



*Teaching Vocal Versatility*

# The Basics, Part II

## Connecting to the Breath

*The Powell Method is a simple method of singing which offers three masterfully crafted techniques that allow singers to be able to sing many genres of music with ease.*

by Katti Powell

## The Basics

Before we can get started, we must first understand how the body of a singer needs to work. First we will learn the basics of breathing, then how to connect the voice to the breath, and lastly, the basics of supporting the sound. You will want to place yourself in front of a full-length mirror so you can observe what your body needs to look like as well as what it is doing wrong. In addition to looking in the mirror, pay special attention to what it feels like when you have done something correctly—most of the time you will not have the ability to watch yourself singing so it is important to be aware of how everything feels.

### Connecting to the Breath

Now that we have figured out breathing, let's work on connecting our sound to our breath. Keeping a hand on your chest and another on your belly, take in a nice, deep breath allowing your belly to fully expand. Once you have inhaled completely, exhale a voiced sigh on a "Hahh" syllable. Sustain this voiced sigh until you run out of breath. While you are sustaining this sound, make sure to stay tall and lifted—not allowing your chest to collapse or your shoulders to round forward. Also, make sure you expel all of the air on the sound. When you are finished, you should be completely out of breath. If you have sustained this sound for a considerable length of time and still have plenty of air to exhale, you are likely holding your breath while you make sound. Make sure you are making a solid "h" at the beginning of your voiced sigh—this will aid in your ability to connect your voice to the breath. This should feel very relaxed—just like an actual sigh would feel, only longer. Try this a couple more times and vary the pitch of your sustained sound—in other words start on whichever pitch you like and allow the voice to move up and down in pitch while you are sighing. Again, remember to stay lifted in your chest and shoulders and to use all of the air you have inhaled.

Let's try another breath connection exercise. We will be buzzing or fluttering the lips. This sound can only be made from a connection to the breath. Some people are not able to buzz their lips but are able to roll an "r". Whichever you can do easier is what you will want to do for this exercise. Buzz your lips or roll an "r" and move the pitch up and down, trying to keep the buzz or roll going throughout the whole exercise. Maintaining the buzz or roll means you are connecting to your breath properly.

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