

How to get the best out of a mature female singer



Leading singing teacher and voice researcher Rebecca Moseley-Morgan is an expert in the mature female voice. In Part 2 of our interview with her ([read Part 1 here](https://www.isingmag.com/mature-female-singers-teaching-tips-and-myths/) (https://www.isingmag.com/mature-female-singers-teaching-tips-and-myths/)), she explains her teaching approach and shares tips for the best results.

What do singing teachers need to consider before taking on a mature singer?

It takes longer to process new information the older you get, so I suggest that teachers create very precise practise regimes, nothing too complicated, but record these so the student will practise at exactly the same pitches and number of repetitions that were done in the lesson. What is done between lessons is as important as the lesson, and it takes time for a singer to learn to apply what they do in exercises into their normal singing, whatever that is, choir, church etc.

How do you gauge if a singer is losing range due to a physical problem, ageing, or poor technique?

There is not usually a clear-cut answer that pinpoints the problem to just one of these things. What I often see is that the singer starts to struggle with the upper range and so they use increased vocal effort, perhaps causing over-adduction, tongue root tension and vocal strain. I have to be something of a detective to find out the cause of this. I would first of all work on the technique. Aging does cause changes, but they are not necessarily negative. I may encourage the singer to embrace perhaps a warmer tone than the one they had at 18.

In all my observations of students and through my research, I would estimate that in 95% of cases range can be improved. I estimate that a loss of more than three semi-tones is due to poor technique and muscle tension. However, improvement is only possible if the student is proactive with exercises and trusts the process

Privacy - Terms

In your research you say that there are always things that a singer can improve. What are these and how they can work on them?

Firstly, there is no one way that will suit everyone. I have to have a number of tools in my box. This is really where a workshop is needed, but here's a brief summary

1. Respiratory function

1. I teach low abdominal breathing "Accent method" but applied for singing
2. Janice Chapman's SPLAT (Singers Please Loosen Abdominal Tension)
3. Primal sounds
4. We may work lying on the ground, sitting or standing whatever works best for the singer
5. I may ask the singer to rotate hips and correct posture
6. I use counting exercises so they monitor improvement
7. I get the singer to gauge the length of the phrase, so they know how much breath they need
8. I use straws in water so they can observe the effect of their airflow and see if they are over breathing at the onset which is a very common problem
9. I ask singers to exhale completely then vocalise on an "ng" just using the residual air in the lungs. This demonstrates just how little respiratory effort is needed at onset, if they apply same technique to a musical phrase, it will also indicate the point in the phrase where they need to start make a little more effort
10. Most singers believe that more breath is the solution for every vocal problem and end up wasting breath and running out of breath.

2. Range

1. I use sirens to initially loosen muscles and take away the fear
2. I use SOVT exercise: Lip trills with tongue in and out and rolled "rrs"
3. Straws in Water – Next step we vocalise through the straw then repeat without. I have observed that optimal results are achieved if the singer does the exercise with the straw, then releases the straw but does not move to put down the glass but sings straight away. I think that the laryngeal position achieved with straw phonation is set in the shortest possible muscle memory and any movement dislodges it

3. Register change

1. This is connected to range, so all of the above are important
2. Work on tongue root tension, exercise with tongue extended or tucked over a horizontal straw are effective methods
3. Use vowels which encourage a high-backed tongue position such as I or E (Italian vowels).

4. Flexibility

1. Poor flexibility is normally too much effort on each individual note. I explain that the brain is task based. So if I want to scratch my nose I do not think 'lift hand, point finger, engage biceps". I just focus on task. So in singing concentrate on musical phrase and control airflow.
 2. Maintain vocal position
- Do not think about doing something on every note or worse still putting accents on every note from the vocal folds
 - Sing runs sing a straw in water will help control airflow, the singer needs to observe the bubbles and aim to create a minimal but continuous flow of bubbles
 - Sing runs after exhaling on an "NG" to demonstrate how little air is needed for runs
 - Change rhythmic patterns on runs to stop habitual patterns of stress
 - Work up speed using a metronome

- work up speed using a metronome.

What are your three top tips for working with the mature female voice?

1. Use it or lose it.
2. Exercise the voice little and often rather than one massive session once a week.
3. Warm up before every sing session and cool down at end.

Website: [inspectorvoice.co.uk](https://www.inspectorvoice.co.uk) (<https://www.inspectorvoice.co.uk/#!>)



ISingmag (<https://www.isingmag.com/Author/Infoisingmag-Com/>)

()

Our mission is to empower the singer through their voice, performance, health, understanding of the biz, and mindset so they can go out and create to their heart's content.