**John Michael SYMT Case Study**

HPI- John Michael, a 27-year-old male whose profession is as a performer, primarily singer but also plays organ and piano in church, presented with continual sore throat, laryngitis on and off, and hoarseness.

Goals:

1. Eliminate hoarseness and vocal cracking due to pain and tension when vocalizing.
2. Reduce pain.

Skeletal assessment of standing posture (side view) revealed slight forward head position and extension, and slight lordosis due to (rolled forward) pelvic tilt. Weight in heels rather than on whole foot. “Pretty symmetrical” across horizontal dimension from front view.

Skeletal palpation revealed jaw tension: masseter, pterygoids and suboccipitals. Higher tone in lumbar, lower tone in abdominal region.

Somatic dynamism revealed head extension (rolling back with chin rising) on inhalation prior to vocalizing. Jaw tensing.

Nervous System: Overall high tone individual.

His breathing seems okay.

Energetically seemed a bit high tone overall. Could be due to first time session, working with a new person. Also, seems to be meeting stress of performing with elevating tone – possibly to “get through it”.

Mental-emotional Outward– JM wanted to address this issue but felt that all his efforts were making it worse to some degree. Expressed frustration. Has juries and auditions and other performances ahead. Feels he cannot practice enough.

Mental-emotional Inward - Doesn’t want to be a church organist for his whole life.

My Assessment:

* JM is high strung and would benefit from relaxation as well as movement that gives energy a chance to flow throughout his body and around him.
* Would like to see his neck release “forward and up”. Would like to give him some ways to better feel his position in space so he can work with himself at repatterning when he practices.
* In relation to this, some hands-on teaching to his cells through – cellular breathing, also AT, and give verbal AT for him to do himself.

Immediate Plan:

* AT head forward and up hands-on on inhalation to repattern set. Cued a marker from his experience, “it feels like I remembered something”. So say to himself, “remembered something”, then somatize it. “Remember” is cue.
* Gave AT script standing for home practice.

Second Session:

* Worked with AT on inhalation (he had almost fully repatterned this!) so moved onto jaw tension as it was still there. Did traction of jaw on each side lying down and then standing. Then singing.
* Showed me AT home practice – looked good, made suggestion to go slower with sit bones to alleviated lordosis! Added “tailbone drops” to script.
* Added 4 points of foot to support his *“Apojare”*
* Talked about lessoning practice time, give time to visualize. Take many breaks that are *true breaks*.
* Added swings to reduce tension, move energy.
* Asked him to take walks, runs, or ride his bike more places for this purpose.

Third Session:

* Did more hands on and work with his feet. His foot strike to standing.
* Guided tail bone to release downward, with SOFT KNEES.
* Taught *agni sara* to build tone in front of body.
* Lifestyle: warmth at neck, warm teas, ginger and lemon, already avoids daily and citrus. Take vitamin C.
* Do relaxation and breathing.
* Taught and gave him relaxation and breathing practice.

Fourth Session:

* Did cellular breathing hands-on while he did his relaxation practice.
* Then got right up to sing! Big difference – the “convincer” for relaxation!
* Did more hands-on now for high notes! “Down to go up” coaching about grounding.
* Sending materials to him that discusses “grounding” and rooting! (Root chakra work.)

Fifth Session:

* Has an audition coming up, sang for me.
* I noticed a sense of guarding himself, like there was a glob of Jell-O he was trying to sing through. Asked him if he noticed anything like that.
* He said “we’ll, there are always people judging you” out there.
* It was like he was shrinking from that or protecting himself from it! I asked him what he wanted to do when he sang the aria?
* “He said he wanted to reach someone’s heart with it”
* I asked what is preventing that from happening? Is it his awareness of the critics in the audience?
* He said, maybe which for me was a “no”. So I went back to my first impression and asked him to sing just a part of his piece.
* I still saw this limitation, like he was near-sighted and could only sing to where he could see. I asked him to use his diaphragm more and project his sound. He got louder but it still seemed to me like there was some sort of impenetrable barrier surrounding him.
* I shared that with him and asked him what that might be. If there was a barrier why might it be there? What would it be for? What would its function be?
* He chuckled (a good sign) it would be from his dad.
* He doesn’t want me to be a singer. He does support my life choices.
* We shared that his father does not approve of him being gay or being a professional musician.
* I asked if he was in the audience today?
* “Isn’t he always in the audience?” He laughed.
* What shall we do about that? We can have him removed, we can put him outside the theatre put him in front of his TV or at the bar with his friends. Then you can sing without him there?
* He didn’t respond enthusiastically, so I asked him, “what shall we do?”
* **“If you could have what you want what would it be?”**
* He said, “I would reach him with my song. Then he would understand.”
* Let’s reach him now. Sing to the part of him that you believe can hear you.
* He sang again, and he became fully in the room, and his sound was so much more tender and real and resonant.
* He stopped and (we) cried.
* We planned a strategy to reach hearts with the singing. To remember to focus on what he was trying to get across in the music versus who was watching or judging. “Heart to heart” was the cue.

Eventual: We worked also with his piano and organ technique.

He later went and got trained in AT. He began to take yoga class.

Last I heard, he became a yoga teacher as well, and was conducting at a University where he also taught music.