

## Fitness Training and the Singing Voice: Physical Harmony

As many singers are integrating fitness training to their lifestyles, and as casting practices have begun giving preference to those singers who look more like the roles for which they are auditioning on stage than not, the fitness movement in singing has begun. With it, a rise in myths and questions about healthy practices for singers who train as athletes has also begun. Modern singers face the same challenges singers have always faced: technical prowess, vocal stamina, beautiful tone, ironclad mental preparation, performance anxiety, and handling all of these things with elegance and ease inside of heavy, hot costumes, stage make-up, and while also juggling the navigation of the music and staging in real-time during runs of shows. Add to that the need to look more fit than ever on stage, and the pressures are mounting. How are singers training for success? How are singers balancing the need for both physical and vocal fitness?

This session will present physical training strategies for singers that minimize or eliminate potential negative side-effects on a singer's technique. The myths surrounding fitness training and singing will be discussed and either debunked or explained. Exploring the importance of keeping the body in balance, maintaining flexibility, and the benefits of increased cardio-vascular health, as well as matching physical strength training with vocal training by drawing parallels in their process, this session will provide tools for singers to be as marketable as possible. Strength training need not be avoided by singers. Core strength training, too, can be a part of a singer's fitness regimen without negatively affecting his or her technique. By modifying exercises into more singer-friendly forms, and by ensuring that muscles do not lose flexibility as they develop size, strength, and stamina through strength training singers can successfully train their bodies and voices in parallel.

Just as singers do exercises at specific pitch levels and dynamic levels to strengthen and coordinate the musculature with which we sing (and thereby strengthen the sound), athletes train their bodies using the same process. Strength training to isolate muscles that are less strong than others or that need to be stronger for their given sport, speed and agility training, and endurance/stamina training all round out the physical side of athletics training. Additionally, athletes train to learn the rules to their games and to operate within those parameters, they memorize playbooks, and they watch tape of other teams and athletes to prepare mentally. They practice the actual game in scrimmage and in drills. This process mirrors almost exactly the process singers go through. It includes physical preparation, mental preparation, and "dress-rehearsals" of sorts. Because of the similarities between developing an athlete and a singing artist, a singer who wishes to integrate fitness training into his or her life will find great familiarity and facility with the process. As such, singing and fitness training can work well together.

This session will show that increased general health and well-being due to regular exercise generally leads to better singing and longevity. It will set forth the benefits of regular exercise for singers and offer workout and fitness strategies helpful for singers. Different kinds of exercise, strength training, and conditioning will be evaluated for singers. Myths surrounding fitness training and singing will be explored, and many disputed. Singing with a six-pack is possible. If our goal as voice teachers is to give our students their best chance at being marketable as singers and artists, we must be knowledgeable about how fitness training may impact the singing voice and how to

mitigate risk for those singers training like athletes. This session will equip voice teachers accordingly.

Chuck Chandler is a frequent recitalist, master clinician, and presenter at conferences in the U.S. and abroad. Recent engagements have taken him to Sweden, Italy, and Carnegie Hall, as well as colleges and universities throughout the US. Equally comfortable with opera and oratorio, Chandler has a long list of concert and operatic credits. His students and have won numerous competitions including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Students and former students have credits with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Metropolitan Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Atlanta Opera, San Francisco Opera and others. He holds a Doctorate from University of Kentucky and is an authority on fitness training and the singing voice as well as an established pedagogue. He teaches at the young artist program at Red River Lyric Opera each summer and is thrilled to be a member of the School of Music faculty at DePaul University.