

TOP TIPS FOR MORE CONFIDENCE IN USING YOUR VOICE

- Relax! Our voices sound very different inside our heads than they do to other people. Your voice is an authentic expression of YOU and it will convey your sincere intent whether or not it is 'in tune' [a cultural construct] and whatever its quality
- Relax! The voice is best supported when we think of it coming from the whole body, rather than from the throat. We need the body to be a resonating chamber for the voice [just like the body of a violin or a guitar], and if we are holding tension – as tends to happen when we feel nervous – that will be reflected in the voice
- So relax, allow gravity to do its job. Particularly relax the knees, the front of the torso, the jaw. There is a mnemonic that singers use SPLAT – meaning Singers Please Loosen Abdominal Tension
- Compassion – can you offer your voice the same sense of compassion, of welcome, of love, as you would a dear friend? Or another part of your body? Our voices have likely had to put up with a lifetime of judgement, from ourselves and maybe from others – if you can manage to drop the critic, your voice will blossom
- Remember that your vocal cords are muscles, and just like any other muscle in the body, they benefit from being warmed up. A good way to do this is a physical warm up – shaking, circling body parts, gentle movement – followed by 'fricative' sounds – these are sounds that offer some restriction to the vocal folds – ssss, sh, ffff,vvvv, zzzzz, zh, mmmmm – you can use the same sounds to 'warm down' your voice if it ever feels strained
- Humming – either with an mmmmm sound or an ng sound [as at the end of 'sing'] helps to strengthen the voice and bring us into the parasympathetic mode [rest and digest]. Yawns are always helpful, opening up the throat and deepening a sense of relaxation. Don't forget to check in with your body to sense where you can feel vibrations – they may not be where you expect!
- Movement – notice what your body is doing as you sound – are there movements that it wants to make – large or small – that you are not allowing? Explore sounding with

movement – it can be as simple as using your hands to echo the movement of the breath, and sounding on the exhale [anything that comes to you]. The more that breath, body and voice are in sync, the more resourced your voice will be. Experiment- does sound initiate the movement? or does movement initiate the sound? Which way feels more natural? What happens when you do it the other way? Maybe they both happen together?

- We can hold a lot of tension in our lips and jaw – silly sounds – horse lips, babbling sounds, raspberries, are all useful ways to release tension and are another kind of fricative
- Sing! Sing a lot – in the shower, around the house – humming or singing quietly can be done almost imperceptibly e.g. when waiting in a queue, on public transport etc etc. The more you use your voice, the more of a friend it will become. You may find particular places where your voice sounds good – in the bathroom, under a bridge, in a church, or even the porch of a church, as I found during covid. Sing as much as you can in these places and learn to really enjoy your voice!
- Nick Cave on singing <https://www.theredhandfiles.com/singing-could-be-better/>

If you would like to join my mailing list for Kirtan and other voice offerings, please email me at cleanorgibsonmusic@gmail.com