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### News from the Studio

Hello Singers,

Our new page is up! We added a New York City page to the site. It can be accessed from the Practice Manual page by clicking on the words just below the photo of the lighthouse.

The only problem I encountered was getting the music to play. If any of you are web gurus and can help me figure it out, I sure would appreciate it. I used the same tag, with a different musical selection, as the one on the home page, but nothing happens.

Lots of my colleagues on the web have included their tributes to the fire fighters and people of NYC, but I wanted to make my tribute a little more personal. As I mentioned to you in my last note, I grew up in Manhattan, and the tragedy hit me pretty hard.

I believe that where we come from geographically has a large impact on who we become, and although I have lived in many towns throughout my singing life, I have forever considered myself a New Yorker. This page is a sentimental journey for me, and I hope it reveals something of me that will help you all to know me better. The reason for that is that the lessons and tips I give you are valid and they work! And if you trust that what I am telling you is true, you will improve...with practice and patience! So visit my new page when you can. And thanks for all your comments as always.

My students at the Senior Center will be performing our "Afternoon of Jazz and

Blues" at the Goebel Senior Center on October 14th. For many of them, it'll be the first time they have ever performed in public, so we are very excited! If you live near the Thousand Oaks, CA area, and you would like to meet us, come on by. Showtime is 2PM, tickets at the door are \$5. and the proceeds are being donated to the NYFD Relief Fund to benefit the wives and children of fallen fire fighters in NYC.

### **Anxiety...how it affects the voice.**

This has been one terrible month...for everyone. The country is in a constant state of anxiety and some are in fear 24-7 that something even more awful could happen any minute.

If you are experiencing anxiety, this will definitely affect the way you are sounding. The biggest impact of anxiety is on the **breath control**.

When we are anxious, we tend to hyperventilate, that is, take in short bursts of breath too fast. We usually breathe through the mouth in these moments, our chests rise, our heartbeats race, and our abdominal support goes out the window. We bring everything up into the throat and end up with a strangled sound that gets weaker the longer we sing.

But there is remedy. There are three factors that will help you overcome anxiety during singing. The first is total body relaxation, which can be achieved by lying on the floor or your bed with your head slightly elevated and your knees slightly bent. Breathe in through the nose slowly. When you have filled the entire abdominal cavity, hold your breath for a second, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Do this 10 times. Your heart rate will decrease, your body will relax, and the anxious feelings will lessen.

The second factor toward handling anxiety is concentration on the fundamentals as you sing. Concentrate on supporting your voice with your diaphragm by placing your hand on the upper abdomen and pressing gently and resisting your hand by pushing down and out with the vocal muscle.

The third factor is this: mean it! By this is meant, communicating the words of your song so honestly and sincerely that you and the song become one. By losing yourself in the communication of your song, all other thoughts leave your mind.

Even if your anxiety should return after you're through singing, by practicing these techniques, your performance will not be adversely affected. Now is the time when all of us should be lifting our voices in song to express our grief, our anger, and our hope. We singers are needed now, so let's share our gifts and bring people closer together.

### **Saving your breath or breathing too much.**

I have a student with phenomenal breath control. Every time we do an exercise, she can hold notes longer than anyone in the class. Yet, when she sings, she seems to bring it all up into her throat and her voice loses quality little by little so that by

the end of the song, she is sapped of strength and her voice is very tired and weak.

So what happened? What happened is that although this singer has great breath control and can hold notes forever, she has failed to make the connection between breathing and singing her song. If she sings a short line of a song that calls for a stopping of the sound, she takes in another breath before the next line. She breathes without needing breath! This creates anxiety in the body and before too long she is hyperventilating and singing totally in her throat. What we need to see here is the difference between stopping the sound, and breathing between sounds. When I say in my manual that you should never save your breath, I mean that you should use all your breath all the time, but I don't mean that you should breath every time the lyrics of a song call for a stop.

I gave my student an exercise that you all may benefit from as well. Breathe in through the nose, and sing, using the initial "grunt" which initiates the diaphragm support, "Me Me Me Me Me" (stop) "Me Me Me Me Me" (stop) "Me Me Me Me Me" (stop) and so, on until you are out of breath. DO NOT LET GO OF THE ABDOMINAL SUPPORT THROUGH THIS EXERCISE! And DO NOT INHALE! Stop the sound between between each series of Me Me Me Me Me's, but do not breath if you don't have to. Breathing when you are already full of plenty of air is like trying to pour more water into a glass that is already full. It overflows onto your table your floor, your lap, and makes a mess!

By practicing this exercise, you will be using the breath you have until you are out of air, and when that happens, your body will take the next breath for you without you having to consciously inhale. It makes your song less choppy and frenetic, but more fluid and connected with more warmth and expression.

#### **Tips on singing through the Holidays**

As we enter the holiday season, many of us will be in demand to perform at parties, church, and a slew of holiday venues. One of my students even has to sing while standing on a float in frigid temperatures as it goes down Main Street in Porterville, CA's annual Christmas Parade. Here are some tips on maintaining strength and quality during the holidays:

- Stay away from Eggnog!
- Stay away from alcohol before singing!
- Don't take on more than you can handle!
- If you are singing outdoors, keep your throat warm with a scarf.
- Don't over eat! Especially before a performance!
- Find time to do your exercises...every day for a minimum of 5 min.
- Shop early so you won't have to become anxious at the last minute.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Don't overdue the parties.
- Keep your voice lubricated with plenty of water.


- Enjoy yourself!

That last one may sound ludicrous with all those don'ts up there, but if you are a singer, and you will be performing, you need to take of your most precious instrument, your gift, your voice. So have fun and let us know if we can be of assistance as you prepare for your holiday performances.

#### Final Word

I *will* be distributing a newsletter in November, but not in December. The demands of the Christmas season will prevent me from finding the time to issue a newsletter, but if any of you need to communicate with us, use the Bulletin Board on the site! Someone is always there if you need help...usually me! And I'd like to see greater participation on the board, so use it, It's yours!

See ya next month, Singers!

A decorative footer consisting of three horizontal bars: a thick dark red bar at the top, a thin light gray bar in the middle, and a thin dark gray bar at the bottom.