

# HOW MOVEMENT WORKS

Faster, Deeper Vocal Breakthroughs For Your Singing Students

## Introduction

The evidence-backed approach to solving vocal problems without relying on endless vocal exercises



### Hi, I'm Chris Johnson

Founder of TeachVoice.com and a [full time vocal coach](#).

Since 2007, I've had the pleasure of working with singers from **beginners to gold disc winners**.

I'm lucky to be able to work with the **National Centre For Voice & Speech** and bringing voice education to teachers and singers.

This helps me to create singing technique that hits different because it's the perfect balance between art, science and intuition.

As teachers, we're trained to listen. We hear wobbles, tension, breathiness... and instinctively want to help it.

- ✓ Change the vowel
- ✓ Support
- ✓ Maybe... try another exercise?

Sometimes it helps.

But sometimes... even often... it doesn't quit land.

And you're left wondering: What now?

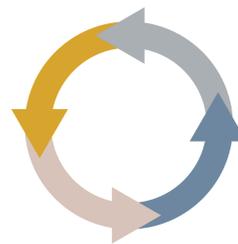
## Change the Body, Change the Voice

Singers are not vocal folds with legs.

They're whole systems. Brains. Bodies. Breath. Emotions. History.  
And here's the kicker:

If you change one part of that system - even a small part - everything else changes with.

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changes with.**



**Example:** Change breath and it'll force a change in the vocal cords to deal with it, which then creates changes in resonance because the vocal energy changes.

And if resonance changes, then all kinds of things change: how a voice lasts, the passaggio/vocal break, tone and power... and more.

This same principle is what makes **movement one of the fastest, most powerful ways to assess and influence a voice.**

Not because it's "stretching" or "warming up"...

...but because it taps into the nervous system, perception, energy and breath and changes it - all before a sound even happens.

**AWESOME FACT:** In the 80's, Michael Jackson's sound engineers built his recording booth on a drum riser. This was to stop the shuffling and dancing vibrations from getting into the microphone signal. Why? Because MJ and Quincy Jones knew that allowing movement was the way to getting THE best vocal takes.

Let's get into the real reasons movement helps singers break through blocks, fast:

## **1. Movement Creates Multiple Pathways in the Nervous System**

Thanks to something called **motor equivalence**, your body can achieve the same vocal result in multiple ways.

This means:

► If one route isn't the same one day (say, when singers are faced with singing with a light cold or whilst dancing), a different route can take over - *if* we open the door.

**Analogy:**

Learning to sing by standing still in the same room is like learning archery from one fixed spot, with no wind and a target that never moves.

But real life - and real performance - is 'windy', distracting and unpredictable. The archer trains for that with variables... and so must singers.

So, movement whilst singing allows the singer to:

- Build adaptability to real-world conditions
- Perform with more resilience under pressure
- Handle stage energy and distractions without losing their technique

If we want to build resilient singers, we can replace 'stand and sing' singing lessons with ones that use movement to both unlock capability... and challenge its adaptability.

**APPLICATION:** You could introduce movement whilst singing of any kind today and see how your students respond. It could be anything from a box step, to swimming arms, to standing on one leg... they will all create new pathways if you **LET THEM STRUGGLE WITH IT** a little.

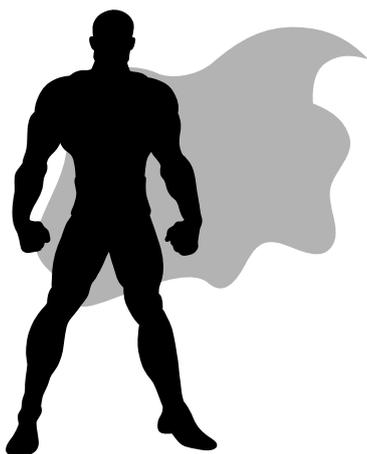
After 10 minutes of finding those vocal spots with disturbing movement, going back to standing still often feels like a big improvement!

## 2. Movement Tricks the Brain Into a New State

### The Power Pose Effect

Changing postural attitude shifts chemistry. Movement tells the brain:

*"Something's shifted - we're not in the same state anymore".*



This play and improv-style bypasses stress centres in the brain and is MASSIVE for training confidence, as well as getting around perfectionists who cripple themselves with their own standards.

Instead of asking nervous singers to be still and calm, give them movements that suit the intended state of mind, like:

- Reaching/writhing movements for strength and courage
- Wafting the arms and swaying for calmness and flow
- Shaking for energy and excitement

These shift states FAST, but don't think too much about which one... just take a punt. The brain changes because the body changes.... and voice goes along with it.

Pro tip - As well the body attitude movement, adopt the facial expressions and the breathing patterns of the character we're posing as. This is really important, because if the singers face doesn't match their intention (IE courage or calmness), then it's not likely the rest of them is falling into line either.

This is how we move from just “trying harder” to feeling different - and the voice follows suit very willingly.

### 3. Movement Influences Breath and Posture Automatically

#### The Limbs Can Lead The Way

Certain body movements (especially with the arms) directly influence:

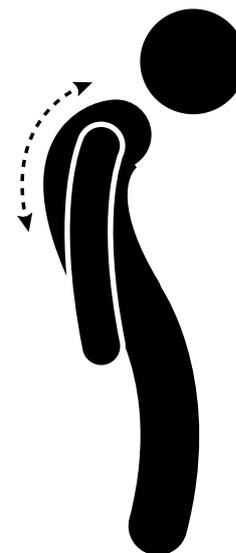
- Ribcage expansion
- Abdominal support
- Postural realignment

Reach the arms up? Ribcage lifts.

Rotate the spine left and right? Breath equals out

March on the spot? Full body engagement without tenseness.

Mega bonus - You don't need to coach breath nearly as much when you coach movement. The movement does it all for you.



### 4. Movement Taps Into the Automatic

#### This is the Deep Stuff

When a student moves while singing, their attention shifts away from micromanaging voice. They stop trying to control everything and start experiencing.

It reveals the control freaks (and we love them!) who hold on too tight.

Try this:

- Ask them to keep rolling their shoulders backwards, alternately, while singing (like an exaggerated dance move)
- Observe what happens

You'll likely see 1 of 3 things:

1. **They fall apart:** This tells you they have low adaptability and get knocked off their perch easily. Use movement in easier songs and build up to train flexibility.

2. **They stop moving the moment they start singing:** They're over-controlling or become tense the moment they voice. You now have permission to coach them to let go and accept the voice that they'll get.
3. **They sing better immediately:** They're ready to trust their subconscious system. Wey hey! Less is more here, but it can be nerve racking for these singers to let go of the reigns... so keep encouraging.

Movement is how we access the unconscious systems that govern the best performances.

## Try It Yourself: Two Quick Experiments

### ☀ Experiment 1: Reach Up



- Arms overhead like a morning stretch
- Sing phrase whilst staying in that position
- Ask: "How did that feel/sound compared to usual?"

#### **Why it works (when it does):**

Opens ribs for better breath management, shifts posture to help breath, lightly activates abdominals - all without saying a word about breath.

We can also see this exercise through the lens of the other benefits - the main one is Power Pose. It's not uncommon for singers to produce a stronger sound because this positions opens out from a guarded posture (from worry?) and into a confident one.

### ☀ Experiment 2: Head Turn (side-to-side)



- Turn the head side to side, smoothly, whilst singing a phrase
- Give the instruction "let the voice be what it will be"
- Notice the differences in sound when they let go of controlling the voice

#### **Why it works (if it does):**

The obvious one is it loosens habitual neck and throat tension.

The not-so-obvious big benefit: Because singing with a wiggling jaw is something most people never do, and hits the motor equivalence principle.

To jog your memory, it blocks current muscle patterns so that new ones can be found.

NOTE: Singers often stop the movement when they sing, or the movement becomes jittery. This is your cue to ask them to work briefly on smooth movement of the head turn for 30 seconds. Then add voice after, prioritising that smooth movement.

# Movement In The Field

## What Teachers Say About Movement:

*"I was taken by Chris's work on the shoulders in singing. I immediately started to implement it into my teaching. Just to see, like Chris mentioned, if I see results immediately. I was blown away. Students noticed an immediate improvement. They reported their singing was "easier" they "didn't have to strain" to reach the top notes. It was as if a light switch had been flicked by simply moving."*

**Zoe Stibi (UK vocal coach, YouTuber)**

*"It's been absolutely fantastic to combine all of the information - I've started to use movement with my students already, The movement in the arms and neck especially has been really empowering for my students - as a distraction from the strain but also to gain a sense of energy."*

**Jasmine Gur (UK vocal coach, performer)**

*"I have had incredible results with movement. Astounding results actually. The shoulder and arms absolutely blew my mind when I tried them on a few of my students that are very breathy. The shoulders were a game changer for my students who have issues with bringing and maintaining clear sounds."*

**Devena De Donatis (AUS singing teacher)**

*"Movement gave me a very clear, quick way to figure out what was happening for each singer. It's allowed me to develop my intuition as a teacher further, which has been pretty amazing. Being able to get results quickly was just awesome and meant a lot of smiling faces at the end of those sessions."*

*Even with students who were struggling with pitch, these methods really helped a lot of students with that, which I was really surprised by.*

**Victoria Hollings (NZ singing teacher)**

## NEXT STEPS

You've just scratched the surface!

There's SO much more movement does, and the ways it can show you what to do is endless. The evidence behind this type of approach is not only research, but also 1000's of bonafide case studies, and the reports of hundreds of teachers experiencing the effects!

If this clicked with you, and you want:

- More tools to use right away
- A system for movement assessments

- Confidence from knowing the 'what' and the 'how'
- Real-world strategies

Then we have a practical, low-cost course to get you using movement in lessons immediately. And your singers to be giving you high fives within minutes too!

**Grab the 'Movement Assessment' course for just £14 below (with money back guarantee) and start your journey of discovery.**



If you have any questions about this training, or want to enquire about any of our training options, email us at [courses@teachvoice.com](mailto:courses@teachvoice.com).

## **FINAL WORD**

When you bring movement into your teaching, something shifts.

Your students feel it. You feel it.

You'll enter a few weeks of the most unusual, wonderful lessons you've had in a while. Breakthroughs, belly laughs, baffling results.

And you'll wonder:

*"Why haven't I done this sooner?"*

Try the course, or create your own. Let the movement do its thing. And see what happens when you start exploring this awesome but underused tool.

Always in your corner

Chris Johnson

**Founder**

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