

## Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate!

True, but there's more to the story! An apple a day may keep saliva at bay!

The body needs water—much more water each day than most singers give it. Singing is an active sport, which intensely exercises some of the body's smallest muscles. Because the water passes over and through these muscles, singers may think that they are helping by drinking water often during rehearsals. As you will see in the quote below, the real need is for drinking water all day long BEFORE you sing. The muscles need hydration from within to be flexible and responsive to the demands placed on them during the art of singing. They need to be provided with water (nothing with sugar, alcohol or caffeine) to prepare for the workout of a rehearsal or performance.

The book, *Power Performance for Singers*, by Shirlee Emmons and Alma Thomas (Oxford University Press, c. 1998) offers more insight: *the ever-present bottle of designer water that accompanies a large proportion of singers...represents, at best, a wild fancy. The facts are these: Yes, your body must be hydrated vigorously in order to maintain vocal health and ease. But...drinking water during singing or just previous to singing strips the mucus from your cords and makes them drier than they were before. This is the real reason you continue to feel dry even after drinking. The general health of your vocal cords requires hydration, but the health of your vocal cords during the moments of singing requires mucus. Answer: peel an apple and cut it into small chunks, putting them into a plastic container or bag. Bring this with you to the audition (performance, rehearsal). Eat a small chunk whenever your cords feel dry and, by all means, just before entering the stage. (The acid/carbohydrate balance of an apple is exactly the same as that of your mucus.) Drinking water makes your cords feel wet for that moment, but because an apple stimulates the flow of mucus, your cords really are wet when eating an apple. The chewing process produces smaller chunks that will also provide the extra benefit of taking some phlegm down with them. This is why apple juice will not do.*

So, try it out for yourself! It may be that, since our rehearsals are for an extended period of time, you will still need the hydration benefits of drinking water throughout the evening to keep your muscles hydrated from within. But try following up the drink with a chunk of apple and see if it makes the singing easier.

By Lorraine Barrows, Director of Education in the Pitch Pipe, April 2002