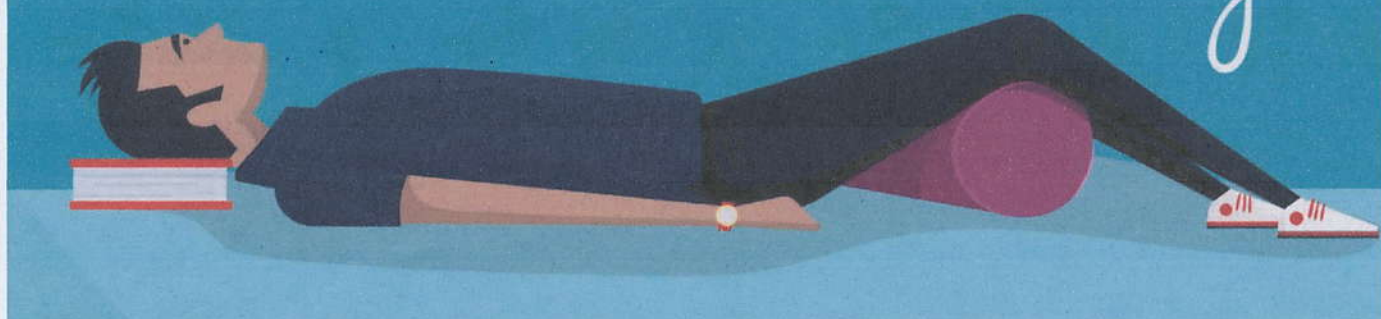


# How to prepare

# FOR SUCCESS

& beat anxiety



In my experience, there are three things that a singer can do to avoid fear and anxiety in performance: preparation, preparation and preparation. It is vital to prepare vocally, emotionally and physically.

## Vocal preparation

The key to preparing vocally is to know the notes, the dynamics, the text, the entire score and where you fit in. As my great singing teachers Professor Frederick Husler and

Yvonne Rodd-Marling (authors of [Singing: The Physical Nature of the Vocal Organ](#)) used to say, get the music “into the throat”.

What does “getting the music into the throat” mean? The voice has to know where it is going. Constructive rehearsing (alone, with a coach, with a repeteur); making sure that there is no unevenness in tone as you go from word to word and pitch to pitch; that there is flow in the music; that no technical

hiccoughs interrupt that process – all this gives the feeling that the music is indeed “in the throat” and creates confidence and great security.

## Emotional preparation

The eminent German psychotherapist [Bertram Müller](#), who works extensively with performing artists, advises that to overcome the normal human feelings of fear, guilt and shame, which can hit us suddenly before a performance



THE FUNDAMENTALS

MINDSET

and sabotage it, you have to connect with what you remember to be a very positive experience, either in singing or in life.

He says that fear arises when we hold back an inner impulse or don't express ourselves. The moment we begin to express ourselves, the fear disappears. This is why we often feel frightened just before a performance but, once the performance starts and we begin to express ourselves, the fear disappears.

Unexpressed negative emotions cause fear and blockages. Stay focused on what you wish to express. If negative emotions continue to

interrupt, then a good therapist can be helpful. Psychosynthesis helped me greatly. The excellent [Re-vision Centre](#) in London specialises in this, in a positive, kind and self-affirming way.

### Physical preparation

A thorough grounding in, and understanding of, the Alexander Technique is the best preparation for looking after yourself physically. Learning this technique and practising it daily will bring you into contact with your body.

Where do you start? Firstly, feel the ground firmly under your feet,

feel the support of the earth and feel the security and safety which that brings. This goes a long way to alleviating fears.

My wife, Professor Nadia Kevan, and I both teach the Alexander Technique and advise students to focus on Outer and Inner Support for the body.

Outer Support is achieved by lying quietly on the floor and coming in contact, via the sensory nerve endings in your skin, with whatever solid support you can feel under you. Have something under the back of your knees (a large, firm pillow, for example) and books under your head



A GOOD THERAPIST CAN CHANGE NEGATIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS



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in order to support it.

This is an exercise which must never be rushed. You begin by:

1. Mentally coming into contact with the heels
2. Feeling the floor under them
3. Feeling the support from the floor under them
4. Reminding yourself to trust that support
5. Letting go of tensions in the feet.

This allows you to feel the floor even more, so you can let go more. It is a never-ending circle of release.

This process is then repeated by coming into contact – one by one – with the back of your knees and legs, then the back of your pelvis, then the

whole back, then your hands, then your arms and elbows, then your shoulder blades and - finally - your head.

This will take about 20 minutes. Practise these steps daily to help the process become part of you. Once mastered, you can do it in a sitting position, then standing and then walking. Do it in the dressing room before a performance or audition: pre-performance nerves are controlled. You feel safe and are “in the moment”. You will present your authentic self. Your neck muscles will be free and your head well-balanced on top of your spine.

When we are frightened, we interfere with our breathing and suffer from a lack of oxygen. Contact your breathing in a natural way. Firstly, use the Outer Support exercise. You will find that feeling the support from the ground already begins to release your breath. Then, concentrate on one area of support – usually the floor under the pelvis – and train your mind to stay focused on the support from the

floor while saying either “Sh”, “F”, “Sss” or whispering an “ah” as you exhale. Stay connected with your chosen support area at the end of your breath. The in-breath will then come by itself. You will not have to do it. [CLICK HERE](#) to request an mp3 recording of me speaking these directions (available at a modest cost).

Inner Support is a training which brings you into contact with the bones of your skeleton: a build-up, one bone at a time, from the feet upward, of the feeling of being supported internally by Mother Earth.

Get to know yourself well. Make taking care of yourself in these ways and remaining connected to yourself a daily routine. Including this in your daily routine is as important as practising vocal exercises. Begin your practice session with it.

Singing comes from the whole of yourself. If part of yourself is ignored, misused or suppressed then you open the door for fear to enter. None of us want that ■

## RON MURDOCK



Canadian born Ron Murdock lived and worked as a solo tenor and singing pedagogue in London between 1969 and 1995. His career included BBC recordings, recitals at Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room and concerts at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. He was a member of the adjudicating panel at the Royal Overseas League voice competition and a member of English Opera Group. Since 1995 he has lived in The Netherlands - first in Amsterdam and since 2010 in Nijmegen. He tutors private voice pupils and is co-director, with his wife Professor Nadia Kevan, of the Awareness Teaching Center where they offer an Alexander Teacher training course. In June 2015 his book *Born to Sing: A singer's journey toward mind-body unity* was published by Mornum Time Press, California.



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