

BREATHING EXERCISES CREATED BY ANNA SIMS

These breathing exercises, done with total energy and commitment, help the body and diaphragm to work correctly whilst singing and take all the pressure away from the throat. They also connect the air with the "mask" in the face. They can be done as often as you like. As soon as the body and diaphragm work in the correct way the brain recognizes the connection and your singing will be freer and easier allowing you to immerse yourself totally in the meaning and the drama of the songs or arias you are singing.

There are four breathing exercises in all (although if you split the big X into 3 and do the last one again on the oo vowel, you could say that there are seven) After each one you should have a 4 minute break (preferably sitting down).

ALL INHALATIONS ARE THROUGH THE NOSE.

In exercise 1 and 2 the inhalations should be swift and deep with the arm raising movements.

Exercise 1: SIDE BENDS.

This exercise fully opens up the ribcage on each side, encouraging greater flexibility for the lungs.

With your legs slightly wider apart than your shoulders, take a *SWIFT* breath through the *NOSE* bending sideways to the left raising your right arm over your head as you go. Release air, blowing gently and evenly as you lower your arm and come back to the upright position (I always time myself counting 20 seconds for the exhalation).

You should do 3 to the left and then 3 to the right.

You will find with the last 2 bends that you will have less breath to release, but just work towards keeping the flow of air smooth.

I always feel slightly out of breath..... so it's almost like an aerobic exercise.

Exercise 2: THE BIG X.

The panting in the following exercise releases the diaphragm and the percussive consonants (see below) kick start the diaphragm. The Big X completely lowers the diaphragm and anchors it. Also this exercise softens the air pressure as you release it, and will help any tension in the throat.

Start off with doggy panting (releasing the air only....NO intakes of breath) and then STRAIGHT INTO the percussive consonants (the meaning of percussive in this sense means "having a powerful impact"). Therefore they should be done very energetically to really work the diaphragm .

Percussive Consonants go like this:-

KSS.....T (3 times) }
PSS.....T (" ") }
SH.....T (" ") }
FF.....T (" ") }

As described in the previous paragraph, these must be done energetically, pushing the diaphragm with each one as you go. Feel the rhythm of a steam train which is building up to full power. Spit out the "T"s and do not slow down when you change consonants.

Immediately follow this with: T, T, T T T T (remember the rhythm for this?.....
2 quavers and 4 semiquavers)

With your legs slightly further apart than Exercise 1, stretch out your right arm, reaching down to the left *bending your knees as you go*. Take a *SWIFT* breath through the *NOSE* as you raise your body and arm upwards and diagonally back to the right.

Release the air the same way as in Exercise 1, blowing gently and smoothly as you bend your body and arm (arching your back like a cat) diagonally back down to the left.

Again you should do 3 on each side (6 in all).

I always feel quite out of breath after this exercise, and you should too, especially if you keep trying to reach 20 seconds for the exhalations. By the time you change sides you will not be able to release the air for as long.

Exercise 3: WARMING THE FINGER.

This exercise encourages an even flow of air and develops your overall lung capacity. Think of the air as being behind the teeth. The more you do this the voice will feel more free and open.

With your hands on either side just below your ribs, blow out your air energetically. Your ribcage should go in.

WITHOUT breathing open your ribcage immediately followed by a good inhalation through the *NOSE*.

Release the air gently over your finger with a relaxed open mouth..... *Do not blow*. When you feel that you are beginning to run out of air you should bend down, *bending your knees as you go* ending up in almost a squat. This compresses the diaphragm and bending down completely expels every last bit of air.

Time yourself as you go - I watch the second hand on a clock or a watch. You should be able to achieve 30 - 45 seconds release of air at first but eventually much more! I have known some go on for as long as a minute !!

The time release of the air can vary a great deal. If you are nervous it will be less but no matter, you will find that this exercise also has a great calming effect and especially before performances and auditions.

Exercise 4: HUMMING

This exercise will help produce a clean even tone, and like the previous one, develop your lung capacity.

The preparation for this regarding the inhalation is exactly the same as the previous exercise. This time the air is released with a gentle HUM. You should feel your lips vibrating.

You should also pull against something or someone as you hum, again *bending and lowering the knees as you pull* - the kitchen sink or the side of a grand piano is very good for this. Release the air as long as you can, around 15-30 seconds.

You can also repeat this exercise but instead of humming use a very gentle "oo" vowel.



In my opinion these exercises are actually more important than vocalising.

Anna says "just breathe!!"

Trust it, it really does work.

Anna Sims, my teacher, created these exercises after her lungs were severely damaged in a fire 40 years ago.

In Sweden where she has been teaching for over 20 years they call her "Sims Anna Bim" which derives from the Swedish word "Sim sala bim" This is the Swedish and Scandinavian equivalent of "Abracadabra!!!"

I promise you without any doubt that when you do these breathing exercises every day the subconscious mind will take over and you will feel an unbelievable difference in your singing - JUST LIKE MAGIC!