

SINGING

Voice of The Association of Teachers of Singing

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Summer 2017
ISSUE 72

Competition considerations

Richard Stokes offers advice to singers taking part in competitions

A passion to teach

Janet Shell on the qualities required of a good singing teacher

Finding the right words

Jenevora Williams discusses the impact of word choice in the studio



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Editorial

Two songs appear in this issue of *Singing*: one is from a Yiddish song collection, a project led by John Yaffé and Juliana Janes-Yaffé (see page 15).

The other is by composer Richard Vella. I met Richard some years ago, which eventually led to the UK publication of his successful educational resource *Sounds in Space, Sounds in Time* (Boosey & Hawkes). Richard's career is as rich and varied as his songs prove to be. He is currently chair and professor of music at Australia's Newcastle



Conservatorium while continuing to compose and conduct research in arts and science relationships, the music industry and the phenomenology of music. I have immensely enjoyed listening to many of his songs, and have marvelled at his skill, his clever and witty ability to word-paint, his ear for texture, and his broad palette of expressive forms. The song printed here is *Ryokan*, one of his earliest works. You can find details on how to explore his output on page 29.

The articles in this issue are written by familiar names, including Jenevora Williams, Janet Shell, Richard Stokes, and Bryan Husband, with articles discussing the language singing teachers use in the studio, what qualities make for a good singing teacher, advice for students entering competitions, and understanding musical theatre singing. We also have the last in a three-part series on singing in French, by French song expert Darquise Bilodeau.

Margaret Hopes has served AOTOS as general secretary for many years, and this summer she steps away from this role and hands over, in the form of a soft exit, to Jan Spooner Swabey. I'm sure all at AOTOS would like to thank Margaret for her many hours of work and dedication, and her tenacious determination to ensure that Council is true to the constitution! We welcome Jan into this crucial position and wish her all the best in steering everyone through the delightful small-print of the charity commission, and so much more.

I, too, am leaving Council, for the time being, while I set my focus elsewhere. If you have experience in editing or writing and are interested in the position of Editor of *Singing*, please contact me or Ivor Flint – or anyone else on Council – for more details. There are, in fact, several volunteer positions becoming available at AOTOS: these are Conference Director, South East Area Representative, and Councillor-at-Large. Please do give these positions some thought. In the meantime, I bid you adieu!

Sara-Lois Cunningham, Editor

Notes from the Chair

Since the last issue of *Singing* we have had a wonderful series of events arranged by our area representatives, all of whom have done a superb job developing these high quality professional development days. In addition, it is important to remember that, as an AOTOS member, you are also a member of the European Voice Teachers Association (EVTA) and I would recommend that you look at the EVTA programme, at evta-online.eu. The next main events are the International



Congress of Voice Teachers (ICVT) in August 2017, followed by the Pan European Voice Conference (PEVOC).

Our forthcoming conference, 'Action and Interaction!' will be held at Bristol University from the 21st to the 23rd of July. The conference has been arranged to provide a balance of lectures and practical sessions so you will have the opportunity to work with our speakers, and get some hands-on experience and develop an understanding of how to apply some of the ideas in your own teaching practice.

Our panel of experts include Dr Gillyanne Kayes, who will explore the teaching of singing after Estill and how this informs our teaching. We are fortunate to have Marcia Carr, a Feldenkrais teacher who works extensively with singers and voice users; and Emma Winscom, who will explore multi-genre teaching. All this will be supported by the application of anatomy and physiology in the sessions run by Linda Hutchison. Ian Anderson Gray will be taking us through the key elements of marketing and technology. Finally, Juliana Janes-Jaffé will share some new repertoire drawn from the Yiddish Folksong Project, especially helpful for those of us who would like to augment our folksong repertoire.

Pathways has been going from strength to strength and members who have taken part in the programme have all reported how much it has helped them develop their own teaching. This leads to our unique Advanced Professional Development Course, the next one being held in 2018.

With such a broad programme of events, Council aims to reach all of our membership through National Conferences, Area Development Days, Pods, Pathways and the Advance Professional Development Course as well as extend our contacts with colleagues and affiliated organisations in Europe and help us all to develop our own professional practice and share and explore our wonderful world of teaching singing. I look forward to seeing you all in the summer.

Ivor Flint, Chair

Finding the right words

Jenevora Williams looks at the language singing teachers use in the studio, and how our choice of words has an effect on our students

The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

George Bernard Shaw

I thought I'd had a breakthrough recently with Amelia; she is thirteen years old, she has a rich, vibrant voice but with one main colour. Most of the time in her lessons I'm not working on technique: I'm trying to stimulate her imagination to find some other expressive, emotive sounds. 'Yes – that's it. It's much more connected now,' I said to her. She looked at me blankly. 'Does that mean anything to you?', I ask. She shook her head. 'Embodied?' No. 'It sounds like you're actually feeling something.' The lights remained switched off. She had no idea what I was talking about. Amelia is a very literal thinker: she's also delightfully honest with me when I say something she doesn't understand. Most students nod politely and assume that the fault lies with them and their own lack of knowledge.

Choosing the right word or phrase is essential and yet so problematic. We aim to be direct and unambiguous, and yet playing with inventive and colourful language is our means of expression. With our choice of language we can be individual and imaginative; we aim to shun the cliché and yet we litter our speech with figurative references. Metaphor is an integral part of our language, it is not just cognitive cheesecake. If we are to understand anything, we need to *grasp it or fathom it out*. I may *run the idea by you* that words often arise from the closest descriptor such as the *legs* of a table or the *teeth* of a comb; the *desktop* or *mouse* for your computer. We cannot avoid metaphor, but we can exercise choice over what to say and how we say it.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.' *'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'* *'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master — that's all.'*

Through the Looking Glass, Lewis Carroll.

We can influence our teaching and learning outcomes by understanding the subconscious responses in the brains of our students. The brain, about which we still know very little, is adaptable and flexible. We know that habitual actions are learnt through repetition: 10% of body-mind processes happen in



Jenevora Williams

conscious awareness, 90% are habitual and automatic. When I reach to pick up a cup of coffee, I am using a complex sequence of actions in a habitual way. Even if I focus on the task and take the coffee cup 'mindfully', I am still not consciously aware of the exact sequence of muscular movements taking place. From Piaget's studies, we know that there are templates or schema that link with particular patterns of use: a run of notes, a rhythm or a sequence of actions. These can be accessed and altered if we can find the easiest way in. To find as many ways into existing schema as we can, we make small changes or create links with other cognitive areas. The small change may be altering just one aspect of the schema at a time. So, when we are learning exercises or melodies with repeating patterns, we will vary the vowel, the speed, the pitch or the rhythm. This helps us to embed the action into our subconscious more effectively than just straight repetition. Another way into the schema could be cognitive, facilitated by metaphor or imagery. For example, with the repeated pattern of notes we could give the student the idea of running water or turning wheels. The use of imagery in this instance is a direct choice by the teacher: it is considered and appropriate. If any of the variations don't work (different rhythm, the idea of water etc) then another one has to be ready to leap into place. The teacher is trying to find a way into the student's existing cognitive models: if the student doesn't get it, the responsibility lies with the teacher to find an alternative.

Both ways into the habitual training are valid; variety is the key. Variable conditions will maximise the generalisation of trained behaviour in the longer term. Then, once we have found the way in, we have to repeat and train the body-mind in skill acquisition and familiarity without conscious remembering. The repetitive drilling is essential. It will require attention from the student and is probably rather less interesting for the teacher. We need to allow these processes to materialise; if we leave it up to the student then they need explicit instructions on how to practise effectively. We are developing implicit memory, memory without awareness, that is not analytical or judgemental – it is ‘in the moment’ attention.

The teacher is trying to find a way into the student’s existing cognitive models: if the student doesn’t get it, the responsibility lies with the teacher to find an alternative

I’m handed a piece of toast by Sam, aged two: ‘Daddy’s on the phone,’ he says. The toast is then held to my ear as I have an imaginary chat with Daddy, who is apparently telling Sam to finish eating his toast. The representation is implicit: the toast is a phone, the conversation is with Daddy; the message is understood. Children learn to associate objects and feelings with other similar ones alongside the development of speech. Some children find it easier than others: those on the Autistic Spectrum Disorder will find it more difficult. Some of the most imaginative methods for accessing and describing feelings come from games played by actors or creative writers. Try thinking about an everyday object – a box perhaps. You may give it character with the adjectives you choose – size, colour, texture, purpose. You could also imbue it with thoughts, emotions, feelings and reactions, just from the words you may use to describe it. Semi-conscious associations are used in advertising and marketing to influence your preferences and actions. Image is more powerful than information. So, in teaching, imagination is more important than information. But it has to be evidence-led. The underlying message has to be factually real, the imaginative link has to be believable. Sam’s phone could not have been a grape or a jumper, it had to be able to represent the real item. And Sam and I both knew that it wasn’t really a phone, as he demonstrated by eating it.

How can we tread carefully through the minefield of singer-jargon? We must surely have to rethink every accepted term, just as I did when Amelia challenged me with the use of ‘connected’ and ‘embodied’. As we know from the evolution of language, words can change to mean something else. For example, naughty originally meant poor or needy (having naught), nice used to mean silly, foolish or ignorant. In our lifetimes, the meaning of the word awesome has shifted completely. I would suggest that we periodically re-examine (find the weight of) many of the terms that we use in the teaching studio (room for study).

Support (carry, underpin, brace): When I was in my late 20s, after all my conservatoire training, I still believed that, to support more, I should tighten my abdominal muscles. Support does imply some sort of bracing action. When I was a young choral singer, the word was often linked with a jabbing action in the midriff. I find the word Support really problematic now and have reverted to calling it Breath Management; the student is feeling what moves and what stays still and experiencing the outcomes.

Posture (position, stance): This implies something fixed. It also has connotations of good and bad. Words like alignment or balance are better, but make no sense to the younger student. The way we stand, what our body does when we sing, how to be tall, poised and soft – again this needs to be experienced not explained.

Freedom (to act, speak or think as one wants): Well, that sounds lovely, we all like the idea of freeing something. Unfortunately for a vocal sound, it doesn’t mean much: it’s getting into the realm of ‘natural’ as a positive descriptor. Perhaps we mean ‘free of unnecessary tension’; however, all too often it’s used to mean ‘pleasing’.

On/off the voice: I’m not sure of this one. Off the voice can be used to suggest breathy, or falsetto/head voice (M2), under-energised or just light singing. It’s all by, with or from the voice.

On the Breath or Spinning: All voiced sound uses breath, it can’t be on or off the breath, in the same way that it can’t be on or off the voice. This is an example that what one feels isn’t necessarily what’s actually happening. The singer may feel that economical airflow is actively moving a lot of air. We know, however, that too much airflow will result in either constriction (an attempt to control the flow) or a leaky glottis (breathy sound), not enough breath will result in poor vocal fold adduction (below the minimum phonation threshold pressure). Generally speaking, less air is more efficient for singing, so ‘keeping the air moving’ is a misguided direction: ‘keeping a sense of movement’ would be better. Spinning is a useful imaginative concept implying fast, circular movement – it’s not actually what’s happening.

Some of the most imaginative methods for accessing and describing feelings come from games played by actors or creative writers.

Floaty: This is normally used for high, quiet singing. Sometimes floaty just means quiet singing; it could be ‘on’ or ‘off’ the voice. It’s an imaginative descriptive term, but not a technical one.

Throaty: All sound uses the throat as a resonator. Does ‘throaty’ mean tight/constricted? Is it a backed tongue? Is it to do with larynx height? Again, it’s not a technical term or a particularly useful descriptor. It would be more helpful to be specific.

Is this what Vennard meant when he wrote in 1967 that language is ‘used so loosely and with so little consistency or reference to objective facts that it becomes meaningless’? I know that I am as guilty as the next teacher – hence my misunderstood use of ‘connected’ as a descriptive term. What on earth did I mean by that? I knew what I thought I meant; I had heard the sound as more excited, more emotional, sounding more like it could only

have come from Amelia. Perhaps she would have found it more helpful if I'd just told her that her singing was much better, and left it at that.

We know that some terms are so overused and potentially ambiguous, and we should do our best to either avoid them, or make sure that our student understands exactly what is meant by the term. But we can't avoid imagery and metaphor altogether, just because of the potential for confusion. It is part of our job to stimulate the imagination of our students, to help them with the link between voice and emotion. This may take us into the realm of sensory metaphor: sound that is clear or dark (visual), smooth or rough (tactile) or sweet (taste). Effective metaphors tend to use the immediate senses of touch, taste and smell ahead of the less immediate senses of sight and hearing. Sweet silence is a more effective descriptor than silent sweetness. The reason for this is partly due to the order in which the senses develop, and partly due to their proximity in the areas of the brain. Taken further in neurological terms, when these links become stronger they result in synaesthesia. Many of these metaphors are powerful stimulators of the imagination. This stimulation is such a valuable part of our teaching, as long as we don't actually believe it's real.

Oftentimes in life, simple or inaccurate answers to questions are repeated authoritatively until they are accepted as truth.

John Nix

When considering the language we use, we are not just limiting ourselves to the polarity of literal and figurative speech. We have ways of shaping a phrase that can produce subtly different outcomes. In terms of the way in which we perceive and describe our students, we could be helping to contribute to their success or failure in ways that we hadn't considered. It is encouraging to be told that you are a good singer, or even that you are talented or gifted. But telling someone this could be the most unhelpful thing that you could do. Carol Dweck has published seminal work on fixed and growth mindset; she researched the way in which children are addressed and described. If the action is praised or criticised, the child can know that there is an alternative. If the child is praised or criticised, there's no way to change future outcomes. Students who are told that they have done well in a test but could have done better will be more likely to strive and improve than those who are just told that they are clever. It is most unhelpful to say to a student 'You're a very good singer'; a subtle change to 'You sang that very well' can make all the difference.

If I think that my failure is due to lack of effort, I am crediting myself with the capability or the resources to do better. If I think that it is due to lack of ability, then I have no control, and trying to understand will be a waste of time. And if I put it down to luck, then I might as well carry on in the same old way, waiting for my luck to change.

Teaching to Learn, Claxton

When considering the language we use, we are not just limiting ourselves to the polarity of literal and figurative speech.

The idea of intellect, innate or latent, brings us to Howard Gardner and his theories of intelligence. He demonstrated that there are nine distinct areas of intelligence that can be measured: musical, linguistic, logico-mathematical, spacial, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spiritual/existential, naturalist. A one-size-fits-all way of measuring IQ is known to have catastrophic limitations. Some schools and colleges focus on learning styles: visual, aural or kinaesthetic. These, again, are useful imaginative stimuli but there is no neurological evidence for any differential in the brain. The fact is that most people are a mix of all types of intelligence and of all three learning styles. Some areas will predominate and some will be a struggle: one person may have wonderful three-dimensional visualisation and another may have a knack for mental arithmetic. In terms of imagery, one person may respond to thinking of the sound like dark chocolate flavoured with orange, another may relate to sinking into a large down-filled cushion. We find a way to communicate via the route the student finds easy and then try to develop that which the student finds a struggle. We don't ask: 'How intelligent are you?' We ask: 'How are you intelligent?'

As performers, we have to get under the skin of another person. We have to imagine feelings that we haven't directly experienced. The mirror neurons in the brain will help us to make the transition from primary representations to those of the second-order: from literal to figurative. Imagination is what defines us as human; it is essential to spark creativity and emotional response. Imagery applied as a blanket to cover ignorance is not acceptable, but used with bespoke precision and thought, it is a sign of an inventive teacher. Image is more powerful than information, but the information provides the best image.

It is part of our job to stimulate the imagination of our students, to help them with the link between voice and emotion.

*'For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.'*

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

*Jenevora Williams is the author of Teaching Singing to Children and Young Adults, Compton Publishing (2013)
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A passion to teach

Singer and former classroom teacher **Janet Shell** explores the many qualities that make for a good singing teacher

The idea of the student being at the centre of what every teacher does has been with me 100% since I began teacher training at St Martin's College (now the University of Cumbria) in Lancaster back in 1977. We were lucky to study child psychology, philosophy and sociology every week for three years: while this merely scratched the surface of each of these disciplines, it did engender a life-long interest in rooting out unhelpful responses as a teacher and gave me some fundamental principles. It set me thinking how I can bring out the best in individual students and help them to get in touch with their own learning. That principle remains at the core of what I endeavour to achieve.

I believe that the reasons we go into teaching initially influence our teaching styles and that is probably one of those universal truths. There were people with whom I trained who were there because they couldn't decide what to do. In those days, teaching was seen as a soft option by many people. I know some who, post degree, did a PGCE just in case they needed it later and this way of approaching anything didactic has added to the poor-relation syndrome that teaching suffers. If you come to something on the back of disappointment with a previous career, or as an added extra – just in case – it stands to reason this can influence how you approach the job.

My first thought when I work with teachers is to begin by focusing on *why* they went into teaching. This is not meant to be judgemental, but it is a fundamental question to be answered, for this job is unforgiving at the best of times. As a teacher, you will be drained of every ounce of energy and always asked to give that little bit more. I think it is fair to say that as performers, many of us find ourselves in a financial cleft stick and sometimes turn to teaching as a necessity or are asked/begged to teach somebody and suddenly we have a growing list of students. That can, however, be one of those unforeseen consequences where you discover a talent to inspire and a growing sense of fulfilment.

Personally, I did not choose to teach singing for several years, despite being asked, simply because I felt I did not yet know my own voice well enough to be able to pass on knowledge and helpful information. Perhaps my thoughts around teaching were

Research from Cambridge University has underlined that the ability to connect with students is a powerful indicator of a successful teacher



Janet Shell

coloured by the training I received where I felt I had to grow and develop before I could be unleashed. Once I had stabilised my own singing and found a consistency of voice production, I realised I was listening to my colleagues and seeking to work out what I could hear in *their* production of voice. I openly discussed this, when appropriate, and became fascinated by how many different ideas there are in voice production. It wasn't the formulaic pattern I had imagined.

What follows are some thoughts on a few key things about the very nature of teaching in 2017.

Knowledge

It stands to reason that every teacher needs knowledge of their subject. One of the Teaching Standards to which every classroom teacher needs to subscribe, as set out by the Department of Education, is that of having knowledge about their subject. Interestingly, as a singer, this knowledge can take many forms. In recent years, technological advances have given us the possibility of viewing the vocal cords and seeing how the surrounding structures create sound. We are now overwhelmed with information denied to previous generations which can lead to an eschewing of previous knowledge on the basis that it cannot have been accurate. Individual teachers pick through the external facts on voice production and make sense of it alongside their internal references. Physics may give us the reasons for sound production,



yet it is Biology that informs how we do it and Biology involves feeling what happens at a cellular level. The appliance of science is indeed a 21st-century tightrope. Teachers are increasingly required to justify their knowledge acquisition. Thankfully, there are boundless opportunities to discover and learn from both the scientific community, esteemed colleagues and a million and one internet searches.

Passion

The most striking characteristic of an effective teacher is when they show how much they love what they are teaching. You cannot beat a slightly eccentric passion for something to draw you in, even if you want to resist. When a teacher exudes their love of their subject combined with their knowledge, it is a winning setting. Passion for your subject and the ability to extend that love across barriers is a skill. Not everybody can relate to a mad-professor type, however, and many brilliant teachers are more studied in their approach. But their love of their subject will always come across and we all know that in one-to-one teaching, the relationship between teacher and student is brought into focus more acutely than in the classroom. Indeed, research from Cambridge University has underlined that the ability to connect

*It is very much
within our power
to create the right
atmosphere and
to turn around a
negative attitude*

with students is a powerful indicator of a successful teacher. 'When people speak of a positive school experience, they frequently cite a personal relationship with a teacher and the encouragement they were given,' said report author Dr Ben Alcott.¹

Creativity

We are in the fortunate position of not only being in a highly creative world but also having the chance to teach creatively. Today, the classroom teacher is struggling with continual assessment of evidence-based criteria which tends to involve data collection and proof of knowledge acquisition. Just reading that sentence back depressed me! It should be exciting and challenging. One look at the faces of many teachers will tell you otherwise. For us, as singing teachers, we can adapt and match what we do to the learning of the student in front of us. We get immediate feedback and, if a student is struggling with a particular passage or technical issue, there are many different approaches to help achieve success. The way a teacher explains something or demonstrates has multiple applications and they are all open to us. We are possibly the last bastion of creativity left in formalised education: we must preserve it.

Learning

This leads on to something that is generally acknowledged, yet seems to be disappearing from the world of education, which is that people learn most when they are having fun. It goes hand in hand with creativity and with the feeling of progress. We have all had lessons when the student hardly seems to have walked in the door than it is time to leave. Usually, those are our most successful lessons, full of potential, possibility, and probably delight. Creating

a positive learning environment for students has a knock-on effect for the teacher, too. There is nothing more fatiguing than a lesson where it is all drudgery and repetition (ironically, of course, repetition of technique and developing muscle memory are integral for progress, but it doesn't have to feel like a chore). It is very much within our power to create the right atmosphere and to turn around a negative attitude. Learning is at the heart of any teaching; finding the way to do it is a lifetime commitment.

Flexibility

The richness of singing teaching is in the diversity of pathways that can be explored. It gives us the opportunity to be flexible about how we choose to give out information and invite the student to make discoveries, and continue the exploration ourselves. I remember one occasion when I was being observed teaching and the observer being a little puzzled about my approach because my style is to suggest something, then discuss as we go along and give the student full credit for discovery as if it is totally new and exciting. This can give the impression that I have only just discovered it myself and I think the person watching was concerned that I may not have the depth of knowledge for which they had hoped. What I love is the sense of pride and ownership the student feels at having co-created that moment. This is powerful because if you feel you have made a discovery that works for you, you will be excited by it and try out new ideas to sustain that.

Language

Some of my language tends to be exploratory, such as: 'I wonder if we tried this...' 'What if you did this?', 'Let's see what happens when...' Positive language can be so transforming for recipients. Many classroom teachers get caught in negative sentences without meaning to. I recently had the privilege of observing a young classroom teacher who was struggling with her classes. It became clear very quickly that one of the chief issues with her lessons was the way in which she talked to students – well she talked at them really. Her language was peppered with 'don't'; 'stop'; 'if you continue to do this x will happen'; 'We haven't got time to go into that now'. I sat for an hour listening to this and longed to hear something positive being said. The behaviour of the students showed me that they, too, needed it. Our students will not (I hope) be subjected to that, yet they may turn up at a singing lesson having witnessed something of that nature. To then have a lesson which empowers the student through both our language use and the feeling of being a creative force will be a much-needed balm in a day. Creating a positive environment enriches both student and teacher and enhances learning.

Stamina

Our own inner resources can take a pounding and the stamina required to teach has been likened to that of an Olympic athlete. The nature of one-to-one teaching means there is no 'down' time for the teacher. For this reason, as a new singing teacher, it can be quite a challenge to be as energised with the tenth student of the day as with the first. Despite our best intentions, there are days when it can feel like a treadmill. When this happens, I remind myself how lucky I am to be doing a job that I love, that these students deserve the best of me and that I could be doing something that gave me no pleasure for work and was just a means to an end. One-to-one teaching necessarily requires more engagement and more input. The more experienced you become, the better you are at pacing the lesson and your input. I have always been in

total admiration of the teachers who have streamlined how they teach so that one or two observations can make monumental differences to the student. They can encapsulate their knowledge in a few well-chosen words. (As you can tell from this, I have yet to manage that!) For all of us, it is worth remembering to nourish ourselves in a long day of teaching whether that is getting outside for a break; chatting with other staff; having that juice/tea/coffee/power drink; not skipping lunch; taking time out to breathe and replenish; oh and rest the voice!

Awareness

My final thoughts revolve around the many roles a teacher is required to play, from instructor, to mentor, to guide, to inspirer, to listener etc. All of our skills are utilised when we step into that space and enter into a contract with the person in front of us – whatever age they be! As performers, we have already developed heightened awareness and it is those intuitive antennae which give us a great advantage when it comes to our teaching. We know if a student's emotional state is fragile when they walk into the teaching room. If not, it becomes evident when they start to sing. We create a safe place for everybody to work and there are occasions when our emotional intelligence skills are required. Being able to lead somebody away from something which has distressed them towards the joy of singing can be very rewarding, if that is a possibility. There is a chain of command put in place to give a structure to any issues which may arise in a lesson and a clear pathway for help. Yet, in those initial key moments, when the person in front of you is struggling with something, it is understanding and kindness which surfaces and can make the difference for the student. By the same token it is useful to become aware if, like me, your concerned face looks cross at times and your passionate engagement face looks a little tortured. The awareness we can develop about how we are perceived by others is probably the most instructive of all.

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¹ Alcott, B. Res High Educ (2017). doi:10.1007/s11162-017-9446-2 Does Teacher Encouragement Influence Students' Educational Progress? A Propensity-Score Matching Analysis

Norman Tattersall Bursary Fund

The Norman Tattersall Bursary Fund exists for the purpose of offering financial help to members attending AOTOS national conferences. The bursaries are intended for those who are experiencing difficulty in finding sufficient resources to cover the fee. Circumstances might be, for instance, that a young teacher is just starting out, an established teacher has taken a sabbatical, or a member has unexpected financial problems. Any one, in fact, who is temporarily in difficulty but who nevertheless is keen to keep in touch. All applications will be dealt with in confidence. Details of how to apply will be included on all national conference application forms.

Singing in French 3

Darquise Bilodeau discusses technique and interpretation in relation to French song through the lens of Fauré's 'En sourdine'

In this third and final article, we shall consider how both the technical and interpretive aspects of the *mélodie* come together into an artistic translation of a poetic work. 'En sourdine' by Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924), from the cycle *Cinq mélodies 'de Venise'* (1891), will serve as the basis of our discussion, with other musical settings of the same poem by Paul Verlaine (1844–1896) used to compare and contrast Fauré's setting.

The two previous articles dealt with the practicalities of French song: resources and musical editions, linguistic difficulties, such as the *liaison* and the mute 'e', and the sonorities of French, built primarily upon clear vowel sounds within a fairly unstressed poetic line of verse. This article examines text and music from the point of view of the reciting singing voice, paying particular attention to the text as the composer's vision or rather audition, as Pierre Bernac writes (Bernac, 1976, p5).

In the beginning were the words

Every art song, every *mélodie*, begins with the inspiration of a poem, its imagery, rhythms, sonorities and 'musicality', that indefinable quality combining sounds and syllables in a rhythmic interplay leading the imagination beyond the words. Verlaine's poetry is replete with unusual word combinations, with syntactical effects and with the echoing of repeated sounds.

'En sourdine' presents several interesting features, typical of Verlaine's style, prefiguring the change in late 19th-century French poetry. Made up of a seven-syllable metre (a fairly unusual metre for the time, but also found in 'Mandoline' and 'C'est l'extase'), each line of verse features a masculine ending in an ABAB rhyme scheme (see poetic text and translation below). This metre, falling short of the eight-syllable metre (the most ancient of French poetic metres and its most common) sustains an underlying sense of disquiet in this poem where two lovers seek the half-lit calm of a woodland retreat. Yet we know that, at nightfall, the nightingale's song brings them only a despairing melancholy.

Verlaine's poetic virtuosity communicates both the physical setting and the mood of the text through rhythm and sonority. In addition to their truncated poetic metre, the verses feature various treatments; for instance, in the first stanza, lines 1 and 2 as well as 3 and 4 are joined syntactically as the two halves of a four-line sentence. On the other hand, the first two lines of the



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third stanza are clearly separated by commas, while the next two form the end of the sentence. In the fourth stanza, the words lead from one line to the next, imparting to it a slightly breathless quality, with only brief breathing spaces in the third line and continuing onwards to end at 'gazons roux'. However, while Verlaine creates continuity within the stanzas, the first word of the poem, 'Calmes', set apart by punctuation and immediately halting the flow of recitation, gives a sure indication of the mood to which the lovers are aspiring and, therefore, which should guide the pacing and vocal tone of a reading of this text. Thus, the text's underlying melancholy is made real in the tension between the poetic

continuity in the stanzas and the calm pacing of the declamation.

Before we consider Fauré's setting, let us turn to one other important characteristic of a poetic text, that is, its sonorities. With 'En sourdine', Verlaine has carefully incorporated words featuring darker sounds, made up of nasalised and of back vowels: for example, [u]: 'jour, amour, souffle'; [ɑ̃]: 'dans, branches, silence'; [ɔ̃]: 'font, profond, ondes'; as well as many instances of the neutral [ə] in close succession, as in 'De ce silence'. In addition, Verlaine skilfully uses the sibilant consonant [s] in the fourth stanza where the soft breeze ('souffle berceur') seems to invite to further intimacy. All these sound colours contribute to the muted atmosphere surrounding the two lovers, suggesting their shady retreat, the lulling breath of the wind and the quiet murmur of voices.

Coaching tip no. 1

Reading a song text out loud is an essential exercise in its preparation: without the distraction of the music and of its own challenges, singer and pianist may experience the rhythms and sounds of a text as they are verbalised, along with any potential diction problems. In addition, this is the moment when *liaisons*, elisions and the treatment of the mute 'e' may be explored.

Musical setting

Two features of Fauré's reading of this poem underline the lovers' heartache: the accompaniment which, in typical Faurean fashion, sustains a continuous motion by an arpeggiated pattern and

restless harmonies, and the unhurried pace of declamation, broken up by numerous rests. These two contrasting characteristics illustrate the emotional tension permeating this poem. Astute singers will also notice how Fauré songs on Verlaine texts differ from previous *mélodies* such as *Au bord de l'eau* or *Les roses d'Ispahan*: melodic lines have become more restricted in their range, with the tessitura generally situated in the middle voice and with less recourse to the overt vocalism of high notes. Fauré is moving away from the Italianate vocal style of the 1870s and 1880s, influenced then by mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot-Garcia (1821–1910), and is now fully engaged with the musical translation of poetry, which, according to his son Philippe Fauré-Fremiet, remained a lifelong concern (Fauré-Fremiet, 1957, p45).

In 'En sourdine', Fauré sets the scene with his changeable harmonies while the voice recites the text on the impeccable rhythms and subtle stresses of his non-metrical musical lines. Fauré's setting of this text focuses on the creation of mood and of impressions through constant rhythmic and harmonic motion, and he assists the singer in bringing out the particular sonorities in Verlaine's poem by crafting phrases featuring a lower tessitura, a restricted vocal range and syllabic stresses utilising longer note values (for instance, bars 2–5, 'Calmes...font'). In contrast, Debussy's (1862–1918) second version of this song from 1891 focuses on the phrase-by-phrase management of textual rhythms, recitation pacing and vocal inflection.

Coaching tip no. 2

Both composers' versions at 'Pénétrons bien notre amour' illustrate the contrasting interpretive demands made upon the singer: while a perfect legato line and faultless vowel sounds suffice to suggest meaning in Fauré's slowly declaimed phrases (bars 6–9), Debussy's insistent crotchet rhythm in a low-tessitura vocal line ('bien notre amour', bars 6–9) communicate rhythmically the intimate mood of the lovers sheltering within the shadows of the dark oaks. This calls for a *sotto voce* colouring of the voice by the singer, differing from the more 'sung' Faurean approach to this text.

The sensuous text of the third stanza ('Ferme tes yeux à demi') again demonstrates the different ways in which composers read a poetic text. After two stanzas where the piano arpeggios have allowed him great harmonic freedom, Fauré now suspends time by also suspending harmonic change and by repeating the melodic motif of the first two lines of verse (bars 17–20). Reynaldo Hahn (1874–1947), in his 1893 setting, opts for a similar solution where the melodic line, only slightly varied at 'Croise tes bras', is supported by harmonies remaining mainly within the same tonal framework (bars 19–22). Hahn includes many interpretive instructions in the score, such as the *tenuto* mark above 'tes' in 'Croise tes bras' (bar 21), a sign which, in reality, is a purely musical and slightly mannered way of negotiating the contour of the phrase, bearing no relation to the text and its goal at 'sein'.

Coaching tip no. 3

Much of Hahn's vocal music is characterised by markings emphasising the vocality of a phrase or directing the singer's

Hahn's vocal music can be quite mannered, so care must be taken not to exaggerate the markings unduly

declamation and expression, as in bars 23–31, 'Et de ton coeur endormi... Les ondes des gazons roux'. Here, Hahn the salon singer directs recitation pace precisely in the melodic line rhythms while including clear tempo and dynamic indications; this can be helpful, particularly for singers who may be less familiar with French declamation. However, there is no doubt that Hahn's vocal music can be quite mannered, so care must be taken not to exaggerate the markings unduly.

A later setting of this poem (1911) by Poldowski (1879–1932), reminiscent of Hahn's rather self-conscious expressive style, exhibits a certain *fin-de-siècle* decadence, a wilting exquisiteness, writes Graham Johnson (Johnson, 2000, p348). The fourth and final stanza ('Et quand solennel, le soir', bars 28 to the end) returns to clearly declaimed lines with simple end-accented rhythms after moments of high emotion at 'Fondons nos âmes' (bars 8–12) and at 'Les ondes des gazons roux' (bars 26–28).

Coaching tip no. 4

This seemingly disjointed approach to poetic expression conceals passages where singers need to pay special attention to syllabic and word stresses as well as careful vocal colouring while declaiming entire phrases on a single pitch (for example, bars 21–25). See the poem below for indications of line stress points.

In a certain sense, Debussy and Fauré share the same interpretation of the fourth stanza: both composers view nightfall in this context as one of the reasons for the pervasive melancholy of the poem, the moment when the two lovers must part. Without altering the song's motion, Fauré scores both voice and piano parts in a lower tessitura, matching the darker colours of the vowel sounds in an allusion to the fading light. Debussy also scores the vocal line in its lower range, but communicates the inevitable moment of separation with steady reciting quavers, slowed down

Contrary to songs from the first half of the 19th century, these later compositions make little use of downbeats to indicate stress; rather, long note values ... provide stress in French song

in the quiet dynamics of the final bars and accompanied by the song of the nightingale, which had pervaded the entire song like the presage of the lovers' parting. Both composers also lift the voice to higher notes to echo the nightingale, Fauré in a modest display of vocalism with a *pianissimo* falling octave (bars 42–43), Debussy employing

a more obvious allusion to the poignancy of the moment with a falling minor arpeggio along with the only instance of slurred notes in the entire song to illustrate 'chantera' (bars 38–39).

In these four settings of 'En sourdine', the common thread of intimacy mingled with poignancy is present, and this is particularly evident in the Fauré and Debussy *mélodies*. With significantly different musical means, both composers communicate in varying degrees the mood of Verlaine's text. Both Fauré and Debussy allude to its meaning, the former with relentless harmonic shifts

leading to the inevitability of night and separation, the latter with every phrase as a musical representation of the lovers' intimacy. While Hahn includes a wealth of detail to ease the musical declamation of text for singers, Poldowski alternates between extroverted vocalism in moments of high emotion and quiet recitation on single notes. All four composers require careful study of the text and of its diction, and an awareness of significant word and syllable stress points in the line of verse. Contrary to songs from the first half of the 19th century, these later compositions make little use of downbeats to indicate stress; rather, long note values rather than dynamic or consonantal accents provide stress in French song.

Coaching tip no. 5

Reading the text to the musical rhythm can offer excellent insights into stressing phrases appropriately (long note values generally indicate these stresses) and provide performers with

the composer's very own reading of the text, made up of rhythm, phrase contour and length, dynamics, articulation, tempo changes and so on.

By setting 'En sourdine', one of Verlaine's most exquisite poems, composers have helped us gain a deeper insight into the world of suggestion and allusion in *Fêtes galantes*. Every performance brings back to life for a moment the revellers of 'Mandoline' or the characters of the *commedia dell'arte* of 'Fantoches'. It is my hope that these brief guides on singing in French will contribute in some way to helping make the task of performing *mélodies* a little easier and more enjoyable.

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'En sourdine' (*Fêtes galantes*)

Calmes, dans le demi-**jour**,
 Que les branches hautes **font**,
 Pénétrons bien notre **amour**
 De ce silence **profond**.

Calm, in the half-light
 That the high branches make,
 Let us imbue our love
 With this deep silence.

[Fondons]¹ nos âmes, nos **coeurs**
 Et nos sens **extasiés**,
 Parmi les vagues **langueurs**
 Des pins et des arbousiers.

Let us meld our souls, our hearts
 And our ecstatic senses,
 Amid the vague languor
 Of the pines and of the arbutus.

Ferme tes yeux à demi,
 Croise tes bras sur ton sein,
 Et de ton cœur endormi
 Chasse à jamais tout dessein.

Half-close your eyes,
 Cross your arms on your breast,
 And from your languid heart
 Forever dismiss all purpose.

Laissons-nous persuader
 Au souffle berceur et **doux**
 Qui vient, à tes pieds, **ri**der
 Les ondes des gazons **roux**.

May we be enticed
 By the soft and lulling breeze
 Which, at your feet, ripples
 The expanse of reddened grasses.

Et quand, solennel, le **soir**
 Des chênes noirs tombera
Voix de notre déses**poir**,
 Le rossignol chantera.

And when the solemn evening
 Shall descend from the black oaks,
 Voicing our despair,
 The nightingale shall sing.

Paul Verlaine

Note: Secondary line stresses are underlined; main line stresses are in **bold**. These merely indicate *potential* stress locations, not obligatory syllable or word accents.

¹ Fauré 'Mélons'

Yiddish Folksong

Conductor/pianist **John Yaffé** provides an overview of *The Yiddish Folksong Project*, which has generated the recent release of a fascinating new body of vocal literature

Through the centuries, Jewish folk songs in the Yiddish language have been passed from generation to generation, from parent (or grandparent) to child, through the Jewish congregational community, and in occasional performance within the relatively small circle of traditional Jews. However, as those people whose *mother tongue* is Yiddish have gradually passed away, the memory of the Yiddish folksong gradually fades as well – and so fades an important part of the chronicle of a people. Sadly, many of these songs are no longer heard at all.

For the past 100 years, many dedicated researchers and archivists have collected and transcribed Yiddish folksong melodies and texts. Most of these transcriptions are published in ‘lead sheet’ form. Such renderings (melody and text only) are useful for archival and research purposes, but any use of them for performance purposes requires the hand of a musician able to flesh them out into viable accompaniments for performance on the desired instrument(s). As such, the songs are subject to the unpredictability of the hand responsible for their arrangements. Most Yiddish folksong anthologies offer only cursory piano accompaniments, as do the arrangements of most of the composers of the ‘New Jewish School’ (also known as the ‘St Petersburg School’) of the early 20th century. Even some better-known composers have tried their hand at musicalizing Yiddish. For example, Dmitri Shostakovich used Yiddish texts but created original melodies on them; Darius Milhaud composed all his *Poèmes juifs* to French translations of Yiddish; and Maurice Ravel’s two settings altered the original modal melodies. Others such as Viktor Ullmann, and Stefan Wolpe tried their hand at setting (intact) Yiddish folksong melodies, but their combined output amounts to less than a dozen songs, and their settings can, in this author’s opinion, hardly be said to be illuminating.

On the other hand, composers such as Johannes Brahms, Benjamin Britten, Aaron Copland, Antonín Dvořák, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and others, have embraced the folksongs of their native lands and fashioned sets of masterful, and oft-performed, concert arrangements of them for recital performance. As a result, those songs have gained recognition worldwide. Such has not been the case with the Yiddish folksong, however. The exposure of these songs to a wider public has been extremely



John Yaffé

limited. They have been almost completely absent from mainstream international recital performance, caught within the small circles of Jewish families, congregations, social events, klezmer camps, festivals of Jewish music, archives, and conferences on Yiddish music. Unlike the folksong arrangements of the composers mentioned above, they have not been disseminated through the channels by which all other significant song repertoire gets its global exposure: the thousands of song recitals performed each year by trained student and professional singers around the world. We have simply lacked a significant body of finely crafted arrangements of Yiddish folksongs, by a single composer/arranger, that would attract trained singers to this important vocal literature.

Enter Robert De Cormier

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Robert De Cormier (*b.*1922), the eminent American conductor-composer-arranger, who early on became very active in Jewish music circles in New York, was commissioned to write 48 vocal-instrumental arrangements of 46 Yiddish folksongs specifically for three LP recordings by two singers: the Austrian-born American Marthe Schlamme, who commissioned De Cormier to arrange 33 songs for her 1957 and 1959 Vanguard recordings, and the Ukrainian-born Israeli Netanyia Davrath, who commissioned him to create 15 arrangements for her 1963 Vanguard recording. Those recordings fell out of print soon after their release, due to lack of the LP-buying public’s interest in this repertoire, and De Cormier’s 48 arrangements were never performed live.

Rediscovery and Realization

In 1999, an organization in New York City bestowed upon soprano Juliana Janes-Yaffé their annual Professional Achievement Award in the area of vocal performance. At the conclusion of the awards ceremony, the above-mentioned Vanguard LPs were handed to her by Alexander Rauchman, president of the awards committee. Apparently, Rauchman had a hunch that Juliana might be the ideal interpreter to revive the De Cormier arrangements. Several days later, she and I set the turntable in motion and listened (in a state of utter amazement and enchantment, it must be said) to all 48 song arrangements. In our immediate recognition of the significance of this body of songs, we began pondering whether De Cormier’s superb arrangements might in fact constitute the

means by which this musically (and culturally) significant body of folksong literature could transcend the narrow framework within which they had been living up to that point.

Coincidentally, at exactly the same moment in time, Juliana had been thinking about what the profile of her next solo recital programme should be, and, without even searching for it, an exciting opportunity presented itself to her: a programme made up entirely of the marvelous Robert De Cormier arrangements; a programme that would introduce the concert-going public to this musically excellent, thematically varied, passionate, poignant, poetic, philosophical, playful, sometimes disturbing – but always heartfelt – slice of cultural history.

The Agreement

I set out to search for the performance materials for De Cormier's arrangements, and it led me to the American state of Vermont, where De Cormier had gone into semi-retirement. In my phone conversation with De Cormier, I expressed our interest in performing his arrangements and enquired as to where we could buy, or rent, the vocal scores and instrumental parts. What happened next shocked me: with a hearty laugh, he said: 'Those materials have been sitting in my storage cupboard for almost 50 years. I'd be thrilled if someone performed them!' Apparently, the arrangements had been written – and used – only for those three LP recordings, but never performed live. Fortunately, he had taken the materials home after the recording sessions; but, unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately for us), they languished in that cupboard all those years.

The upshot of my phone conversation with De Cormier was an agreement by which he gave Juliana and me exclusive performance and publication rights to his arrangements. In return, we entered into a royalty agreement with him, and we agreed to do three things: 1) perform the songs as widely as possible, 2) undertake a new commercial recording of the songs, and 3) arrange for the publication of the songs in the original voice-and-instrumental-ensemble version (three to ten instruments, depending on the song) and in reduced versions for (a) voice and piano and (b) voice, violin, and piano. We arranged a (lunch) meeting with De Cormier, and he appeared in New York City some weeks later with a stack of manuscript materials under his arm. He set them down on the restaurant table in front of us, and thus began *The Yiddish Folksong Project*.

Robert De Cormier and His Arrangements

It would be remiss not to mention here that, when talking about Robert De Cormier, we are talking about one of the most highly regarded American musicians of the second half of the 20th century. One would be hard-pressed to find anyone in American choral circles, or in the area of folksong literature, who does *not* know who Robert De Cormier is. A Juilliard School graduate, he was a major player in the politically-charged 'folk music revival' of

the 1950s and 60s, working with such artists as Harry Belafonte, Peter, Paul and Mary, and his own Robert De Cormier singers. His contribution to the editing, arranging, and publishing of folksong literature is immeasurable.

The magic of De Cormier's arrangements in general, and especially with regard to those being discussed here, is that they possess the rigour and integrity of classical composition, while retaining the accessibility of folk music. De Cormier demonstrates an ability to stay out of the way of the essential flexibility inherent in this style of folk music; he avoids bogging the song down with heavy-handed musical setting; yet, he is able to enhance the environment in which the original material lives through an attractive, poetic, and nuanced musical setting – goals not easily achieved.

The Task at Hand

Now the real work began. The first step in the restoration of the arrangements was for me to collate all the disparate pencil/pen manuscripts – scores and parts – making sure that the materials for each song were present. Next, I had to computerize all those materials in a state-of-the-art music notation programme, meticulously editing, correcting, and correlating them one-by-one; transcribe the vocal parts and their corresponding Yiddish texts (mostly missing from the original scores) from the LPs, or research them externally; bring the musical content into line with the original recordings; and transform the sum total of text and music into new engravings suitable

for rehearsal, performance, and publication. A crucial component of this process was the creation of a piano reduction from the newly engraved full score, so that (a) Juliana could begin to learn the songs on her own, and (b) the two of us could eventually begin to rehearse them together.

On the 13 March 2005, the first live performance of De Cormier's arrangements took place in New York City – more than 50 years after their creation – with Juliana singing, and the instrumental ensemble under my leadership.

Questions of Language, Style and 'Authenticity'

In bringing these songs into mainstream concert settings, and in preparing published versions of them for concert performance, we knew full well that we were treading on slippery ground. First, one needs only to consider that, unlike most languages, which are spoken by the residents of a particular area or by members of a particular nationality, Yiddish, at the height of its usage – that is, prior to the Holocaust (1939–45) – was spoken by an estimated 11 million people *of different nationalities all around the world*. (Note: the Holocaust dealt an almost lethal blow to Yiddish: today, only around one million people worldwide speak the language.)

From its origins in the west-central German Rhine region in the 10th or 11th century, it fused the existing Middle High German (comprising about 80 per cent of Yiddish) with Hebraic elements (ultimately, about 15 per cent) as well as French and Italian Jewish dialects brought by immigrants to that area. As a result of



Juliana Janes-Yaffé

persecution in the 13th and 14th centuries, large numbers of Jews were forced into the regions of Eastern Europe, where the language permanently assimilated elements of various Slavic languages (about 5 per cent). In practice, this means that different dialects of Yiddish exist, and that disagreement exists on what defines 'correct' pronunciation of song texts – especially those that are anonymous, and whose date of origin and regional provenance is unknown.

Earlier in this article, I mentioned the LP recordings by Martha Schlamme and Netanya Davrath. Each of them pronounced Yiddish differently because they came from different parts of the world: one from Western Europe, one from Eastern Europe. When Schlamme sings the beloved *Rozhinkes mit mandlen*, it sounds different than when Davrath sings it. So, which one is 'historically informed'? Which one is 'authentic'? Thankfully, the Yiddish Scientific Institute, or 'YIVO' (now the Institute for Jewish Research, in New York City), devised guidelines in the 1930s for what they call 'Standard Yiddish' pronunciation. In *The Yiddish Folksong Project*, we used those guidelines as our point of departure, incorporating additional components of Yiddish phonology.

However, there was another matter that concerned us: 'authenticity of style'. Although both Juliana and I are Jewish, and I had grown up hearing Yiddish at home (Juliana hadn't), we couldn't help asking ourselves, 'What is authentic Yiddish folksong style?' Juliana already had a mastery of Yiddish pronunciation and understood the meaning of every word of every song text. Still, we were preparing to perform these songs in New York, seat of the largest single Jewish population in the world still speaking, or at least familiar with, Yiddish, and we found ourselves wound up and rather stressed over questions of authenticity.

With time, however, we realized that reaching for authenticity was a futile endeavour. Is it not true that, as soon as one moves beyond the framework in which a song was originally created (and it was not recorded at the moment of creation), literal authenticity is lost? Is it not true that, once the lullaby improvised by a mother who sings over her baby's cradle gets passed to the woman next door, moves on to another village (or to another country), or is passed down to another generation, any claim of authenticity must necessarily be put into question? It follows, then, that authenticity can only be *imagined*, supported by whatever knowledge is available relating to the historical/cultural/aesthetic realities of the time in which the song was created.

Even so, what do you do in the case of an *anonymous* song, where you don't know when, where, or how the melody and text came into being? This is not the music of a German people in a German land, or a Chinese people in a Chinese land. This is the music of Jewish people living in many different lands around the globe; music that organically absorbed, digested, and became

integrated into, the musical environment in which it found itself; music that was then transmitted across borders, and even across oceans.

To me, the critical question is this: Does it really matter? It is certainly true that one should do a background check on every song that one intends to sing in public; one should give oneself fully to the history, language, sentiment, atmosphere, and aesthetic of each song; one should try to become an inhabitant of the world in which each song resides. But have audiences really enjoyed the songs of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, Tchaikovsky, Fauré, Debussy, and others, any *less* just because we haven't had enough reliable documentation to enable 'historically-informed' performance? I don't think so. In the end, if we hadn't believed that there was some enduring universality inherent in these Yiddish songs outside of their original cultural, historical, musical context – just like every other body of great song literature – we would never have embarked on what was essentially a gigantic experiment in the communicative power of these songs on the world stage.

The Yiddish Folksong Project, Now and in the Future

In 2013, *The Yiddish Folksong Project* attracted the attention of the Endeavor Foundation (formerly the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation), which expressed to us its firm belief in both the educational significance of the project as well as its dedication to cross-cultural understanding. The result has been a collaboration, which, since 2014, is manifested in full funding of the research, restoration, performance, recording, publication, and educational components of the project.

Thus, the appearance of this article coincides with the release of Volume I of the *Yiddish Folksong Project*. It introduces – for the first time in published form – 18 of the 48 arrangements created by De Cormier between 1957 and 1963 and is accompanied by a new recording of the corresponding songs (Juliana singing). This is the first publication of its kind, as

we know of no other anthology of Yiddish folksong arrangements with this volume's distinctive features.

With the release of this anthology, singing teachers, professional singers, singers-in-training, and répétiteurs will now have access to a wonderful new body of vocal literature from a pedagogically conceived publication. It is our sincere hope that singers around the world will heartily embrace this repertoire, enchant their audiences with it, and become participants in the broader dissemination of this rich cultural and musical heritage to a global community.

To view a mini-documentary on this project, go to YouTube and search 'Juliana sings Yiddish Folk Songs'.

John Yaffé is an internationally acclaimed conductor/pianist, a PhD candidate and lecturer in music at Coventry University, Editor-in-Chief of Ipsilon Music Press/Services, and co-author of the book Arias, Ensembles and Choruses: and excerpt-finder for orchestras (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

*The Holocaust dealt
an almost lethal blow
to Yiddish: today, only
around one million
people worldwide
speak the language*

*Is it not true that,
as soon as one
moves beyond the
framework in which
a song was originally
created, literal
authenticity is lost?*

Rozhinkes mit mandlen

Words and Music attributed partially to
Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908)

Original arrangement by Robert De Cormier
(piano reduction by John Yaffé)

Moderato (♩ = 100)

A (recitative)

In dem beys ha - mik-dosh, in a vin - kl

Moderato (♩ = 100)

p (plaintively)

tr.

colla voce

ped.

4

khey - der, zitst di al - mo - ne bas - tsi - on a - leyn; Ir ben

9

(a tempo)

yo - khi - dl yi - de - len vigt zi ke - sey - der, un zingt im tsum

(a tempo)

pp

a tempo

ped.

This arrangement © 2007 by Ipsilon Music Press, New York
Taken from *The Yiddish Folksong Project*, Volume 1 (New York, Ipsilon Press, 2017)

14

rallentando

(plaintively)

shlo - fn a li - de - le sheyn... ay lu lu lu lu lu lu.

rallentando

ped.

19

B *a tempo*

Un-ter yi - de - les vi - - - ge - le

a tempo

p

24

shteyt a klor vays tsi - - - ge - le. Dos

29

tsi - ge - le iz ge - fo - - - rn hand - len;

33

Dos vet zayn dayn ba - ruf: _____ Ro - - zhin -

38

kes _____ mit mand - len... _____ Shlof - zhe yi - de - le,

43

shlof... _____ ay lu lu lu lu lu lu.

rallentando C *a tempo*

48

53

D

Dos tsi - ge - le iz ge - fo - - - rn

57

hand - len; Dos vet zayn dayn ba - ruf...

62

Ro - - zhin - kes mit mand - len...

67

E

Shlof - zhe yi - de - le, shlof... Mm...

72

Mm...

77

ritenuto Shlof - zhe yi - de - le, *a tempo* shlof...

colla voce *ritenuto* *a tempo*

ped.

82

(calmo) ay lu lu lu lu lu lu.

Competitions

Richard Stokes offers advice to singers on taking part in singing competitions, from stage presence to dynamics: and song choices, with particular attention to German repertoire

I recently returned from Heidelberg, the new venue for Das Lied competition, where I was a member of the nine-strong jury. This brain-child of Thomas Quasthoff was born in Berlin, where the first four biennial competitions took place from 2007 to 2015, and moved this year to Heidelberg, the delectable small town on the Neckar, the cradle of German Romanticism associated with the *Manessische Liederhandschrift* and *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and the home of the celebrated Heidelberg Fass.

Singing competitions are important for a variety of reasons. They enable highly trained young singers and pianists to be noticed by impresarios and agents, and to test their nerves on the recital stage before large and enthusiastic audiences. Competitions also compel duos to learn extensive new repertoire – there were 30 songs this year at Das Lied, the chosen composers being Schubert, Schumann and Wolfgang Rihm. The friendly atmosphere in Heidelberg provided the perfect background for these young artists to forge new contacts and friendships and, in their spare time, to enjoy the architectural and scenic splendours of the town, which was festooned in banners advertising Das Lied – not just in the immediate vicinity of the theatre but also in the central square. This was an extraordinary spectacle, made possible by the force of Quasthoff's passionate advocacy and the willingness of the civic authorities to support such a venture. Art song in crisis? Not in Heidelberg.

The members of a song competition jury do not always agree with one another – *viz* the often-protracted period of waiting that audiences have to suffer while the panel deliberates. We all hear music differently; and although there was unanimity in Heidelberg, there can often be disagreement about timbre, interpretation, stage demeanour and, even, dress. How best to prepare for a big song competition can also be contentious, and although I offer these remarks with personal conviction, they will scarcely be shared by everyone.

Prepare thoroughly – not just the songs for the first two rounds, but also those for the semi-final and final. Imagine, in other words, that you are going to win; and bear in mind that even if you do not win a prize, agents, impresarios and music club representatives might still engage you. Don't be paralysed by nerves, expect to be nervous – most singers and pianists are. Enjoy the competition.



Richard Stokes

Don't try to talk with the jury and don't talk about other competitors, which can spoil the atmosphere.

Dress appropriately. Think about what to wear. There's great sartorial diversity on show at many song competitions, but it's worth remembering that a recital stage is not a catwalk. Don't choose too outlandish an outfit. Look smart, but be comfortable. If you feel that a tie constricts, don't wear one. You can look elegant without neckwear. Don't wear tight-fitting clothes that reveal an undulating tummy every time you breathe. Practise your songs in your chosen outfit and footwear, especially if you intend to wear high-heeled shoes. Don't choose a song you have never sung before in public – you learn something important every time you perform live. Don't worry too much if you have a memory

lapse – even the greatest of Lieder singers suffer these.

Think about your entrance on stage and how you stand at the piano. A famous singer whispered to me in the jurors' gallery at a recent competition, 'He's no good'. 'How do you know?' I replied. 'You haven't heard him yet.' 'Yes, but look how he stands!' Deportment on stage is important. Some singers stand motionless, as though in a straitjacket, even when the music is emotionally overwrought; others wave their arms about like a windmill, for no good reason; hand and arm gestures are often wooden or irrelevant. Not every phrase needs to be acted out. Preludes and postludes, however, must be reacted (but not over-reacted) to. The opening line of Schubert's *Suleika I* runs: 'Was bedeutet die Bewegung?', but the song does not begin there. The soprano must react to the prelude with an alert expression of expectation. And postludes! A fine actress can bring tears to the eyes, as the pianist plays the closing bars of *Frauenliebe und -leben*, without uttering a single word. Whenever Fischer-Dieskau sang songs of great *Innigkeit*, such as *Nacht und Träume*, he would, with bowed head and with both hands on the piano lid, lean towards his pianist and commune. Then as the dark semiquavers sounded, he would turn to the audience and gaze up at the lights...

Avoid too many warhorses. Imagine a juror's dismay when he/she sees that *Erkönig*, *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, *Die junge Nonne* and *Du bist die Ruh* are to be performed umpteen times in the course of three days. Do not always choose the popular *Der Wanderer* ('Ich komme vom Gebirge her') and *Der Schiffer* ('Im Winde, im Sturme befahr' ich den Fluß') – the Schlegel settings with the same titles are equally fine. Instead of always opting for the first setting of Goethe's *An den Mond* (D259), learn the later one (D296) that does

not truncate Goethe's great poem and probes its meaning more deeply. Try not to monopolize the songs in the first two volumes of the Edition Peters Lieder series. Explore the gems of Volume 7, which include *Abendlied* (Claudius), *An den Mond* (D259) and those fresh-as-a-daisy Hölty settings from 1816: *Frühlingslied*, *Minnelied* and *Blumenlied* – all as irresistible as the better-known *Seligkeit*. And then consider those wonderful songs that did not make it into the Edition Peters volumes: *Das Lied vom Reifen* (Claudius), *Gondelfahrer* (Mayrhofer), *Herbst* (Rellstab), *Die Liebe* (Leon), *Nach einem Gewitter* (Mayrhofer) – all of which and many more can be found in the *Gesamtausgabe*. If you are programming Richard Strauss, do look beyond opp.10 and 27. There are equally good songs elsewhere in his oeuvre! Bass-baritones should try *Im Spätboot*, baritones *Gefunden* and sopranos the *Drei Ophelia-Lieder*.

Not all competitions prescribe set composers. If that is the case, choose some lesser-known composers and lesser-known songs. Do not always limit your choices to the English, French, German, Spanish and Russian repertoires. In particular, explore – but only if you are linguistically competent and confident – the Scandinavian repertoire: the songs, for example, by Grieg, Kilpinen, Rangström, Peterson-Berger and Sibelius contain many wonderful masterpieces. Spice your programme with comic songs. Too many singers are too serious too often; show that you have a lighter side. Wolf and Loewe (try 'Hinkende Jamben') reign supreme in the realm of comic song, but remember that Mahler was not always communing with his soul, and that Beethoven was not always high-minded and heroic – both composed wonderfully witty songs. And choose only those songs that you love.

Do not always end a recital with a virtuoso piece of vocal gymnastics – sopranos, please note. I recall how a few years ago the winner of the Kathleen Ferrier Award ended with a spellbinding rendering of Wolf's *Benedeit die sel'ge Mutter* – a performance that impressed the panel more than the soprano's stratospheric rendering of a Rossini aria.

Lieder is a keyboard art form. Pianists can impress, not just by their playing, but by their demeanour at the keyboard. Some are too visibly moved and stare entranced into space, as they play; others have a predilection, during witty postludes to songs such as Wolf's 'Begegnung', of swivelling round towards the audience, thus upstaging the singer; some ostentatiously mouth the poem. Singers and pianists should react to one another and, sometimes, be seen to react to one another – whenever there is genuine communication, the effect on the audience is palpable. Pianists should beware of feathering the keys in quiet songs – let the instrument sing. See that your *fortissimi* are not ugly. For some pianists, the markings *Schnell* and *Geschwind* are an invitation to play the music as fast as possible, and thereby display to the jury their virtuosic talent – with virtually no relevance to the poem. How many times have *Erlikönig* (*Schnell*) and 'Auf der Bruck' (*Geschwind*) been ruined by an insensitive pianist's breakneck tempi that compel the singer to gabble the text?

Beware of singing too quietly. Though the Wigmore Hall acoustic is kind to *pianissimi*, that is not always the case at other venues. A phrase, though marked *piano*, has to be energized and projected. Take 'In der Fremde' from Schumann's Eichendorff *Liederkreis*. The opening phrase, 'Aus der Heimat hinter den Blitzen rot', is marked

piano, and too often sung so quietly that the *pianissimo* at 'Aber Vater und Mutter sind lange tot' is impossible to bring off.

Read carefully a composer's tempo and expression markings. Songs marked *langsam* or *sehr langsam* need to be approached with caution. There is little point in singing *Litanei auf das Fest aller Seelen* slowly, if you lack the breath-control to do so. It can also be a mistake to sing it slowly, even if you are blessed with prodigious breath-control. A recent recording by a celebrated Lieder singer with a penchant for slow tempi lasted seven minutes and 55 seconds – an astonishing three whole minutes longer than the average duration for a performance of three verses from this song. It is more important to maintain the musical pulse and interpret the text than display virtuoso technique.

A word on *ziemlich*. *Ziemlich* is usually translated as 'rather' – unhelpfully since the English word is ambiguous. Etymologically, the German word originally meant 'appropriately' ('Es ziemt sich nicht' = 'it is not appropriate, not seemly'), although the word since the 16th century has also acquired a more general meaning. The *Ziemlich lebhaft* marking, therefore, of *Der Musensohn* can also mean 'appropriately vivaciously'; and since 'schweifen' in Goethe's first line means 'to wander', 'to roam', it's inadvisable to adopt a speed that sends the son of the muses hurtling through the landscape. And anyway, the end of the poem is tinged with melancholy – an image of the lonely Schubert springs to mind playing his music at the Schubertiaden while his friends dance and flirt the evening away. There is a sadness in the final bars, suggested by the *pianissimo* marking in the last verse, and an exquisite *ritardando* on 'Busen'.

No metronome markings are to be found on Schubert's manuscripts, and the few that feature on the printed scores were possibly added by the publishers. However, when a composer, such as Fauré, does suggest metronome markings, it's as well to remember that these are not set in stone. It's wise to ask yourself if such and such a speed tallies with your own interpretation of the song and poem – and your own technique. Crotchet = 69 seems very slow for *Le secret*, a poem whose three stanzas each begin with 'Je veux'. A quicker tempo makes more sense – and breathing much easier.

Hugo Wolf often insisted that the singer RECITE the poem before performing it – a practice highly recommended in rehearsal, and one of the best ways of interiorizing – not merely memorizing – a poem. It's impossible to appreciate the shape of a poem as it appears on a score. The versification is never evident, and most music publishers have a cavalier attitude towards a poet's punctuation, indentations, italicizations and inverted commas. Yet these can be crucial to an understanding of a poem. The lubricious feel of Mörike's *Der Gärtner*, for example, can only be fully relished if the italics are printed:

*Nimm tausend für eine,
Nimm alle dafür!*

The homo-erotic subtext of Strauss's 'Morgen!' can only be appreciated by reading John Henry Mackay's original title: 'Morgen! ...', where the ellipsis invites the reader to imagine a less homophobic era and suggests a time may come when gay men and women can live and love without persecution. Many poems, especially by Heine, are characterized by deflating half-rhymes which cannot be easily detected on the score but are crucial to

*Too many
singers are too
serious too
often; show
that you have a
lighter side*

the understanding of the original poem, as in Schumann's setting of 'Die beiden Grenadiere', where the final half-rhyme (blitzen/schützen) and faltering postlude suggest with wonderful economy the dashing of the patriotic dream. And can the beauty of Goethe's *Nähe des Geliebten* ever be fully savoured if the singer/pianist does not SEE the telling indentations at the start of every second line ('Vom Meere strahlt' ... 'In Quellen malt.:'; 'Du bist mir nah!' ... 'O wärst du da!')?

The more singers and pianists know about a poet (and composer), the better – *pace* the deconstructionists – they will be able to understand the music and poetry. It *helps* in performance to know that Mörike was a sexually suppressed priest, that Heine was both cynic and romantic, that Goethe was an indefatigable lover, that Mayrhofer was a possibly gay pessimist who would eventually commit suicide. As Schoenberg once wrote in an early essay on Mahler:

Nothing about a great man is irrelevant. In fact, every one of his acts is in some way revealing, and it would thus have been a great pleasure for me to watch Mahler put on his necktie, for I would have assuredly found it more interesting and instructive than observing how one of our musical big-wigs composes a 'sacred work'.

Strophic songs frequently test a duo's imagination. Singer and pianist must be prepared to depart from the dynamic and expressive markings of the first verse in each of the subsequent verses. The three verses of *Seligkeit* and four of *Nähe des Geliebten*, for example, are all different in mood, and the rests indicated by the composer do not always suit the sense and grammar of the words in every stanza. It is perfectly in order – perhaps even advisable – for the singer to ignore the rests in phrases such as 'Jedem lächelt traut eine Himmelsbraut' and 'lächelt Laura mir einen Blick'. And how refreshing it would be if duos were to *pause* for a second before the final verse in each song, and then begin it *piano*, instead of belting out 'Ich bin bei dir' and 'Lieber bleib ich hier'. Without imagination, you are doomed. A singer might have the most wonderful voice in the world, peerless pronunciation and idiomatic diction; pianists might be digitally dexterous and command a palette of wonderfully varied colours – but that is not enough to move hearts.

Whether you be soprano, mezzo, tenor, countertenor, baritone or bass, you must be singer, actor and painter rolled into one. To succeed at the highest level, you need a good technique and voice, an ability to act such theatrical songs as *Belsazar* without going over the top, and a sufficiently varied tonal palette to colour words. But never at the expense of musical line. Beware of over-colouring. In the phrase 'Und ruh' in einem stillen Gebiet' from 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen', for example: it is perhaps gilding the lily to colour both 'ruh' and 'stillen'. Speech marks are an invitation to change timbre to characterize the speaker, be it a bird ('Es kam ein Jungfräulein gegangen'), branches ('Komm her zu mir, Geselle') or miller ('Euer Werk hat mir gefallen').

Many of the singers in Das Lied competition – and many fine international Lieder singers – did not study the German language either at school or university, yet manage to sing in idiomatic and faultless German. Is anything more required from a purely linguistic viewpoint? Yes. Unless the poem can be inhabited and the syntax understood, correct pronunciation can count for

surprisingly little. Take care with the definite article which, when stressed, can be used demonstratively and mean 'that/those' instead of 'the', as in these three examples from *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*: 'Die beiden Wörtchen schließen/Die ganze Welt mir ein'; 'Die Eber, *die* schieße, du Jägerheld' and 'Kommt mir *der* Tag in die Gedanken,/Möcht' ich noch einmal rückwärts sehn'.

Consider the grammar of separable verbs, as in 'Intermezzo', the second song of Schumann's *Liederkreis* op. 39:

*Das sieht so frisch und fröhlich
Mich an zu jeder Stund'.*

The German language abounds in separable verbs, and 'ansehen' is a good example; the prefix ('an') and the infinitive ('sehen') belong together, and should not be split up by a pause for breath. In the first verse the singer has no option, due to Schumann's suspect prosody and the rest between 'fröhlich' and 'mich an'. But when the verse is repeated at the end of the song, there are no such rests, and singers must decide where to breathe. After 'fröhlich' is ungrammatical. Many singers breathe, perfectly correctly, after 'mich an'; but my own preference is for a breath after the first 'jeder': 'Das sieht so frisch und fröhlich mich an zu jeder/jeder Stund"', which enables singers to muster all their emotion for the repeated 'jeder Stund'.

But breathing does not have to be grammatical, and there are countless examples in the Lieder repertoire where it is better to breathe than almost run out of breath in the interests of grammatical sense. Two melismatic phrases spring to mind: 'Allliebender Vater' at the end of Schubert's *Ganymed*, and 'Um uns ward Elysium' at the end of Strauss's 'Das Rosenband'. In long phrases that, grammatically, should not be split up, it is perfectly permissible to do so, either for physical reasons (the necessity to breathe!) or for reasons of expressiveness. Take the final line of Strauss's 'Morgen!': 'Und auf uns sinkt des Glückes stummes Schweigen'. If you do not have sufficient reserves of breath to sing the phrase in one at a slow tempo (and most singers don't), you can breathe wherever you like *as long as you make it work*. Some breathe after 'uns'; others after 'sinkt'; others after 'des Glückes'; others after 'stummes'. Fischer-Dieskau in his 1970 recording with Gerald Moore breathes after 'uns' and 'Glückes' – and it's wonderful.

There is no RIGHT way of performing a song, no RIGHT place to breathe, no RIGHT tempo, no RIGHT dynamic. Attend to the composer's markings, yes, but then perform the song in a way that also mirrors your own feelings and understanding of the poem. Listen to the great recordings, past and present, of, say, Schubert's *Litanei auf das Fest aller Seelen*, and you will experience a huge variety of different interpretations. Above all, sing and play with personal conviction, and be prepared to take emotional and musical risks.

Singers and pianists are usually disappointed if they exit after the first round but they should bear in mind that they have the opportunity to discuss their performances in an invaluable feedback session, during which the panel can advise them on technique, interpretation and general musicianship. And it's worth thinking about how many great singers with flourishing international careers have never won a single competition, and how many prize-winners have sunk without trace.

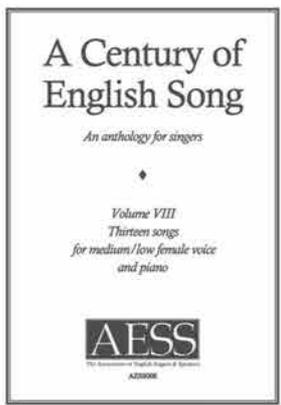
Richard Stokes is Professor of Lieder at the Royal Academy of Music and author of several books on French, German and Spanish song. The Penguin Book of English Song: Seven Centuries of Poetry from Chaucer to Auden was published in 2016.

Breathing does not have to be grammatical

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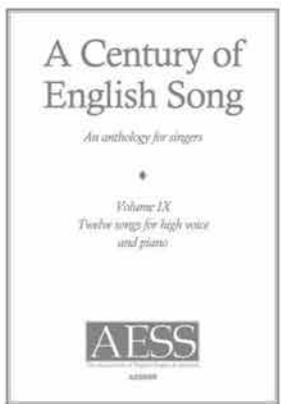
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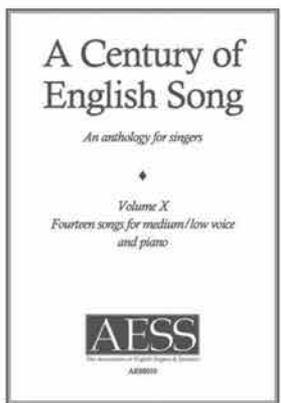
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The musical-theatre voice

Bryan Husband discusses the commonality of technique in musical theatre and classical singing, and draws attention to the three main vocal qualities of musical theatre

Prima la musica o le parole? Musical theatre is perhaps more focused on 'parole' than is opera, or any kind of 'classical' vocal writing. Recitative, in oratorio, opera, sections of the art-song repertoire, and even non-vocal music, from Monteverdi to the most contemporary classical vocal writing, is closer to the musical theatre style than is opera, the most obvious form to be compared to: it is syllabically set, at a speech tempo, non-repetitive. In Strauss's *Capriccio*, the Countess concludes that if she chooses one lover (poet or composer) she will effectively lose the other. Do we have to make the same exclusive decision? I would argue 'no', emphatically, in any form of theatre that is musical.

When one considers how many novels or plays have been set to music – Wedekind's *Spring Awakening* (a 19th-century German play), *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, numerous other Shakespeare plays, Goethe's *Faust*, Hugo's *Les Misérables*, for example – it would appear that in the Beginning was The Text, set to music. But does the music always enhance the text? That may be a contentious, impossible question to answer, as much of the argument would be subjective. But on the other hand, how many pieces of music for voice(s) were music first, text added later? It appears that the general consensus is that music-first pieces have lyrics that are less memorable. But this is all 'off the track' (of the subject of this article): if one considers the fact that music has always been written with 'the masses' in mind – the passions, early opera, madrigals, masses, to cite just a few examples – then it is no great journey to acknowledge that 'music theatre' has changed in style significantly during the 120 years or so of its existence, maybe more than comparable 'classical' (or 'legit': the unfortunate term coined by the MT world!) repertoire.

I have no wish to present an argument for/against MT/'legit', nor to provide a history of the development, but instead to work through some ideas of how MT repertoire can be challenging for singers, especially those who have been working in 'legit' repertoire and style and are then confronted with demands for 'different' sounds, some of which are less 'beautiful' than those previously considered acceptable, and some of which sound 'undesirable' at least, 'harmful' at most.

I was asked to present a day's workshop for the central area of AOTOS on precisely this topic; I entitled it 'Music Theatre: it's



Bryan Husband

here to stay!' and subtitled it 'styles and techniques appropriate to MT'. As far as I understood the brief, this was for singing teachers, some of whom will be more comfortable in 'traditional' singing styles – 'legit' – and technique – 'bel canto'. My own background is training at RCM, and a career spent on stage in opera houses, oratorio, recital, concert; around 20 years ago, I began teaching at a well-known drama school, specialising in the 'triple-threat' performer – one who is equally comfortable, and skilled, in acting, dance and singing – in repertoire ranging from operetta (sometimes opera) to rock musicals, such as *We Will Rock You*, and more contemporary pieces such as *Kinky*

Boots and *Hamilton*, in US and UK accents.

Dance training in drama schools is often ballet-based – 'classical' ('legit', if you like) as this is considered the 'best' basis for all dance technique. Likewise, a 'classical' vocal technique has long been considered the 'best' basis for all vocal technique, focusing, as it does, on breath, body connection ('support') and resonance. MT style is 'simply' that – an adaptation of *musical* components more than technical issues. The caveat is, of course, that some MT style necessitates changes – additions, really – to the bag of tricks a 'legit' singer would, should, have. However, these additions are merely matters of incorporating sounds that many of us use in everyday communication: speech, breathy, belt – we talk, we whisper, we yell ('exclaim' might be a better verb).

In more detail, 'speech' quality is heard much more in MT than in 'legit' – but not exclusively so: consider fast recitative in Mozart or Handel, for instance, which is most effective in 'speech quality'; MT speech quality is achieved where the fast, recitative tone is sustained even in slow-moving, more lyrical songs. 'Whisper' is effective for certain conditions, such as intimacy, fear, excitement. 'Belt' is reserved for the moments of 'heightened emotion' – the climax to a big power ballad, the moment of extreme joy, rage, despair. These three qualities are the tools for our day-to-day verbal expression, so why should they not be applied in singing, when the music style is more contemporary, more immediate, more direct? This is what we hear in pop, and, let's face it, a lot more pop music is heard, and by more people, than 'classical' singing – whether we like this fact or not!

Speech This is most easily accessed by applying a glottal onset (we might have learnt the term ‘glottal stop’ or even ‘glottal attack’ in our training) on words that begin with a vowel (obviously), particularly at the beginning of a phrase. ‘I picked up your shirts this morning’*. Pure speech quality has no vibrato, no laryngeal tilt, no legato; it is, however, clear and direct, easily understood and heard.

Breathy This is most easily accessed by applying an aspirate onset on words beginning with vowels (usually, but not always). ‘You took my life away’*; this often sounds like ‘hyou’. Pure breathy quality may not have vibrato or tilt; it suggests, strongly, specific emotions, but has little projectory power. Modern sound engineering, of course, manipulates amplification so that an audience hears the effect and the text through artificial, mechanical means.

Belt This vocal quality is most easily and safely accessed with the glottal onset. Pure ‘belt’ may not have vibrato or tilt, and is unlikely to have a volume ‘knob’ – it is either ‘on or off’ – another challenge for the sound engineer! ‘Live in this pain’*. Once ‘belt’ is applied in a song, there is ‘no going back’, except by contrasting tone significantly, e.g. by dropping to breathy, maybe speech qualities. The alternative is to maintain the ‘belt’ through several phrases: this can be boring, worrying or excruciating for a listener (even though an audience may – often – applaud this as a vocal ‘feat’).

The ideal rendition of an MT song is one where qualities are varied, probably in an ‘arc’, i.e. quiet to loud, possibly followed by a *diminuendo* to quiet again. In classical singing, we are less likely to hear the same sense of shape – we would hear different colours, and volume changes within phrases, for example.

Considering the current demands placed upon MT performers, it is essential that graduates are equipped with a technique that can handle all these, and have a clear insight into stylistic differences. Performers are expected to be able to switch between styles spanning more than 120 years – and ‘legit’/classical singing, of course, spans a much wider chronological reach, but we rarely expect a singer to be employed in all of these styles (early music, Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Judith Weir, and so on) AND genres (music hall, operetta, contemporary, pop, rock). There was an article in *The Stage* (8 May 2017) where some of the ‘blame’ for hearing ‘legit’ rep embellished with ‘riffs’ was placed with Mariah Carey-type singers. Artists themselves do need to know what constitutes the appropriate style. After all, actors want to be employed – and employed for as much of their working/performing life as possible.

Singers such as Renée Fleming, Bryn Terfel, Dawn Upshaw and Julian Ovenden have for some time sung ‘cross-over’ repertoire, with varying degrees of success (in terms of style, certainly). One can hardly fault the vocal technique of any of these singers, but sometimes the *style* has not been adjusted authentically, resulting in a performance that is not fully accepted as ‘correct’. Singers such as Audra McDonald and Kristin Chenoweth – known mostly as MT singers/actors – sing in a very good ‘legit’ style: clean, even tone, great range, good breath-control; on balance, I would venture to state that they are more effective in ‘legit’ than the previously-mentioned ‘legit’ singers are in MT.

Posture is another stylistic/technical aspect that can be adjusted for MT. The ‘noble’ (according to *bel canto* guidelines) or ‘open’ posture, accepted as desirable in ‘legit’ singing, is not always appropriate or necessary in MT: after all, we talk and whisper in a variety of postures, safely, so in a musical genre where ‘naturalism’ is arguably more crucial than in opera, for instance, because of the necessity to produce tone that is consistently appropriate to the style, it is highly desirable that a vocal quality appropriate to the actor is applied. So, in ‘speech’ quality, any posture that is appropriate to the character and context works; in ‘breathy’ quality, likewise; only in ‘legit’ is there a need to adopt the traditionally-desired posture, where a wider range, generally, is accessed, specifically the ‘upper’ register. ‘Belt’ requires a posture that is open, firmly grounded, free – just that which we would adopt if we needed to yell or exclaim loudly to express danger, fear, extreme joy, for instance.

An interesting point to consider and experiment with is the effect that accent has on vocal style/technique. I notice that when I adopt a specific accent – usually US or cockney – my tone and style also adjust. Both these accents, being more ‘twangy’ (read ‘squillo’, ‘focused’, etc), raise the larynx, generally, to a higher position than in an English (RP) accent. Switching accents (a British art song in cockney or US, an American MT song in RP) can be very informative for a singer, where s/he notices the physiological adjustments applied unconsciously – let alone amusing! This can be related to physiological changes that occur when singing in Russian or Cantonese, for instance.

In terms of vocal styles, I believe that there are three basic divisions: ‘legit’, ‘contemporary’ and ‘rock/pop’. In this context, ‘legit’ constitutes opera, art song, some music hall, classical MT (Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern); ‘contemporary’ encompasses repertoire from around 1930/40 up to the present date; ‘rock/pop’ is self-explanatory. Of course, the edges are far more blurred than I have suggested, and we hear nowadays ‘legit’ repertoire sung in a ‘contemporary’ style, and ‘contemporary legit’ musicals being premiered.

In conclusion, I believe that we as singing teachers are often challenged in MT repertoire, style and technique. Much of this challenge is aesthetic, subjective, and comparative. Many of us come from a ‘traditional’, ‘legit’ background and training process, where consistency of tone and the

long-term ‘health’ and ‘safety’ of a voice are paramount. When we are confronted by styles that incorporate unfamiliar vocal – sung – sounds, there is a tendency to judge on aesthetics instead of on appropriateness (to the character and context). Even when there is a vocal cost – maybe a risk that vocal longevity and/or purity of tone may be compromised – I suggest that the important aspects to consider are whether a) there is another way of producing the same effect, b) the cost outweighs the risk, c) the performer is aware of these considerations. Finally, then, I believe that it is not our duty to judge, only to ensure that a performer knows how to achieve safe, effective tone and the alternatives, but ultimately to be an engaged, effective, brave singing actor.

Since training as an opera singer at RCM, Bryan has performed extensively in classical vocal music, and has now taught MT for 20 years in the UK’s best-known drama schools

* The three sections of text used as examples here come from ‘With You’, from ‘Ghost the Musical’

Composer notes: Richard Vella

Richard Vella composes in a diverse range of musical languages, from classical through to pop. Here he provides the background to one of his early songs, *Ryokan*

The poem *Ryokan* was written by the Australian poet Michael Dransfield (1948–1973). It is based on the Japanese Buddhist monk Ryōkan Taigu (1751–1831) who wrote haiku poetry. The words are evocative of haiku imagery and its syllable structure. In my setting of Dransfield's poem to music I repeat the first verse, which would have been considered a poetic crime by the author, if he were still alive, due to the beautiful open-ended structure of his poem.

The song was written in 1977, just more than three years after Dransfield's death. It is one of my early songs, many of which were written for voice and piano.

The songs from this time were all written while I was a student of composition. Each song focused on a specific compositional task. In *Ryokan* I focused on rhythmic counterpoint in the piano part with the voice and piano parts having equal prominence. In many ways the song is a piano solo bookended by the poem's beginning and final verses. Because the poem's haiku-like quality is so meditative, the piano solo suggests a meditation interlude between the singer's two entries.

I chose the Japanese pentatonic scale called Hirajoshi (B♭-C♭-E♭-F-G♭), which can be expanded to form the B♭ Phrygian scale (B♭-C♭-D♭-E♭-F-G♭-A♭). This static but beautiful collection of notes enabled me to focus on rhythmic counterpoint and not harmonic development. As I wanted to have a floating quality in the rhythm I did not use time signatures. Instead the musicians are to count not in beats but durations. This avoids any sense of an unconscious downbeat.

Other than the impressionistic arpeggiation on the word 'rain' there is very little word painting or direct word/music representation in the song. One could say that the piano solo represents the sense of aloneness in the universe, especially as it starts after the lines 'sings brightly but alone'. The song relies more on the representation of one's internal world when contemplating one's existence. For me this is similar to when we observe a beautiful moment such as a flower petal dropping or a sunset. It is this metaphysical dimension that the music seeks to address.

As with any song that I have written, the challenge is why add music to something that is already complete in itself? I can only answer this by saying that all my songs are sonic interpretations of my personal reading of the poems. They can only be my interpretation and in doing so, are not definitive, simply my 'spin' on the words. They do not claim to be the absolute hermeneutic interpretation of these poetic texts and I can understand why



Richard Vella

some poets do not like their poems being set to music. A musical setting pins the poem down to that composer's interpretation. This is why, for me, reading poems on the white page is far more rewarding than hearing someone read them out aloud. So with that I also am guilty of 'pinning down' someone else's poetry.

Sometimes my settings are abstract, at other times analogous or ironic to the text. Like many composers I am particularly interested in classical rhetoric and the devices rhetoric can bring to musical forms. For example, the palindrome is a particular favourite of many composers such as Machaut's *Ma fin est mon commencement et mon commencement est ma fin* (my end is my beginning and my beginning is my end).

Not just for emotive reasons, rhetoric can bring an intellectual richness to a musical setting. Peggy Lee's version of *Fever* is a wonderful example of analogy: as her fever rises so too chromatically does the music! Elliot Carter's *A mirror on which to dwell* is a beautiful and elegant setting of six poems by Elizabeth Bishop using rhetorical devices to determine each song's form.

I have written many pop songs where the music totally supports the words and in combination create an emotional whole. However, it is the application of rhetorical devices that I find the most interesting in songwriting. This does not escape the challenge mentioned earlier. Is it possible to go beyond interpretation to create a new statement using an existing text written by someone else?

I hope you enjoy *Ryokan*. It is deeply personal in its quasi abstract presentation and, while it was written 40 years ago, it still 'speaks' to me.

RICHARD VELLA

- From: Australia, Maltese descent
- Studied at: La Trobe University (Australia) with Keith Humble and Graham Hair
- Works at: The Australian Music Centre
- Other vocal works: many original songs and lyrics plus numerous settings of poets (for example: D.H. Lawrence, Michael Dransfield, Juan Ramon Jimenez, Basho, Rabindranath Tagore, Alfred de Musset)
- Publishers: The Australian Music Centre; Currency Press (Sydney, Australia)
- Where to hear his music:
<https://soundcloud.com/user-314331261>
- More about Richard Vella:
<http://newcastle-au.academia.edu/RichardVella>

Ryokan

Words by Michael Dransfield

Music by Richard Vella
(1977)

Sempre legato

At the

p

This system contains the first three measures of the piece. The vocal line begins with a whole rest in the first two measures, followed by a half note G4 in the third measure. The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and ties, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes.

4

win - dow__ rain the

mf 6

This system covers measures 4 through 7. The vocal line has a half note G4 in measure 4, a quarter note A4 in measure 5, and a quarter note B4 in measure 6, followed by a quarter rest in measure 7. The piano accompaniment includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and a sextuplet (6) in the right hand in measure 5. Triplet markings (3) are present in measures 6 and 7.

8

spar- row__ fea-thers puffed out__ sings bright-ly__ but__ a -

This system covers measures 8 through 11. The vocal line has a quarter note G4 in measure 8, a quarter note A4 in measure 9, a quarter note B4 in measure 10, and a quarter rest in measure 11. The piano accompaniment features triplet markings (3) in measures 8, 9, 10, and 11.

Music © 1977 by Richard Vella
Text © 1972 by Michael Dransfield

11

- lone

Piano solo

This system contains measures 11 through 14. Measure 11 features a vocal line with the syllable '- lone' and a piano accompaniment with a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sustained bass line. Measure 12 continues the piano accompaniment with a sixteenth-note triplet. Measure 13 is marked 'Piano solo' and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand. Measure 14 continues the piano solo with a sixteenth-note triplet.

15

This system contains measures 15 through 17. Measure 15 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand. Measure 16 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand. Measure 17 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand.

18

rallantando rit.

This system contains measures 18 through 20. Measure 18 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand. Measure 19 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand. Measure 20 is marked 'rallantando rit.' and features a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand.

21

a tempo rit.

This system contains measures 21 through 23. Measure 21 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand. Measure 22 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand. Measure 23 has a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand.

My hands make black marks on white the

stringendo

a tempo

spar-row pink marks on grey at the win - dow_

♩ = 78

rain

(8) - - - |

8va - - - |

rit.

8va - - - |



Autumn Conference Keeping an Open Mind

St Paul's Girls' School, London

30 October 2016

Christopher Goldsack: Keeping an Open Mind

Our day began with a presentation by Christopher Goldsack. His title *Keeping an Open Mind* seemed a positive topic that most of us can relate and aspire to. In fact, the day's organizer, Ivor Flint, admitted that the theme had been the inspiration for the conference. I was very pleased to see that, along with most other presenters, he'd brought along some young singers to illustrate his points. This is always a good idea as it immediately brings ideas and concepts to life. It's always lovely to see the wonderful rapport teachers and students have, and Goldsack and his two young performers were no exception.

Goldsack had a lot to say to us in just 40 minutes. He'd come prepared with well-organised PowerPoint slides and delivered his message with lots of energy and enthusiasm. He talked about the need to teach students a free and flexible technique that would underpin their learning for the future, regardless of what genre they chose. He reminded us that no student comes to us as a completely blank slate and that we need to make sure we use this positively rather than dismissing their interests and prior learning.

He strongly recommended classical singing as the genre most suitable to construct a successful technique. This promoted a good range (head voice), legato line, diaphragmatic breathing,

abdominal support and simultaneous onsets. He also mentioned the Accent Method as a highly effective way of teaching breathing.

While Goldsack's presentation was filled with well-thought-out information, he used terms that not everyone would have understood. 'Belt', 'chest', 'head', to name just a few, could easily be misunderstood and would have benefitted from more explanation or qualification. As someone who has attended many Estill courses, did he mean 'speech quality' (singing with the larynx in a modal or neutral position) when referring to 'chest' and what did he mean by 'belt' when referencing



Christopher Goldsack

music theatre? This is an ongoing problem with singing teachers and the new language and terms that spring up as we benefit from new technology and the science behind the teaching.

Goldsack's two young singers, Georgia, a year 9 student, and Emily, year 13, sang with confidence and ease. I particularly enjoyed their duet from *Wicked*. They moved smoothly from their classical repertoire to MT and popular with an excellent sense of style and confidence. This was a thoroughly enjoyable and informative session.

Jenny Morgan

David Henson: Teaching Music Theatre singers

This was an excellent distillation of the obstacles to be found on the way to a successful career in musical theatre. David Henson talked with great authority about the lack of a formal preparatory education at secondary level for aspiring performers. What do they at the London College of Music ask of auditionees? Three A levels? Certainly that gives no indication of what is needed in a candidate. Although there are useful pathways that can be taken in the early years like youth music theatre groups (Stagecoach and the like), amateur groups, the practical exam system, private tuition, there simply is no formal established academic/theoretical system in place. And, it goes without saying, singing alone just doesn't cut the mustard. Dancing and acting skills are just as important.

What do they look for in an audition? Henson listed: imagination, an ability to create magic in the performing space, and a sense of communication and dialogue with the audience the minute the candidate walks in. With 900 to 1000 candidates chasing around 20 places, the bar is placed pretty high, and they



David Henson

are keen to make the system fair: which is why he advocated an audition panel rather than a single listener. He gave the apposite warning that if an institution is happy to take candidates unseen and unheard – i.e. without an audition – we should be asking serious questions about whether students should accept a place at such an institution.

Henson then highlighted and listed all the dangers of the profession. These included: the sheer numbers of prospective students, the unhelpful emphasis on product rather than process, and on 'sound' rather than 'sense', the dangers of imitation (itunes, Youtube etc.) and replication of recorded performances (there was only ONE Judy Garland), and the influence of the media in general. Finally, he noted that there was a rather shocking lack of awareness of the genre in its wider context.

To illustrate his points, he brought with him a student, Jack Ballard, who gave an excellent display of how NOT to do it, as a platform for a lively discussion with the audience. He then followed on by giving a most engaging and imaginative performance of the same song. The song, after all, has to be the centerpiece of the audition. It must display an authenticity of style, expression, emotion and story-telling ability. We as an audience must be invited into the world of the song.

Liza Hobbs

Janet Shell: Empowering the Peri – Structuring a Lesson

A recent ISM webinar addressed the concerns of peripatetic teachers that their work in schools might dry up in the current educational climate. It was somewhat pessimistically called 'Career Planning and Career Change'. Janet Shell presented a far more optimistic outlook, not shying away from the issues confronting beleaguered school music departments, but setting out tools to empower the peri through a clear understanding of the benefits we bring.

Teaching in schools appeals as it offers a ready supply of students, the opportunity to be part of a team, accelerated learning opportunities through performances and an established process for exam entry. Peripatetic teachers share many of the skills of formally trained teachers but, being free from the internal politics of the classroom, they can bring a sense of perspective when they visit.

In comparing the roles of classroom and peripatetic teacher, Shell expressed sympathy for teachers in schools who fear being considered a cause for concern if things do not go according to plan. In contrast, the peri can see mistakes as opportunities, which is a useful contribution to the teaching of resilience and confidence. Shell often sees students 'light up' with a sense of possibility. She uses positive language, avoiding the words 'can't', 'don't', 'must', 'should', 'ought' and 'but'.

In structuring a lesson, Shell was clear that the initial welcome sets the tone. She advocated sharing the learning task with the student. A variety of warm-ups was recommended, including exercises linked to songs being studied. Shell recommended clarifying, later in the lesson, how an aspect of the warm-up impacted on the way the student sang a passage, as the singer is unlikely to have made that connection for themselves.

Shell reminded delegates to look at pieces where specific practice had been asked for in the previous lesson. She suggested



Janet Shell

putting new content near the start and finishing with something familiar, so the student leaves with a positive bounce. We were reminded to consider the classroom teacher when sending students back to class – on time and cheerful.

Shell understood the challenges faced by peris, including a sense of working in isolation, often in unloved teaching spaces, with visitor status. A couple of issues especially stood out, which Shell recommended addressing with heads of department. Not being included in the dissemination of sensitive information causes problems for teachers who are often working one-to-one with students. Shell was also adamant that a peri should never be made to feel afraid to knock on a classroom door to collect a student, whose parents have, after all, paid for the enrichment. An empowered peri can engage in proactive conversations with department teachers and feel comfortable proposing improvements. Delegates particularly liked the suggestion of a staff photo board.

School environments are hectic and pressurised but Shell reminded us that peris are valued. She recounted a student telling her, 'You were the person who believed in me'.

Melanie Stephenson

Veronica Veysey Campbell: Teaching aspiring classical singers

Opening her presentation with a clip from America's Got Talent, Veronica introduced the main theme of her session, namely the need for teachers to ground the aspiring classical singer in slow, steady, appropriately-paced technical and musical development. She stressed the importance of guiding students towards realistic outlets for performance and competition, naming the Association of English Singers and Speakers as an example of a wonderful platform.

Veronica then effectively invited us into her teaching studio, having brought with her three talented young singers, each at a very different stage of his/her vocal journey.

With the two younger students, Veronica worked through a short lesson, running each student in turn through appropriate exercises before inviting them to sing a piece, accompanied by Leanne Singh-Levett at the piano. With 13-year-old Nathaniel, ex-head chorister of St Paul's Cathedral, whose voice is beginning to change, Veronica talked about the importance of teenage boys singing appropriately, comfortably and without strain throughout the period of voice change. She stressed the importance of working gently into the lower register as it unfolds, keeping the voice easy, free and light, using comfortable and undemanding repertoire within a limited range, as appropriate to each individual singer. We were treated to a beautiful performance of Nathaniel singing Britten's 'That Yonge Child'.

James, a Year 13 tenor currently studying at the Royal College of Music Junior Department, was a great example of a student who needed to be patient with his singing and the development of his voice. He had come to Veronica already consumed by the desire to be a fully-fledged operatic tenor but had been encouraged to take a step back and to work with exercises and repertoire appropriate to his age, to build a safe technique and sound musicianship. James gave us lovely performances of Warlock's *Pretty Ring Time* as well as Quilter's *Now sleeps the Crimson Petal*.

Throughout both lessons, Veronica filled us in with a great amount of interesting supporting material whilst guiding the student to maintain good postural alignment, appropriate air flow, a released jaw, and a released and appropriately young sound.

The third student had been invited to come and talk about her vocal journey. Rose, now on the postgraduate course at the RCM and studying with Rosa Mannion, had started studying with Veronica from the age of 15 having previously struggled with tension issues,



Veronica Veysey Campbell

despite having success as a young singer. Rose told her inspiring story of great courage and dedication and talked of the enormous importance of having learnt to trust the sensations of singing as much as the sound. She gave a heart-warming performance of Dorabella's 'Smanie implacabili' from *Così fan tutte*.

It was a delight to witness the lovely sense of trust and teamwork that Veronica had established with all three singers – and to hear such super results.

Ansy Boothroyd

Nicholas Gibbins: Vocal health

At the end of a practical and interactive day, Nicholas Gibbins, consultant otolaryngologist, gave us 'the science bit' with an excellent session on vocal health. Following videos demonstrating extreme voice use, Gibbins took us right back to the first emergence of the larynx and its evolution over millions of years, a process which I could never do justice to by describing here. Nor could I replicate the dry wit with which he delivered it. This part of the talk concluded with Gibbins explaining that, of the muscles attached to the larynx, only one opens the vocal folds, and it is this imbalance between opening and closing that can cause strain and tension problems.

There were a number of valuable pieces of information that Gibbins returned to during his presentation. Below are the main points.

A professional singer has the same issues to face as a professional athlete. Both need to warm up, stretch, warm down and recover, post-exercise. We're pretty good at the first two, but the latter two need a bit more thought and discipline. Warming down brings the voice back to a relaxed 'normal' start, and post-exercise recovery keeps you ready for the next time you need to sing. Mr Gibbins suggested wine and pizza might seem attractive after a performance but nuts and fruit are a better combination. He pointed out that Pavarotti never did a concert without a bowl of fruit in his changing room.

Take a team approach. Make sure you know who to go to when a problem arises. And Gibbins was at pains to say it is very much a case of 'when' not 'if'. As singers, we have coaches, physios and psychologists in the form of teachers and voice coaches; we are essentially our own nutritionist, ensuring we eat well and at the right times (eating late is a big cause of reflux) and keep properly



hydrated. Then there is the doctor or surgeon for when something goes wrong.

What can go wrong, though? Gibbins detailed a list of things that do, and some of the misconceptions or misdiagnoses that can happen. In particular, nodules are far less common than one might think. Research performed in his clinic found just eight out of 87 singing patients with voice problems have nodules. He also noted that ENT surgeons can easily mistake a cyst on one vocal fold with bruising on the other for nodules. He did say, however, that a diagnosis rarely comes down to just one thing, with cysts or muscle imbalances in the larynx occasionally being the result of a problem away from the larynx and neck, for example in the lower back.

The bottom line for enabling a prolonged singing career is to start looking after your voice young, get to the nuts and bolts and avoid painting over the cracks. If you believe there's a problem, get it checked!

Ben Sawyer



Nicholas Gibbins

You are a member of EVTA

By virtue of our membership of AOTOS, we are all members of the European Voice Teachers Association (EVTA), and are encouraged to attend all EVTA activities.

The last EVTA event was the first 'Jewels of European Vocal Pedagogy' (JEVOP), which took place in Celja, Slovenia, on 16/17 of September 2016. This was an initiative of Martin Vacha, by which a Member Association issues an invitation to all EVTA members to share an aspect of its own particular vocal pedagogy.

The next EVTA conference (called Eurovox 2017) will be hosted by the Swedish Association, in conjunction with the International Congress of Voice Teachers (ICVT) conference, ICVT 2017, entitled The Future of Singing. This will be held in Stockholm, 2-6 August (www.ICVT2017.com for details)

Eurovox 2018 will be hosted in the Hague, the Netherlands, from 30 August to 2 September 2018.

You can keep in touch with EVTA activities through its website (www.EVTA-online.eu).

Paul Deegan

AOTOS Overseas and EVTA Representative

Membership News

From the Administrator Beck Laxton

In April this year, we added the 700th member to the AOTOS database, which was an exciting moment! Jessa Liversidge of York was number 700, and we sent her some back issues of *Singing* magazine as a prize. Membership currently stands at 705, and of those we have:

- 622 standard members
- 25 student members
- 18 Emeritus members
- 21 corporate members
- 5 reciprocal corporate members

However, this is also the time of year when we put into limbo the accounts of members who haven't paid their subscription for the year; as I write, there are 58 of them, including four student members, but subscriptions continue to trickle in.

We now have 380 members signed up for our direct debit scheme, which makes renewals much easier – thank you! This year 134 members paid by Paypal, which also helps us as the database updates automatically. For the 15 who paid by standing order and 22 by bank transfer, I have to look through all the credits to our bank account, so we are trying to persuade members to use other methods. Even cheques are slightly easier, and 42 members used that method. This was the first time I had handled renewals since I took over membership duties from Heidi Pegler in July last year. There were a few blips as I worked it all out and persuaded the database to co-operate, but hopefully next year will be easier!

Welcome to the following new members

NORTH

Emma Bradnum, Bradford
Hilary Joan Dickie, Glasgow
Heather Machelles Gillibrand, Mirfield
Stewart Hankinson, Preston
Rob Lines, Stockport
Jessa Liversidge, York
Patrick Morgan, Altrincham
Sarah Rhodes, Hull
Nikki Turner, Manchester
Sally Cathrine Woan, Manchester
Jennifer Rose Wright, Wigan

CENTRAL

Andrew Ashwin, Lutterworth
Carol Brittle Khan, Derby
Shirley Goddard, Malvern
Gill Hawkes, Leicester
Rachael Histed, Burton upon Trent
Dale Kynaston, Telford
Annette Preece (student), Cannock

SOUTH WEST

Roger Bickle (student), Paignton
Rhiannon Brown, Hengoed
Daniele Calimera, Cardiff
Penny Carpenter (student), Cardiff
Diana Dracea (student), Winchester
Kerenza Hurr (student), Hayle
Cerys Purser, Chipping Campden
Alice Simmons, Marlborough
Louisa Wilde, Exeter

SOUTH EAST

Abigail Gostick, London
Alison Cooke (Stamp), Oxford
Amelya G. Goldy (student), Croydon
Andrew McIntosh, London
Brier Alexandra Rigby Dames (student), Cambridge
Claire Taylor, Haywards Heath
Genevieve Arnold, London
Jackie Harrison, Hook
Jeni Bern, Kingston Upon Thames
Jenny Morgan, Highbury
Katharine Williams, Addlestone
Leigh Martyn Thomas, Colchester
Lucienne Suter, Billingshurst
Lucy Mary Thomas, Carshalton
Lucy Sneddon (student), Guildford
Mairi Armstrong, North Finchley
Melanie Bradley, Walton-on-Thames
Paola Cuffolo, Oxford
Penny O'Connor, London
Philip John Spendley, Canterbury
Rob Archibald, West Norwood
Scott Harrison, London
Wendy Pickles, Hove
William Branston (student), Blackheath

OVERSEAS

Allison Bryan, Versoix, Switzerland
Vanessa Menezes Bernardes, Rueil-Malmaison, France
Shona Louise Seck (student), Co Mayo, Ireland

CORPORATE

Rhinegold Publishing has joined us as a reciprocal corporate member.

In memoriam

One of our most faithful members, **Edna Broadbent**, died after a short illness on 25 May. A founding member of AOTOS, she was a regular delegate to conference, and many of us remember her kindly and wise presence at these events. Her sons Michael and Andrew wrote: 'She was 94 so, by anyone's reckoning, it was a very good life, with lots of laughs and music along the way. I think

that Edna touched a lot of people with her knowledge, passion and love of music and the voice and we hope that her legacy will live on in the Association, membership of which she loved.'

Composer, choral director and singing teacher **Robert (Bob) Latham** died on 3 April. Based in the south west after taking a Certificate in Education at Bristol University, Robert gained a fine reputation for his music teaching both in and out of the classroom. He became an examiner for Trinity College, London and was also in demand as an adjudicator for music festivals. Founder Director of the Bristol Cathedral Girls' Choir from 1993 to 2002, he then taught for three years in the Bristol Academy of Performing Arts; he also directed the national award-winning Bristol Schools' Chamber Choir from 1993 to 2008. He was a member of AOTOS for many years, as well as artistic adviser for the Association of British Choral Directors. In recent years he became recognised as an authority in upper-voice choral technique and wrote many wonderful arrangements and original compositions for upper voices.

Barbara Large (also known as Barbara Bines), an Emeritus member of AOTOS, died on 9 February. Her funeral was held in Newport, Essex.

Pods

I have started emailing pods without co-ordinators to ask for volunteers, and am also emailing those that have new members. Eventually, I should email everyone: if you're keen to get your pod going, do ask me to move you up the list. You will find advice and tips in the members' section of the website at <https://aotos.org.uk/members/pods/>. If you use Doodle to find a convenient date, and meet in a local pub or café, it should be pretty simple to set up an initial meeting. Do let us know how you get on!

A big thank you to our new pod co-ordinators:
Jennifer Maslin: Tunbridge Wells pod, South West
Lorraine Mahoney: Wiltshire pod, South West
Philippa Hobson: Dorset pod, South West
Ann Hudson: London North pod, South East
Jennifer Bourke: Northern Ireland pod, North
Jane Maudsley: Lancashire pod, North

Facebook

Our members-only group on Facebook now has 180 members, and there have been lots of lively discussions and plenty of interesting posts including many job opportunities. The group is invisible to other Facebook users, so anything you say is in complete confidence. It also means that you can only join if we send you an invitation: email me at administrator@aotos.org.uk to ask for one. If you're reluctant to use Facebook, I can also direct you to an article by Ian Anderson Gray that explains

how to stay invisible.

Emails

AOTOS Secretary Margaret Hopes had a query from a member who hadn't had details of our Summer Conference, and it turned out that she wasn't signed up for AOTOS emails. So during April and May I emailed members who had opted out from our various email lists. There are four lists:

- The first is just for AOTOS administration, such as a reminder to pay your subscription, and obligatory emails such as information about the AGM. That is the only one you can't opt out of.
- **AOTOS national news and events** lets us send you details of our conferences and area days, and news about members; if, for example, a longstanding member dies, we will share details of their funeral.
- **AOTOS local news and events** is one we have not used much in the past. But I am now emailing every pod to let members know when there's a new member in their area, to try to find a co-ordinator if they pod doesn't have one, and to remind pods to share details of any successful meetings so we can all gain inspiration. So if for any reason you don't want to be included in those emails, you can opt out.
- **Non-AOTOS news and events** covers any email that is not directly about AOTOS, and is mostly about events that members or corporate members are running. A recent email from the ABRSM about changes to the singing syllabus also came under this category.

If you'd like to change what emails you get, go to aotos.org.uk and click on **Your Profile** at top right, then log in using your AOTOS email address and your password (if you've forgotten this, click on the **Forgotten password** link). On the page **Your AOTOS profile**, scroll down to Your Privacy and click on the button Edit Privacy Settings. The third item, Email Correspondence, lists the three options. Check each box to opt out, or leave them unchecked to get emails, then click the grey button at the bottom of the page to update your profile. If all this is too much, you can also just email me at administrator@aotos.org.uk to tell me what you want, and I will make the changes for you.



Members of Council, at the November 2016 council meeting at St Paul's Girls School



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