



UNIT 5

STAGE
OF
mind

5. VOICE AND DICTION

The purpose of this unit is to support the participants in the improvement of their vocal and expressive skills as well as to solve challenges they may have in their everyday speech and verbal communication.

The unit includes three sections:

- ▶ The first one concerns the way the voice works;
- ▶ The second one how it works in the dramatic reading (clear articulation, accents);
- ▶ The last one is about how the voice works when singing.

The unit provides a comprehensive introduction to anatomy and proper breathing techniques, along with an array of dynamic exercises and interactive games that combine physical movement with speech. Furthermore, it features engaging activities designed to explore and improvise vocalizations, as well as opportunities for discussion and reflection.

5.1 Learning outcomes

Upon completing this unit, participants of the training program will improve:

- ▶ their speaking skills (diction, volume, pitch of voice)
- ▶ their listening and active listening skills
- ▶ the ability to express own ideas and desires
- ▶ the way they address an audience

5.2 Theoretical background / Approach

This voice-breathing system incorporates three different methods that start from different points but have common goals and results that creatively complement each other throughout their evolution. The main focus of the exercises is on the breath, specifically its role in music and speech. As breath and thought are interconnected, this system seeks to restore the natural function of breath.

The program includes exercises from the following methods:

- ▶ Mirka Gementzaki's approach treats the human body as a perfect musical instrument that requires freedom from unnecessary tension to produce a unique sound. By restoring the natural function of breath, we can approach the sound that will reverberate in the body and will constantly surprise us with its intensities, range and colours.
- ▶ Kristin Linklater's method aims to release the natural voice and deepen the meaning of the words. It



liberates the voice and liberates the individual themselves.

- ▶ Roy Hart's improvisations offer the key to start a journey of discovery by expanding the field of imagination and surprise. Like the universe, the voice is unexplored and always magical.

Participants will have the opportunity to explore and discover the volume, range, qualities, and colours of their voice while feeling the power of speech and resonators within the human body. They will also work on remaining constant in the tonality of a song and improving their musical perception.

Selected exercises from the above methods, along with physical and vocal improvisations, will be combined and applied to dramatic readings and songs that the participants have a connection to. The facilitator may choose a dramatic reading from the classical or modern repertoire.

5.3 Learning and teaching methods

The training unit incorporates experiential learning methods such as exercises, improvisations, games, discussion, and feedback to facilitate individual and group learning. The facilitator will work with each participant individually, in pairs and groups, to understand their vocal situation and tailor activities to their needs.

To ensure the comfort of all participants, the facilitator will regularly check in with them and be prepared to make necessary changes. For example, in case of social anxiety, participants can find a private place in the working space where they feel at ease, and physical contact will be avoided if it is not comfortable for participants. In case of low physical fitness or side effects of medications, the facilitator will adapt the exercises in response to the capacity and stamina of participants in the group as the group progresses.

Participants will also be informed from the beginning that they can give a signal to take a break or step out of an exercise if they feel uncomfortable during the workshops, and the group can decide on the signal.

All instructions presented are optional and non-obligatory, and the facilitators must be supportive, flexible, and sensitive to adapt activities to individual needs.

5.4 Detailed unit description

"Breath is the kiss of God" - Yogi Bhanjan

Every person has a unique voice that is shaped by their body, character and natural tone. Additionally, the resonators they use and their voice placement also play a crucial role in their sound. In this unit, we focus on training participants to use air properly to improve the tone of their voice, vocal range, and breathing capacity.

The following sections are covered in this unit:

- ▶ Introduction to the different methods that will be used in the workshops, such as Linklater, Hart, and Gementzaki.
- ▶ Anatomy information and an introduction to natural respiration.



- ▶ Basic exercises to increase awareness of sound vibrations.
- ▶ Positioning the voice on various body resonators.
- ▶ Working with text excerpts and applying the exercises.
- ▶ Developing different qualities in the voice such as volume, pacing, pause, rhythm, and tonality through songs with the help of a piano.
- ▶ Individual and team-level group work.

In the first section, participants will be introduced to the basic principles of the methods that will be used in the workshops through simple exercises and games. They will experience relaxation and learn techniques to calm the body and mind, support the diaphragm, and manage the air they inhale and exhale.

The second section will cover the anatomy of the head and chest, with the facilitator using sketches and pictures to explain how the respiratory system works. Participants will learn the importance of diaphragm and breathing exercises, and how to maintain correct posture while remaining relaxed internally and externally active.

In the third section, selected exercises will help participants hear the sound in other people's spines and feel vibrations and oscillations in their own chest and head resonators. Through these exercises, they will understand that sound circulates in the human body and is not limited to the throat and mouth, as many people mistakenly believe.

The fourth and fifth sections will be combined and intertwined, with exercises applied in dramatic readings to explore the chords in detail and understand where they "live" and "reside." The goal is to send the sound to the appropriate resonator, ensuring that the chords sound clear and the vibration is carried by the vowels in space. Consonants are the backbone, necessary for the production of the word. When combined with the vowels and extended in phrases, the whole body will resonate with sound.

In addition to the technical requirements of speech, the meaning of sound and text is also important. When the exercises and methods are applied to a specific dramatic reading, the benefits are numerous: a strong and clear voice, a variety of tones, and effortlessly organic emotional expression.

We chose to focus on the respiratory system because it emphasizes achieving the best results with minimal effort. While one can breathe through only the nose or mouth, both inputs are necessary for optimal breathing.

The improvisations and games we suggest are designed to encourage good diaphragm support and coordination of movement and speech in a light and enjoyable way.

In the sixth and seventh sections, we have selected simple and accessible music scores for participants with no prior experience. Singing liberates the voice even more effortlessly, as we don't have time to overthink and block the natural process. Participants can discover which octave their voice is in, if the men are bass, baritone or tenor and if the women are soprano, mezzo or alto.

The voice is one of our most important tools, and the way we speak involves elements such as intonation, pauses, rhythm, and correct breathing. It is important to practice in an airy, ventilated space with a soft floor, and wear comfortable clothes and shoes to allow for comfortable movement.

Overall, this unit provides a comprehensive training in vocal techniques and expression, allowing participants to improve their speaking and singing abilities with ease and enjoyment.



5.5 Unit assessment

Assessment should be tailored to each individual's competencies, experience and expectations, taking in to account the unique challenges they may face. The progress of each participant will be evaluated according to the following points: clear speech; strong, extroverted voice; singing with stable pitch; correct speech, timbre and voice qualities; voice length and volume control; voice uttering and speech with adequate diaphragm support.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed activities in improving the above-mentioned participants' competencies, questionnaires can be used. These questionnaires can allow the participants to express whether they perceive that they have improved their skills in these areas. Additionally, at the end of each session, time should be allocated to discussing these topics to enable participants to share their experiences with their peers. In the case of exercises involving the voice, participants can be invited to take a notebook in which to record their progress or impressions during the different sessions.

In the framework of this training programme implementation, it is expected to have a professional familiar with the participants present during the sessions to support the facilitator and to provide objective assessment to ensure that the training is achieving its intended goals.

5.6 Additional resources

- ▶ Boston, J., & Cook, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Breath in Action: The Art of Breath in Vocal and Holistic Practice*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London and Philadelphia.
- ▶ Linklater, K. (1992). *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice: The Actor's Guide to Talking the Text*. Theatre Communications Group. New York.
- ▶ Armstrong, R. (2003). *The spirit of technique*. Roy Hart Theatre. Retrieved from: <https://roy-hart-theatre.com/shop/the-spirit-of-technique/>
- ▶ Höfing, W., & Hommelsheim, C. (2012). *Your own voice in Life and Art*. Retrieved from: <https://www.wallihoefinger.com/en/media-en/your-own-voice.html>
- ▶ Höfing, W., & Hommelsheim, C. (2012). *Finding your voice. Interview with Rosemary Quinn*. Roy Hart Theatre. Retrieved from: <https://roy-hart-theatre.com/shop/finding-your-voice/>
- ▶ Windsor, J. (1996). *The sound boxes of Aeschylus*. The Independent. Retrieved from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/the-sound-boxes-of-aeschylus-1346982.html>

5.7 References

- ▶ Linklater K. & Slob A. (2006). *Freeing the Natural Voice: Magery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language*. Nick Hern Books. London.
- ▶ Yemendzakis, M., & Hefe, M. (2006). *Jedes Kind Kann Singen*. Bosse. Germany.



5.8 Unit activities

5.8.1 Introduction exercises

EXERCISE NAME: THROW THE BALL

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise: Warm up the body and voice

Focus level: Medium

Energy requirement: High

Materials: A ball

Duration: 10 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator instructs the participants to form a straight line, standing shoulder to shoulder.
- ▶ The facilitator gives a ball to the first participant in the line.
- ▶ The facilitator asks the first participant to place the ball on the ground and kick it, while shouting the word “ball” in a loud and clear voice, like shouting “gooooooal” during a football match. For participants who may have difficulty with physical activity, the facilitator encourages them to adapt the exercise to their abilities, such as using less force or mimicking the kicking gesture while still making the sound. The facilitator reminds the participants to kick the ball gently to avoid hurting others in the line.
- ▶ The next participant in the line repeats the same exercise until everyone has had a turn.
- ▶ The facilitator suggests that the participants can use different tones and inflections when shouting “ball”; to make the activity more fun and engaging.

EXERCISE NAME: BLOWING THROUGH A STRAW

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise: Regulate the air flow

Focus level: Low

Energy requirement: Low



Materials: None

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator arranges the participants in a circle, facing each other.
- ▶ The facilitator demonstrates how to purse the lips, as if blowing through a straw.
- ▶ Next, the facilitator instructs the participants to take a deep breath and exhale slowly through pursed lips, regulating the flow of air to create a soft, steady sound. To make the exercise more interesting, the facilitator can suggest that the participants imagine they are making different sounds as they exhale, such as the sound of wind blowing, rustling leaves, or animal sounds.
- ▶ The facilitator explains to the participants how breath control is essential to sound production, and how regulating the airflow through pursed lips can produce a consistent sound.

5.8.II Core exercises

EXERCISE NAME: ANIMAL IMITATION

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise:

- Triggering the imagination
- Warming up
- Developing speech and body coordination

Focus level: High (if practiced individually) / Medium (if practiced in group)

Energy requirement: High (if practiced individually) / Medium (if practiced in group)

Materials: None

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator gathers the participants around in a circle
- ▶ The facilitator asks two participants to choose an animal and imitate its movements and sounds.



EXERCISE NAME: ANIMAL IMITATION

- ▶ The two participants move to the centre of the circle and start to simultaneously perform their animal sounds and movements. They can interact with each other as the animals they have chosen. The facilitator demonstrates how to imitate an animal and encourages the participants to be creative in their movements and sounds.
- ▶ Once the first pair finishes the exercise, the facilitator selects the next pair of participants to take turns.

For participants who experience social anxiety, the facilitator can suggest techniques to help them feel more comfortable. For example, they may suggest that participants close their eyes and visualize the animal gesture and their own body performing it. Additionally, participants can choose a location in the working space that feels safe and comfortable for them to practice the animal sound, either by whispering it to themselves or making the sound quietly. The facilitator may also emphasize that participants should focus on themselves and their own experience, rather than feeling pressure to watch or compare themselves to others.

EXERCISE NAME: SINGING A TEXT

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise:

- Help participants to express ideas clearly and listen actively to others.
- Develop participants' ability to use their voice effectively and convey meaning and emotion when delivering text.

Focus level: Medium (if practiced individually) / Low (if practiced in group)

Energy requirement: Medium

Materials : A text chosen from the facilitator/the participants or a text produced by the participants

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator can use this exercise as a continuation of the exercise "Consonants-clear enunciation", but can also be used by itself.
- ▶ Participants are invited to form a circle either standing or sitting on the ground.
- ▶ The facilitator provides the text for the activity, which can be chosen by the facilitator, participants, or created by the participants.



EXERCISE NAME: SINGING A TEXT

- ▶ The facilitator sets a relaxed tone of voice and initiates a tonicity exercise by forming the vowel “o” with a group “ooooo”.
- ▶ The facilitator sings the text in the same tonicity and instructs the participants to follow along. For participants with literacy issues, the words will be given orally.
- ▶ The facilitator ensures that everyone maintains the correct tonicity, and if they start to deviate from it, the facilitator instructs them to gradually return to it and sings the text again. If someone in the group is singing the text correctly with a strong voice, the facilitator may suggest that everyone follow their lead. For example, the facilitator could say, “Let’s all listen to George!” and everyone can follow his rhythm and tone. Participants who are struggling can be supported by the group.
- ▶ The facilitator also corrects any tenses of the throat by placing their hand on the participant’s sternum or asking them to feel their own resonance.
- ▶ At the end of the exercise, the facilitator reminds participants to drink water to keep their vocal cords hydrated and prevent fatigue.

Choosing one tone at a time helps us understand the text’s meaning without the stress of tone selection. By feeling the vocal essence of the text, we can determine which words and syllables to emphasize, capturing its sound and gaining a better understanding of how to perform it. Additionally, it’s essential to warm up our voice before proceeding.

Key Terms: Tonicity refers to the particular tone or pitch used in singing or reciting the text. The facilitator selects a specific tone and all participants sing or recite the text in that same tone.

EXERCISE NAME: SINGING LESSONS BASED ON CALL AND RESPOND

Exercise number: 3

Aims of the exercise

- Warm up the voice
- Develop vocal range extension techniques
- Learn diaphragm expansion technique

Focus level: High (if practiced individually) / Medium (if practiced in group)

Energy requirement: High (if practiced individually) / Medium (if practiced in group)

Materials: None

Duration: 30 minutes



EXERCISE NAME: SINGING LESSONS BASED ON CALL AND RESPOND

Instructions:

- The facilitator gives the following instructions to participants:
 - ▶ Begin by loosening your jaw.
 - ▶ Keep your mouth open at all times while singing, so your teeth do not touch.
 - ▶ Loosen your face muscles.
 - ▶ Position your body in a straight line, with your shoulders relaxed.
 - ▶ Breathe from your diaphragm instead of your chest.
 - ▶ Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
 - ▶ Keep your throat muscles relaxed.
 - ▶ An open chest is advantageous for breathing, and sitting straight is essential for good posture.
 - ▶ Ensure a firm base, with your legs relaxed and not touching each other.
 - ▶ Position your head naturally, looking forward with a slightly elongated neck.
 - ▶ Take deep breaths and while exhaling, the sound should come out immediately. It is the air flow that vibrates the vocal cords.
- The facilitator sings the notes and the participants follow along with their voice.



Examples:

Three staves of musical notation. The first staff has the lyrics 'La La La La La La La La'. The second staff has the lyrics 'La - a La - a La - a La La - a La - a La - a La'. The third staff has the lyrics 'Ball Ball Ball Ball Ball Ball Ball Ball'.

Two staves of musical notation. The first staff has the lyrics 'Bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bomm Bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bomm'. The second staff has the lyrics 'So - o Sa - a So - o Sa So - o Sa - a So - o Sa'. The page number '116' is visible in the bottom left corner of the image.



Musical notation for the first exercise, consisting of three staves. The first staff has the lyrics "Fu Fu Fu Fu Fu Fu Fu Fu". The second staff has the lyrics "Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom Bom". The third staff has the lyrics "Bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bomm Bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bo-bomm".

Musical notation for the second exercise, consisting of four staves. The first two staves have the lyrics "Hu - - - hu!" and "Hu - - - hu!". The third and fourth staves have the lyrics "Schu - - - schu!" and "Schu - - - schu!".



Bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm

O - o - oh! O - o - oh!

Bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm bomm!

A - a - ah! A - a - ah!

U - u - uh! U - u - uh!

Ju - hu - uh! Ju - hu - uh!

O - o - oh! O - o - oh!

A - a - ah! A - a - ah!





5.8.III Closure exercises

EXERCISE NAME: UNFOLDING THE SPINE

Exercise number: 1

Aims of the exercise:

- Enable the free circulation of sound throughout the entire body and unlock the full potential of the voice.
- Make participants feel the sound passing through the spine, by embodying the text-song.

Focus level: Low - Medium

Energy requirement: Low

Materials: None

Duration: 15 minutes

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator arranges the participants in a horizontal line in the room, ensuring that everyone is visible to each other.
- ▶ The facilitator stands straight with relaxed shoulders and maintains steady eye contact with the participants and asks the participants to observe them carefully once and then repeat the exercise along with them.

EXERCISE NAME: UNFOLDING THE SPINE

- ▶ The Facilitator shows the exercise and simultaneously explains the steps. Starting from the head, vertebra by vertebra (from atlas, the first vertebra of the head) until the last vertebra, the coccyx, the facilitator begins to bend down slowly while exhaling and singing a text or a song in one single note.
- ▶ After exhaling, the facilitator explains calmly and warmly, "Now I stop the motion and wait calmly for the new breath to flow into my body."
- ▶ The facilitator continues bending down and simultaneously uses deep breath from the diaphragm and exhales, singing a song.
- ▶ The facilitator maintains a slow rhythm while bending down and emphasizes the importance of feeling the space between the vertebrae for the circulation of sound.
- ▶ When the facilitator reaches the final position, which is when the coccyx is the highest vertebra of the spine, they say, "Now I will rest for a while. We can observe the motion that creates this free inhaling-exhaling. Next, I will get up in a straight position, following the exact opposite motion. The head will stand straight in the end."
- ▶ The facilitator repeats the exercise along with the participants.
- ▶ Finally, the facilitator asks the participants to do the exercise one more time while they observe and correct any mistakes or guide participants towards precise movements.

At the end of the exercise, the participants can be asked the following questions:

- ▶ What did you enjoy most about today's workshop?
- ▶ What did you learn from the workshop?

EXERCISE NAME: DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Exercise number: 2

Aims of the exercise

- Let the participants share their feelings and better assimilate the knowledge they got through the implementation of this unit's activities.
- Make participants more aware of their bodies and the places where their voices resonate.
- Verify if the participants are able to express verbally all this experience.

Focus level: Medium to High

Energy requirement: Low – Medium

Materials: None



EXERCISE NAME: DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

Duration: 15 minutes

Instructions:

The facilitator tells the participants to sit down in a circle.

- The facilitator invites each participant to share their experience and reflect on what they have learned during the session.
- The facilitator can use the following questions to guide the discussion or add new ones:
 - ▶ What was the most valuable thing you learned during the session about music?
 - ▶ What was the most challenging part of the training session for you?
 - ▶ Is there anything you would have liked to learn more about or do differently in this training session?
- Finally, the facilitator reminds the participants that changing respiratory habits takes time and encourages them to be patient and persistent in their practice.



END OF THE UNIT



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