SING HIGH, SING LOW
VOCAL RANGE EXTENSION – the WHY and HOW

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How you manage the top and bottom of your range affects your contribution to the ensemble and is important for all parts.

Ever notice that low notes can disappear? It matters for all singers:

Lead: lost notes make the melody disappear;

Tenor: low notes need to be sung with Lead-like quality rather than the regular angelic tone;

Baritone: affects the chord BALANCE when low notes disappear so it may make the lead and/or bass stick out because they sound so far apart;

Bass: low notes can be swallowed, breathy, throaty, 'bottom out', gravel-y.

Ever sung or heard higher notes that sound strangled? They may not even be very high but can sound that way because they are tight. That can be avoided when the sound is open and free.

WHY does that happen to our sound? **TENSION** interferes with a free, open, resonant voice. Extra muscles are recruited that only compound the problem… scrunched face? raised shoulder? clenched fists? raised heels? All that tension overflows into the sound. **Negative self-talk** ("Yikes, that high note is coming") creates even more tension and increases the likelihood that the result will be less than wonderful.

What YOU can do individually OUTSIDE REHEARSAL to create that **FREEDOM** at the top and bottom of your range, when the focus is not on the ensemble…

Tips for **EXTENDING YOUR RANGE:**

Starting from a comfortable range, using an easy interval of 1-5-1 (doh-soh-doh), slowly hum, bubble, trill your tongue, ooooh. SLIDING is helpful to engage your support system to take advantage of your whole instrument. Work your way up by semitones. NOTHING should cause discomfort, ever! Use arm swinging or bending over or other big movement to keep the tone free and open. When progressing to a vowel, use AH or OH when going up. Use an open EE for sliding down 5-1-5 (soh-doh-soh) to encourage that forward feel of the sound.

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General Principle: In a song, when approaching a note near the end of your range, sing the NOTE BEFORE it with great freedom, support and resonance. You'll be more likely to continue that great singing when you get to 'the' note.

SONG SPECIFIC: Awareness is key. Notice where your tension creeps in on a high or low note for you, isolate a few measures around that note and turn that into a personal vocalise. Here is one example of how you could explore a free high note:

1. Take those measures that include the high note, start them in your mid-range (not in the key of the song).
2. Applying the general principle above, sing that 'line' on a hum, then bubble it, trill it, then on AH or OH, making sure all the sounds are connected and seamless. Repeat #2, using graceful arm waving or other freeing body movement, until you are happy with the ease of it.
3. Raise the 'exercise' by a semitone. Repeat as often as you need to for the sound to be free before raising it again. Add into the mix: sing the whole line on the target vowel of the lyric you are improving.
4. Keeping raising the key of your exercise until you are higher than the key of the song. Sing it all on one vowel. Repeat on a different vowel.
5. Sing all the lyrics with the same open free sound, not letting consonants send you away from the wonderfulness you developed.
6. Then sing the lyric and notes in the key it should be sung in. YOU DID IT! It should feel so easy.

The same exercise for a pesky **low note** (for any part) starts also in your mid-range and goes down by a semitone applying all the same principles. Use an open free, forward EE when you are ready to use a vowel after the humming, bubbling, trilling etc.

Does all this seem like too much work? There are probably only two spots in the whole song that would need this practice. You can meet your goal of being **present** in every chord you sing.

HIGH NOTES: TAKE THE LID OFF!   LOW NOTES: FORWARD AND AWAY!