



## BEING AN OPERA SINGER

Opera singer's voices differ from pop singers voices because they are specifically trained to sing without amplification. Some of the following may help you explain to your students how the sounds are made.

Opera singers sing loudly. They have to sing in very big theatres and opera houses without microphones. They also have to sing very high or very low which means that they have to train their voices. The voice is like a muscle. Opera singers have to train hard to keep their voices fit just like an athlete has to train for the Olympics. Opera singers use their whole bodies to sing. They need to learn to breath and let the breath flow out gently to make the sound, then they need to spin the sound around in their heads to make it loud without putting pressure on their throats. Singers do not lose their voices from singing. They do lose their voices from colds or flus like everyone else. They have to learn to sing correctly so as not to hurt their voices when they sing loudly or have a cold.

**VOICE PLACEMENT:** This means using the natural resonators in the head so that throat strain is avoided.

**BREATHING:** Very important as the voice is carried on the breath. To carry a big sound a long way one has to be able to breathe very deeply, expand the rib cage and use the diaphragm.

**SUPPORT:** Using the muscles of the chest, back and abdomen to control the diaphragm and support the breath, so the singer can control the sound and its volume without any shoulder, neck or jaw tension.

To learn to sing in this way the voice has to be developed slowly. It is important the instrument is mature, so the late teens is a good age to start, otherwise damage can be done (compare this to intensive physical training of your athletes). Other skills, such as acting, music and language can be developed while young, along with an enjoyment of performing in choirs and / or shows.

It usually takes at least five years to learn to use your voice and body properly in order to sing and up to ten years before the musical and physical skills are in place to sustain a major role, if one starts as a teenager.

Where can these skills be learned? Many places can help. Usually one starts with a private teacher who understands the technique required for classical singing. Be prepared to look around, different teachers are better for different kinds of singing. There are singing schools and master classes with visiting experts. Also University based diplomas, degrees or post graduate tuition.