

## Principle 4: Cartoon Mouse

### THE PRINCIPLE:

This is a simple and effective way to affect M2 phonation in a way that serves popular styles.

Although it is helpful for the singer to have a familiarity and comfort level with the physical feeling of their own resonance as outlined in Principles 1 and 2, an easy “way in” to making this sound can be through concepts.

The M2 register (in all its iterations) can be a treasure trove of vocal textures and approaches. It’s the engine behind quick embellishments and riffs. It can also be challenging for singers of popular styles.

Often singers avoid using this part of their voice because they experience it as being different from their “real voice.” They feel that it’s airy, childlike, or “fake” sounding.

Using the Cartoon Mouse principle helps singers learn to:

- access their higher notes without reticence
- keep their placement forward in a way that creates “vocal camouflage”

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- experience a version of their higher notes that will allow a more natural coordination, or blend/mix, in their higher pitches
- build strength and confidence in M2 ranges
- coordinate M2 functionality low in the range

## OBJECTIVES OF THIS PRINCIPLE:

The objectives of this exercise are any or all of the following:

- Introduce the singer to the concept of using feeling to guide register coordination.
- Help them access M2 functionality in a way that will serve the styles they sing while (secretly) showing them how a high mix will feel.
- Introduce vocal textures inherent in M2 along with the idea of “vocal camouflage.”
- Begin the process of teaching the singer to *expect* a certain *feeling* outcome, so that they can make the real-time adjustments needed to create the sounds they want.

## NOTES TO THE COACH:

This exercise can be approached via interoception, concepts, or both. In any event, it's helpful to be interactive and encouraging to the client as

they get the hang of it. Try to not “fix” or “tweak,” but rather to let them repeat the patterns, with an objective in mind, as they get the feel for it.

## SCRIPT I: Interoception version

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YOU: We’re going to do an exercise called *Cartoon Mouse*. So get ready to sound like a cartoon mouse! :) Will you please say “nee” on this pitch?

*You indicate a pitch that is solidly into M2 range without being high, e.g. a B5 for a treble voice, an E4 for a baritone.*

THEM: “Nee”

YOU: Great. Now will you make it [whatever they need, e.g., a bit louder or uglier]?

THEM: “Nee”

YOU: There you go! Now, will you please do that again, and bring your attention to the front of your face and mouth? Let’s see if you can perceive a feeling to go along with that sound.

THEM: “Nee”

I feel it [whatever they say] behind my teeth.

YOU: Great. Do it again, and this time anticipate that feeling you just described.

THEM: "Nee"

YOU: Got it?

THEM: Yes.

YOU: Ok. I'd like you to focus on that feeling and keep it as consistent as possible as you move through these pitches:

*Here you offer a small range, such as:*

- *do-ti-do*
- *me-re-do*

*Move ascending a few semitones or as long as they sound efficient, and/or move descending as far as they can coordinate without shifting into their M1.*

*As they learn to anticipate the feeling they will be able to coordinate with a greater range.*

## SCRIPT II: Concept version

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YOU: We're going to do an exercise called *Cartoon Mouse*. So get ready to sound like a cartoon mouse! :)

Will you please do your best impersonation of Mickey Mouse?

*You start. Say "Hey Minnie" in a cartoon mouse voice. Alternatively, you can select an animated rodent that is more*

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*relatable to your client, such as Dave T. Chipmunk (Alvin!!), Cinderella's mouse Gus-gus (Cinderelly!) or another.*

THEM: (Trying not to be vulnerable...) Hey Minnie!

YOU: Ok! Now do it in character!

*You demonstrate again.*

THEM: (A bit more...) Hey Minnie!

YOU: There you go! Now let's get the voice-over gig! Go all out!

THEM: (Shamelessly) Hey Minnie!

YOU: Great! Now, as we move through these pitches, will you please stay as mouse-y as possible for as long as possible? You may find you have to become a quieter mouse when we get into the lower pitches, but you can still be in character.

*Start on a pitch that is solidly into M2 range without being high, e.g. a B5 - C#5 for a treble voice, an E4 - F#4 for a baritone.*

*As you move through pitches, keep it playful. Make a mouse face and/or talk to them in a mouse voice. Remind them that they can be a quiet mouse when they get into the range that is lower.*

YOU: Nice! It's a little tricky, right? Not really difficult, but tricky.

THEM: Yeah!

YOU: Can you tell how getting good at this way of making sound could allow you to sing low and quietly if you wanted to?

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THEM: Yes. I love it when [artist of choice] does that.

YOU: Yes! Exactly!

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Like all the exercises, this one typically goes very well if you stay in a comfortable range the first time or two. As they begin to anticipate what is needed they'll be able to coordinate into lower pitches. Use your ears to guide the process.

At the beginning the ranges should be small. When they get better at it you can use a descending 5-note scale, or slide down a so-mi-do arpeggio. When they are very familiar with this you can do 8-5-1, or 8-1 patterns or descending pentatonic scales.

This principle will come in very handy when your client is starting to mix high, or when they need to create "camouflage" for their not-yet-mixing break. You'll likely use this in your song coaching.

Please remember that, even though this concept offers a good default M2 sound for pop singers, it is only one vocal texture. It's a good "way in" to experimenting with other ways to make sound.