

Resonance

- Tim Marron, BHS Competition Judge

When a singer sings loudly with tension, they stick out in the chorus. Without common voicing techniques there is no blend. Vocal resonance and placement are key to tuning as well. Barbershop ensembles strive to match each other as well as possible from a placement standpoint. If the Lead singer has a natural, forward, bright placement, the rest of the ensemble makes every effort to match that same resonance. So it's important to sing in a tension-free way that lets the overtones ring.

LARYNX

The position of the larynx determines the spectrum of resonance:

- High Larynx: less resonance. Also creates vocal tension and limits range.
- Low Larynx: Relaxed. Gives max resonance for all styles and textures. Helps vocal freedom. Helps create the Ring!

Take a look at [Lowering Your Larynx](#) for some practical suggestions. (*NOTE: This is in the Resonance section of the Song Craft webpage, where you downloaded this document.*)

AMPLIFYING THE OVERTONES

- Low overtones get amplified in the back of your mouth - the soft-palate area. To experiment with the low overtones in your voice, open the back of your mouth (like there's an egg back there.) Put space between your molars.
- High overtones get amplified in the front of your mouth . . . the rigid, front-teeth-and-hard-palate area. If you want to amplify the high overtones in your voice, show your front teeth and imitate a kitten saying "Meow, meow." Or imitate a baby crying: "Waaah!"

High overtones are the ones that make your voice sound "piercing," "penetrating," "brilliant," "bright," and "forward." This is also what some people are talking about when they use the phrase "singing in the mask." Watch [Sing With Forward Placement](#) for additional details and exercises to learn how to "sing in the mask." (*NOTE: The link to this YouTube video is in the Resonance section of the Song Craft webpage, where you downloaded this document.*)

TONGUE

- The position of the front 1/3 of the tongue determines vowel formation (along with lips for "oh" and "ooh.") Keep it free and articulate.
- The back 2/3 of the tongue needs to always be gently arched forward in order to keep the throat-resonating space open!

Resonance

- Do not let the tongue fall back on “Ah,” “Uh,” “Oh,” and “Ooh.”

SOFT PALATE

- The sole purpose of the soft palate is to stop air from going into the nose or water going into the throat.
- It requires no effort to lift the soft palate. (Most people use unrelated muscles to “lift.”) Just don't let sound come out of your nose, just your mouth.
- The only time the soft palate should drop is to make the “N,” “M,” or “NG” sound.
- If you sing with the soft palate dropped and allow sound in the nose, it takes away resonance, vibrancy, and clarity.

JAW

- Movement beyond what is used in normal speech is unnecessary and creates intonation and synch errors.
- Use the supple lips and tip of the tongue for clear articulation!

Gold medal singers make it look easy because it **is** easy. The key to making your artistry most impactful is for each singer to maintain that resonating space by following the above. Each time the larynx rises, the tongue drops, the soft palate drops, or jaw drops there will be inconsistencies that degrade unit sound.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

1. "Lack of resonance comes from wide vowels, so instead, have tall vowels".

IN FACT: Lack of resonance comes from shortening the resonating tube with a high larynx. It has nothing to do with vowels. Keep your larynx relaxed and low for full resonance.

2. "Nasal resonance creates ring."

IN FACT: Keeping a low larynx, tongue forward, and sound out of the nose (via soft palate) creates ring!

3. "Intonation errors come from singing under the pitch."

IN FACT: This may be true occasionally, but often it's a result of jaw and or tongue drop. This creates too much space in the front of the mouth which literally slows the frequency of the resonated sound down just enough to sound flat. Keep the tongue forward.