



Enable. Empower. Educate.

ULTIMATE VOCALS: KEY CONCEPTS #1 - Setting Up the Voice

with RIA KEEN

SYLLABUS

Overview

This 6 week course is designed to instruct singers in how to apply the first 6 Key Concepts of the *Ultimate Vocals* method which has been developed by Ria Keen over the course of a long and very successful teaching and performing career. Ria is known to be an inspirational and highly effective teacher whose methods get results fast, and produce long-lasting positive effects.

Singers (and vocal coaches) who undertake this course will learn how to apply some simple techniques which work for any voice, in any style, at any level. The work explores postural adjustments, increasing the closure phase at the vocal folds for a more centred sound, the truth about support, how to use breath to improve your phrasing, singing with intent.

This course leads directly on to “*Ultimate Vocals: Key Concepts #2 - Strengthening the Voice*” and “*Ultimate Vocals: Key Concepts #3 - Developing the Voice*”. The “*Ultimate Vocals: Advanced Technique*” course is currently in development.

Key Concepts #1 is based on the very simple premise that a good singing voice must be *free* to be developed. If a singer sets out to develop a voice which is not essentially free (i.e., it is constricted in some way, whether that means tension in the throat, tension in the body or tension in the mind) then the singer will only get so far before problems start to be encountered.

This six-part foundation course will equip you with all the tools you need to release, ground and develop your singing voice. It effectively sets up the singing voice so that it is ready for further development. In six sessions you will have learned to use the right tools to set up the vocal instrument whenever you need to. Equally, if you are a very experienced singer, you will find that this course takes your voice back to its most effective ‘factory preset’, helping to eliminate any negative habits that may have been picked up along the way.

Naturally, you will be singing during this course. You will be singing a lot! Each week you will learn a new technique and review previous ones, apply those technique to exercises, and transfer the techniques into song. Each week, you will both hear and feel a difference in your voice as a direct result of the techniques that you learn.

It is expected that you will practise in between sessions, so that we can build the techniques one on top of the other. By the end of the course, you will have a good working knowledge of each individual technique, plus the ability to use the exercises in a healthy and ongoing developmental way.

A final note for vocal coaches: if you would like to gain certification enabling you to teach these techniques officially under the Ultimate Vocals banner, the course can be extended in order to facilitate this.

THE COURSE

Session 1 - Physical Alignment and Essential Vocal Warm-Ups

In this first week Ria will show you how to immediately improve your vocals via some simple physical ‘set up’ exercises which align and free the body. Small physical and postural adjustments give the voice a sense of freedom which in turn leads to better tone, more richness, warmth, colour and depth. This set of exercises also ‘re-sets’ the larynx, which in turn leads to optimum physical efficiency. In addition to the physical exercises, you will learn some simple but very effective vocal warm ups, and how to *feel the floor*, ready for singing.

Session 2 - Breath work and Feeling the Floor

This week's session explores the *short breath*, leading you to understand that less is more when it comes to essential vocal technique. Most people over-breathe, and it is crucial that you learn to break any bad habits related to breathing at this early stage. You will learn that, if you get the physical set-up right, breathing becomes much easier, and that combined with *feeling the floor* gives your voice a greater sense of freedom. You will also explore the *low breath*, the *snatched breath* and the *hold*, in readiness for the work in Session 3. In order to fully explore these techniques, you will be working on both vocalises and part of a song.

Session 3 - Breath Patterning

This session looks at how to apply the breath techniques and physical alignments explored in Sessions 1 and 2, in song. Many singers find that they can apply technique well enough in isolated exercises, but that old habits resurface when it comes to singing songs. *Breath Patterning* is a means of gaining better breath efficiency whilst distracting the body from old, potentially unhelpful habits. Whilst applying the principles of breath patterning, we will revisit *feeling the floor* in conjunction with *the short breath*, *the low breath*, *the snatched breath* and *the hold*.

Session 4 - Exploring Support

Support is a much-misunderstood concept in singing, and yet in essence it is easy. An unsupported voice will be produced entirely by manipulations of the larynx, and in some cases by driving excessive breath pressure against the vocal folds. A supported voice uses the whole body in its production, letting muscles much larger than those in the larynx do the 'heavy lifting'. At the same time, we will discuss ways in which the intrinsic muscles of the larynx can be strengthened, so that the vocal instrument as a whole is working at (or developing towards) maximum efficiency.

Session 5 - The NG / AH hook up

The work in this lesson is really the "secret sauce" of Ultimate Vocals Key Concepts #1. Ria will teach you how to manipulate vowel sounds in a specific way so that they encourage a longer closure phase at the vocal folds when singing. This is vital, as it leads to a much more centred and controlled sound throughout the voice, regardless of pitch, volume or musical style. These exercises will develop over time into an efficient warm up and a set of diagnostic tools for overcoming future difficulties or 'sticky moments' in songs.

Session 6 - Singing with Intent

In this last session, we will review all of the content explored thus far, and take a look at the last Key Concept - which is to mean what we sing! There are physical techniques associated with this, but it is equally important that you begin to address the concept that what you *think* and *feel* at the moment of singing has a dramatic effect on the sound of the voice. In the longer term, it also has a physical effect on how the vocal folds strengthen and become more flexible.

Professional Qualifications

PhD , MFA & B.Phil (Hons), all in the field of contemporary vocals & education.

Cert. Ed (Further, Adult & Higher Education)

Honorary Cert. TVS

Ria is a Member of The College of Teachers.