

Vocal Exercises For the Recovering Singer

(Larra Browning Henderson)

FAH-EE-AH-EE and FEE-AH-EE-AH EXERCISES

Purpose

They will train the jaw to swing freely.

♩ 72

Fah ee ah ee ah ee ah ee ah ee
Fee ah ee ah ee ah ee ah ee ah

Exercise 7-5

Fah-ee-ah-ee and Fee-ah-ee-ah

Procedure

These exercises are vocalized in one breath in the middle range; the entire sequence is sung legato. Each exercise should be practiced four to five times, each time ascending by a half step.

Discussion

On the first set of syllables, the jaw should swing on the "fah" and *should come back up on the "ee."* The jaw simply swings loosely from the width created under the eyes. The "f" is initiated by lightly laying the upper teeth on the lower lip. The lips should be soft and responsive (not tight and spread). The air is simply passed through the upper teeth across the soft lower lip as the "f" is aspirated on the first tone of the sequence. These same principles apply to the second set of syllables.

HUM-MAH AND HUM-MAY EXERCISES

Purpose

They will train the jaw to swing freely, coordinating the swing with the inside smile.

♩=72

Hum mah hum mah hum mah hum mah hum mah hum mah
Hum may hum may hum may hum may hum may hum may

Exercise 7-6
Hum-mah and Hum-may

Procedure

These exercises are sung in one breath, in the middle range, with one tone arching over to the next. The jaw action should be exactly as described in the preceding exercise, swinging loosely from the strength under the eyes, all the way into the temples, the jaw swinging on each "h" of the "hum." The tongue follows it, lying wide and soft against the bottom teeth.

Discussion

The "h" is aspirated very lightly on each of the tones of the sequence by releasing air through the mouth as a result of continuous pressure of the abdominal muscles (keeping the breath clutch engaged). Each tone is connected so the attack of the "h" should be done very lightly.

KEE-KAY-KEE-KAH EXERCISE

Purpose

It will help to develop the strength of the soft palate.

♩=120

Kee kay kee kah

Exercise 7-10
Kee-kay-kee-kah

Procedure

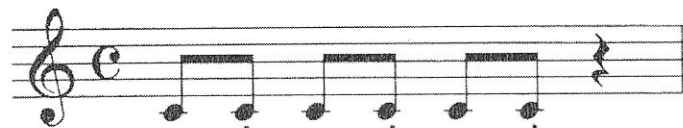
The exercise is sung entirely on one tone, preferably in the middle range, and is done very lightly *on one breath*. Do not bounce the abdominal muscles on each syllable—it is a steady pull. Always feel the inside smile. It helps to keep the opening in the back of the oral cavity. The mask will have a pleasant look, and feel wide, not pulled up, but certainly not dropped. The jaw and tongue move on every "k."

HUM-EE AND HUM-AH EXERCISES

Purpose

These exercises will help to develop the feeling of the inside smile.

♩ = 120



Hum ee hum ee hum ee
Hum ah hum ah hum ah

Exercise 7-12
Hum-ee and hum-ah

Procedure

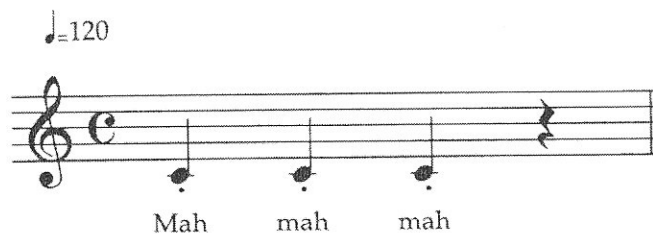
The "hum-ee" is vocalized on one tone in the middle range and should be raised one-half step each time it is sung. It should be vocalized in a flowing, easy way. The jaw should swing loosely on the beginning of the "h" (coming up again for the "m") and should move slightly on the bright sound "ee." The mask should be wide because of the inside smile, and strong, with the cushions under the eyes lifted (but not stretched). On "hum-ah," all these same principles apply.

Vocal nodes cannot disappear overnight and check-ups with a laryngologist should be continued until the nodules are gone. Only through constant application of good vocal technique and through using therapeutic exercises can the nodes disappear and a healthy free voice be restored. The above exercises get the breath to flow through the vocal cords with the correct support. The position of the body, particularly from the hips to the crown of the head is of great importance whenever you are speaking or singing.³

MAH-MAH EXERCISE

Purpose

Often in singing a text, the student will pull down the mask on the "m" consonant and will lose the inside smile. Exercise 7-11 will correct this fault.



Exercise 7-11
Mah-mah

Procedure

The entire exercise is sung on one pitch in the middle range and is done so (staccato) four or five times on one breath, always going upwards in half steps. The "m" is placed on each tone by lightly touching the lips together. There should be a feeling of great strength across the bridge of the nose as the "m" is sung.


It is very important that there be a strong, concentrated feeling of the inside smile in this exercise. The soft palate is easily activated by this exercise, if the mask remains strong and the cushions softly involved, wide but not stretched.

KAH-KEE-KOH EXERCISE

Purpose

It will train the jaw to swing freely.

♩=132



Kah kee koh

Exercise 7-7
Kah-kee-koh

Procedure

This exercise is sung in the middle range, each time ascending a half step. It is sung very lightly and never too slowly. The inside smile must be present. The pull on the abdominal muscles should be steady, not jerking or bouncing.

Discussion

The "k" is aspirated each time with the strength of the breath clutch. Strong width in the mask should be maintained throughout the "kah" and "kee" part of the exercise, the width created under the eyes and the cushions activated. There is no mask in "koh," but the tone simply goes straight up through the hard palate. The jaw swings on each of the "k's."

NING-EE AND NING-AH EXERCISES

Purpose

These exercises help the singer to acquire facility in focusing vowel sounds by bringing the sound forward.

$\text{♩} = 80$

Ning ee ning ee ning ee ning ee ning ee
Ning ah ning ah ning ah ning ah ning ah

Exercise 5-4
Ning-ee and Ning-ah

Procedure

Be sure the jaw feels loose in the hinge and does not remain immobile, forcing the tongue to do all of the work. (This is often a problem, especially with "ning-ee.") This exercise is sung in the middle range, on one breath, and is sung legato. Each of the two should be practiced three to four times, each time ascending one-half step. Don't forget the inside smile!

Discussion

Be sure that the jaw is swinging *slightly* on the "ah" and not being held stiff. Don't press the tone, and don't try to "focus," since the "ning-ee" and "ning-

ah" *automatically* bring focus into the tone. One usually feels a vibration in the bridge of the nose when focus is there.

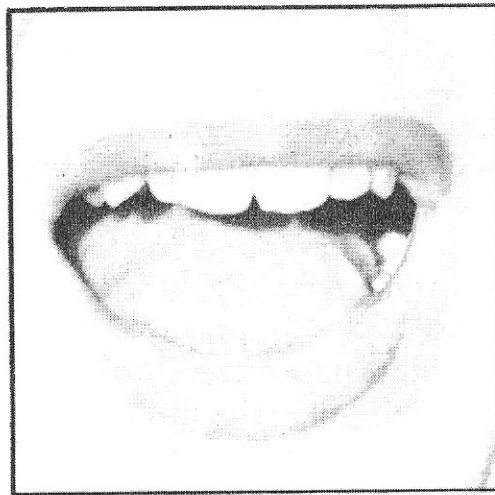


Figure 5-9
Correct position of mouth and tongue while singing "ng" exercise

The "ng" exercise should be practiced with care, and the tones should not be forced. They should come easily, and restraint should be used in trying to take the octave figure up higher than is comfortable to sing. The "ng" attack on the first tone should never be glottal (initiated by banging the vocal cords together) but should be sung on the air as it passes from the trachea as the jaw springs lightly (never forced or pressed).

When one is extending the range with the "ng" and the first pitch of the two octave scale does not come easily but has a tendency to stick, the breath flow should be started through the nasal cavity before starting the actual sound. *Be sure the jaw swings on the first pitch of the scale.* Be sure too that the mask is wide and the lower abdomen is involved. Let the tone go straight up through the top of the head.

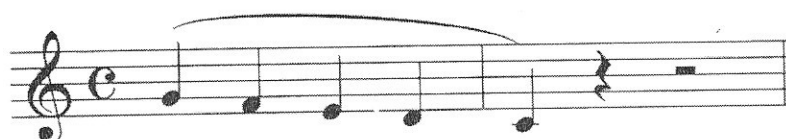
To get the higher pitch to come easily, gently lay the tongue out on the lower lip while singing the "ng." Sometimes it is impossible for the singer or the teacher to detect any pressure or tightness in the back of the tongue, but when the student lays the tongue out loosely on the lower lip, the pitch will go up easily into the top of the head. By doing this exercise in this manner, one increases the space of the whole pharyngeal area.

NG EXERCISES

Purpose

These exercises are excellent for extending both the lower and upper ranges and bringing the tones forward to focus them. It also bridges the voice over from one range to another.

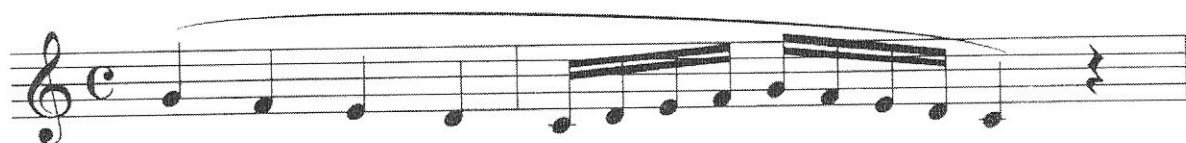
♩ = 52



Exercise 5-5a

Ng

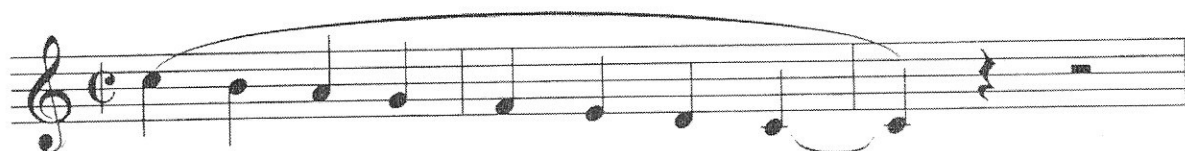
♩ = 52



Exercise 5-5b

Ng

♩ = 40



Exercise 5-5c

Ng

Procedure

To learn this exercise, begin by *speaking* the word "hung." The "ng" should be lengthened, as though humming it. This allows the tone to "sit" in the proper area of the mask, and indicates just where the sensations of the "ng" exercise will be felt. Another method of sensing where the "ng" sound will originate is simply by producing the sound "ng" on the tone sequence 5-4-3-2-1, legato (Exercise 5-5a). If the tone is "sitting" far enough front, the legato comes easily. If it is too far back it "bumps" down the back of the throat. Sometimes whining through the nose like a little puppy dog, allowing the jaw to swing up and down freely, will assist in finding the "ng" spot.

Having sensed the "ng" in the correct spot, begin the exercise by singing "ng" on the tone shown in Exercise 5-5b. Sing the exercise in one breath in the middle range and sing very legato (no "stair-stepping" effect), with each tone articulated but "arching over" to the next. (Note, I said "arching," not slurring one tone into the next.) The entire exercise should be sung three to four times, each time a half step higher than before.

After singing the "ng" exercise as described above, repeat the "ng" exercise on a one-octave descending scale (Exercise 5-5c). Sing each succeeding octave one-half step higher than the one before it, inhaling between each octave, with each tone connected and arching into the next. The jaw should swing on the first tone and should remain down (but not held down) throughout the remaining tones. When the sequence is at that point in the high range where it is relatively easy to do so, the octave figure is extended to two octaves (and sometimes three). The exercise should be taken as high as is comfortable, always feeling that the voice could go at least one-half step higher. This more advanced version should be attempted only when the basic "ng" has been mastered.

Discussion

The sensations are very evident in this exercise because of the great involvement of the nasopharynx and the hard palate, particularly in the middle and low range. The sounds "sit" very far forward on the front part of the hard palate. If the student has difficulty sensing the "ng" in this area of the nasopharynx, he should precede the "ng" sound with a slight puff of air outward through the nose before the tone starts.

This tone has a sensation of being in the nasal cavity. Lest you fear that this exercise will produce a nasal voice, hold your nose closed and try to make an "ng" sound. No sound comes forth. This illustrates that we sing *through* the nose and that the nasopharynx is a very vital area of singing. The sound is similar to that of a hum.

The inside smile should be present throughout the exercise. The tongue should follow the jaw and remain wide and soft against the bottom teeth (Figure 5-9).