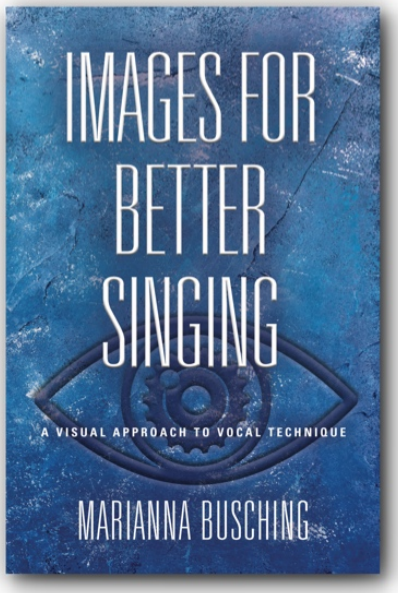


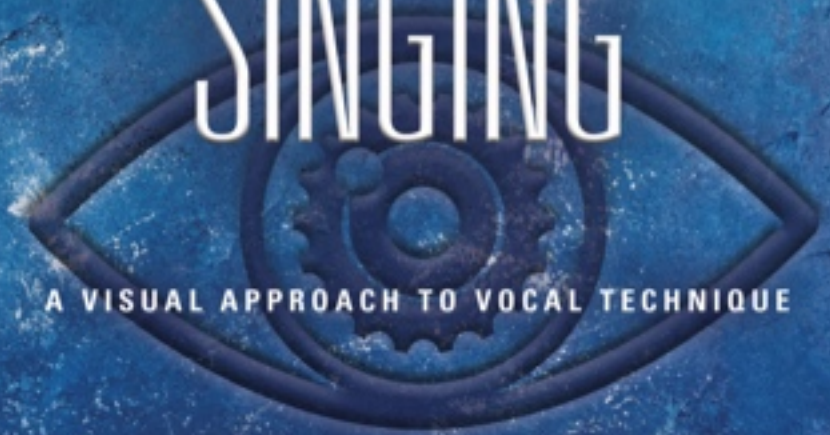
This book is intended to be an extra tool for singers and teachers of voice. The instrument that produces the sound is out of sight and cannot be heard accurately by the singer. Since most people respond readily to graphic images, this book seeks to employ images to aid in learning a difficult art with a difficult instrument.

IMAGES FOR BETTER SINGING

A VISUAL APPROACH TO VOCAL TECHNIQUE

by Marianna Busching

IMAGES FOR BETTER SINGING



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MARIANNA BUSCHING

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: AS WE BEGIN (Honoring the Voice)

To thine own self be true.

—William Shakespeare

Before we begin discussing the marvelous, living wind instrument that is couched in the human throat and "how to run it," there are several important things to remember about the art of classical singing.

First and most important: *honor your voice*. Honor it before language, diction, dynamics, repertoire, or interpretation. Your voice should be individually yours, as unique as your foot size or your fingerprint. Vocally, we are all snowflakes. Find and develop the natural voice that you were given genetically—your very own sound—without trying to imitate any other singer's sound. You can't buy a different voice and have it installed. You can, however, buy lessons to improve, strengthen, and bring your own voice to its greatest potential.

Honor your voice.

As a classical singer, you are an athlete….an athlete who uses very small, tough but delicate muscles that, like any other muscle in the body, can be damaged by the wrong use, too much use, or not enough use. Therefore, you are always "in training." You must exercise (practice) faithfully, and your entire body must be as physically healthy and as strong as is reasonably possible. The voice must be treated as a rare jewel, never overused by too much speaking or singing or shouting until only a burning throat and a bit of hoarse voice is left; it must never be used for anything besides speaking, singing, and laughter that is not too uproarious. Richard Dale Sjoerdsma, Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Singing*, recently wrote an apt and touching article (2018) about his own illness and surgery, which he attributed to smoking and drinking, and which forced him to give up singing. His closing advice was,

"Make the choice to cherish the voice." Lest all these warnings sound frightening, it is reassuring to know that very few serious classical singers permanently damage their voices. But it has been done—I myself have seen and heard a few permanently damaged voices.

Everyone learns to speak through imitation. The babies of French-speaking parents begin to babble with distinctly French sounds. Songs learned in childhood are also learned through imitation, and melodies are sometimes even learned in the womb. A colleague of mine was amazed to find that he knew many melodies that he swore he'd never heard, and he guessed that he'd probably learned them from his mother before he was born, because she was a professionally trained cellist and, of course, rested her instrument against her stomach when she practiced. Only in rare cases does vocal imitation give you the same voice as your parent or sibling, and that is usually because of genetics.

It is certainly helpful and even necessary to listen to the world's greatest singers through CDs, DVDs and, particularly, live concerts and performances, because the *way* they sing will influence the way you sing. Singing their way will not change the basic, unique quality of your own voice; it will only give you a better understanding of how to produce the sounds your voice is yearning to make. Shen Yang, a fine professional baritone singer from China, had no teachers, so he learned to sing classical music entirely by listening to recordings of other baritone singers. Yet the quality of his voice is uniquely his own.

A 15-year-old student of mine had a lovely voice and wanted to sing classical music, but she had persistent "pop" diction that we were working to correct. After only a few months of lessons, she very suddenly developed Hodgkin's Lymphoma and had to stop her lessons because the chemotherapy took so much strength from her body. Not only was she afraid for her life, but she was terribly disappointed not to be able to study singing. Her doctor gave her a gift of some CDs of songs and arias sung by Beverly Sills. It took about 18 months before this student was well enough to continue her lessons. When she came to me for the first lesson after her illness, I was astonished at how much her voice and diction had improved, although she had not had the strength to practice. Simply listening to Beverly Sills hour after hour while she herself rested had changed her diction and placement, even

though she was a lyric soprano and Sills was a coloratura. But all that exposure to the *way* Sills sang improved my student's singing so much that we quite quickly brought her close to professional level, and she went on to successful study at a conservatory and later to a fine career.

Advice to students: if you are seriously considering a professional career in classical singing, honestly examine yourself and assess how much you know, musically. Simply having extraordinary vocal talent is not enough. If you have studied an instrument (especially the piano), you already have a great advantage. However, you will need to fill in any gaps in your skill or knowledge: note reading, sight-singing, transposing, counting (which always seems to be the hardest), knowing different historical styles, and so on. That is why it is important to study at a good music school and/or with a good, knowledgeable teacher.

I studied with the late Boris Goldovsky for two summers, and he gave a rather alarming lecture called "Multiplication by Zero." His example was an imaginary tenor at an audition, to whom he gave a list of scores: Appearance, 80. Intonation: 95. Technique, 35. Presentation, 25. Interpretation, 0. Then Maestro Goldovsky said that these scores are not added; rather, they are multiplied. And multiplication by zero is zero. I remember the silence among the singers who were listening to this lecture. I think we were all going through our own skills, looking for our own zero. To illustrate how important it is to "fill in the blanks" of anything that is lacking in your own set of musical skills, I want to tell you about a time when being able to sight-read literally helped win an important competition for me.

The competition rules demanded knowing all the arias in five oratorios, to be sung with the score. One of the oratorios I had chosen was Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. After I had sung most of the many arias and recitatives in the oratorio, one of the judges asked me to please sing No. 35 in Part 2. I turned to the correct page and was horrified to discover that I had somehow missed this recitative. It was very short, but it began *a capella* and had no accompaniment, as most of the other recitatives did. Trying to remain calm, I studied the music for a moment, assessing its key, tonality, and rhythm, and then I asked the pianist to give me an E-natural. Literally sweating, I successfully sang

the recitative. I think I might have ruined any chances of winning the competition if I had not been able to sight-read this piece of music without error.

As I have already mentioned, this book deals only with the classical way of singing, geared to the voice you have—a genetic gift that you did not choose to receive but that you may feel driven to develop. There are many variations on how to sing, depending on the individual's gifts and physical and artistic idiosyncrasies. But there are three rules that all classical singers must follow.

a) Support the tone with firm, slow abdominal breath pressure, not pressing down with the chest to expel the breath. This is a skill that may take months or even more than a year to learn. Also, remember that the commonly used word "support" refers to energy rather than to brute strength.

b) Keep the jaw and the lower part of the face relaxed.

c) Keep the upper part of the face lifted and consequently the soft palate lifted (more about the soft palate later) so that only the nasal consonants exit through the nose. Although in many Eastern cultures classical singing has a strong component of nasality, beautiful classical singing in the West is not nasal.

The expression of your face also affects the sound you make. Here is a good, all-purpose facial position for singing:

a) Eyes wide open, eyebrows lifted.

b) Nostrils flared.

c) Cheeks slightly lifted, as though to begin a smile.

d) Upper lip slightly lifted, exposing a bit of the top incisors.

e) Lower lip relaxed.

f) Corners of the mouth relaxed.

g) Jaw relaxed, so that it can easily move up and down (and even sideways).

With your face in this position, look in the mirror. You will see an attractive, alert person, eyes wide open and shining, lips slightly parted, ready to speak or sing…ready to convey something *important.* Always remember: *If you look funny, you will sound funny*.

If you look funny, you will sound funny.

Students are often told to "relax." If they were totally relaxed, they would be lying on the floor in a loose heap of bones. Giovanni Lamperti (1937) nicely sums up what is needed: "Do not be rigid, but never relax." This is a very old directive from an old Italian teacher, but it remains absolutely true. Instead of relaxing or being too rigid, there seems to be a checkerboard of work, relax, work:

a) The abdominal muscles used for breathing must work.

b) The shoulders, neck, and jaw must relax.

c) And the upper lip, cheeks, soft palate, and even the unseen and mostly ignored muscles that lift the ears (you'd be surprised!) must work.

I will discuss all of these points in detail in upcoming chapters.

Returning to Shakespeare's admonition to be true to yourself: follow your own love of music, your love of producing music with your own voice, your own personality, and your own emotions. The gift you have is rare and extraordinary. A recent study by Bandi Szaboles et al. (2017) found that musicians differ from the "normal" population even in their personality structure. This made total sense when I heard a lecture in October 2017 at the Peabody Conservatory by Dr. Lee Akst, a noted ear, nose, and throat doctor in Baltimore. He addressed the talented singers before him in the class thus: "You are not normal. You will never be normal. Don't try to be normal. Try, instead, to be exceptional."

I was very much affected by this list, because it explained so much in my own life. I remembered, when I was approaching puberty, the confusion—and yes, joy!—I felt about my singing voice, which seemed to be growing louder and more peculiar than most other peoples' and

which seemed to call so much attention to itself when I sang and even when I spoke. There was a time when my own children didn't like going with me to a restaurant because they claimed I could be heard in the farthest corner, even though I was trying to speak in a "normal" voice.

Now, if you are one of those "abnormal" people with a voice that promises to grow in power and beauty, it is time to begin gathering a few of the images that may help you run this living musical instrument. I have tried to describe the images verbally and have added graphic images to accompany them. If the graphic image seems puzzling, not helpful, not meaningful, or just plain silly, ignore it. The verbal image alone may trigger your imagination to produce its own personal image. And I offer the same advice about any of the verbal images you find here: if you find it unhelpful, just discard it and move on to something that might speak to you and speed you on your way to learning to sing.

Chapter 2: THE CELESTIAL INSTRUMENT (The Larynx)

I never think about the larynx.

—Metropolitan Opera Soprano Roberta Peters

Poets speak about songs issuing from the lips and the mouth, yet those particular bits of anatomy actually make very little sound. You can smack your lips or make rude noises with them, and you can produce certain clicks, gurgles, and pops with the mouth and teeth, but the mouth and lips cannot sing or even speak. Thus we must bypass the mouth for now and concentrate on the larynx, that wonderful instrument that we cannot see but only hear and sometimes feel, and that is wholly dependent on breath passing through and over it. Although it is best not to think about the larynx too much (it's about as helpful as thinking about the beating of one's heart or trying to monitor the precise squirts of bile from the liver), still, it is a most remarkable organ, and as singers we need to know a bit about it.

Almost every normal human possesses a larynx that produces audible sound. According to "Larynx Etymology" (*Online Etymology Dictionary,* reviewed October 2015), there are evolutionary reasons for the development of the larynx in mammals.

a) To make an air pressure device out of the body, thus temporarily increasing the body's strength. Closing the larynx (in a "grunt" position) makes mundane actions possible—clearing the throat, coughing, moving the bowels (think about it!), lifting, pushing or pulling heavy objects (for example, dragging away prey), and delivering a baby. Because air passing over the larynx makes noise, an involuntary "grunt" often accompanies some of these exertions when the vocal cords are released and the air bursts through them under pressure.

b) To make noises of defense, warnings, expressions of pain, or calls for help, and (even among animals) sounds of communication or joy.

c) Finally, in humans, to communicate, mainly through spoken language.

Singing does not appear on the list. Except for the vocalizations of birds, which often choose their mates by the strength and beauty of their songs (Ackerman, 2016), there is probably no evolutionary reason for singing….no life-saving or procreational value in producing lovely and often repeated melody. But for that very reason, I have always thought of singing as an almost supra-human activity, a bit in the league of the angels—and I think of the larynx, therefore, as a celestial instrument.

Genetics (more on that later) seem to produce a certain number of "gifted" larynxes, which naturally produce powerful, beautiful sounds, and there are cavities in the mouth and sinuses that nature may have perfectly carved to amplify the sound. These are the reverse of birth defects; I call them *birth perfections.* The individual who is born with such a larynx and the "right" cavities in the mouth that amplify the sound, and then is also gifted with an ear that can accurately hear tones and reproduce them, and who possesses a skill and memory for melodies and languages…a person who possesses that entire package seems to be rare among the general population on the earth.

Since there is very little hard evidence about the quotient of beauty (always a very subjective idea) that a certain larynx can produce even under the best training, I must rely on my own experience of auditioning voices and teaching them. Most students who come to me definitely have a "gifted" voice and are aware of their gift, although their gift for learning may vary. However, I have listened to—and even tried to teach—some less gifted voices, and they simply could not produce a sound that one would want to listen to, solo, for any length of time. If these students have a good ear and a desire to perform, they can sometimes find a place in ensembles or choral music. I once heard a coach who was auditioning a voice that had good intonation but was very unpleasant to listen to, say, "Honey, better you should learn to

drive a truck." I thought that was rather cruel, when perhaps this person could have been steered toward another musical venue, such as a large chorus.

If you are reading this book, you might be surprised that relatively few people actually possess all the attributes I have described. Your surprise could be because singing may have always been a part of your life, maybe even from childhood, and you just assumed everyone could sing. But Gagné (2013) says that a natural gift, whether for music or mathematics, is almost completely under "inborn control" and usually shows up spontaneously when a child is fairly young. Therefore, if you have always sung, even and especially since childhood, your having a gift is not at all a surprise.

A story: one rainy day when I was 10 years old, my best friend and I were bored. I suggested that we get out a book of hymns and sing. "First you can sing soprano and I'll sing alto, and then we'll change places," I said. My friend looked at me in horror. "I can't sing!" she said. "Oh, sure you can," I replied, as I handed her the book. "Everybody can sing." My friend backed away and shouted, "I can't sing! I can't sing alto!" Well, we had a fight, and after that we weren't best friends any more, all because I didn't know that not everybody sings. My entire family sang, so how was I to know?

So I myself was surprised years ago when I found, while doing research for my graduate degree, that musical talent, especially vocal musical talent, is a recessive gene. Later research bears this out (Dovey, 2014; Gagné, 2013). Indeed, several studies have shown actual differences in brain anatomy between musicians and non-musicians (Üllen et al., 2016). The renowned soprano Eileen Farrell summed up the ability to sing by declaring bluntly, "You can either do it or you can't. You're born with it" (Farrell Obituary, *The Guardian*, 2002).

But to become a professional singer, even a person with a "gifted" larynx and that elusive recessive musical talent gene must have the will, the passion, and the unremitting desire to sing. He must want to sing so badly that he feels he will get sick or die if he doesn't have the chance to sing. She must feel that she did not choose music but, instead, music chose *her*. He must have the desire to seek out the best teachers and to work ceaselessly to perfect his art, because no matter

how naturally gifted he is, true excellence lies in training and years of practice. Daniel Coyle (2009) says that it takes around 10 years to reach professional excellence, whether in sports, mathematics, music, or any other field. In addition, the singer must have the courage to present herself to the public and take the risk of performing difficult music with an instrument that can be unreliable, affected by humidity, age, fatigue, allergies, hormones, and dozens of other factors. It is remarkable that there are any professional classical singers at all.

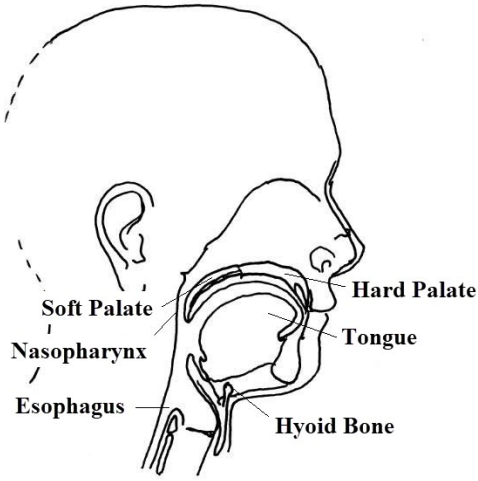


Figure 1 Inside the Face.

There are a multitude of books that describe in precise detail and in drawings and photographs how the larynx is constructed and operates. **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** are helpful in simply showing the hidden structure and tissues of the larynx and the surrounding muscles and organs and, particularly, in validating the activities that are needed to sing. One can refer to it when speaking of the hard palate, the soft palate, how the tongue is attached to the larynx, and so on. The purpose of this book is not to delve deeply into the science and physiology of voice production, but in the Bibliography I list sources for readers who want to learn more about the biological structure of the larynx and also the names of the muscles and tissues that make up this remarkable organ.

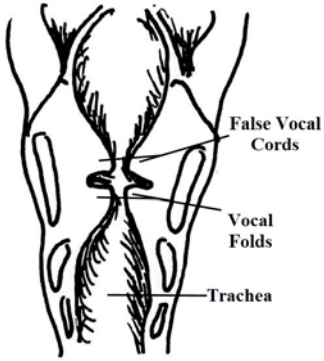


Figure 2 The Larynx, Posterior View

Unfortunately, the names of the laryngeal structure itself are not actually a help to the real activity of singing. A

student once told me how frustrated she was when a voice teacher told her, "No, no! Tighten that left cricothyroid!" It's almost like commanding someone to work harder with his small intestine.

However, although we can't consciously ask specific laryngeal muscles to perform a certain activity, it is still the responsibility of the singer to learn how to "run" this celestial instrument, how to use it wisely, and how to keep it healthy. Just as it is best not to dwell on the beating of your heart, it is best to simply leave the larynx alone to do its work of producing sounds. Any thought of manipulating the larynx in any way only gets in the way of good vocal production.

One good image to consider when regarding the larynx is simply to "let it dangle" in its natural place in the neck. Because the larynx is attached to the base of the tongue (see **Figure 1**), almost anything the tongue does has a direct effect on the position of the larynx. It is possible to raise the larynx by raising the back of the tongue. The highest position of the back of the tongue, and thus of the larynx, is when you swallow. Of course, we never sing while we are swallowing, and we certainly can't sing if the larynx is raised to a high position. So we try to allow the larynx just to "dangle" in its natural position.

Because we live on a planet with gravity, we often subconsciously equate the *up* and *down* of the sung pitch to the *up* and *down* of life on this planet: the ceiling is high, and so is a "high C"; the floor is low, and so is a "low E-flat." But if you lie down on the floor and sing those same notes, "high C" might be west and "low E-flat" might be east, depending on where your head and feet are pointing. If thinking *high* and *low* tempts you to raise or lower your larynx in an effort to "help" reach and sing those pitches, it is important to try to replace *high* and *low* with other words or visual images that will allow you to leave your larynx to do its natural job. (See Chapter 4, "Jacob's Ladder," for images to supplant the ideas of *high* and *low*.)

Another influence our subconscious awareness of gravity has on us is the temptation to raise our head for a high note and lower it for a lower note. Sometimes vocal students move their head down in increments for every note of a descending scale. But if we just sing with a head held level and in a natural position, the larynx produces the

ascending and descending notes all by itself, without any pressure or tension from the chin or neck. *Sound does not depend on gravity*.

Sound does not depend on gravity.

Something that makes the larynx seem even more mysterious and out of your control is the fact that, when you are healthy and singing correctly, you have little or no sensation from the larynx (or the *vocal folds* or *vocal cords*, as they are usually called). You certainly know that you are using the larynx because you hear it (not as others do, unfortunately), and you may feel vibration in the area of the larynx. You will definitely feel vibration (if you pay attention) in the facial bones and sometimes in the sternum when you sing low notes.

You will be very aware of your larynx if it is fatigued from too much singing or, even worse, from shouting or screaming, or if you are sick with an infection—a cold or a more serious illness, such as strep throat. An infection usually causes the entire throat and the back of the soft palate to burn and feel feverish and swollen, and swallowing often causes burning or pain. When you look in a mirror with your mouth open, the back of the throat and the uvula look as red, shiny, and swollen as they feel. (Of course, you can never see the vocal cords themselves, except with special equipment operated by a trained physician. In any case, seeing your vocal folds in action does not actually help you sing; this is only for diagnostic purposes.)

If the vocal folds are sore from misuse or dry from lack of humidity, the sensation is of dryness and burning. Once I sang a concert in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the humidity was only 15% that evening. Toward the end of the recital, my vocal cords began to burn with every breath I took, and I had to give up the idea of singing any encores because I suspected I would be hoarse.

Sensations like these are a message from your celestial instrument to stop singing and give it a rest. Obey this message, for the sake of your health.

The better you sing, the less you'll feel. The larynx is like any other healthy organ in the body: painless and efficient. If you are young or have had only a short amount of vocal training, your speaking voice

The better you sing, the less you'll feel.

may be a bit changed after an hour of practice or (especially) after a long choral rehearsal: the voice may feel frail and higher-pitched. This effect usually disappears if you stop singing and rest overnight. Some studies are being done (Ragan 2018) on vocal "cool-down" exercises; some singers who use them after a long stretch of strenuous singing claim to have less fatigue and a stronger speaking voice. This seems to make sense, but more study on these exercises is being conducted.

To protect your larynx, there are several mistakes to avoid: shouting, screaming, laughing too loudly, talking too much in a whisper, or artificially softening your voice (in order not to offend?). In my experience, people who possess a gifted larynx also have resonant, clear speaking voices that are more easily heard than the voices of other people. As children, they are often told they are too loud. In a choral situation, their singing is often criticized for being too loud or for "not blending." This is also a valuable message from your larynx: you are not a choral singer. You are a soloist.

This is why I recommend that you not pay inordinate attention to the larynx unless you actually feel discomfort or pain. It does not help to try to manipulate it. It is possible to check your larynx with a finger on your throat (the finger must be as delicately weightless as a butterfly) to see whether you are jerking it when you begin a tone, or whether you are pulling it up for a higher note or pulling it down for a lower note (none of which is advised). You can also use this light touch to check whether you are "kicking" a consonant, such as S or T, with your larynx. The larynx should be motionless when you pronounce or sing a consonant. Our speech patterns, especially in English, make this difficult to do. In singing, however, consonants should spring not only from positions of the tongue and teeth but also,

Figure 3 The Voice Unspooling as a Solid Entity

Figure 4 Highway in Front of Face

and especially, from pressure in the abdominal breathing muscles. (One motto the students use in my studio: *Every Week is National Support-Your-Consonants Week*.)

To keep your larynx "dangling," you might use the image that your voice is exiting from someplace in your face rather than from the larynx or your throat. It may help to imagine your voice as a solid but weightless entity, such as a golden scarf unspooling into the air ahead of you (see **Figure 3**). Another image: as your voice exits your face, imagine it traveling straight ahead instead of up or down. You might imagine a highway stretching in front of you at the level of your cheekbones (see **Figure 4**), and the notes are the lines in the middle of the highway, going out straight in front of you.

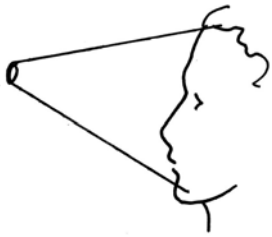


Figure 5 The Reverse Megaphone

You might imagine that the sound is materializing 14 inches in front of your face. You can hold your hand at arm's length in front of you and imagine the sound splashing right against your open hand. One student imagined that his voice was materializing about 15 feet in front of him, and that he could view it as through a glass window.

Another helpful image is of a "reverse megaphone," or a wedge of sound forming in front of your face, with the point a few feet in front of you (see **Figure 5**). I will describe this in more detail in "The Organic Microphone." Many students discover this image on their own. An older gentleman I was teaching found this place on a certain note and excitedly tried to describe the feeling to me. "Remember the grilles on those '37 Pontiacs?" he asked, holding his hands in a point in front of his face. Well, no, I didn't remember the '37 Pontiac, but he certainly had the right idea. And it worked for him from then on.

One image of "up" that actually works when singing an ascending scale is to imagine the scale beginning in the middle of your face and then ascending upward at a shallow angle in front of you (see **Figure 6**). One of my students calls this image "the Glass Ramp." I have also used the image of a child's playground slide angling upwards starting at the upper teeth. A child's slide has edges on the sides, and this will keep your voice from falling off or falling sideways. The image will encourage you to send your voice straight ahead and upwards at a slight angle.

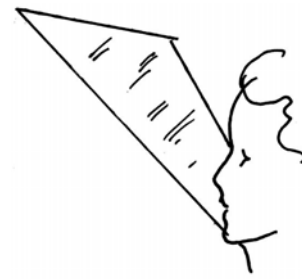


Figure 6 The Glass Ramp

Another image is to imagine that your larynx doesn't exist at all: that your neck is transparent or invisible, and you can see the clouds or the landscape through it. Or you can imagine that you are singing against and through your cheekbones. You might even imagine that you are singing through your eyes. An image I like is imagining a hole in the middle of your forehead like the opening in one of those old-fashioned Easter eggs…the opening edged with pearls and crystals. But instead of a scene inside the opening, your voice will emerge through that opening into the room. You can aim many notes right through that hole (see **Figure 7**).

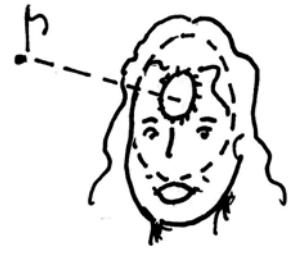


Figure 7 The Easter Egg

The only time the larynx must be felt and examined as an entity is when something goes wrong with it—something more serious than the usual cold or the slight fatigue of singing too much or speaking too much, even in the healthiest way possible. (Several students in my studio were elementary school teachers. Every year in March, after months of teaching and controlling children in the classroom, they began to have trouble singing.) Nodules, which are like calluses on the vocal cords, can also develop, often through no fault of your own, just as a football player may sprain his ankle: it's a risk of the job. At the end of this book, Annex 2 deals with

vocal health problems and gives specific exercises to eliminate simple nodules.

Something else that can gradually damage the voice is singing too much and singing too high in the chest voice. This usually happens to female pop singers and musical theater singers (as we will discuss in a later chapter), but it does not happen only to female singers. Lyric baritones, especially when young, often have some beautiful (and fairly easy) high notes, such as A-natural or higher above middle C. Often they or their teachers become totally enamored of these high notes and try to turn a baritone into a tenor. Although some tenors who will eventually develop particularly powerful tenor voices do begin as baritones, as the great Placido Domingo did, I would not force the voice to go higher than is totally comfortable. Thus choosing repertoire for such a student can be challenging. It is important to wait for age and careful vocal exercise to coax the voice into revealing itself. One cannot forcibly change a singer's *fach* (a German word for the individual's natural, comfortable singing range). It must remain what nature bestowed upon him….and that can sometimes take years to figure out.

I can relate many stories about how coaches and even some well-known conductors tried to convince me that I was a soprano. I felt as though I had a crisis about "what I was" every six months for many years. Fortunately, I resisted the attempts to turn me into a soprano and ended up singing healthfully in my mezzo *fach* to age 66, when I stepped down from major public performances simply because I was afraid that my voice might begin to show its age. However, I am still singing solo—in church, for instance—with a clear and comfortable voice at age 79, and I attribute this to good genes, good technique, staying "myself," and sticking with my nature-given voice. The only effect age seems to have had on my voice is to lower my entire range by a few steps (which means that I have a few extra low notes to make up for the couple of high notes I lost). For this change in my voice, I simply changed my repertoire. I also have to take a longer warm-up time. But a healthy "gifted" larynx, with proper training, should produce beautiful singing for 40 or 50 years, at least.

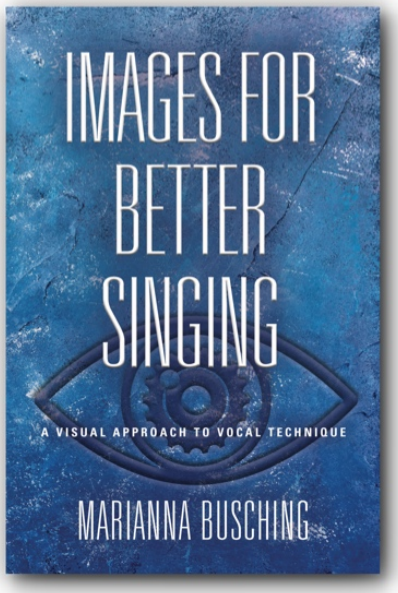
Dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been written about the larynx, and I myself have seen wonderful slow-motion videos depicting the remarkable movements of the vocal folds in action. However, I must admit that although these medical illustrations can help us understand and marvel at the biology and movements of the larynx (I often remark seriously that they make me believe in God), they really don't help the singer produce her tone. In fact, all the images that I mentioned are meant to lift the singer's attention *away* from the larynx and closer to the actual work of singing, of which the most important part is breathing. And that is the subject of our next chapter, "Square One."

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is intended to be an extra tool for singers and teachers of voice. The living instrument that produces the sound is totally out of sight and cannot be heard accurately by the very singer who is performing the song. The ideas and instructions presented here are not meant to replace other methods of teaching voice but are, instead, to be an added help.

Most people respond readily to graphic images. This book seeks to employ graphic images to aid in learning a difficult art with a difficult instrument. Long before this book was written, the pictures and ideas contained here were already "tested" on hundreds of my own students with great success. They are the reason this book has finally been written in the hopes that these ideas may help other singers and teachers, as well.

Marianna Busching
mbuschingimages@gmail.com



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IMAGES FOR BETTER SINGING

A VISUAL APPROACH TO VOCAL TECHNIQUE

by Marianna Busching