

TAMING THE TENSION:
ADDRESSING UPPER BODY ISSUES
FOR THE SINGER

by

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ABSTRACT

A common vocal obstacle for many singers is detrimental tension, its occurrence in the upper body in particular, and how to alleviate it. Preconceived ideas of singing, poor habits of posture, or uninformed exposure and performance experience in contemporary vocal styles, could contribute to various tension problems for singers.

This document examines the pedagogical research of several renowned voice teachers, showing how addressing excessive tension through voice teaching has changed in the past two centuries. In researching the views of these voice teachers, a compendium of pedagogical strategies and vocal exercises that these individuals have identified to help remedy unwanted tension in the upper body has been compiled. Research on physical activities, from Alexander Technique and yoga to dance training and Laryngeal Manipulation Therapy (LMT) will be included. These forms of activities are becoming common among voice teachers and students when working with alleviating tension related issues. This document focuses on the following areas: jaw, tongue, neck, shoulders, chest, and intrinsic and extrinsic muscles of the larynx.

It is the author's hope that the research and resulting compilation of historical and modern techniques designed to reduce tension will serve as a useful tool for voice teachers and performers alike.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2. MANUEL GARCÍA II	12
CHAPTER 3. FRANCESCO AND GIOVANNI BATTISTA LAMPERTI.....	18
CHAPTER 4. CORNELIUS REID.....	23
CHAPTER 5. RICHARD MILLER	30
CHAPTER 6. DAVID JONES	40
CHAPTER 7. ALLEVIATING UPPER BODY TENSION THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND SCHOOLS OF MOVEMENT TRAINING	52
CONCLUSION.....	71
REFERENCES	73
APPENDIX	78

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Jaw Positions	3
2. The Extrinsic Tongue Muscles	5
3. The Intrinsic Tongue Muscles	5
4. The Neck Muscles	6
5. The Intrinsic Muscles of the Larynx	10
6. The Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx	11
7. Laryngeal Exercise	28
8. Laryngeal Exercise	29
9. Tongue Release Exercise	35
10. Jaw Release Vocalise	41
11. Jaw Release Vocalise	42
12. Tongue Tip Positions	44
13. ‘Diddle’ Tongue Exercise	44
14. Tongue Release Exercise Using the Italian Vowels.....	45
15. Laryngeal Tilt Vocalise.....	51
16. Lion Pose	60
17. Mantangi Mudra	60
18. Warrior 1 Pose	61
19. Cow Face Pose	62
20. Second Position	65
21. Fifth Position	66

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are many obstacles and concepts for a classically trained singer to understand while continuously striving to perfect the art of singing—the proper breath, correct alignment, and understanding foreign languages, to name a few. A common vocal obstacle that has been the subject of study for voice teachers is detrimental excess tension in the singer’s body and how to properly alleviate it. While the entire body can carry tension for a singer in individual ways, some of the more common, negative tensions a singer can have involves parts of the upper body—specifically the jaw, tongue, neck, shoulders, chest, and the intrinsic and extrinsic muscles of the larynx.

In order to better understand the effect detrimental muscle tension can potentially have on a singer, a common definition must be established. For the purpose of this document, muscle tension will be defined as the stress or force resulting from the contraction and elongation of a muscle.¹ While humans rely on this function continually without any negative effects, detrimental tension can be understood as any harmful or damaging consequences being placed upon a muscle.

While a myriad of pedagogical strategies and vocal exercises have been created by vocal teachers to assist in alleviating the tension of these specific areas, there is an imperative need for

¹ Cornelius L. Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis* (Huntsville, TX: Recital Publications, 1995), 235.

the singer to understand the proper role of each specific body part, how it is used when singing, and some of the more common tension-related issues for each area.

From here, each previously mentioned area of the upper body will be addressed, along with relevant vocal and physical exercises that have been suggested by some of the most preeminent voice teachers, listed below, in order to alleviate such issues.

- A. Manuel García II (1805-1906)
- B. Francesco (1811-1892) and Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839-1910)
- C. Cornelius Reid (1911-2008)
- D. Richard Miller (1948-2009)
- E. David Jones (b. 1949)

While countless voice teachers, both past and present, are well-respected for their research and contributions to the vocal field, the aforementioned teachers provide the singer with some of the most beneficial information on tension in the physical areas being discussed. As vocal pedagogy has changed throughout the centuries, the specificity in approaches as to how these teachers addressed the specificity of alleviating unwanted tension in the isolated body part has developed.

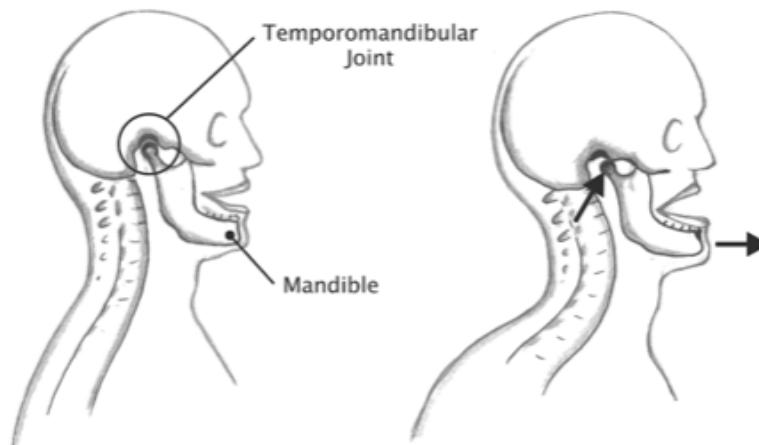
The Jaw

For the vocalist, jaw tension can be caused by, but is not limited to, too small or large of a space in the resonating cavity created by the singer during phonation. This often results from attempts to create a pharyngeal space for resonance that is not suitable for the given purpose.² While many singers can be aware of tension in the jaw, they are often unaware of the correct

² Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 167.

motion of the jaw.³ Ideally, the jaw should be relaxed and should hang freely from the temporomandibular joint. In Figure 1, note how the first image shows correct jaw alignment while in the second image the balance of the head is distorted with the jaw slid forward in the temporomandibular joint, causing the pharyngeal space to be closed.⁴

Figure 1. Jaw Positions⁵



Finding correct jaw alignment is important for the singer to ensure proper and healthy singing, as well as facilitate efficiency in the enunciation of the language. When the jaw is properly positioned, the effect achieved is that of an open pharynx.⁶

³ David L. Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing: Concepts of the Swedish-Italian and Italian Singing Schools* (David L. Jones, 2017), 62.

⁴ Janice L. Chapman, *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice* (San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing, 2012), 26.

⁵ Reproduced by permission from Janice Chapman, *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice* (San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing, 2012), 26.

⁶ Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (Boston: Schirmer, 2013), 58.

The Tongue

The muscles which comprise the tongue can be divided into two groups—extrinsic and intrinsic. The extrinsic muscles have attachments outside of the main body of the tongue and are named after their points of origin. As seen in Figure 2, these paired muscles include the styloglossus, hyoglossus, palatoglossus, and genioglossus muscles. The intrinsic muscles originate entirely within the tongue and are named according to the three spatial dimensions in which their fascicles, or nerve groups, run. These paired muscles, as seen in Figure 3, are the superior and inferior longitudinal, vertical, and transverse muscles.⁷

Tongue tension rarely originates from the tongue itself. This is due to the muscular connections between the tongue, jaw, and larynx.⁸ The tongue is ideally positioned when it is flat on the floor of the mouth with the tip of the tongue resting against the back of the lower teeth. However, these positions sometime change because the base of the tongue plays a crucial role in determining vowel quality. It is not possible to pronounce different vowels distinctly without altering the shape of the body of the tongue. By doing so, this changes the shape of the oropharynx, the pharyngeal cavity directly behind the oral cavity.⁹

⁷ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 379.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 381.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 380.

Figure 2. The Extrinsic Tongue Muscles¹⁰

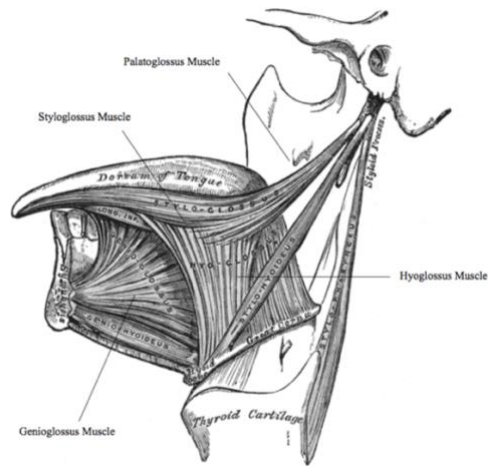
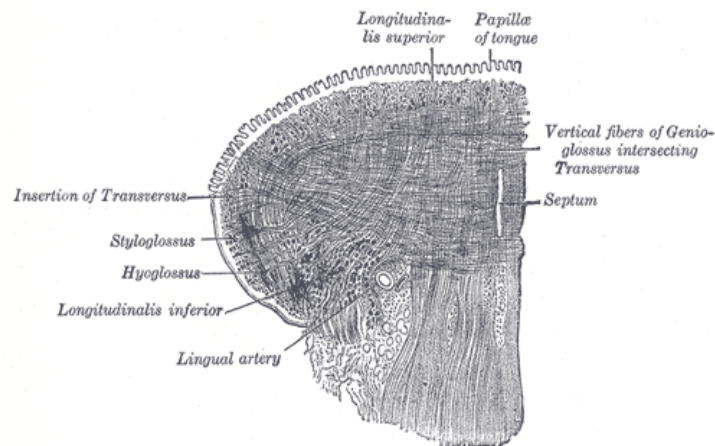


Figure 3. The Intrinsic Tongue Muscles¹¹



The Neck

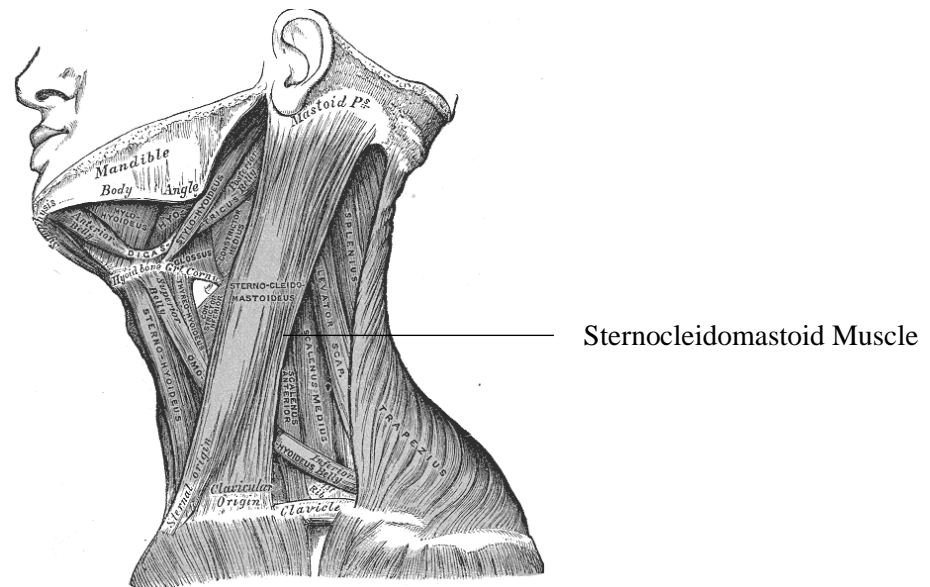
The neck is, undoubtedly, a crucial part of the body for singers as it houses the chief instrument of phonation—the larynx. The neck serves as a passage not only for the respiratory

¹⁰ Henry Gray, *Anatomy of the Human Body*, 20th ed. (Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1918), Figure 2019, accessed June 23, 2018, <https://www.bartleby.com/107/indexillus.html>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Fig. 1020.

and phonation mechanism, but for the muscular structures as well. The neck consists of many muscles, but the most visible of the neck muscles, as seen in Figure 4, is the sternocleidomastoid pair. This muscle provides essential postural support between the head and torso.¹²

Figure 4. The Neck Muscles¹³



Alignment can have a major effect on one's neck position. For instance, a person who slouches, pulling the shoulders too far forward, can pull the head forward in front of the shoulders, creating a number of problems. These problems can range from putting stress on the cervical vertebrae to collapsed shoulders, chest, and a rounded upper back.¹⁴ The preferred posture taught in vocal studios, is known as "noble posture,"¹⁵ a proper alignment of the ears,

¹² Miller, *The Structure of Singing* (Boston: Schirmer, 2013), 270.

¹³ Gray, *Anatomy of the Human Body*, Fig. 385.

¹⁴ Gavin Morrison "How Poor Posture Causes Neck Pain," Spine-health, 2011, <https://www.spine-health.com/conditions/neck-pain/how-poor-posture-causes-neck-pain>.(accessed June 01, 2018.)

¹⁵ Chapman, *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice*, 27.

shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles. While this is the preferred posture, if a student attempts to overcorrect this appropriate alignment, it can become counterproductive to their singing. In her book, *Singing and Teaching Singing*, Janice Chapman states, "...when militaristic posture is sought, aligned with re-reserve or high-chest breathing, the whole body of the singer becomes rigid and unresponsive."¹⁶ This rigidity and unresponsiveness can often have a negative effect on the neck. Through indication of external musculature, these postures can create a lack of freedom within the phonatory system.¹⁷

While the human body can vary a great deal from person to person, causing the position of the neck to be different, Chapman offers many suggestions on how to achieve a free neck while singing. The neck should be free of excess tension so that the head can balance freely above the atlanto-occipital joint and up on the spine, the ears should be located over the shoulders, the sternocleidomastoid muscles should be inactive, and the head should be balanced and free to move easily both up and down and side to side on the atlas and axis vertebrae.¹⁸

The Shoulders

Just as with the neck, poor alignment can affect the shoulders. When shoulder tension is present, it can play a major role in disturbing the phonation of the singer because of its effect on the larynx and pharynx. Common in the untrained singer is a tendency to "chest breathe," which upon inhalation, brings into play unnecessary usage of the pectoralis major and trapezius by raising the shoulder girdle which consists of the clavicles and scapulae. This causes the upper vertebrae to compact and minimizes the pharyngeal space. While a natural rise will occur due to

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷ Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 224.

¹⁸ Chapman, *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice*, 28.

muscles connecting the shoulder and ribs, any excess movement of the shoulders will disturb the natural equilibrium of the laryngeal musculature. This can also lock the upper torso into a fixed, somewhat rigid posture, immobilizing the respiratory system. ¹⁹

Normal inspiration requires lateral expansion of the ribs as well as a descent of the diaphragm. When the shoulders are manipulated, specifically into the rounded position, both the intercostal and abdominal muscles assume a shortened position. This directly impacts lung volume for inspiration by restricting a descent of the diaphragm and lateral expansion of the ribs and could result in vocal fatigue and difficulty in projecting the voice.²⁰

The shoulders should naturally relax, not allowing them to be pulled forward or backward. There should be no rising and falling of the shoulders when singing and breathing.²¹

The Chest

The chest, also known as the thorax, is formed by the thoracic cage, or rib cage, which houses and protects the lungs, and is composed of the ribs, sternum, and vertebrae. Due to the thorax being lightly covered in front and on the sides by relatively flat muscles, especially during singing, its topography allows for this area of the body to be easily observed. This observation can allow for the teacher to easily detect any tension the singer might be producing.²² Chest tension could come from a number of issues, but one particular source could be the

¹⁹ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*, 327.

²⁰ Barbara M. Wilson Arboleda and Arlette L. Frederick, "Considerations for Maintenance of Postural Alignment for Voice Production," *Journal of Voice* 22, no.1 (2008): 90-99, doi:10.1016/j.jvoice. 2006.08.001.

²¹ Helen Coleman, "Singing Notes About Posture," Helen Coleman, December 17, 2015, <http://helencolemansinging.com.au/singing-notes-about-posture/>.

²² Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 259.

misunderstanding of the concept of *appoggio*. *Appoggio* is defined by Richard Miller as “An international breath management technique in singing; coordination among the large, flat abdominal muscles of the anterior/lateral wall and the thoracic cage throughout the breath cycle.”²³ Below is Miller’s discussion of the necessary alignment in order to help the singer organize the body to efficiently set up *appoggio*:

The sternum must initially find a moderately high position that is retained throughout the inspiration and expiration cycle. Since the ribs are attached to the sternum, sternal posture will determine the diaphragm position. If the sternum lowers, the ribs cannot maintain an expanded position, and the diaphragm ascends more rapidly.²⁴

Given this explanation of how one might maintain this feeling of *appoggio*, if a singer misinterprets this, he or she may collapse the sternum while others may elevate it excessively.

The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx

The larynx is the most important structure in vocal production, and also serves the crucial function of airway protection during coughing and swallowing.²⁵ The muscles associated with the larynx can be divided into two types. The first type are the intrinsic muscles that originate from and connect to a point of attachment within the laryngeal framework. The second type of muscles are the extrinsic muscles that originate from outside the larynx and connect to another body part such as the sternum or hyoid bone

Intrinsic Muscles

The intrinsic muscles of the larynx, as seen in Figure 5, include the cricothyroid, posterior and lateral cricoarytenoid, oblique and transverse arytenoid, and the thyroarytenoid.

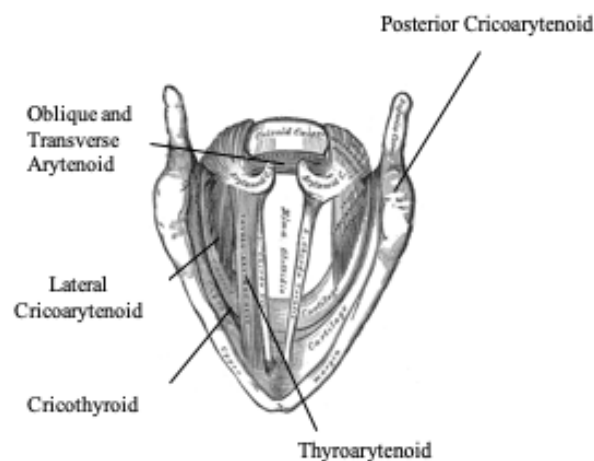
²³ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 249.

²⁴ Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 24.

²⁵ John Bishop, "On the Physiology of the Human Voice," 1846, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/108331>

The main intrinsic muscle of the larynx is the thyroarytenoid, which contains the vocalis muscle, fibers that form the interior portion of the thyroarytenoid.²⁶ The thyroarytenoid muscles are responsible for the shortening of the vocal folds and lowering vocal pitch. In contrast to this, the action of the cricothyroid muscles causes the vocal folds to lengthen, thereby raising the pitch. The posterior cricoarytenoid muscles serve as abductors, opening the vocal folds, while the lateral cricoarytenoids and interarytenoids serve as adductors, assisting in closing the folds. The contraction of these intrinsic muscles is responsible for intralaryngeal activities including the approximation and vibration of the vocal folds.²⁷

Figure 5. The Intrinsic Muscles of the Larynx²⁸



Extrinsic Muscles

The extrinsic muscles are divided into two groups. The first group, which is the suprahyoid group, raises the larynx. These muscles are the digastric, stylohyoid, mylohyoid,

²⁶ Karen Wicklund, *Singing Voice Rehabilitation: A Guide for the Voice Teacher and Speech-Language Pathologist* (Australia: Delmar), 2010.

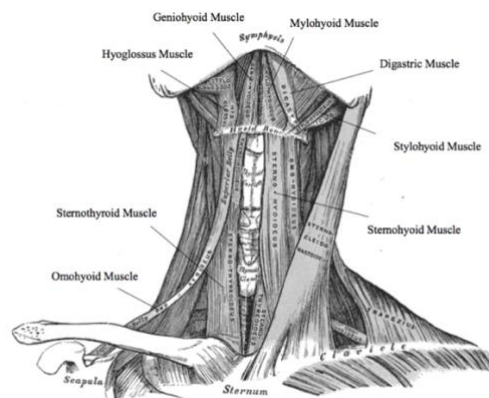
²⁷ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 182

²⁸ Illustration by Henry Gray, *Anatomy of the Human Body*, (Philadelphia, 1918), Fig.960.

geniohyoid and hyoglossus muscles. The second group of muscles are known as the infrahyoid group which lower the larynx. The muscles that form this group are the sternohyoid, sternothyroid, omohyoid, and the thyrohyoid muscles. The contraction of the extrinsic muscles positions the larynx and regulates its movement within the pharynx.

For the singer, laryngeal tension can often be produced by factors such as long-term patterns of ineffective voice use, the pulling back and down of the head, or emotional stress and fatigue. These factors can result in an elevated larynx.²⁹ This is often evident at pivotal points between two registers heard as a thin vocal timbre.³⁰ Naturally, muscles are utilized within the larynx for basic phonation. This is not to be confused with a negative laryngeal tension, or strain.³¹ In classical singing, the singer's mechanism should remain as stable as possible, neither rising nor lowering substantially for pitch change or intake of breath.³²

FIGURE 6. The Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx³³



²⁹ Sara Harris and Sara Caldwell, "Muscle Tension Dysphonia (MTD)," British Voice Association: The Effects of Stress and Emotion on the Voice, accessed June 5, 2018, https://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/voiceware_muscle-tension-dysphonia.htm.

³⁰ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 56.

³¹ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 177.

³² Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 56.

³³ Illustration by Henry Gray, *Anatomy of the Human Body*, (Philadelphia, 1918), Fig. 386.

CHAPTER 2

MANUEL GARCÍA II

While voice teachers such as Giulio Caccini (1551-1618) and P.F. Tosi (1653-1732) were some of the most prominent figures in vocal music between the 16th and 18th centuries, they were strictly offering techniques based on their own singing and on issues that were primarily observation based.³⁴ Many of these observations were acknowledged by Caccini in his book, *Le Nuove Musiche* (1601) and by Tosi in his book *Observations on the Florid Song* (1723).³⁵ Caccini's techniques and devices, James Stark said, "laid the foundations for similar and related techniques that developed over the centuries [and] continue to play a role in classical singing styles."³⁶ Prior to this, there were no manuals to inform the teacher or singer of how the voice was trained, no scientific evidence, and the advice given to students seems to simply have been find a teacher who sang well.³⁷

It was not until the nineteenth century that the tradition of science and history were combined in an organized way by the Spanish singer and singing teacher Manuel García II (1805-1906). García had a controversial career due to the fact that he had to stop performing by

³⁴ Cornelius L. Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* (New York: J. Patelson Music House, 1990), 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶ James A. Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 163.

³⁷ Karen Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach* (Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2005), 11.

the age of twenty-four as a result of vocal health issues. However, after this short period of performing, followed by a seventy-five-year teaching career, his contributions to the field of vocal pedagogy are nonetheless astounding.³⁸

García's treatises, books, experiments, and inventions are all major contributions to the field of vocal pedagogy. In particular, his treatise *Traité complet de l'art du chant*, written in 1847, is considered to be one of his more important publications. This book contains exercises that are designed to encourage singers and their development of power and volume. His invention of the laryngoscope in 1854 gave the singer and teacher the tools to understand what was transpiring during the vocal process. This important device also allowed physicians and teachers to pinpoint the origin of unwanted tension and find solutions to relieve this in the singer's body more easily.³⁹ Richard Miller said it best: "Never in the history of solo singing has one individual so influenced vocal pedagogy as did Manuel García."⁴⁰

The Jaw

García mentioned that too large of a separation of the mandible tightens the pharynx, and consequently stops all vibration of the voice. He stated in his book *The Art of Singing*, "It is generally believed that the more we open our mouth, the more easily and powerfully can sounds be emitted; but this is quite a mistake."⁴¹ This will deprive the pharynx of its vault-like, resonant form which will not favor the higher or lower register of the singer. Conversely, if the teeth are

³⁸ Julia H. Nielson, "Chapter II. Manuel García II: The "Columbus of the Larynx." Singer Space.com, accessed June 04, 2019, <http://singerspace.com/articleschapter-ii-manuel-garcia-ii-the-columbus-of-the-larynx>.

³⁹ Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, 31.

⁴⁰ Robert Thayer Sataloff, *Vocal Health and Pedagogy* (San Diego, CA: Plural Pub., 2006.), 305.

⁴¹ Manuel García, *The Art of Singing* (Boulder, CO: Milton Enterprises, 1968), 6.

too closed, the voice will assume a harsh timbre. García compared this sound to singing through a comb. When the mouth assumes an oval shape, such as that of a fish, the timbre becomes dark and gloomy and diction becomes muffled and the face expressionless.⁴²

To obtain a correct jaw position, García suggested that the jaw should be allowed to fall by its own weight, while the corners of the lips part slightly. This movement separates the teeth by the thickness of a finger, leaves the lips alone, and gives the mouth an easy and natural form. If a singer had a problem regulating a natural jaw position, he suggested that the singer place laterally, between the teeth from front to back, a small piece of wood no thicker than a pencil. In his book *Hints on Singing*, García concluded his remedy for the jaw/mouth with this: “The real mouth of the singer is the pharynx. This is because the pharynx is the causation of the timbres. The facial mouth is but a door through which the voice passes. Still, if this door were not sufficiently open, sounds could not issue freely.”⁴³

The Tongue

García noted that one of the main sources of tension in the tongue is the root. When the singer holds excess tension at the root of the tongue, it weighs on the epiglottis and is pushed into the path of the sonorous waves. This will often cause a guttural timbre to be produced by the singer.⁴⁴ In order to resolve this issue, García suggested that the singer do this difficult, but necessary exercise. He taught that the tongue must stay limp as when the mouth is shut, also as it

⁴² García, *The Art of Singing*, 10.

⁴³ García, Manuel, *Hints on Singing* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2009), 12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

is when yawning, or breathing through the nose. Vocalizing on the vowel [o] or the Italian [u] may assist, as can placing the handle of a spoon on the tongue.⁴⁵

The Neck, Shoulders, and Chest

Manuel García II believed that the neck, shoulders, and chest of the singer were one entity, and he was an advocate of the aforementioned noble posture when singing. He believed that these regions of the anatomy were crucial during the intake of a proper breath and stated, “the chest must be sufficiently capacious to allow full dilation...the head be erect, and the shoulders thrown back without stiffness, and the chest expanded.”⁴⁶ In order to teach this posture accurately, which he believed to be crucial in order for the singer to achieve the correct *appoggio* technique, he created what is known as the García position.

For this position, García asked his students to place their hands in a crossed position, palms outward, at the lower back at the bottom of the rib cage.⁴⁷ This position offers many positive results:

- 1) The position allows for the pectorals to align into a proper relationship with the clavicle, sternum, and rib cage.
- 2) The muscles of the lower abdominal wall are free to move outward on inhalation. This avoids both the outward thrusting of the German school and the inward abdominal pulling advocated in regional European techniques.

⁴⁵ García, *Hints on Singing*, 18.

⁴⁶ García, *Art of Singing*, 6.

⁴⁷ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 40.

3) This position also allows for a normal curvature of the spine and elevates the thoracic cage and the pectoral muscles and balances the stance.⁴⁸

The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx

Manuel García II who was trained by his father, Manuel del Pópulo Vincente García (1775-1832), has been universally cited as an exponent of the “Old Italian School.” However, although García was trained with the methods associated with this school of singing, he would stray from these roots in his own teachings. When it came to his stance on the use and manipulation of the larynx, García adopted the use of the depressed larynx and is reported to have taught this laryngeal position as early as 1832.⁴⁹

García believed that the larynx responded to a natural coloring of the voice through emotional identification and that every voice possessed two basic timbres which he described as “closed” and “opened.” The “closed” or “dark” timbre was produced when the larynx assumed a slightly lower position than its normal state of rest. This adjustment was accompanied by a reflexive elevation of the soft palate and an overall enlargement of the throat cavity in all dimensions. He believed that this permitted the singer to move freely from a “darker” to a “brighter” sound, what we refer to now as the *chiaroscuro* aesthetic.⁵⁰

As García’s teachings and studies of the human voice and larynx continued, his view of the larynx during vocal production progressed and became less mechanistic. Malcolm Mackinlay stated, “His method may be perhaps summed up in the doctrine that it was not a method—in the

⁴⁸ Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach*, 72.

⁴⁹ Richard Miller, *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 85.

⁵⁰ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 196.

sense that he had no hard and fast rules—his object always being to make each pupil sing in the way most natural and involving the least effort.”⁵¹ While García did not address the particular issues and cures of laryngeal tension in his many works and publications, his scientific studies and discoveries would continue to influence teachers and students.

“I try to awaken your intelligence so that you may be able to criticize your own singing as severely as I do. I want you to listen to your voice and use your brains. If you find a difficulty, do not shirk it. Make up your mind to master it. So many singers give up what they find hard. They think they are better off by leaving it and turning their attention to other things which come more easily. Do not be like them.”⁵²

- Manuel García

⁵¹ Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *García The Centenarian and His Times* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh and London, 1908), 305.

⁵² Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, *García The Centenarian and His Times* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh and London, 1908), 286-87.

CHAPTER 3

FRANCESCO AND GIOVANNI BATTISTA LAMPERTI

Francesco Lamperti (1813-1892) was known not as a performer, like so many of the teachers who came before him, but primarily as a teacher of the traditional Italian method. He believed that the art of singing was declining due to singers pursuing a stage career before they were ready.⁵³ He also believed that a singer should apply themselves to severe and careful study—striving to train their voice by singing music of the old masters. In his 1890 treatise *The Art of Singing* which was written as a dialogue between master and student, Lamperti said the following about the new singer and their styles:

Owing to the fact that the singers no longer find the best methods and masters in the music and do not wish or are unable to begin their careers in the slow but sure way of their predecessors, they rarely attain more than mediocrity in their art, and their singing is usually defective and unsatisfactory. ⁵⁴

Francesco Lamperti's pedagogical approach was based on the singer's timbre, resonance sensations and breath control. He left the task of addressing the physiological side of singing to the other teachers of his day.⁵⁵

For Lamperti, the art of singing and its success, or lack thereof, seemed to have revolved around the singer and their breath control. Lamperti was likely responsible for entrenching the concept of *appoggio* in the pedagogical literature and attributed to this concept many of the

⁵³ Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach*, 24.

⁵⁴ Francesco Lamperti, *The Art of Singing* (Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 1985), 2.

⁵⁵ Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, 43.

characteristics of good singing.⁵⁶ Finally, Lamperti said, “It is singing with the voice well *appoggiata*, that the pupil, under careful supervision, will learn what is the true character and the capabilities of his own voice...In this, in my idea, lies the great secret of the art of singing.”⁵⁷

His son, Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839-1910) held many of the same pedagogical views when it came to the art of singing. Through his youth he was a successful pianist, studying under his father, and he would become a sought-after accompanist and opera coach of many of the greatest singers of his time. His pupils were making their opera debuts as early as 1858 when G.B. Lamperti was only twenty-one. His friend and pupil, William E. Brown, said, “With these associations he was thoroughly formed as a master of the art of singing.”⁵⁸

After his father fell ill, G.B. Lamperti took charge of his father’s vocal students and his music courses at the Milan Conservatory. His career as a conductor, pianist, author, and pedagogue continued to flourish during this time of his life. The number of vocal students whose lives he impacted and who continued to have continued success was unprecedented. Just as his father, G.B. Lamperti believed that:

...The things which have changed are the study of breath, of vocalization, and of classic repertory, as cultivated by the singers of former times. They used to study for four or five years...Nowadays, after maltreating the larynx for a few months, a student considers himself an artist, and attempts the most difficult feats.⁵⁹

The Jaw

When addressing issues of the jaw, Francesco Lamperti believed that the student should hold his mouth still and in a natural manner while singing. When ascending to the higher range

⁵⁶ Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, 182.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁸ Giovanni Battista Lamperti and William Earl Brown. *Vocal Wisdom: Maxims of Giovanni Battista Lamperti* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino, 2010), 119.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

of the voice, the mouth may be allowed to open wider, but the difference should only be slight, as to not let the air escape. He suggested that one way to avoid this hyperextension was to keep a firm hold upon the breath. The student, under the guidance of the voice teacher, should strive to gain the power of retaining the mouth immovable.⁶⁰

When asked in his treatise what the expression of the mouth should be to most facilitate the emission of the voice, this was his response: “The mouth should be smiling, the lips should be drawn sufficiently tight to merely show the upper row of teeth, that the sound, striking on a hard surface, may vibrate with greater intensity, and thus give a ring and brilliancy to the voice.”⁶¹ While certain properties of this suggestion may be helpful, in trying this in today’s studio, the singer may find it more difficult to emit the voice. The artist may also sense negative tension developing in the hinge of the jaw, as well as the lower lip, and chin.

G.B. Lamperti’s teaching, as expected, does not differ much from his father’s. He taught that the breath, having been taken through the mouth, never through the nose, should be open enough to permit the forefinger to pass between the upper and lower teeth—like the formation of an oval.⁶²

The Tongue

F. Lamperti taught that during singing the tongue should remain extended in order to leave the largest space in the mouth. This would also allow the throat to be at ease and open. His son, G.B.Lamperti believed that if the pupil had a habit of holding the tongue high or keeping the teeth closed, the mirror was the only way to overcome this issue.

⁶⁰ Lamperti, *The Art of Singing*, 18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶² Giovanni Battista Lamperti, *The Technics of Bel Canto* (Delhi: Kalpaz, 2017), 7.

Mirror work has remained a very important method in ridding unwanted tension and it was with the younger Lamperti that this method began being used more frequently. He further advised against the teacher and student using any artificial devices on the tongue or in between the teeth: “These are playthings whose uselessness has been sufficiently proved by experience.”⁶³

The Neck, Shoulders, and Chest

In F. Lamperti’s treatise, when addressing how a student should stand when singing, he wrote, “He should hold himself erect, with the chest expanded and the shoulder easy—in a word, in the position of a soldier.”⁶⁴ He later said, “Upon inspiration, the student should avoid noises and all movements of the upper figure, especially raising the shoulders and strive to give always to his singing a semblance of ease and elegance.”⁶⁵

G.B. Lamperti taught that the whole torso as a unit contracts and expands:

The position of the body must be easy and natural. Take care, above all, that the muscles of the neck and throat are not unnecessarily tense. Hold the shoulder-joints free and loose, with the shoulders slightly thrown back to allow the chest due freedom in front, without raising it.⁶⁶

In order to achieve this, he suggested the pupil throw their weight on the right foot, which should be slightly advanced, and the gaze should be slightly elevated and forward. The head should be erect and should neither incline forward or backward.⁶⁷

⁶³ Lamperti and Brown, *Vocal Wisdom: Maxims of Giovanni Battista Lamperti*, 7.

⁶⁴ Lamperti, *The Art of Singing*, 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁶ Lamperti, *The Technics of Bel Canto*, 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx

Francesco Lamperti suggested that the key to a stable larynx while singing was the breath, which he considered to be the most important aspect of singing. In his treatise, he stated that the singer should employ a diaphragmatic, or abdominal, respiration. This is the only type of breath that allows the larynx to remain in a natural and unstrained condition. He continued with, “Let him take the deepest inspiration he can, making use of the diaphragm and muscles of the belly. Any effort about the chest...in breathing must be absolutely and entirely avoided.”⁶⁸

In order to achieve an abdominal breath as well as a relaxed laryngeal position, F. Lamperti suggested having the singer seat themselves on a chair and cross their hands behind the back of it as high as possible. This causes the shoulder and upper part of the chest to be immovable. In this position, the breath can be nothing more than abdominal, thus, achieving the correct breath and a relaxed larynx position.⁶⁹

G.B. Lamperti understood very well the relationship between the muscles of the larynx, especially in conjunction with the rest of the body. He taught that the larynx does not rise to produce a high pitch, and for low tones, this cartilage tips forward to normal position, leaving a “quiet throat.” He also stated, “Though the larynx needs to be held muscularly fixed in one position, for either higher or lower register, it should remain quiescent throughout a song. This repose is a sign of physiological action of the throat.”⁷⁰

“Know thyself” applies to [the] singer more than to other professions, because to sing well, body, soul, and mind are tuned together to do it.”⁷¹

- Giovanni Battista Lamperti

⁶⁸ Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, 100.

⁶⁹ Lamperti, *The Art of Singing*, 20.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

CHAPTER 4

CORNELIUS REID

Cornelius Reid (1911-2008) grew up in a home where music making was a way of life. His career in music started at the age of nine as a chorister with Trinity Church in New York City. During this time, he realized the importance of music and how fortunate he was to be able to sing and immerse himself in the art form. Over the years he would encounter many voice teachers who would present contrasting information on the fundamentals of singing—from breathing to resonance.⁷²

These varied points of view sparked his interest in pedagogy and he began his extensive studies on the subject; in 1930 he would begin studying with Dr. Douglas Stanley. He read numerous contemporary works, such as Dr. Stanley's *The Science of Voice*, and worked his way back to the original treatises by pedagogues such as Pier Francesco Tosi, Giovanni Battista Mancini (1714-1800), and Domenico Corri (1746-1825). His research and writings would lead to many publications which, along with his successful teaching, earned him his place among the most respected vocal pedagogues of his day.⁷³

⁷² Carl M. Cherland, "On the Voice: Toward Beautiful Singing-The Vocal Pedagogy of Cornelius Reid (Part I)," *Choral Journal* 44, no 3. (October 2003): 47-51, <https://search-proquest.com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/docview/1032500/fulltext/ED4750EA57D94277PQ/1?accountid=14472>.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Reid was well-aware of the issue of tension in the singers of his day. He knew there was a need to return to the principles of vocal techniques that were responsible for the era of greatness—the invention of opera and inception of virtuosic singing. In his book *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* Reid noted that, “One of the sadder commentaries on our musical present is the obvious fact that use of the voice invariably means abuse.” He attributed this to incorrect teaching and the prevalence of quick remedies which prevented students from fully developing their talents and abilities.⁷⁴

The Jaw

Reid believed that jaw tension was one of the more common difficulties with which students had to contend and that jaw tension was caused by either throat constriction or mouth “resonance.” If the cause for the singer’s jaw tension was throat constriction, Reid believed that this was a result of poor coordination among the laryngeal muscles, particularly those that prepare the vocal folds for vibration and those that position the larynx and pharyngeal cavities for resonance. If the cause of jaw tension comes from mouth “resonance,” this is an attempt at a fixed position of the pharyngeal space that is unnecessary.⁷⁵

In *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis* Reid suggested that jaw tension could be corrected as follows:

- 1) By instituting procedures which will permit the tone to resonate in the laryngeal and pharyngeal areas, as it should, and,

⁷⁴ Cornelius L. Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* (New York: J. Patelson Music House, 1990), 1-2.

⁷⁵ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 167.

2) By having the student relinquish all predetermined tonal objectives centered on “forward placement” and quality.⁷⁶

According to Reid, specific exercises for alleviating tension in the jaw muscles were useless due to his assertion that the masseter muscles cannot relax as long as there is throat constriction: “Energy properly directed at the core of the vocal process (laryngeal musculature) through proper exploitation of the vocal registers should eliminate both throat and jaw constriction.”⁷⁷

The Tongue

Reid believed that the action of the tongue was unique because it performed two distinct functions when vocalizing. The first function of the tongue is its use in articulation of the consonants. Here, the frontal portion and tip of the tongue are active. The second function is its ability to shape the base in order to form vowel positions. Throughout his teaching, Reid found that one of the more common forms of negative tension in the tongue was tongue stiffness. In his book *The Free Voice: A Guide to Natural Singing* he said, “Whenever unnatural movements of the tongue and jaw can be observed they offer undeniable proof of the presence of deeper-rooted tensions.”⁷⁸

The source of these issues, he believed, stemmed from the influence the laryngeal muscles have on the musculature of the tongue. He taught that until these were relieved, the tongue cannot be made to relax. Even though the tongue may be adjusted to be in a proper position, this does not guarantee that the functional activities happening within the larynx will

⁷⁶ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 176.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷⁸ Cornelius L. Reid, *The Free Voice: A Guide to Natural Singing* (New York, NY: Joseph Patelson Music House, 1972), 120.

also be correct. In regard to this issue, Reid stated, “To position the tongue is easy; to coordinate the laryngeal musculature so that its movement is facile and free is difficult; and indeed, involves procedures which do not directly concern the tongue at all.”⁷⁹

The Neck, Shoulders, and Chest

In his studies, Reid found that faulty breathing was a major source of neck, shoulder, and chest tension. In regard to the neck, Reid said that, “a flushed face and visible distortion of the neck when the technique is faulty provides visible evidence of the strain to which the vocal mechanism is being subjected.”⁸⁰ When this happens the muscles that stabilize the larynx during phonation become imbalanced, resulting in the base of the tongue being pulled back or forward. Tension of this sort can cause partial closure in the Eustachian tube, a passage that links the nasopharynx to the middle ear. This will lead to off-pitch singing and may cause the singer to sense a feeling of false resonance. While exercises such as shaking the head side-to-side can help momentarily, Reid knew they did not help address the root of the problem. In order to alleviate such an issue as neck tension, the energy must be redirected and the activity that is within the laryngeal pharynx must be successfully rechanneled.⁸¹

A vocalist who elevates their shoulders upon inhalation is also causing a great deal of chest tension as well. When the singer inhales this way, Reid mentioned two deficiencies that are being created:

- 1) An attempt to expand the upper rib cage, which actually has minimal movement is occurring. This consequently limits the amount of air that can be inspired.

⁷⁹ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 381.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

2) An attempt to push up with the diaphragm, which relates in the upward movement, with an intent of forcing the abdominal wall inward and upward in order to expand the ribcage.

This style of breathing, as expected, creates a great deal of tension on the neck muscles as well.⁸²

In reference to correct breathing and the alleviation of such negative tension in the neck, shoulders, and chest, Reid taught that the singer should become aware of the natural rhythm of breathing, and by doing so, the singer is able to learn the mechanics of the function.⁸³ Also, with time and experience, the singer's performance nerves will be reduced and respiratory equilibrium will be achieved. ⁸⁴

The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx

When singing, the larynx requires movement contrary to its habitual movements used for respiration. Reid believed that there were many difficulties to overcome in eliminating the constricting influence of the swallowing muscles over the muscle movements that are required for phonation. Only when the muscular function that controls laryngeal movement is maintained in a state of balanced tension can proper relaxation of the swallowing muscles be achieved.⁸⁵

The following are exercises that Reid suggested in order to gain a sense of laryngeal freedom:

⁸² Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 49-50.

⁸³ Cornelius L. Reid, *Voice: Psyche and Soma*. (New York: J. Patelson Music House, 1982),18.

⁸⁴ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 53.

⁸⁵ Cornelius L. Reid, "Vocal Mechanics and The Cultivation of Listening Skills," Cornelius L. Reid, accessed July 1, 2018, <https://corneliusreid.wordpress.com/articles/>.

1) Simple musical patterns, such as triads or arpeggios to be used with specific combinations of intensity and vowels. These exercises should be sung legato to ensure consistency of resonance, to ensure a direct relationship between the tonal ranges, and to include loud and soft singing as well as shades of vowel coloration.

For example, G and A major arpeggios, as seen in Figure 7, may be sung on a neutral [a] vowel with the emotion of “joy and wonder” given to the singer. This will assist in creating a low, relaxed, laryngeal position.

FIGURE 7. Laryngeal Exercise



2) Arpeggios can be sung staccato in order to gain a sense of free laryngeal activity. Reid said that, “This should lead to an understanding of natural, involuntary movement within the laryngeal area, and through kinesthetic awareness, open up the possibility for effective control without recourse to direct control.”

3) Lastly, an octave leap, which includes a neighbor movement to the seventh scale degree. An example of this can be seen in Figure 8. By lessening the energy used in singing the upper octave, the pitch should fall to the seventh without losing tonal vibrancy. This should be followed by a rapid return to the octave.

Unlike the second exercise, which is sung staccato and is executed by a rapid narrowing and opening of the glottal slit, this exercise is designed to identify a natural movement of the suspensory muscles which position the larynx.⁸⁶

FIGURE 8. Laryngeal Exercise



“The initial problem in teaching, therefore, remains unchanged, for the main obstacle in training the voice is not in *recognizing* difficulties, but in *overcoming* them.”⁸⁷

- Cornelius Reid

⁸⁶ Reid, *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, 105-106.

⁸⁷ Reid, *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices*, 195.

CHAPTER 5

RICHARD MILLER

Richard Miller (1926-2009) was, and still is, considered to be one of the singing world's "most distinguished and inspirational teachers,"⁸⁸ and his contributions to vocal pedagogy are extraordinary. Mr. Miller was an instructor of voice at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, co-Founder of Oberlin Conservatory's Otto B. Schoepfle Vocal Arts Center, and the author of eight books and of articles for over 120 professional journals. His interest in the subject of singing flourished at a young age, and by the age of eleven Miller had sung hundreds of times in his hometown area of Canton, Ohio. His curiosity about how the voice works was piqued specifically while he was singing some of the major lyric tenor roles with the Zürich Opera. There, he observed the singers and their different techniques and found that some were more effective than others. It was at this point, notes Karen Sell, that, "He became interested in comparative voice pedagogy, and undertook research into historic pedagogical practices with a view to determining what technical maneuvers within them would be more efficient from the standpoint of physiologic and acoustic function."⁸⁹ Miller concluded that the most acoustically pleasing sound resulted from these two basic rules:

- 1) As the singing voice is an acoustic instrument it should abide by the laws of acoustics.

⁸⁸ David M. Howard and Karen Sell. "Editorial." *Logopedics Phoniatics Vocology* 34, no. 3 (2009):<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14015430903318916?journalCode=ilog20>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

2) The voice should never be asked to violate its physiological boundaries.⁹⁰

In *The Structure of Singing* Miller referred to vocal pedagogy as a “smorgasbord:” “One can sample foods both rich and simple; not everything that can be ingested is equally nutritious.”⁹¹ While a singer and teacher can attend one masterclass and lesson after the next, they can only make an informed choice if they know what produces a free vocal function. He believed that knowing how the singing instrument worked, and knowing how to get it to work consistently, was the sum of technical knowledge.⁹²

The Jaw

According to Miller, jaw tension could be created by two opposing errors along with the singer’s incorrect concepts about creating the ideal resonator space. These two errors are:

- 1) clenching the jaw and
- 2) the hanging jaw (excessive dropping).⁹³

When the jaw is clenched, this can result in such effects as poor breath intake and phonetic distortion. The hung jaw unites excessive laryngeal depression and as Miller said, “stands in direct opposition to a historic pedagogical position that maintains mobility of the jaw...avoids tension and allows for freedom of articulation.”⁹⁴ Gaining freedom of the jaw is crucial to the singer because what the singer does with the jaw will directly affect the tongue, the hyoid bone, and the larynx. This can also determine the shape of the resonator system.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Howard and Sell, “Editorial.”

⁹¹ Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (Boston: Schirmer, 2013), xv.

⁹² Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique*, xv-xvi.

⁹³ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 88.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁹⁵ Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 264.

In order to assist in freeing the jaw from tension, Miller taught that emphasizing loose, flexible movement was a more efficient solution. One of the best ways to achieve jaw mobility is to permit the sounds of language to be shaped according to their natural postures as determined by pitch and power.⁹⁶

To alleviate the issue of jaw tension, Miller suggested the following exercises:

1) With lips apart, simulate a circular chewing motion for twenty to thirty seconds. Next, with the lips now closed, hum a few pitches while at the same time moving the jaw back and forth in a gentle chewing motion. Miller said to imagine chewing a large wad of gum on either side of the mouth. From here, still using the lateral jaw movements used while chewing, sing a short phrase of music in a comfortable range—noting that there will be some diction distortion. It is important to use a mirror during this exercise in order to observe the looseness of the jaw. Now, take the chewing motion out and sing the same phrase that was just sung. From here alternate longer phrases (still in a comfortable range) and alternate between chewing motion and a regular articulation posture.

2) Move the jaw rapidly back and forth while speaking a single sustained vowel. Move the jaw for a few seconds and then stop while still sustaining the vowel. Do this experiment with different vowels. Sing the passage that has induced a tight jaw, first while using small chewing motions, then without them.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 268.

⁹⁷ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 88.

The Tongue

According to Miller, the tongue can disastrously disrupt the singing voice. This is, in part, due to the fact that much of the vocal tract is occupied by the tongue. The tongue is attached to the hyoid bone, from which the larynx is suspended by a membrane. In his book *On the Art of Singing* Miller stated, “What is not always fully recognized is the extent to which the tongue controls events of the resonator tube and the tongue’s effect on laryngeal efficiency.”⁹⁸ Although the internal action of the base of the tongue cannot be seen, the apex and the body of the tongue can be, and tension can be observed from these points.

While many believe that tongue tension is confined to a specific region of the tongue, Miller believed that tension in any part of the tongue was experienced throughout the entire organ, not in just a particular region. When in the “acoustic-at-rest position,” which Miller believed to be when the tip of the tongue is in contact with the inner surface of the lower front teeth, the tongue should feel loose and relaxed. This is, of course, with the understanding that the tongue does have to move to the alveolar ridge for specific consonants. However, Miller stated, “for something like 70 percent of the time, in the languages of classical voice literature, the tongue apex remains in contact with the inner surface of the lower front teeth.”⁹⁹ When the tongue apex is placed in unnatural positions during phonation, the entire body of the tongue tenses.¹⁰⁰

Miller provided the following as some of the more common types of tongue tension and inexact tongue postures. In fixing these issues, Miller suggested using a hand-held mirror as the singer will be able get a closer look at the tongue:

⁹⁸ Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 228.

⁹⁹ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 96, 102.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

- 1) By placing the tongue too low at the roots of the lower teeth, this will cause the body of the tongue to become elevated.
- 2) Pulling the tip of the tongue upward and backward (retroflex position) can cause diction distortion and timbre obscurity.
- 3) Retracting the tongue in the mouth will also cause diction distortion and timbre obscurity.
- 4) Elevating the tongue by pressing it upward against the molars can induce a high laryngeal position.
- 5) An excessively grooved tongue for all vowels causes extreme pressure on the base of the tongue and forces the larynx down.
- 6) One side of the tongue held higher than the other is caused by severe tensions among muscles of the tongue and is transferred to the larynx.¹⁰¹

Miller suggested that by allowing the lips, jaw, and tongue to follow patterns of spoken enunciation, most problems of tongue tension could be cured. The following are exercises that Miller suggested in alleviating tongue tension:

- 1) Speak a phrase while retaining its rhythmic value, then sing it on a single pitch in the lower-middle register with the same patterns of phonetic articulation that occur in speech. As the pitch ascends, the mouth opens conformably, but relative relationships among the phonetic shapes remain.

¹⁰¹ Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 230-231.

2) The singer may also sustain an affirmative “Hm!” at a comfortable pitch and dynamic level while drawing attention to the contact of the tongue apex to the inner surface of the lower front teeth.

3) Next, while executing a vowel sequence such as [i-e-a-o-u], quickly move the apex (tip) of tongue in small back-and-forth movements against the inner surface of the lower front teeth. While sustaining the tone, stop the lateral movement of the tongue. This will reestablish the acoustic-at-rest position of the tongue. From here, the singer can return to the musical phrases, insisting that the tongue remain free.

4) Lastly, Miller said that tension of the tongue (and soft palate) are often eliminated by vocalises that use [m]. The [m] must be sung vibrantly without any pinching of the lips. The tongue must not be raised to the alveolar ridge as it is in the [n] position, nor should it assume a posture between [m] and [n]. Figure 9 illustrates vocalise examples that Miller included in his book *The Structure of Singing*. 102

FIGURE 9. Tongue Release Exercise

[m a m a m a m a m]
[m i m i m i m i m]

The Neck, Shoulders, and Chest

Miller was an advocate of the “noble posture.” In order to accomplish this the singer should imagine the ears are lined up with the spine, the back of the neck long, and the front of

102 Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 102.

the neck short. The shoulders should be relaxed, the sternum should never slump, and the weight of the torso should be carried to the balls of the feet. This posture ensures proper alignment of the torso region, which allows for an appropriate position for the singer to properly execute the *appoggio* technique. ¹⁰³

Miller wrote, “The head should be held neither high, nor low, but remain in the communicative position of normal speech... The head must not elevate for ascending pitch nor lower for pitch descent.” ¹⁰⁴ For Miller, neck tension was associated with a weakness or slackness in the neck musculature. In order to strengthen these muscles without singing, turn the head slowly to the side—left to right then right to left. Turn the neck sideways until the sternocleidomastoid muscles offer a slight resistance. After doing this for thirty to forty-five seconds, roll the head or the shoulders in a circular motion several times. Finish with a few quick headshakes. This exercise helps strengthen the posterior muscles of the neck. If neck tension occurs while singing a high passage have the student, while singing, move the head in small side-to-side motions while keeping the head, neck, and chest aligned. ¹⁰⁵

In order to correct this displacement in the chest region, Miller taught that there must be coordination amongst all of the muscles in the torso: pectorals, epigastric, umbilical, and abdominal. “The best way to eliminate this problem, is to break long phrases into briefer segments and to initiate each portion by short onsets,” said Miller. Miller was also an advocate of the García position that was discussed on page fifteen in chapter two. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 38.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

In *The Structure of Singing*, Miller provided the following exercises in order to alleviate tension in the areas of the neck, shoulders and chest. They have been placed in step-by-step order for approachability:

Exercise One

- 1) Raise the arms above the head.
- 2) Return the arms to the sides while retaining the moderately high posture of the sternum and rib cage.
- 3) If the chest, at this point, cannot be raised somewhat higher with an upward thrust of the sternum, the basic thoracic posture is too high. If the chest sinks during either inspiration or expiration, the initial thoracic posture was not sufficiently high.
- 4) Breathe in and out, easily and silently, allowing the sternum to not fall and the rib cage to not collapse. Upon inhalation there should be an outward movement in the epigastrium (upper abdomen region), umbilical, and ribcage area. At beginning of the exhalation while there is a slight inward motion at the umbilical area, the ribcage and sternum position should remain unchanged.

Exercise Two

- 1) Recline on a flat surface.
- 2) Be sure the head is not tilted backward with an elevated chin (head and shoulders should be in line). A book under the head may be needed to avoid the head tilting backward.
- 3) Breathe through parted lips while a hand lies flat in between the navel and sternum feeling the expansion in this area, but not the lower abdomen.

4) The chest will neither rise nor fall due to the postural alignment of the body in this position.

5) Breath is totally quiet and maintains the relationship of head, neck, and shoulders with the noble posture.¹⁰⁷

The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx

In his book *Solutions for Singers* Miller states, “In classical singing, the larynx ought to remain as stable as possible, neither rising nor lowering appreciably for pitch change or breath renewal. The larynx should not pop up at the release of a sung tone or phrase.”¹⁰⁸ Miller believed, to a certain degree, that the muscles within the neck were used to support the larynx. He stated that, “A vocal technique which tries to readjust this natural support and control the relationships of the muscles of the neck to the torso and to the larynx, risks presumptuousness.”¹⁰⁹ When the singer holds the larynx either in a raised or depressed position, the muscles of the face, neck, and the pharynx (including those that work together with the larynx), must maintain a posture that is intended for only a brief period of time, such as a yawn. This is not a posture intended for singing.

The low-lying, depressed, laryngeal position is often taught due to the belief that this induces pharyngeal enlargement. Following the initial lowering on the intake of the breath, the singer will attempt to anchor the larynx lower into the throat. Miller wrote that the low-laryngeal

¹⁰⁷ Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 30.

¹⁰⁸ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 56.

¹⁰⁹ Miller, *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited*, 89.

position offered a localized control which could produce results that were quickly seen, taught, and heard. These results make this laryngeal position seem logical and scientific.¹¹⁰

Miller believed that the elevated laryngeal position was so frequently seen in singing that the conclusion must be that either it was considered to be a desirable position or that it involuntarily occurred as an undesirable compensatory action. The latter cause is unrelated to technique since a high laryngeal position must, out of necessity, follow when the head is elevated in singing. When this laryngeal elevation occurs, the soft palate is lowered, and the tongue is raised causing nasality in the singing.¹¹¹

Miller taught that the stabilized larynx was achieved through the breath, which should be inaudible, not forced. This relaxed inhalation allows the larynx to naturally lower and should never reach the position that is taught in the depressed laryngeal position.¹¹² Once in the natural position, the larynx should remain in this position, although some movement may occur when forming vowels. Rising or falling of the larynx should not occur during the changes of pitches or register changes. As the singer continues to sing, the larynx should lie relatively inactive throughout the breathing cycle. ¹¹³

“Life being brief and art being long, one should spend only the minimal time each day required to deal with the technique of singing so that one may move on to those much more important aspects of the art that have to do with musicianship, interpretation, and communication.”¹¹⁴

- Richard Miller

¹¹⁰ Miller, *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German, and Italian Techniques of Singing Revisited*, 86-87.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹³ Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 25.

¹¹⁴ Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, xxii.

CHAPTER 6

DAVID L. JONES

David L. Jones (b.1949) is a renowned voice teacher based in New York City. His studies and research, most notably with Alan L. Lindquist (1891-1984), broadened his expertise in the concepts of the Swedish-Italian school of singing as well as how “Old World” concepts can be therapeutic in treating voice disorders. He dedicates his energy toward informing teachers, writing articles, and actively teaching in both the United States and Europe.¹¹⁵

The Jaw

David Jones states that many singers are aware of tension in the jaw, but most are not aware of the correct motion of the mechanism. In his studies, he has found that many singers hyperextend the jaw down and forward. This lends itself to a number of negative tendencies such as laryngeal elevation, retraction of the tongue, lack of legato line, diminished breath control, imbalance in registration, and distortion of vowels. While many schools of singing work toward the loose and relaxed jaw, Jones mentions that it is important to study the “back” jaw position, especially after each consonant in text.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ David Jones, “Biography,” David Jones: Voice Teacher, accessed July 25, 2018, <http://www.voiceteacher.com/biography.html>.

¹¹⁶ David L. Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing: Concepts of the Swedish-Italian and Italian Singing Schools* (New York, NY: David Jones, 2017), 62.

In the middle register, the jaw should rarely open downward, but instead should release toward the back. However, as the singer approaches the *passaggio*, a point of transition in which the shift from one register to another occurs, and higher range, the jaw must drop more. This feeling of down and back, as Jones’s teacher Alan Lindquest stated, was the same motion as chewing soft food: “taking notice that the jaw falls downward and back, not down and forward.”¹¹⁷

The following exercise is what David Jones suggests when gaining the sense of “down” and “back” in the jaw:

Jaw Release Exercise

1) Begin by using a couple of mirrors so that the student can see their profile as the vocalize. Close the lips and sing a five-tone ascending scale, as seen in Figure 10, while chewing downward and back, not side to side, on every pitch of the scale. It is critical that the jaw muscles move slowly and gradually, not abruptly. The goal here is to achieve a jaw position that is back and down, accompanied by a slow gradual jaw motion as in gently chewing.

FIGURE 10. Jaw Release Vocalise



2) Next, cradle the jaw with both hands, allowing it to fall into the hands. Once the jaw is totally relaxed, sing a five-tone scale using the Italian syllables da-me-ni-po-tu as seen in Figure 11. Continue to monitor the jaw motion making sure that is down and back.

¹¹⁷ Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 62-64.

FIGURE 11. Jaw Release Vocalise



3) The next step to this exercise will be to combine the two scales with two beats of rest in between each.¹¹⁸

The Tongue

Throughout his teachings, David Jones has found that the most common forms of tongue tension are the retracted and the flat tongue. He has found that the most shocking methods being used to correct these outcomes are the tongue depressor or a flat instrument to flatten the tongue. The idea of this is that the instrument will get the tongue “down and out of the way,” but this is far from the truth. When the tongue becomes depressed, the larynx is depressed and makes it impossible for the vocal cords to vibrate without forced breath pressure. The vocal techniques of students whom Jones has taught who have experienced this issue as a result of previous teaching have taken years to repair. Some have even exhibited permanent damage.¹¹⁹

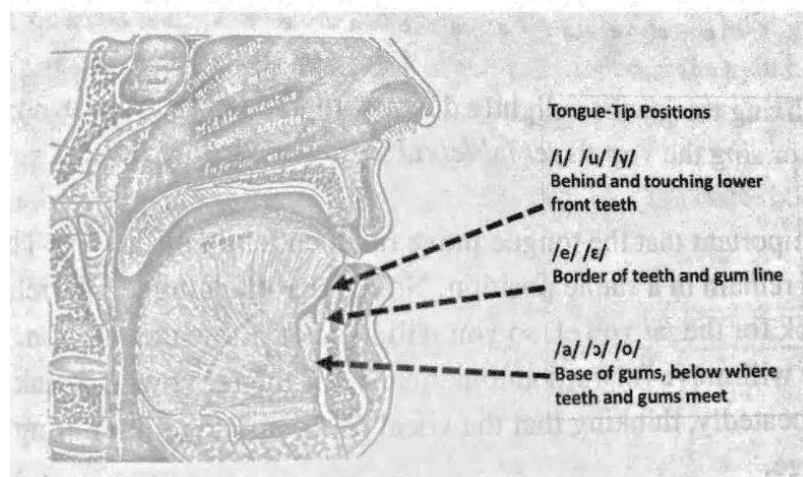
The position that Jones teaches and encourages his students to use as the home base for the tongue is the ‘ng’ [ŋ] position. In this position, the front half of the tongue is forward, while the tongue-root relaxes. This allows the singer to maintain a lower laryngeal position. The singer is encouraged to use this position directly after each consonant, however, the tongue tip should be free to move to the different positions of the five Italian vowels.

¹¹⁸ Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 66.

¹¹⁹ David L. Jones, "The Dangers of the Flat or Retracted Tongue," *Damaging Vocal Techniques*, accessed July 25, 2018, <http://www.voiceteacher.com/tongue.html>.

The correct position of the tip of the tongue will help the singer to achieve and sustain a proper space behind the tongue-root. This is particularly effective in the middle register. Once the singer reaches the upper *passaggio*, the tongue tip must be deep below the gum line for all vowels. When speaking the vowels, the jaw should be slightly down and back and, if done properly the student will feel the proper position of the tongue-tip for each vowel. Figure 12 provides a chart of the position for each tongue-tip position with the respective vowel.¹²⁰

FIGURE 12. Tongue Tip Positions¹²¹



The following exercise will assist the singer in releasing the tongue and exploring the positioning of the tongue-tip:

Tongue Release Exercise

- 1) Using the fingertips to help stabilize the jaw position slightly downward and back, speak the Italian vowels [a], [e], [i], [o], [u], allowing the tongue-tip to assume its correct

¹²⁰ Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 56-57.

¹²¹ Reproduced by permission from David Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, (New York, New York: David Jones, 2017), 57.

position. Next, sing the same vowels in a legato line on a single pitch at a quarter-note value.

2) Stabilize the jaw slightly downward and back without locking it in this position. Say the word *diddle* [dɪdl] over and over. As the student speaks this for a period of time, they may find the tongue has become tense. If this happens, slow down the tempo of the spoken exercise. When the tongue has achieved freedom in speaking this word, then add a five-note scale as seen in Figure 13. Keep the mouth shape rounded. If the tongue tenses, slow down the tempo and begin with speaking the word again.

FIGURE 13. ‘Diddle’ Tongue Exercise¹²²



3) Speak the Italian syllables [la],[le],[li],[lo],[lu] without moving the jaw. The jaw should be slightly down and back, but not overly open. Pronounce the syllables again with the tongue movement only, allowing the tongue to flip for the [l] and keeping the jaw still. While using varied tempi, sing the syllables on various scale patterns such as the one seen in Figure 14.¹²³

¹²² Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 59.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 59.

FIGURE 14. Tongue Release Exercise Using the Italian Vowels



The Neck, Shoulders, and Chest

David Jones writes, “Posture has a major effect on all aspects of singing. If the body is aligned efficiently, then the body coordination will work efficiently. If the body is not aligned properly, then certain muscles tense...”¹²⁴ When it comes to the neck, shoulders, and chest, Jones teaches the following:

- 1) Avoid the forward thrust of the head and neck. This will create a high laryngeal position. Allow the ears to align somewhat over the shoulder area to create a more natural and relaxed neck posture.
- 2) The shoulders should never be too far back. Allow the shoulders to release. This is accomplished through the suspended ribcage.
- 3) Avoid hyperextension of the ribcage or a pulled-up chest. Also, avoid a dropped chest, which invites clavicular breathing. Instead, the chest should be rounded without hyperextension.¹²⁵

Ensuring that these parts are aligned, and that the spine is tall and in the natural ‘S’ shape, which allows for an even distribution of weight and flexibility of movement, can allow for the singer to simply release the muscles of the lower body and allow for a new breath without force.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 26.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

David Jones is a strong advocate of the Alexander Technique to assist in finding the natural posture of the body. This technique will be discussed more in the next chapter. The following exercises, which employ some Alexander Technique methods, encourage the desired posture of the neck, shoulders, and chest.¹²⁷

Exploring Proper Head and Neck Postures

- 1) While sitting in a chair find a tall posture, making sure that the ears align over the shoulders. This posture can be checked by placing fingertips at the edge of the ears and touching the shoulders. If the shoulders are properly aligned, the neck will feel long.
- 2) Start to sing a tone. While sustaining the tone, thrust the head forward. The sound will immediately sound and feel shrill, thin, and throaty. This is because tension has been created in the neck muscles, and the larynx rises, and the pharynx closes.
- 3) Move the head back so that the ears are positioned over the shoulders once again. Sing the same tone and the same vowel. The tone will be noticeably warmer and round.
- 4) Repeat these steps with varying pitch and vowel.¹²⁸

Hissing Breath While Lying Face Down

This exercise is designed to align the body for good posture as well as engaging the lower body at phonation:

- 1) Find a comfortable posture on the floor lying face first. Rest the hands between the forehead and the floor.

¹²⁷ Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 27.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

- 2) Inhale and exhale several times comfortably.
- 3) Make a strong hissing sound while creating a firm resistance at the tongue and the teeth. Concentrate on the resistance in the body and feel as though the lower abdominal muscles are slightly lifting the body weight off the floor. Feel the lower back stretch toward the ceiling.
- 4) First, hiss strongly and loudly, then use different dynamics, crescendo and decrescendo. Voiced consonants such as [v] or [z] may be used as well. The sound should be the one that is most comfortable for the student.
- 5) Start by hissing, then move to a vowel sound, keeping the same resistance throughout the body.
- 6) Repeat this exercise several times until the body learns that the intensity of the resistance in the lower body changes with different levels of vocal intensity.
- 7) Sing a part of song [or aria] that goes at least to the upper *passaggio* range. Take note of how free the neck is in the face down posture than in the face up posture. Repeat this step, letting your body memorize the feeling of engaging elastically without neck tension.¹²⁹

The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Muscles of the Larynx

When David Jones meets a student for the first time, he will ask them if their previous study included laryngeal function or tilt. More often than not, he gets a blank stare in return. After having vocal training in his undergraduate education where the word larynx was not

¹²⁹ Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 36-37.

mentioned, Jones believes that the teaching and understanding of laryngeal release is a basic foundation of healthy vocalism.¹³⁰

Like many teachers, Jones encounters the depressed or high larynx positions more often than not. He finds that the depressed larynx is a result of the student attempting to make a darker sound, especially in the middle register, and also when the singer tenses the tongue-root. The depressing of the larynx can result in a forced breath and this pressure through the larynx can cause irritation to the vocal folds. The high laryngeal position can be caused by the lifting of the larynx in an attempt to lighten the voice. Other causes of an elevated larynx can be inadequate laryngeal release, lack of laryngeal tilt in the middle register, and insufficient lower body connection at the onset.¹³¹

Jones's teaching and philosophy of the laryngeal tilt derived from his positive experience of this technique with his teacher, Alan Lindquest. He taught Jones to breath the larynx halfway downward with the 'ng' tongue position, which avoids the depressed larynx. After applying this technique, he says, "Immediately I felt more open acoustical space in the back of my throat. Also, I felt my laryngeal muscles expand rather than constrict at phonation. It was the beginning of the open throat concept for me..."¹³² The following are concepts of Jones's that assist in laryngeal release:

- 1) Vowel origin or pharyngeal vowel space. (By this Jones means that the vowels are formed in the pharynx. He states, "The pharyngeal space beyond the mouth space must

¹³⁰ David Jones, "Is Laryngeal Function Covered in Your Instruction?" The David Jones Voice Studio, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/298599243590502/posts/april-12-2017:-is-laryngeal/1226671040783313/>.

¹³¹ Jones, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing*, 137-138.

¹³² Jones, "Is Laryngeal Function Covered in Your Instruction?"

be opened, accompanied by moving the tongue and soft palate out of the way in order to achieve full resonance.”¹³³)

2) Low breath and using the concept of allowing the breath to stay low during usage, which keeps the student from ‘pulling up’ on the breath or over-blowing.

3) Release of the jaw. This can be accomplished by the gentle chewing motion that was addressed earlier in the chapter.

4) Rounded embouchure or mouth opening. This embouchure (without lip tension) can be helpful at accomplishing the lower laryngeal position.

5) Achieving the ‘down and forward’ laryngeal tilt between middle and head registers, which will be discussed next.

6) Proper head alignment, so that the head does not push forward as this raises the laryngeal position.¹³⁴

The Laryngeal Tilt

The following is an exercise in order to achieve the laryngeal tilt. Careful employment of this technique will result in a freer and more resonant middle register, making it easier to access higher pitches:

1) Using the Italian vowel [u], vocalize on an ascending major third (do-mi-do) as seen in Figure 15.

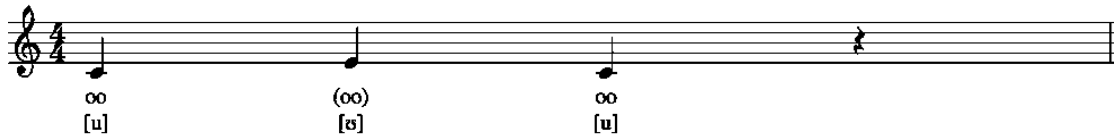
¹³³ David Jones, “Teaching Pharyngeal Vowel Formation: Lesson 1” The David Jones Voice Studio, accessed September 19, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/298599243590502/posts/march-25-2018-teaching-pharyngeal-vowel-formation-lesson-1i-repeatedly-refer-to-/1549842675132813/>

¹³⁴ Jones, “Is Laryngeal Function Covered in Your Instruction?”

- 2) Allow the front half of the tongue to be arched, as it is in the 'ng' position, and the tongue-root to be wide and relaxed. It is important to not bunch the tongue-root or depress the larynx with the root. The root should remain wide and soft.
- 3) Think of a slight rocking motion of the larynx downward and forward as you ascend toward the upper pitch. The laryngeal tilt is only a slight movement. It may take time and repetition to feel this transition smoothly. It is related to deepening the vowel space while ascending in pitch.
- 4) As the larynx tilts down and forward, feel the vowel drop deeper. Concentrate on feeling the vowel deeply, as though it originates below the vocal cords.
- 5) Notice that the vowel will alter slightly, and the singer will have the sensation of dropping the vowel deeper when ascending in pitch.
- 6) Take this exercise up gradually by semitones through the middle register.
- 7) Repeat this exercise with a wide east-west stretch at the lower laryngeal muscles, soft palate, and root of tongue. Maintaining the image of a wide east-west stretch discourages depression of the larynx with the tongue-root.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Jones, A Modern Guide to Old World Singing, 143-144.

FIGURE 15. Laryngeal Tilt Vocalise¹³⁶



“The inspired teacher usually enjoys helping others, enhancing lives by sharing information in a positive way. These teachers possess a healthy ego and strong self-esteem, which gives them an advantage in becoming excellent at their job”¹³⁷

- David Jones

¹³⁶ Ibid., 143-144.

¹³⁷ Jones, A Modern Guide to Old World Singing, 245.

CHAPTER 7

ALLEVIATING UPPER BODY TENSION THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND SCHOOLS OF MOVEMENT TRAINING

For centuries, voice teachers have focused on the scientific study of the voice and how it works. A newer concept in the vocal studio is introducing physical activities and certain schools of movement training into the student's routine. These can range from yoga, which began over five thousand years ago, to the Alexander Technique named after Frederick Matthias Alexander who lived from 1869-1955, to dancing, an activity people have taken part in since the earliest moments of known human history. Certified instructors of these activities and vocal teachers who specialize in them are finding ways to incorporate these concepts into their curriculums as a way to enhance both the emotional and physical side of singing. Instructors are finding ways to take these components and assist their students, especially those suffering from unnecessary tension in the body.

The Alexander Technique allows individuals to become aware of inefficient habits they may have in their body, including such issues as tightening of the shoulders, crunching of the neck, and alignment as a whole. The practice of yoga can be beneficial for singers as it can help relieve stress and assist in alleviating unwanted tension. Some vocal programs around the nation have introduced dance training into their curriculum. Finding styles of dance, such as ballet or modern, that allow the singer to bring certain elements into their singing, and help relieve their bodies of unwanted tension, can be very beneficial. Lastly, one of the newest forms of alleviating unwanted tension in the neck is Laryngeal Manipulation Therapy, or, LMT. This form of therapy

is a practice that is developed by specialists and medical professionals being trained to provide such therapy to vocalists.¹³⁸

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR: It is recommended that these exercises only be attempted if the individual is being monitored by a certified instructor.

Alexander Technique for the Singer

The Alexander Technique was created by classically trained actor Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955). During his performances he would find that his voice would show signs of stress. Countless doctor's visits would end with no relief and he concluded that it was something he was doing during performances which was causing him to lose his voice. This motivated him to spend the next nine years observing his own and others' performances.

He concluded that as he was preparing to speak he was compressing his neck and spine, depressing the larynx, as well as gasping upon inhalation. The result was his inability to speak.¹³⁹

In his book *The Use of the Self* Alexander stated the following:

Observation in the mirror showed me that when I was standing to recite I was using the parts [standing, walking, gesturing, interpretation] in certain wrong ways which synchronized with my wrong way of using my head and neck, larynx, vocal and breathing organs, and which involved a condition of undue muscle tension throughout my organism.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ L. Mathieson, et.al., "Laryngeal Manual Therapy: A Preliminary Study to Examine Its Treatment Effects in the Management of Muscle Tension Dysphonia." *Journal of Voice* 23, no. 3 (2009): 353-66. doi:10.1016/j.jvoice.2007.10.002.

¹³⁹ Julia Caulder, "The Singer and the Alexander Technique." *Classical Singer* (November 2001), 24-32, <http://www.thealexandertechniqueofsantamonica.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/classicalsinger-reduced.pdf>.

¹⁴⁰ F. Matthias Alexander, *The Use of Self* (London, UK: Orion, 2001), 17.

It was, therefore, F.M. Alexander's intention to develop a technique that would ensure a new and improved use of the head and neck, and, indirectly, of the larynx, breathing, and other mechanisms. He believed "that such direction, when put into practice, would ensure satisfactory instead of an unsatisfactory reaction to the stimulus to use of [the] voice."¹⁴¹

In her book, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach*, Karen Sell describes the purpose of Alexander Technique as promoting better alignment, freedom of movement, and easy breathing through a process of awareness and self-mastery.¹⁴² However, in order to gain freedom of movement and achieve the desired result, the source of tension must be pinpointed.

Barbara and William Conable mention in their book, *How to Learn the Alexander Technique*, that teachers will often realize their students are tense: "They don't see that tension in the throat is inevitable when there is tension in the neck, that tension in the torso is inevitable when there is tension in the neck, and they don't see the patterned tension that exerts a tyranny over the singing structures of the body..."¹⁴³

F.M. Alexander referred to the coordination of one's head, neck, and back, as "primary control."¹⁴⁴ This relationship stemmed upon his own observations when he began to understand his vocal mechanism was being impacted negatively by excess tension. When he was able to lengthen his neck, putting his head forward and up, instead of shortening, his conditions

¹⁴¹ Alexander, *The Use of the Self*, 23.

¹⁴² Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach*, 71.

¹⁴³ Barbara and William Conable, *How to Learn the Alexander Technique: A Manual for Students* (Andover Press, 1995), 98.

¹⁴⁴ Rebecca Nettle-Fiol and Luc Vanier, *Dance and the Alexander Technique: Exploring the Missing Link* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 24.

improved. However, he realized that the habit of shortening his neck was going to be extremely difficult to overcome.

A particular practice used in Alexander Technique that can assist in relieving neck tension and bring awareness to the use of the upper torso is “Constructive Rest.” This practice has many other benefits such as improving posture, finding a deeper and calmer breath that comes more naturally, as well as a decompressed spine, to name a few. This exercise can be done once or twice daily for two to five minutes at a time.¹⁴⁵

Constructive Rest Process

- 1) To begin, find a comfortable position lying down on a firm, clean surface.
- 2) Allow the head to be supported by a number of books so that there is enough height under your head allowing the neck to be firm, but soft to the touch. If a part of the body is not supported, allow the part of the body to sink into the surface and release.
- 3) Allow the knees to be softly bent and the feet flat on the floor.
- 4) Allow the elbows to be bent with the hands resting comfortably on the torso.¹⁴⁶

While in this position, calm the mind and soften the gaze, becoming aware of what is happening in the peripheral vision. Begin to expand the awareness to include the room as well as the body, feeling the sensation of the body. Soprano Andrea Matthews gives these phrases to think while in this position, allowing them to happen naturally, not forcing the body to do them:

¹⁴⁵ Andrea Matthews, “Alexander Technique Constructive Rest as a Daily Practice,” Alexander Technique: Constructive Rest, accessed August 12, 2018, <https://alexandertechnique.com/constructiverest/constructiverest.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ Witold Fitz-Simon, “How to Do Constructive Rest: The Alexander Technique Lie Down,” ACAT, accessed August 12, 2018, <https://www.acatnyc.org/blog-posts/2014/05/02/how-to-do-constructive-rest-the-alexander-technique-lie-down>.

- 1) My whole neck is free,
- 2) so my whole head can release up and back,
- 3) so my whole head can lengthen and widen. ¹⁴⁷

A sense of release may be felt in the neck and fewer books may be needed under the head.

Continue to allow the back to lengthen and widen, the knees to ease up toward the ceiling, and the shoulders and elbows to ease outward away from the chest and back.

As the student wishes to get up from this position, they should become aware of the ease and expansion that has happened throughout the body. Allow the spine to remain long, rolling the head up, followed by the shoulders. Once rolling over onto the side and around on the knees, come to a stand, being careful to not tighten the relaxed muscles. ¹⁴⁸

Instead of relying on the concept of “feeling” the appropriate placement of the neck, Alexander began to replace this with thinking about what it was he was to accomplish before doing it. Authors of *Dance and the Alexander Technique: Exploring the Missing Link*, Rebecca Nettle-Fohl and Luc Vanier, say:

He began to practice thinking of directing himself to lengthen, as opposed to physically trying to lengthen himself. He would consciously think of allowing his neck to be free, stimulating his head to go forward and up, thereby allowing his back to lengthen and widen...Paying attention to the process of opposed to the desired result allowed him to redirect his habitual use through conscious inhibition and control. ¹⁴⁹

In order to alleviate the issue of jaw tension, F.M. Alexander developed what is known as the “Whispered Ah.” This exercise is done on a whispered, outward breath that helps inhibit not only tension of the jaw, but of the tongue as well. This can also ensure that the mouth and

¹⁴⁷ Matthews, “Alexander Technique Constructive Rest as a Daily Practice.”

¹⁴⁸ Witold, “How to do Constructive Rest: The Alexander Technique Lie Down.”

¹⁴⁹ Nettle-Fohl, et.al, *Dance and the Alexander Technique: Exploring the Missing Link*, 21-22.

pharynx properly stay open. This exercise also brings with it a good, natural breath. Alexander Technique instructor, Tim Soar, says, “The “Whispered Ah” can teach reflex inspiration—the natural, rapid, easy, silent, more or less automatic intake of breath which is necessary as part of your pattern of breathing...to avoid gasping, sniffing, and wheezing between musical phrases.”¹⁵⁰

Whispered Ah! Procedure

- 1) Begin by standing in what is known in Alexander Technique as “*Monkey*.” This position is achieved by bending the knees and allowing the torso to tip forward at approximately 45 degrees. From here, give the student the directions of “Allow the neck to be free,” “Allow the head to go forward and up,” and “Allow the back to lengthen and widen.”
- 2) Next, exhale through the mouth keeping the neck muscles and abdominal muscles relaxed. For this exercise, allow the inhalation to come through the nose.
- 3) Bring a natural smile to the face, allowing the smile to raise the soft palate. The tip of the tongue should come in contact with the back of the lower teeth.
- 4) Allow for the jaw to naturally fall open, allowing it to achieve the normal position of back and down. Be aware that the student does not force the jaw down in this step, restricting the throat.
- 5) Allow a whispered [a] to be released until the end of the breath has been reached. Once this happens, close the lips and allow the breath to naturally fall through the nose.

¹⁵⁰ Tim Soar, “The Whispered Ah!,” Alexander Technique London, accessed August 12, 2018, <https://www.alexander-technique.london/articles/defining-the-alexander-technique/the-whispered-ah/>.

6) Repeat this exercise three to four times.¹⁵¹

The Alexander Technique is unique to each individual because it is a hands-on technique. This guidance allows the practitioner to assist in developing the student's kinesthetic sense. Without it, the singer's own sensory feedback, that is his or her ability to exhibit realistic physical self-awareness, would be unreliable because of instilled habits.

When working on gaining control of the body through Alexander Technique, it is important to find a certified instructor. For singers, it can be beneficial to find a vocal teacher who is certified in this technique, however, it can be as equally beneficial to obtain individual Alexander Technique lessons outside of the voice studio. Both the vocal and Alexander Technique instructor can provide verbal and physical guidance to the student during a lesson that will allow the student to reduce compression and increase overall ease and proficiency.¹⁵²

Yoga for the Singer

Yoga is a practice that began in India over five thousand years ago and was used as a way to unite the body, mind, and soul. The origins of this practice were centered around Hindu and Buddhist concepts of bringing the individual to unity with the Divine. While there may be some spiritual components brought into an individual's yoga practice, this document will focus on the physical element of *Hatha* yoga.¹⁵³ According to *Yoga Journal* this practice, "refers to a set of

¹⁵¹ Soar, "The Whispered Ah!"

¹⁵² "Private Lessons." AMSAT, accessed July 23, 2018, <https://www.amsatonline.org/aws/AMSAT/pt/sp/lessons>.

¹⁵³ Linda Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga* (Lister, 2011), 10.

physical exercises (known as asanas or postures), and sequences of asanas, designed to align your skin, muscles, and bones.”¹⁵⁴

This school of yoga is particularly singer-friendly, especially for those with unwanted tension. Linda Lister mentions that she teaches *Hatha* yoga to singers because, “the principles of *Hatha* yoga embody physical vigor and power as elements that can enhance and embolden healthy, dynamic singing.”¹⁵⁵

The following exercises derive from this particular school of yoga. These exercises, especially for beginners, should be done under the supervision of an instructor until there is a clear understanding of the process.

The Jaw and The Tongue

For any tension dealing with the jaw and the tongue, the *Simhasana*, or, “Lion Pose,” as seen in Figure 16, is recommended. This can particularly assist with singers whose tongue contracts or shakes while singing. Lister notes that this pose is beneficial to practice before vocalizing due to its ability to help release the tongue and open the throat.¹⁵⁶

Once in a comfortable kneeling position, spread the fingers apart and place the palms on your knees. Inhale, looking up between your eyebrows. As you exhale on an [h] sound, creating what sounds like a lion’s roar, stick out your tongue and stretch it toward the chin, being careful to not stretch the tongue too forcefully.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Cyndi Lee, "Yoga 101: A Beginner's Guide to Practice, Meditation, and the Sutras," *Yoga Journal* (October 07, 2014): <https://www.yogajournal.com/meditation/yoga-questions-answered>.

¹⁵⁵ Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga*, 10.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

FIGURE 16. Lion Pose¹⁵⁸



(Photo by Maryann Bates)

The *Mudra* is a symbolic hand gesture used in meditation. One in particular that can facilitate the flow of energy and can be used in order to release jaw tension via a pressure point, is the *Matangi Mudra* as seen in Figure 17. By interlacing the fingers, holding the hands in front of the solar plexus, extend and bring together the middle fingers outward and press them together. Mudras can be held anywhere from one minute to thirty minutes.¹⁵⁹

FIGURE 17. Matangi Mudra¹⁶⁰



(Photo by Maryann Bates)

¹⁵⁸ Reproduced by permission from Linda Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Publishing, 2011), 81.

¹⁵⁹ Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga*, 81, 113.

¹⁶⁰ Reproduced by permission from Linda Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Publishing, 2011), 113.

The Neck, Shoulders, and Chest

“Warrior 1” is a pose that stretches and strengthens the neck, shoulders, and chest—all common areas of tension for the singer. See Figure 18.

From “Mountain pose,” a natural stance with feet flat on the ground, shoulders rolled down and back, and arms hanging down at the side, step into a forward lunge with the right foot. The hips should be aligned forward, and the right knee should be directly over the innermost toe. Next, bend the right leg into a ninety-degree angle. Linda Lister says, “Focus on lifting the sternum and keeping the shoulders rolled down and back, just like...your stance for singing.”¹⁶¹

FIGURE 18. Warrior 1 Pose¹⁶²



(Photo by Maryann Bates)

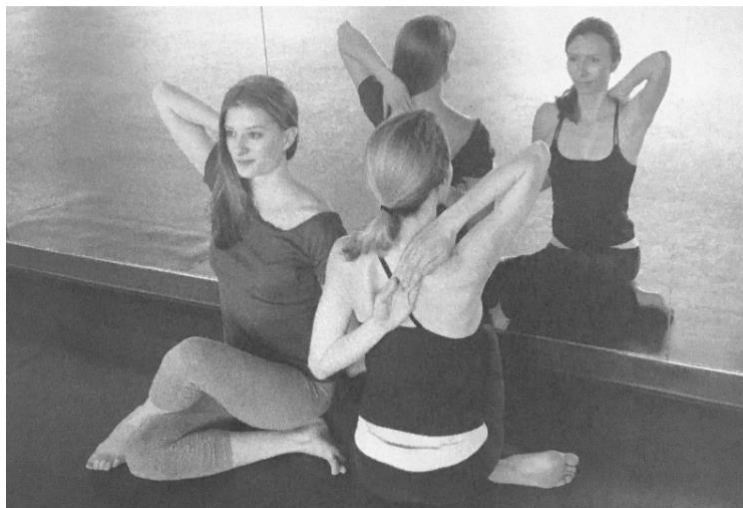
In order to create less tension and help open the chest, Lister suggests the “Cow Face” pose as seen in Figure 19. This pose relieves stress on the shoulders that is created by trying to

¹⁶¹ Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga*, 72.

¹⁶² Reproduced by permission from Linda Lister, *Yoga for Singer: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga*, (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Publishing, 2011), 72.

maintain proper rib and sternum elevation. Starting with the legs crossed and the knees stacked on one other, reach the left arm between the shoulder blades with the palm facing away from the body. Lift the right arm up and then bend at the elbow. From here, reach the hands toward one another. If the hands do not touch, you can use a yoga mat strap, towel, or whatever is accessible between the hands. It is important to make sure that the chest does not collapse, or the neck does not hyperextend.¹⁶³

FIGURE 19. Cow Face Pose¹⁶⁴



(Photo by Maryann Bates)

In her book, *Yoga for All of Us*, Peggy Cappy provides a number of effective stretches for the specified areas of the body. As with yoga positions, Cappy urges the individual to execute these stretches on a regular basis in order to successfully rid the tension.

¹⁶³ Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga*, 77.

¹⁶⁴ Reproduced by permission from Linda Lister, *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Publishing, 2011), 77.

For the neck, Cappy suggests while sitting with noble posture to take a deep breath in. Upon the exhalation, gently drop the chin toward the chest, feeling the stretch in the back of the neck. With the next inhalation, gently bring the head back up and slowly lift the nose and chin toward the ceiling, feeling a stretching sensation in the throat. It is important to keep the jaw loose and relaxed. Repeat these movements at a comfortable pace for at least five times. After the last stretch, take note of the sensation in the front and back of the neck as a result.¹⁶⁵ While there are no specific poses that help directly with the larynx, poses and stretches such as this one can help create a sense of ease in the throat and neck, which work in direct correlation with the larynx.

For the shoulders, simple shrugs and circles will help loosen the shoulder joints as well as the back muscles. Cappy suggests doing these from a seated position. For shoulder shrugs, as the student inhales, the shoulders should be lifted slowly toward the ears. Upon exhalation, lower the shoulders and press them down toward the floor. For shoulder circles, when the student inhales, they should lift the shoulders toward their ears, pulling them forward and up. Upon exhalation, roll the shoulders back and down. Repeat this step changing the direction.¹⁶⁶

There are many physical and mental benefits for the singer who practices yoga. Soprano Natalie Dessay said in regard to her study of yoga and her successful career: "It [yoga] was preparing me to go through rehearsal...Preparing me physically, of course, but also mentally for the concentration and the desire to go to work...an awakening of the body and spirit."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Peggy Cappy, *Yoga for Us All* (New York, NY: Griffin, 2006), 30-31.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁶⁷ Carol Dickman, "Look Who Is Practicing! - Natalie Dessay." *Yogi Times*, accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.yogitimes.com/article/natalie-dessay-yoga-singer-soprano-french>.

Benefits for the Singer Through Dance

Singing and dancing have been linked with one another for thousands of years, since time immemorial. These art forms can be identified with the drama of ancient Greece and Rome when the *choros* (chorus) was used for the song and dance.¹⁶⁸ Having knowledge of dance and how to carry the body with poise is beneficial for the vocalist. Standing gracefully in front of a piano, walking confidently into an audition room, and learning how to waltz for an opera production are all skills that singers may be expected to know how to do in their profession. Whether it be jazz, hip-hop, ballet, or modern, the singer can take a basic knowledge of dance and apply it to their studies in order to gain a tension-free experience.

When taking a dance class of any genre, one of the first actions to be implemented is a stretch in order to make sure the body is free from tension and that the body is warmed-up. Dance instructor Jilise Bushling Austin says she has her students skip around the studio like rag dolls allowing them to loosen up the tension that can form during a rehearsal. She says, “I tell them to shake everything out. If they have a tense upper body, then the legs don’t respond correctly...The joints all need to work together.”¹⁶⁹

Imagine the change in the tense vocal student’s lesson or performances if each would begin with a simple exercise of shaking the tension in the body loose. Just like a dancer, all joints need to work collectively in order to have a successful rehearsal and performance.

Some examples of transferring dance knowledge to a vocal performance can be seen in the following example of alleviating shoulder tension. Irene Dowd, a teacher of movement-based

¹⁶⁸ Pierre Destrée and Penelope Murray. *A Companion to Ancient Aesthetics* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 201), 81.

¹⁶⁹ Julie Diane, "3 Ways to Reduce Tension in Your Students' Upper Bodies," February 6, 2018, <https://www.dance-teacher.com/3-ways-to-reduce-tension-in-your-students-upper-bodies-2531904286.html>.

anatomy and physiology at The Julliard School, uses this multistep approach that comes from the study of ballet:

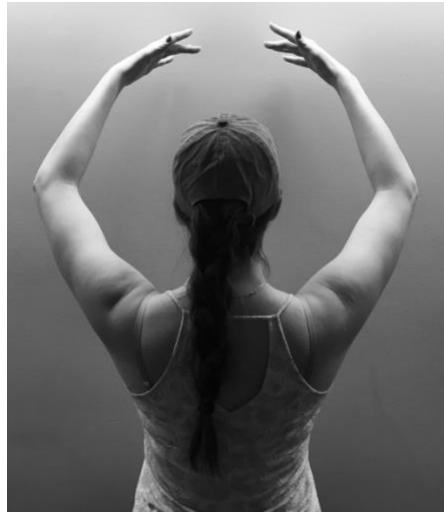
- 1) The student must widen the distance between the shoulder joints to the sides so that both the front and the back of the shoulder girdle expands.
- 2) Lift the arms to second position and reach out with the fingertips as seen in Figure 20. The third finger will lead the lower angle of the shoulder blade out into space.

FIGURE 20. Second Position



- 3) Lift the arms overhead to fifth position, which will widen the shoulder blades back and wraps the lower tips around the arm pits. See Figure 21.

FIGURE 21. Fifth Position



4) Next, sustain the shoulder blades wide as you bring the arms down again to second.

5) Finally, bring the arms down to the side, retaining that feeling of expansion.¹⁷⁰

Research dating back to the 1980s shows that dancing can also help alleviate anxiety, a primary cause of excess tension. Dance enables an individual to gain a sense of confidence, which can be transferred to their own body its use. ¹⁷¹ In his article “Why Dancing is the Best Thing You Can Do for Your Body” Markham Heid says, “if you can loosen up enough to [dance] in front of strangers, you’re a lot less likely to feel self-conscious when hanging out or speaking in front of an audience.”¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Amy Brandt, "Head-to-Toe Bad Habits and How to Fix Them," *Dance Teacher*, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.dance-teacher.com/head-to-toe-bad-habits-and-how-to-fix-them-2392489281.html>.

¹⁷¹ Andre Lesté and John Rust, "Effects of Dance on Anxiety," *American Journal of Dance Therapy* 12, no. 1 (June 1, 1984): 19-25. doi:10.1007/bf00844312.

¹⁷²Markham Heid, "Why Dancing Is the Best Thing You Can Do For Your Body." *Time*, accessed July 24, 2018, <http://time.com/4828793/dancing-dance-aerobic-exercise>.

The study and application of dance techniques can allow a singer to have the confidence to walk into an audition room with poise and elegance, to step out onto stage with great composure, and much more. More importantly, dance has the ability to allow the singer to do this with greatly reduced tension throughout the body.

Laryngeal Manipulation Therapy

Laryngeal Manipulation (or Manual) Therapy (LMT) is a newly researched method of tension release that is receiving a great deal of attention. This practice can be very dangerous and should not be attempted on oneself or a student. This therapy should only be performed by a trained physical therapist. Self-prescription of this procedure should not occur by the student or teacher unless he or she is certified. If a student thinks they need this therapy, they should consult their teacher and a specialist. The purpose of this section in this document is strictly to inform the reader of available options.¹⁷³

The need for LMT can be brought on by hyperfunction phonation, which is a result of the singer's excessive phonatory effort. According to L. Mathieson, et. al., hyperfunction can place undue physical stresses on the vocal tract, which cause undesirable changes in its normal function, and, in some cases, trauma to the vocal folds. One voice disorder arising from this is referred to as Muscle Tension Dysphonia (MTD). A significant number of patients who experience MTD will also experience Vocal Tract Discomfort (VTD).¹⁷⁴

In 1990, Dr. Arnold E. Aronson, a speech pathologist, described LMT as a source for the reduction of musculoskeletal tension associated with vocal hyperfunction and in 1993 L.

¹⁷³ L. Mathieson, et.al., "Laryngeal Manual Therapy: A Preliminary Study to Examine Its Treatment Effects in the Management of Muscle Tension Dysphonia."

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Mathieson would conduct what is considered to be the first experiment to investigate the relationship between hyperfunctional dysphonia and VTD. The retrospective study sought to investigate the following:

- 1) The incidence of VTD in a group of patients presenting with hyperfunctional dysphonia;
- 2) The qualitative differences in the discomfort experienced;
- 3) The link between discomfort and vocal fold mucosa changes.¹⁷⁵

Thirty-six patients participated in the experience over a six-month period. To begin, the patients were given a list of terms to describe the sensations they were feeling. This list included tickling, burning, soreness, aching, tightness, choking, and pain. Sixty-two percent of the patients marked one or more of the terms, with the majority choosing “aching” and “soreness,” however, no patients marked “choking” or “pain.” Further monitoring of these patients later added descriptors of “irritable,” “dry,” and “lump in the throat.” Fifty-six percent of the group experienced vocal fold mucosa changes, while forty-four percent of the group experienced no change.¹⁷⁶

These results revealed that the patients were experiencing possible inflammatory changes or tissue damage, as well as issues relating to the musculoskeletal system. The resultant discomfort was arising from tightening and bunching of muscle fibers through overuse or postural strain. In order to improve the patient’s symptoms, L. Mathieson, et.al, says the following in regard to LMT treatment:

¹⁷⁵ L. Mathieson, et.al., "Laryngeal Manual Therapy: A Preliminary Study to Examine Its Treatment Effects in the Management of Muscle Tension Dysphonia."

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

Ergonomic considerations and physical therapies are regarded as the mainstay of intervention for this type of musculoskeletal discomfort. Massage of the perilaryngeal musculature, therefore, is directed at reducing the tightening and bunching of the muscles with the aim of reducing or eliminating discomfort and improving phonatory function.¹⁷⁷

Some other benefits of LMT treatment include improvement of articulation, reduction of overall tension in the speech subsystems, and improvement in sensorimotor processes.¹⁷⁸

It is important to note that since this tension is capable of restricting vocal flexibility, the teacher may audibly hear the issue. Most patients' vocal quality can be described as "locked," and they will often have reduced dynamic range in both the singing and speaking voice.¹⁷⁹

LMT Process

IMPORTANT NOTE: This process is mapped out strictly for the purpose of understanding how it is executed. DO NOT attempt this on anyone unless properly certified.

- 1) The clinician ensures the patient is seated well back on the seat of a chair. The spine is straight, head is in a neutral position, and shoulders are relaxed.
- 2) The clinician will begin by massaging from the area of lesser tension, typically the sternocleidomastoid, to the area of greater tension in order to achieve better results. This is also more comfortable for the patient.
- 3) The supralaryngeal area is kneaded while the other hand cradles the back of the patient's skull. It is crucial for the patient to keep the jaw relaxed during this process.

¹⁷⁷ L. Mathieson, et.al., "Laryngeal Manual Therapy: A Preliminary Study to Examine Its Treatment Effects in the Management of Muscle Tension Dysphonia."

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Nelson Roy, "Assessment and Treatment of Musculoskeletal Tension in Hyperfunctional Voice Disorders." *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* 10, no. 4 (2008): 195-209. doi:10.1080/17549500701885577.

4) When the perilaryngeal musculature is more relaxed, increased lateral movement of the larynx is applied.¹⁸⁰

During the Laryngeal Manual Therapy process, the patient does not vocalize as this will only reiterate negative phonatory habits. Minimal speech activities are requested by the therapist only after the larynx responds easily to lateral pressure in the final stages. This process lasts approximately ten minutes and the number of sessions varies according to the patient's response to the process.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ L. Mathieson, et.al., "Laryngeal Manual Therapy: A Preliminary Study to Examine Its Treatment Effects in the Management of Muscle Tension Dysphonia."

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The alleviation of unwanted tension has been a common challenge for singers and vocal teachers for centuries. The studies and exercises that are discussed throughout this document represent both the musical knowledge and scientific findings of specific periods. As both the art form and science that pertains to the voice have progressed, the ways in which teachers have approached the issue of unwanted tension have evolved and continue to do so.

While there are countless sources and opinions on how to alleviate unwanted tension, the vocal instructor and student should trust their intuitions when addressing and working on this issue. There are numerous exercises when it comes to finding a solution to relieve the upper body of unwanted tension. Although specific parts of the upper body have been addressed individually in this document, it is important to note that these areas work together as a whole. The release and correction of excess tension in one specific area of the upper body can have a beneficial effect on any residual tension in the proximate area.

Both the vocal instructor and student should be receptive of alternatives that are available if an exercise is not attaining the desired results. The vocalist may find that incorporating the physical activities and schools of movement discussed in this document are a more effective way of achieving the desired freedom. Certain stretches, yoga poses, or Alexander Technique practice may result in a more tension-free performance than the everyday vocalise alone.

It is the author's hope that this document will bring a sense of awareness to the issue of unwanted tension, specifically in the upper body, to the singer. By including techniques from well-known vocal pedagogues, as well as physical activities, there is hope that the instructor and singer both have the awareness of treatments and options, and access to resources in order to tame the tension in the upper body.

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APPENDIX



FROM: Dr. Linda Lister
Associate Professor of Music,
Director of UNLV Opera
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

TO: Scott Willis

RE: Letter of Release

I hereby grant Scott Willis permission to use images from my book *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Voice and Spirit through Yoga* in his doctoral document for the University of Alabama. The photographer, Maryann Bates, should be properly credited.

Sincerely,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Linda Lister" in a cursive, flowing script.

Linda Lister, DMA
Board of Directors, National Opera Association
Author, *So You Want to Sing Light Opera, Voice Secrets, Yoga for Singers*
Winner, 2014 American Prize in Directing



Scott Willis <sewillis.88@gmail.com>

Permission David Jones

1 message

David Jones <david_voiceteacher@icloud.com>
To: sewillis.88@gmail.com

Sun, Aug 5, 2018 at 4:29 PM

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to confirm permission for Scott Willis to use some images from my book for his doctoral paper.

Sincerely,

David L Jones

Sent from my iPhone

**PROFESSOR JANICE CHAPMAN OAM FGS
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I confirm that I give permission to Scott Willis to use the illustration which appears on page 26 of the Third Edition of "Singing and Teaching Singing – A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice" (pub. Plural Publishing) re the position of the jaw in his dissertation.



Janice L Chapman OAM FGS

August 2018