

Suggested Exercises for improving your singing with the

*SingingMat*TM

- **Size** is just right for singing on risers or in quartets.
 - Standard risers are 18 inches deep. The mat is almost 16 x 20 inches, just the right amount of room to allow moving around but not so much that the singer can move too far out of their intended area. Have you ever been practicing with a quartet that slowly moves all the way to the left or right, or moves backwards? Put a SingingMat on the floor for each person and help the quartet to stay in one place! The SingingMat is also great for working with kid singers that like to move around a lot. If they know that they can move around within the edges of the mat but can't step out of the mat, it helps them to stay focused in one spot while knowing exactly how much moving around is allowed.
 - **Suggested exercise for a quartet:** Place four mats on the floor and determine an approximate arrangement. Practice moving to the outside extremes of each mat as well as to the inside extremes. Note how this helps the two outside people to have more information about how far each person is moving away from the center.
 - **Suggested exercise for an individual:** Practice your music on a SingingMat, taking note of where your feet are located when you find that you are doing your best singing. This will probably be with one foot slightly more forward than the other. Take the mat to your next rehearsal and see if your best singing happens when you start with your feet in that same place. Move around in the space of the mat, but if you find that you aren't using the entire mat, consider that more movement might be better.
 - **Suggested exercise for kids:** Ask a young singer (3-9) that might normally find it difficult to stand in the same place for a long time, to sing and try to stay on the mat. Help them take some pride in being able to stay on the mat. Give them ownership of the challenge of staying focused as if they are staying on their own mat.

- **Design** is customizable to your own logo or brand.
 - Your logo or picture will come alive as a dye sublimated SingingMat. Our dye sublimation process is different from screen printing such as on T-shirts. Dye sublimation will not fade, crack, or wash off. The colors are permanently embedded in the fabric rather than printed on the surface. Use the SingingMat as a fund raiser or as a keepsake to remember your contest journey.

drop your knees a little on the breaths. It also creates a vacuum by moving the diaphragm down.

- **Bounce Back Feature** assists in maintaining a more flexible alignment and singing with energy.
 - The SingingMat absorbs the impact that your feet would otherwise make on the floor and springs back to keep your quads engaged. Sometimes you may have been told to engage your quads and sing with a little bounce, rather than using a stiff, stationary posture. The SingingMat practically requires you to engage your quads. In fact, at the same time your feet, knees, and joints may be relieved when you start using the mat, you might begin to notice that your leg muscles are working harder. You may need to adjust to using the mat on a long term basis or pace yourself for a while. Alternate between singing on the mat and singing without the mat.
 - **Suggested exercise:** Any chorus can learn to move as a group in the same way that a quartet moves as a group. There's no need for a director for a quartet because a quartet can sense the timing of the music from the way that everyone is constantly moving together. A chorus that is constantly in motion can do the same thing. Scan your chorus for the most stationary singers. Find people that could use some help to learn to move with the chorus. Let them stand on a SingingMat and see if they loosen up and adopt the movements of those around them because their quads are automatically engaged.

- **Active Balancing** calls for constant motion by requiring tiny movements to keep your balance.
 - You can't be a statue and stand on a SingingMat. It forces you to make very tiny movements just to stay on it, but the required movements are so tiny that you might not notice them. Now that you've allowed the SingingMat to improve your alignment, breathing, and relaxation, next we're going to free up your vocal range. Did you know that the voice naturally wants to start high and work its way down? We tend to think vocal warm-ups should start low and maybe go high very briefly sometime after the lower range is ready. But here's an experiment. Laugh, sigh, and cry. Did your voice start low and go high or start high and fall down? The voice wants to start high. But it wants you to be free of muscle tension and breathing interference first. That's what the SingingMat does best, but now that we can see that we're in constant motion while using the mat, free up some higher notes that you might not know are there.
 - **Suggested exercise:** Stand on the SingingMat and breathe using one of the SingingMat suggested breathing exercises or with another correct method that you like. Sing an "oo" starting high and falling down, almost like a sigh. Do this at least five times, and then change it to other words and vowels. Check your breathing again, check your alignment, check your neck muscles, shoulders, jaws, arms, etc. Start higher, using a smaller "oo" this time. The "oo" vowel brings the larynx down. If other vowels seem stressful change back to "oo" and

see what happens. Then when you sing your repertoire, if a note seems high, change it to “oo” and if it still seems high, start with an “oo” sigh on a higher note and fall down to the “high” one. Try singing the vowel in the “oo” space.

- **Constant Movement** improves kinesthetic awareness, leading to better listening technique for singing.
 - Now we’re really getting somewhere. In one way or another, all of the concepts so far are not new for most singers. They may have been presented in a different way, but up until this point you have probably heard everything before. Brace yourself, because this last benefit of the SingingMat is not a well known idea.
 - It is based on a concept of sound therapy as described by researchers and practitioners of the Tomatis Method, which is an ear training system that is used to improve a variety of conditions. A good understanding of the Tomatis Method is beyond the scope of this summary, but the overall theory is that many conditions, including vocal problems, are actually ear related. The solution is to improve the tone of the muscles of the middle ears. More specifically, it isn’t an improvement in either hearing or listening that they are going for, but an improvement in listening technique. They are trying to get the ear to develop a heightened awareness of sounds. For singing, this sounds good so far, right?
 - The Tomatis Method uses specialized equipment in a setting that you would attend sessions in a certified center to take advantage of. We aren’t trying to use the SingingMat to do the Tomatis Method. But we are borrowing the method’s concept of bone conduction to train the ears to hear a singer’s own voice better. We’re finding the specific alignment that sends an amplified sound of your singing to your ears so you can have better information about your singing that will allow you to adjust your sound in real time.
 - **Suggested exercise:** Stand on the singing mat and produce some sounds while adjusting your neck alignment. You might find an amplification of the sound when your head is just slightly farther back than you might be used to. We are primarily working with shoulders and above for this experiment. Make sure you are using your good technique for keeping relaxed jaws, arms, neck, and that you are breathing without interference. This only works if other aspects of your singing technique are good. Think of it as moving the dial on a radio and listening for a station. Sometimes you will barely hear it, and keep moving and hear it clearly, but then keep moving and lose it again. This is the beginning of training your ears to hear the sound that you’re looking for. Eventually your ears will direct your muscles to get you in the proper alignment automatically, like when a dog hears something and his entire body changes to hear the sound better. We’re first going to move your alignment to help your ears find the amplified sound, then as your ears become trained to listen for that sound, the reverse will happen. Your ears will remember the technique and direct your alignment, without you thinking about it.

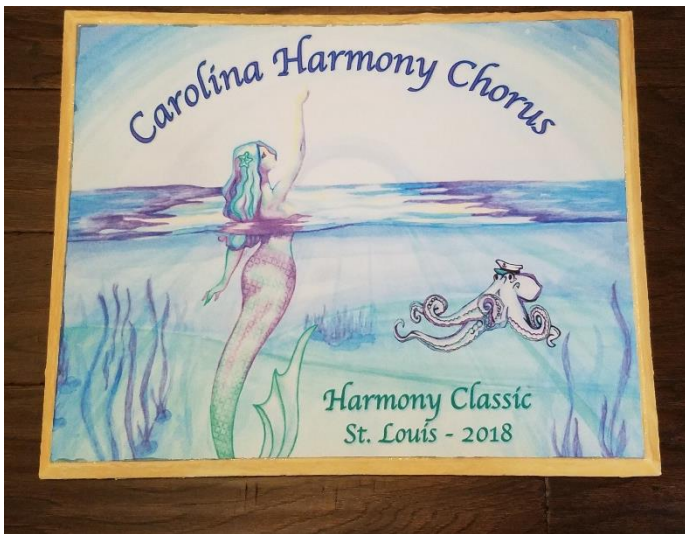
Inventor's testimonial:

Anyone that knows even a little about my history with barbershop singing probably knows that I've never been able to decide what non-bass part to sing. "Anything But Bass" has always had to do. But until recently I never felt loud enough on lead. Even on the occasions when I've had the chance to sing with gigantic sounding quartets, I felt loud enough on baritone or tenor. But the shyest novice quartet singers in the world could make me feel like I didn't have a big enough sound to sing lead. This didn't make any sense. In reality you only need to be slightly louder on lead than baritone. It wasn't until I started learning about bone conduction for singing that I noticed that I tended to stand differently singing a harmony part than lead. My neck was a little more forward on lead, so I couldn't hear myself very well. This is why I want to bring the SingingMat to all singers, so they can hear their own sound better. You are more likely to find an alignment that is better for bone conduction of sound if you are in constant motion on the **SingingMat™**. *Karen Maney*

SingingMat™ Standard



SingingMat™ Luxury



Standard - One layer of polyurethane with a soft fabric top. Less than 1/2 inch thick. This is a good basic introduction to using the mat. Available in quantity discount pricing for choruses or fund raisers.

Luxury - Over an inch thick. Strong and durable polyurethane base with layers of fabric for added strength and layers of neoprene for added comfort and slip resistance. Our polyurethane is a closed cell flexible foam, giving it more strength and the ability to withstand more pressure than an open cell polyurethane (such as memory foam).

Both mats have a **polyurethane base** and a polyester top that is suitable for **dye sublimation printing**. They are both just under 16"x20".

Polyurethane is **non-toxic** and is the main component of the highest quality anti-fatigue mats on the market. We tested several polyurethane blends and manufacturing processes to create the ultimate mat for singers.

Dye Sublimation - Our dye sublimation process is different from screen printing such as on T-shirts. It will not fade, crack, or wash off. The colors are permanently embedded in the fabric rather than printed on the surface.

For ordering information or questions, contact Karen Maney at karenmaney@yahoo.com

The vocal training philosophy shared here is highly influenced by the Suzuki Voice Teacher Training program and the Tomatis Method. You may contact Karen Maney for more information on Suzuki Voice or search online for a local Tomatis practitioner.