

A to J model of singing v.4

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Here is a summary of some of the core concepts that we work with in my teaching studio. The many posts in the [blog](#) are expansions of different sections or even single ideas from this **A to J model of singing**.

THE '3 + 1' MAP

1. BREATHING system – ‘power source’
2. VIBRATING source – ‘raw vocal signal’ or ‘sound source’
3. RESONATING system – ‘sound filter’
4. ‘Plus 1’. INNER LIFE – thinking and feeling, and their impact on both learning, and the body (and therefore the sound)

A ... ALIGNING & AWARENESS (which improve everything in the 3+1 Map)

1. ‘Neat feet’ – feet pointing forwards, and weight distributed evenly over the centre
 2. ‘Ease in the knees’ – keep the knees free and unlocked
 3. ‘Elvis pelvis’ – keep the muscles of the groin and bottom released
 4. ‘Shoulder tip above the hip’ – don’t curl the shoulders forward, or pull them back
 5. ‘Un-pack the back’ – lengthen vertically, and widen horizontally – and breathe!
 6. ‘Check the neck’ – ensure the head/chin is not pushed forward; the ears should be above the shoulder tip
 7. ‘Jaw to the floor’ – not jamming it open, and not biting or ‘holding’ it, but letting it feel that it hangs freely at the back; it does not need to be opened wide at the front, except in special circumstances
 8. ‘Un-grip the lip’ – let the lips feel free and mobile, never tightening
 9. ‘Un-bung the tongue’ – let the tongue be free and mobile
 10. ‘Low feeling, high ceiling’ – the beginning of a yawn helps drop the larynx low (opening up the pharyngeal resonance), and raise the soft palate.
 11. ‘Sane brain’ – mind is calm, alert, and ‘aware’ rather than self-conscious; the ‘noble attitude’
- Processes, not ‘positions’; dynamic, fluid, no holding

B ... BREATHING (Breathing System in the ‘3+1 map’)

1. WIDE RIBS (to lower and brace diaphragm)
2. ‘BBB – Below Belly Button’ – when exhaling and breathing air upwards to the vocal folds to make sound, use the lowest possible muscles, just above the pelvis – transversus abdominis “TA” – the ‘cummerbund muscle’, but not the rectus abdominis (‘six pack’)
3. CONSTANT FLOW (NO HOLDING) (to prevent glottal ‘grip’)

4. **MOUTH BREATHING** – Apart from in longer rests (when the singer isn't singing), there isn't time to breathe through the nose. Also, breathing through the nose, with mouth closed, would mean that the resonating cavity of the mouth would not be ready for the syllable we have to sing.
5. **SILENT PRACTICE** - ie no vocalising, to make multi-sensory awareness more important than listening

Breathing affects

1. Onset & release
2. Duration
3. Renewals of air
4. Volume
5. Volume variation
6. Stability of tone (across pitch range and vowel spectrum)
7. *Vibrato*
8. "Ring" in the voice (ping)
9. Tonal variation (vocal colour)
10. Pitch range (and expressive versatility at extremes of pitch range)
11. Intervals and register transitions (including 1st and 2nd *passaggio*)
12. Agility (pitches and words)
13. Enunciating
14. Phrasing
15. Musical versatility (genres / styles)
16. Personal expression
17. Performance stamina
18. Recovery rate
19. Vocal health
20. Long vocal life

C ... CONNECTING (onset; 'note in the throat'; VIBRATING in the '3+1 map')

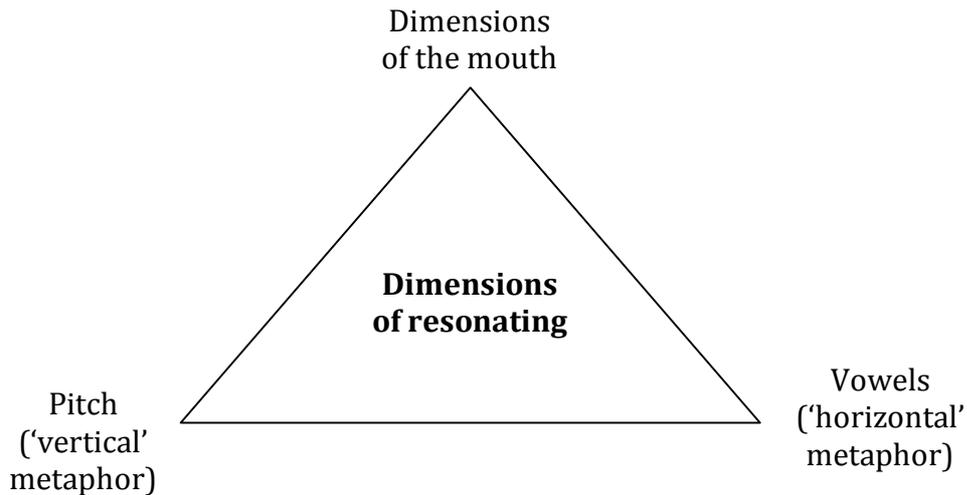
1. **ALIGNING, AWARENESS & BREATHING**
2. **BALANCED ONSET** ('glide'): Neither vocal fry (creaking), glottal stop, or breathy ('intrusive H') – breath flow as the first step (but inaudible – 1/3 sec before sound)
3. **'BBB'** (see earlier) **NOT THROAT**: minimal throat, neck, jaw, tongue – larynx shouldn't jump, but it will move slightly on a) much higher pitches, b) very rapid pitch change (e.g. *coloratura* singing or semiquavers). There should be no intervention from the tongue for onset or release.
4. **VOCAL MODES** – understanding different set-ups for the larynx. The terms 'head', 'chest' and 'mixed voice' are almost always very poorly defined, and tend to muddle people. It is better to think in terms of: Mode 1 'thick fold' (formerly 'chest'), Mode 2 'thin fold' (formerly 'head'), Mode 3 ('falsetto', sometimes referred to as Mode 2b). BELT and music theatre singing may use either Mode 1 or Mode 2 set-ups, and has to be combined with understanding resonance strategies (see 'Dimensions of Sound'). Mode 1 singing is not confined to low pitches, and Mode 2 singing is not confined to high pitches: Mode 1 singing can, with skill, be taken above C4 for a man, and above D5 for a woman; Mode 2 singing can be taken well below these.

5. **DON'T LISTEN:** primal noise-making, not 'singing'; checking for multi-sensory feedback (sensation); spontaneous vocal gesture, 'speechy'; imagination
6. **VOWELS FIRST:** Core sound from the beginning of the note; neither hesitant (creeping in), or over-eager; "no word begins with a consonant" (Alexander's dictum – ie find the vowel shape inside mouth before finding consonant that precedes it)
7. **RELEASE WITH PRESENCE:** end of note as full and easy as the onset; note has a beginning, middle and end, and the end is just as important. The timed SPLAT exercise is useful here. (SPLAT = 'singers please loosen abdominal tension' when breathing in – Janice Chapman). Sustain a note for as long as possible before a quick inhalation; leaving as little time as possible for the breath makes the whole process less tiring, more accurate in timing onsets, and sustains better tone and line.
8. **PORTAMENTO:** 2 types – 'Carry' the vowel or the pitch: i) The vowel from the first syllable is carried to the next syllable's pitch, and then the new syllable is sung, or ii) The pitch of the first syllable is used to start the next syllable, which then tastefully slides to the second syllable's written pitch. Never 'surprise' the muscles in a pitch or vowel change; during pitch change, no visible activity in throat / neck, underneath tongue. The techniques used for *portamento* link with the 'Dimensions of Resonating' module.

D ... DIMENSIONS OF RESONATING ('D' and 'E' are the Resonating System in the '3+1 map')

1. **ALIGNING, AWARENESS, BREATHING & CONNECTING**
2. **The FIVE DIMENSIONS**
 1. (Spatial) Metaphor 1 – Understanding **the 'structure' and 'timbre' of a vocal sound** – the fundamental (what we hear as the pitch of the note) at the (metaphorical) 'bottom' of the sound structure; the first [formant](#) 'above' it (strong/peak resonances of the lowest harmonics, which account for the 'dark', 'deep', 'bass-y', 'heavy', 'round', 'weighty' aspect of a vocal sound); the second formant 'above' that (the next area of strong/peak resonance of slight 'higher' or faster frequency harmonics, which accounts for the 'light', 'treble-y', 'thinner' aspect of vocal sound); the third and 'higher' formant (the 'singer's formant' or 'ring' in a sound, harmonics around 2800-3400 Hz)
 2. **The resonating space ('dimensions of resonating')** – reshaping and resizing the actual physical, three dimensions of the vocal tract – using lips, jaw, tongue, soft palate, and pharynx – to enhance different aspects of the vocal timbre. In general: a wider and longer pharyngeal space lowers the 1st formant (making the sound darker/rounder/heavier/bass-y-er) – what I call 'low feeling, high ceiling' (low larynx, high soft palate); dropping the main body of the tongue away from the hard palate lowers the 2nd formant; narrowing the opening above the larynx raises the 3rd formant (creating a ringing sound); sending the lips forward lowers 1st and 2nd formants in particular (generally 'darkening' / 'rounding' the sound). Reversing these moves reverses the acoustic result for the listener.

3. (Spatial) Metaphor 2 – **the ‘vertical’ dimension of changing pitch** – going ‘up’ and ‘down’ – for any given vowel, we need to increase or decrease the internal mouth space, depending on whether we are ascending or descending in pitch.
4. (Spatial) Metaphor 3 – **the ‘horizontal’ dimension of vowel change** – for a given pitch, to change vowel, we must modify the lips (forward or back), tongue height (in relation to the hard palate), forwardness or backwardness of the tongue, and pharyngeal depth (how low the larynx sits, and how high the soft palate is lifted).



5. **Volume** and ‘power’ are only partly to do with amplitude (size of the wave form, ie how widely the vocal folds vibrate). Listeners perceive / hear a singer very well even when the volume / amplitude is less, as long as the 2nd formant (the ‘treble-y’ end of the vowel) is resonated well, and / or the 3rd formant is resonated well. *Messa di voce* (‘putting the voice’), a concept within the *bel canto* tradition, is an approach to managing volume control. Low pitched notes are made audible not by ‘pushing’, driving air pressure, depressing the larynx, or opening the mouth wider; instead, we must but raise the tongue much closer to the hard palate, regardless of the required vowel.
3. ‘PING IS KING’: by ‘ping’, I mean maintaining reasonably strong resonance in at least formants 1 and 2 (if not formant 3). Unless ‘crooning’ or other specialist effects (e.g. growl or distortion) keep ‘ping’ permanently in all vowel sounds, except for expressive appropriateness. Beauty, audibility, mechanical efficiency and vocal health are all enhanced by maintaining ‘ping’. Track ‘ping’ on i) pitch change, ii) vowel change, iii) simultaneous vowel and pitch change (preparing for true *legato*), iv) approaching a consonant, v) coming off a consonant. ‘Ping’ can be compromised if the jaw drops with pitch drop, or with move from front to back vowels (especially in middle vowels where the tongue flattens), or if ribs close or ‘BBB’ slackens.
4. **LEGATO VOWEL CHANGE**: Vowels are differentiated by having their own distinctive positions for their 1st and 2nd formant. The movement between vowels sounds smoother if at least one of the formants is kept reasonably similar for both vowels. It is also important to retain similar strength of resonance between adjacent vowels. (Also, see later: ‘*Legato* syllable change’.)

5. QUIET JAW: women must not attempt significant jaw opening until F5; minimal activity; massage jaw and tongue points. The jaw opening at the back helps draw the tongue further from the roof of the mouth (lowering formant 2, and reducing shrillness), and can help open up the pharynx (dropping formant 1 slightly lower, increasing 'warmth' of sound).
6. PASSAGGIO: uses Aligning, Awareness, Breathing, Connecting, rounded lips, quiet jaw, tracking ping (vowels and *portamento*). The *zona di passaggio* is approximately between C4 and G4 for men and women, ie in the higher part of a man's pitch range, and the lower part of a woman's range. A man can stay in Mode 1 almost to the top of this region, but may choose to transition to Mode 2 low down in this region; either way, he must also adjust formants 1 and 2 (ie resonances) carefully through this region, and needs to do so differently whether he is favouring Mode 1 or Mode 2. The same is true for a woman, but, unless she is deliberately going for a heavy 'chesty' sound in this region, she is better off singing all of it in Mode 2. The challenges of the *passaggio* come from having to adjust both Mode shifts and resonance shifts simultaneously.
7. CHIAROSCURO ('light-dark') – managing vocal colour, mix of 'high', 'medium' and 'low' harmonics (ie fast and slow frequencies present within a single sung note).
8. CONVERGENT / DIVERGENT resonators – In general, a classical singer should aim for a convergent resonator, ie. a relatively small mouth opening, but jaw dropped at the back. This creates a 'balanced' *chiaroscuro* tone containing a balanced mix of 'weightiness' (low first formant), and 'light' (reasonably high 2nd formant within what is possible for a given vowel); the sound is also more likely to have a strongly resonated 3rd formant ('ring'). 'Belt' requires a divergent resonator, with a much wider mouth opening (what I call 'letterbox' mouth); this lowers the front of the tongue, pulling most vowel sounds towards 'ah', 'eh' or 'uh', lowering the 2nd formant, and raising the larynx and back of the tongue, thereby keeping the 1st formant higher (with less 'bass' in the sound quality). A divergent resonator produces a sound usually described as more 'natural' (or less 'formal' or 'trained'); however, the sound from a divergent resonator may still have been created through pre-meditated and carefully managed technique by the singer; and the sound from a convergent resonator is still 'natural' in that it does not, and cannot, defy the laws of the physical universe. 'Natural' is a human construct, based on aesthetics.

E ... ENUNCIATING ('D' and 'E' are the Resonating System)

1. ALIGNING, AWARENESS, BREATHING, CONNECTING, DIMENSIONS OF SOUND
2. VOWEL / CORE SOUND FIRST: ease, clarity and audibility of enunciating depend on point 1, and focussing on good core sound, and immaculate migration between vowels at the heart of each syllable, including when changing pitch. (Consonants depend for the success on being con-sonant, 'sounding with' the vowels.)
3. QUIET JAW: when the jaw is quieter the tongue and lips work much better for pinging vowels, articulating consonants, and leaving the larynx and 'note in the throat' alone; gently biting the tip of the little finger whilst enunciating

all the consonants helps establish the precise and vigorous work that the lips and tongue must do whilst the jaw does nothing. Jaw movement disturbs the resonating space (and ping), as well as the muscles attached to the larynx (so interfering with the function of the Vibrating source – vocal folds).

4. **LEGATO SYLLABLE CHANGE:** The listener should not sense/hear in the vowel that there is a consonant coming, or that a consonant has just happened; the core integrity and consistency of the required vowel must be retained right up to the moment the consonant is articulated; it must be re-established immediately after the consonant. This is part of what makes for a true *legato*. (Also, see earlier: ‘*Legato* vowel change’.) It is a mistake to ‘understate’ consonants – they end up sounding ‘soggy’, unclear, and lacking conviction. *Legato* is possible even when consonants are vigorously articulated.
5. **CONSONANT TABLES** – there is a separate handout that includes i) information on how to articulate each consonant for singing, ii) a one page graphic to show the relationships in ‘families’ of consonants, and iii) information on how to articulate different pairings of consonants, introducing my idea of ‘ghost vowels’ to help create better *legato*.
6. **DICTION:** is a muddling word. It can mean how we pronounce words, but its main (and original) meaning is actually how we choose and use words (as in a ‘dictionary’ where we look for and ‘choose’ words). So, I prefer to talk about ‘enunciation’ when thinking about the clarity and mechanical efficiency with which we articulate consonants and words.

Appoggio (from ‘*appoggiarsi*’ meaning ‘to lean’) is a combination of the right sensations in:

- **Breathing** (the feeling of ribs resisting collapse while the abdominals squeeze in and up)
- **Connecting** (the feeling of stability in the throat as sub-glottic and supra-glottic pressure hold the larynx in balance)
- **Dimensions of Sound** (the subtle pressure wave sensation between tongue and mouth roof when we find ping)
- **Enunciating** (the vigorous crispness of tongue, lips and soft palate when we articulate with good underlying air pressures, and well-pinged *legato* vowels)

F ... FEELING (a catch-all term for Inner Life in the ‘3 + 1 map’ and self-mastery)

1. **VOICE PENTAGON:** i) Paradigm (view of self and world) ii) Current thought / mental script / intention iii) Emotional charge iv) Muscle behaviour v) Vocal sound
2. **LEARNING MAP:** i) Teacher-student relationship is a partnership ii) The student is responsible for his/her learning and voice iii) Learning is incremental iv) Learning is iterative and non-linear v) Practice makes permanent vi) Compassion enriches discipline vii) Check for understanding.
3. **MANAGE YOUR STATES:** Feeling issues affect every aspect of singing, from A to E, and G-J.
4. **4 CIRCLES OF MEANING:** i) Singing by yourself, or with your teacher (personal exploration and expression, pleasure of learning, pleasure in making sound, and experiencing oneself holistically) ii) Singing with others (other

singers or musicians, sharing in a private space with each other, musical richness, relationship and camaraderie) iii) Singing live where others hear you (looking for recognition or affirmation? offering an emotional / psychological / spiritual insight or experience to others to respond to how they wish; engaging in a dialogue / conversation with listeners) iv) Singing on recordings (reaching people you will never interact with live)

G ... GYMNASTICS (advanced vocal skills)

1. MANAGE 'A to F' FIRST – with maintenance of 'ping' as the key element to monitor in order that all the Gymnastics become possible.
2. EXTREMES
 1. HIGHEST AND LOWEST NOTES: **B**reathing and **D**imensions of Sound
 2. VOLUME – Loud and soft – and CHANGING VOLUME: **B**reathing and **D**imensions of Sound. *SFORZANDO* – Follow the rules of A-F; especially open neck, unpacked back, rounded lips, bracing ribs, engaging 'BBB', maintaining light spontaneity as a state of mind
 3. SPEED
 1. RAPID PITCH CHANGE – velocity, runs, trills and ornamentation, *coloratura* – “fast singing is slow singing speeded up” (Alexander’s dictum); don’t change the method in order to sing faster (although a lighter production, higher larynx and lower breath pressure is sometimes stylistically and physically called for – learn the rules before you bend them)
 2. RAPID SYLLABLES – patter songs and recitative: Follow the rules of A-F. For recitative, *legato* is particularly important, as is the understanding of intention (see 'Feeling'), and the dramatic trajectory (see 'Interpretation')
 3. REPEATED NOTES – including STACCATO – Follow the rules of A-F; especially open neck, unpacked back, rounded lips, bracing ribs, engaging 'BBB', maintaining light spontaneity as a state of mind
 4. SLOW NOTES – including notes of long duration. These are easier to maintain by keeping vibrancy throughout.
4. BELT & SHOUT, TWANG & SCREAM, GROWL, DISTORTION: All of these will tend to be used by singers who are using a microphone; these singers do well to rely on clever microphone technique and sound engineering to do the 'heavy lifting' (ie delivering loud vocal effects). **Belt** tends to require a divergent resonator (see earlier); **shout** is a version of this. **Twang** requires tongue nearer the hard palate; **scream** may be a version of this, and may include 'whistle' register (a special set-up of the larynx). **Growl** is a low note with low air pressure, and benefits from exploiting amplifying power of a microphone. **Distortion** is a clean note at the level of the larynx, with the 'false folds' (ventricular folds) used to partially obstruct the airway above the larynx so the false folds 'rattle' in the sound wave emitted from the larynx. All these techniques can be done safely with thorough training, some also assisted with the extra power from a microphone and amplification system.

3. **CROONING:** generally use lower air pressures, and breathier ‘note in the throat’, singing more quietly, and letting the microphone and sound equipment shift the volume
4. **VIBRATO:** Naturally occurring vibrancy and warmth, or a manufactured sound effect? Follow the rules of A-F.

H ... HEALTH & HYGIENE (advanced vocal skills)

1. **NEVER COMPROMISE YOUR INSTRUMENT** (you can’t replace it): regardless of the apparent opportunities, obligations, pressing agendas, lack of negotiating options; your instrument is solely your responsibility, and under your sole authority
2. **MANAGE A-G & I-J FIRST:** if the rules are followed, barring ill health, the voice should never suffer
3. **LIFESTYLE & MEDICAL CHOICES AFFECT YOUR VOICE:** diet; keeping hydrated; sleep, rest and recreation (partying, burning the candle at both ends); managing stress; alcohol and smoke; air quality and temperature; silent rest when vocally tired, or sore throat from respiratory infection or other illnesses; seeking help with voice strain; medications and their side effects; not speaking in loud environments

I ... INTERPRETING (working with repertoire)

1. **TECHNIQUE BEFORE REPERTOIRE:** establish a good conceptual and experiential embodiment of A-H before taking on too much repertoire learning, or having to the demands of singing to others (in roles, performances, recordings, auditions, social situations etc). But remember, Technique and Interpretation are not separate. In my model, Feeling (the Inner Life – emotion and psychology of making sound) is integral to good vocal function. In our learning, lessons and practice time, imbuing every single sound with personality, feeling and intention means that when we come to sing songs, we have already trained ourselves to sing with imagination and humanity.
2. **TECHNIQUE GUIDES REPERTOIRE OPTIONS:** don’t make premature decisions about your voice ‘type’, what repertoire you ‘should’ sing or want to sing, or what key or pitch you ‘should’ sing the song in. Working on A-H reveals your voice to you, and your voice changes throughout your life. Your current level of technique will guide you in what you can currently sing. If you have to break the rules to sing a particular song, then consider improving your technique first, adapting the song till you can do it within your current technical means, or don’t do the song for now.
3. **SONG LEARNING SYSTEM:**
 1. Learn physically, well resonated, with ‘whole person’ approach right from the start (rather than under your breath, or in your head).
 2. Whole song can be done with the following approach, or any areas that prove tricky, though doing the opening page this way often sets the singer up well so that later pages slot more quickly and easily into place.
 3. The next sequence done SLOWLY at first.
 4. Spoken ‘vowel stream’: theatrical, ‘lovey’, pinged and *legato*

5. Spoken 'vowel stream' with consonants
 6. Do vowel stream, and then vowel stream with consonants, again, on a sustained single sung pitch.
 7. Sing the melody (or 'pitch stream') on one vowel (probably 'EE' or something well pinged): Check for Aligning, Breathing (no sudden jabs of air on wider intervals or high notes), Connecting, Dimensions of Sound, as well as avoiding twitches in any of these and twitches in lips, jaw, tongue, neck or shoulders. i.e. Keep the integrity of technique and instrument.
 8. Sing, combining melody and vowel stream, checking everything as in the previous step.
 9. Sing, combining melody, vowel stream, and consonants, still slowly, and checking every element of following the rules.
 10. Speed everything up, little by little: maybe work through steps (d-i) a little faster.
 11. Put in musical context: a phrase by itself may be mastered, but the pitch-vowel it starts or ends on may be more of any issue, because of what precedes or follows that phrase, or there may be a breath issue (e.g. little time to catch a new breath).
 12. Research and understand the literary and historical context and genre / stylistic conventions, and (in the case of a song cycle, or piece from a larger dramatic work) dramatic context.
 13. Embody the meaning (see next section)
4. SING MEANING, NOT TUNES:
1. Tyranny of word and line rhythms: is word emphasis in the right place?
 2. Tyranny of time signatures and bar lines: is word emphasis in the right place?
 3. Tyranny of intervals and pitch events: is limitation in vocal technique making you sing something the composer, lyricist or you do not intend?
 4. Tyranny of word pairs (e.g. 'broad and narrow'): give them different energy and intention.
 5. Sondheim: a song is play, a verse is an act, a line is a scene [so a phrase or word might be a whole speech]
 6. Specificity of thought: find every possible contrast and switch in thought, intention, emotion from one word to the next
 7. Understand architecture: both of the lyric, and of the music; and how well are they related?
 8. Speak to own the words: practise saying the lines, until you feel them from the inside, so you can say them every time as if it's a) for the first time (spontaneous), b) absolutely necessary that you say them at that moment, c) you totally mean them. Feel them, believe them, live them – if you don't, the audience will not believe you.
 9. Use theatrical size: the words and music must be lived / embodied in a larger than life way – imagine saying them in pantomime, or dramatising every word and idea in telling the words to a group of children in a storytelling session.

10. Everything is new: everything must seem like it's being expressed for the first time; repeated words or phrases must mean something new the second time.
11. Musical clues to meaning: does the music given some clue about what is there in the text, or what the words mean to the composer?
12. Seriously consider adding different meaningful movement and gesture for every phrase (to echo 'specificity of thought') – this helps with visual presentation, and with memorising
5. LYRICISTS & COMPOSERS: understanding the craft of the lyricist, and the craft of the composer; discovering meaning in lyric and song structure and techniques
6. TECHNIQUE & INTERPRETATION: technique should empower us to interpret as we wish; sometimes we must go beyond technique; and then we must return to it, to preserve the voice.

J ... JOINING THE DOTS (bringing everything together)

1. WARMING UP: Bringing A-I together. i) prepare muscle groups ii) co-ordinate muscle groups iii) de-clutter the mind iv) focus attention on what is useful.
2. APPROACHES TO PRACTISING: practice makes permanent, so the mindset we have when practising, and the muscular moves we programme in must be as close to our ideal as possible every single time; precision; awareness; patience and compassion; experimentation, curiosity, playfulness; repetition
3. SOUND TECHNOLOGY: microphones, amplification, sound manipulation, recording studios and techniques, and the demands of the recording environment.
4. PERFORMANCE CRAFT: preparing for every element, so that the only surprises on the day are pleasant ones, or ones you can take in your stride; cultivating presence; entering the space; welcoming the audience with breath and intention, and staying connected to them; introducing a song (don't 'report' the content, share its emotional content with your voice, choice of words, and use of your body); entering character and story before the music starts; staying in character and story until several seconds after the last sound; build a 'virtuous circle' for performance (reviewing and learning from every experience)
5. SET LISTS, PROGRAMMES & ALBUMS: you are an 'energy worker and shaper' for an audience's experience; albums are different from set lists and programmes, in that they might be a 'concept' album, a story album, or have more of one kind of sound (so that someone might be in the 'mood' to listen to the whole CD in one sitting); a programme (one continuous performance) takes the audience from A to B via C, D etc., so plan the 'book ends', the first and last songs; a set list can be a sub-division of a programme; parameters for sequencing songs (key kinship or contrast; speed; time signature; instrumentation; verbal content (thematically linked or contrasted); energy (start with a '6' and work up to a '9' or '10', then drop down to a '4' and a '5', then build up again; don't start with a '10' and then have nowhere to go; finish first set on a '7' or '8', to leave you with possibility of starting higher or lower for second set; have a '10' as your penultimate song of the evening, then drop the level a little to end, so the audience does not leave with a '10' and deflated

and frustrated that you didn't carry on); don't start with a song to 'warm yourself up' or the audience will feel short-changed at the start of the evening, and you set the wrong mood. Plan song sequences – in performance space, our perception alters and we cannot tell what works or doesn't for the audience, so a trusted listener's feedback is very valuable.

6. **BEING READY:** being a singer is a way of being – with disciplined, gentle practice and awareness, we can always be ready to sing.
7. **RESPECT:** i) for ourselves, ii) for the material, iii) for our teachers, fellow musicians and artists, iv) for our audience. These 4 principles can guide all our vocal, musical and artistic decisions – none must be compromised.