The Aging Voice

Voices go through some rather traumatic events with aging, especially female ones:

- Menopause is considered by some otolaryngologists (ENTs) to be as or more significant physiologically and psychologically than male pubescent change
- For men and women, hormone levels drop and muscles weaken, the vocal folds (cords) may atrophy, cartilages that support our larynges become stiffer as they ossify, the elasticity of the rib cage lessens, and we can even get arthritis in the arytenoid joints of our vocal mechanism

Despite these discouraging changes, as we all live longer, and hopefully, better, we expect to be able to DO SOMETHING to use the collected wisdom, experience, musicality, and technique we’ve gained over the years. The good news is – we can. Here's what to do:

- If you have a concern that your voice is truly different in ways that are alarming to you, go see an ENT and preferably one who specializes in singers and the voice
- If all is well, then the next step is to begin a regular, daily, vocal practice routine that incorporates exercises to improve, strengthen, and balance your voice. If you don’t already have a voice teacher you believe in, now is the time to get one
- Understanding that accommodations may be needed for range, stamina, and dynamics is vital
- You will find your voice regaining much of its former beauty and flexibility and revealing, perhaps, some new timbres that you’ll enjoy exploring

Some sound vocal health practices:

- Keep hydrated, limit alcohol, reduce or eliminate caffeine
- Avoid eating late at night, and avoid fatty or spicy foods
- If you have or suspect you have acid reflux, also watch out for citrus. Investigate any medications you may be taking for drying effects
- Of course – no smoking of any sort, and get your sleep

Your voice may not be exactly the instrument you remember from your twenties and thirties, but you are not the same person, either. You’ll bring all the richness of your life experience to your singing, and you will find joy in singing once again.