

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In the middle of his concert at the famous Forum in Los Angeles, superstar Stevie Wonder stopped the show to acknowledge, in front of thousands of fans, a man who has had much to do with the success and longevity of his vocal career. He wasn't referring to his manager or record producer. He was referring to Seth Riggs—his voice teacher.

And, this isn't just an isolated case. Grateful stars often give credit to this man whose unconventional methods allow them to use the main vehicle for their talent—their voice—to its maximum degree of efficiency and effectiveness.

Whether he has to go on location to a movie set, a concert date, or a recording studio to help a Natalie Cole, a Jeremy Irons, or a Michael Jackson, Seth Riggs has helped many a star—and nervous producer—out of a jam. Recently he gave Waylon Jennings a voice lesson by telephone. The country singer was in Tahoe to open a show with his wife Jessie Colter and his voice was ailing. It was Jennings' first contact with Riggs. However, Riggs was able to get the singer's voice in shape quickly with just a few special exercises.

Seth Riggs's vocal technique and the methods he uses to teach the technique were forged and tempered by the fierce demands placed on the world's top performers, who must often perform several shows a night—night after night! A great deal of money is always at stake, so his clients' voices must be able to function easily, without strain. It is no wonder that whenever singers come to Los Angeles from other parts of the world, producers, directors and fellow performers send them to see his master vocal technician.

Seth began his career at the age of nine as a boy-soprano singing music of Bach and Handel at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. His later training, however, reached into all areas of the performing arts. He studied acting with Lee Strasberg, Sandy Meisner, Bobby Lewis, and Frank Silvera; dancing with Peter Gennaro, Matt Mattox, and Luigi. He studied voice with John Charles Thomas, Robert Weede, Tito Schipa, and Keith Davis, and did repertoire coaching with Pierre Bernac, Martial Singher, Leo Taubman, Charles Wadsworth, John Brownlee, Hans Heintz, and Louis Graveure. He joined his first professional union, Actor's Equity, two years before completing his undergraduate degree. After that, he became a member of all the performing unions: AFTRA, SAG, AGVA, AGMA, as well as ACRA (the Association of Canadian Radio Artists).

He spent ten years in New York City. For three years he performed on Broadway, and for six seasons he was a guest artist with the New York City Opera. Yet, in the midst of pursuing his own singing career, he discovered that his greatest talent lay in his ability to help others. After taking a few



**Seth Riggs**



I first met Seth during the “In Living Color” series. Right away, the “balancing” of the “bridges” or “breaks” in the vocal range began. This technique holds you together vocally during extended recording schedules, and/or the tours to promote the album.

### Jennifer Lopez

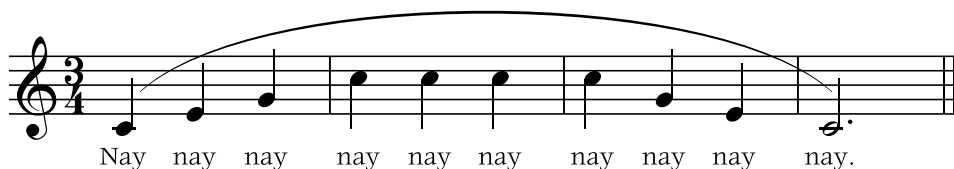
Actress, Singer, Dancer  
New York, Los Angeles

### Exercise 5

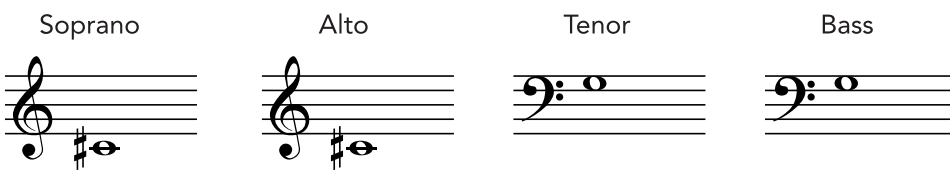
**Instructions:** (Listen to CD)

Don’t jam the “nay nay” sound into your nose. It will be nasal enough with the exaggeration of the “n” sound.

Also, be careful not to reach up in chest voice.



**Approximate starting pitch:**

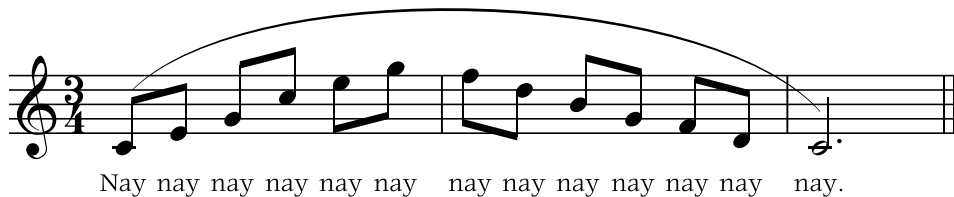


**Practice log:** Date started \_\_\_\_\_ Date accomplished \_\_\_\_\_

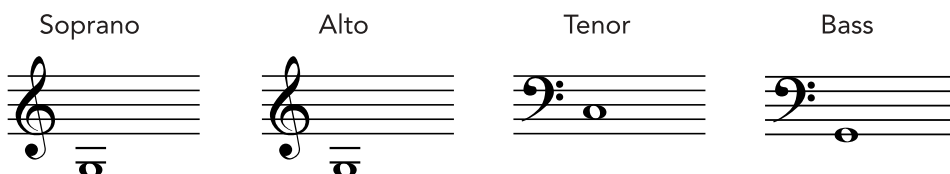
### Exercise 6

**Instructions:** (Listen to CD)

The instructions for Exercise 6 are the same as for Exercise 5—the notes and rhythms are different.



**Approximate starting pitch:**

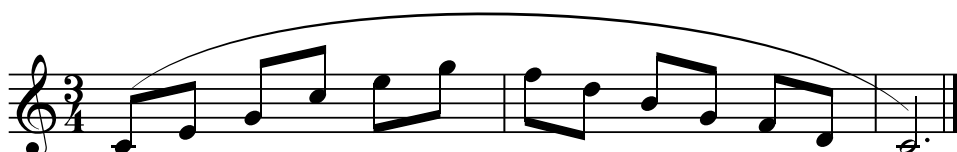


**Practice log:** Date started \_\_\_\_\_ Date accomplished \_\_\_\_\_

## Exercise 8

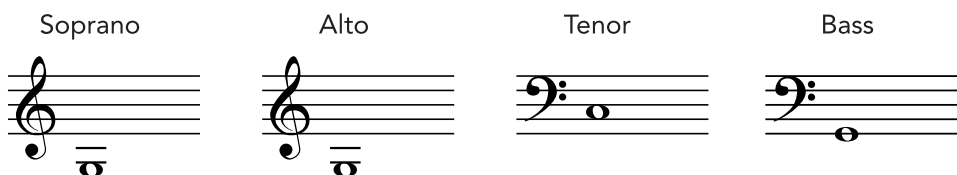
Instructions: (Listen to CD)

The instructions for Exercise 8 are the same as they were for Exercise 7— only the notes and rhythms are different.



- (a) mum mum mum, etc.
- (b) guh guh guh, etc.
- (c) go go go, etc.
- (d) gee gee gee, etc.
- (e) koo koo koo, etc.

Approximate starting pitch:



Practice log: Date started \_\_\_\_\_ Date accomplished \_\_\_\_\_

*L*ike all young singers, I want to get my voice together with as much strength, quality and control as I can. It seems to me that there is always some new style, new sound or new direction in popular music. I'd like to be ready for whatever happens. Working with Seth is building a vocal coordination which prepares me to meet all these challenges.

### Madonna

Actress, Composer, Singer,  
Dancer  
Los Angeles





*I began to study with Seth when I was 14 years old. We vocalized 3 1/2 octaves and evened all the “breaks.” Today, some years later, we still vocalize and sustain nearly 3 1/2 octaves of vocal range and continue to strengthen the bridges.*

**Janet Jackson**

*Recording Artist, Singer  
Los Angeles*

**Exercise 9**

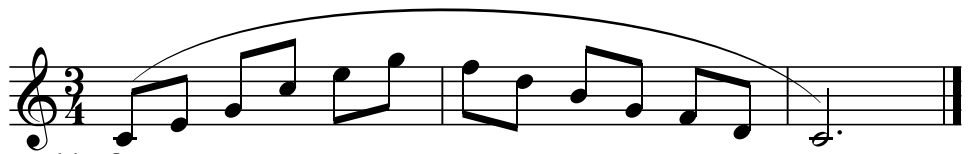
**Instructions:** (Listen to CD)

As before, use a slightly imposed larynx as you do the exercise.

The higher you go, the “hootier” or more “hollow” sounding you should get to keep from grabbing. Don’t worry if your tone sounds breathy or weak on the higher pitches. Just try to stay connected from the beginning of the exercise to the end of it.

Even though you are imposing your larynx down slightly, you must sing each vowel with the same pronunciation you would use if you were speaking it. For example, if you do the “Oh” sound incorrectly, it will “splat” as you take it higher. You’ve got to keep your larynx slightly imposed to keep it from raising. (Listen to CD.) You may want to think of singing “Oh” through “Oo” lips.

As you get into the upper part of your range, let your jaw drop just *slightly* to give the sound more space—but don’t grab with it.



- (a) Oo \_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Oh \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) Uh \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) Ee \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) Ah \_\_\_\_\_

**Approximate starting pitch:**



**Practice log:** Date started \_\_\_\_\_ Date accomplished \_\_\_\_\_