

Singing in the Heat

A Mental Health-Informed Guide to Vocal Wellbeing

When the weather gets hot, many singers become concerned about their voice.

Perhaps your throat feels dry or maybe your range feels different. You might find yourself running out of breath more quickly, struggling to concentrate, or feeling unusually tired after a rehearsal.

Whilst heat can affect the voice directly, many of the challenges singers experience during hot weather are actually caused by what heat does to the rest of the body.

Your voice does not exist in isolation. It is influenced by your hydration, energy levels, sleep, nervous system, breathing, emotions, and overall wellbeing.

The good news is that a few simple adjustments can help you continue singing safely and comfortably.

Your Voice Is Part of Your Whole Body

When temperatures rise, your body has to work harder to keep itself cool.

This can leave you feeling:

- More tired than usual;
- Less focused;
- More emotionally reactive;
- Less physically coordinated;
- More easily overwhelmed.

And all of these factors can influence your singing.

If your voice feels different during a heatwave, it does not necessarily mean there is anything wrong with your vocal technique. Often, your body is simply working harder than usual.

Hydration Matters, But It's Not Just About Drinking Water

We often hear singers being told to "drink more water."

Whilst hydration is important, vocal health is about more than carrying a water bottle.

Try to:

- Drink consistently throughout the day;
- Increase fluids during hot weather;
- Eat regular meals;
- Avoid becoming overheated;
- Take breaks when needed.

Hydration supports your entire system, not just your vocal folds.

Remember that water you drink immediately before singing will not instantly hydrate your voice; it takes roughly 3 to 4 hours for systemic hydration to reach your vocal folds.

The Hidden Impact of Poor Sleep

One of the biggest effects of hot weather is disrupted sleep.

Many singers find themselves waking frequently, struggling to fall asleep and feeling exhausted the next day.

Poor sleep can affect:

- Breath control;
- Concentration;
- Emotional regulation;
- Vocal stamina;
- Confidence.

If you've had a difficult night, it is entirely normal for your singing to feel different the following day. Your voice may simply need a little more time and patience.

Heat, Singing and the Nervous System

This is the part that is often overlooked: heat can place the nervous system under additional stress.

For some people - particularly neurodivergent individuals, those with anxiety, chronic health conditions, sensory sensitivities, or those experiencing stress - hot weather can increase feelings of discomfort, overwhelm, irritability, or fatigue.

When the nervous system feels under pressure, singing can become harder.

You may notice:

- Shallower breathing;
- Increased tension in the jaw, neck or shoulders;
- Reduced vocal flexibility;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Feeling emotionally drained.

This is not a personal failing, it's a normal physiological response. Supporting your nervous system can support your voice.

To support your nervous system during a hot rehearsal, consider:

- Taking breaks in cooler spaces;
- Using breathing exercises between songs;
- Wearing comfortable clothing;
- Sitting down when needed;
- Giving yourself permission to participate differently on difficult days.

Looking after your nervous system is part of looking after your voice.

Air Conditioning and Fans

Many singers worry that air conditioning will damage their voice. In reality, overheating is often far more problematic than a comfortably cooled room.

If you use air conditioning:

- Avoid directing cold air straight at your face;
- Stay hydrated;
- Take breaks from very cold environments if needed;
- Use settings that keep the room comfortable rather than excessively cold.

Naturally, a well-rested singer in a cool room will often sing more comfortably than an exhausted singer in an overheated one. Remember, steam inhalation is a good way to get instant, superficial hydration.

Adjust Your Expectations

Hot weather is not the time to demand perfection from yourself.

Your voice may feel different, your stamina may be reduced, your concentration may fluctuate. This is all normal!

Professional singers, choir leaders, and experienced performers all adapt to changing conditions.

Healthy singing is not about performing at 100% every day, it's about listening to your body and responding appropriately.

When to Take a Break

Please prioritise your wellbeing if you experience any:

- Dizziness;
- Headaches;
- Nausea;
- Extreme fatigue;
- Confusion;
- Persistent vocal discomfort.

Your health is always more important than any rehearsal or performance.

Final Thoughts

Singing should support your wellbeing, not come at the expense of it.

During periods of hot weather, the goal is not to sing exactly as you would on a cool spring day, the goal is to support your body, regulate your nervous system, stay connected to your choir community, and enjoy singing safely.

Stay hydrated, stay rested stay flexible. And most importantly - be kind to yourself.

Because a healthy voice starts with a healthy human 😊