

Trippingly on the Tongue:

Modern Theatrical Vocal Techniques
for the Creative Anachronist

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The Warmup

1. Breathe and check in with your body. Where are you physically today? Does anything feel strained or is hurting? Are you able to feel grounded and focused, or is that a challenge right now?
2. Warm up the breath by stretching out the six-sided-box:
 - Front of the box: hands on belly, at/above belly button
 - Sides of the box: hands on lower ribs, really making them move in and out
 - Back of the box: hands on middle back, same height as sides but on your back
 - Bottom of the box: hands just above hips &/or in child's pose. Remember that this one is less about breathing into hands than the others
 - Top of the box: we generally skip stretching this. We don't want to focus on filling the top, it happens naturally for most people.
3. Physical mobility warmup
 - Take the heels of your hands and place them in the upper hollow of your jaw, a little in from your ears. Massage with little circles.
 - Slide your hands down your jaw, letting the pressure push your mouth open.
 - Massage your face, manipulating and waking up the sinuses and muscles used in speech and expression.
 - Gently slap your face, and (perhaps a touch harder) the rest of your body to wake everything up - head, neck, shoulders, arms, belly, back, and each leg.
 - Open your mouth (and face) so it is very big.
 - Make your mouth and face very small
 - Move your face to the right, left, up and down.
 - Move your face around.
 - Let that movement become chewing
 - Let that chewing become an exploration of the inside of your mouth with your tongue
 - Place the tip of your tongue behind your lower front teeth and stick the middle of the tongue out, with sound.
 - Do a motorboat. Add sound. Add pitch changes.
 - Vocal siren, from high -> low and then from low -> high -> low
 - Pant, like a dog (diaphragmatic breathing)
4. Check back in with your six-sided box and the rest of your body. Does anything feel different, more awake or stretched? Any new pain or other issues?

5. Resonance: The Sigh of Relief.

Start with a sigh. Let it resonate from your core or the floor up and through you till it spills out of your mouth (you may find different imagery more helpful). Add a bounce, 'hah', to the sigh. Once you feel secure in the bounce, add a second, 'hah hah'. Repeat with additional bounces. Then add a 'Hello' to the end. Finally, dial back on the 'hah hah's before the 'hello' until you are just saying 'hello', but the start of the word feels as relaxed as the initial sigh of relief.

6. Hah-mmm-ahh with Spinal Drop

- Start standing upright, breathing into the full six-sided box. Take several breaths.
- Inhale. On the next exhale, breathe out the sound 'Haaaaaaaah'
- While exhaling, begin a spinal drop, rolling down one vertebrae at a time until you are hanging bent at the waist. As you descend, change the 'hah' sound to an 'mmmm' sound.
- Once you reach the bottom of your bend, the sound transitions to an 'Ahhhhh' sound. This lasts for whatever breath you have remaining.
- As you inhale on the bottom, check in to make sure your body is relaxed, head is hanging free. You can swing your body a bit if you'd like.
- Exhale on another 'Haaaaaaah'.
- Begin rolling back upward, stacking on vertebrae at a time on top of the other to come to standing. The shoulders and then the head should be the last body parts to come into position. As you move, the 'Haaaaaaah' transitions to an 'MMMMM'
- Once you reach your full standing position, the sound becomes an "Ahhhhh" once again. This lasts for the remainder of your breath.
- Take a moment to say a few words - to another person if they are present, or just aloud. Does your voice feel any different or more resonant?

Note: This exercise sometimes takes some practice to lock in. Don't be discouraged if you don't feel a difference right away - it comes with time and practice.

Tongue Twisters

This set comes from the curriculum at the Studio Acting Conservatory in Washington, DC and covers the majority of sounds/problem sounds often encountered in speakers.

Red Leather, Yellow Leather (5x)

Prunes, Beans (5x)

Lucy locket lost Cleo's new white lollipop

She sells seashells by the seashore, sister suzy's sewing shirts for sailors

What wild whim led willy Whitney to wander whistling on a wharf where a whale might reel and whirl

Buddah guddah Buddah guddah (5x+)

Unique New York (5x)

A boob's tune is Neptune's doom

Round the rough and rugged rocks the ragged rascals rudely ran

Betty bottom bought some butter. "But", she said, "My butter's bitter. If I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter. But, a lot of better butter will make my bitter badder better"

Theopholis Thistle, the successful thistle sifter, while sifting a live-full of unsifted thistles, thrust three thousand thistles through the thick of his thumb.

How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood

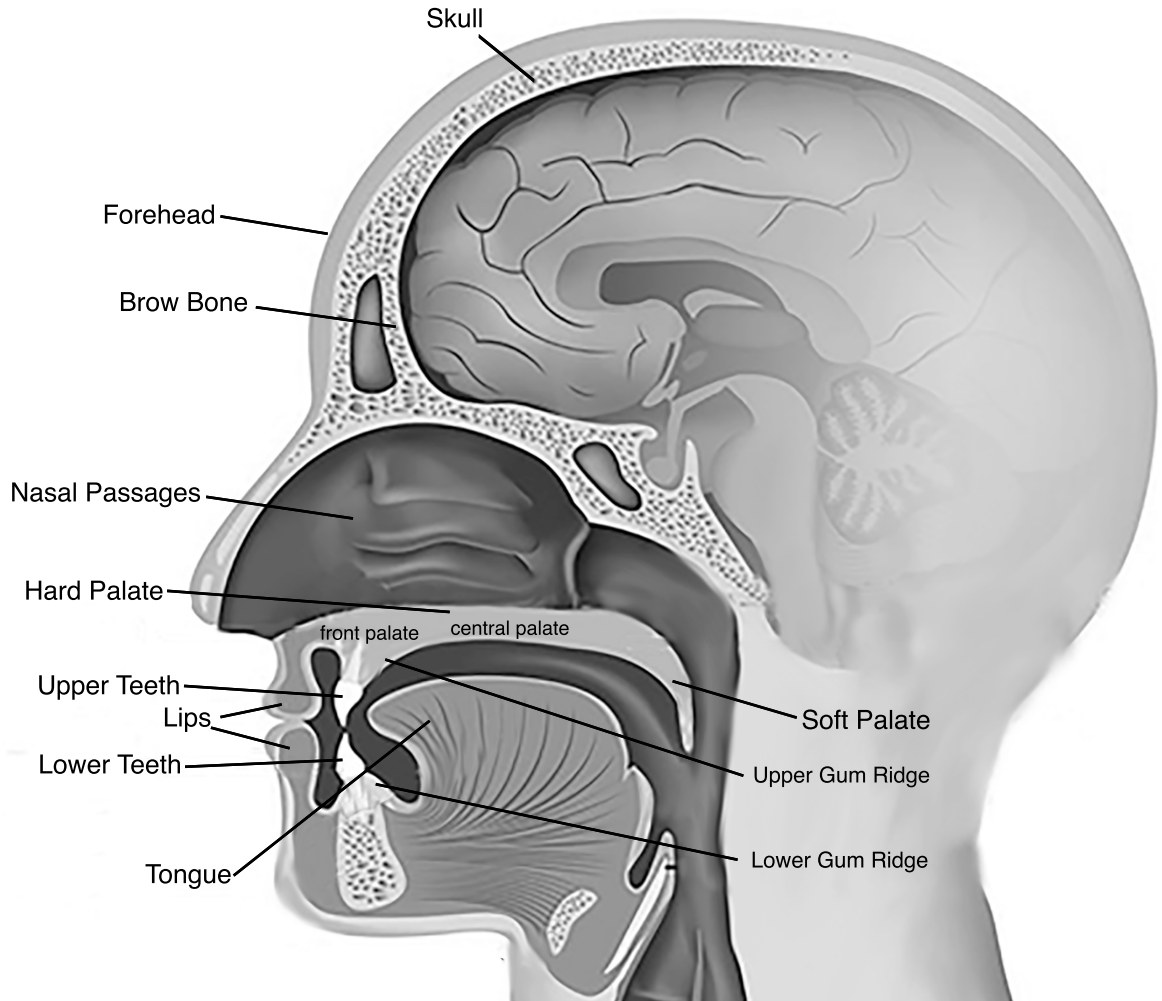
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Beder Beiber bagged a beg of biggled bebbers

Rubber baby buggy bumpers (5x)

Amidst the mists and coldest frosts, with stoutest wrists and loudest boasts, he thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghosts

MASK of FACE

Frontal Resonance



Tongue

