

# Voice pedagogy from the perspective of a Voice Student

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## Topics to be covered

- How I managed to ruin my voice and retrain it.
- How an average student's voice and attitude got rebuilt.
- The difference between Voice Technique and Performance.
- Practice – a brief note
- How to find the right teacher/student for you.
- Q and A.

## Primal Sound



## But first...

- Exercise – Head between feet.
- The trickiness of language. Find your own vocabulary.

## Posture - The Body

- Balance
- Ribs and sternum
- The problem with belly-breathing – do not *push* your belly out. It will expand naturally.
- For every rule, there is an exception.
- FLEXIBILITY AND RELAXATION without SLACKNESS.

This is what I try to think of:



## Breathing

- Air vs Pressure – DIFFERENT
- Exercise – breathe in to the count of 1,2,3 – exhale in 1,2,3,4,5. Slowly add more as the weeks go by.
- Raise your chest without taking a breath. Take a deep breath and let it travel to your diaphragm. Keep your throat open.
- Breathe gently with nostrils and mouth.



## Release



## Let it go...no need to hold onto it

- Never push; start a note with a slight “h” if you feel tension.
- Play with your mouth openings until you find that one that suits the note.
- Keep your mouth vertical, not horizontal.
- Have your mouth in the right shape and size even as you breathe in.

## Resonance

- Different voices, different passaggios.
- Don't try to "hear" yourself.
- Air VS Pressure
- Mouth openings and sizes.
- Keep it forward



## Chest, Head, Whistle

- The chest voice is the lowest part of our voice, our speaking voice.
- The head voice is the sound you want to have throughout your register.
- The whistle register is high up; it feels and sounds like you're whistling.
- I avoid the word "false" because I associate it with singing that is disconnected from the body. Breathe properly and let the air flow through the chords! That way your voice will always stay "true".

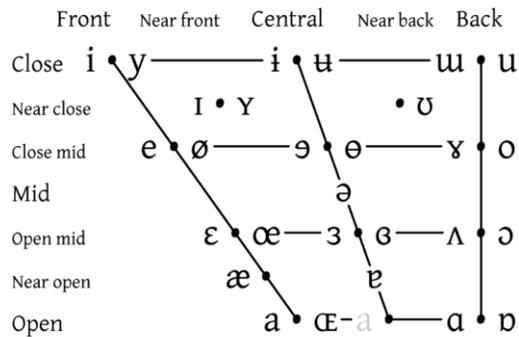
# Vowels and Consonants

- The right vowels. Round them off.
- SEE: Berton Coffin and the chart for maximum resonance.
- Simply speaking, above F or G (above the staff), watch your mouth.
- Consonants – put the consonants at the end of each word and the beginning of the next. Legato. Smooth. Connected.

# Diction

- IPA vowels.

## VOWELS



Vowels at right & left of bullets are rounded & unrounded.

## Pronunciation and Articulation

- The inside of your mouth has a dome and an interior. It gives your voice the top and the bottom.



## Problems that can arise

- Tongue tension – cough drops on tongue
- Jaw placement - chewing
- Wobble – vocalize gently on “e”, sighing as you do so.
- Hoarseness, voice whiteness – vocalize gently on “u”.
- Loss of range

## Dynamics

- Do NOT force your voice when you need to sing loudly.
- Loud = open your mouth (vertically).
- Soft = smaller mouth opening, darker vowels
- DO NOT PUSH. You may add more air, but air pressure remains constant.
- Soft = do not sing “off” the air. No whispering.
- Singing and talking are DIFFERENT.

## Loud and Soft

- Just keep the air flowing!



## How does this all apply to students?

- Recognize that we are all different.
- Vocalize on your best vowel.
- Bring the beauty of your head voice down or up to where it is less beautiful.

## Vocabulary: Exercise

- Positive direction.
- What are the words that you think of when it comes to: support? Air flow?
- Adjectives, give three.
- Nouns, give three.
- Images for simplification.
- Whatever works!

## Practice - Learning a Song

- I have enclosed a handout which has proven very useful. (credit: Oren Brown)

It's all connected...





## What is Performance?

- Being aligned with the music and your intentions, so that even the audience feels your energy.
- “Owning” the Piece.
- Proper practice, in a performance-state of mind.



## Performance Anxiety

- Voice training v.s. performance
- What's the worst that can happen? The very, very worst.
- Relaxation – visualization exercises.
- Rehearsing with no interruptions. Record yourself.

## Presence

- Why is presence important?
- Focus of the eyes – sing to the back of the hall
- Stance – be respectful, “natural”.
- Gestures – don’t overdo them but permissible in some situations.
- Expressions – if you feel the music, it will show. Let it show in your eyes.

## Warm-up/Cool-down

- The warm-up before a performance
  - essential for putting yourself in the right frame of mind.
- The cool-down after performance
  - essential for recognizing what you did well and what you need to do to improve. Avoiding burn-out.
- See Handout.

## Community

- Sharing session
- Do you feel supported?
- Do you get too involved/not involved enough?
- How to develop the right mindsets. Brain -> Body. It's NOT about talent.

## Final thoughts

- BALANCE.
- Who are you as a singer/teacher?
- What can you offer?



## Bibliography

- Oren Brown – *Discover Your Voice: How to develop healthy voice habits*
- Shirlee Emmons - <http://www.shirlee-emmons.com/>
- Shirlee Emmons and Alma Thomas – *Power Performance for Singers*
- Berton Coffin – *Overtones of Bel Canto*

## Mental Warm-up:

a) Considering the repertoire my voice feels at home in, what is my performance persona going to be for today? (e.g.: I like that jubilant piece, I'm going to be bubbly and sexy!)

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b) How will I achieve this? (e.g.: Bubbly and sexy...I'm going to focus on making my runs sound like laughter!)

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c) What is my personal goal for today's rehearsal?  
(e.g.: "I want to really master the entrances in this piece" or even "I aim to learn the words to that piece by heart").

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ii) Cool-down

a) What did I really enjoy during today's rehearsal? (e.g.: something that makes me feel good about myself).

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What is something I could improve upon?

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b) Now cross out what you wrote above. Rephrase it.

(e.g.: I feel that I could be less careless with my rhythms. → I will put in more work/practice and become more proficient at those rhythms.)

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## **Oren Brown's Awesome List for Learning New Music**

- ⑥ Study the rhythm. Go through the music much like a solfeggio exercise, noting and clarifying any intricate passages.
- ⑥ Now go through it as if it were a study in intervals with no regard to the rhythmic patterns.
- ⑥ When these first two steps are accomplished, take a moderate metronomic tempo and go throughout the piece on la la la or some similar easy syllable, singing the notes in the rhythm. Make no attempt at dynamics.
- ⑥ Read through the words as a poem. If it is in a foreign language, translate it word by word. Attend to any diction problems before proceeding.
- ⑥ When you have mastered Step 4, read the words in the rhythm of the music. Maintain a strict tempo.
- ⑥ Now sing the words on the pitches in the rhythm, with no dynamics.
- ⑥ Thoroughly study all the expression marks, tempos, lounds and softs, fasts and slows, stresses, etc.
- ⑥ Begin working on a song as a work of art, giving special attention to the meaning of the words and the musical phrasing.