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**SINGING IS LARGELY IN YOUR MIND.
WHAT YOU THINK IS HOW YOU SING!**

One of the most common beliefs held by beginning singers is that the voice is completely formed in the throat, at the site of the vocal cords. This is far from the total picture. As you'll see in the following chapters, there are actually many elements that combine to form your "voice."

The foundation of all singing, though, is breathing. Singing requires a strong, controlled breathing system. You'll begin to experience this firsthand by doing the breathing exercises introduced in the "Mastering Breathing" chapter. The voice will begin to relax and show its true potential only after you've begun to master the breath work. Simply understanding how the instrument works, in a step-by-step manner, is the best beginning a singer can make.

MOUTH VS. NOSE BREATHING

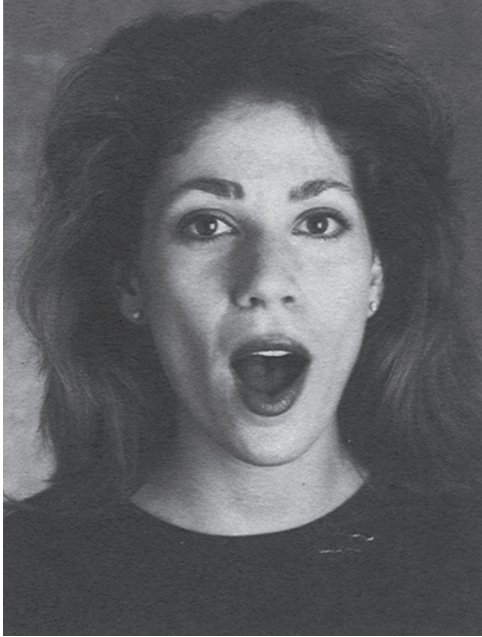
Many students ask "Should I breathe through my nose or my mouth?" In the beginning, mouth breathing is preferable because it helps you get a good stretch in the lower breath support muscles and to achieve the feeling of storing the breath low in the lungs. However, both mouth and nose breathing have specific pros and cons.

Breathing through the nose has the distinct advantage of involving the upper passageways where some of the tone will exit (see "Elevating the Voice"). And it can be very helpful in arid climates (like Las Vegas, Nevada) or in places where the air is dry because of air conditioning.

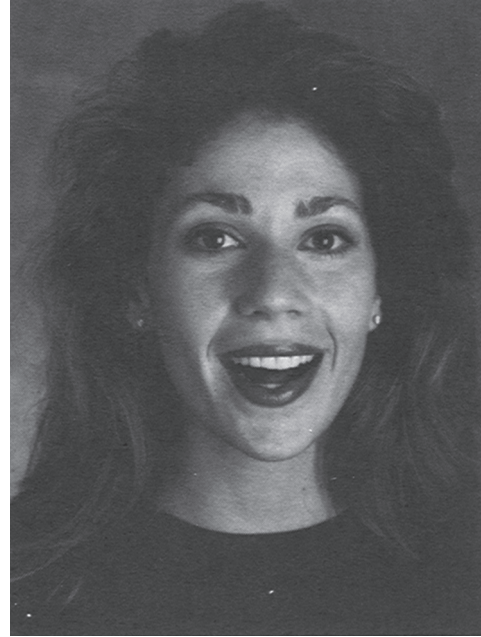
Dry air robs the vocal cords of the natural moisture that lubricates their workings. The nasal passages and sinuses actually humidify air as it passes through them. However, if you choose to breathe through the nose, be aware that a bout with a cold can require a sudden shift to mouth breathing. Also, breathing through the nose can promote shallow (upper chest) breathing.

PHOTO #4.1 a & b - The Inner Smile

a) Correct



b) Incorrect



Notice that in Photo #4.1a, there's just a little hint of a smile as the singer gives out a tone. This smallish hidden grin is all that's needed to assist the voice in lifting up onto the upper portion of the pathway. When the smile becomes obvious and overdone (as in Illustration #4.1b), tone quality deteriorates and a singer's intentions may be questioned by the audience.

BONE AMPLIFIES TONE

Along with lifting the voice into the head resonators using the inner smile, it helps to think of the bones of the cheeks, eye sockets and forehead as being a huge, bony cavity. Feel as if you're not only lifting the voice, but secretly smiling it up into big, thick bony ridges and caverns.

Seek bone and avoid the fleshy parts of the inner cavities of your head. Bone amplifies tone, flesh absorbs vocal vibration. Seek out bone unless you want to dampen your sound to blend as when singing with a chorus. In that case, allowing some of the tone into the fleshy parts of the back of your throat can help to round and darken the voice to "fit in" with the overall choral texture.