

# COMFORT ZONE IN SINGING AS A MARKER OF TRAINING PROGRESS

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Singers working in different musical genres may be required to use their voices differently and sing in different parts of their phonational range. Both factors have implications for training regimes. A key finding of my doctoral research was that, where a singer has a larger 'comfortable vocal range' (which was called Comfort Zone) or two contiguous Comfort Zones, she is more likely to be rated as 'comfortable in performance' by expert listeners (Kayes, 2014). This was true for female singers of Western Lyric, Musical Theatre and CCM styles.

The aim of the present project is to investigate further into this finding via a longitudinal study with a larger cohort of singers and a mixed gender group. I shall be tracking the progress of the Level 4 singing students at the University of West London across a 4-semester period in their fundamental speaking frequency, their full singing range and any self-declared Comfort Zones. I want to find out how these factors change with training, if they vary with genre, and with gender. An underlying hypothesis of the study is that Comfort Zone Extent will grow across the training period, and that the positioning of the Comfort Zones within the full singing range will differ according to genre.

Results will be presented following statistical analyses of variables genre, gender and semester.

**Gillyanne Kayes** PhD is an internationally recognised expert singing voice pedagogue and holds a visiting Professorship at the London College of Music. She has been invited to speak about singing pedagogy at the Sibelius Academy, EUROVOX, PEVOC and the Stockholm Institute of Music Education. She is passionate to get singing teachers 'talking' and her mission is to improve our profession by sharing of ideas, and pooling of knowledge. In her studio she works singers of all types including singers needing post-rehabilitation work to get them back on stage. Gillyanne has published widely on singing voice, including a scheme for class music teachers (Singing Express), a core text on musical theatre singing (Singing and the Actor), and a book on speaking and singing voice specially commissioned by the Wellcome Trust (This Is A Voice), which includes chapters on beatboxing, ventriloquism, and mimicry. Gillyanne has a special interest in vocal function and how it relates to singing pedagogy, and supplied write the chapter on Structure and Function of singing voice for the Oxford Handbook of Singing.

Together with husband Jeremy Fisher, Gillyanne runs the voice education company Vocal Process. Their most recent venture, developed in collaboration with Speech Tools, is The 1-minute Voice WarmUp – a series of vocal warm-ups for general voice use to maintain healthy speaking habits throughout the working day.