



Regenerative Singing: A Practical Introduction into Resonance Training

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My name is Maria Busqué and I am not a voice teacher – but I do teach singers almost every day. In fact, I teach all instruments regularly, including singing and conducting.

So what exactly do I teach them? I teach Resonance. I work with the principles of Resonance, not necessarily the resonant spaces you talk about with your students, but the ability of the whole body to transmit and potentiate a resonant sound, full of musical expression and emotion.

Resonance is in more places than in the resonant spaces in the skull. In this session we tried out a few practical exercises from Resonance Training and their application to singing “Ave Verum” by Mozart, as a vocal ensemble.

When making music regenerates the body

So what does all of this have to do with »regeneration«, or Regenerative Singing? I’m proposing here a work on the musical movement that would allow the body to generate a lot of energy in an effortless way. You know the feeling when you have sung a concert and instead of feeling exhausted, you feel energized and basically could turn around and go back on stage and do the whole thing again? I think everyone of us has experienced this sometime. It's through the training of certain physical principles that the body is able to regenerate while making music, instead of getting tired. That means, we are able to reproduce this experience at will, in any situation, and not only when inspiration strikes.

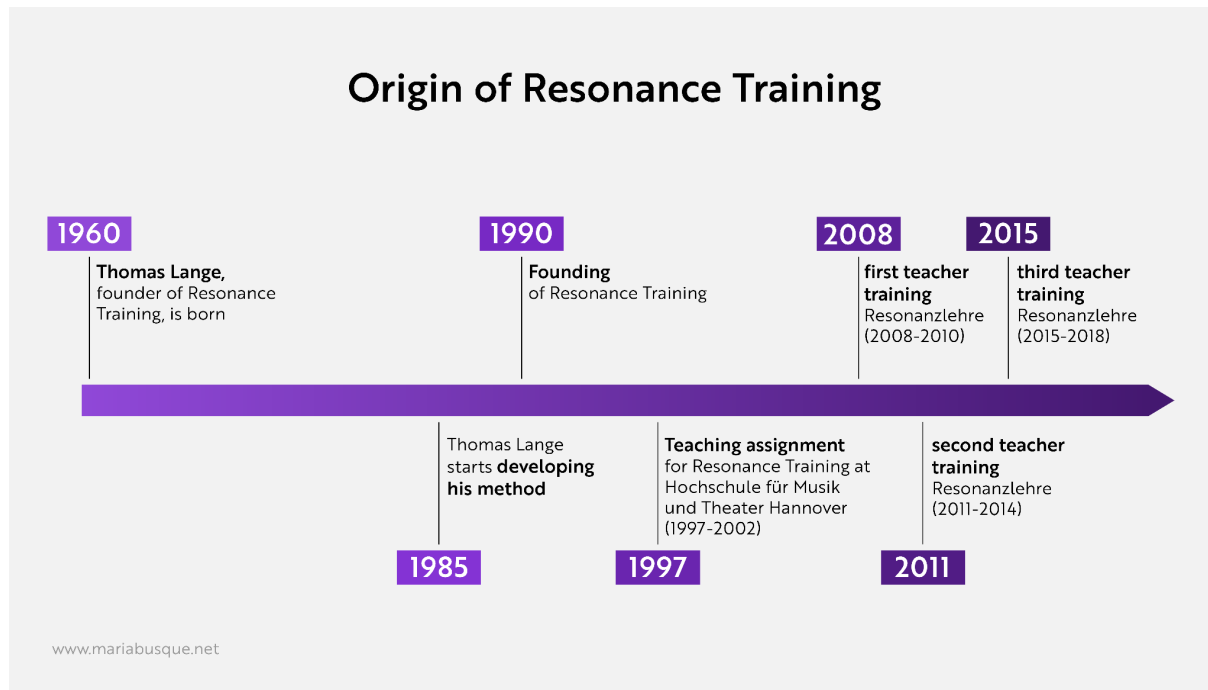
While many musicians are aware or even have first-hand experience of body awareness methods such as the Alexander Technique or Feldenkrais, Resonance Training is not so well-known, maybe more among German-speaking musicians.

As we know, lots of practice hours are not necessarily conducive to great results: When it’s been too much, the body has a clear sign: tension. If this is ignored, the body will start to cramp. If we ignore this further, pain will ensue.

German Violinist Thomas Lange (*1960) had such an experience at the age of twenty: he had, bit by bit, caused himself a tendonitis in both arms and was forced to give up violin playing completely for one year.

After this, an odyssey from specialist to specialist, as well as contact to different movement methods like Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, Aikido, etc. The pain became less, but it was only after Lange started paying attention to the resonance of his sound while practicing, that he

was able to play pain-free: He had discovered the relationship between the quality of his sound and an effortless movement. Moreover, Lange's violin teacher commended his musicality. What had happened?



The reciprocal relationship between sound, emotion, listening and movement

The main statement of Resonance Training is »The more resonance in the sound, the more ease in the movement.« Lange had found a way to link the field of movement and movement awareness with the musical field. Musicians thus learn in Resonance Training to prevent tensions and pain actively, while allowing themselves to perform according to their full potential. The main difference of Resonance Training to two of the most popular body awareness methods that musicians know about, Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais, was developed with music, sound, and listening (or perception) in mind. Listening and sound quality are at the heart of the work on the voice or the instrument.

To occupy ourselves with our sound quality is helpful, for two reasons. First, producing sound is basically our livelihood. Second, a resonant sound has the capacity to transmit emotion. It turns out, it's only with a resonant, full, vibrant sound, that we actually transmit musical emotion. Therefore, one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves is: How does the emotion reach the ear of the listener? We can feel intensively the Schubert song – it's only when the emotion in our sound reaches our listeners that we have have communicated with them.

Thomas Lange developed body exercises, some of which we did during the session. They're based on the physical rule: »A mass is more easily moved if taken by its center of gravity.« By moving with this principle in mind, the body literally becomes the first instrument and a conductant for the sound you're producing. For singers, this might be a felt reality already. For some instrumentalists, it represents an absolute change in paradigm.

First experiment: singing in balance movement

We began by singing the first part of Mozart's "Ave Verum," to see what was our starting point.

Then we went on to finding the center of gravity in the body – in order to apply the physical principle described above. For the body, it's in the region of the lower belly, in the middle of the pelvis, or at the height of the sacrum.

We then did the basic balance movements of Resonance Training in a standing position: balanced left and right, forward and back, diagonally and in a circle, always moving as a unity from the center of the body and feeling the distribution of the weight on the feet, which are always positioned fully on the floor.

Afterwards, we sang Mozart again, while allowing ourselves to "be moved" by the sound of the music itself, i.e. not decide intellectually how we would move, only that we would allow ourselves to move.

Very positive feedback came from the participants – the sound was fuller, it was easier to sing, less effort.





Second experiment: The hearing leads the musical movement

At this point, the group expressed interest in experimenting with two factors: first, how would exercises for the neck and shoulders support the sound quality, and second, how would we apply the Resonance Training principle “The hearing leads the musical movement”?

This statement is at the heart of Resonance Training work: if we presume that sound and movement are two phenomena that take place simultaneously during the musical action, we then have two actions happening at the same time: listening and moving. In the hierarchy of these two activities, it’s the sound that should lead the musical movement. This implies for us to *put listening first, even before singing.*

We then practiced some exercises for the head and the neck, in order to support the listening. For this, we “measured” our head from three dimensions: left-right, up and bottom, forward and back, by laying our hands on our head. Then we did some movements with the head, from the center of gravity of the head.

Then we experienced what I call “open awareness listening” – just by listening to the sounds in the room for a few seconds we “switched on” our ears. So often we stop listening in the moment of the start of our rendering. We then tried out putting listening first, also while taking the first breath before singing.

We then sang Mozart again, with the invitation to listen more than to sing. This time we could hear a big difference in how the singers were harmonizing and listening to each other. It sounded more together, it was in general a more expressive version. Some singers reported that they could hear much more distinctively at the same time while perceiving the choir sound – all without rehearsing, but only by shifting the focus of how we were perceiving our own music. The atmosphere in the room had also shifted to a very curious, open awareness.

Conclusion

It's especially in the classical world that singers hear the words "please don't move." A far cry from recommending to move uncontrollably, I would like to make the following argument: that a readiness for movement and mobility (i.e. the ability to adapt to what we listen to, instead of producing something from our intellect) leads to the fact that we as human beings can make music with liveliness and freshness. When we lead with our listening, our music becomes a powerful expression of what is present in the moment. Then we can bring to the stage our whole musical-artistic potential. It's a power that generates more energy, the more you use of it. And this brings us and our body the desired regeneration: We feel refreshed by our own music making.

About the author

Maria Busqué, the flow-whisperer, is musician, musician's coach, Resonance teacher and author and teaches her work in individual sessions and group courses, mostly online. Her first book »Alles im Flow? Die Kunst, ein musikalisches Leben zu führen« (Flow with the music – the art of leading a musical life) is being published in the fall of 2022. More information about her work and publications on www.mariabusque.net