

# 1. Physical warm-up exercises

After a long day at work or school, chorus members often come to practice tired. Some are tense, others feel exhausted.



The "posture" of some singers

For this reason, warm-ups or voice training should always be preceded by several relaxation exercises in order to prepare the chorus for singing and relaxation.

The following exercises are intended to make singers aware of how damaging bad posture can be (see figure above) and demonstrate the posture that should be maintained when singing.

Although some singers might consider it odd to perform physical exercises, do not let this compromise your plans as choir director. During my travel in countries outside Central Europe, I have often been surprised and amused by the way physical exercises are performed at choir rehearsals. We, music educators, Central Europeans – particularly the older singers – have difficulty forcing nature and uninhibited during such exercises. Explain to your chorus that these exercises have the following goals so that they will gradually come to understand the reward of physical activity:

- ♦ To create a powerful group spirit
- ♦ To strengthen the entire body
- ♦ To promote health and fitness
- ♦ To promote a feeling of well-being
- ♦ To increase the awareness of diaphragmatic action and the breathing process
- ♦ To activate the resonance capacity of the body
- ♦ To illustrate the fact that music and motion belong together

All exercises should be performed in a relaxed atmosphere. The practice room should be well-ventilated, because having plenty of oxygen is important.

Basic position:

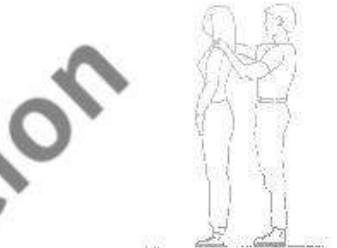
- ♦ Stand up straight with feet comfortably apart and firmly on the ground (see page 12)
- ♦ Let your arms hang loose at your sides
- ♦ Keep your back straight

Use images to describe the following exercises so that singers understand them properly. The instructions should be concise and illustrative.

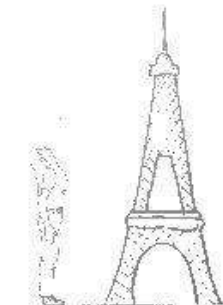
- Exercise 1** You are picking apples from a tree and placing them in a basket in front of you. Some of the apples are so high that you can only reach them by standing up on your toes and reaching as high as possible.  
Or: You are lifting bricks onto scaffolding.  
You are hanging curtains.



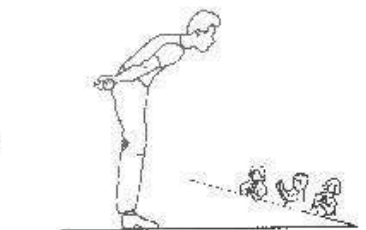
- Exercise 2** Stand on one leg, lift the other leg slightly and move your foot: first to the right a few times, then to the left. Switch legs and repeat.



- Exercise 3** The singers massage each other's backs and shoulders. Not too firmly!



- Exercise 4** You are standing in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Lifting the tower, move slowly from the ground floor up to the top of the tower. After a brief pause, follow it back down to the ground floor.

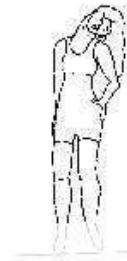


- Exercise 5** You are on an open stage receiving a round of applause from the audience. Take a deep bow, making sure your knees are slightly bent. Then stand up straight again to acknowledge the applause from the upper balconies. Your hands should be clasped behind your back.

- Exercise 6** Lift your left shoulder up to your ear and hold the position briefly. Then let your arm and shoulder drop as if they were made of lead. Repeat with the right side. Breathe normally during this exercise, not in time with the raising and lowering of your shoulders.



**Exercise 7** Slowly lower your head onto your right shoulder and hold the position briefly. Then swing it in a semicircle over your chest to the left shoulder, hold the position briefly and then return. Repeat about ten times.



**Exercise 8** You are standing at the edge of a swimming pool in starting position for diving in. Your knees should be straight and whoever wants to can touch the floor or their toes with their hands.



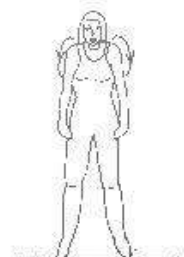
**Exercise 9** You are swinging an imaginary hula hoop around your hips. Both hands should be on the hips in a fixed position.



**Exercise 10** Stand like a soldier. Bend your right leg and raise it as high as possible up. Repeat four times and then switch legs.



**Exercise 11** Lift both shoulders and then let them drop loosely. Repeat five times. Continue by rotating the left shoulder a few times and then the right. Finish by rotating both shoulders.



**Exercise 12** This exercise should be part of every warm-up session. Have everyone yawn heartily and stretch all over. Then have them sigh several times from the highest to the lowest note. Shake out the arms.



## 2. The right posture

Try not to get tired of repeatedly reminding singers to maintain good posture, and also try to set a good example yourself. The right posture for sitting or standing is a basic prerequisite for good vocal performance.

- ◆ Stand as if you were balancing a basket of fruit on your head.
- ◆ Stand as if you were carrying a book on each shoulder.
- ◆ Each singer should stand as steadfastly as a lighthouse in a storm, leaning only slightly to one side to the other like a beacon light.

Exercise:

Lean your back and especially your shoulders against a wall. You should be able to feel the wall all over your back. Start with your feet about 20 cm in front of the wall, and gradually slide them back to the wall.

**The right standing posture:**



Feet comfortably apart  
(shoulder width).

Knees not too stiff,  
but rather relaxed and  
flexible.

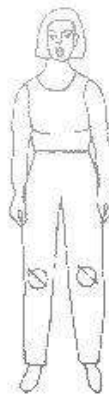
wrong posture:



1. Legs too far apart



2. Legs too close



3. Knees too stiff

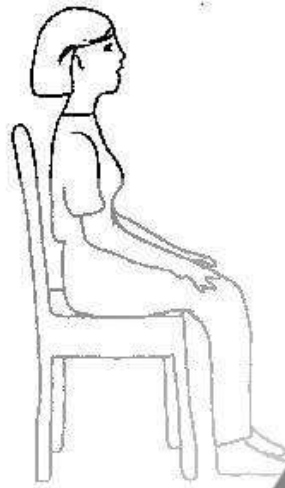


4. Body weight on only  
one leg

### The right sitting posture:

Sit up straight,  
without leaning your  
back on the backrest

Sit firmly on the  
tailbone



Do not cross your legs  
or fold your arms in front  
of your chest

Keep your feet flat  
on the floor  
ready to move

### The wrong sitting posture:



1. The arms are on  
edge of the chair  
rather than on the  
legs



2. Back and legs  
under the chair



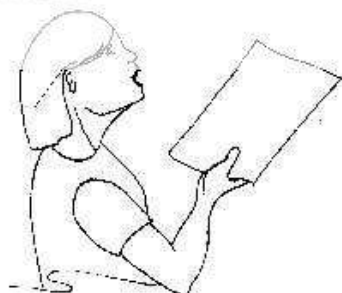
3. Legs crossed

### The right posture during a performance:



### The wrong posture:

1. Tense



2. Neck area restricted

