

Unit 3, Module 11

The Respiratory System & Getting a Singer Started

Check-in:

Course work:

Recap: *At Last* & why we copy, Style listening & pentatonic warm-ups

Unit 3: Heidi Moss article, Breathe Like a Chimp, observation video

Studio work:

What you're learning, challenges you face, successes to share

VIDEO:

Breathing

- passive breathing controlled by
 - a combination of internal air pressure dynamics interacting with the external environment
 - a tiny community of pacemaker neurons in your brainstem.

- keep your body breathing constantly
- subdivide into neurons for sighing, yawning, and other specific ways of breathing.
- diaphragm innervated by the phrenic nerve from the brainstem
 - messages from this nerve can be
 - Autonomic
 - Active
- diaphragm
 - a thin, strong muscle that separates the thoracic (chest) cavity from the abdominal cavity
 - three holes in the diaphragm
 - two for blood
 - one esophagus

Inhalation

- activates both diaphragm external intercostal muscles
- These two muscle groups are considered your primary respiratory muscles.
- When the diaphragm contracts lungs fill with air.
- abdominal muscles and internal intercostal muscles relax.

Passive inspiration

- how we breathe when sleeping or at rest
- primary respiratory muscles (diaphragm and external intercostal muscles) contract to draw air in, relax to exhale

Active or forced breathing

- how we breathe when taxing the body
- Inhalation typically engages any or all of the muscles attached to the ribcage or clavicle
- exhalation engages the abdominal and internal intercostal muscle groups

You can show students by having them pretend to blow out their birthday candles.

Getting a Singer Started

Singers benefit from knowing how to use active breathing intentionally and effectively without engaging in overwork, anxiety or other stressors which are often associated with active breathing.

- Singers often do not understand that the sound of their voices emanates from their larynx, which is part of their respiratory system.
- If appropriate, the coach can show the singer the basics of how breathing works

- begin by developing an awareness first of passive and then of intentional breathing.
 - Passive breathing helps the singer connect to an awareness of their own breathing.
- Help the singer become aware of passive breathing.
 - Ask the singer to sit in a reclined position with their feet resting and elevated with hands on the abdominal wall
 - Have them experience their own breathing for a minute or two.
 - Ask them what they notice
 - When they share what they notice, you can give them the short version of why that was.
 - Tell them this is how they breathe when they sleep
 - Ask them to do it at home a few minutes every day until you see them again.
- The goal here is for the singer to become familiar with the connection between their inhalation and the abdominal wall responding to that inhalation.
- ***Step one is to establish familiarity.***
- Once they're familiar with this connection, you can begin asking them to take slightly bigger and more intentional breaths.

Now they can begin to activate their breath without overworking or creating stress.

DISCUSSION:

Breathing:

- Do you start with “how to” passive breathing?
- How most people “take a breath.”
- If we continue down the path of “intention breathing” then we’re confirming habituation; swimming upstream. There is activation with passive breathing.
- Connecting to passive breathing creates awareness of the dynamic aspect of breathing, and can be powerful.
- For your client: *As you become aware you can take a bigger breath. It’s more of the same.*

Context:

In Western classical training breathing is the beginning of the sound. *The manner in which I inspire sets up the sound that I’m going to make.*

That's not a thing in popular styles. Why?

- Based in untrained singers
- Singer isn't the amplifier
- Singer isn't following external rules

Singer needs to know how to breathe, *and context matters*. It can be hard to allow singers to “do it wrong.”

- **As coaches we clarify, recognize, and respect individual timelines and goals. We take context into account.**

Examples of context:

- Is it music theater or pop?
- What are our priorities?
- What is the timeline?
- How often are we singing?
- What genre?
- What are the demands of the genre or the performance environment?

VIDEO: *Breathe Like a Chimp*

WORKSHOP: *Power Breathing*