

# Nurturing the Aging Singer - Part 1

Jennifer Ciobanu, D. M. A.

## A few encouraging facts ...

1. The voice matures at age 30 and beyond, depending on voice type.
2. Good overall health = Good vocal health (with few exceptions)
3. A gradual decline in the quality of the singing voice need not be a part of the natural aging process.
4. The literature suggests that older singers can greatly benefit from voice lessons and/or regular practice aimed at making vocal improvements. You CAN teach an old dog new tricks.
5. Music training helps keep the brain healthy! Just being a musician has already put you in an excellent category for brain health as it pertains to the aging process.

## What to expect as we age ...

1. Hormonal changes cause vocal changes.
2. The aging process changes the structure of the larynx, the elasticity of the vocal folds, and the surrounding cartilage.
3. Career misuse or overuse of the speaking voice begins to take its toll on the instrument (throat pain, vocal fatigue).
4. Conditions associated with aging (osteoporosis) and/or surgeries affect vocal technique.
5. Acknowledge that a new 'normal' may be the best way to enjoy singing later in life.

## Principle No. 1: Your body is your instrument.

- Prevention and Prescription
- Sing from your brain and with intention.
- Sing from your belly. Learning how to support the voice is essential!
- If you use it poorly, you lose it.
- Muscle memory and its significance

## Principle No. 2: Tension is a part of your singing. Find it and release it.

- The good tension -- *appoggio*
- Jaw -- Tongue -- Larynx -- Neck -- Lips -- Face

## Principle No. 3: If you are already doing it, do more. If you aren't, start.

1. Establish a practice routine. Exercising the voice for as little as 15 minutes, 3 times per week will yield noticeable, positive results in a short period of time.

- posture, breathing exercises, lip trill, sighs/sirens
- single note vowels, establishing high soft palate/low larynx muscle memory
- 5-note scales (descending); [u] useful for optimum head resonance
- vocalize freely throughout the range; do not avoid problem notes or passages as these indicate an imbalance in the muscle that needs correcting

2. Remember that every effort made to improve your physical fitness will result in an improvement in your singing.

3. Drink lots of water. Fluid retention (caused by any number of conditions) affects the vocal folds, and water helps to eliminate it.