



Voice Warm Up

Module Two: Voice Warm Up

This is our voice warm up. It's an amalgamation of work by many of the great voice teachers including Patsy Rodenburg and Cicely Berry.

This voice warm up should run for around 20-30 minutes. You can modify the warm up depending on the time you have available. If you are doing a shortened version make sure you have exercises from all five sections.

Our vocal warm up is divided into 5 sections that logically build on from one another:

1. Alignment/Body Work

2. Breath Support

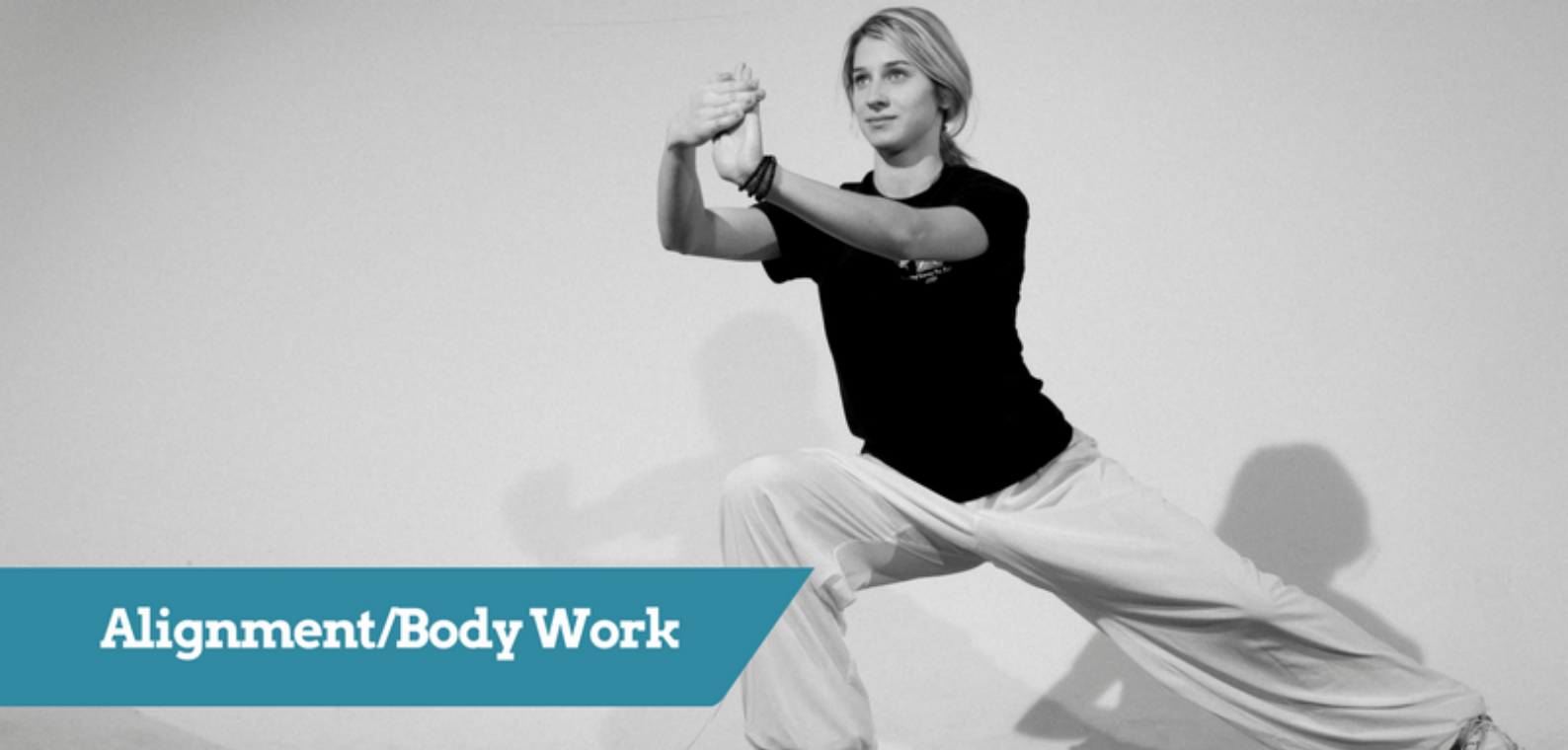
3. Freeing the Voice

4. Resonance

5. Articulation

To Remember when warming up:

- Start becoming aware of where you hold tension.
- Let your belly go and don't be afraid to look ugly.
- Don't push.



Alignment/Body Work

This is always the first step in any voice warm up. You need to be physically ready: aligned, centred and grounded before beginning work on your voice.

1. Semi Supine

Semi Supine is one of the most important positions for voice work. It is a position that will allow your spine to lay completely flat on the ground. Spending 10-15 minutes in semi supine a day is incredible for alignment. (See video for full instructions)

2. Stretching

- Stretch to each side, allowing the ribs to open. Hold all stretches ideally for 30 seconds to get maximum affect.
- Join hands, stretch outwards and do circles around your body. Opening out your ribs, back and chest.
- Stretch your arms, legs, and lower back as well. The more open you are the better.

3. Releasing Tension

- Begin by lifting the shoulders and then drop your shoulders. Do this without releasing breath on the drop. Just breathe normally. (5 times)
- Shoulder Rolls. Roll your shoulders forward. Then back. Then in opposite directions. (20 seconds each)
- Massage and tapping the body. You can do this throughout the warm up to release tension.

4. Spinal Roll

Bend over at the hips and allow everything to release. Make sure you're not holding your belly, let it flop out. In this position you can bounce and then stretch lightly over to the left, then to the right. Once you're feeling released slowly come to to standing. Feeling each vertebrae stack on top of the next. Once you're standing feel the spine lengthen and everything else fall away. (Only need to do this once.)

5. Neutral Position

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Toes pointing forward and your weight evenly over your feet. Leaning forward very slightly may help.
- Your knees should be soft. And you shouldn't be holding anything.
- The spine is long. Imagine a helium balloon on top of your head lightly pulling you upwards.



Breath Support

After your body work you should be feeling grounded and comfortable standing tall. We now move onto the breath. Breath is the foundation of voice. Once you are in alignment and relaxed we look at the breath. The goal is to make sure the body is working to support the breath.

1. Fricatives

Voiced and Unvoiced fricatives in all positions. Do three in each position. Breathe out to the end of your breath and release, allowing yourself to breathe naturally.

Four Positions: 1. Semi supine (discussed above) 2. All fours. 3. Rib stretch to each side 4. Standing.

Unvoiced: FF, SH, SS, TH

Voiced: VV, JJ, ZZ, TH

2. Count to 10

A great way to check in to see if you are connecting with breath is to count. Simply count to 10 and then release and let the breath naturally come in. (Do this three times.)

3. Staggered count to 10

A great way to work on breath support is using staggered counting. Count: 1 then: 1, 2 then: 1, 2, 3 and continue until 10. Aim to be on full voice and again allow the breath to come from releasing, not from “trying to do a deep breath”.

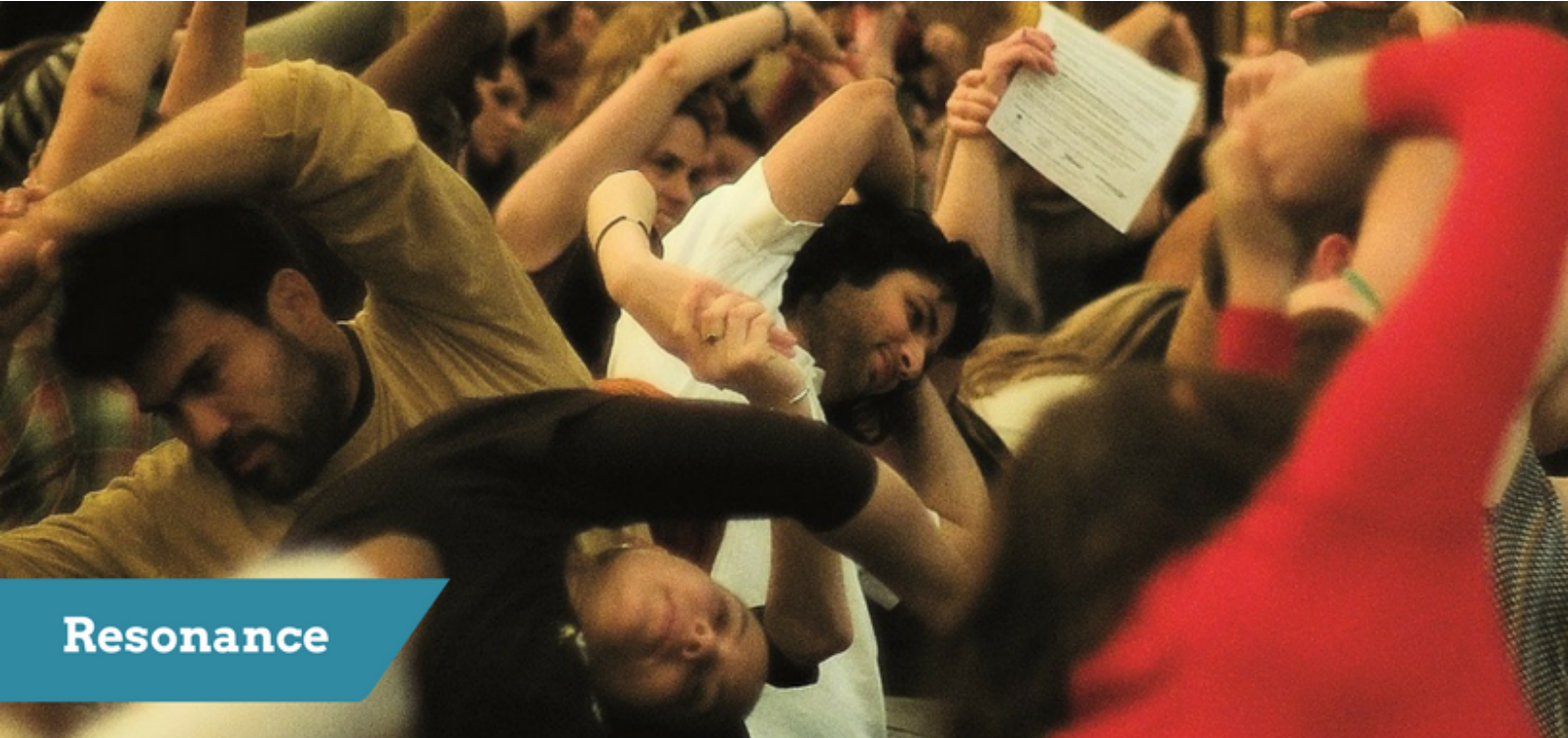
Note: you shouldn't hear in your in-breath. A quick exercise is to put your fingers in your ears and breath until you can't hear breath. That means the throat is open and no longer restricting.



Freeing the Voice

After breath support we need to start freeing up the voice. The main area we often impede the voice is in the jaw. So let's begin loosening and opening the voice:

1. **Stretch your ribs open** - reach over to one side, opening up the ribs. Lightly tapping the ribs with your free hand to help release them.
2. **Yawn and sigh.** Throughout the entire warm up get into the habit of yawning and sighing. They shouldn't be forced. Yawning in particular is a great way to open the soft palate and relax.
3. **Jaw Release.** Rub your hands together vigorously to produce a bit of heat in your palms, then draw your palms gently along your jaw, feeling the jaw relax. (See video). Do this 3 times.
4. **Jaw Release 2.** Lightly open your mouth, releasing the jaw. Very gently shake your fists to get your jaw moving up and down. (See Video) Do this 3 times.
5. **Massage.** Massage the face, jaw, neck, shoulders and chest. Massage is a great way to release muscular tension.
6. **Lips Trills.** (See Video) Do sets of voiced and unvoiced lips trills. You can siren through your range using lips trills as well.
7. **Shake out.** Throughout your warm up do an occasional shake out. Shake your arms, legs and whole body. It's all about getting loose and opening up.



Resonance

We now move onto resonance. We want to feel the actor is speaking from the whole body. Resonance is based largely around humming. It's great to hum through some of the earlier stages of the warm up.

1. **Begin simply by humming.** Allowing yourself to breath freely. Notice where you can feel your natural vibration (resonance). For me it's strong in the chest.
2. **Body scan.** Begin humming again. The goal now is to feel your resonance in different parts of the body. Begin feeling the resonance in the chest. Then move to the ribs, throat, back of the neck, face and finally top of your head. Can you get each part of your body vibrating? (20 seconds each)
3. **Sirens.** Humming through your range. Begin high to low. Then low to high. Then try going up and down through the range like a police siren. (3 times each way).
4. **Humming onto sound.** By now you should be feeling much more resonant. We are going to take the hum onto sound. Begin humming and then slowly open up onto an "ah" sound. MM - AH. Do this 3 times.
5. **Vowel Sounds.** You can continue this idea on other vowel sounds: MM AH, MM AY, MM EE, MM OO. And then do them one after another. in a sequence. The idea is to feel your resonance in your full voice.



Articulation

Articulation is the final part of any voice warm up. By now we are feeling free, open and resonant and now we need to articulate the sound.

1. **Hands in mouth.** This might feel a bit disgusting to begin with but it works wonders. With your two pinky fingers stretch the mouth from inside. Making smiles and frowns and generally having a bit of fun.
2. **Hands in mouth 2.** Now begin massaging the inside of your right cheek with your thumb, while your other hand massages from the outside. Then do the same on the left cheek. You can also move onto the lips, just making sure everything is warm and stretched.
3. **Tongue.** Point your tongue far out of your mouth making it as pointy as possible. Then flatten the tongue completely. Go from pointed to flat three times.
4. **Tongue Circles.** Again, poke your tongue out and begin making tiny circles with your tongue. After that do the opposite and try to make as big a circle as possible. Go from clockwise to anticlockwise. (Aim to do 10 of each)
5. **Tongue in cheek.** Building on from there try to make little circles in your cheeks. Again start small. Try to make the circle as even as possible. Can you draw a perfect circle with your tongue? As always do the same on each side. (5 circles in each cheek)
6. **Consonants.** Begin with a “D” sound. DA, DA, DA. Keep going to the end of your breath. Do three sets. Do the same with any combination of consonants - B, T, K, L.
7. **Consonant sets.** Voice and Unvoiced. Unvoiced: PTK: PA TA KA (say 10 times). Voiced: BDG: BA DA GA (say 10 times)
8. Tongue twisters:

Red Leather, Yellow Leather

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers; a peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.

**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
From a cheap and chippy chopper on a big black block**



After a warm up it's a great idea to pick up a poem, monologue or any piece of text and see how it feels. At the end of the day we are warming up and practicing vocal work to be better actors.

You should feel more open, resonant and articulate.