



SINGING VS. SHOUTING:

Vocal Advice from an Expert, Part 2

by Dina Else



Welcome back! Now that we've ensured the proper body alignment is well underway and have established the basics of breath intake, let's journey a step further into the topics of breath support and breath management.

We hear the terms "breath support" and "breath management" thrown around a lot. What's the difference in these two phrases? Breath support refers to the correct breath pressure under the folds. Giovanni Lamperti says it this way: "The vocal folds are helpless without the power of compressed breath to feed their pulsation. Therefore the lungs should never collapse."

In *Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults*, James McKinney says it like this: "The breath of a singer is the actuator of the vocal instrument. The pressure of the breath against the vocal folds sets them in vibration and phonation ensues." Breath management, on the other hand, is the ability to control the rate in which you return to a body neutral position toward the end of a longer phrase, the slow ascent of the diaphragm if you will.

As we begin our conversation about this facet of singing, let's talk about "diaphragmatic support." Yes, the diaphragm muscle is highly involved in the process of pressurizing and compressing the air. Furthermore, the diaphragmatic involvement is necessary to

achieve proper "breath support." Let's be clear about this however; the diaphragm is an *involuntary* muscle, and you do *not* have control of it. It triggers into action as the lungs begin to fill and then, through controlling the muscles involved in the breathing process, we can control the ascent and involvement of the diaphragmatic muscle. This is, of course, safely assuming that the proper descent of the diaphragm muscle was achieved during the breath intake.

Step one in ensuring the continued involvement of the diaphragm muscle is to keep the rib cage expanded, with a certain amount of buoyancy throughout the phrase. Step two: Do not let the ribs collapse as the diaphragm slowly makes its ascent.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE ABOVE DIRECTIVES

I'm very careful to monitor my singers as we work on this step. Singers tend to take things to the extremes and "hold" the ribs out with the muscles locking and tensing, versus keeping the ribs out with buoyancy. The quickest way to get your singers to feel

Fund Raising



1. 40% Profit
2. USA Kitchen Items
3. Easy System

Made in the
USA
Waverly, Iowa

Your Show Choir, School, Club, Team, or Church will work directly with the factory to make **40% profit**.

Your **FUND RAISER** will sell:

- Kitchen Knives, Utensils and Gift Sets
- Cookbooks and Soy Wax Candles
- Stoneware and Quick Mixes



RADA
CUTLERY

"A Cut Above The Rest"
Lifetime **GUARANTEE**

Rada Cutlery's reputation for **Made in the USA** quality is well known. We have made and sold over 136,000,000 knives since 1948!

You deserve a fundraiser that is EASY for YOU!



- Useful Products
- Tremendous Value
- Amazing Prices

Request your **FREE** catalog and information packet:

1-800-311-9691

or **www.RadaCutlery.com**

NOTE: Dept **A13PRM**



Celebrating 65 years of remarkable cutlery, service and value! 1948-2013



Rada Cutlery is 100% American Made – raw materials and construction!

FUND RAISE with the BEST!

the difference is to have them “hold” the ribs out and “lock” their muscles in place so they can feel what NOT to do. Then have them find that rib expansion associated with movement or buoyancy.

My favorite tool for working this is an exercise band. I’m careful to use the lightest weight band so that the expanded buoyancy is the primary focus. The thicker/heavier the band, the more the students will want to engage their “lock and hold” muscles. Using the band helps the singers realize that there doesn’t need to be a total collapse of the ribs and that it IS possible to keep the ribs lifted and buoyant during the sung phrase.

Here are a few more bits of wisdom from Giovanni Lamperti: “Generally, faulty singing is caused by awkward respiration. In fact all bad habits of the throat are merely efforts of protection against clumsy management of the breath.” My other favorite quote of his on this subject is this: “Power either builds or destroys. The energy in regular vibration is constructive. The violence in irregular vibration is destructive.”

In regard to the muscles involved in breath management, James McKinney notes, “Perhaps the best way to gain control of the exhalation process is to try to maintain the expansion around the middle of the body, the upper abdomen, the lower ribs, and the back.” In *The Structure of Singing*, Richard Miller says it this way: “A skillful singer remains in the inspiratory position for as long as

possible, maintaining a relatively high sternal position (taking care not to elevate it in military-parade manner), allowing muscles of the lateral abdominal wall to stay close to the position of inhalation and consequently delaying early rib cage collapse. Of course, something must eventually move, either the chest wall or the abdominal wall. Slowing these movements depends on an acquired, disciplined breath management technique.” Miller goes on to say, “A technique of lateral abdominal wall retention and the noble, elevated sternum has for centuries been known as ‘appoggio’. Clearly, one cannot continue to inhale while phonating, but the singer can retard the upward surge of the diaphragm and the collapse of the rib cage by training the musculature of the abdominal wall in cooperation with the pectoral musculature, to delay normal collapse of the breath mechanism.”

In studio, I talk to my singers about their abdominals, lateral abdominals and their intercostal muscles. When the inspiration has been achieved correctly, the lower torso has expanded laterally, dorsally and frontally. I’m a firm believer that if singers don’t *understand* what’s working then they can’t *control* what’s working. I make sure they understand that all of these muscle groups are involved in helping the body “remain in the posture of inhalation.” I’m also very careful to focus in on the stomach wall. I’m not sure about your singers, but mine tend to want to protrude the stomach wall and call it good. When this happens, the outward push causes laryngeal tension. We aim for all

Holiday Fundraiser



A Guaranteed Success!



Mickman Brothers
A Holiday Tradition Since 1954

- Proven Profits: \$5-\$8 for each product sold
- No Risk: You buy only what is pre-ordered
- FREE Online tools and Sales Aids

Contact us: www.holidayfundraiser.com or 1-800-446-4229



NEED SHOW CHOIR MUSIC?

Custom Arrangements sells pre-arranged charts that were chosen and designed for **competition show choirs**. We obtain a license to resell these charts and offer them at much lower prices – passing the savings on to you!

FAST AND EASY!

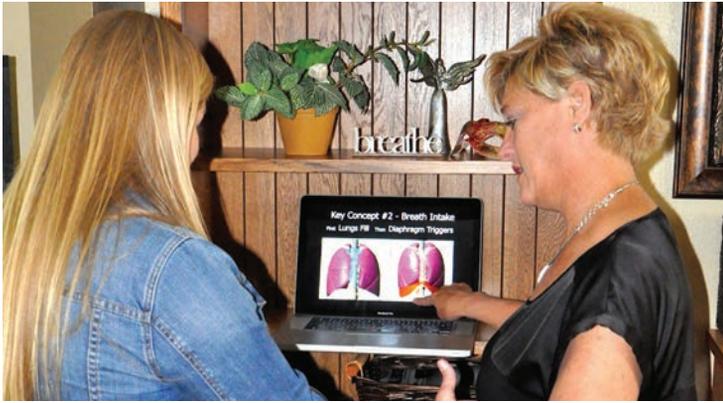
Online ordering • Download files immediately
Preview charts before purchase

HUNDREDS OF TITLES TO CHOOSE FROM!

Broadway • Classic Rock/Pop • Current Hits



CUSTOMARRANGEMENTS.NET



of the muscle groups *working in combination* to “remain expanded” (think 3-D), therefore keeping the diaphragm muscle engaged.

As I shared in the last issue, I like to explain breath management to my students this way: The breath intake is their “deposit,” the beginning of the phrase is their “savings” and the end of their phrase is their “spending.” We’ve just extensively covered the “savings” portion of the breath management. Now let’s delve into the management aspect (the spending phase) in more detail.

MASTERING APPOGGIO

In order to “remain in the posture of inhalation, stay expanded or remain in the inspiratory position,” a singer needs to master *appoggio*,

a term used to indicate how the muscle groups work together to achieve the proper balance of push and pull. The term *appoggio* is an Italian word that means to “lean against.” A singer’s main goal during breath management is to stay as long as possible in the “inspiratory position,” but only as long as is comfortable. A singer’s responsibility is to identify and drill the natural processes involved in developing the “push and pull” of “remaining expanded” and then to keep these muscles engaged so that breath support remains intact during the last part of the phrase. I like to tell the students that this is like having one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake, counterbalancing for control. James McKinney describes it this way: “The ‘breathing in’ muscles stay active during the controlled exhalation stage; they help retain breath in the body by offering resistance to the breathing-out muscles, and assist in the process of breath support thereby.”

I feel that this (the “spending” or “controlled exhalation”) is the aspect of breath management that is the least understood. Many choral directors know you’ve got to achieve an “*in, down and out*” breath intake that expands the torso frontally, dorsally and laterally. Many—though by no means all—choral directors know that the torso and ribs should remain expanded and buoyant at the onset and beginning of the phrase. What many choral directors don’t realize is that the *appoggio* muscle interaction, the push and pull, should remain through the end of the phase. When we



WWW.COOKIEHOUSE.COM 800-276-4770

EARN 50% PROFIT

Includes the following:

- GREAT TASTING COOKIE DOUGH AND COFFEE • MAXIMUM SCENTED / LONG LASTING CANDLES
- EACH SELLER’S ORDER IS INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED • FUN AND EXCITING PRIZE PROGRAM
- DELIVERED TO YOUR SCHOOL READY TO HAND OUT

Little Ol' Cookie House is family owned and operated. Since 1988.

recognize this moment, our main goal is to keep the diaphragm muscle involved/engaged during the entire phonation phase. In order to do that, we can't allow the ribs or torso to collapse, even toward the end of the phrase.

BREATH AS CONSTANTLY MOVING ENERGY, NOT WEIGHT

As we conclude our time together on this topic, keep in mind that breath must *never* be used as weight; it is *energy*, something that is *always moving*. Keeping this a mantra in your rehearsals will pay huge dividends and keep you from having to diagnose and fix all of the issues that come from forcing the breath process and using your air as weight. Rather than the idea of feeling like a singer has to transport their breath out into the room, I find it very useful to work with the idea of "going down into the breath" or the feeling of "keeping the breath in your body" as the tone leaves your face. In closing, I have a few more maxims from Giovanni Lamperti:

"As a blossom draws strength to bloom from the plant, so the voice draws energy to sing from the body."

"Exhale through each note."

"The moment you have energy of breath sufficient for the phrase, re-adjustable for all details and all pitches in the phrase, yet continuous from start to finish, you can sing."

"Loose, pushed out breath is useless even injurious, though you have lungs full, for it causes local efforts, irregular vibration and disrupted energies."

I'd like to leave you with a tip I use as I travel and clinic show choirs. This works wonders as the learning process moves from singing to the skill of singing and dancing. If the choreographer will allow it, have your singers hiss as they learn the choreography. This will help them incorporate proper breath support into their muscle memory alongside the choreography. It's one thing for the choreographer to constantly remind the singers to breathe (thank you to those of you that do this), but if you can make them hiss, you *know for a fact* that they are doing it! If they've already learned the choreography, no worries, this technique is helpful during all phases of the learning process and keeps the breath a primary focus. **O**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dina Else is a highly sought after vocal technician/specialist, choral clinician, motivational speaker, festival conductor, and adjudicator throughout the United States. The choral ensembles and show choirs she works with are consistently awarded "Best Vocals" and highest honors in competitions and festivals.



CHARMS
OFFICE ASSISTANT

The do-it-all 24/7 online contact management and student financial system used by choral directors and booster organizations everywhere.

Get your life back!

To learn more, and to get a a no-obligation 60-day evaluation, visit www.charmsoffice.com/about.asp

