Ideally, the lowest notes of the song should match the lowest notes of your range and the highest notes of the song should match the highest ones of your range. But actually, it will be even more comfortable for your voice to have a small ‘margin’ on both ends, otherwise both low notes and high ones may sound a bit weaker and quieter than the rest. You want to be able to sing all the notes confidently and loud enough. So, the lowest note of the song you sing should be one or two tones higher than the actual lowest note of your range. And the highest note you sing in the song should probably be at least one or two tones lower than the actual top note of your range.

Here is a list of **different scenarios** telling you if, when and how you should change the key of the song:

- If you can sing the lowest and highest notes of the song without too much difficulty, it means that this is the right key for you.
- If you find all the notes easy to sing but are struggling a bit with the highest notes, this could mean two different things, either that the key is bit too high and then you may want try the song 1 or 2 tones down and see the difference, or that the key is actually the perfect one and then you just need a bit more practice in order to sing these high notes more confidently

- If you find all the notes easy to sing but are definitely struggling with the highest notes (not just the top one, but the group of highest ones), or if most of the notes you sing are sung with your head voice, it means that the key is too high for you, and you should try it a third or a fourth lower. Then this should feel much better for your voice. If it still feels a bit too high, you may want to try a fifth lower
- If you find that most of the notes seem too high, and sung with your head voice, it is probably because you should sing the song a whole octave lower, while keeping the same key. The opposite can happen too, when most of the notes seem too low, try and sing the song a whole octave up
- If you struggle singing the lowest notes, or if they don't sound as loud as they should, you may want to try a higher key, maybe one tone up. If it still feels a bit too low, sing the song another tone up

Once you have decided the right key for the song, decide if you want to accompany yourself, have friends/people accompany you or if you want to find a backing track online:

- If you are accompanied by either yourself or friends/people, find the chords for the song online. Some website allow you to transpose the song to a new key. If not, you'll have to do the maths yourself. For example, if the song is in C Major on the website but you want to sing it in D Major, every chord written on the website should be one tone higher
- If you want to be accompanied by a backing track online, look for one on youtube or some specialized websites making sure that you type the key you wish to sing the song in. You may not be able to find the key you chose. In that case, choose the closest possible key, ideally lower, as a higher key may be too uncomfortable for your voice
- If you cannot be accompanied, sing a cappella then. Maybe just check the first note you are supposed to sing on a keyboard or any instrument

I hope this was helpful.

Enjoy your singing and don't forget that if you want to be comfortable when singing a song, the key is to find the right key!