

## ARMS & SHOULDERS

**1. Mirror Posture** - This is the absolute quickest route to making the reach up effect stick! Reach up can help because it avoids the posture pushing the air out too hard, making singing difficult!

Your awareness of what this changes in your stance is important in creating a lasting change. To get that awareness going, follow this:

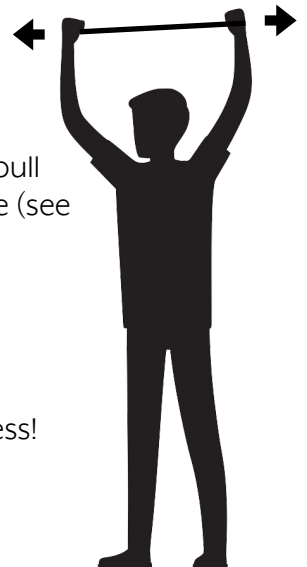
1. Reach up and notice the length in your spine, the belly position, and the shape of your chest/ribcage. Give it a minute to feel it and understand it.
2. Sing again with the reach up position, again keeping your awareness on the same difference in the chest, belly and spine.
3. Silently, slowly bring the arms down to rest at the sides whilst KEEPING some of the physical position of the upper body.
4. Roll the shoulders and move around flexibly to be sure your aren't holding, making sure the new open shape is not stiff. Sing again with that new shape.
5. Pro tip - too many things to notice makes learning near impossible, so keep it simple and stick to one or two focusses MAX when noticing your body. Valuable focusses could be your belly, spine, breast bone, side ribs, head/chin position, your vocal effort etc.

**2. Arms (Strap OPTIONAL)** - finding a buoyant, open ribcage with an extra helper! Inspired by Kari Ragan.

Initially, if the arms up assessment was a good one, do this exercise with the arms above the head. Hold a belt, jumper or exercise band. With a light force, pull each arm away from each other and keep this for the remainder of the exercise (see image below).

Apply to singing of repertoire, passages and exercises that benefit.

This will create a more open, buoyant ribcage, with space to breath in to and reduced physical collapse on the out-breath. Keep your senses on for awareness!



**3. Breath Suspension** - Training the openness of the ribcage and a coordinated voice onset

This exercises is great if the habit is to collapse of the upper body on the start of a phrase, creating too much pressure for the voice. If the ribcage is happy opening, it helps to allow breath to take care of itself across the whole body.

1. Check breathing pattern - be sure to first encourage breathing into the whole self with a slight expansion around the whole torso on the in-breath. Not high, chest breathing, or into the neck. Breath calmly like this two or three times.

2. At the top of a regular breath (not a huge one!) where the body is lightly expanded, actively pause the movement of breathing. Keep the body feeling relaxed and DO NOT pause by holding the breath with the vocal cords (IE not like a bracing feeling/lifting a piano!). The voice must remain open in the breathing position, which ensures the pause in breath coming out is being done by the coordination of the breathing muscles only.
3. Remain paused for 3 seconds staying loose and calm. Roll the shoulders and move the body whilst paused and be sure there's no physical tenseness during the pause. Gently and slowly let the air out again after the pause. Don't collapse! Repeat 3 times.
4. If pause looks good, add voice. Start with an AH vowel in chest voice, where there's a normal breath in, a one second pause, and then onset onto a sustained AH vowel whilst resisting strong bounce or collapse of the ribcage on the onset. This may trigger a very slight inward movement of the belly, as it would now have to lead the way. Repeat 3-4 times, or as necessary for learning. Lastly, experimentally apply this onset approach to songs segments. Be sure that the breaths aren't too large, and are normal and suitable for the vocal demands!
5. Reminder: This isn't about holding the ribcage open and holding breath at all costs. It's about using the feeling of breath to guide the ribcage open where there's movement available for it to manage pressure. It should also help increase your attention on how you can create a more consistent breath flow from the full side to the empty side.

**4. Awareness** - both rolling shoulders and the wafting arms 'buoyancy' character all need to be repeated to understand what they change.

Shoulders - rolling these interrupts tension patterns in the muscles surrounding the back, ribs and neck. If you benefit from rolling the shoulders, feel how the movement interrupts tension, stiffness or muscle force in the body and voice. Gradually reduce the movement after expiring it's effects for several weeks, turning it into a light sway or subtle dance move.... But keep the freedom you've felt physically and vocally!

NOTE: like full body activation, the shoulder rolling might be about the slight activation in your core muscles. This is likely to mean that the full body exercises will also be positive for you!

'Buoyancy' - this typically helps because it's slows breathing patterns, is relaxing, is intentional, and likely goes along with a soft facial expression and a nice warm feeling. Let the whole change in yourself be a state of mind and calm that you can feel inside you, and call upon anytime you want. Just without needing to sway that much (although many artists do do it.... I reference Jessie J as someone who always distinctly represents her state of mind physically!).

DO NOT BE AFRAID OF SNEAKING THESE INTO SINGING SITUATIONS.

You can stick your arms up in a recording studio!

You can dance in a way that relax the shoulders during a live performance!

You can be 'buoyant' when you're recording your practice at home!

There are no rules!!

## **ARTICULATORS**

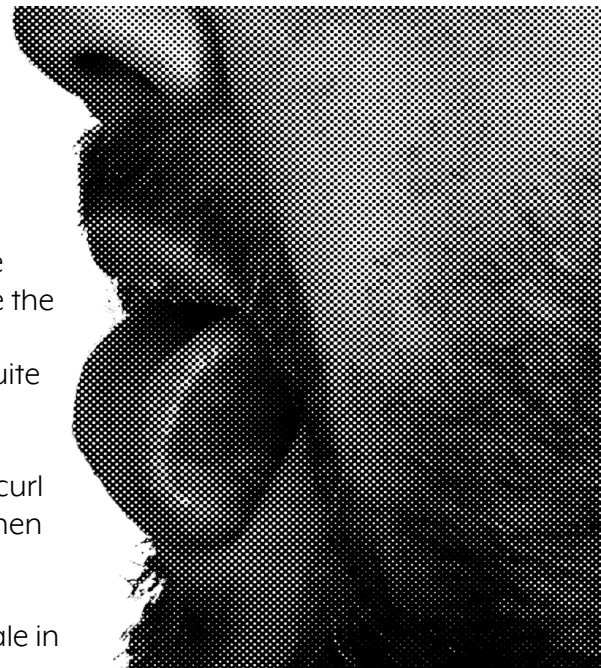
### **TONGUE**

**GRADUAL RETURN** - This is the quickest way to get from a positive tongue-out to a positive result in the songs:

1. With a positive result with the tongue resting on the bottom lip, sing with it for several minutes to get a deeper sense of what it changes. Remind the singer to aim for some definition in the diction.
2. When you experience consistent results with the tongue on the bottom lip, allows to return only half way back in the mouth. Be careful to retain as much of the positive change from step 1 as possible. Spend time there to gain consistent results (anything from minutes to days), again preserving as much diction as possible.
3. Finally, allow the tongue to go back in the mouth and to normal diction, but retaining a sense of forwardness in the mouth (or freedom behind it in the throat!) and the positive results from steps 1 and 2.

**TONGUE CURL** - This exercise is quite like going to the tongue gym, as many singers find this difficult initially. Mainly because the back of the tongue pulls it back in, so it does require some will and a little tongue effort to keep this shape. It can also take quite a few weeks or months to be able to do this easily!

1. Place the tip of the tongue behind the bottom teeth, and curl the tongue body out over them. Hold it there for 10 secs, then relax.
2. Using an AE (cat) or a bright AH (father), sing a 5 tone scale in comfortable chest voice range (no higher than G4) for 20-30secs, or until the tongue tires. Take frequent breaks to reduce tongue fatigue! Let the back of the throat feel loose, even though the tongue is working to keep the shape at the front.
3. **LEVEL UP** -  
Increase the amount of scaling time to 1 minute.  
Hold a pencil or chopstick under the tongue whilst voicing.  
Silently create this tongue position 5 times during the day, for 1 minute each time.



**TONGUE-JAW INDEPENDENCE** - The tongue and the jaw obviously work together, but they also need to be trained to be able to move somewhat independently so that you can easily create exceptional shapes for exceptional singing:

1. Let the jaw fall open with gravity, and place one hand flat on the side of the face to feel for any jaw movement.
2. Only allowing the tongue to move, repeat the babble YAH YAH YAH YAH YAH on a 5 tone scale in comfortable chest range. 4 per second is a good baseline speed. You should feel the tongue vault up and forward with every Y and move backward with every AH.
3. As the scale goes on for a minute or two, exaggerate the movement of the tongue and the definition of the Y and the AH. The bigger the better! This will increase the freedom of the tongue from any tense points in the chest voice range. This is especially important to notice and change at the upper part of chest voice, as the tongue has the tendency to get stuck, leaving the movement small and barely any definition in the babble sound.
4. HELPER - if the jaw always seems to move to help the diction, hold the thumb knuckle lightly between the front teeth to inhibit the movement of the jaw and repeat the exercise.

## JAW

**AWARENESS** - As with a lot of movement, they teach you where the unnecessary effort is. That just takes a little repetition and an openness to your senses.

So, if you get benefit from a jaw wiggle, try this:

- 1) Repeat jaw wiggle during a phrase, and notice the difference in tenseness in the jaw itself, the area under the jaw and the feelings in the throat overall. Your vocal tone is also a possible target to aim for.
- 2) Start the phrase with the jaw wiggle, but then stop wiggling half way through the line. Try to keep the positive effects of the jaw wiggle on after it has stopped.
- 3) Over time, begin to understand what it's changing in your voice when you go from wiggle to regular jaw. That can become your new normal!

**FLIP TOP HEAD** - Opening the mouth by releasing the jaws bite, rather than pulling the jaw down.

By keeping the jaw stable with a gentle hold from our hands, we can use the muscles that lift the head up to open the mouth. Gradually, the only way to find the full range of motion is the release the bite and the masseters etc.

1. First, get a sense of the current jaw position when slack, open and left to gravity. If helpful, look in a mirror when you do it to get a senses of how open the mouth is when the jaw is left to drop. Open and close the jaw a few times to also notice the movement quality.

2. With the head level, hold your chin with both hands to keep it fixed in one place.
3. Without letting the chin move from it's normal spot, open the mouth by tipping your head back only
4. Repeat several times, focussing on how to release the bite in masseters to gradually open to the maximum but COMFORTABLE range of motion.
5. When there appears to be an increased range of motion, tip the head back to full opening, then leave the mouth open as you tip your head back to an almost level position. Monitor the difference in the mirror.
6. Open and close the jaw a few times again, and notice the different in movement quality, sensation, tenseness or anything else that seems to have changed. Prompt an awareness of this improved feeling and check in with it everyday and/or during singing periods.

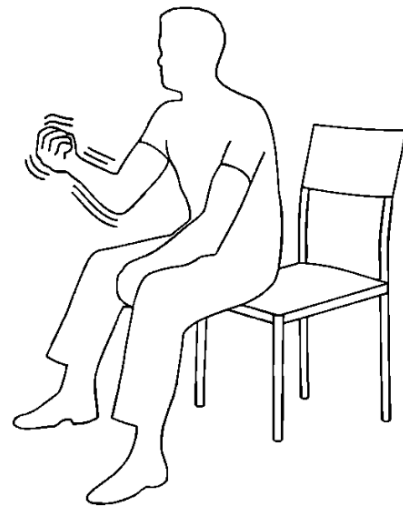


## FULL BODY ENGAGEMENT

**AWARENESS** - With both shaking and marching, there's an active engagement of the core without being held or hardened. There's also a postural change that helps you... after all, you're not likely to march slumped over, right? You'll get into position to make the marching work properly. You'll also not shake your fist vigorously, but be flaccid everywhere. Nope! You'll likely engaged your body to keep you steady! (Image cred: Lessac 1997)

So, it's productive to first understand:

- 1) What is this changing in my overall posture?  
How does it make my head, shoulders, hips and legs stack on top of each other?  
Does it change how my chest and abdomen position themselves naturally?  
Can I reproduce any of that?
- 2) What does this change in the activation of my body?  
How does it change the engagement of core muscles around the abdomen/middle?  
Can I reproduce any of that?
- 3) How does this change my overall energy to sing?  
Does it increase my level of excitement or internal buzz?  
Does it allow a sense of better energy in my voice/face/placement  
Can I reproduce that?



**SUPPORT** - Provided that we know how to relax the body and breath freely into all side (I recommend floor breathing for that), it can be good to explore full body engagement through more awareness exercises. This nice little exploration is inspired by Tom Burke:

1. Purse your lips so that you can blow and very narrow stream of air. The lip opening should be so small that you can feel it takes a little work to get the air to move through to a stream. Don't push it or force it hard, just notice how much it takes to get it going (which should be noticeable but easy).
2. As you create that stream through pursed lips, notice the light activation in the abdomen, the lower back. That's the breathing muscles helping create enough breath energy to work with the resistance of the lips.
3. Now, this is the important bit....  
Try and create that exact same light but noticeable activation whilst singing the phrase that benefitted from shaking or marching. DO NOT squeeze your voice simultaneously; It takes awareness NOT enter into a full body brace, but just add the light core engagement.

4. Notice how the same activation helps your voice to work with your breath in the same beneficial way as the shaking assessment.  
IMPORTANT NOTE: this isn't likely to work well for intentionally breathy sounds. This kind of activation is usually more suited to clear sounds all the way to belting and more high intensity (even opera!).

**THE JIGGLE** - Sometimes we notice that shaking isn't about the engagement of the body, but it's about how it sends it's shakey goodness into your voice. This can help you to reduce tension in the voice (if you have some) but only if you let the jiggle sound in.

Try exploring this, if you notice this is the reason:

1. Shake with larger fist movements, so that the jiggle affects your voice more. It'll make your voice sound wobbly, akin to vibrato. Notice how you have to let the jaw and voice loosen off slightly to invite the wobble in. Feel, repeat and memorise that ability.
2. Alternatively, jump up and down on the spot whilst you make sound. This sends even larger vibrations through your body to wobble your voice, so can help some singers a little more. As with shaking fists, notice how you have to let the jaw and voice loosen off slightly to invite the wobble in. Feel, repeat and memorise that ability.
3. Once you can understand how to let the wobble sound in, ensure that happens during your singing for the short term. Especially in the bottom and the easy parts of your voice.
4. NOTE - if you don't hear the jumping or shaking come in to the voice, the voice is remain too tense to allow it. You might need some 1:1 help to explore it!

**TINGLING WITH EXCITEMENT** - Much like 'buoyancy' and the wafting arms, shaking as an excitable child also changes your state of mind. It'll make breathing a little more rapid, less full, raised eyebrows and anticipation in your facial expression, probably lots more vibrato, brighter even. You might also get feelings akin to butterflies (I know I do!).

If we use the movement to get into a complete character, really really often, we can internalise that feeling and ask for it anytime.... With or without the movement.

Utilising movement to change state of mind takes risk, reduced guard and openness to ones senses. When you can embrace that, it becomes a very powerful tool!

**Are you a pro or semi-pro singer looking to explore greater ability or resolve a voice problem?  
Book yourself a free exploration call below and I can show you how you can achieve them!**

**BOOK YOUR FREE CALL**