

on your feet:

# Singing for the *soul*

Reckon you could give Whitney or Elton a run for their money? **Arveen Bajaj** fancies her chances with Simon Cowell.

It's Friday and you've been roped into going to the karaoke night at the local hotspot. You're dying to give it a go but are not quite sure that your vocal skills are up to the job. Has this ever happened to you? Maybe a singing evening class is just what you need to give you that extra push ... after all, somewhere inside us all there's a Chaka Khan just waiting to get out.

With the recent popularity of shows like 'Pop Idol' and 'Popstars' bringing ordinary folk with talent right into our lounges, singing is becoming an attractive hobby for those who enjoy a bit of a warble.

In the UK there is a veritable cornucopia of evening courses and choral groups available, offering everything from modern pop singing to jazz and swing harmonies — and beginners are welcomed with open arms.

Smita Shah of Bethnal Green, who attends a vocal workout class in London, started singing for stress relief. 'As a way of getting rid of daily stresses and strains some people go for a massage or to the gym, but I sing. I find it really therapeutic, especially if we're doing a really powerful song where I can let rip and give it a bit of welly. I can totally rid myself of the whole week's stresses, just through my voice.'

Smita's not the only one proclaiming the virtues of exercising your vocal cords in your spare time. Candy Verney, founder of music

group 'Singing in the Round' explains why music therapy is so successful. 'I get lots of people saying how much it relieves stress and also chronic illness. We have singers with ME (some very acute), with MS, and with cancer and we have had singers with physical disability also. We learn by ear rather than with

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written music; this includes everyone. You also learn with the whole body, using the ears, rather than the eyes. We don't so easily forget what we've learnt. Most people don't read music, so they pick up the songs by ear. If there was nervousness at the beginning, it soon gets swept away by the sheer intoxication of singing in company with others.'

Rebecca Shields, an enthusiastic participant in one of the workshops, conveys her own experience of one of the workshops. 'Singing is an excellent workout for the body and mind, and as well as that, it makes you happy! In everyday life there are few opportunities for adults to sing. Often when you first start, you are quite terrified, convinced you can't sing, and would sound like a frog if you did, but it is not true, everyone can and should sing their hearts out.'

Many find that singing in a choir is uplifting for the mind, body and soul. Carol McCreedy from Berkshire, who has been a member of a choir for around three years, says, 'Singing in a choir uplifts your spirit, and the feeling of being a part of a massive body all singing in unison is amazing, like nothing else I've experienced. I was also once part of a choir that competed in national competitions and it was great having a common goal and working together to make our singing successful.'

So next time you're singing in the bath, just think what it would be like to have an audience for your crooning ... other than the rubber duckies of course.

#### Useful websites

[www.hotcourses.co.uk](http://www.hotcourses.co.uk)

[www.floodlight.co.uk](http://www.floodlight.co.uk)

[www.candyverney.co.uk](http://www.candyverney.co.uk)