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THE MIRACLE OF YOUR VOICE

CLASS 3 - RESONANCE



SING AND USE YOUR VOICE WITH
CONFIDENCE AND FREEDOM!

SOUNDWORKZ
A Different Kind of Sound Thinking

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The Miracle of Your Voice – Class 3 – Resonance

First of all welcome and thanks for purchasing this product – the third in a series of three classes. I firmly believe that we are all capable of making sounds and singing in ways that we find enjoyable and healthful. I hope that you'll enjoy the journey and I look forward to the progress I know you'll make – not only in your voice but in yourself!

Track 1 – The Class

Part 1 - Physical Warm-Up

The Washing Machine.

Begin standing with your feet hip width apart, your knees relaxed and soft, your arms hanging relaxed and your shoulder blades low. When instructed slowly begin to swivel your body from side to side (Fig.1 & 2) and continue as instructed.

Fig.1



Fig.2



The Hippy-Dippy

Stand in a relaxed upright posture with your hands placed where they naturally fall on your thighs. Slowly bend over to the right allowing your right fingertips to slide down your leg towards your knee (Fig.1). Then return to centre and slowly bend over to the left (Fig.2), continue as instructed.

Fig.1

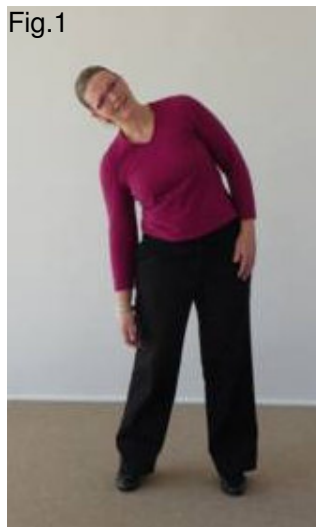
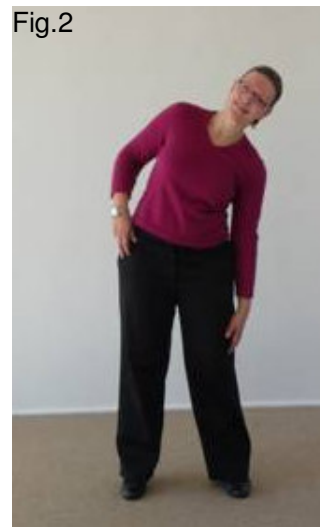
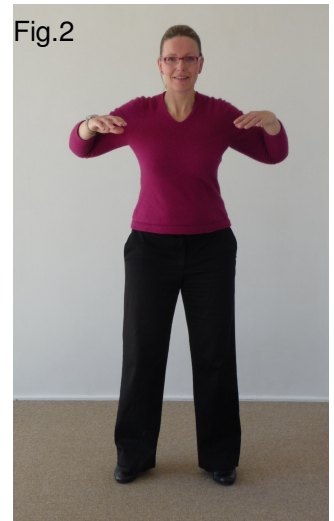
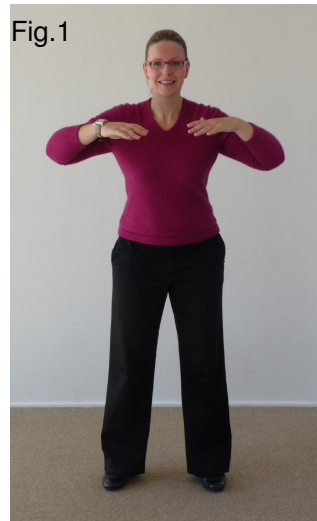


Fig.2



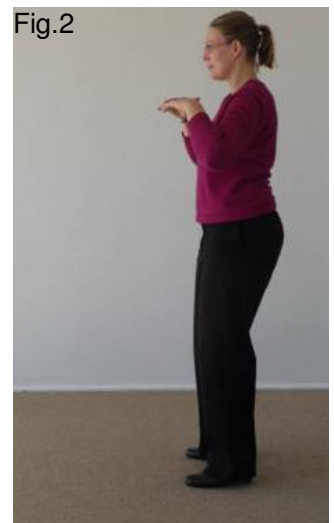
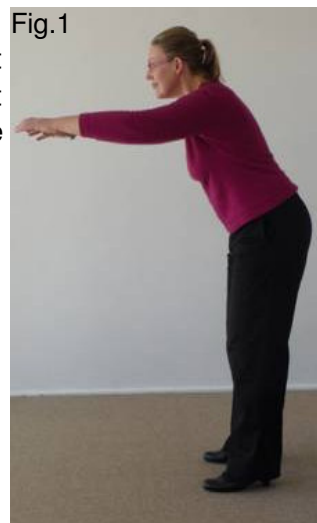
The Rooster

Stand in a relaxed upright posture. Raise your elbows up and out to the sides with your hands in front of your chest. Now begin to move your elbows backwards and forwards (Fig.1 & 2) and continue as instructed.



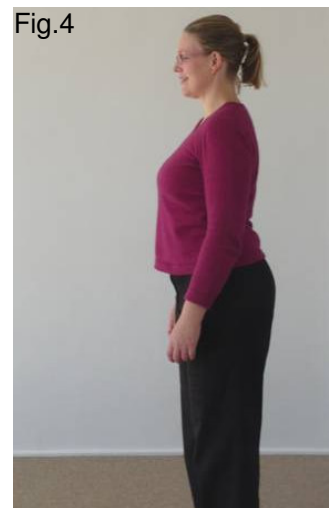
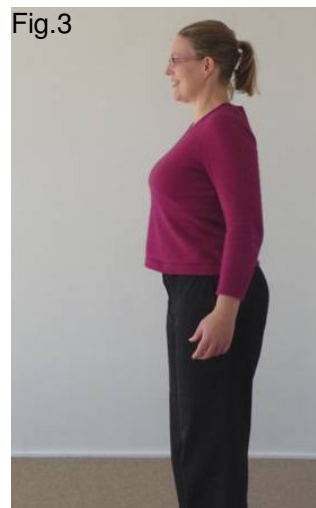
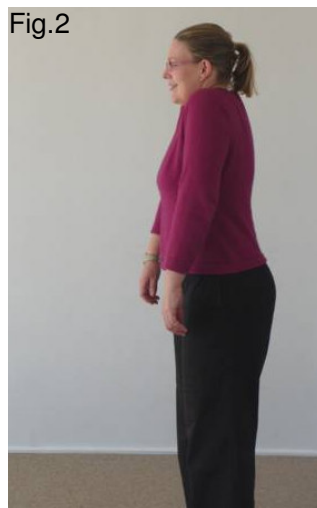
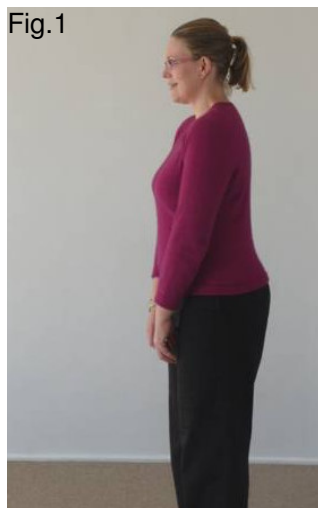
The Albatross

Stand in a relaxed upright posture with your hands at your sides. Lean forward slightly, raise your arms out to the sides of your body and flare them forwards like giant wings (Fig.1). Now draw your hands back towards your chest as if you are rowing a boat (Fig. 2). Continue as instructed.



Shoulder Rolls

Stand in a relaxed upright posture with your hands at your sides. Move your shoulders forward, back, up and down (Fig.1, 2, 3 & 4) and continue as instructed.



Shoulder Rotations

Stand in a relaxed upright posture with your hands at your sides. Lift your arms straight up from the sides of your body. Rotate your left hand upwards and your right hand downwards (Fig.1). Then rotate your left hand downwards and your right hand upwards (Fig.2). Look towards the upturned hand each time and continue as instructed.

Fig.1

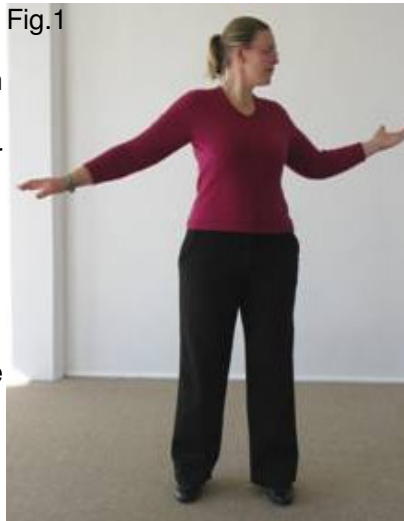
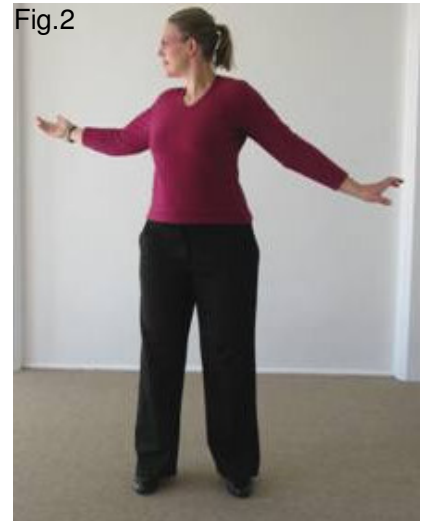


Fig.2



Part 2 – Resonance exercises

Marshmallow Hums

Begin standing in your neutral relaxed upright posture. Place your imaginary chunky marshmallow onto your tongue and feel the spaciousness within your mouth cavity. Continue following the Marshmallow Hum exercise as instructed.

Muesli Munch

Imagine now you have a mouth full of breakfast muesli or granola or something chunky you really enjoy eating. Continue following the Muesli Munch exercise as instructed.

The Happy Horse

This is a version of a tried and tested exercise called the Lip Trill. Imagine there is a very happy, contented horse in a beautiful paddock, the horse has not a care in the world and is really relaxed. Use this image to help you as you continue following the Happy Horse exercise as instructed.

Sound Shifter

In this exercise a series of vowel sounds are used to change the spaces of the throat and mouth which has the effect of altering the sound qualities we produce. Continue to follow the Sound Shifter exercise as instructed.

Ng Combo

This exercise uses the consonant cluster 'ng' which is found in words such as Si'ng' and Hu'ng'. Feel the articulation as you make this sound slowly. Focus on the tongue and jaw as you continue the exercise. The goal is to block off the mouth as a resonator and feel the resonance in your sinus cavities.

Nasty Neighbour

This exercise engages the space in the sinuses and pulls up the space in the mouth making you aware of the area of your mouth where the teeth meet the gum line. This area gives a hard, edgy sound quality. This sound quality is sometimes referred to as 'twang'. Continue to follow the Nasty Neighbour exercise as instructed.

Santa Sounds

This exercise works on resonance balancing and produces an opposite sound quality to the Nasty Neighbour. Focus on the quality experienced at the start of a yawn and on releasing the chin and jaw to make a deep, dark, 'dropped' sound quality. Allow the resonance to 'fall back' into the throat. Continue to follow the Santa Sounds exercise as instructed.

Song Study – Tall Trees

This is a beautiful variation of a folk song, the rhythm is slow and it contains flowing vowel sounds that really allow you to tune in to the resonance you are creating.

Tall Trees

Tall trees, deep water,

Cold stone, warm fire,

I feel it in my body,

I feel it in my soul.

Support Notes:

The importance of water

The voice is a wet membrane and wind instrument. You need to keep it moist and hydrated for optimum performance. Make sure that you drink plenty of clean water throughout the day particularly an hour prior to your singing. As a guideline a **minimum** of 1.5 litres of should be drunk daily.

Basic anatomy of the voice

Your voice is produced in a structure called the larynx. The larynx is made of cartilage positioned just under the mid-point of your throat. You can place the fingers of one hand gently around the front of your neck about two thirds down the length of your chin. Now give a gentle swallow. You should feel a structure bob up and down slightly. (This may take a few repetitions to find the right spot!) This structure is your larynx.

The vocal chords are a miracle consisting of different layers of membranes (the things that come together and vibrate to actually make the sound!). The vocal chords (or folds) sit cross-ways within the, 'ring' of the thyroid cartilage which slots into the, 'ring' of the cricoid cartilage. These membranes are braced, supported and manipulated by a variety of ligaments capable of moving in a number of directions. The membranes or vocal chords sit inside the larynx horizontally in a 'V' shape that meets at the front and spreads out in the v towards the back.

The entire larynx is balanced on top of the trachea or wind-pipe. When we want to make a sound the brain signals that we release a puff of air from the lungs, the air comes up the wind-pipe and passes between the notch or 'v' of the vocal chords. The brain signals the vocal chords to come together. When the vocal chords meet they begin to vibrate which produces a sound wave. This is the miracle of your voice.

The miracle of your voice

If you look at the nail tip on your index finger you have the rough size and dimension of your vocal chord. Yet this tiny delicate structure is capable of producing notes of the most exquisite range, beauty and expressiveness. When we sing tuning A (A above middle C), the note that orchestras use before they start playing, we produce a note that is vibrating at 440 vibrations per second (or A 440 kHz). I include this information so that you can appreciate that it is impossible to consciously control the actions of our body to produce sound (we cannot consciously make our body do anything at the rate of 440 vibrations in a second!). What we can do is set up optimum conditions in the mind and body for the voice to do what it intuitively knows how to do. Therefore singing is in many ways a clearing away of our sense of, 'how we should' sing and a learning to just allow what is and can be.

Sing on the air

Always start sounds (phonation) gently and on the air. When you begin it is useful to start each sound with a small, 'haah' of air prior to starting the sound. This is to ensure you don't start the sound with too much of a bang or squeeze known as a harsh 'onset' or glottal.

Identifying your resonant quality

Each voice has its own unique resonant quality. Use the exercises on this CD to become more conscious of how your voice resonates. As instructed, use your hands to explore where you feel the vibrations of your voice. Consider whether your natural voice is, 'dark' or, 'bright'. These are descriptive words for the quality of your vocal sound known as the timbre. Explore how you can change your resonant quality – make it, 'brighter' then, 'darker' by changing the positioning of your lips, mouth and tongue. Remember that your natural sound should always be made with a relaxed jaw and the tongue lying down in the, 'bed' of the mouth.

Identifying others resonant quality

Start to listen to your favourite singing artists to identify what type of resonance they have. Do you hear a 'bright' sound with lots of the, 'nasty neighbour' quality or a darker more mellow quality as with the, 'Santa sounds' exercise? The more conscious you become of other people's resonant quality the more effective you will become at perfecting your own.

How to practice

When you start singing you should practice little and often. As you build strength and ability in your instrument you can increase the duration and frequency of your practice. 10 mins 3-4 times a week consistently will yield good results. After a few weeks increase this if you can to 15- 20 minutes 3-4 times a week. Don't force your voice, start gently, be attentive, let your voice teach you, your voice knows how to sing if you let it!

A Note on Pitch

This vocal series is not focussed on pitch. I firmly believe that everyone has the ability to find pitch (sing in tune). However, it is true that the ability to recognise the relative nature of pitch and sing within the framework of a prescribed series of notes varies from person to person. THIS IS NO BARRIER TO LEARNING TO SING AND ENJOYING YOUR SINGING!!

Maybe you don't know if you sing in tune or not – many people don't. That doesn't matter. I know from experience in my private teaching that the ability to sing in tune develops over time. It's a matter of waking up the right parts of the brain that recognise pitch. If you've had people in the past tell you you're out of tune or 'can't sing' put that behind you and let go of it, this singing course is for you. For now, just sing for yourself, then you're perfectly, 'in tune' with how your own voice wants to express itself!

What if we were to forget entirely about pitch and just sing!!

'Nothing ventured, nothing gained' - nothing sung nothing pitched! i.e. you'll never get there if you don't go from here – so just sing. Over time the ability to sing in tune will grow – but first plant the seed by singing!

Have you ever had the experience of just singing for the pure joy of it? Maybe you were walking in the bush, out at a hut somewhere isolated, in the car in the rain with all the windows up – singing a song that you know from childhood, a song that takes you back to a special time and place and singing it at the top of your lungs with all your heart! The objective of this course is to get you singing like that – so at this stage in the game don't worry about pitch!

The first stage of learning to sing is just to sing! Sing uncritically and freely – sing because it feels good not because you want to 'sound' good – (whatever that means!).

Important Note for The Male Voice

If you are a male working with this vocal series please remember that the quality and range of your voice will differ significantly from mine. **You don't need to start on the same pitch as me.** Because the male voice has a unique range known as the falsetto it is quite possible that you can sing all the notes on the same pitches as I do. However, if you do this you will not be exploring your own unique head, chest and middle voice registrations. Therefore it is important that you work to discover where the low chest, high head, and middle notes are in your own vocal range.

Breath Coordination

Breathing is the in-depth topic for the second class in this vocal series. Remember to concentrate on keeping low, soft shoulders when you breathe and relaxing the tummy. For some of you this in itself may be quite a feat! Many of us have been trained since a young age to suck in the gut and hold up and tense the shoulders constantly – like the sergeant major on parade. This is the **opposite posture** of a good singer's breath. With a singer's breath the shoulders should remain low and relatively still when we breathe in. The ribs should flare out (most at the lower ribs) and the tummy should relax and swell gently outwards. You can begin waking up your awareness of this coordination by placing a hand gently on your tummy (over the belly button) and taking a good low breath in with relaxed shoulders before you start each singing exercise.

Put it into practice

If you've worked through the three classes in this vocal method you'll now have two songs to work on, 'Amazing Grace' from Class 2 and 'Tall Trees' from Class 3. Explore your resonant quality using these two songs,. Be very conscious of the vowel shapes as you sing and try to optimise the resonance you can get from each vowel. If you're feeling brave it's a great idea to record yourself! While you play back the recording listen closely to the quality of each voice you sing – could you improve it? Try singing the song again and see if you can shift the resonance to the edgy frontal quality of the 'nasty neighbour' exercise. Now you're ready to branch out to other songs. Find something you enjoy singing to work with – you can sing along with the radio, TV, your ipod or a CD. Work with a song that doesn't strain your voice. You should choose something with a tune you find easy to pick up, in the comfortable mid-range of your voice (not extreme high and low notes and not with big jumps in the tune). While you're singing try and stay down and grounded in your body, do the physical and vocal warm-ups first if possible. Be conscious of any 'holes' or 'gaps' in your resonance – if your sound becomes less vibrant this indicates the vowels and possibly pitches that you find more of a challenge. Work on them to improve the resonance quality.

Checklist for song singing

Think about the registrations chest, head, middle voice while you sing your practice song. Get in touch with the feeling in the body, in the throat, in the head as you move through the notes of the tune. Ask yourself these questions as you sing:

- Do I feel free vibration in my face, throat and torso?
- Does the resonance feel free and easy to do?
- Do I feel relaxed?
- Can I get all the notes?
- Are some notes more resonant than others?
- What notes are easier – the high notes, the low, the middle?
- How's my posture when I sing?
- Are my shoulders relaxed?
- Are my eyes level forward?
- Is the back of my neck long?
- Is my chest comfortably high (but not rigid)?
- Does my tummy expand when I take an in-breath?
- Does my tummy move back towards my spine as I sing and release the breath?

Wait for the answers to these questions. Don't rush. Ask the questions lots of times. The answers (and the next question!) will change as you progress.

Bibliography

This course is designed to be a practical, 'feeling sense' experience of what it is to sing well. There are many useful and informative books on the mechanics of singing. If you're some-one who enjoys detailed explanations and anatomical description here is a selection of the ones I have found most clear and relevant.

Singing and the Actor, Keyes, Gillyanne, Routledge, 2nd Ed. 2005.

The Structure of Singing, Miller, Richard., Schirmer Books, 1986.

Singing - The Mechanism and the Technique, Vennard, William, Carl Fisher, Revised Ed. 1967.

Sites for Singers

www.youtube.com - Of course! This one has revolutionised the teaching of singing. Go on-line and find in a heart-beat multiple renditions of most pieces you would want to sing! Compare voices, technique and interpretations.

www.sheetmusicplus.com - A comprehensive site for purchase of sheet music, all genres and styles.

www.onlinesheetmusic.com - One of the main sites for instant sheet music download.

www.ameritz.co.uk Faithful to original backing tracks available at a low cost.

Glossary

Aspirate - The 'hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh' sound when we release a puff of air.

Glottal - Starting a sound with a hard strike of the vocal chords together, like when we say, 'ah-huh'.

Larynx - A structure made of cartilage and membrane that sits on top of the wind-pipe and houses the vocal chords.

Phonation - Making sound.

Pitch – A sound at a specific vibratory rate.

Resonaters – The spaces that reflect and magnify the vibrations from the vocal folds i.e. the chest cavity, throat, mouth and sinuses.

Vibrator – The vocal folds.

Vocal Chords (or folds) - The 2 membranes housed inside the larynx that when brought together begin to vibrate and create sound waves.

Meet your Teacher – Barbara Ann Grant

Barbara Ann Grant is a classically trained mezzo soprano. She sang her first public performance aged 6, began formal lessons at 13 and went on to study performance voice at the Wellington Conservatory of Music, Victoria University and Oberlin Conservatory, Oberlin, U.S.A, where she received a full tuition scholarship.

She says, "Our voice is a deep expression of our true self. We need to, 'feel good to sing good' and 'sing good to feel good'. Treat the voice with the curiosity of a child and the voice itself will teach us the lesson that we are always free and whole and we have always been so. When our voice finds this truth it echoes it back to us on all levels and in all ways and we are deeply transformed."



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