easy
WARM UP FOR OLDER SINGERS

1. BODY WAKE UP

Purpose: Older singers often carry more stiffness in the neck, shoulders, and thoracic spine, all of which directly influence breath freedom and phonation.

- Seated or standing sways – arms loose, gently swinging side to side.
- Neck and shoulder release – trace a slow figure-of-eight with your nose, then roll the shoulders forward/back.
- Add a cheeky "ahhh" sigh as they stretch, to connect body and breath.

Make sure to include seated/standing options to remove pressure and keep everyone involved.

2. BREATH PLAY

Purpose: Breath can feel more laboured or shallow as we age due to decreased elasticity in lung tissue and reduced muscle efficiency. Playful breath tasks bypass anxiety around "proper technique" and simply invite better airflow.

- Blowing feathers/pretend candles: short, playful puffs of air.
- "Snake hiss" challenge: who can hiss steadily the longest? (Encourages lengthened, supported breath).
- Finish with one luxurious slow inhale through the nose, sigh on a "vvvv…".

Alternative breathing methods (pursed lips, nose, gentle phonation) accommodate those with respiratory conditions, dry mouth, or dentures.

3. GENTLE VOICE SWITCH-ON

Purpose: Ageing voices benefit from light, stretchy, gliding work rather than abrupt, muscular vocalising. These exercises are perfect for reducing stiffness in the vocal folds and strengthening coordination.

- "Ooo–ahh" sirens from mid to high and down again, keeping it light.
- Lip trills with scales – make it silly ("tractor noises", "motorbikes") to release jaw and lips.
- Sliding fifths on "ng-ah" to ease into resonance.

These tasks support singers with vocal fatigue, tremor, or reduced upper range.

4. RHYTHM AND BRAIN TEASER

Purpose: Cognitive sharpness varies hugely across older groups, and rhythm challenges that are short, achievable and playful are brilliant for keeping singers engaged across ability levels.

- Call and response claps (short patterns).
- Then switch to vocal call-and-response: you sing a silly rhythm on one vowel, they echo it.
- Layer in two-part echoes if they're following well – keeps the brain sharp and adds novelty.

These exercises fire up auditory processing, working memory, and timing. Older singers with mild cognitive change benefit from clear structure, repetition, and novelty delivered in manageable bursts.

5. SILENT SHAPES (WATCH THE CONDUCTOR!)

Purpose: strengthens visual attention, reaction time, and ensemble awareness, without the need for any auditory processing.

- You conduct in silence (just gesture a pulse or shape) and they copy with a simple hum or "laaa."
- Change the size/shape of your gesture (big arcs, tiny flicks, jagged patterns).
- They must respond musically to what they see, not what they expect.

These exercises build confidence in following conducting cues - a common anxiety in older singers. They also disrupt autopilot habits, which are often more deeply ingrained in singers with many decades of experience.

6. ENERGISING FINISH

Purpose: Ending with laughter, bright sound, and easy ensemble work is a great way to round off the warm up, feeling warm rather than worn out.

- "He-y!" stabs – everyone calls out "He-y!" on different pitches, like a crowd at a football match.
- Move into a short, upbeat canon round that you sing regularly or one with simple actions (we like "The Grand Old Duke of York").
- End with a deep breath and a long, warm, humming chord together.

Short, familiar rounds reduce anxiety and boost community feeling. The final hum is accessible for singers with limited range or stamina - everyone ends on success.

WHY THIS WARMUP WORKS FOR OLDER SINGERS:

- It changes up expectations (no more "scales, scales, scales").
- It gets the body, breath, brain, and voice all equally warmed up.
- It's gentle and adaptable for varying needs, cognitive challenges and physical limitations.
- It builds group energy and laughter, so singers start rehearsal feeling brighter, more-relaxed and less stiff.