

## Comprehensive Vocal Warmup

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Sources of exercises: F.M. Alexander, Cicely Berry, Connie de Veer, Kristin Linklater, Kelley McEvenue, Diane Timmerman

### ELEMENTS OF A THOROUGH VOCAL WORKOUT INCLUDE:

Physical awareness – particularly Primary Control (Head/Neck/Back)

Release surface muscular tension and activate breath/heart rate: Do something aerobic for about 3 – 5 minutes.

Free the physical instrument: Lengthen and widen the back, release holding in entire body

Root the breath

Get on voice – gentle, but fully phonated sound without breathiness or a hard attack.

Open resonators

Free articulators

Get on text

**PART ONE - FLOOR WORK/USE OF THE SELF** - Alexander opening, releasing of excess tension; Connecting the breath; Touch of Sound - gentle on-set of voice (“getting on voice”) with no breathiness.

- Notice back/ribs on floor
- Stretch and yawn
- Encourage space in joints; float into *semi-supine*
- *Diaper me, powder me* – lightly pulsate. Encourage sit bones away from body and separating from each other. Think into pelvic floor
- BREATHE INTO PELVIC FLOOR - release breath on loose and sloppy “f-f-f-f”
- *Touch a sound* - Feed in an image and release sound - huh; huh huh
- Hands behind knees, gently rock, roll knees in circle - hum fully on voice, but softly, on ascending to descending 3 note scale.
- Float hands and legs up – *Happy Baby*, play and bounce movement, breath and sound, following image

- *Gentle tantrum* - Let organic sounds fall out
- *Yoga Bridge* - tailbone up – lengthen. Breathe into back ribs
- Release pelvis and allow to hang like a hammock inches off floor - Let organic sounds fall out
- Head curl forward into primary curve, hands at base of skull. Breathe into upper back as you bring elbows together, lengthen spine down to floor.
- Arms/shoulders - lead with fingers of one hand, reach up to ceiling, allow shoulder to come off floor, stretch arm with opposite hand.
- Rib-cage openers: Side stretch /Arm rotations: Direct thought to open rib cage, feel diagonal stretch from hip socket to armpit to finger tips. Image that evokes heartfelt sigh of relief. *Touch a sound*, nurture/think the vibrations from deep in belly to hip socket to armpit to fingertips - let vibes gather on lips, travel around face, and be released to the world: huh-hummmmmmm - uh. Repeat several times on different pitches. Playfully explore unfamiliar parts of your pitch range.
- Berry breathing exercise: To really reap the benefits of this, do for 5 minutes! *Semi-supine*. Inhale soundlessly and exhale for 10 (count in your head) on an “s.” Wait for need in ribs to breathe. Let breath drop in. Repeat several times feeling ribs and torso open. Then increase to 15. Don’t push! Keep neck, etc. FREE!

**PART TWO - FLOOR TO ALL FOURS TO STANDING:** Nurture vibrations (freeing the body of tension to develop resonance); begin freeing and warming up lips and skull, sinus resonators; stretching hip flexors, psoas muscle to free pelvis for optimal breathing.

- *Yoga Prayer* position– hum vibrations into lips, floor, back.../ blow through lips.
- *Yoga Cobra*
- *Yoga Pigeon*
- *Yoga Cat* – then add huh – hummmmm-uh’s
- *Squat* – breathe into back and hips

- Roll up the spine, one vertebra at a time, with the head the last to arrive– think length and width
- “Neck free, head to go forward and up, back to lengthen and widen” – Imagine a second head on top of your head, with a funny hat on top. (from Janet Madelle Feindel’s The Thought Propels the Sound)
- Massage lips and face
- Hang from bull vertebra – sigh a hum
- Spine – sigh a hum onto lips, let it roll you down. New thought: sigh a hum and let it bring you up to release to the world.
- Spine – bounce and shimmy on huh hummmm uhs

**PART THREE - Opening the Channel for Sound** (throat, jaw, tongue, soft palate, spine; Nurturing vibrations (resonance) to further warm up voice.

#### JAW

- Place hands on jaw muscles, making sure to use palms, not fingers. Gently massage.
- *Jaw drop*: Allow the jaw to drop gently (avoid over-opening, as this will tighten already tense muscles) down and back.
- *Jaw Walk*: Allow jaw to be passive, direct upper jaw up and off bottom jaw (like a Pez dispenser), with your hands (jaw remains passive) bring bottom jaw up to meet top jaw. Continue until head is back as far as your neck’s strength and comfort will allow (Do NOT force). Reverse to return to upright position
- *Jaw Shake*: hold bottom jaw with thumbs and gently shake jaw vertically on a sigh of relief. Make sure this movement is quick and relatively small, especially if your jaw is very tight.

#### TONGUE

- Massage tongue root under chin
- Tongue moving sound forward: Tip of tongue behind bottom front teeth, moving front/middle of tongue up towards upper gum ridge: Heee yuh Hee yuh Hee yuh
- Hold tongue while speaking text, then speak text without – notice difference.



Puh-tuh-kuh-tuh....  
Buh-duh-guh-duh...

red leather    yellow leather  
red leather    yellow leather  
red leather    yellow leather  
yellow leather        red

\*Will you wait, will you wait, will you wait?  
Will you wait for Willie and Winnie?  
Will you wait for Willie and Winnie Williams?

\*(on an ascending five note scale) Billy Button Bought a Bunch of Beau (on a descending 5 note scale) -tiful bananas

(\*From Kristin Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice*)

Amidst the mists and fiercest frosts,  
With barest wrists and stoutest boasts,  
He thrusts his fists against the posts  
And still insists he sees the ghosts

A tutor who tooted the flute  
Tried to tutor two tooters to toot;  
Said the two to the tutor,  
"Is it easier to toot or  
To tutor two tooters to toot?"

For healthy warmth in all the weathers  
Some birds build nests with snug warm feathers;  
Feathers thick and feathers thin,  
With thick without, and thin within.

Thirty thousand thoughtful boys  
Thought they'd make a thundering noise;  
So, with thirty thousand thumbs,  
They thumped on thirty thousand drums.

A fly and a flea in a flue  
Were imprisoned, so what could they do?  
Said the fly, "Let us flee!"  
"Let us fly!" said the flea,  
So they flew through a flaw in the flue.

To sit in solemn silence in a dull, dark dock,  
In a pestilential prison, with a life-long lock,  
Awaiting the sensation of a short, sharp shock,

Connie de Veer

From a cheap and chippy chopper on a big, black block.

*W.S. Gilbert, The Mikado*

For linking and connected speech:

A man of words and not of deeds,  
Is like a garden full of weeds;  
For when the weeds begin to grow,  
Then doth the garden overflow.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.

*Shakespeare, Macbeth, V,v*