

Pitch & Tone

Pitch Control

As explained on the 'Resonance' technique sheet both pitch and tone are partially controlled by resonance placement but the most important aspect is the position of your vocal chords.

When singing low, vocal cords are short and thick making vocal connection relatively easy.

Resonance can be felt in lower jaw line and chest.

When singing high the vocal cords are long and thin, this can, for some people, make vocal connection a trickier task, so it's something to be aware of.

Resonance can be felt above the roof of the mouth, in the head.

The higher you pitch, the higher the resonance, the longer and thinner the vocal cords become.

The lower you pitch, the lower the resonance and the shorter and thicker the vocal cords become.

For older singers 15 upwards, who are wanting to sing really low notes, you need to start thinking about lowering the larynx which helps the voice pitch dramatically low notes.

Yawn - if you place your fingers on your larynx and yawn, as you inhale just before yawning you will feel your larynx drop. This is simple and effective way of helping students to become aware of their larynx position. To sing really low notes, you want to drop the larynx and hold it there whilst singing. This is an advanced technique that shouldn't be spoken about until students have a solid understanding and capability of healthy basic vocal technique.

Introduce this during scales/warm ups, slowly dropping the larynx more and more as the pitch lowers.

Off Pitch

When we sing flat, it means we are pitching under the correct pitch, often due to a lack of support, lack of resonance awareness and sometimes lack of vocal connection, although singers are still capable of pitching correctly with aspirate tone. It can also be purely down to lack of confidence, so therefore not applying themselves to the sound.

When singing sharp it means that students are pitching above the desired pitch, often due to over reaching (students think they have to push/reach more than they need to, they just need to relax and support their voice). It can also be due to lack of resonance awareness and/or over-compressing (squeezing the cords together too tightly).

Tone

Tone is controlled mainly by resonance placement and vocal connection.

Resonance:

When using resonance to control pitch we think about resonance moving vertically up and down our head but when controlling tone we think about the resonance moving horizontally from the back of the head/top of throat to the nose and every placement in between.

The further forward the resonance the more nasally/thin the tone will become, the further back the resonance is the thicker/rounder the tone will become. Using 'ee' to feel the nasality placement and 'ah' to feel the backward placement is a great way to get students started.

Vocal Connection:

This is in regards to how fully the vocal cords are closed.

Fully connected vocal cords will give a core to the sound, really important for projection.

The less connected the vocal cords, the breathier the tonal quality.

A great way to become aware of this is to use a school-yard like chant of 'Nah nah n-nah nah' in a really annoying whiney tone, then make it slightly less annoying each time until you reach a "normal" tone then begin to make it slightly breathier each time until the tone is saturated with breath, then work your way back. Repeat the process until the student is capable of gradually moving the tone from fully compressed to aspirate/breathy and back again.