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AOTOS 6: how KMI gestures are embodied and integrated in the singer

In this sixth part of the series will be shown one of the gestures specifically created for use in vocal training. This is original work and all text and images are

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These are taken from a lexicon of over 40 images, put together and tested over a period of nine years. Each image is related to a different vocal task. Note that for more complicated tasks, some images can be used in combination.

In this series we are restricted to a *written* explanation of the KMI protocol because we cannot actively show the gesture with a hand movement, or the resultant activity in the muscles, or the change in sound that these images elicit. In gesture-based KMI (*Embodima*), movement of the hand is always used to replicate the motor image or images.

Even though each Embodima gesture represents a complex set of muscle co-ordinations, the shapes are simple enough for a child to understand. Thus, although the task is complicated, the singer will feel that they are being asked to do something that is not demanding – even though in reality, it is! This is particularly appealing to students with learning difficulties.

Once the image has been embodied within the student, it can, if necessary, be drawn on the vocal score to remind students of the task required. This will help manage such demands as maintaining pitch and resonance, breath management through long phrases, or achieving good legato singing. The combination of gesture + KMI means it is possible to coordinate multiple elements of the voice simultaneously rather than tackle each one in turn.

Shown below is one of the most popular images in the *Embodima*™ lexicon. Each image represents a different vocal challenge, and each is associated with a particular vocalise to first integrate the sensation before incorporating the new muscle co-ordinations directly into a song.

embodima™

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The Conger Eel

Following presentations of this work nationally and internationally, the conger eel gesture is now being used as a teaching tool in both Australia and the States as well as UK and Europe. It is a good example of a simple motor image that activates a complex system of muscle co-ordinations. Excellent for teaching legato singing, breath management through long phrases and establishing a consistent flow of air. It engages lower abdominals and back muscles to support this action. The student makes the moving gesture with their hand as they sing from vowel to vowel, imagining the eel swimming through the ocean in a long phrase represented by its length. It can be applied directly to a simple 8 note ascending and descending scale.

There is only room here to show one of the images. The conger eel is much beloved by singers of all ages and levels.

It is important to note that the *Embodima*™ gestures need to be taught to singing teachers in person because the whole aspect of motor training is about seeing, feeling and reproducing the movement. This cannot be learnt by simply looking at an image on a page – as they are shown here.