

*Jessica Lane Studio Presents:*

## **How to Practice Singing**

I am writing this article because over the seven years I have been teaching, I have had many parents and students explain and teach them how to practice singing effectively.

The voice is an extremely unique instrument as it is housed in our own bodies and as such, it is not going to have the same practice techniques as other instruments. The most important thing to remember about practising your singing, whether it be your technique OR repertoire, is that

### **90% of practising singing should be done SILENTLY!**

One of the biggest things I hear when I have asked a student if they have practised is, “yes, I sang [the song] like 20 times a day!”

While I am thrilled you are so enthusiastic to be singing and that you love your repertoire, this is one of the biggest mistakes you can make. The reason this method (which instrumentalists call “wood shedding”) is ineffective for singers is that you begin to practice mindlessly instead of mindfully, you stop paying attention to what you're doing and you therefore do not improve AND you wear out your voice!

What I recommend instead is the following. You are going to need to develop and use your musical imagination! If you are unsure of what I mean by that, please ask me to explain it to you during your lesson time.

### **TECHNIQUE - PRACTICE IN 5-10 MINUTE SESSIONS**

Turn on the timer and slowly, and carefully warm up the way we begin in all your classes. You do not need to spend more than five minutes warming up.

1 Start with your breathing (smile, yawn, release down, lean, flow, energized explosion, drop)

2 Do your tongue exercises (La-Li, Da-Di, Na-Ni, Ta-Ti, Tha-Thi)

3 Sing slides of an octave SLOWLY and the first batch should be descending. Once you've worked through your lower register, begin to ascend. All the while, your focus should be on maintaining your openness throughout the exercise and using the breath efficiently. If we have been doing this as floor work, please continue this on your own.

When the timer goes off, STOP singing, no matter where you are, and go do something else.

### **REPERTIORE – PRACTICE IN 5 – 10 MINUTE SESSIONS**

This is the most difficult part. Set the timer for repertoire as well, 5-10 minutes, whatever you think you can handle while staying mindful (in the moment and not thinking about everything else you need to do!)

1 Select the piece on which you're going to spend some time and select a small section (one phrase, one page, etc). Close your eyes, and, while utilizing openness and breathing technique, **IMAGINE yourself singing it on the vowels only, very slowly and with legato.**

UNTIL YOU CAN SING THE WHOLE SECTION FLAWLESSLY IN YOUR HEAD AND WHILE UTILIZING TECHNIQUE, YOU MAY NOT SING OUTLOUD!

If you find you are unable to sing it internally before the timer goes off, that is OK! Walk away, come back to it later and start the process again.

2 Once you have gone through the small section in your mind and with the correct technique successfully, you may sing it out loud on the vowels only. Be very diligent to keep a legato line. If you are finding you're unable to do it out loud, go back to your silent process.

***Do not rush: it is extremely important and the most important step in the musical learning process!***

3 Only when you have sung the vowels with excellent legato and technique internally and externally may you begin silently adding consonants. The same process applies here: with excellent technique, imagine you are singing the phrase.

4 Once you can do it internally, *then* you may try it aloud. Again, **do not rush the silent practice! A reminder that 90% of your singing practice should be done SILENTLY!**

## OTHER WAYS TO PRACTICE

Sometimes I will assign other methods of practising including:

- listening to recordings of your pieces by various artists
- translating a piece
- looking up poetry or plot summaries
- reading assigned articles
- “verb”-ing your piece
- listening to a recording from a previous lesson
- journaling about something that may have come up in your lesson
- mindfulness meditation and body scan work
- physical work such as: assigned stretches, yoga, martial arts etc.
- Theory assignments
- learning you melody line on the piano

***Remember, just because you are not singing aloud, doesn't mean you aren't doing really valuable work!***

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