



Belting Explained: Range and Repertoire

Expected Range for Voice Types in Belting

Soprano: Belt begins B/C above middle C and goes on up to F or beyond. Sopranos need to have good Speech Quality and should be able to take it up to at least G or A above middle C.

Mezzo Soprano: Belt begins around F/G above middle C and should go on to the C or D above. Sound quality will be darker and thicker than that of a soprano.

Tenor: Belt begins high A/B above middle C and upwards.

Baritone: Belt begins high F sharp/G above middle C and upwards. We have found that many baritones can extend their range by accessing belt quality. You can get a high A if you are a heavy voiced baritone.

Bass: Belt range for bass voices is D/E above middle C and upwards.

Suggested Repertoire for Practise

For women

'I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy' from *South Pacific* (mezzo): the final sequence, if not before.

'Don Juan' from *Smokey Joe's Café* (mezzo): the refrain.

'Daddy's Song' from *Ragtime* (soprano/mezzo): from line 'Only darkness and pain'.

'I Think I May Want to Remember Today' from *Starting Here, Starting Now* (soprano): the 'Albert' sequence and ending.

'One Night Only' from *Dream Girls* (soprano/mezzo): from 'I've got one night only'.

For men

'Bui-Doi' from *Miss Saigon* (tenor): from 'they're called Bui-Doi'.

'Anthem' from *Chess* (tenor): from 'I cross over borders but I'm still there now'.

'What am I Doing?' from *Closer Than Ever* (tenor/high baritone): the last two pages.

'The Games I Play' from *Falsettos* (baritone): from 'Years, years too long'.

'I Don't Remember Christmas' from *Starting Here, Starting Now* (bass): from the last page and building to the end.

Young Performers

Young performers whose voices have not begun to change can belt safely provided they are applying the set-up. Note that the belt range may often be higher than the expected ranges for adult voices (think of the young Michael Jackson). It is important that young singers are discouraged from trying to sing 'big' below the stave—their vocal folds are neither long enough nor thick enough to create the required mass.

Changing voices: boys

Avoid belting from stages two to five. Speech or speech and twang (when appropriate) will do just as well.

Changing voices: girls

Many girls will head straight to chest voice territory once the bottom of their range starts to develop. Find repertoire that suits their voice where it is now and encourage them to find their own voice rather than to over darken the sound. If a girl can siren and produce a good, clear twang quality then it may be OK for her to belt as well. Use your judgement and give her plenty of options.

Suggested repertoire

The following songs have sections that could be explored using belt quality by the young performer if appropriate.

‘Tomorrow’ from *Annie*.

‘Part of Your World’ from *The Little Mermaid*.

‘I Just Can’t Wait To Be King’ from *The Lion King*.

‘Consider Yourself’ from *Oliver!*

Many pop and rock songs are also suitable but they must be transposed into appropriate keys.

When to Avoid Belting

1. If the voice is generally raspy and husky (listen to the speaking voice).
2. At the bottom of the range (unnecessary).
3. All the way through a song (save it for the ‘money’ notes).
4. When young voices are changing (with boys stages 2 to 4, and girls when their chest voice is emerging).¹
5. When singing classical or traditional choral repertoire (usually an inappropriate style belt).
6. During the few days prior to and the first two days of the menstrual period when the vocal folds may be swollen.

Further Reading

Gillyanne Kayes, *Singing and The Actor*, Chapter 12 (London: A&C Black, 2000).

Jeremy Fisher and Gillyanne Kayes, *Successful Singing Auditions*, Chapters 2 and 3 (London: A&C Black, 2002).

Contact Details

Contact Vocal Process for further information on belting and our full education programme for teachers, performers and training establishments. Register online to received regular updates and free ezine.

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¹ Using categorisation by John Cooksey detailed in ‘Do adolescent voices “break” or do they “transform?”’, *BVA Journal of Voice* 2:1 (1993). Also Deirdre Trundle’s ‘Changing Voices’ workshop for Vocal Process Ltd., March 2003.