**Derby Bach Choir- Vocal conditioning: 3/Breathing** *(notes)*

Remember singers are sportspeople who carry a valuable instrument, care of the instrument will prolong its life and increase the enjoyment of using it

Hydration- drink, drink, drink- water, hot or cold…preferably room temp!

Positive benefits: well-oiled joints and larynx: Feeling brighter /alert.

Improved concentration and memory

Posture- standing erect, with S shaped spine, relaxed knees, shoulders down and back, free relaxed neck and larynx with open chest and rib cage.

(See notes for previous sessions)

**Breathing**:

Many of us due to occupation, lifestyle, stress, childbirth etc may have adopted a less-than-optimal breathing pattern which though not dysfunctional, may have resulted in our being less aware of our breathing, bodies and diaphragm support.

This session is aimed at reminding us where to find our diaphragm and how diaphragmatic breathing can be enhanced.

Avoid mouth breathing: Breath in through the nose which warms, filters and hydrates the air.

Mouth breathing causes dryness and trauma, can lead to loss of voice and possible laryngitis

**Patterns of breathing**

main patterns-

1/ Passive resting- gentle inspiration /passive expiration using tidal volume punctuated by occasional deep breaths.

This is an automatic process, usually unnoticed, shallow and quiet eg when occupied by activities eg watching TV or reading

2/ Dysfunctional breathing-

*Definition: an inefficient and unhelpful pattern of breathing often characterised by shallow rapid breaths using the upper chest rather than the diaphragm.*

Causes:

Injury/acute conditions: eg. Fractured ribs, falls severe bruising to the thoracic area

Chronic conditions: e.g. respiratory condition, Osteoarthritis

Anxiety: Symptoms of anxiety, breathlessness, chest and throat pain, fatigue, dizziness, poor concentration

N.B. *Anxiety can cause a dysfunctional breathing pattern which can become habitual and create a prolonged pattern of associated anxiety.*

To alleviate a poor breathing pattern and anxiety, practice Diaphragmatic breathing.

(see below)

3/ Diaphragmatic breathing- important for singers-provides the driving force from the bellows thro larynx to sound box.

* Uses full lung capacity, apart from residual volume (the residual volume is that amount of air which always remains in the lungs)

**Practising Diaphragmatic Breathing.**

Sit in a relaxed posture with whole back and head supported or lie on a bed on your back with head supported

Shoulders dropped, down and back,

Place one hand on your chest

The other on your abdomen or belly

Breath into you lower hand, relaxing the abdominal and allowing the hand (and ribs) to move in and out with each slow breath

**The hand on your chest should not move!**

Try following a breathing pattern.

count 4 to breath in: hold for 7: sigh out for 8: repeat several times.

N.B. Sitting and standing in an upright posture, with shoulders relaxed down and back, and where the spine is maintained in a midline position allows the ribs to swing up and out freely (a bucket handle swing) creating maximum potential tidal volume, ie. maximum inspiration.

Poor posture reduces this movement preventing the ribs from moving to their full potential and reducing our breath volume.

Techniques to increase diaphragmatic awareness and control-

Visualisation: ways of achieving max inspiration

Imagine:

* Breathing in through feet **(*encourages basal expansion as diaphragm is pushed down.)***
* Breathing in to expand an imaginary rubber band around the waist
* Bubble PEP (Positive End Pressure): blowing through a wide bore straw through water reservoir e.g. in your water bottle,

Control the out breath to create gentle bubbles and continue as long as possible, increase the amount of water to engage the abdominal muscles in breathing out.

When confident with your diaphragmatic technic, try practicing in standing.

**Singers, Please Loosen Abdominal Tension: SPLAT**

Allows us to relax the abdominal muscles inhale allowing the diaphragm to expand fully, prevent neck tension.

Assists us in obtaining a rapid, full and silent in- breath during quick musical phrases.

**Hydrate thoroughly, Stand tall and Breathe deeply…Sing well !**

**(Look and feel younger)**

