

# NeuroVocal

*a groundbreaking approach to singing*

## Unit 2, Module 6

### The Nasty Triangle: *Blending High in Popular Styles*

#### Check in:

#### Concept & words

The Nasty Triangle is very conceptual.

- It's meant to introduce the idea that the singer's experience of the resonance of their voice changes as frequencies change.
- Not everyone will experience it as "nasty," and not everyone will experience a "triangle."
- Nearly any brain can be trained to experience the changes in sensations that accompany changes in pitches.

#### Belting

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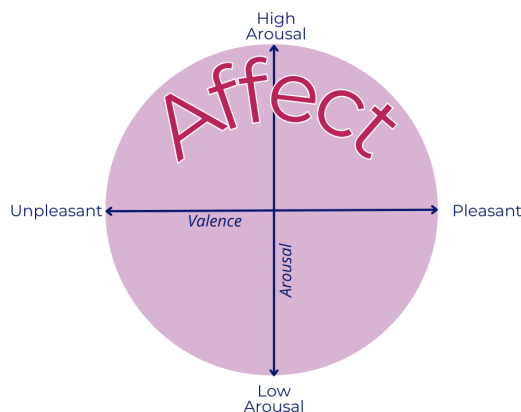
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This is a conceptual word, and one that voice pros would do well to avoid using. Most singers have not learned to hear the “thinning” sound that accompanies register coordination in higher pitches. They perceive their favorite singers bringing a rich, full tone to their higher range, or their “belt” voice.

The word/concept “belt” often encourages a behavior that will not allow the singer to get what they want. The associations they’ve created for the word are not possible in practice.

## Brains are like cats

NeuroVocal is unfamiliar to everyone, every time. I’ve noticed that when people engage in the new and unfamiliar behaviors of NVM, that action is nearly always accompanied by an immediate and unpleasant affect.



Usually, though not always, the person contextualizes that affect as feelings of discomfort, frustration, negative judgment, or defensiveness. What it looks

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like from the outside is that the person has had a new experience - an intention that caused an unfamiliar physical feeling - and they respond to that unfamiliar physical feeling with an immediate and brief negative emotion.

I think that when we ask our brains to quickly make sense of new things on the fly - particularly in the intentional, experiential way that NeuroVocal asks for - we encounter emotional discomfort. Our brains don't like it. They're spending too much time and energy on the "prediction error correction" part of the process, and less energy on happily predicting. Luckily, neuroplasticity being what it is, most people's brains come around pretty quickly. Their brains quickly ascertain that, although this behavior is unfamiliar, it is not threatening. Nobody is going to die because you made sound in a new way.

## **What the Nasty Triangle sounds like**

We have an expectation of sounding good in the studio. The sounds you've had your students making may not sound "good" to them. However, since **you've** become familiar with the element of vocal sound we find in the "hunn" principle, you've probably

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noticed it in many - or all - singers of popular or contemporary music theater styles.

**This video** demonstrates that sound in the context of singing.

In none of these singers was that element ‘locked into place.’ Listen for the changes in how they ‘place’ their voice depending on where they are in their range.

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## Video

### New Behaviors, New Possibilities

- Neuro-Vocal concepts thus far based on neurology.
  - brain creates motor memories
  - brain prepares for familiar behaviors through predictive nature.
  - brain predicts based on what it already knows
- predictive brain prepares us to sing

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- idea of “opening the Sing File” is more understandable.
- voice professionals must remember the Sing File opens *before* we sing.
- That fact can both help a singer *and* get in the way
- When we ask the brain for behavior that it does not yet know how to predict, we create new possibilities.
  - (experiential blindness)
  - can reveal a way to phonate that feels and sounds different from what we’re accustomed to.
  - This can be emotionally uncomfortable
  - is tricky.
  - phonating on Sweet Spot makes a case for itself
    - Easy
    - Resonant
    - connected to your body
    - yummy

## **It's not pretty.**

- Buzzy forward sounds are a part of all popular, microphone-based genres.
- Listening helps it make sense
- Nasty Triangle an efficient tool for getting over and through register breaks.
- Once you have the feel for it, the Nasty Triangle concept can be liberating.
  - empowered
  - expressive
  - confident

## **How to Nasty Triangle**

- Slide our “hunn” feeling up and down a whole step.
- Make sure that:
  - singer is able to stay in feeling place,

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- not open “sing” file
- maintain a consistent feeling between the first and second scale degrees.
- becoming familiar allows higher & louder
- Ask singer to repeat behavior with a new awareness.
  - notice the change in feeling between the first and second pitch?
  - suggest the words “narrowing” or “thinning.”
  - These words help singer focus on *which element* you’d like them to pay attention to.
- Same thing on buzzy EE vowel from Hunn-ee exercise.
  - Makes change in feeling between one pitch and the next feel even more present and exaggerated.
  - Brings up emotional resistance
  - Teacher keeps ear tuned to any hint of pushing, gripping, or straining.

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- If student is pushing, gripping, or straining, stop immediately.
  - Reframe
  - Explain briefly
  - Suggest tools
  - Try again, OR
  - Drop it and try next time
- Singers can embrace and use quickly, or take a long time.  
Every singer is on their own schedule.

## The “Nasty” in the Nasty Triangle

- Refers to the deliberate isolation of the **feelings** that accompany the buzzy sound
  - Sounds bad or even horrible.
  - *sound* is typically perceived as getting increasingly ugly as singer phonates on higher pitches.
  - Most people have an emotional reaction to that sound



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- coach needs to contextualize the experience for the student.
  - help the singer *accept* sound
  - Help singer *focus on* the feeling.
  - Point out that phonation was
    - Loud
    - Resonant
    - connected to abdominal engagement
    - caused no strain or stress in the larynx

## The “Triangle” in the Nasty Triangle

- Refers to the singer's physical/interoceptive experience of sound.
- Triangle experience described here based on the efficient phonation that arises from the Hunn and Hunn-ee concepts.

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## Why

- As the tissue of the vocal folds becomes thinner, and the oscillation more rapid, the singer will likely have the sense of their sound
  - Thinner
  - more forward
  - higher in their face
- Perception becomes more acute as pitches get higher.
  - Singer is both creating the conditions for *and* allowing this feeling
  - Singer is allowing for changes in feeling to occur along with changes in frequencies
  - Being aware of interoceptive feedback does a powerful neurological job over time.
  - awareness is beginning the process of initiating a new neural response to the “sing” command.

## **Chest register, modal register, or M1**

- vibratory pattern of vocal folds more complex.
  - cycling from back to front *and*
  - from bottom to top.
- lower the pitch = thicker the folds
  - more tissue coming together creates a richer and more complex sound.
- Higher pitch = thinner folds
  - less tissue comes together
  - diminishing richness of sound.
  - each change in pitch results in a different overtone/harmonic series.

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- **Triangle concept** can help the singer allow for the natural thinning of the tissue that occurs as they phonate on increasingly higher pitches.
- **Nasty concept** helps them maintain the *character* of the chest register, M1, or TA dominant sound as the ascending pitch necessitates an increasingly thinner sound.

*If the tone is being produced in an efficient way that relies on an even and energized flow of breath, both the formants and the overtones will vibrate within the singer's resonant cavities, as well as with the hard and soft tissue in the face and head. The singer experiences the changing vibrations resulting from the thinning vocal folds as becoming thinner in the face or head. Hence the triangle.*

- Singers' experience may be:
  - very localized way such as
    - within the mouth

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- In the sinus cavities
- In bridge of nose
- general way such as:
  - across the face area
  - Around the cheekbones
  - Inside the ears
- expanded proprioceptive way
  - extending beyond the face
- Reflect their experience back to them. That becomes *their* tool as they get the feel for this.
- Listen for
  - Resonant phonation
  - “Relaxed” larynx
  - Engaged abdominal wall

## Remember the bike-riding analogy

*As singer keeps reaching for the feeling of balance and ease, they build the motor memory that expects that level of balance and ease.*

*Their brain will know what to predict, and everything will begin to line up behind their intention.*



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## Workshop