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**From “Basics for Vocal Technique” ...Booklet by Cathy Segal Garcia**  
**(818)368-8839     [www.cathysegalgarcia.com](http://www.cathysegalgarcia.com)**

*“IT WASN'T CARUSO'S DIAPHRAGM THEY SAVED...IT WAS HIS LARYNX”* Teacher...SCHISTROFF

This information is about voice technique. There are probably more wrong teachings of the voice than any other instrument. Speaking is so easy to do, we don't even think about it. But singing is a surprise...it needs attention to be a truly **balanced** instrument, half string instrument and half wind instrument. In my opinion, there is too little teaching about the vocal cords. I've tried to give you simple-to-understand (but complete) information. I hope it serves you well. The rest is up to you...

#### **WHAT IS THE INSTRUMENT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?**

**We are a unique instrument! A mix of a wind instrument and a string instrument. String being the vocal cord and wind being the air we use. The most misunderstood thing I've found in all my years of teaching is what happens to the air after it passes through the larynx. You must take air in and immediately and completely use it...sound is air that has been condensed and changed into sound. You always can take more air...there's no need to hold it, and save it. The vocal cords are the valve through which the air is released. The sound/air column MUST travel up into the pharynx.**

#### **FUNDAMENTALS**

Voice is 3 things combined: 1) Breath 2) Vibration (of the vocal cords stretched by the proper muscles), and 3) Resonance (of the pharynx, mouth, and upper head cavities). Problems happen when one of these 3 things is out of balance. When one of these 3 things is wrong, the other 2 suffer. The challenge for the serious student is to achieve and keep a perfect balance between them. And so...production of voice is due to **THE CONTROLLED RESONANCE OF AIR FLOWING THROUGH THE WINDPIPE AND RINGING THE VOCAL CORDS.**

Physiologically these are the component parts of a working voice:

From the lungs, air moves up through the *trachea* (the windpipe), and in the top of the trachea passes through the *larynx*, the home of the vocal cords, just inside where the Adam's Apple is. There are 2 vocal cords in the larynx. They are made of muscle and cellular tissue, and are attached to each other at one end -- in the front -- under the Adam's Apple, and they lie horizontally inside the top of the trachea. In the back, each cord is attached to another set of cartilage, which are attached to muscles which open and close the vocal cords in the back. There are 2 different types of actions of the many muscles in the larynx. One action tenses and one action stretches. These muscles pull the vocal cords together in the back, stretch them forward or backwards, and tense them inward toward each other mostly. The air coming up from below passes through a small oval shaped opening left between the vocal cords, is collected and condensed, rubs the vocal cords, and the created vibrating waves of air/sound must travel up, unobstructed, into the pharynx (the passage way in the very back of the throat that goes down to the stomach and up into the head). The air/sound **must** move up into the *pharynx*, and it vibrates into the mouth, pharynx and upper head and nasal cavities for resonance (which equals sound!).

If this was all there was to it, singing would be as easy as breathing or for some people, speaking! But we can have many separate problems regarding each of the things necessary to sing - air, muscle vibration, and resonance...such as pushing, squeezing, muscle laziness, and a lack of air flowing.

The two groups of muscles have different functions, or tensions, and therefore have different sounds acoustically! One group (in the back) has the job of bringing the vocal cords together into a linear position, and also the job of **stretching the inner edge**, which results in the **upper** register. This sensation feels lighter but with a “clean” sound. The other group of muscles has the job of stretching **the thicker muscle** part of the vocal cords forward and slightly downwards, for the **lower** register. This feels heavier and has a warmer sound.

When these two muscle group actions are isolated, and separately exercised and strengthened, the acoustical tones and sensations are understood with the singer's own body. Then the vocalist has the freedom to use them, separately or united, at will. This is how the so-called "break" disappears, and this is the route to a free and agile voice...**NO MATTER WHAT STYLE YOU SING! THIS IS NOT A “METHOD”!!** This is how the voice **naturally** works!

*“VOICE IS AIR STRUCK”*

Scientist...GALEN

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## **FOOD AND REST**

When you are tired, you are more susceptible to negative emotions and behavior, and mistakes, and the body has a tendency to tense muscles which grab the larynx. Try to always be well rested and fed when you are singing. Some people can eat or drink anything before and during a performance. I find room temperature water (no ice, no lemons) the best to ingest while I'm performing. I try not to eat any closer than one hour before the performance, and I stay away from spicy foods or unusual food combinations. Coffee, caffeinated tea, most juices, sodas, any alcohol...I suggest none of these from 30 minutes before your performance begins until it ends. Some people have no problems with food and drink, but I've always found my body to react much better if I keep an eye on these things.

## **SMOKING**

Smoking is bad for your body. For singers, it hurts your breathing and irritates your vocal cords.

## **DRUGS**

Besides the very obvious bad effects drugs have on your body, mind and personality, drugs can make you *think* you're singing great, **but trust me, you're not.**

*"A TONE MUST BE SELF-STARTING, SELF-PROLONGING AND SELF-STOPPING."*

Vocal Master....BATTISTA LAMPERTI

To have complete freedom is to have a voice without physical consciousness. Without grunting and pushing, and so forth. We are not against breath support, but **first** you must develop the delicate tensions and weight of the cords - the adjustments -- and discover the cavities in the head. **Then** you can add breath pressure, because the vocal cords hold against any pressure, and you don't *have* to use as much breath pressure. And there will come a point where it feels like the air is pulled up by a magnet -- if the adjustment is right. REMEMBER...we are looking for BALANCE...of breath, laryngeal muscles, and resonance.

## **IF YOU'RE CONFUSED ABOUT WHICH TEACHINGS TO FOLLOW...**

Look, experiment, and then decide. If it hurts while you're doing it, it's probably wrong! If it feels good and you can see results, it's probably right! Don't believe people **ONLY** because they teach or perform or have written a book...LOOK, EXPERIMENT, AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF!!!

AS A TOTAL HUMAN BEING...THERE IS YOU (SPIRIT), THE MIND (MENTAL IMAGE PICTURES), AND THE BODY. YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF THE BODY AND THE MIND, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND. WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS, WHICH BECOMES EVIDENT IN SEVERAL WAYS WHEN YOU PRACTICE CORRECTLY -- YOU'LL FIND YOUR OWN VOICE, THE BALANCE BETWEEN VOCAL CORDS AND BREATH PRESSURE, THE BODY CAVITIES ONLY YOU HAVE, AND, IF YOU ALLOW IT TO COME OUT, YOU WILL ALSO EMERGE IN YOUR OWN STYLE!!!

## **RECOMMENDED READING**

by Herbert Ceasare -- "Voice of the Mind" and "Sensation of Vocal Tones"

by Douglas Stanley -- anything about anatomy

by Mario P. Marafiote -- "The Caruso Method of Voice Production"

by Carlos Lobos -- regarding laryngology

by Cavaliere Giovanni Battista Lamperti -- "Vocal Wisdom"

by Charles Lunn -- "The Philosophy of Voice"