

November, 2005

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE

by Roger Burnley

www.rogerburnley.com

Most singers experience a reluctance to practice, especially when it comes to vocal exercises. It is helpful to think that what you are trying to accomplish is a sort of mastery over your voice that will enable you to sing your songs more effortlessly. In this manner you will gain a freedom in your voice which then allows you to add more artistry and freedom to your singing. Your ultimate goal as an artist is to be able to communicate your songs. You can even think of it as training for an athletic event. You wouldn't dream of trying to run a marathon or run a 100 yard dash without the proper training. The training is what gives you the coordination to compete effectively. I find that most singers have resistance to vocal exercises because they don't fully understand what the exercises are supposed to accomplish. I explain to each client exactly what each exercise is designed to accomplish. If you are currently studying with someone and that isn't made clear to you, you need to ask more questions. Also if you are studying and not readily applying the exercises to the actual songs you will be singing, it is unlikely that you will go about doing your exercises with any enthusiasm. Furthermore the purpose of your exercises should be to insure that you are using your voice correctly so as to prevent any vocal problems or damage. Again, using a sports analogy, you wouldn't dream of trying to compete in a weight lifting competition if you had not properly trained to know exactly how much weight you could lift without causing physical damage. I also encourage my clients to have a routine of always doing their vocal exercises and warm up first before attempting to sing actual songs. If you are given proper exercises to do you will then put your voice in a more correct way of producing sound before you start to sing a song. If you continually sing something improperly, you can irritate your vocal chords, experience vocal fatigue after singing or some hoarseness the next day. These are all signs that you are not producing the sound correctly and you won't be too thrilled with the sound either. You should also experience a sense of accomplishment after your practice and be able to notice precise areas where you improved. If this is not occurring for you there is something missing in your program. There is no limit to how much you can improve your voice with the correct guidance. Many singers, especially more in pop music, will settle for much less than their full potential. If you look at opera singers who maintain their voices and also develop more ability as they age, you will see that they never stopped practicing and working with a good vocal coach.