THE VOICE LESSON

Written by

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JULIE is leading BRIDGETT, GREG & VIOLETTA in a voice lesson. For each exercise, Julie plays a run of eight descending notes on piano (or another instrument, or just with voice).

Once a run is done, Julie moves up a step (or half step) on the scale, showing the student a new key for the next run. The exercise continues in this way.

Note: The quality of the singing is not important here, only that the effort be true.

Julie is working with Bridgett.

JULIE
(flapping her lips like a motor boat as she plays 8 descending notes)
BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB.

BRIDGETT
(as Julie did)
BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB.

JULIE
(moving up)
And again?

BRIDGETT
BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB.

JULIE
(moving up)
That’s it.

BRIDGETT
BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB.

JULIE
(moving up)
One more.

BRIDGETT
BBBBBBBBBBBBBBBB.

JULIE
Good. Okay. It’s simple, but it puts you in contact with that feeling of support, right?

BRIDGETT
Mm-hm?
JULIE
Did you feel that?

BRIDGETT
I think so, yeah.

JULIE
You weren’t pushing down on anything, right?

BRIDGETT
No. I wasn’t.

JULIE
Thank you, Bridgett. Greg?


JULIE
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

GREG
BLAH, BLAH, BLAH-

JULIE
BLAW. Don’t think ah, think aw.

GREG
Aw.

GREG
Aw.

JULIE
Aw.

GREG
Aw.

JULIE
(same starting note)
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-

JULIE
Yes, good, now breathe, lift and
go. Think about your breath-

GREG
(jumping the gun)
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-
JULIE
Think about your breath like a wave. It comes back from the shore, goes into the ocean, comes up, and crests. Right? Makes foam up there. So, here’s your breath, foam is the sound, so...
(same starting note)

GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

JULIE
Good. And it’s straight out, like a bull, right? BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.
(snorts like a bull;)
(then plays a note higher:)

GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.
(snorts)

JULIE
Good. (moving up)
One more.

GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

JULIE
(moving up)
Last one?

GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

JULIE
(same starting note)
And again.

GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

JULIE
That’s it. Last one.
(moving up)
GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

JULIE
Good, Greg! That’s making more space in your mouth. It’s
encouraging both the tongue and the jaw to relax. Okay? That’ll give
you room to work in.

GREG
Right.

JULIE
We want a big, big space. We don’t want to work in a little black box.
We want to create a whole concert hall.

GREG
Inside of my mouth?

JULIE
Yes! Violetta.

Greg sits. Violetta joins Julie. Without prompting, Greg
repeats his line, but rounder, as if for a concert hall.

GREG
BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW-BLAW.

JULIE
Greg, that’s it exactly. Miss Brown.

VIOLETTA
Hi. So, I have done a fair bit of training in the past, and what I
was thinking about for today was--

JULIE (CONT’D)
Let’s start with a chewing sound and: NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW--
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

VIOLETTA
Oh, uh...

JULIE
(same note)
It’s gonna seem really stupid, we’ll just go for it: NYOW-NYOW-
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.
VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

JULIE
Be aware of your breath each time.
(moving up on piano)

VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

JULIE
Excellent.
(moving up)

VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.
(gets a higher note)

JULIE
One more.
(higher note)

VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

JULIE
Great. One more.
(higher note)

VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

JULIE
Last one.
(higher note)

VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

JULIE
Yeah. Again, this is giving you space. It’s teaching the tongue and the jaw to elongate rather than to constrict. And it’s putting you in touch with that support, which is so, so important.
VIOLETTA
I can feel it.

JULIE
Good. So. Let’s try that down here a little lower.
(an octave down)

VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

JULIE
Keep thinking, as you come down, you want to snort out that breath.
(lower note)

VIOLETTA
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.
(lower note)
NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW-NYOW.

JULIE
Yes.

VIOLETTA
Wow, that’s crazy.

JULIE
Bridgett, my love, can I get you back up here?

Violetta sits. Bridget joins Julie.

JULIE
Just the jaw this time. Feel the breath up there, up high, almost like a yawn: NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH.

BRIDGETT
NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-

JULIE
We’re going to get your jaw a bit more open than what you’re used to.
(higher note)
BRIDGETT
NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH.

JULIE
Yes, and:
(higher note)

BRIDGETT
NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH-NYAH.

JULIE
And repeat:
(each syllable gets a note:)
“THIS IS WHAT’S IM-POR-TANT TO ME.”
(same note)

BRIDGETT
THIS IS WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO ME.

JULIE
THIS IS WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO ME.
(higher note)

BRIDGETT
THIS IS WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO ME.

JULIE
And now you answer.

BRIDGETT
Wait, what?

JULIE
Now you say what’s important to you. In life.
(higher note)

BRIDGETT
(gets the note again)
EM-PA-THY’S IM-POR-TANT TO ME.

JULIE
Good.
(higher note)

BRIDGETT
EMPATHY’S IMPORTANT TO ME.

JULIE
What’s important you, Bridgett?
(higher note)
BRIDGETT
EMPATHY’S IMPORTANT TO ME!

JULIE
Yes, you see, once the jaw is elongated, then we can start to make space for the soul, which is great. We’ve got to get that soul inside of the mouth. Gregory!

Greg leaps to his feet and Julie sits.

JULIE
Greg, I need to know what’s going on with you.
   (gives a note)

GREG
   (one note each syllable:)
I GUESS I’M JUST DO-ING MY BEST.

JULIE
No Greg, you, this person, I need to know what’s going on with you.
   (gets same note)

GREG
Uhhh...
I’VE BEEN TRY-ING NOT TO COMPLAIN.

JULIE
Yes!
   (higher note)

GREG
BUT IT ISN’T GO-ING SO WELL.
   (higher note)
I FEEL LIKE I’M SUF-FO-CA-TING.

GREG
   (higher note)
CHO-KING ON A SIL-VER LI-NING!

JULIE
Greg, you are good. You have invited the universe into the room, and that is so, so hard to do. Violettea, I need you, come, come.

Violettea pops up, Greg sits. Julie gives Violettea a note. She starts confidently and only grows more so.
VIOLETTA
I THOUGHT DIF-FRENCE MADE ME SPE-CIAL!
(higher note)
THAT’S WHY I HAD TO BE U-NIQUE
(higher note)
NOW I THINK IT’S HOW WE’RE A-LIKE
(higher note)
THAT IS INT-RES-TING A-BOUT ME!

JULIE
That IS what’s interesting about you Violetta!

VIOLETTA
I knew it was! I Knew it.

JULIE
Everybody now!

Greg and Bridgett join Violetta. All three sing a run of eight notes, as if moving down a scale.

BRIDGETT, GREG & VIOLETTA
I KEEP LOO-KING FOR A ROU-TINE
BUT I AL-SO LONG TO BE FREE
IT WOULD BE SO GREAT NOT TO CARE
WHEN I FRIT-TER MY DAY AWAY

JULIE
Yes! And, find each other:

The rules shift. These are no longer runs of eight notes. Each chunk of text is its own song, and the actors must create it together (in rehearsal or performance.) The actors may sing a song as a scale, or harmonize, or make up whole melodies. The only requirement is to represent one voice.

BRIDGETT, GREG & VIOLETTA
WHY DOES A SALAD SPINNER TAKE
SO LONG TO DRY
WHY OH WHY, WHY OH WHY

BRIDGETT, GREG & VIOLETTA
(a new song)
NO, YOU DON’T WANT TO BE ANGRY
SO WHAT THEN, WHAT SHOULD YOU BE
YOU SHOULD GATHER UP ALL YOUR FRUSTRATION
AND POUR SOME OF IT ON ME

JULIE
Don’t stop!
BRIDGETT, GREG & VIOLETTA
(a new song)
I SPENT THAT MONEY
I SPENT THAT MONEY
I SPENT THAT MONEY
ON THE WRONG THING (YES I)
I SPENT THAT MONEY (OH I)
I SPENT THAT MONEY (YES I)
I SPENT THAT MONEY
ON THE WRONG THING...

JULIE
And now, tell it to everyone else,
to everyone everywhere, tell them!

BRIDGETT, GREG & VIOLETTA
(new song)
HAVING THE FEELING AND PULLING THE RUG
HAVING THE FEELING AND PULLING THE RUG

HA-VING THE FEELING, PUL-LL-LING THE RUG
HA-VING THE FEELING, PUL-LL-LING THE RUG

HAVING THE FEELING AND PULLING THE RUG
HAVING THE FEELING AND PULLING THE RUG

ON IT, ON IT, ON IT
ON IT, ON IT, ON IT

HAVING THE FEELING AND PULLING THE RUG
ON IT, ON IT, ON IT

JULIE
All four of us now, let’s listen to
ourselves and to each other and
choose our words wisely, we’re not
going to rush, we’re going to take
a breath and truly listen, and:

ALL
(a new song)
A TISKET, A TASKET
WHAT A LOVELY HANDBASKET
WE HAPPEN TO FIND OURSELVES IN
AND IT COULD TURN OUT WELL
BUT IT FEELS MORE LIKE HELL
THAT WE’RE ALL HEADING FOR IN THE END
HEY THERE STRANGER, WON’T YOU BE MY FRIEND

JULIE
Nice. And if we move that up here?

End of play.