

1st basic element: Breathing

1. Breathing exercises with the plosives p t k and the fricative f

1 | Intensifying the out-breath with the aid of the plosives p t k

O = inhalation: dilation, air flows in = inhalation reflex

- a) ||: p O t O k O :|| Slowly, allowing time for the inhalation reflex = reflexive breaths
- b) ||: p O t O k O :|| Faster, with reflexive breaths
- c) ||: p-t-k-p-t-k-p-t-k :|| On one breath, until all the air is expended! Accentuated speech, but without taking breaths – a gentle yet continuous inward “tummy pull” is the result.

2 | “Three-phase breath” exercise with the fricative f

1st phase	2nd phase	3rd phase
f f - f - f	Pause	O
Gradually emit all the “phonation breath”	Blow out three times on one breath, to emit the residual air	Pause (without breathing in), maintain the tension, feel the “breath hunger”
		Release the abdominal wall, allowing air to stream in through the nose and mouth (inhalation reflex)

3 | Gradual lengthening of the out-breath, diaphragm work with f

a) f

b) f - f - f - f - f

c) f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f

d) f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f - f

etc.



Commentary

1. Breathing exercises with plosive consonants

1 | Intensifying the out-breath with the aid of the plosives p t k

This familiar exercise stimulates flexibility in the muscles of the abdomen by energetic articulation of the plosive consonants: phonation occurs with a slight inward “tummy pull”, and the abdominal wall relaxes outwards on the release reflex. Tension and release alternate constantly.

- a) Begin slowly at first, allowing time for the reflexive breaths.
- b) Then increase the speed, section by section.
- c) Finally, repeat many times in one breath until there is no “phonation air” left.

There is no need to open the mouth wide on the in-breath – expansion inside the oral cavity is important. This also happens when the nose is kept open. Air can then stream in imperceptibly through nose and mouth at the same time.

2 | “Three-phase breath” exercise with the fricative f

This exercise is for experiencing the inhalation reflex, practising the alternation of tension and release and training the muscles of the abdomen and the back.

Phase 1: Blow out the air gradually but strongly on **fff** – make sure to maintain the basic body engagement!

Phase 2: Pause for as long as possible without breathing in. Feel the increasing sensation of “breath hunger” (*Lufthunger*) – this strengthens the muscles and the lungs.

Phase 3: The subsequent in-breath is a reflex!

N.B. The pause (phase 2) should only occur after breathing out; the next out-breath begins immediately after the in-breath.

3 | Gradual lengthening of the out-breath, diaphragm work with f

The whole exercise is for training the lengthening of the out-breath.

N.B. While consciously controlling the out-breath for as long as possible, the sternum remains raised and the abdominal wall moves or pulls gradually inwards.

- b–d)** In the sequence **f-f-f-f** the flow of breath is not interrupted by reflexive breaths or stops; on the contrary, the **f-f-f-f** are tightly bound together in one phrase with small impulses from the diaphragm. Emit all the “phonation breath” on the final long **f** while further maintaining the body engagement. After the new reflexive in-breath, go to the next part of the exercise. Only emit the residual air (= “toning breath”) at the end of the whole set of exercises, thereby releasing the body tension.

2. Exercises to engage the body for singing “hoch” and “breit” – *Totalatem*: combining abdominal breathing with the lateral flanks and lower back

1 | Basic exercise for raising the sternum – abdominal breathing

O = inhalation/relaxation/dilation

a) “ksch O ksch O ksch O ksch O”

[kʃ] ...

b) Speak with the same sensation in the body:

“hoch O hoch O hoch O hoch O”

[ˈhox] ...

c) Then speak on one breath:

Hoch will ich das Brustbein heben. (Not lowering the sternum.)

[ˈhox vɪl ʔɪç das ˈbrʊstbeɪn ˈhebən]

Leseprobe



Sample page



Fundamental principles – 1. Breathing – engaging the body for singing

- Actively increasing the physical engagement by a threefold expansion of the body – *Totalatem* (“total breath”):
 - raising the sternum (*hoch*)
 - expanding the lower ribs (*breit*)
 - engaging the muscles of the lower back (lumbar region).
- The threefold expansion of *Totalatem* takes place during inhalation and is maintained while speaking.
- Special feature: The raising of the sternum and expansion of the ribs/engagement of the intercostal muscles are first practised separately: rib expansion/intercostal movement is practised while not fully inhaling or phonating.
- Only carry out both movements (sternum lift and rib expansion) simultaneously when the muscles respond well; these movements take place during inhalation and the expansion is maintained while speaking.

Leseprobe

Commentary

2. Exercises to engage the body for singing

1 | Basic exercise for raising the sternum and abdominal breathing

This exercise is for deliberately keeping the sternum raised during phonation. The syllable **ksch** is an extremely effective combination of consonants, which should be practised while raising the sternum.

The abdominal wall moves inwards during exhalation and again inwards on the in-breath. The movements are more obvious and deliberate at first; later they become more automatic.

Image: “Shooing chickens away” with **ksch**, while raising the sternum.

b) Hoch

The activity in the torso (sternum raised, abdomen moving inwards) when speaking the syllable **hoch** should be just as emphatic as it was with **ksch**.

To feel the sternum lift, it helps to lay one hand on the upper chest and put the other hand on the abdomen, to feel its inward movement. The interplay of both movements can now be felt clearly through the hands.

Image: A large, half-filled jar with water bottles inside the abdomen and the chest. When speaking, pressure on the abdomen (the lower part of the jar) makes the water rise to the sternum lift. Release the pressure on the abdomen on the in-breath: the water falls and the abdomen moves inwards.

c) Hoch will ich das Brustbein heben. (*High will I my sternum lift.*)

This time the sternum is not lifted by individual impulses, but should be raised gradually, maintaining this position during a longer sentence.

The sternum remains consistently raised while speaking, i.e. while breathing out. It lowers only minimally when breathing in – when the abdomen moves outwards.

Here it becomes clear that Martienßen-Lohmann’s concept of breath support mainly concerns the flexibility of the abdominal muscles and their tension/contraction while speaking or singing and the subsequent release/dilation on the in-breath.

“Support” means flexibility of the diaphragm! Training the interplay of these two antagonists, the sternum and the abdominal muscles, has this aim in view.