DEVELOPING THE YOUNG DRAMATIC SOPRANO VOICE AGES 15-22

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation provides information on how to develop the young dramatic soprano, specifically through more concentrated focus on the breath. Proper breathing is considered the single most important skill a singer will learn, but its methodology continues to mystify multitudes of singers and voice teachers. Voice professionals often write treatises with a chapter or two devoted to breathing, whose explanations are extremely varied, complex or vague. Young dramatic sopranos, whose voices are unwieldy and take longer to develop are at a particular disadvantage for absorbing a solid vocal technique. First, a description, classification and brief history of the young dramatic soprano is discussed along with a retracing of breath methodologies relevant to the young dramatic soprano's development. Second, specific breath methods will be presented by the author and third, three singing experts, Angela Meade, Luana DeVol and Dolora Zajick present their breathing/vocal methods, providing specific exercises, which are included in the appendix. The appendices also include graded repertoire for the young dramatic soprano and an IRB Exemption Letter.

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DEDICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Angela Meade's Vocalises

Luana DeVol's Vocalises

Dolora Zajick's Soprano Vocalises

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to provide information on how to develop the young dramatic soprano voice. Very little information exists on the young dramatic soprano, leading to misclassification and misunderstanding. In Barbara Doscher's *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice* she writes,

> Many a big-voiced soprano has sung as a mezzo into her mid-20's, only to find that her voice was misclassified. The retraining period can be extended and frustrating because the upper third of her voice has been inactive for so long. As a result, sometimes the voice never reaches its full potential.[1]

My interest in the young dramatic voice is quite personal. I had a 14-year-old high school student come for lessons with her mother several years ago. The student sang a folk song in her chest voice at the first lesson, and I knew we would need to begin at the very beginning, as I normally would, and work on posture, breath, onsets, vowels, and head voice. As she progressed, and it was astonishingly fast, this rather large instrument revealed itself. McKinney asserts that "When techniques of posture, breathing, phonation, resonation and articulation have become established…the true quality of the voice will emerge."[2] This student also seemed to have an understanding of the voice of a much more mature student, and learned more about singing than some do over the course of many years. When she turned 15, I encouraged her to audition at the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, a "haven for big voices."[3] We drove to

[1] Barbara M. Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice,* 2nd ed. (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), 196-197.
[2] James McKinney, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults: A Manual for Teachers of Singing and Choir Directors* (Elk Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. 2005), 107-108.
[3] "Institute for Young Dramatic Voices," accessed on September 21, 2020, https://iydv.org/.

California, and I listened to her audition from outside the audition room. Weeks later we received notice that she was accepted; she blossomed in the program.

Although I never had come across a voice of that size at such a young age, oddly enough, I began to meet other high school students and college undergraduates that also had large instruments. I noticed that as soon as these students would begin to find their support, sometimes this voice would emerge that was not like other students of their same age group. I began to wonder if perhaps there were more young, "dramatic" voices hidden in the world, who possibly were not being identified. In Clifton Ware's *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy*, he writes: "Dramatic voice types are fairly evident by the time a student reaches the age of 21 or 22, or possibly earlier."[4] In an interview with iCadenza, world-renowned, dramatic mezzo-soprano, Dolora Zajick, asserts that "The average age [the dramatic voice] emerges is 17 [for women] and for men it's 20. They might not use [the voice] to its maximum—an untrained voice won't have as much volume—but the actual size [is there]."[5] In Miller's *Training Soprano Voices*, he states:

> Research on laryngeal structure and function supports the supposition that the range and timbre of an individual voice is in large part determined by the construction of the larynx itself (particularly the length and thickness of the vibrating vocal folds), by the relationship of the larynx to adjacent structures, and by the length and configuration of the vocal tract.[6]

After my student was invited back several years in a row, I was invited to teach at the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, and was appointed the Director of Opera Discovery, which is a program at the Institute that specializes in young dramatic voices ages 15-17. Since that first experience with a young dramatic voice, it has become quite clear that the young dramatic

[4] Clifton Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy: The Foundations and Process of Singing* (Boston: McGraw-Hill1, 1998), 193.
[5] Dolora Zajick, interview by Julia, iCadenza, December 24, 2010, iCadenza interview with Dolora Zajick - You Tube.
[6] Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 15.

soprano can be identified and successfully developed. I argue that the young dramatic voice can be developed specifically through more concentrated focus on the breath. When Lenore Rosenburg, the former Associate Artistic Administrator of the Metropolitan Opera and the former Director of the Metropolitan Lindemann Young Artist Program, was asked about proper training for young singers, she said, "First and foremost, they must have a secure vocal technique. The technical aspect that is most often missing in the vast majority of singers I hear is a reliable breathing technique."[7] In Marvin Keenze's article "Teaching Breathing," he writes, "There are those who believe that the proper respiratory action is the result of other influences; therefore, they do not isolate breathing skills or even mention it at all."[8] Michael Philip Davis, voice teacher, stage director, and one of Hope Koehler's interviewees in her dissertation writes, "Breathing is not being taught. I think it's the single biggest problem in all the repertoire."[9] Every voice type has to work on the breath; however, due to the fold thickness in dramatic voices, the breath is even more important in their development than in other voice types, leading to more challenges in supporting the instrument. Scott McCoy states in *Your Voice: An Inside View*, "It turns out that big vocal folds require more airflow to maintain vibration than do smaller folds…."[10]

First, this doctoral document will begin by defining the various dramatic sopranos (*Dramatischer Koloratursopran, Jugendlich-dramatischer Sopran, Dramatischer Sopran, Charaktersopran/Zwischenfachstimme* and *Hochdramatischer Sopran*) through use of the *Fach* system and tracing the dramatic soprano's historical development. Second, breathing

[7] Robert C. White and Lenore Rosenberg, "Reality Check! Training for an Operatic Career," *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 2 (November/December 2007), 190.
[8] Marvin Keenze, "Teaching Breathing," *Journal of Singing* 61, no.4 (March/April 2005), 371.
[9] Hope Koehler, "The Effects of the Perception of Voice Type on the Practice and Pedagogy of Singing Opera," (DMA diss., University of Kentucky, 2003), 38.
[10] Scott McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 3rd ed. (Gahanna, Ohio: Inside View Press, 2019), 143.

methodologies from treatises (written as early as the mid–16th century), from schools of singing and from individual pedagogues are highlighted. Third, with such little information available on the development of the young dramatic soprano voice, I will discuss and present specific exercises of breathing methodology I use with young dramatic sopranos and interview three world-renowned singing experts that also teach voice: Angela Meade, a *Jugendlich-dramatischer Sopran/Dramatischer Koloratursopran*, Luana DeVol, *a Hochdramatischer Sopran*, and Dolora Zajick, a *Dramatischer Mezzosopran*. These three experts share their breath methodology and singing journeys, asserting what breathing/vocal method is most effective for them with examples of specific vocalises that they use for themselves and for students. In addition to the interviews, two appendices will be included: vocalises of the three singing experts and a graded repertoire anthology for the young dramatic soprano ages 15-22.

Singing Experts

I chose these singing experts based on several factors: they possess a dramatic voice, currently perform or performed consistently at the top opera houses in the world, teach voice students, and received training at a major training program, and/or direct an elite training program for dramatic voices. All three experts had completely different journeys to singing: Angela Meade won 57 competitions and trained at the Academy of Vocal Arts, making her debut at the Metropolitan Opera in the role of Elvira in Verdi's *Ernani* at age 30; Luana DeVol believed for years that singing would just be an avocation, making her European debut at age 41 as Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio* at the Staatsoper Stuttgart, and Dolora Zajick, who started taking lessons at 22, won the Bronze Medal at the 7th International Tchaikovsky Competition at age 30 after completion of two music degrees at the University of Nevada, Reno with Ted Puffer and continued training at the Manhattan School of Music. After acceptance into the Merola

Opera Program, Zajick was groomed for the role of Azucena, making her debut at San Francisco Opera at the age of 34. Although I have introduced Meade, DeVol and Zajick, these short biographies will provide more detail:

Opera News describes Angela Meade as "the most talked about soprano of her generation."[11] Meade is the winner of the Metropolitan Opera's 2012 Beverly Sills Artist Award and the 2011 Richard Tucker Award. In addition to Ms. Meade's 57 vocal competition wins, including the 2007 Met Council Auditions (which is documented in *The Audition*), she was the winner of the first prize in both the opera and operetta categories of the Belvedere Competition.[12] Meade's 2019-2020 season includes her role debut of Elisabetta in Verdi's *Don Carlo,* a role and house debut of Verdi's *Aida* in Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, her portrayal of Bellini's *Norma* and her house debut in Rossini's *Ermione* at Napoli's Teatro di San Carlo, the role of Elisabetta in Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux,* Imogene in Bellini's *I Pirata* and the title role of Verdi's *Anna Bolena*. Highlights from Ms. Meade's 2018-2019 season include her portrayals of Leonora in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and Alice Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff*. In 2017-2018, Meade's season included her Live in HD broadcasts, where she sang the title roles of Bellini's *Norma* and Rossini's *Semiramide*.[13]

According to *Classical Singer Magazine,* Luana DeVol is recognized as "one of the great leading-lady voices in Europe," and was awarded "Singer of the Year" twice by *Opernwelt*, a German opera magazine.[14] DeVol has performed in almost every major opera house, including La Scala, where she sang the role of Leonore in Verdi's *Fidelio*. DeVol has performed the role of

[11] Angela Meade, accessed November 1, 2020, https://angelameade.com/biography/.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Gil Carbajal, "Luana DeVol: An Unconventional Career," October 1, 2007, https://www.csmusic.net/content/articles/luanna-devol/ (accessed October 20, 2020).

Brünnhilde from Wagner's Der Ring und Nibelungen at the Bayreuth Festival, the Vienna State Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin. She also has sung the title roles in Puccini's *Turandot* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Most recently, DeVol maintains a thriving private studio and is the Director of the American Wagner Project, a prestigious training program that provides intensive training for future Wagnerians. Those selected receive coaching and instruction in role preparation from DeVol and John Parr, who is Head of Music Staff at the Deutsche Oper Berlin.

The legendary Dolora Zajick made her Met debut as Azucena in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in 1988. According to the *Latin Post*, "Her Azucena is undoubtedly the best of modern times, and it just seems to get better and better with age."[15] The *New York Times* writes, "It is difficult to imagine anyone other than Dolora Zajick as Azucena, as she has been projecting the part exceptionally for decades. She simply owns the role of Azucena (as well as that of Ježibaba in *Rusalka*) and shows no sign of wear on her marvelous deep mezzo voice."[16] Zajick is also well-known for her outstanding interpretations of Amneris in *Aida* and Eboli in *Don Carlo*. Zajick has received the Opera News Award, has been honored by the Giulio Gari Foundation in 2009, received the Ortrud Award in 2011 from the Committee for the Marjorie Lawrence Awards for Opera Excellence and was presented with a golden anvil by General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, Peter Gelb, for her "definitive" interpretation of Azucena.[17] In 2006, Ms. Zajick also founded the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, which provides instruction from world–class experts in the industry to young, talented dramatic voices. According to *Classical Singer Magazine*,

> [Zajick] saw that there was a serious lack of dramatic voices in the emerging generation of singers. Many of the dramatic singers that she did see had problems that should have

[15] Dolora Zajick, accessed September 15, 2020, https://www.dolorazajick.com/2015/09/28/dolora-continues-to-own-the-role-of-azucena-in-the-mets-il-trovatore/.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

> been dealt with much earlier. In some cases it was almost too late to correct ingrained bad habits, and she wanted to try to remedy the situation….[18] The institute's mission is to guide these singers with special voices until they are ready for training programs offered by major opera companies.[19]

Some of the most popular classes at the Institute are Soprano Class, Mezzo Class, Tenor Class and Baritone Class. In each Soprano Class, Zajick addresses a multitude of technical issues, allowing each singer to experiment with the technical challenge in front of the class and allowing the students to hear one another. She is a firm believer in the power of listening to others especially those that possess the same voice type. One of the most famous singing teachers of the nineteenth century, Mathilde Marchesi, also taught many of her lessons in group settings.

[18] Maria Nockin, "A Fresh Look at the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices," January 1, 2014, https://www.csmusic.net/content/articles/a-fresh-look-at-the-institute-for-young-dramatic-voices/ (accessed October 20, 2020).
[19] Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

DESCRIPTION, CLASSIFICATION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DRAMATIC SOPRANO

The dramatic soprano has been described in many interesting ways. Robert Rushmore, author of *The Singing Voice*, quotes Blanche Marchesi, a Wagnerian, a notable voice teacher and daughter of the renowned singing teacher Mathilde Marchesi: "The dramatic soprano is the rarest voice produced by nature…It is like a new-born Newfoundland dog, clumsy, heavy, shapeless…The heavier and bigger the voice the more carefully must it be trained."[20] Rushmore continues with his own description,

> The dramatic soprano has about the same range as the *spinto*: This voice must be able to soar over great Verdian ensembles or the heavy Wagnerian orchestra as well as to sustain literally hours of singing in one evening. The three Brünnhildes, Isolde, Elektra, Leonore in *Fidelio*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and *Norma* are all usually sung by a dramatic soprano, though the last three are also undertaken by singers with slightly lighter and smaller voices.[21]

In the *Art of Singing*, Miller writes,

> A …dilemma may exist for the young, female singer with a sizable vocal instrument. Because she has more depth of quality than most of her soprano peers, she is told by some that she is a mezzo-soprano, while other authorities insist she is a soprano. Her problem is that the young soprano with an ample instrument often has not yet established sufficient ease in the upper range to manage the higher lying soprano literature. She is currently a 'short' soprano who may early be falsely classified as a mezzo."[22]

In the *Art of Singing and Voice Technique*, Fuchs states,

> A Wagnerian soprano should have the richness and fullness of a mezzo. Another characteristic common to both is that as a rule they develop later than their lyrical counterparts…The future Brünnhilde or Isolde may at first be classified as a mezzo-soprano or even a contralto. But female Wagnerian singers often have a workable head register from the very beginning, in addition to a rich middle register.[23]

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[20] Robert Rushmore, *The Singing Voice*, (New York: Dembner Books, 1971), 60.
[21] Ibid., 61.
[22] Richard Miller, *The Art of Singing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 201.
[23] Viktor Fuchs, *The Art of Singing and Voice Technique*, (New York: London House & Maxwell, 1964), 146-147.

According to the *Opera Singer's Career Guide*, there are 25 main *Fach* categories; nine of the 25 are soprano categories.[24] The guide defines *Fach* as "specialty or category" and explains that it not only

> refers to the system…to cast operas, [but] it also refers to a voice type or category—not just soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, but what 'kind' of soprano, alto tenor and bass….In Europe the *Fach* system is used to hire and fire singers, organize the season, ensure that there are enough ensemble singers to cover all roles, and even to balance the budget.[25]

Several factors to determine *Fach* are also listed; for example, range, size of the voice, timbre, physical appearance, age and experience and frequency of performance.[26]

For the purposes of this paper, only the dramatic soprano categories will be discussed. We begin with the *Dramatischer Koloratursopran* (Dramatic Coloratura Soprano), which is described in the *Opera Singer's Career Guide* as "…high, bright, flexible [and] capable of considerable power in the upper range."[27] The range is from C4–F6 and roles such as Donna Anna from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Leonora from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* are included as examples of this voice type.[28]

The *Jugendlich-dramatischer Sopran* (Young Dramatic Soprano), is described in the guide as a

> young-looking dramatic soprano with a powerful and beautiful voice capable of long lyrical phrases but of a greater volume capability than the lyric soprano…Also called a spinto soprano or a German dramatic soprano, *Jugendlich* has no adequate translation in English. It literally means 'youthlike.'[29]

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[24] Pearl Yeadon McGinnis, *Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System*, ed. Marith McGinnis Willis (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/lib/unlv/detail.action?docID=662270 (accessed November 7, 2020).
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

The range is from C4–C6 and roles described for this voice type are Desdemona from Verdi's *Otello*, the Countess from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro,* Agathe from Weber's *Der Freischütz,* Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and Elisabeth in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*.[30]

The *Charaktersopran/Zwischenfachstimme* (Character Soprano) is described as a voice with "a bright, metallic [sound] with the power to portray dramatic characters…[It is] also called a between-category voice…this *Fach* category does not require an easy top range…nor does it exemplify the warm beauty of sound preferred for Mozart roles."[31] The range is from A3–B5, and roles include the title role from Bizet's *Carmen*, the role of Mélisande from Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Margret from Richard Strauss's *Feuersnot*, and Hexe from Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*.[32]

The *Dramatischer Sopran* (Dramatic Soprano) is described as a "powerful, brilliant voice, physically and vocally imposing on stage…This soprano must have a voice that can cut through heavy orchestrations and the ability to sing effectively for long periods while always commanding the attention of the audience."[33] The range is from G3–C6 and some of the roles listed are the title role of Puccini's *Turandot*, Leonore from Beethoven's *Fidelio,* the title role from Richard Strauss's *Arabella,* the title role from Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, the title role from Verdi's *Aida* and Sieglinde from Wagner's *Die Walküre*.[34]

The last dramatic soprano category is the *Hochdramatischer Sopran* (High Dramatic Soprano). This voice, according to *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*,

> [is] the most powerful and mature of soprano voices, with a smooth line, beautiful color, effortless volume and endless staying power…The *Hochdramatischer Sopran* is almost

[30] Pearl Yeadon McGinnis, *Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System*, ed. Marith McGinnis Willis (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/lib/unlv/detail.action?docID=662270 (accessed November 7, 2020).
[31] Ibid.
[32]Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

> exclusively a German category [and] has the same power in the voice as the dramatic soprano, but more of it and must be capable of singing for a longer time without becoming tired vocally or physically. This voice must be as powerful in the middle and low ranges as in the top.[35]

The range is from G3-C6 and roles include Brünnhilde from *Die Walküre, Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, Isolde from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, the title role of Wagner's *Elektra*, Venus from *Tannhäuser*, Senta from *Der fliegende Holländer* and Ortrud from *Lohengrin.*[36]

In Michael Scott's *The Record of Singing*, he asserts that generally four voice categories (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) were in existence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[37] During this time, the term soprano often referred to the castrato voice; however, there were female sopranos, but their ranges were much closer to a modern-day mezzo-soprano.[38] By the nineteenth century, Scott claims two influences changed the course of singing:

> The first, the growing size of the orchestra; the second, the emphatic accents called for by Romantic melodrama. In order to accommodate these…the technique of the old Italian school was compromised…One of the earliest and finest artists of the new age, Isabella Colbran, was also the wife of Rossini…To our ears, the Rossini orchestra seems very small…but it did not seem so to his contemporaries….[39]

The *Cambridge Companion of Singing* also mentions the operas of Meyerbeer and the new requirement of 80 to 100 players for the orchestra. Moreover, opera had become extremely popular with all social classes, and larger theatres were built to hold thousands. As described by Rosselli, "Volume was now called for."[40]

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[35] Pearl Yeadon McGinnis, *Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System*, ed. Marith McGinnis Willis (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/lib/unlv/detail.action?docID=662270 (accessed November 7, 2020).
[36] Ibid.
[37] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume I: To 1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), x.
[38] Robert Cannon, *Opera* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 389.
[39] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume I: To 1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), 12.
[40] John Rosselli, "Grand Opera: Nineteenth-Century Revolution and Twentieth-Century Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. John Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 101.

It is in the early nineteenth century that we see the rise of the coloratura and also that of the dramatic soprano.[41] According to Scott, the dramatic soprano's development was influenced by the French, dramatic tenor, Gilbert-Louis Duprez, who was the first to sing a high C from chest voice.[42] Earlier tenors sang their upper range in falsetto, or as Scott explains, "…[with] an artful blending of registers in which the head voice predominated."[43]

The dramatic soprano thrived in works by Halévy and Meyerbeer, whose compositional style allowed the dramatic to linger in the middle register and also move through the whole range.[44] Cornélie-Marie Falcon, the French dramatic soprano who studied with several teachers at the Paris Conservatoire, including Adolphe Nourrit[45] (student of Manuel García II), became synonymous with this type of repertoire even though she did not sing much of it.[46] Falcon created the role of Valentine in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*; a role described by Scott as one that would "…challenge…every dramatic soprano for the next three-quarters of a century."[47] There are three soprano roles in the opera, and in certain early editions of the opera, Meyerbeer differentiates among the three. Scott writes, "In a note which appears at the end of certain early editions of the score, Meyerbeer gives some guidance in the manner of casting the roles, in order to contrast the colours of the different types of soprano voices effectively. It was an example that hastened further voice classification…."[48]

The Germans also produced notable dramatic soprano voices. Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient was adored by Wagner; he composed the roles of Adriano in *Rienzi*, Senta in *Der*

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[41] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume I: To 1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), 15.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 13.
[44] Ibid., 16.
[45]Cornélie-Marie Falcon, accessed September 21, 2020, https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/falcon-marie-cornelie.
[46] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume I: To 1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), 13.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

Fliegende Holländer and Venus in *Tannhäuser* for her.[49] Although Schroeder-Devrient was known more for her extraordinary acting than for her singing, she paved the way for many dramatic sopranos such as Lilli Lehmann and Teresa Tietjens.[50]

The Italian dramatic soprano emerged at the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of the verismo school.[51] Italian dramatic sopranos, such as Eugenia Burzio, sang Vivetta in Cilea's *L'Arlesiana,* the title role in Puccini's *Tosca,* Maddalena de Coigny in Giordano's *Andrea Chenier* and the title role in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. Another notable Italian dramatic soprano, Giannina Russ, sang Abigaille in Verdi's *Nabucco* and Elena in Verdi's *I Vespri Siciliani*.[52]

[49] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume I: To 1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), 16.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 157.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY OF

BREATHING METHODOLOGY

Although today it appears that the young dramatic soprano often does not receive proper breath training, this was not the case in the seventeenth through the early twentieth century. In tracing the history of breathing methodology, as teachers began to use the *appoggio* method in the nineteenth century, the dramatic soprano emerged.[53] In looking back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when castrati reigned, a breathing technique called *sostegno* was in fashion.[54] The tenor and professor, Bernardo Mengozzi (1758-1800), refers to this method in his manual, *La Méthode de chant du Conservatoire de Musique* (*The Singing Method of the Music Conservatory*), which was written for music courses at the Paris Conservatoire.[55] According to Talia, in the *sostegno* method, "the singer…flatten[s] the body and then raise[s] it again quickly."[56] Talia states that the author Mori confirmed this method of, "retracting the abdomen [and] inflating the lower thorax and sustaining the chest."[57] The *sostegno* method actually was a close approximation of the technique used by the castrati.[58] Although *sostegno* is quite different from *appoggio*, there are certain similarities, such as the noble posture and the controlled exhalation.

Besides Mengozzi's description of *sostegno*, previous treatises had similarities to his. For example, Johann Agricola (1720-1774), a student of J.S. Bach, who translated Pier Tosi's (1647-

[53] According to Sell in *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy* (24), *appoggio* "means to lean on, support or sustain the voice."
[54] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 139.
[55] Ibid., 138.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 139.
[58] Ibid.

1732) treatise into German, *Anleitung zur Singkunst* (*Instructions for the Art of Singing*), instructs singers to "continue singing in one long breath without ever forcing."[59] He also prescribes not exhaling "forcefully [or] frequently, especially in the detached divisions…holding back the air as much as possible," and adds that the inhalation should be silent and slow.[60] Tosi, a castrato soprano and well-known singing teacher, discussed vocal technique in his treatise, but did not provide much detail on breathing; however, Agricola's addition of a preface provided much insight.[61] According to Julianne Baird, Agricola's preface to Tosi's treatise was "The first…useful book on singing to appear in German, the [preface] addressed a serious lack in the musical life of Agricola's countrymen."[62]

Agricola's description of "holding back the air" is similar to Giovanni Mancini's (1714-1800), author of the treatise *Pensieri e riflessioni pratiche sopra il canto figurato* (*Practical Thoughts and Reflections on Figurative Singing*). According to Talia, "Mancini wrote the finest book on the art of singing in the late Baroque period, a work that generously divulges the secrets of the great castrati. His is simply the most complete vocal training programme of all the early manuals…."[63] Talia also provides a description of Mancini's breathing philosophy:

> In order to obtain perfect control of the breath, the student will conserve his breath with good economy that in his progress will accustom the bellows of the voice to regulate, graduate it and hold back the breath at will, it will render him master of taking, re-taking and letting go of the voice, and not to take the breath only following the necessity of insensible pain and fatigue. I do not deny that this will cost him hard work at the outset, but this hard work will put him in the state of singing with facility and pleasure in every kind of style; and acquiring thus the robustness of the chest and facility in passing

[59] Johann Friedrich Agricola, *Introduction to the Art of Singing* by Johann Friedrich Agricola, trans. and ed. Julianne C. Baird (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 39-40.
[62] Johann Friedrich Agricola, *Introduction to the Art of Singing* by Johann Friedrich Agricola, trans. and ed. Julianne C. Baird (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[63] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 127.

> gradually from one note to another, he will see himself able to make an impasto of the voice so perfect that it will be said: 'He sings from the heart.'[64]

Many years after Mengozzi describes the *sostegno* method, other treatises continue to use similar descriptions. Luigi Lablache (1794-1858), a celebrated bass who studied with the same teacher as the outstanding tenor, Manuel del Populo García I (1775-1832), writes, "To take a good breath, be sure to compress the abdomen, inflating and swelling the chest to the limit. That position should be held as long as possible, then the air should be allowed to dissipate slowly."[65] García I, also a renowned composer and teacher, who produced three famous children: Maria Malibran, Pauline Viardot and Manuel Patricio García, had this to say about breathing, "…never commence singing in a hurry, always take a breath slowly and without noise, which would otherwise be unpleasant to those who listen and injurious to the singer…."[66] He also advocates, as did most teachers of the day, to practice the *messa di voce*: "…the tone must be connected as piano as possible gradually increasing its force to the utmost, returning again by the same method to the extreme piano, without renewing the breath."[67]

It was the French phonetician, Louis Mandl (1812-1881), who first disputed this *sostegno* method, leading to the establishment of a new method, which Mandl called diaphragmatic/abdominal.[68] Talia writes, "…[the diaphragmatic/abdominal method] would soon overthrow the respiration of the old school *sostegno* in favor of the modern method we have today, the *appoggio* system."[69]

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[64] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 129-130
[65] Ibid., 177.
[66] Berton Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1989), 16.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 142.
[69] Ibid.

It was García's son, Manuel Patricio García (Manuel García II), the reigning teacher of the nineteenth century and inventor of the laryngoscope, who became one of the advocates of this new system. Initially, however, his breathing techniques were very similar to the *sostegno* system.[70] Talia writes, "García advocates not only a high chest position, but…he also [prescribes] an immediate withdrawal of the stomach, an action which limits the descent of the diaphragm with a consequential constraint on the effectiveness of inspiration."[71] Talia provides García's description from his *Traité complet de l'art du chant en deux parties* (*Full Treatise on the Art of Singing in Two Parts*):

> To inspire effectively, the head must be held erect, shoulders straight but without tension and the chest must be held free. Then with a slow and regular movement, the chest is raised and the stomach is withdrawn. From the moment you begin these two movements the lungs will dilate until they filled with air. If the lungs are filled gradually and smoothly without jerks, they can retain the inhaled air for a considerable time. In order to facilitate the penetration of the lungs by the air, it is necessary however, to spread the intercostals and lower the diaphragm . . . If once having achieved this inspiratory position, one were to allow the intercostals to collapse and the diaphragm to raise, then, the lungs would be compressed from all angles, and just as a sponge in one's hand, would instantly expel the air previously inhaled. It is therefore prohibited to collapse the intercostals or allow the uncontrolled rise of the diaphragm . . . The mechanism for expiration is the reverse of that employed for inspiration. and the diaphragm. Any sudden jerks, movement of the chest, the precipitous collapse of the intercostals or sudden withdrawal of the diaphragm will allow the instantaneous loss of breath.[72]

Talia states that these principles of breathing are "in line with the ideals of the *sostegno* system, but not completely in line with the modern breathing physiology or the yet to be developed *appoggio* system.[73] With Gilbert Duprez's high C in chest in Rossini's *William Tell*, Talia argues

> García [II] [was]… aware that times were changing, and Verdi and Wagner were altering the face of opera forever. He knew that the relatively high breathing taught by the Old School was completely inadequate with respect to the requirements imposed by Duprez's new method…His response to the situation was a new edition of his treatise, in which he

[70] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 206.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 205.
[73] Ibid.

> modified his ideas on registers…and altered his breathing technique to accommodate the new musical and stylistic circumstances.[74]

The following is García's description of his modified breathing method, which Talia states is a "good description of the then developing *appoggio* method":[75]

> The lungs, in order to receive exterior air, need for the walls of the chest to separate to provide for them a space where they can dilate. To this increase in capacity is added the lowering of the diaphragm . . . From the moment when you begin these two movements, the lungs dilate until they are filled with air. This double procedure, on which I insist, enlarges the envelope of the lungs, first at the base, then at the circumference, and allows the lungs to complete all their expansion and to receive all the air which they can contain. To advise abdominal breathing exclusively would be to reduce by one half the element of strength most indispensable to the singer, the breath. The mechanism of expiration is the opposite of that of inspiration. It consists of exerting a slow and gradual pressure on the lungs filled with air. Jerks, sudden movement of the chest, the precipitous fall of the ribs, and the abrupt relaxation of the diaphragm would let the air escape instantly.[76]

Moreover, two other world-renowned pedagogues were advocating for this new method: Franceso Lamperti (1813-1892) and his son Giovanni Lamperti (1839-1910). Although neither Franceso or his son, Giovanni, were performers, both wrote treatises and taught many students that became famous. Francesco Lamperti produced at least two dramatic sopranos: Sophie Cruvelli and Teresa Stolz. Lamperti's preferred method was the diaphragmatic/abdominal breathing, and one of Lamperti's most important contributions to pedagogy was his description of what he called *la lotte vocale* (French, *la lutte vocale*) or vocal struggle. It was his belief that the vocal struggle was essentially the *appoggio* technique.[77] According to Sell, "Some musicologists have suggested that the term *appoggio* was not used before the time of Lamperti. The full phrase *appoggiare la voce* means to lean on, support or sustain the voice…."[78] Lamperti

[74] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 208.
[75] Ibid., 209.
[76] Ibid., 216-217, 33-34.
[77] Ibid., 262.
[78] Karen Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 24.

defined *appoggio* as "The support afforded to the voice by the muscles of the chest, especially the diaphragm, acting upon the air contained in the lungs."[79] Talia shares a more elaborate description of *appoggio* by Lamperti:

> To sustain a given note the air should be expelled slowly; to attain this end, the respiratory (inspiratory) muscles, by continuing their action, strive to retain the air in the lungs, and oppose their action to that of the expiratory muscles, which, at the same time, drive it out for the production of the note. There is thus established a balance of power between these two agents, which is called the *lutte vocale*, or vocal struggle. On the retention of this equilibrium depends the just emission of the voice, and by means of it alone can true expression be given to the sound produced.[80]

Lamperti asserts that those students who do not sing with the *appoggio* technique do not sing.[81] In his *Daily Exercises in Singing*, he advises singers to practice the exercises or those that are similar, every day:[82] "I recommend their employment, in particular, to soprani and mezzo-soprani singing a dramatic repertory; because this kind of [exercise], if they do not wholly prevent, will assuredly for a long time delay vocal deterioration."[83] Lamperti's first exercise consists of repeated notes with each note marked marcato in his *Art of Singing*. Similar to Francesco Lamperti, Giovanni Lamperti believed that the breath was the most important aspect of singing. Giovanni references Mandl often regarding breathing, and still recommends his father's *lutte vocale*.

The prominent teacher, Mathilde Marchesi, and student of García II, produced many world-renowned singers, including a number of dramatic sopranos: Emma Eames, Etelka Gerster, Emma Calvé, Gabrielle Kraus, Ellen Norgreen (Gulbransen) and Anna Redecke.[84]

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[79] Francesco Lamperti, *The Art of Singing* (n.p.: Belwin Hills, 1986), 10.
[80] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 262.
[81] Ibid., 264
[82] Francesco Lamperti, *Daily Exercises* (n.p.: Kalmus, n.d.).
[83] Ibid.
[84] Kandie K. Kearley, "A Bel Canto Tradition: Women Teachers of Singing During the Golden Age of Opera," (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1998), 150.

Marchesi's daughter Blanche was also a dramatic, and sang the roles of Brünnhilde, Isolde, Elisabeth and Santuzza.[85] Marchesi expressed that the inspiratory and expiratory breath should be 'unimpeded….[and] that the process of breathing requires not only a lowering of the diaphragm but also the expansion of the ribs, and the chest at its base, summit, and sides."[86] Sell asserts that we can "deduce…that the foundation on which she built her technique was correct abdominal and diaphragmatic breathing."[87] Sell explains that today's scientists find it difficult to criticize Marchesi's methods.[88]

Lilli Lehmann, one of the most celebrated Wagnerians of the late nineteenth century and teacher to two well-known dramatic sopranos, Geraldine Farrar and Olive Fremstad, supported the *appoggio* method although it is described quite differently from Lamperti's. Lehmann's description is as follows:

> …I raise the chest, distend the upper ribs, and support them with the lower ones like pillars under them. In this manner I prepare the form for my singing, the supply chamber for the breath, exactly as I had learned it from my mother. At the same time I raise my palate high toward the nose and prevent the escape of breath through the nose. The diaphragm beneath reacts elastically against it, and furnishes pressure from the abdomen. Chest, diaphragm, and the closed epiglottis form a supply chamber for the breath. Only when I have begun to sing and articulate an ā do I push the breath against the chest, thereby setting the chest muscles in action. These are combined with the elastically stretched diaphragm and abdominal muscles—the abdomen is always brought back to its natural position during singing—exert a pressure in the form, which, as we have already learned, is the supply chamber and bed of the breath. This pressure enables is us to control the breath while singing.[89]

In reviewing pedagogical sources on breathing, the *appoggio* method was described and recommended more often than others. Talia states, "With respect to breathing, I believe, as did

[85] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume I: to 1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), 37.
[86] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 439.
[87] Karen Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 29.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Lilli Lehmann, *How to Sing*, trans. Clara Willenbücher (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), 11.

Francesco Lamperti, and more recently Richard Miller, that the *appoggio* system of breath management remains the most important and influential system of breath control for singing."[90] Talia asserts that Richard Miller gives the most thorough explanation of the *appoggio* system of breath management in literature, emphasizing that "*appoggio* is not just a breath management system but also one which incorporates dimensions of resonance."[91] Miller's description is as follows:

> The *appoggio* method of breath management maintains for longer periods of time the natural inspiratory antagonism among the muscles of the abdominal wall. In singing (during which the motor activity of the breath mechanism is greater than in spoken phonation), the initial antagonism of the major muscles of the abdominal wall-which occurs more fully in deep than in shallow inspiration-is maintained for longer than in speaking. The *appoggio* method of breath management relies on the natural antagonism among these muscles at the inspiratory moment of the breath cycle.[92]

In another description Miller writes,

> …the term *appoggiare* means to 'lean against' and accurately describes the interaction of muscles of the…abdominal wall…Expansion is felt at the base of the rib cage, at the front and sides of the torso, between the tenth rib and the crest of the iliac (hipbone)-and in the back at the eleventh and twelfth ribs…[there is] no pressing down or out against the viscera-either at inhalation or during singing….[93]

Miller provides one of his most detailed descriptions of *appoggio* in *The Structure of Singing*,

> In *appoggio* technique, the sternum must initially find a moderately high position; this position is then retained throughout the inspiration-expiration cycle. Shoulders are relaxed, but the sternum never slumps. Because the ribs are attached to the sternum, sternal posture in part determines diaphragmatic position. If the sternum lowers, the ribs cannot maintain an expanded position, and the diaphragm must ascend more rapidly. Both the epigastric and umbilical regions should be stabilized so that a feeling of internal-external muscular balance is present. This sensation directly influences the diaphragm…In *appoggio* the region between the sternum and umbilicus moves outward on inspiration, but the chief outward movement occurs in the lateral planes. This action

[90] Joseph Talia, Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), xxii.
[91] Ibid., 272.
[92] Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39.
[93] Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers: Tools for Performers and Teachers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

> does not correspond to the pushing outward of the lower abdominal wall (hypogastric, or pubic area…), which is to be found in some breathing techniques. Following the initial expansion, a nearly imperceptible inward motion commences unless consciously resisted internally by counterbalancing pressure, experienced in the navel region, at the flanks, and in the lower back regions. The torso remains stable, with almost no movement in the area of the lateral planes; at the close of a long phrase, of course, some inward abdominal movement is apparent. There should be an awareness, when inhaling, of transverse expansion, the result of antagonism of the anterolateral muscles. These muscles include those of the rectus sheath, the rectus abdominis, the external and internal obliques and the transversus abdominis. Lateral distention is experienced at the level of the tenth rib and immediately below, between the tenth rib and the crest of the ilium (the hip bone). Balance of muscular action is felt both in the frontal regions (thoracic, epigastric, and umbilical) and in the lateral–posterior (also lumbodorsal) areas.[94]

Miller, an accomplished singer, a renowned pedagogue, author and the first director of the Otto B. Schoepfle Vocal Arts Center at Oberlin Conservatory, studied with two voice teachers, Luigi Ricci and Mario Basiola, who were both advocates of the Lampertis.[95] Moreover, several of Miller's books contain valuable information about the dramatic soprano. For example, in his *National Schools of Singing*, he describes each of the Western European schools of singing (German, French, Italian and English) and writes a chapter on each voice type and what each school prescribes, including breath methods employed.

Miller's *Training Soprano Voices* was one of the few sources that argued that all sopranos cannot be taught the same way, he writes,

> Universal measures apply to each soprano voice, but the diversity of instruments within the general soprano category requires variations in pedagogic application. A young dramatic soprano voice must not be forced into a soubrette mold…subtle differences in categories of the soprano voice are based on variations in physiognomy, laryngeal size, shape of the resonator tract, points in the musical scale where register events occur and personal imaging.[96]

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[94] Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (Boston: Schirmer, Cengage Learning, 1996), 24-25.
[95] Karen Sell, *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 37.
[96] Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 15.

Miller was the only source I discovered that presents onset and breathing exercises, mentioning to vary the tempi depending on the size of the soprano voice and accommodates the dramatic soprano by suggesting that they "sustain each note longer."[97] He also suggests certain songs and arias to practice onsets, but they contain leaps of more than a third and young voices yearn to sing more stepwise passages. Sell explains that onset exercises, "…encourage balanced and disciplined breathing."[98]

Only a few dissertations mention the dramatic soprano and none specifically describe the young dramatic soprano or breath methodology for the voice type. Amber James's dissertation, "Technique for the Developing Dramatic Soprano," focused on assisting voice professionals in "navigating the pedagogical problems often found in the dramatic soprano…as well as offering solutions to these technical problems."[99] James discusses pedagogical issues often found in the dramatic soprano voice such as the jaw and tongue, laryngeal position, artistry, breathing, onset, resonance, registration, agility, sostenuto, interpretation, dynamics, vowel modification, vibrato. James's dissertation does not present any particular exercises that are specific to breathing or specific to the other pedagogical issues addressed; she simply gives an overview of several breathing methodologies by well-known pedagogues. In her appendices, she includes interviews with professional singers, teachers and coaches that have expertise in teaching the dramatic soprano and lists arias and short synopses of operas for the "developing and aging dramatic soprano."[100] The interviewees also do not suggest any exercises for the breath or for any of the other pedagogical challenges listed. Another dissertation entitled "Twenty-five Works for the

[97] Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000),48.
[98] *Karen Sell, The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach* (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 112.
[99] Amber James, "Technique for the Developing Dramatic Soprano," (DMA diss., The University of Mississippi, 2018), ii.
[100] Ibid., 154.

Dramatic Soprano Voice and Orchestra" by Kathleen Beth Sasnett categorizes and defines the dramatic soprano, listing ranges and the tessitura of twenty-five works for dramatic soprano and orchestra.[101] Hope Koehler's dissertation "The Effects of the Perception of Voice Type on the Practice and Pedagogy of Singing Opera" focuses on "the social implications of possessing a particular voice type,"[102] but also mentions issues concerning the training of the dramatic voice such as under supporting or over supporting the voice; both are detrimental.[103]

In looking at the past, although it is clear that teachers explained the *appoggio* technique differently, dramatic voices were thriving. What has happened with the breath training of the young dramatic voice in recent times? It certainly can be argued that there isn't a difference in training in comparison to their lyric counterparts; however, some disagree. David Jones, when asked if he thought that dramatic sopranos needed special training, answered, "I think they need more body connection. I think the lighter voice can get away with less body connection, but a dramatic soprano will develop all kinds of problems unless they are fully connected to their body."[104] I propose that the issue in training the young dramatic is two-fold: there is a difference in training methods and there are many confusing variations and explanations of *appoggio*. First, I will discuss the difference in training methods. O'Bryan and Harrison describe the regimen of a promising singer prior to the twentieth century:[105]

> From the middle ages until the late nineteenth century, it was normal educational practice for young singers to be apprenticed for up to 12 years to a singing teacher who was responsible for not only their musical and vocal education, but also their moral and physical development.

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[101] Kathleen Beth Sasnett, "Twenty-Five Works for the Dramatic Soprano Voice and Orchestra: A Study Guide," (DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 2006), ii.
[102] Hope Koehler, "The Effects of the Perception of Voice Type on the Practice and Pedagogy of Singing Opera," (DMA diss., University of Kentucky, 2003), abstract.
[103] Ibid., 34.
[104] Amber James, "Technique for the Developing Dramatic Soprano," (DMA diss., The University of Mississippi, 2018), 126.
[105] Jessica O'Bryan and Scott D. Harrison, *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*, eds. O'Bryan and Harrison (Heidelberg: Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht, 2014), 2.

Kesting recounts Callas's regimen when she first began her training with Elvira de Hidalgo at the Athens Conservatory at approximately 15 years old.[106]

> I began lessons with [de Hidalgo] at ten in the morning…then I took a break at midday to eat a sandwich and then carried on our lessons into the evening. I never thought of going home earlier simply because I would not have known what to do with myself at home.[107]

Lilli Lehmann says of her vocal studies with her mother, "I…received a very careful musical education, and later a notable course of instruction in singing….From my fifth year on I listened daily to singing lessons [and] from my ninth year I played accompaniments on the pianoforte [and] sang all the missing parts…got thoroughly familiar with all the operas, and very soon knew how to tell good singing from bad."[108] When asked about how one learns to be an artistic singer, Lehmann goes on to say, "Of a clear understanding, first and foremost; of breathing, in and out; of an understanding of the form through which the breath has to flow, prepared by a proper position of the larynx, the tongue, the nose and the palate."[109] Scott, in *The Record of Singing*, states,

> …From the early years of childhood until they were mature artists, these singers were subjected to the most complete and rigorous musical education. Once purely mechanical matters of attack, tone formation etc. had been mastered, they concentrated on refinements…[110] It was breath control that the old Italian masters continually told their pupils to learn…[111]

Pleasants recounts a story given by Francois Joseph Fetis, regarding Nicola Porpora's (founder of the Neapolitan School and teacher of Farinelli) teaching:[112]

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[106] Jürgen Kesting, *Maria Callas*, trans. John Hunt (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1992), 86.
[107] Ibid., 86.
[108] Lilli Lehmann, *How to Sing* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1993), 2-3.
[109] Ibid., 5.
[110] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing Volume I: to 1914* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1977), 9.
[111] Ibid., 8.
[112] According to Talia in the *History of Vocal Pedagogy* (67), in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, two singing schools, the Bolognese School, founded by the exceptional castrato contralto, Francesco Pistocchi, and

> Porpora became fond of one of his pupils, a young castrato. He asked him if he had the courage to follow the path prescribed for him as tedious as it might seem. Upon the boy's affirmative reply, Porpora wrote out on a piece of paper the diatonic and chromatic scales, ascending and descending, skips of the third, fourth, fifth, etc., for the mastery of intervals and the sustaining of the tone; then trills, turns, appoggiaturas and vocalises. This piece of paper occupied teacher and pupil for the ensuing year; also the next. In the third year nothing was said about a change. The pupil began to grumble, but the teacher reminded him of his promise. The fourth year passes, and then the fifth, and always the same piece of paper. In the sixth year they continue, but add exercises in articulation, enunciation and, finally, declamation. At the end of this year the pupil, still thinking himself a beginner, is surprised to hear his teacher say: 'Go, my son, you have no more to learn.' He spoke the truth, for this singer was Caffarelli.[113]

In the twenty-first century, unlike the eighteenth through the early twentieth century, it is customary for students to receive one lesson a week, and sometimes they don't begin working with a coach until graduate school. Furthermore, the young singer may skip private voice lessons during high school, and get their first dose of instruction in college. These explanations definitely would be contributing factors to the lack of proper breath training in young dramatic sopranos. In reference to the confusing breathing explanations, Paul T. Klingstead writes in his book, *Common Sense in Vocal Pedagogy* (1941),

> …Let us consider the idea of conscious breath control. One teacher will tell you that according to nature when you begin taking in breath, you must protrude your abdomen so that your diaphragm has room to operate. The next will contradict this and say that while beginning to breathe you should contract the muscles of the abdomen causing it to flatten. Another group will tell you to fill your lungs full of air and go ahead and sing. Their ideas of breath expulsion are just as divergent. One says, at the beginning of exhalation to push out the abdomen and use force in contracting the muscles around the lower ribs. Another will tell you that in beginning the expulsion of breath you must forcibly flatten the abdomen and give a big push with the diaphragm. Still another suggests that you let the chest sink as breath is expelled, keeping a steady pressure upon the lungs with the rib muscles. Another one tells you to raise the chest higher and higher as the breath flows from the lungs. Imagine the bewilderment of a student after studying with teachers of these various schools.[114]

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the Neapolitan School, founded by composer and voice teacher, Nicola Porpora, were responsible for producing most of the great singers of the day such as Farinelli and Caffarelli.

[113] Henry Pleasants, *The Great Singers: From the Dawn of Opera to Our Own Time* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 67.

[114] Paul T. Klingstedt, *Common Sense in Vocal Pedagogy as Prescribed by the Early Italian Masters* (Stillwater, OK: Edwards Brothers, Lithoprinters, 1946), 43-44.

In addition to this, the celebrated bass, Jerome Hines, who sang at the Metropolitan Opera for over thirty years, was an advocate of the *appoggio* technique and experimented with three different variations of it. Furthermore, he was familiar with five additional breathing methods.[115] During Hines's early years at the Met, he began to have some trouble in his upper register and thought he would spend some time evaluating the concept of *appoggio*.[116] The first method described by Hines is simply called a low "Support/*Appoggio*."[117] With this approach, one imagines breathing deeply into the abdominal area with no involvement of the intercostals. The pressure is then exerted around the abdominal muscles during exhalation. Along with this pressure, one must continue thinking about inhaling so that there is a greater pull between the abdomen and diaphragm.[118] Hines warned that males may develop an inguinal hernia using this technique; Hines actually did develop one. This first *appoggio* method is in complete contrast to Miller's concept of *appoggio*, or any of the other pedagogues described earlier.

Hines's second variation involved taking the same kind of breath described in the first method, but the stomach (directly below the rib cage) is allowed to bulge out while the abdominals pull in. During exhalation, pressure is exerted on the distended belly in all directions.[119] This statement is also in opposition to Miller who explains that with *appoggio* concept "there is no pressing outward against the viscera upon inhalation…."[120]

The last *appoggio* method discussed by Hines does not require the intense tension of the other two. The inhalation begins, as before, by breathing low, the stomach protrudes, and then

[115] Jerome Hines, *The Four Voices of Man* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1977), 25.
[116] Ibid., 22.
[117] Ibid., 23.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 24.
[120] Richard Miller, *National Schools of Singing: English, French, German and Italian Techniques Revisited* (Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1977), 43.

the lower ribs expand. After the lungs are full, there is a brief pause (suspension) before exhalation begins with a contraction in the lower abdomen. This particular method was taught to Jerome Hines by one of his teachers, Samuel Margolis.[121]

Since breathing concepts aren't being taught effectively and the young dramatic sopranos need more work with the breath based on their physiology, perhaps a few exercises that are built specifically for this voice type are in order. I have compiled specific exercises that seem to be especially helpful in the training of the young dramatic soprano.

[121] Jerome Hines, *The Four Voices of Man* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1977), 24.

CHAPTER FOUR

BREATH METHODS FOR THE DEVELOPING YOUNG DRAMATIC SOPRANO AGES 15–22

In reviewing vocalise books and treatises by Marchesi, Lamperti, Vaccai, Viardot, Panofka, Lütgen, Liebling and Concone, the first exercise is generally sustained or sustained with some movement. For example, Panofka's first vocalise consists of long, scalar passages marked *andante*.[122] In Lamperti's *Daily Exercises,* the first exercise is more appropriate and begins in 4/4 with two half notes and marcato markings. Lamperti, however, marks the tempo as *adagio*.[123]Another example of a sustained first exercise is in Viardot's *An Hour of Study, Book I.* The exercise is marked moderato, but held over six beats.[124] In working extensively with the young dramatic soprano ages 15-22, avoiding sustained exercises is strongly recommended until the singer is comfortable with her breath management. Perhaps these great masters had some pre-singing exercises that they taught to students before delving into their method books. In addition, these masters would have guided the student carefully and observed them when they were practicing.

Beginning exercises that seem most effective for breath management for the young dramatic are those described by Appelman as pulsating drills.[125] Appelman's exercise "requires five and nine pulsated sounds on one pitch level sung on the neutral vowel [ʌ] as in up."[126] He

[122] Heinrich Panofka, *Panofka 24 Progressive Vocalises for All Voice Types Except Bass Op. 85, Book I* (N.Y. Belwin Mills, n.d.), 2.
[123] Francesco Lamperti, *Francesco Lamperti Daily Exercises* (Florida: Belwin, Inc., n.d.), 3.
[124] Pauline Viardot, *Pauline Viardot An Hour of Study: Exercises for the Voice, Book I* (Florida: Belwin, Inc., n.d.), 4.
[125]D. Ralph Appelman, *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 17-20.
[126] Ibid.

states that these exercises help unify and coordinate breathing and phonation.[127] Miller describes similar exercises in *The Structure of Singing* and explains their use:

> Control over three specifics of breath pacing (breath management) is essential to efficient function in singing: (1) the rate and ease of each initial inhalation (2) the variable rate of breath emission (in response to phrase demand); and (3) the quiet renewal of breath energy (replenishment of the source of power).[128]

Miller's first exercise is in 4/4 and five measures in length; the same pitch is sung for the entirety of the exercise. Students only sing the first quarter note of each measure on any vowel and pause for the remaining three beats. This continues until the fifth measure, where the pitch is sustained for four beats.[129] In my work with the young dramatic soprano, if students sing one pitch repeatedly even with pauses, the tone quality decreases tremendously. I have had much more success in beginning a pulsed exercise where the student sings a descending M2 or sometimes a m2. With the change in pitch, they must listen and think about the interval and also the onset.

However, before beginning the pulsated exercises, I usually start with a primal sound. This is not new. Chapman writes, "Human babies make primal sound as do primates and other mammals. Human adults also use primal sounds such as crying, howling, wailing, laughing, groaning, calling, spontaneous joyful exclamations, grunts, the vocalized sigh and yawn, and the sound of agreement (MMM or uh-huh)."[130] As students develop the kinesthetic awareness of the support system, I move from a spoken sigh, laugh or call to a sung sigh in the middle range. If the voice of the young dramatic sits low, I start them on G4 or A4, if the voice sits higher, we begin anywhere from Bb4 to C5. Usually the spoken sigh helps the singer transfer some of the

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[127] D. Ralph Appelman, *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 17.
[128] Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (Boston: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 1996), 34.
[129] Ibid, 35.
[130] Janice Chapman, *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice*, 3rd ed. (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2017), 17.

body connection they need for the sung sigh. I usually begin on [i], but if they engage the pharyngeal constrictors, I will go to a back vowel such as [o]. If there is still engagement, I find the vowel that is most free of tension and work out the issue in the speaking voice. The sigh tends to assist with several things: palate height, jaw release, release of tongue (as long as it's monitored), clean onset, and the beginnings of breath support. The student does not move on until the onsets are glottal-free.

After the sighs, we begin a descending portamento on a M2 or a m3, transferring the sigh to two specific notes. It must not be done too slowly because young singers, especially those with large instruments, have a tendency to press. Pressing as defined by Dolora Zajick, "is a long glottal." Once singers have mastered the minor third, we may continue with a descending three-note exercise (3-2-1or mi-re-do), where the student continues to practice the portamenti with swiftness. Marchesi's method book contains a section of portamento exercises; however, most are sustained patterns with ascending intervals of a fourth or more, making them unsuitable for the young beginner. [131] After the descending three-note pattern, four notes are practiced (4-3-2-1 or fa-mi-re-do) and then five notes (5-4-3-2-1 or sol-fa-mi-re-do). Once students are proficient on all vowels, then we begin vowel combining; for example, 5-4-3-2-1 with [i] [a] [i] [a] [i]. Eventually, we master ascending patterns as well.

As the breathing mechanism becomes more coordinated, short/sustained or pulsed exercises are begun. Students sing a descending M2 or m2 with a pause between the two notes. It cannot be emphasized enough that the students must have a clean onset with no glottals. This pattern is practiced throughout the middle range. Once the body begins to coordinate the exercise, students master the m3 and M3. At this point, we begin to lengthen the notes ever so

[131] Mathilde Marchesi, *Bel Canto: A Theoretical & Practical Vocal Method* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970), 46-52.

slightly so that the short sustained becomes not quite as short. Before long, students have begun to master the legato line, which is supported, free of nasality, with a resonant vowel and a clean onset.

Once students are able to coordinate the above exercises, I begin to apply all of the techniques to repertoire. I will take two notes of the students' song, they will portamento between the two notes, and then three notes from their piece are added then four. Next, we practice the pulsing on two notes, then three then four. I choose patterns in the middle of the phrases so students often don't realize that we actually are working on their repertoire. Before long, the piece is learned with clean onsets and supported singing.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERVIEWS

Angela Meade

How would you identify a potential dramatic soprano voice?

I believe the voice will identify itself if it will head toward a potential dramatic direction. I believe any soprano voice should have the ability to sing with beautiful tone, lyricism, and flexibility. As one progresses, strengths and weaknesses identify themselves and that will give you an idea of the direction they are going. If a voice excels at singing that involves thrust and more angular shape, that gives a hint, but it isn't the only identifying factor. It comes down to where the voice likes to live as well. Sheer size of voice also plays a huge part in identification. If we look back at the dramatic voices of Maria Jeritza, Birgit Nilsson, Eva Marton, Ghena Dimitrova, Gwyneth Jones, Jane Eaglen, Sharon Sweet, etc., what we see over and over again in comments and reviews is the sheer size of the voice, described in words such as volcanic, unforced, commanding, inexhaustible, penetrating, voice of extraordinary size. In terms of sound quality of a dramatic soprano, qualities usually include clarion, silvery glow, brilliant, gleaming, powerful and like a trumpet in the throat. If in working on vocalises and repertoire and these qualities identify themselves, exploration into more dramatic repertoire would happen gradually. The fundamentals of good sound production, vowel placement and general technique are more important for a beginning student than repertoire selection.

What were the indicators that you were a big voice?

I think as I have gotten older, it has developed into a voice that has more amplitude and grandeur. When I was first discovering my voice in high school and early college, I wouldn't

necessarily have labeled it as "big." I wouldn't have labeled it as a small voice, but certainly nothing in the realm of *spinto* or dramatic soprano because I didn't know how to use my voice yet at that point. Stamina came from years of study and working progressively into larger and lengthier repertoire as well as more use of chest voice and the ability to sustain through the upper tessitura for long periods of time. I think heritage/bone structure and body type can sometimes indicate that a voice will end up being dramatic. True dramatic sopranos tend to be, by and large, Germanic or Nordic by heritage and they tend to be larger people. I don't mean obese, I mean large bone structure, broad and tall. I've always been intrigued by how heritage plays into the type of sound that humans make. I don't think it's a coincidence that people of Germanic, Swedish, Nordic and general Northern European heritage are the ones who become dramatic sopranos and have voices with more of a vertical rather than horizontal sound quality. Personally, I am of Germanic, French and British heritage so it doesn't surprise me that my voice sounds the way it does. I have always thought I have a more Germanic sound rather than an Italianate one. I'm not saying that I am a true dramatic soprano though, I think there are three schools of dramatic sopranos. There is the *Hochdramatischer* soprano who sings Brünnhilde, Turandot, Elektra, Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Isolde, Salome and has a metallic timbre and an exceptionally strong weight to the voice and volcanic volume, and then there is the regular *Dramatischer w*ho has a darker, lower set voice that is voluminous and spacious sounding and sings the Empress in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Leonore in *Fidelio,* Senta in *Flying Dutchman*, Elisabetta in *Tannhäuser* and *La Gioconda* and finally there is the *Jugendlich* which is also referred to in Italian as a *spinto* soprano, this is a voice that is more powerful than a lyric soprano with more volume and she sings a lot of the big Verdi repertoire such as Leonora in *La Forza del destino,* Aida, Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera*, Elisabetta in *Don Carlo*, Valentine in

Les Huguenots, Sieglinde in *Die Walküre*, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Eva in *Meistersinger*, the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Selika in *L'Africaine*, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Chrysothemis in *Elektra*. I think if I had to categorize myself, I would be in the last group. I think I fall somewhere in the *Jugendlich/Dramatischer Koloratursopran* box. I think it is fine to sing in two *Fachs*, many dramatic sopranos sing in all three of those categories and singers like myself who have maintained flexibility and my top extension are able to cross *Fach* lines.

Did you take voice lessons in high school and, if you did, describe your training? Please explain specific methodology for breathing and onset of tone.

I did not take formal voice lessons in high school. I only studied voice around the time of year that solo and ensemble competition took place. Specifics of technique weren't really discussed.

Describe your college vocal training (undergraduate and graduate). Did your teachers emphasize the breath? Please explain.

Breath wasn't really addressed in very specific wording or teaching philosophy. My real understanding of breath came from my days of being a competitive swimmer and pushing myself to swim longer lengths of the pool without having to breathe and understanding how to compress the breath but still make it flexible to be able to hold it longer. Breath is something that seems to be varied in how it is taught and discussed. In undergraduate my teacher didn't really address a specific idea of technique nor breath. In graduate school we started exploring the basics of *bel canto* technique, *appoggio*, legato, placement, etc. In my master's degree, is also where breath came more into focus, mostly because I started playing around with it in a practice room and

started purposefully inquiring about it with my teacher. Again though, most of it was through self-discovery.

How would you describe compression?

I think a lot of students think that when you take a breath in that it has to be rigid…that the support underneath has to be rigid, which is actually not the case. If you take a balloon or take bellows…kids nowadays would be like, "What are bellows?" To make the air come out in a steady stream you have to compress it down very slowly, right? (*Puts one hand horizontally on top of the other, and slowly brings the hands towards each other*). Or you take a balloon (*makes slow movement vertically with the hands moving towards each other*), and you want [the air] to come out very slowly; you have to pinch the top [of the balloon] then you have to make it come out very slowly. If you just go (*slaps hands together quickly*), then it all comes out at once, which is the collapse of air. So we have to take it in and compress it, without it becoming rigid, very slowly.

Were specific pedagogy books or vocalise books instrumental in your journey of mastering your vocal technique—specifically the breath?

I haven't used any specific pedagogy books or vocalise books in my journey. The teachers I have studied with didn't work out of a book. Most of my work, until I was studying at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, was through self-exploration of the breath. Bill Schuman, who was and is still my teacher, teaches natural breathing, deep breath inhalation and not holding it, which causes a lot of singers to be stiff and unable to maintain a long line. It has only been in the last couple of years that I have taken a real interest in studying what the masters

of teaching of the old school of singers taught: Lamperti, Marchesi, Viardot, Lehmann. I think as we train singers, it is important to look back to those masters of teaching and teach the singers of today how they were taught then.

What exactly, or it may have been many things, helped you solidify your technique?

I would go to practice rooms, and I would work on my breath, and I would question myself, "Well, why can't I sing a phrase the way I want to sing it?" And I would just go to a practice room and sort of play with my breath and sort of try to figure that out. It really wasn't until I got to the Academy of Vocal Arts that a lot of time was spent talking about technique and breathing and how we apply all those things. I was blessed with a very natural technique. I know of a lot of young singers that aren't, and it must be so frustrating to sort of feel like you never got a foundation. I had to find a lot of it myself. I had to do a lot of exploration, listening to recordings, and being like, "How do I…what singer do I think I sound like—the qualities that I have in my voice—what do I find in others?" "How do they approach this?" "How can they do that—what are they doing?" A lot of listening—*a lot* of listening, and not just Renée Fleming, who was very famous at the time—listening back to recordings in the twenties and thirties—pre–YouTube—going to the library and having to check out CDs—it was not always easy to find things to listen to either because some libraries didn't have a lot of choice. There was a lot of Pavarotti, a lot of Domingo and a lot of Renée Fleming.

That's very helpful.

But I'm very curious; a lot of students are not really curious.

I know. That's so puzzling.

I feel that technology has made us less curious because we have the information at our fingertips all the time, and we can just google so your natural curiosity goes down because you know you don't have to look very far for the knowledge.

That makes a lot of sense. So again, you would say that you solidified your technique once you got to the Academy of Vocal Arts?

Some of it was solidified or in a good spot once I got to AVA, but there were definitely things that were solidified and learned; for example, I could always sing in my top, but I felt like because of some technique things that I was taught while I was AVA, it became something that I could do with more consistency in all the repertoire that I was singing rather than only when it was set up a certain way. Stamina came into real focus while I was at AVA, which is something I never even really thought about because I wasn't really singing those kinds of pieces before that. Learning how to have stamina and how to pace yourself through a role really helped. There was a lot of work on languages; not so much diction, but syntax of language was worked on at AVA. It was a lot of work on minute little details.

Describe your young artist experience and the vocal training you received. At what age should the young dramatic soprano apply to an internationally recognized young artist program?

I have a lot of mixed feelings about young artist programs, especially for singers with larger voices. Unless the program is specifically designed to foster the growth and training of larger voices, then it is harder for those voices to be granted participation in my experience. A lot of young artist programs are designed to use the young artists as the chorus for the mainstage

productions. There are times when the young artists are allowed to cover main roles, but most of the time they are relegated to small to medium–size roles. Mostly, it is about making connections and singing for people in the business and presenting scene work. I'm not sure that is what a large voice needs. We tend to train everyone the same way without regard for individual voice type needs at specific ages of development. Smaller voices mature earlier. So a young artist experience for a light coloratura is probably more beneficial because they should be ready to get on stage singing roles in their very early 20's. However, a voice that potentially will become a dramatic voice may need time and study throughout their 20's and maybe even their 30's to be able to be at a place technically to be able to present true dramatic soprano roles although many dramatic sopranos started off with roles we now deem to be part of a lighter category, so a lot of times singers who would be dramatic sopranos are overlooked and parts they should be singing given to smaller voices. I look at the great dramatic sopranos of the past and many of them didn't venture into the very dramatic repertoire until at least their early–mid 30's. My personal experience with young artist programs was that I wasn't accepted to any of them. I participated in two pay-to-sings and one was my teacher's program. The only "young artist program" that I did do is not necessarily a young artist program but a hybrid of a school and a company. That was the Academy of Vocal Arts. I think for a young singer, and one who has a voice that is heading down a bigger path, it is important to do research and see what the companies are presenting and if they are willing to invest in a more specific voice type. There are programs such as Dolora Zajick's program that is specific to fostering dramatic voices. If a young artist program has a track record for training young dramatic voices and it isn't just about fulfilling their casting needs, that is something to consider. I don't think age should necessarily be a deciding factor. Development should be the deciding factor as people develop at different paces.

There are singers who are 18 who could benefit from a training program that focuses on dramatic voices if they have trained early or have an incredibly amount of raw, innate technique and there are people who will need to [wait]well into their 20's before a program is right for them.

You seem like you are a very natural singer, but what was most frustrating about learning how to sing?

I was a very natural singer, and I think that led to confusion about what kind of singer I was, and so there was a lot of disparity in what repertoire that my teacher—I wish that my teacher had spent more time on just vocalises instead of trying to immediately assign repertoire. And I know in schools that happens because we have to do juries and prepare for audition—I guess I didn't really start taking voice lessons until I was in school—just two years ahead of when I went. I was in community college, but it was a side thing when I started taking lessons, and we spent time just on vocalises and warm-ups, and I wish that we would have spent more time on things like that because it wasn't really until I got to my master's degree that I sort of learned how to sing pianissimo, and that was a frustrating thing for me when I was in my undergrad because it was something that I always wanted to [implement] into what I was singing and nobody seemed to be able to teach me how to do it, or there was never time spent on it. It felt like my lessons were very—"Okay, you're here…let's warm up for five seconds and then let's do some repertoire," which I felt was always frustrating because I thought that I would have liked to have spent, I don't know, 40 minutes of my lesson vocalizing and learning technical things, and then spent the last 20 minutes on repertoire. If you look at famous people like Pavarotti, they famously have said, "I spent two years just learning how to sing an [a] vowel." And I know that's so tedious, but especially for students nowadays, because they are like,

"Where's my repertoire?" "I just want to sing." "Give me my arias." (*Laughter*) And I feel like even since I went through school, it's become worse so even now people are like, "Give me my repertoire." And students that I teach—I ask them, "What did you do with your previous teachers?" And they say, "Nothing, really—we didn't talk about breath, we didn't talk about high notes, we didn't talk about placement." So that is what I wish would happen more with teachers is that they would spend more time on actual technique and then apply it to repertoire later.

I notice that students are taken aback that first semester when we spend so much time on vowels or maybe just one or two of them.

It's like learning to be a gymnast.

I use that exact analogy…a gymnast or an ice skater. You are learning how to use your body, and it is all of this muscle memory.

Yes. You have to learn these small techniques in order to make the big techniques.

What are your recommendations for the most effective breathing and onset exercises for the young dramatic soprano?

First, the breath should be a relaxed inhalation so that it flows all the way to the bottom of the lungs and not just partially fills the top portion. When the breath fills the entire lungs then the diaphragm effectively pushes down and out of the space for the lungs to fill up. So focus should be on a relaxed breath. This is counterintuitive to new singers especially when they are on stage and nerves kick in because the first thing that happens in a fight or flight response to stress

is shallow breathing. We must practice relaxed deep breathing so as to have the ability to counteract the nerves and the response. I recommend yoga or meditation as a means to really focus on breathing as an exercise, and yoga is particularly helpful because you are placing your body in a "stressful" situation since you are exercising while trying to maintain thoughtful breath flow. While practicing singing, after the breath is relaxed, the next thing to discuss is how the breath must be moving before the vocal cords approximate to make sound. The onset is made by engaging the support to start the flow of air and then the vocal cords come together to start vibration, thus creating sound. I like to have singers start by making an unforced "ha" sound and then engage the muscles, think a pitch and then start the cords. Once they have mastered the technique of the "ha" then the "ha" is discarded and vibration begins without the help of the "ha." The breath should be elastic and not rigid. Often singers think that when you take a breath and you have to maintain "holding out" the ribs and lungs that you have to become rigid in order to do so, but this is incorrect. For example, if one takes a low, deep, relaxed breath and just holds it without releasing it, rigidity isn't present, the same feeling should be present when releasing the air in a focused stream. It should be a feeling of buoyancy rather than forced engagement. For the release of air, as I mentioned above, it should be a focused stream of air. When the air is unfocused then it escapes in large puffs, thus causing depletion of air and thus causing the support system to collapse.

As a professional, what breath exercises or vocalises are most helpful in maintaining excellent breath control?

The breath exercises that I do, focus on relaxed inhalation and compression and metered release of air. I will sit at the piano or on the floor for a few minutes prior to practicing or getting

ready for rehearsal or performance and simply focus on my breath. I suppose you could call it meditation since that is the purpose of meditation, to focus on nothing but the inhalation and exhalation of breath. As singers, we need to find the place between inhalation and exhalation, so I focus on especially long phrases in my focus exercises and think about how my muscles will engage to carry me through. I then start with nine–note scales to engage the breath in a line, and I go all the way to the top of my range because the higher you go up through the *passaggio,* the more engagement one needs as you depart from your normal speaking range. I also will do a focused air release, where I take a relaxed inhalation and release the air on a "ts," holding and sometimes timing how long I can make the breath last before I have expelled everything and then working on making the breath last even longer. I also like to work on *messa di voce* as the ability to sing pianissimo comes from the ability to regulate air pressure and flow.

If young dramatic voices started training earlier, would they be able to start a career sooner?

That is a tricky question, because the conundrum happens because of the very nature of how we live our lives now versus how we lived them in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and even the early twentieth century. Between 1740–1800 the average age of dramatic sopranos making their professional debut was 18. Between 1800–1850 the age was 20. Between 1850-1900 the age was 22. Between 1900–1950 the age was 24 and from 1950–present it has jumped up to 28. The question is why. I think it has to do certainly with how we train singers now. It used to be that students studied intensely for just three to five years, starting when they were in their mid to late teens and then had a sort of *fest* position a lot of times at a local opera house and there they made their debut. Nowadays students do a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree and finally a YAP or two or three and they are not done training until they are in their late

20's and now because there are so many singers, finding their way from school or training programs into a debut somewhere is extremely difficult. Some students up until the 1940's still lived and worked with their voice teachers and studied voice and technique every day. It's true that some before that and all the way back to the late 1700's attended college/conservatory, but they graduated by the time they were 18 with either the complete knowledge of technique or with the very best of connections that allowed them to find work immediately. It wasn't until Jessye Norman in 1945 that a dramatic soprano did more than just a bachelor's degree. She was the first dramatic soprano to obtain a master's degree, and in 1947 the Music Academy of the West was founded and students started attending further post–degree training programs. So hypothetically if we reverted back to the old way of teaching a student, where they studied with a teacher every day of the week for a couple of years then, yes, I believe it would be possible.

What repertoire were you given as an undergraduate and what repertoire would you suggest for a young dramatic soprano?

The very first arias I was given were "Deh vieni, non tardar" from *Le nozze di Figaro* and "V'adoro pupille" from *Giulio Cesare*. The emphasis was always put on singing lyrically and beautifully. When I was in my undergrad, my teachers were convinced I was a *spinto* and so they gave me a lot of Puccini arias and big Mozart. The roles I sang in undergrad were Countess in *Figaro*, Rosalinde in *Fledermaus,* The Abbess in *Suor Angelica* and I sang the *Verdi Requiem* for the first time. In my graduate studies, I sang the title role in Handel's *Agrippina*, Madame Herz in Mozart's *Impresario,* Queen of the Night in *Magic Flute,* The Mother in *Hansel and Gretel* and the Mother Goose in *The Rake's Progress*. I attended a pay-to-sing prior to attending my master's degree, where I sang First Lady in *Magic Flute*. When I attended the Academy of

Vocal Arts, I sang the title roles in *Anna Bolena* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Act II of *Forza del destino* as Leonora, Agathe in *Der Freischütz,* Fiordiligi in *Cosi fan tutte* and Berta in *Barber of Seville*. I would suggest the big Mozart ladies (Fiordiligi, Elettra, Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, First Lady), Agathe in *Der Freischütz,* The High Priestess in *Aida*, Woglinde, Wellgunde and Freia in *Das Rheingold*, Helmwige in *Die Walküre,* Venus in *Tannhäuser,* Eva in *Meistersinger,* Third Norn in *Götterdämmerung*, and the title role in Gluck's *Armide*.

What do you wish teachers knew or understood about this voice category?

I wish teachers wouldn't shy away from helping dramatic sopranos find their way. Too often I have heard that you can't and shouldn't be a dramatic soprano until you are in your mid-40's. While that may be partly true for the most dramatic of repertoire, there are lots of things a dramatic soprano can and should be singing on their way down the road to the heavier repertoire.

As a young singer, were there any dramatic voices that you listened to that helped you grow technically?

I mostly listened to Callas, Caballé, Sutherland, Margaret Price and Beverly Sills. I'm glad I did so because I think that if I had listened to a lot of the bigger voices that didn't also keep their flexibility that I might have lost mine as well by trying to imitate.

What advice would you give to young dramatic sopranos today?

Find a good teacher who actually teaches technique and someone who also speaks your language. People work in different ways: some people are visual and some people are very technical. If you aren't grasping what your teacher is telling you, even if they are a great teacher,

it's not going to help you. Take some lessons with somebody and try it out like you would test drive a car. Figure out if it is right for you, and then if you can—I don't even know if people do this, but— I always think if you can study more per week with somebody, you get more out of it. Once a week is really, really hard.

It's not enough.

Can you imagine if you were trying to be a world–class gymnast, and you had one gymnastic session a week?

It's not going to happen.

It wouldn't happen. I know that a lot of it is financial with kids. I wish that schools would change around curriculum so that kids could have at least two lessons per week. Two lessons to work on technique and then coachings in between that to work on repertoire. That would be ideal. If you can, as a student, somehow have two lessons a week with your teacher —that would be great. Work on languages, really solidify that because it's only going to help in your travels as a student or as a singer, but also it helps you be able to digest the pieces you are doing more easily; it helps you with syntax and it helps you with movement and acting because it becomes natural like your native tongue. Read a lot, be very curious, listen to things—that would be my advice. And, of course, be patient. Big voices are often unwieldy especially *Hochdramatischer* voices. People don't know what to do. There is a lot of volume; they are all over the map. Take the time to think about it as [if you were a] sports figure—that you devote a lot of time every day to just working on that—even if it is just working on a five–note scale to get it lined up on an [a] vowel. Spend the time—don't get bored—spend the time.

Luana DeVol

How would you identify a potential dramatic soprano voice?

These are voices that naturally have a carrying power to them. They are not always focused correctly as we know. For the young voice, for study, I would begin with a hum and lip trills which shows the flexibility of the voice and then a siren which shows how the voice moves through the registers. A natural placement of a hum-disassociates it from singing. What is your favorite perfume or if something is coming out of the oven-you would say, "Mmmmmm…I really like that." Then I would try a longer, more sustained scale. That usually puts the tone in a natural place, and they are not thinking about singing so they are not thinking about an unnatural tone. Singing has to be placed with the natural voice, and then you can tell how big the voice is.

What were the indicators that you were a big voice?

I never believed I was a big voice. I never considered myself a big voice. I just worked on my technique; I never stopped working on technique, and eventually I learned to sing very well because I was practicing my technique all the time.

Did anyone ever tell you that you had a large instrument or that you should be singing Hochdramatischer repertoire?

That came as a matter of age. I sang the *Jugendlich-dramatischer Fach* when I first started, and you have to remember I started quite late in my career. I didn't start until I was forty. I sang the *Jugendlich-dramatischer Fach* for about eight years, no, nine years, and then I had sung most of those roles in most of the houses, and it was then that I felt my voice could tackle those roles. Let me give you some examples. I was engaged in Aachen, which is a very small

900 seat theatre for three years, and then I went to Mannheim for four years. The repertoire in Mannheim was right for my voice category. They were doing Mozart, Strauss, Wagner and Verdi; I was singing all of those and I was asked in the course of time if I would look at Lady Macbeth and *Turandot*, and I had offers for those engagements. So I learned those roles enough so that I could work with a répétiteur, and I noticed that my voice did not like them. And this is what I say to young people. You have to be sensitive to how your voice reacts to the repertoire.

Now I know you studied with Jess Thomas at one point. Did he indicate that you had a large instrument, or somewhere along your journey, or in your early years of training did anyone suggest to you that your voice was a larger voice?

Well, you have to go back a little further. When I was in high school between my junior and senior years, I developed my ability in music as compared to other people in singing. I went to an art camp in the summer and I took one chorus class, and in this class we had to sight read music to prepare for two separate concerts. It was basically a sightreading class. For me, at first, I found it very difficult. I had to audition and they took me in so when I got there, I was around people who had been singing a long time and had music lessons and all of that, but at the end of the four–week program, I was one of the best sight readers there, and I developed my love for music. So now when I went home, I auditioned for the choir my senior year of high school, and the teacher there happened to be Dr. Randolph Hunt, who was married to Marcia Hunt. Together they produced their daughter, who was Lorraine Hunt [Lieberson]. She was a mezzo-soprano who died quite young. Her father was friends with my parents in school. Together they produced some Gilbert and Sullivan shows in which I took part. That was really fun. That was probably my very first stage experiences. Anyway, when he heard me audition for the senior choir, he said

that I should have voice lessons and he referred me to Donald Stenberg, a baritone, who had had quite a lovely career. He trained my voice. Luckily, I had a voice teacher, [who] did not say I had a large voice or a small voice. He gave me Lieder and Bach. We don't teach Bach anymore. I also sang *The Consul*—"Papers, Papers." That was the heaviest thing I ever did.

Did Donald Stenberg give you any exercises?

I still have the book from when I studied with him. That was in the early 1960s, and I still have it.

Now are these his original exercises or did he use a vocalise book—Marchesi or Liebling?

No, we did Lütgen. And it's still available. So I have the lessons marked that I did, and I use these exercises with my students. I just used it today.

Which ones did you use?

I have a couple of favorites. The first one I go to is number four. These exercises are specifically to achieve facility in traversing the *passaggio*. They don't go very high. The high note in most of them is a G5 and the lowest note may be C4. They are wonderful; they are very musical. They have little accompaniments so if the teacher is proficient in piano, the teacher can play a little musical accompaniment below, which makes it more enjoyable for the student and the teacher. That one is simply to learn how to move the voice without using your neck—it's for facility.

Did he talk to you specifically about breath support?

Yes, we did. He talked about a flowing breath and being able to control the emission of the breath. Then in the San Francisco Bay Area, I worked with Dr. Jan Popper. He was working with West Bay Opera in Palo Alto, and he recommended that I go to Vera Rózsa in London. I had auditioned for *Fidelio* and they had given me Leonore. I also sang in the San Francisco Opera Chorus from the time I was 21 until I left for Europe. I was still working with Stenberg.

How old were you when you went to Europe?

27.

Describe your college vocal training (undergraduate and graduate). Did your teachers emphasize the breath? Please explain.

I went to College of San Mateo, that was a junior college, for two years. I took chorus, but I was still going to be a first–grade teacher. I was still doing music as a hobby or avocation (taking private lessons, starting at 17). From there I went to San Francisco State University. By then, I decided I had a love for music and I changed from being a kindergarten teacher to a music teacher. I left San Francisco State because I had a baby.

When did you start with Vera Rózsa?[132] *And what kind of training did she give you?*

She was wonderful! She was the teacher of Kiri Te Kanawa and many others such as Anna Reynolds.[133] She taught very high–ranking singers. Vera was the one who really worked on breathing with me. She also worked on my top, the high notes. I was 27. One of the first lessons she said to me, "In the palm of your hand, you have a little bit of water and you are sipping it." (*DeVol sips from the palm of her hand*). "You sip and stop the breath, sip and stop the breath." This is so that you begin to get in touch with your breathing and the muscles that pull the air in. When you do that and then stop the breath, you can feel the abdominals working. And then conversely, you do basically the same thing with breathing out—blowing out in little puffs and stopping the breath, which gives you the controlled exhalation. She smiled when she first saw me because I had sent her a tape, and she accepted me as a student. I went over and walked in the door and she smiled, and she told me several lessons later, "You know why I smiled when I first saw you? You sang like a little girl." In other words, I was singing on inadequate support. So that's the first thing she went to work on. I worked with her for about eight months in London. I saved money; I was working in a financial company, and I would sing in little groups and the money that I would get from that I would save. For the plane trip over to London, I was given a grant by James Schwabacher, a teacher and supporter of the arts. He gave me the airfare to go over there.

[132] Barry Millington, "Vera Rózsa Obituary," *The Guardian*, November 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/nov/22/vera-rozsa-obituary (accessed November 1, 2020). According to Millington, Rózsa developed lung damage from pneumonia, but "developed a special breathing technique in order to sustain a partial career; she was later able to use her knowledge to assist singers with particular vocal problems."
[133] Ibid., Rózsa's students also included Karita Mattila, Anne Sofie von Otter and Ileana Cotrubas.

From there, who was your next teacher?

Janet Parlova. I still go to her. She became my close friend. When I was preparing to go to Germany, I had Jess Thomas, I had Janet and then I had a coach at the San Francisco Opera. I never worked exclusively with one person. That would have been the period before 1964 and 1969 when I went to Europe.

What did you do with Janet?

She worked on resonance. She had me find what she called the "tiny voice." That's when your air is so balanced with your support. Once you had the tiny voice, you could sing anything— any volume and dynamic. We worked more on arias—"Pace, pace" and "Come scoglio." One exercise she gave me was from Martial Singher with whom she studied. You hold your jaw and rest the tongue against the bottom teeth and you speak [i] [a] [i] [a] [i] [a] [i]—you try to get the vowels resonating evenly, then on one pitch in the middle range and then a second 12121, then 12321, then 1234321, 123454321, 12345654321, then seven notes. If you have a student with a tongue problem, it eliminates it. You are forcing yourself to keep the tongue quiet except for moving the tongue to pronounce the vowels. The muscles of the neck are all relaxed (*she touches her neck*), and all you are doing is moving the tongue to pronounce the vowels with even resonance for each vowel.

Would this exercise help the breath too?

Yes! One of my teachers gave me staccati—I am always surprised when I get a student and they have not been taught staccato. I think it is very important. It strengthens the abdominal muscles. It is worth the work because you will strengthen your abdominals, and if you have a

passage that is *fioritura,* practice it legato, and if it's legato, practice it staccato. You just do the reverse. The staccato and the legato should work hand in hand. For the staccato, you need to stay on the line, and for the legato you need to keep the support that you have in your staccato.

Describe your young artist experience and the vocal training you received. At what age should the young dramatic soprano apply to an internationally recognized young artist program?

Unfortunately, people age out before they are ready. Because I think I have a theory; I can tell you from personal experience that your voice is not ready for the dramatic repertoire until you are around 35. The voice and the body undergo a change. You can start singing and learning the roles before that, but you should not be out on stage doing it. And who waits to 35? At 30, you are told you are too old —you have aged out.

What is a plan for those voices?

I don't know. You tell me. Hopefully, you can get the job singing lighter repertoire until your voice matures. You can apply for young artist programs, but apply when you are younger and sing the lighter repertoire. There's no hurry to jump into dramatic repertoire. Mozart—Anna, Elvira, Countess, but don't sing Elettra in *Idomeneo*.

As a professional, what breath exercises or vocalises are most helpful in maintaining excellent breath control?

I like the staccato-1358888531 on [ha]

What did you do with Jess Thomas?

I went to him specifically—well he was doing a masterclass—and I wanted to sing for him because of his stature in the world as an international star and because he sang in the repertoire that I was interested in. I was covering Ariadne; I wanted to study Ariadne with him—so I went to Jess. I studied the role with him—he filled the gap. He told me what I should be thinking. Jess Thomas showed me how to sing *piano* and improved my musicianship. Taught me to be subtle about expression.

If young dramatic voices started training earlier, would they be able to start a career sooner?

Yes, but not in the dramatic *Fach*. Study the languages, learn how to play the piano — you can learn your German diction. You need to do what Birgit Nilsson did. She says in her biography—the first thing I did when I got a score was look for the piano places. A big voice should be able to sing in the same manner as a lyric soprano—it is just that the voice is bigger.

What is it—why do teachers feel confused about teaching a big voice?

It takes more time and understanding to get the voice to sing focused. You do not produce a big voice differently than any other voice. You have to assure the young dramatic that it is okay if their voice is unwieldy at the moment; it needs good support.

What repertoire were you given as an undergraduate and what repertoire would you suggest for a young dramatic soprano?

Anything and everything —*Verdi Requiem*, Schütz, [other] Baroque, *Liebeslieder*, "Von ewiger Liebe" [by] Brahms…Schubert, Strauss, everything…Wolf, Zemlinsky, in my later years

Franz Schreker; he was the head of the Berlin School for Music. I sang everything from soup to nuts. It was not so categorized as it is today—not so compartmentalized. As a professional singer, if I were singing Bellini, I had to change my resonance—much more like the old–time sopranos—placement more forward.

As a young singer, were there any dramatic voices that you listened to that helped you grow technically?

I loved Eileen Farrell and Leontyne Price; I played their records over and over again. She sang *Simon Boccanegra*—beautiful Verdi and I have Puccini arias of Price.

Dolora Zajick

How would you identify a potential dramatic soprano voice?

Well, it is a tricky question because a lot of people mistake timbre for size, and you can have someone that has a very lyric sounding voice, but it's actually quite huge. It is really the size of voice and where the tessitura is; the soprano tessitura is B to B and for a mezzo it would be Bb to Bb. And that's one of the ways you can tell what the difference is between a dramatic soprano or a dramatic mezzo. And it is important because there are a lot of dramatic mezzos that are being pushed into the soprano rep because they have high notes and people mistake them for sopranos, and they will have a timbre that sounds very soprano-ish, but when you check out the *passaggio* it's actually low and that is really what determines what the voice type is. And I don't know how many colleagues I have seen that turn themselves into sopranos, and they stop singing the mezzo rep and they entered a no man's land and they sounded really great for a couple of years and then there was damage. They got a wobble or the voice just did not have a bloom on the top like it used to and then they go back to being a mezzo, but it is not as good as it was before they turned themselves into sopranos. I have seen that happen a lot actually. And I have been told I was a soprano, but if you read *Last of the Prima Donnas* when Ebe Stignani talks about it (and I find my voice similar to Stignani's) she says that the battle isn't over yet. People were still trying to push her into being a soprano, but she knew she was a mezzo because she knew where her *passaggio* was.

What were the indicators that you were a big voice?

Well, it was loud (*laughter*). It was loud and unwieldy. But the thing about—it is breath control, but it's not so much strength and size of cords as it is coordination because usually, not

always true though, but usually when a person has thick vocal folds they usually have a trunk size to go with it. Now there are various trunk sizes-there's length, there's width and there's roundness, and there's all different kinds of combinations. So you could be diamond shaped or triangular shaped —they can be broad at the shoulders and very narrow at the waist, or they could not be that wide, but very round so that has a lot to do with how much you can put behind that voice—is how much trunk muscle you have and usually the size of the trunk goes with the size of the voice. The problem is with a big voice it is more about coordination. It is difficult to coordinate that size of voice. It is kind of like a baby elephant trying to walk down a flight of stairs. It is hard to do the refined stuff in the beginning because it just takes more coordination. When smaller voices have technical shortcomings, they are less glaring than they are with a larger voice because when a larger voice is focused or unfocused it is more obvious. So a voice is going to sound uneven and inconsistent a lot of times with a big voice.

Did you take voice lessons in high school and, if you did, describe your training? Please explain specific methodology for breathing and onset of tone.

No.

Describe your college vocal training (undergraduate and graduate). Did your teachers emphasize the breath? Please explain.

Okay, I was almost 22 when I started singing opera, and my first teacher was Rosemary Mathews, and she was a student of Ted Puffer. Ted Puffer was really a conductor and had his own opera company with Nevada Opera so the first year I studied with Rosemary. She had an unusually large voice—she was a dramatic soprano. She kind of recognized a dramatic voice

when she saw one, and she had been trained by Ted so when she started working with me it was an easy thing for her because she was working with another large voice. She did work on breath, but the technique that she had been trained on and the technique that I have been trained on is that the breath is really a result of using really a different part of the brain. It is not what she said and it is not what he said, but it is about listening to the focus, and if you are not really listening for focus, it is like a blind person trying to cross the street, but you can't see the stop light. All the breathing exercises in the world won't help if you are not listening for the result. There is a lot of work on breath, but it is always connected with the sound. So he had me do things like sustaining an sssssss. Both of them had me do that early. He also had me do the dog pant just so I knew where my diaphragm was. Ted's approach was very simple. He would ask, "Have you ever watched a baby breathe? A baby breathes quite well. He doesn't even think about it." And in the process of learning how to speak, we often lose that natural good type of breathing. Learning how to take a breath in is just as important as knowing how to exhale a breath and control it. So actually, intaking a breath is more difficult to learn than the exhalation, but there has to be balance so that you are able to go in and out in and out. I tell my students a good exercise is to take a minute a day, just one minute each day, and see if you can watch yourself breathe without interfering. Because if you don't think about it, you breathe naturally; you just go on naturally. If you think about it, all of sudden it gets complicated. The gene that's probably responsible for this is the FOXP2 gene. If we didn't have that gene, we wouldn't be able to speak. They turned that gene on in mice, and it is interesting because all of a sudden there was an increase in innervation to the lips, the snout, the vocal folds and breathing, oddly enough. And there is a crossover between involuntary and voluntary breathing. When you speak, you have to do it voluntarily. Whereas when you're not thinking you are just breathing, you don't have to think about it.

Because of this crossover between voluntary and involuntary muscles, what happens is opera singers enter a no man's land that other kinds of singers don't enter, and mastering that part of the brain—it is really in the sensory motor cortex. It goes from ear to ear. It is lead by the ear and that is why smart people often have a lot of trouble learning how to sing; they want to do everything in a cerebral way and it is really a sensory motor exercise. Now, of course, you need your cerebral cortex to make decisions and plan things. They did a very interesting study. Who was it—it was opera singers, it was triathlon athletes, Carmelite nuns, Buddhist monks, martial artists and bomber pilots—I think. They wanted to find out what part of the brain was functioning when they were doing things at the highest level, and we are talking about world–class people. The people who are really at the highest levels of this—and shock of all shockers—their cerebral cortex was shut down; they shut down their cerebral cortex when they were performing. And it had nothing to do with intelligence. It is kind of like an athlete's brain (the good ones)—they know how to do it—being in the zone—almost as if someone else is doing it. You have to cut loose and trust your brain to do the right thing and let your brain learn to operate in a different way. Breathing is very complex. If you are a pop singer and you just use your natural speaking voice when you sing and you just sort of elaborate and grow on what you do there—you don't go through that process. But if you are going to sing opera, you have to learn how to breathe differently. And that's why singers, no matter how talented they are, they enter this area—it can last ten years for some people—where they don't know what they're doing. It takes that long to master that. Opera singing is very different from other types of singing. It is even more difficult than Tuvan Mongolian throat singing. You know those people that sing two pitches at the same time? It is actually more difficult than that because actually even though it sounds more impressive, throat singing is actually easier and it is easier to do once

you understand the concept and know how to do it. But opera singing, that's different. Why is it that a high school kid can sing "Mary had a little lamb," and it sounds terrific, and then all of a sudden they take lessons and then they can't sing anymore?

How would you explain that?

Well, it is because of the process of learning to master the breathing exercises and to master the focus that you need to sing—having it all connected takes years of training. The same reason it takes a Carmelite nun or a Buddhist monk years to learn how to do that contemplative prayer or meditation. That is why it takes years, and one way to start is to be able to observe yourself without interfering. I tell students to just watch yourself breathe and don't do anything—just watch what you do naturally. When you can accomplish that, you are tapped into the right part of the brain. It is almost like one part of the brain is watching another part of the brain.

I've read that any singing exercise is going to help with the breathing. What do you think?

Well, if it is applied properly. First of all, there is a part of warming up—there's certain things. It has been my experience that really young people do best if they do their breathing first only under supervision. Then when you are sure that they know what they are doing, then you can cut them loose to exercise and then they don't go off on all these weird tracks.

Under the supervision, what would take place?

A voice lesson, being with a good voice teacher that is there when they are doing it. Then you are sure that the singer knows. With certain types of exercises, it's good to let them

experiment. Other kinds of exercises—when it comes to breathing—I do it one step at a time. I have this one exercise where they go tssssss, and, of course, they hate doing it because it is a tedious exercise, but it is an important one. And I tell them they have to make that tssssss very steady, and you have to be able to do it three times. And then when I'm sure that they know how to do that, then now I tell them to do a hum, and then when they can do that correctly, then you apply it to an exercise where they are actually singing. In my case, I do the [ma] [me] [mi] [mo] [mu]. (*She demonstrates the exercise*). It is a really good exercise because they have to learn how to close to the m without closing their jaw. Usually singers think that you are opening your jaw like a drawer, but it is actually like a hinge. (*She makes the movements with her hands—one on top of the other*). The sensation is that it is going back. If your jaw is back, it is very easy to bring your lips together and to bring the tongue to do the consonants towards the front of the mouth. But if you go like that (*puts her jaw in the drawer position*), it is almost impossible to bring your lips together without moving your jaw. You have to close your jaw to say an [s], but you don't have to move the jaw for [g], [k] or [d]— all that should be done without moving the jaw.

Now these exercises—how do you tell the student to breathe in between each tssssss?

What I do is a recovery breath because it is more natural. Usually when singers take a deep breath, they tense up and take less breath in. The only way you can really expand breath intake is to starve yourself of oxygen. If they learn how to do a recovery breath and just repeatedly do that over and over they are going to increase the amount of air that they are going to be able to take in every time they do it, and it gradually builds up. What you do is you go to the end until you run out of breath like tssssss (*she demonstrates the exercise*) so when you run out of breath you want to hold it for a couple of seconds—so you discipline yourself. You want

to starve yourself of oxygen and then you let your body take the breath rather than you take the breath. Then the pieces that you give them to work on when they are at that stage are things that have a long phrase so that they have to sing that phrase, and then they have to do a recovery breath to do the next one.

What kinds of repertoire would you have them work on?

Handel; they have all those long runs.

Any piece in particular?

I would have a soprano do Rosina. So what it does is that you sing this line and then you have to do a recovery breath to get the next breath in and that is one way to kick start it. There are some singers that would purposely not take breaths so that they would have that recovery breath. You know who would do that? Dmitri Hvorostovsky; he would so that. He did everything on a recovery breath.

How would you define a recovery breath?

You starve your body of oxygen to the point that your body is going to take in more air than it normally would out of sheer desperation. It is the reason you start panting when you exercise; your body does it naturally. You always want to tap into those natural ways of doing things because otherwise what happens is you start using all the wrong muscles. Kids when they think that they are supporting they start squeezing their muscles and pull their tongue back and tense up their tongue and sound like Kermit the Frog. Getting them to use, well, less is more and then really exercise the muscles that they do need. Now there are levels, there are stages of

breath capacity in students. First you have your beginner, and that's just getting them to take a breath and knowing what a recovery breath is, learning how to sustain it without using all the wrong muscles, find out which muscles are involved like the back muscles and the abdominal muscles, chest compression— then you have to make allowances for differences in trunk size because someone who's got a long, narrow torso, that torque is going to be in a slightly different place. You are still using all the same muscles, but the center is going to be felt in a different place. If you have average proportions, you are going to feel it in the abdominal muscles. If you have a short, wide torso, you are going to feel it around the bottom of the rib cage—all the way around there's kind of like a band. So that people who are short and wide will feel that torque much higher. If you have a long back or a long torso like I do, the back is the center and not the abdominals although you still engage the abdominals, it is just that the back is more engaged than the abdomen. And of course, you know, that's only just the center because ultimately you need to use all of the muscles. And one way to find out which ones work best for you: you take a partner and press the palms of your hands against theirs, push down against the palms of their hands and press in against the palms (the other persons elbows are pulling in). It needs to be steady and not jerked and singers will find that certain muscles are engaged more than other muscles, and that is how they find out where their center is. What happens when singers first start supporting is that they tend to clamp down on their breathing. They tend to start squeezing everything together—it is important to keep it open even though the muscles are working—everything's flexible like painting, or doing push–ups, pull–ups or using stretchy bands. You want motion—fluidity is very important. You don't want to be like a tree trunk when you sing—you have to be able to move when you sing.

Now when you start the humming—on which pitch would you start the hum?

I start the ladies in chest voice-for a soprano on Bb3, or if they are a high soprano B3. The reason I use chest voice is that I want the ladies to engage in a natural speaking sound when they hum. Trying to get them not to use this (*points to her throat*) when they sing, which everybody thinks they need to do. For ladies, since they speak mostly in chest voice, that's usually the best place to start. Then it's a nice easy jump to, "Okay, let's work on chest voice." Then I do the same thing an octave higher.

When you do the hum, how many notes do you sing before you go up the octave?

There are several humming exercises, and you have to do them in steps. You do the first humming exercise after you have done three tsssssssss. Then you do the humming in chest voice on one pitch three times, doing the recovery breath and then you hum again, recovery breath and hum again then recovery. Next you hum the pattern 12321 from F4 and then you end where the high note is G5, (which means the starting note would be Eb5). What that does is that gets them over the *passaggio*. When they get to B4, they need to start adding that chest compression (taps her chest), and as they go higher, they are going to need that chest compression, and when they get to the *passaggio*, they're going to have to shift into that new sound—starting at about an E5 for sopranos. Now sometimes when they are having trouble finding that focus with the hum, I have them open their mouth [and continue the exercise]. It especially helps them when they are going over the *passaggio*.

Then singer's hit an intermediate level. This is for a more advanced student. This is when they know how to make the right sound—it is focused, it is properly supported, but they are running out of air. What you have to do is keep them from falling back into their old habits as

their trunk muscles are getting stronger and stronger. I tell them that I would rather them run out of breath and do it right than compromise to get to the end. Yes, I understand if you are in the middle of a performance, you have to get to the end of the phrase, but if you really want to develop your breath quickly, you really need to be able to go that extra second with that focus. And it is really the focus because once they start hearing it and they recognize the right sound, all of a sudden their support muscles—they don't have to think about support.

Can you describe this focus, and how you would help a student find that?

There are three levels of good teaching. The lowest level—and many singers have had good careers with this kind of teacher—the teacher recognizes the sound, the student recognizes the sound, but the teacher has no idea how that happened, and they have a lot of gobble-dee-goo. They'll have technical jargon or throw out scientific terms and impress the student, but they don't really know why—they just recognize the sound. But since the student recognizes the sound and the teacher recognizes the sound, the singer remembers it and actually figures it out themselves, and they do it by ear, and a lot of people have careers. They somehow have managed to learn a vocal technique that way—they just figured out their own way of doing it. The teacher would say, "Yes, that's it…no that's not!" The second level of teacher: the teacher recognizes the sound, the student recognizes the sound and they work as a team or a partnership to discover why it did that. What they do is they say, "Let's figure out why that worked." They may not say it that way; they might cover it up a little bit, but they'll figure it out, and this is a less common teacher. There aren't that many teachers that even do that, and some of them become really good teachers, which is the highest level. At the highest level, the teacher recognizes the sound, the student recognizes the sound and the teacher knows what exercises will get them there quickly

and why. They may know the scientific jargon; they may not—doesn't matter. What matters is (*she demonstrates her [nɪn] exercise located in Appendix A*) they know that's going to get their soft palate up and they know that's going to make the right sound and they're going to say, "That's it." They are just more specific as to why it is working the way it is. But there's something that they all had: the teacher recognizes the sound and the student recognizes the sound. If one of those ingredients is missing, it is never going to happen. If the student never recognizes the sound or the teacher doesn't, then that's a vital connection that means there's not going to be a development there. And so, the answer to your question is, "How do you do it?" Well, the teacher has to recognize the sound and the student has to recognize the sound. And that's what it takes. And that talent is actually not so common.

Can you define focus?

Well, there are different formants; they are really created by vowels and tongue position. Resonance is basically controlled by three factors—actually it's four. The first one is that you have to get your jaw in the right position. To get the first formant, you have to get the jaw in the right position; otherwise, you just don't get it, and that's been scientifically proven. If you don't open your mouth, the first formant is not there, and the rest of it comes from the tongue position, soft palate position and a very relaxed upper lip—you want to use the zygomatic muscles. Once you get the jaw in the right position, they'll start supporting. When their sensory motor cortex is listening instead of their cerebral cortex, then the brain will say, "Needs more air." Then you breathe the right way without even thinking. Then when you run out of breath, all of sudden they know which muscles they need to work more because those muscles are really working. When the singer reaches that level, that's a really dangerous level because a lot of singers—once they

discover it—will overdo it. Then they sprain their muscles. They'll say, "I don't know why, it was sounding good for a week." But you have to pace it; it's like doing reps in a gym. Beginning singers are doing hit or miss or making a lot of mistakes before they get the right sound; there is a little bit of wear and tear on the vocal folds so they are going to be a little tired after a lesson. Whereas a singer that is an intermediate level kind of singer, the fatigue is not going to be vocal; it is going to be in their trunk muscles. They will have a sore back after they sing. I tell students that they shouldn't sing more than 45 minutes a day this way. If they have to sing, they should mark except when they really, really need to sing out. The ideal is that at the intermediate level they should sing 45 minutes a day or an hour and 15 minutes every other day. I wouldn't sing more than that.

Are there exercises that you would add on once you had an intermediate student?

Then it's a matter of refining, gaining strength and becoming more coordinated—like doing an accent with your trunk muscles so that you have that point of sound when you are doing an accent or a marcato, or learning how to sustain it and being able to apply it in an artistic way. That's when you are getting into a more advanced singer.

I wanted to get back to your college training. Again, any exercises that you thought helped you vocally?

Once I learned the basic breathing, it was more about singing…singing and singing properly that developed most quickly, and just making sure I was doing it right. That develops the breath faster than anything—singing correctly with the focus. The problem with young singers is that they don't always know what they're doing yet so they practice the wrong way.

One of our pet peeves is that teachers say, “They don’t practice!” And the teacher hasn’t given them specific things to practice. They tell them, “You have to work hard,” but they don’t break it down for them and say, “Okay, you need to do this, this and this” because they don’t know at that age. I mean, they should be practicing; I don’t mean don’t practice. But, teachers don’t give their singers guidance on how to practice and they say, “You have to do this and you have to learn this….” Too many singers and too many conservatories are doing too much in classroom work and not enough one on one. They are doing all this stuff unsupervised. There’s nobody guiding them. It is economics; it is all about money. Money comes to a conservatory, and it usually gets split down the middle, and the voice department gets half and the instrumental department gets half, and it costs ten times as much to educate a singer. And then when they do get money, they put it in a fancy production rather than giving the students what they really need. A fancy production is not necessarily going to give—it’s going to make the school look good—but it’s not going to give the singer what they need. Maybe it would be better instead of having a really expensive set for a school opera is to have—bring in a couple of world class coaches to work with the kids. That would be more beneficial. So even if they do get the money, I’m not always sure it is spent wisely. And, unfortunately, the publicity and the donations are dependent on the school opera. It is a tricky balance to maintain for someone who has the eye for quality and someone who understands the economics of the situation. It’s a tricky balance to maintain.

Do you want to discuss anything about how you were trained as an undergrad or graduate student as far as your teachers and how they trained you technically?

When I was going to UNR, there were only two classrooms: the band room and the chorus room, and all the classes were held in those two rooms. There was 110 and 112, and on

one side there were studios and on the other side there were practice rooms with old beat up pianos, and the piano students had a special key to get into [a certain practice room] because the pianos were so bad—they were out of tune because they had no money. I remember when the opera budget was $200. My adviser kept saying, "Why do you keep taking vocal rep every year?" "You've already taken it!" I said, "Well, that's the only time we get a chance to get up and sing." It is a combination of vocal rep, vocal lit; it covers a lot of territory, and it is useful information. But he says, "You don't need it for your degree," and I said, "But I need it to sing." Anyway, so Rosemary was my first teacher, and she left. Ted always had a couple of grad students take care of the students, but, basically, he taught everything except for Music History and Music Theory, but all the other stuff was the same teacher. And he ran the local opera company so if you had any kind of a voice at all, you were immediately conscripted into the opera chorus, and if you could sing and you could deliver, you got to sing small roles. So at almost 22 when I started taking voice lessons, they put me in the opera chorus, and that same year they started giving me little roles. And so that was my education. I did not have a standard education. And because the teacher was knowledgeable and he was a conductor, he understood things from a conductor's point of view; it gave you more of a global picture of what you needed to perform.

Let us say your first five or ten lessons…what did he focus on?

Well, exercises…breathing exercises… [ma] [me] [mi] [mo] [mu]. (All the exercises that Zajick learned with Ted Puffer are in Appendix A). I didn't do them very well in the beginning, but at least I was familiar with them. And then, he spent the first 25 minutes vocalizing and the second 20 minutes after that singing something. My first aria was "Se tu ma'mi sospiri," and the

second one was “Il mio bel foco.” I learned those two right away, and the third thing I learned was “Voi che sapete.” I remember when I went into my first lesson, I just opened up the aria book to the first thing that was there and it was “Ortrud’s Curse.” And I go, “Can I sing this?” And he goes, “I don’t know, can you?” (*Laughter*) I ended up actually singing it later in life.

And so basically, he was your primary teacher.

Yes. He was my primary teacher for most of my career until he got older and passed away. Teaching voice became my voice teacher after that. So teaching voice actually made me refine my technique.

Do you want to explain how?

Well, when you try to demonstrate a trill or a *pianissimo* or something, you have to be able to demonstrate it. And if you want someone else to know how to do it, you have to figure out why it does that. I was able to analyze everything right away. And Ted, my teacher, said that it was important that I taught right from the very beginning because he said that I would absorb a vocal technique much more quickly. He sent me my first students when I had only been studying three years. And it did, it really did. Of course, the first people he sent me were just horrible, but he kept sending me better and better students as I got better and better at what I did.

Were specific pedagogy books or vocalise books instrumental in your journey of mastering your vocal technique-specifically the breath?

No.

Describe your young artist experience and the vocal training you received. At what age should the young dramatic soprano apply to an internationally recognized young artist program?

I got my master's degree at UNR, and then I went to Manhattan School of Music, and I didn't want to get a doctorate degree, but I wanted to keep my foot in the door, and I needed to get to New York, and I went to Manhattan School of Music for three years in their young professional program. It is for students who do not want to pursue a doctorate and they already have their master's. It gives you a little more freedom with what classes you take, and I could concentrate on classes that I thought were important for the career. And then I entered the Tchaikovsky competition in 1982, and I got the Bronze Medal. And I had my first feather, and I auditioned for Columbia Artists and the story is actually more complicated than that. The opera director called; it was his manager and he said, "I got this big mama mezzo soprano I don't know what to do with; I think you need to hear her." And he arranged for me to audition. He said, "You got to do it now while you won this Tchaikovsky competition. You got to move on it now." So I sang for her. I sang "O don fatale" and then I sang "Non più mesta." It was Betsy Crittenden; the manager I have until this day, and she suggested that I audition for Chicago, The Met Young Artist Program and Merola, and I got accepted to Merola. It was a great fortune that I got there because Terry McEwen at that time was the general manager, and had recorded the three big Verdi mezzos: Ebe Stignani, Giulietta Simionato and Fedora Barbieri so he knew what a Verdi mezzo was supposed to sound like so I was in great hands; they never miscast me. They always gave me the right rep to sing, and so I was older when I went in because I really wasn't right for those smaller apprenticeships and it turned out to be a good thing because when I went into Merola, I was the right age—I was 31. When they looked at me and they heard me sing, I didn't know this at the time what was going through their heads, but they were thinking, "We

might be able to groom her for Azucena." They were doing a *Trovatore* in the summer. In other words, I went in at a level where they looked at me and they said this is an international level voice we just need to refine it a little bit, give her some experience. And, indeed, that's what happened. They gave me my first big role in a big house, a debut, big success and that's basically what started my career. After that, the rest was history. I was hired everywhere after that because I went in at the right age and right level of development for my voice type.

At what age should a dramatic soprano apply to an internationally recognized young artist program?

When their vocal technique is solid. Because the other stuff you are going to get. They will have international level coaches; they are going to have acting. They are going to have all those things available to the singers. What they aren't necessarily always able to offer is vocal instruction. So, if their vocal technique is really together in the right way before they go in, that will make a huge difference in surviving the other stuff that they throw at the singer. It doesn't mean they shouldn't be working on the other stuff, that's not what I mean by that because the more together a singer is in those other areas, the better it is, but if you have all of those other things and your vocal technique is not together, unless you are very lucky and you've got a really good voice teacher there or they let you work with your voice teacher or something, you're not going to survive the situation very well. I saw many, many singers destroyed by that because their vocal techniques were not together when they went in. And sometimes, in some programs, when you have a voice teacher running it, they'll see a singer with flaws and they'll take the singer because they'd love to get their hands on that voice, and they're not necessarily always looking at the bigger picture like, "Can they do the rest of it?" And they have to do the rest of it

too, but the rest of it won't count if your vocal technique isn't together. So that's why, somebody might be more ready, like Jonah Hoskins…(young tenor, who was in the Opera Discovery program at The Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, Winner of the 2019 National Met Council Auditions). He was technically precocious and that's why he could go in at such a young age—Jonah is currently in the Met's Young Artist Program. He really understands technical matters. A century ago, people were technically more ready at a much earlier age than they are now. That's because if you were going to become an opera singer, if you were a girl you started as young as 12 and boys 15 and you worked a half hour every day on a voice lesson, and then you did some *solfège* and then you worked a little bit on phrasing. That's where a répétiteur would come in. They would sing the line and [the student] would copy it. They were getting that daily. They were getting very short doses, but on a daily basis and so by the time a singer was in their early twenties they already had ten major roles under their belts, and they were technically ready and they were singing in smaller theatres and the orchestras weren't as loud. You have to take all of that into consideration. Today, a singer needs to have a certain amount of physical stamina and they need to know what they are really doing so the training takes longer because they usually don't start studying until they discover they have a voice, then they get a weekly lesson, and if they are lucky, they get coaching and so it takes a lot longer to pull it together. Ideally, we should be starting younger, but the thinking behind that is, well, if you invest all that in the singer and it turns out they don't have a voice; you can't always tell when they're that young.

What are your recommendations for the most effective breathing and onset exercises for the young dramatic soprano?

I don't think it matters which exercises you use as long as they are effective. Does it get the voice focused? Does it get the support going the right way? When they sing the vowels, are they operatic, but at the same time do they sound like the vowels are supposed to be? Is the diction clear? Are they able to integrate it into musical expression, artistic things? Do they understand style? You have to be able to work their vocal technique into those things. It's not just a surface thing that you slap on the top. Technique has to be in everything that the singer does. I know singers that thought that because they do every musical thing, they were perfect. But it wasn't vocally integrated. That requires an ear. I don't think it matters which exercises you use, it just matters if they're effective. There are teachers that use exercises that are totally different than the ones I do, but they develop the same things. They get the jaw loose, they get the corners forward, they get the singer's face and after a while, things will get there. The technique that I was trained on was the Vidal technique. There were three Vidals. It was actually an offshoot of the Manuel García school. So what happened was because it was harder to travel back and forth to places-groups of people didn't have as much exposure to each other. The *bel canto* school had split into three schools, and they were going in their different directions. The Italian was going in one direction, the Spanish in another and the French in another. And they were starting to develop little differences in style. There was this German, Jewish person living in Milano; he had been born and raised in Milano. He moved back and forth constantly between Spain and Italy and basically re-Italianized, in an old school way, the Italian bel canto school. He took the Spanish school and re-Italianized it and there were two others-Raoul Vidal and Wilhelm and Wilhelm was my teacher's teacher and this is an old school so the [nɪn] (See Appendix A)

exercises-- those are all Vidal exercises. (*Zajick demonstrates other Vidal exercises*). Those are the exercises I used. First you get the voice warmed up, you do some staccatos and then you do a descending five note scale on [i] (See Appendix A); it's easier for ladies to get focus in the [i] vowel. Then you can go to the [a]. Then you go to flexibility exercises, where you have to give a "kick." (*She demonstrates an ascending/descending scale with an accent at the top done with the abdominals*). It comes from there, like if you were walking along and you were singing and you stepped the wrong way and you jerked your breathing mechanism and it jerked your voice, that's what's making that happen. That's how you do an old school accent. You concentrate on being able to start a tone from nothing. Being able to do a *messa di voce* and being able to connect two notes together—that's very important. I was trained on that right away. You want to have a clean attack on any note that you made with no grabs at all.

Any specific exercises for the clean onsets?

Staccato and sometimes if you—the opposite of a glottal is breathiness. When people have a very breathy sound, that's not enough tension as opposed to a glottal which is too much tension and so sometimes having them make the sound breathy or put an h in front. That's traditionally why an h is before a staccato. It's to keep you from grabbing.

Do you have a certain pattern of the staccato that you would recommend?

I just do an arpeggio-1358531 on [ha], and I go as high as I can go-starting on middle C. I used to be able to go up to an F#6. I lost it during menopause when I turned 59. It went really fast too. One week it was there and the next week it was gone, and I said, "I can't do the Queen of the Night anymore!" That's one way you can tell the difference between a dramatic mezzo

and a dramatic soprano. The mezzo will top out—their bell register is going to begin on that E6. If she doesn't have a bell register, she won't get past that Eb6, and for a soprano it's an E6. So it is really the F6 where you flip over and then a mezzo, no matter how gifted a mezzo is, she's not going to be able to sing a G6-it's impossible. Whereas if the soprano, if she has a bell register, can usually sing that G6—sometimes on a good day. Sometimes on a bad day they can sing the F#, but they'll have that G6.

Before your operas, do you still do these same exercises—the Vidal?

Yes. It was a routine. Each exercise—you'd have to master the one before you can get the one after it. Once you know what the exercises are, the exercises are actually building up everything that needs to be built. I would just run through the routine. It would take me about 20 minutes to half an hour, and sometimes I'd break it up, and I'd be warmed up, and it put my voice in a really good place because I made such a habit of it, and I always did it in the right order.

If young dramatic voices started training earlier, would they be able to start a career sooner?

Yesterday yes, today no because theatres are bigger, instruments are louder. A lot of those little theatres in Italy only had 300 people, 600 or 700 people. Instruments did not put out as much sound; they are designed to put out more sound now. It wasn't as punishing on the voice. There were dramatic voices, but a young dramatic voice wouldn't have to push in order to be heard. So, and today, it's kind of like the Olympics, every year somebody is breaking the record. When the record is broken the bar is raised and there's more people on the planet than there ever were, but, it's like, they are still breaking the record in terms of volume.

What repertoire were you given as an undergraduate and what repertoire would you suggest for a young dramatic soprano?

Mozart is a really good choice for a lot of singers because it forces them to work on the *passaggio.* Mozart really forces technical things; you have to start the note dead on, which is really good training. There's a lot of good things you can get from Mozart, and then I would go to florid music; I would go to Handel, Rossini. I would do that before I would do art songs. The problem with art songs is that they get too precious. It becomes too much the way you would speak it rather than the way it should be sung and so students often get confused; their voices shut down. I remember a teacher saying, "Oh, no, no, no." The singer was like 18. And the teacher says, "You wouldn't use that kind of a voice in Baroque music." The thing that these Italian songs are good for is that they are good for a singer who is not ready for an aria, but really needs to be singing operatically. When they get older, then they do the Baroque thing. Then they know what they're doing technically. You don't want to try to put a size 10 foot into a size three shoe; it just doesn't work. And volume control…what you want to do is you want to get them not to push, not to sing super soft or super loud unless they technically can do it—*mezzo forte*, *mezzo piano* and expand it from there—expand it slowly according to their capabilities. It is more important that the *passaggio* is lined up, that it is one column of sound, and that they have the right breath support. *Piano* is one of the last things technically to learn. That's the last thing I learned.

What do you wish teachers knew or understood about this voice category?

It's really easy to put the cart before the horse: artistic expression before you have the means to do it. Most singers get the impression you have to sing Mozart a certain way, you have

to sing Verdi a certain way—technically, vocally—and it's the same. A good vocal technique is a good vocal technique, and mother nature decides if you are a Mozart singer or a Verdi singer. And some singers can do both like Eleanor Steber could sing Mozart and some light Wagner, and she could do Verdi so it depends on the singer. I think it's important that they don't try to get them to artistically do things before they understand what they are doing technically. I've seen more singers get in vocal trouble—they try to be—they think they're being so expressive, they've got this little marcato, but it's not in their body. They are kind of like puppies on linoleum when they're trying to get it in their body, and you have to be able to go through that stage with them so that they learn how to do it the right way.

As a young singer, were there any dramatic voices that you listened to that helped you grow technically?

Well, when I was a student at UNR, I worked in the music library and I listened to everything that I could get my hands on. They didn't have any money and they had stopped buying recordings after 1962 so all they had were the old-time singers. They had early Cossotto, they had Irene Minghini-Cattaneo, Irina Arkhipova, Barbieri, Stignani and Simionato. I thought that's what they all still sounded like so I was listening to them and my teacher encouraged it. He said that I should be listening to those people. I didn't know that people weren't singing that way as much as they used to. Some people were singing that way, but it was becoming more and more rare. He was also of the school that you need to learn it technically the right way so he wasn't really big on artistic details before mastery, but once mastery was obtained, he was a stickler. Like when he told me I had to do a *messa di voce*, and I said, "What's that?" And then he described it. He gave me some samples to listen to, and he said, "It's part of the old bel canto

school. If you want to have a bel canto vocal technique, you have to know how to do a *messa di voce*. And a *messa di voce* is most effective in one's tessitura. It's not wise to do one out of one's tessitura. If you are a soprano, you can do it from B4 to B5. Of course, you can *crescendo*/*decrescendo* lower than that, but a real *messa di voce*, he said was best in the tessitura. For me, it was a Bb4 to a Bb5. And much to my shock, I discovered that it was not that difficult because I had the right approach to it.

What advice would you give to someone who might be a potential big, voice soprano? Someone who is maybe 17, very young?

I know this is easier said than done, but it does not matter what school you go to. Most of the other stuff you can get either privately or through your school like Music Theory or French, German…just as a speaking course, I'm not talking about diction. You can take all of those languages from a native speaker, get them in your ear, learn the grammar. There's a lot that you can learn, but you don't need to be at a fancy school for you to learn, and if you don't have good coaches and they don't have a lot of high–class diction classes, you hire a private one and it's cheaper that way. Another thing is don't go to a fancy school thinking that you are going to get something better. The teachers take turns on new singers so that the teachers don't fight over the singers. You might get accepted to a big–name school, but you might get the bottom of the barrel as far as a teacher is concerned. You don't get to work with the best teacher because it's that teacher's turn to get to work with someone that was at the auditions. Don't be fooled by a school's name. If you look at all the top singers in the world and you ask them what their career path was, take the top 300 singers, you're going to have 300 different stories. There is no one path because talent rises to the top and that talent manages to hook up with people who can help

them and guide them. Then there's the "How do you know you're with a good teacher?" That's part of the talent. If you don't know you're with a teacher that's not helping you, then you don't have what it takes. If it's a political thing and you are afraid to upset that teacher, that's a different thing. That's not lack of talent, that's just the inability to know how to survive difficult political situations, which as treacherous as it is, a singer needs to know how to survive those and be self-protective of their needs without killing everybody off. You don't have to be a bad person to go to the top of the profession. You have to be good at what you do. And just because you have a big voice, does not mean you have what it takes to be an international opera singer. It takes a lot of different abilities.

Can you name them?

Well, you need kinesthetic empathy. If you can't analyze what someone's doing by how it sounds, it's going to be very difficult to absorb a vocal technique. You need an ear for language, you need to be musical, have a keen ear for style, and it is really crucial to be able to integrate.

Now at your Institute, how did you decide to add on the youngest group of singers?

When we started this, we decided to do an experiment. We decided to do master classes. And we advertised and said that anyone between the ages of 15 and 35 can participate. And we just wanted to find out what the lay of the land was out there. We discovered something very interesting. We heard dramatic voices under the age of 19, over the age of 30 and nothing in between. Why is that? And why was that everywhere we went? What happened that cut all those people out by the time they got to college? The reasons were surprising. They weren't what you

thought. We lose the biggest number of singers at the high school level because they don't sing classical music anymore. And if you have a kid that's got a really big voice, they often don't fit into their a cappella choir and they're constantly telling them to shut up. Singers that get so tied up in the requirements that the school loses track of where the potential really is—they don't quite know what to do sometimes so what happens is there is no real accommodation for the big voice. It is going to be a little ungainly so all their lyric colleagues are getting all the parts in the big opera and the person with the big voice is getting less and less experience because they don't know what to do with this person, and they end up often not getting the kind of nurturing that they need. Because the voice is bigger and it's harder to get those little technical details in, they'll say "Oh, they're just stupid," or "There's more to singing than just voice." But it's the puppy on linoleum thing. It's going to take them a little longer to get that. And sometimes schools don't have the patience to deal with that level of development.

Why don't they know what to do?

There's no short–term solution. The solutions are all long term, and for the purposes of the school, they can't really use them…right away…a lot of them. And the other problem is they'll always take those couple of voices that are really special, but when they're that young you don't know if they are going to be able to integrate and pull it together and they don't. And they don't want to deal with that. It's hard to work with people like that and usually -it's not always true. I know some lyric teachers that are great at teaching dramatic voices, but generally speaking a person that has a big voice does better with a person with a big voice so there's also the rarity of that voice type and then you get such a wide variety of teaching capabilities and skills and you never know—it's like Russian roulette. You could have this fabulous teacher at

this school and then you could have this teacher that [isn't as effective]. And they are all at the same school. Then the student has to go through this minefield to get to the best teacher.

Some believe you can teach a big voice the same way as you can teach a lyric voice so why isn't it being done?

Because it takes longer. It takes longer to integrate. A lyric voice can learn to do a real accent with the trunk muscles sooner than someone with a big voice because it takes more coordination to put it all together. And a lot of teachers get tired of investing in them because just when they start to get somewhere with the student they leave and they go to another program and they go to another teacher.

You had this big gap below 19 and over 30…

Since we had this gap, we decided we should start with them when they are really young. The first year, we took a control group to compare it with—just to see what happens if you go with the natural population—we took the first 22 people that showed up and we set an age limit—you couldn't be older than 22. We thought—let's work with the really young ones—and that is actually where we started. And then they started getting older and older. We started with young people since that's where we are losing a lot of singers. The biggest loss of students is right after the conservatory level or just at the end of it when singers go into a lot of these training programs and make them sing chorus for three or four hours a day. It's especially hard on tenors and sopranos. You lose a lot of singers at that level. They come out with their voices in shreds. And then when you get to a more advanced young artist program like Merola or Houston the Met or Chicago, you go from nothing to an embarrassment of riches, where you have 50

coaches working with a singer, but they are all throwing different information at them, and the singer has that inability to sort through it because they aren't centered with a good vocal technique, and so you lose singers. Singers at the conservatory level—the training takes longer so you lose them. Another key thing is that there is not enough coaching, but then, of course, coaching has to go hand in hand with technical expertise, and to get that level of coach to come—you can't hire a full-time coach. You would have to bring this coach for two weeks—bring this coach for three weeks. It's the only way it can be done if you want to get that high level of coaching, where the coach has a good ear. Anytime that a program can bring together—whether it is at a school or a program—you can bring for short periods the really good people—it makes a big difference [as opposed to] hiring a couple of all-around generic people. You need one, but everyone else should be imported. They always want to hire these big faculty positions, but when it comes to a skill like opera, if you want high–level skills imparted, you have to bring high–level people, and the high-level people work in the big houses. It's the only way you can get them.

How would you describe your program?

The coaches that are in our program are the highest–level coaches in the world. I mean there's more, they are not the only ones, but the point is that the people that we hire are the people that you would find at the international–level houses at the highest level of operas in the world. The only way you can get international development in singers—even if it is in retrospect and it takes them a while to learn it and then they go out and come back—the thing is you can only get that from that level of teacher—it is not possible to get it otherwise—you don't want people learning bad habits. You want people to understand what the standard really is and these

people—they work with the best people in the business so they know what's expected. They know what those kids are going to be up against. They know what that voice is going to sound like on a big stage. You know a lot times these people may be good singers but they're not going to cut it on a particular role on a stage because that coach has prompted, played, been the musical advisor, that's why we need those people that's why we hire those people. It works because our program isn't a whole year long. If our program was a whole year long, we always would have to have someone new coming in. And then you have to have someone who is willing to work with younger kids. Beatrice is willing to work with younger kids. (Beatrice Benzi is the head coach at La Scala). She loves working with the Discovery kids! And I'm pretty picky about the voice teachers too. We've got really good voice teachers and those don't grow on trees.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

As the dramatic soprano emerged, opera houses and orchestras grew in size and the music of Verdi and Wagner thrived. As the castrati disappeared, so did the *sostegno* breathing method championed by Mengozzi, ushering in the *appoggio* method described by Giovanni Lamperti and adopted by García II. With García's discovery of the laryngoscope, the scientific era of vocal pedagogy began. More understanding of the breathing mechanism and the larynx allowed for the dramatic soprano to thrive with world–renowned masters, such as Manuel García II, Mathilde Marchesi, Giovanni and Francesco Lamperti and Lilli Lehmann, to instruct them. Students of singing spent much time with their teachers honing their craft and developing a solid vocal technique.

In today's world, singers are missing the basics—breath training—making the situation even more dire for young dramatic sopranos, who need more airflow to maintain vibration. Although a multitude of treatises and exercise books exist on the subject, many young singers are not being taught how to breathe for singing. In reviewing the method books, it was obvious that many of the exercises were too difficult for a young soprano of 15 and may cause issues with pressing or pushing. After training a number of young dramatic soprano voices and familiarizing myself with their tendencies, it seemed necessary to provide an introductory method of breath training for the young dramatic soprano. These methods have been extremely successful in my studio. In addition to my breathing methods for the development of the young dramatic soprano, three singing experts, a *Jugendlich-dramatischer Sopran/Dramatischer Koloratursopran,* Angela Meade; a *Hochdramatischer Sopran,* Luana DeVol, who also directs the American Wagner Project; and a *Dramatischer Mezzosopran*, Dolora Zajick, who also is the President and General

Director of the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, provide their expertise on breathing and describe their breathing journeys: Angela Meade found her support after much self–exploration and inquiries to her teacher while in graduate school and through continued studies at the Academy of Vocal Arts. Luana DeVol found her breath support after spending eight months in London with Vera Rózsa at the age of 27. Dolora Zajick was able to find her breath support through the exercises of Vidal given to her by Ted Puffer, but noticed years later that many young, dramatic voices had vocal issues that should have been addressed much sooner, inspiring her to found the Institute for Young Dramatic Voices. The vocal exercises in the appendices provided by Meade, DeVol and Zajick are insightful.

Further study needs to be done to remedy the lack of efficient breath training for young dramatic sopranos. Studies might include researching the average length of time it takes for most dramatic sopranos to develop a solid breathing technique and researching the factors prohibiting them from getting the information and training they need, and then providing solutions for the most effective and efficient training. Talia states,

> Breathing is the motive force of singing and it is something that needs constant attention. It needs to be consciously studied until the singer elicits the correct and balanced muscle action every time. This needs to be so well drilled that it becomes second nature, and then and only then can one afford to leave it to the unconscious. Even then, the conscious mind needs to be constantly alert and monitoring the situation, and it must be ready to fly into action when necessary in order to adjust the instrument in the most balanced and coordinated manner**.** At this point it is worth remembering that the majority of the problems associated with singing can be traced back to incorrect breathing.[134]

Moreover, we must not forget the words of Francesco Lamperti: "He who has the best command over his breath is the best singer."[135]

[134] Joseph Talia, *History of Vocal Pedagogy: Intuition and Science* (Australia: Australian Academic Press, 2017), 61-62.
[135] Francesco Lamperti, *The Art of Singing* (n.p.: Kalmus, 1985), 24.

APPENDIX A

VOCALISES

Almost any vocalise is a breath-management exercise.

Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing*[136]

Angela Meade's Vocalises

Figure A.1. *Exercise 1: Arpeggio on [e] [a] and [a] [o]*. For stretching the soft palate and keeping space as well as even air flow.

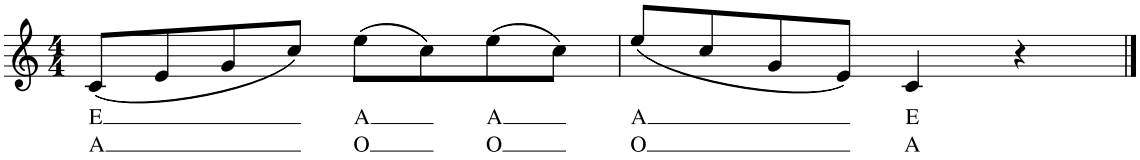


Figure A.2. *Exercise 2: Staccati Arpeggio*. For clean cord closure and attack and diaphragmatic engagement.

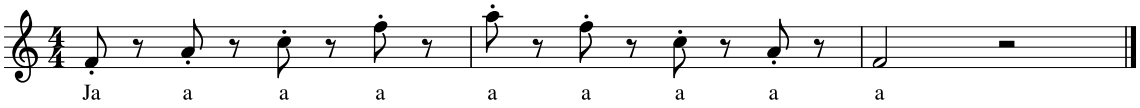


Figure A.3. *Exercise 3: Thirds on [a] [i]*. For keeping the tongue flexible from the highest position to the lowest position without engaging or supporting with the jaw.

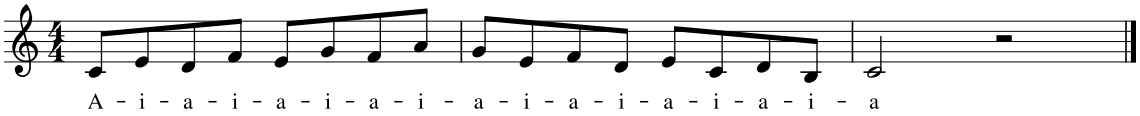
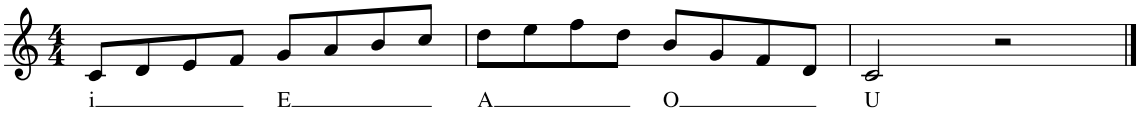


Figure A.4. *Exercise 4: Vowel Unification Scale*. For getting the breath moving and to keep all the vowels working together.



[136] Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (Boston: Schirmer, 1996), 37.

Figure A.5. *Exercise 5: Octave Scale on [i]*. For focusing the voice forward and learning to modify the vowel as you go up.

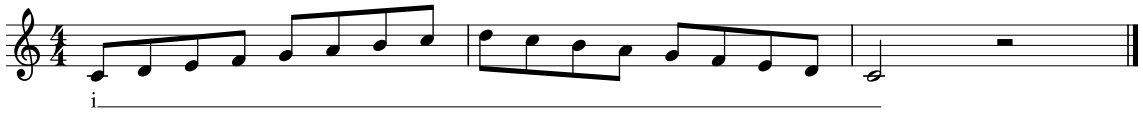


Figure A.6. *Exercise 6: Repeated Note Arpeggio*. To not use the tongue or jaw as support, but to open the mouth and let sound out and continue to support and reengage on repeated notes.

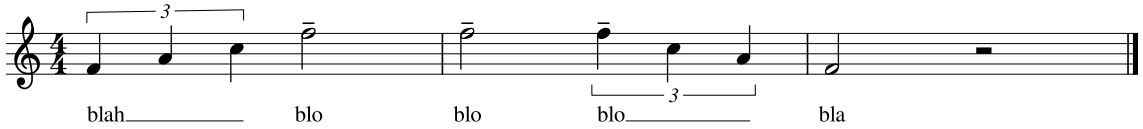


Figure A.7. *Exercise 7: Arpeggio on [bla]*. To not use the jaw or tongue and to practice using proper support.

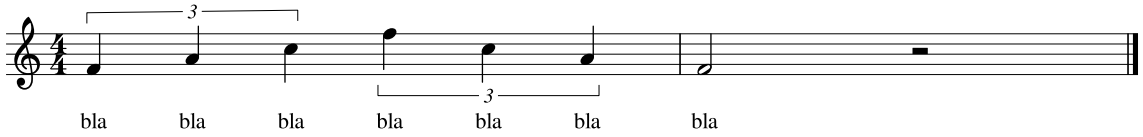


Figure A.8. *Exercise 8: Messa di voce Scale*. To work on managing breath for the *messa di voce* and keeping a focused vowel.

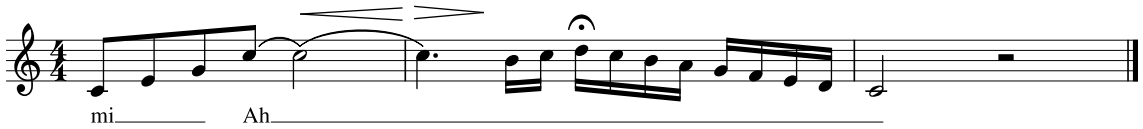


Figure A.9. *Exercise 9: Registration Blending Scale*. Engaging air for coloratura and blending registers.

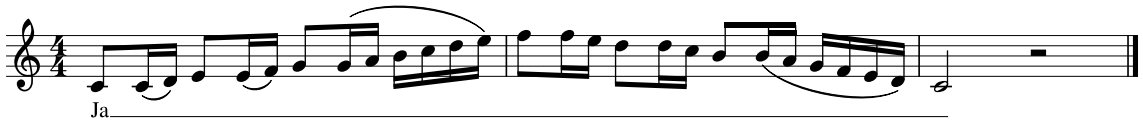
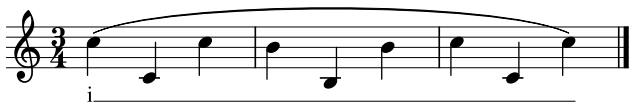


Figure A.10. *Exercise 10: Lower Passaggio Octaves on [i]*. To work on connecting from the middle/head voice down to the chest, it progresses downward when you transpose.



Luana DeVol's Vocalises

Figure A.11. *Exercise 1*: *Great Scale*.

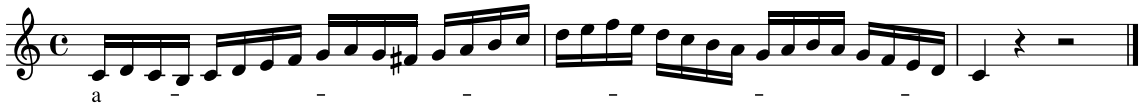


Figure A.12. *Exercise 2: [i] [a] [i] [a] [i]*. Totally relaxed facial muscles. You hold your jaw and rest the tongue against the bottom teeth and you speak [i] [a] [i] [a] [i] [a] [i]. You try to get the vowels resonating evenly, then on one pitch in the middle range and then a second 12121, then 12321, then 1234321, then 123454321, 12345654321, then seven notes – 1234567654321. Must puff the cheeks.

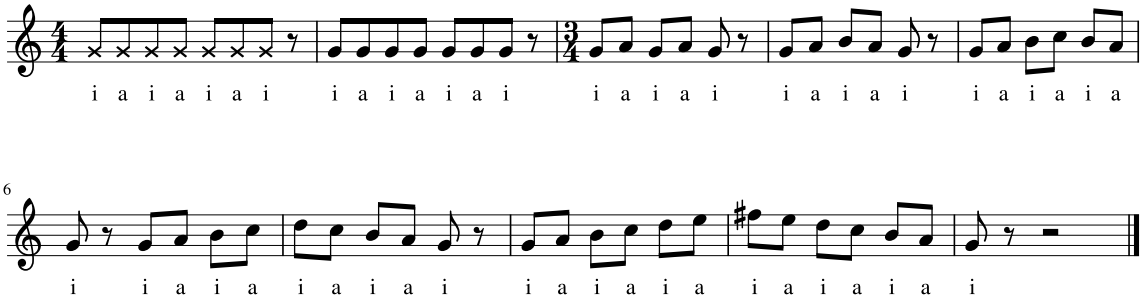


Figure A.13. *Exercise 3: Five Note Pattern on [bli] [bla]*. This exercise should be done while puffing the cheeks. Feeling cheeks—the [b] focuses the point of entry far forward—if you are loose here your body has to support.

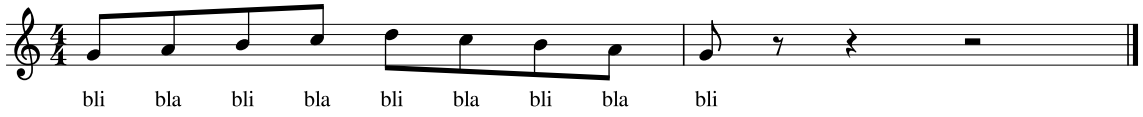


Figure A.14. *Exercise 4: Siren on repeating [d]*.

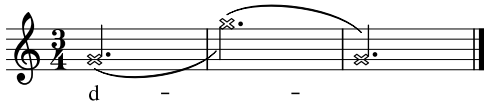


Figure A.15. *Exercise 5: Full Range Siren on [a]*. Siren on [a] from lowest note to the highest note in the range and back.

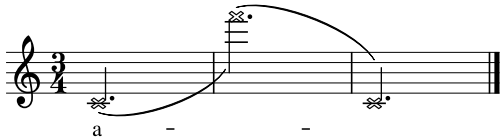
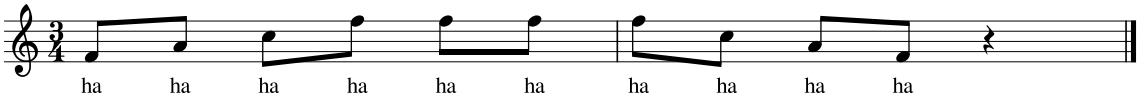


Figure A.16. *Exercise 6: Arpeggio on [ha]*.



Dolora Zajick's Soprano Vocalises

These exercises were given to me by Ted Puffer. Two-thirds of the exercises came from Vidal. They came from Wilhelm Vidal. Wilhelm said that he got it from Raoul Vidal, and Raoul Vidal said he got it from Melchiore Vidal. They were all related from what I understand. For example, the Spanish tenor Viñas [Francisco] was a student of Melchiore Vidal so if you get some old recordings of Viñas—that's what it sounded like. All three of the Vidals were German Jews that lived in Milan, and they went back and forth between Spain and Milan a lot. Melchiore was the first one, and he got his technique from Manuel García II, and then it became refined over the years. It was Jean Kraft, who was a comprimario singer at the Met, and she wanted so badly to get him [Wilhelm Vidal] to America. She talked a whole bunch of students into paying for lessons to bring Wilhelm over, and they did. Ted Puffer was one of those students, and he started taking lessons from Wilhelm. There is this line from Manuel García II to Melchiore Vidal to Raoul Vidal to Wilhelm Vidal to Ted Puffer and then there was me. It was a very strange trajectory. It was a controversial method, and when people say that they use the Vidal method, were they using the Melchiore Vidal method, or were they using the later developments? And, of course, people have their misunderstandings of technique, and people have their different trajectories. People will say, "Well, this is the Vidal method." That only comprises two-thirds of Ted's technique.

The technique that I was brought up on was to start out with a staccato on middle C (both sopranos and mezzos start here), and they have to be as short as possible. It is being able to do a

really short staccato connected to your abdominal muscles—your support. It is a very difficult exercise and most singers, especially the beginning singers, really struggle with it. I find that it is an extremely useful exercise because it immediately diagnoses exactly where the singer is (See Figure A.17). It encompasses a large range; you take it as high as a student can go. It covers all of the *passaggi* and can tell you how quickly they can find the pitch—if they are singing and still fishing for the sound rather than having the concept in their brain before they start—it tells you many things. This particular version was actually from the Stanley School—the Stanley method. Ted didn't like the Stanley exercises in general, but he did like the *staccati*; he felt it really opened up the singers. This was always the first exercise that Ted used, and he claimed that what he didn't like about the Stanley method was after a while people started sounding like steam whistles and sometimes, they would press their larynx down instead of letting it float down. There was this physical pressure to press down the tongue to press down the larynx and that would create a lot of tension in the sound. That's why he avoided the Stanley method in general, but he liked the staccato exercise so he kept that.

There were some exercises that were not Vidal that I suspect came from Julius Huehn. I'm not sure of the spelling, but he is probably the person responsible for the exercises that are not Vidal and that are not this Stanley exercise. The hum is also a Vidal exercise (See Figure A.22). Let's go back and start with the second exercise (not listed in figures) which is a five–note descending exercise 5-4-3-2-1 on [i]. The [i] vowel is the easiest vowel to do in head voice, and it is the easiest to pull the head voice all the way down to a middle C. You want the students to find that natural mixing point. There's a point where they discover that they naturally hit a wall, and what you want to do is keep it in head voice, but at the same time you also want them to be able to go down and naturally mix too. This exercise serves two purposes: bringing the head

voice all the way down, using the [i] vowel to do it, and it makes the singer aware of where that point is on the keyboard, where they want to mix naturally, and you don't want to get rid of that ultimately because that's a good thing, but you want them to do it with knowledge rather than by accident. So sometimes singers will enter a period of no man's land as they negotiate that. You continue the descending exercise until you get to C#5, where you change the vowel to [u]. The purpose of that is to start dealing with vowel modification of [u], which is tricky and that's where it begins. You jump to F5—this is where the most dramatic vowel modification takes place in a soprano. You aren't really singing an [u] up there…you are singing an [ʊ] (*Zajick demonstrates a modification of [u] on an F5*). [ʊ] is what I'm really singing and that turns into [u] [as you continue down the scale]; [u] is the most difficult vowel to do with this vocal technique. One of the things that this technique does is go right for the jugular. Instead of starting easy and going to the difficult; it goes for the most difficult things first and then it makes the other things easier. They are difficult to get in the beginning, but once you master it, the progress is extremely rapid. The [ʊ] at F5 has an [r] in it. As women ascend, it's not exactly how much of that they need in order to make that work; it depends on how they are shaped on the inside. There are always going to be slight variations. The sounds that we would speak to make an [i] sound is not the same in [sustained singing]. (*Zajick now sings a modified [i] vowel— [ɪ]*). It's a very difficult concept for a young singer to get—to understand what vowel modification really is. Now some teachers just completely skip vowel modification and they say, "It just doesn't sound like an [i]." And then they just adjust it vocally until it sounds like an [i]. It accomplishes the same purpose; there are just different approaches to the same problem.

With this descending five–note exercise, you get to C#5 and switch to [u], then you jump to F (don't sing the notes in between) and switch to [ʊ], you jump back to C#5 and switch to

open [ɛ], which is more like an [œ]. You continue on [ɛ] or [œ] until you end up back on middle C, and if they have done it right, it will have a lot more richness in the sound. It forces them to bring that focus down with an open vowel all the way down to that middle C in head voice.

The next exercise is a flexibility exercise; this is a Vidal exercise (Figure A.18). You want to kick the top note (accent mark shown in exercise). Sopranos will begin on F4. (The progression of vowel modifications is shown in Figure A.18—these vowel modifications are used in the middle range until students are comfortable singing a more closed [i] and [e]). You continue until the highest note is a G5. You want to pass through the *passaggio*. When they start getting into the *passaggio*—you have to remember that the spread from here to here (zygomatic muscles) is different on different people. The wider that spread is, the wider that lip is going to be naturally. If someone is doing a natural smile, some people's smile is going to be much wider than another person. You want to go with the natural lift of that person. You don't want to put an artificial lift—mouth position—then they are engaging the (*points to the muscles above the upper lip)* [levator labii superioris muscle]. That gets in the way of focus. You want the [zygomatic muscles] pulling the lip up not the [levator labii superioris muscles]. Now the point of the exercise is to "pop" at the top of the exercise. That requires a very coordinated effort—you can't use brute force. You can't push and make that sound. If you push the least little bit, you won't be able to make that sound. You take it up to G5, and they need to be able to negotiate that "pop" for the high note. You really need that if you are going to sing Rossini or Verdi because that's how you do an accent. In the Vidal, you graduate from pops to surges to sustained. This first exercise is non–aspirated coloratura.

The next exercise is sustained coloratura (Figure A.19), which is really crucial for Mozart singing. It's almost like vomiting sound—that actually comes from Vidal. You really use the

same muscles that you vomit with. With beginning singers, you do an open [ɛ] and with more advanced students you do a closed [e]. You want them to do it without a diphthong. This exercise begins on D4 and can be taken to Bb5 (this will be the highest note sung). And you don't always have to go all the way up. The more skilled they are, the quicker you can get through the exercises. If they can get up to the G, it's pretty effective. There's no way you can fit all of the exercises into one lesson, and ideally you want them to be able to whip through these exercises in about 20 minutes so that you can spend the rest of the time applying it to music.

The next exercise is not Vidal; it is actually a Ted Puffer invention (Figure A.20). It was basically a Vidal extension. I found it to be an extremely helpful exercise. It's a long run. First you do it with one "pop" on the top and then you add three "pops." You have to make sure that the last note is just as short as the other notes. I used to combine these exercises together—this is my own invention. I haven't shown anybody else this, but for myself I found it very useful (Figure A.21). I found that really developed your breath control. Adding the "pulses" or "pops" in these exercises gives them a lot of expression in learning how to phrase coloratura; it's really important to be able to do that. It is very important for them to keep their mouths open. You want them to have a nice, healthy supported coloratura.

Next, we come to the hums (Figure A.22). You start on a C#4 for sopranos, and they quickly will find that they usually try to bring their chest voice up too high and then it breaks so we are getting them to bring that hum up through the *passaggio*. A sopranos tessitura is from B4 to B5. That's the best range for the voice. The reason for that is that is when compression starts being effective. That's usually where the *messa di voce* is most effective; it's usually where they are written except for the stuff that was written for castrati; those were written in strange places.

When you get to B4 and then C5, you have to apply chest compression. The lift [zygomatic muscles] and the tongue position are so important. One way to get them to do this is when the sopranos reach that A4, you can have the singer open their mouths and hum with their mouths open. It's easier—that was something Ted Puffer discovered. [When humming with your mouth open], the tongue is in that position and then you have to raise the soft palate and you are raising the [zygomatic muscles]. Then when they get to E5, it's going to be easier to make that switch and it's going to sound thinner. E5 is that magic note for sopranos; that's where that new place begins. For a soprano it's E4 to E5. This is really where the break is— E4, and you shouldn't bring chest voice higher. E5 is the beginning of the second *passaggio* and E6 is the beginning of the bell register. If you have a bell register, you have to make a switch. These are the limits that a soprano has to overcome: E4, E5, E6. And the tessitura is B4 to B5. That is where the best singing is. When the soprano gets to that E5, the soprano has to start making adjustments before she gets there. When you get to that E5, it is a new territory.

The highest note of the hum will be a G5. The reason why you want to go to a G5 is that gets you over that *passaggio.* It is a thinner place and if you can get them to trust that thinner place, all of a sudden, they can sing *pianissimo* and they didn't even know they could do it—and *fortissimo*. You cannot hum this with your mouth open unless it's properly supported. It will just crack. You start opening your mouth on the A4. This A4 is not in the tessitura, but because the next two notes are, it's best to open the mouth before you get to there.

Next exercise is [ma] [me] [mi] [mo] [mu] (Figure A.23). Sopranos start on an F4. The [m] must be as long as the vowel. This exercise accomplishes several things. First, it shows you where the jaw needs to be in place when you are doing a consonant. The exercise must be done without moving the jaw. When they find that position where they can open their jaw, which is

very relaxed but they must not over open. If you over open, that is just as bad as not opening it enough. Most people don't open it enough. When you sing, you want to look natural. You want to be able to close the lips without closing the jaw. It also addresses nasality because of course you have to sing through your nose to sing the [m], but then you have to get it out of the nose when you sing the vowel so you are switching back and forth. That's a very important thing for a singer to learn so that they don't over nasalize their sounds when they are singing. Then you also are dealing with vowel modification. One of the ways that I am able to convince singers quickly that this is the right method (because some of them resist it) is that I demonstrate for them. I do it the wrong way first by using my jaw and my lips to say the vowels and the second way I use just my tongue—just to show them how that changes the sound. It takes three times as much support to make that [m] sing when the exercise is done correctly. It is really developing their breath control. It usually takes two or three years before they can get through the whole exercise the right way. When they start doing it right, they run out of breath. It makes them realize, "Oh, those are the muscles I use for support!" You will take a soprano up to an E5 in this exercise. You don't need to go into the upper *passaggio* for this. Vidal actually used other consonants besides [m]; for example, [p] or [l]. Sometimes if a singer is having trouble making a connection, I have them do that.

The next exercise discussed is the [nɪn] exercise (Figure A.26). Sopranos begin on F4. Only the very advanced students start on a middle C. Here's the brilliance of this exercise: the whole idea is to be able to sustain an [n] while holding your nose. If you can sustain the [n], that means your tongue is in the right place and your soft palate is in the right place. It's impossible to do unless your soft palate and your tongue is in the right place. And you can hear the result. It helps cultivate their ears so that they can hear focus better. The whole idea is that if you can get

that—you want to be able to transfer that focus that you have in the [n] position to the sung vowel, and it's got to be a short vowel [ɪ] not [i]. It's probably the most difficult Vidal exercise. Vidal had a series of these exercises; this is the first of the series. You can't really master the second until you master the first. What's brilliant about it is that it boxes the singer into a place where they can only do it one way to get the right sound. You really are singing behind the nose not in the nose. The [nɪn] exercise is not actually in the nose. There also is the "pop" that is important when you get to the [ne] part of the exercise. What will happen is that as they ascend the scale, all of a sudden they are going to start sustaining without even realizing. Do not take this exercise any higher than G5. For some people, this will be the first time that they have ever really sustained the right way, and it is the most difficult of these exercises. However, it gets the fastest results for high notes and for going over the passaggio and for getting focus in the sound. This was designed by Melchiore Vidal and is the oldest exercise in the series, and it is a brilliant exercise.

The next exercise is [njɪn] (Figure A.27). This one you start on middle C and you "pop" the top note, taking the exercise as high they can. I don't know of any exercise that opens up high notes faster than this one. I mean the really high notes. It even opens up the bell register. If a mezzo does have a bell register, she won't be able to get past the F#6. If someone thinks they are a mezzo and they can squeak up to the G6, they are not a mezzo.

I usually like to work the lower *passaggio* first before I work with the top because I've discovered if I resolve the lower *passaggio* issues, it makes it easier to address the higher notes. In the singers I work with, usually their top comes in a little later than their chest voice, but the results are longer lasting.

Now chest voice fits in between the [ma] [me] [mi] [mo] [mu] and the [nɪn] exercises. It's important because after they have been working with chest voice that [nɪn] helps balance it back. You don't want to overwork the chest voice. Sopranos begin this exercise on a B3 (Figure A. 24). This is a Vidal exercise. I don't like young singers doing this one on their own until they really know what they are doing. Ted never gave me that restriction, but I also was built like a bull. I was physically strong. This should not be sung with a bright [a], but more [ʌ].

I like using this next exercise for mixing, and I got this exercise from another singer, who was a soprano. It is not the ultimate to mixing but it introduces students to it. They are octave jumps from chest to head. (Figure A.25). Sopranos begin on B3. The whole idea is to be able to do staccati in chest go up to head and then be able to slide up to head voice and back down to chest without a break, and if you can do that and especially on an [a]—because ascending on an [a] is very difficult, but it's easy to bring down. It is easier to ascend on an [i] vowel from chest, but the descending is more difficult.

After those chest exercises, you would do the [nɪn]. The next exercise is very difficult (Figure A.28). When women can master the open [ɛ], then they can go to the closed [e]. This adjustment of the vowel is not Vidal, that is my thing. It's a descending coloratura run, and the last note is short. You begin on Bb5. You want to bring the focus and the richness you have gathered all the way down to the middle C, and you can mix the C4.

This next exercise starts on G4 (Figure A.29), and you ascend until the highest note is an F#5 for sopranos. The next exercise begins on C5 (Figure A.30). The last exercise (Figure A.31) begins under the *passaggio* and then you go into the *passaggio*. And as you go up, different notes are in and out of the *passaggio.* You also have to master how to say the [s] because you have to close your jaw. Singers often struggle with that [s]. It works on a difficult consonant and

a difficult vowel—the [e] vowel. As you go up, you have to have vowel modification and a bigger lift in the [zygomatic muscles]. It takes a tremendous amount of breath. You are compressing and going over the *passaggio*. It's like a culmination of everything you've done so far. You want this exercise to end with the highest note being a high C.

Zajick adds a few final words of wisdom: breathing exercises are extremely valuable if informed by the ear. There are many *different* breathing schools that will get you to the same place.

Also, Zajick's description of compression is as follows: Compression is taking the same amount of air flow at the same rate and at the same volume and pushing it through a smaller hole. It's akin to putting a nozzle on a hose. [The smaller hole is] the chest. This is *appoggio*. The *appoggio* is initiated in the back muscles and the sensation is felt in the chest.

Figure A.17. *Exercise 1: Staccati on [ha]*. Stanley exercise.

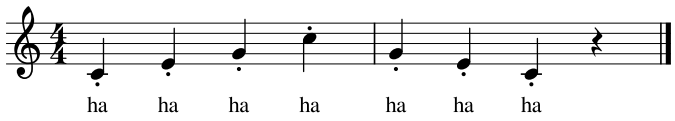


Figure A.18. *Exercise 2: Five Note Pattern on [i] to [e]*. Vowel modification as shown is encouraged to master the intended resonance balance before eventually graduating to vowels [i] and [e]. Vidal exercise.

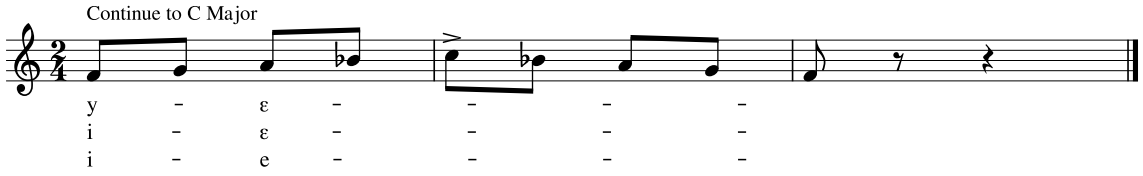


Figure A.19. *Exercise 3: Triplet Pattern [i] to [e]*. Vowel modification as shown is encouraged to master the intended resonance balance before eventually graduating to vowels [i] and [e]. Vidal exercise.

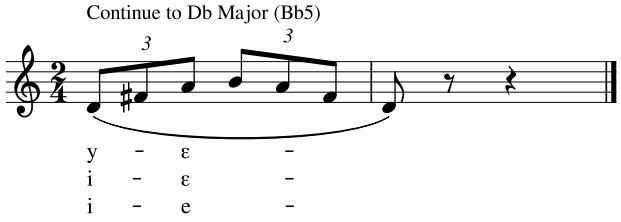


Figure A.20. *Exercise 4: Nine Note Pattern [i] to [e]*. Ted Puffer exercise.

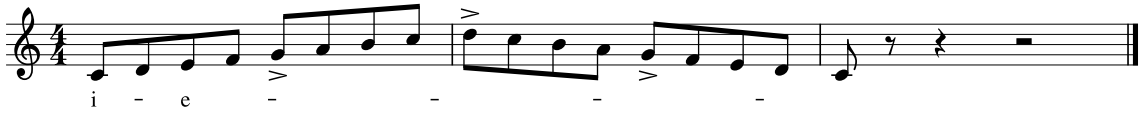


Figure A.21. *Exercise 5: Coloratura Combination Variation*. This is a combination of the previous three coloratura exercises. Vowel modification as shown is encouraged to master the intended resonance balance before eventually graduating to vowels [i] and [e]. Dolora Zajick's combination of Figure A.18, A.19 and A.20.

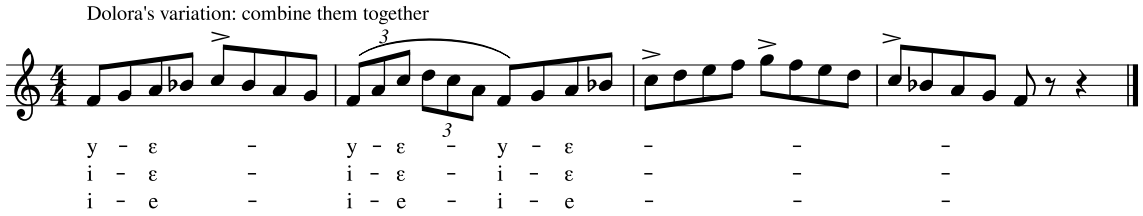


Figure A.22. *Exercise 6: Humming Three Note Pattern.* Vidal exercise

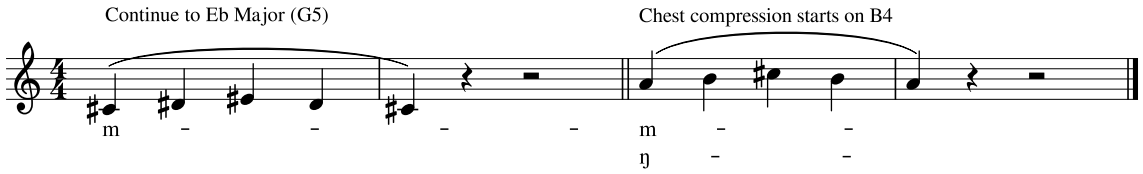


Figure A.23. *Exercise 7: Hum to Cardinal Vowels*. Vidal exercise.

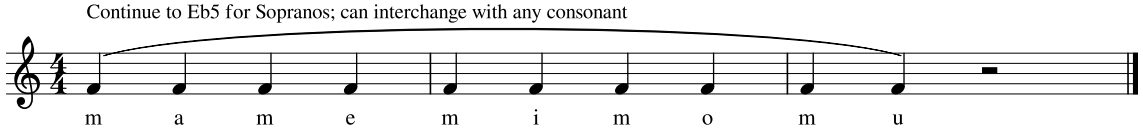


Figure A.24. *Exercise 8: Chest Voice Three Note Pattern*. Vidal exercise.

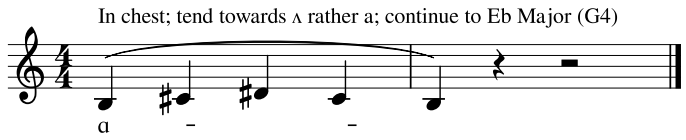


Figure A.25. *Exercise 9: Chest Voice to Head Voice Octave Pattern.*

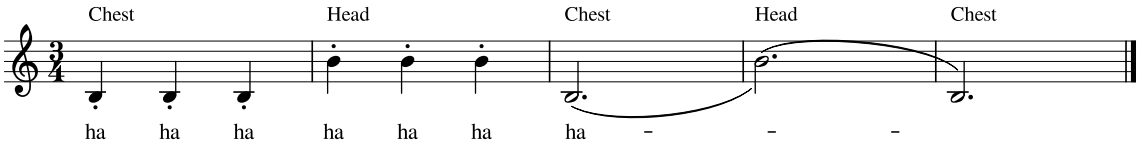


Figure A.26. *Exercise 10: Three Note Pattern on [nɪn] to [ne]*. Vidal exercise.

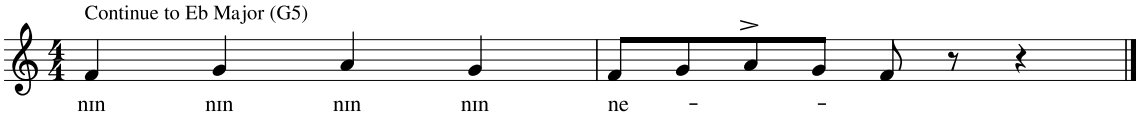


Figure A.27. *Exercise 11: Arpeggio on [njɪn]*. Vidal exercise.

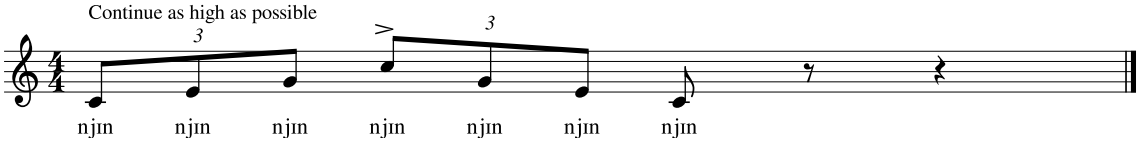


Figure A.28. *Exercise 12: Descending Octave Pattern on [nɪn] to [ne]*. Vidal exercise.

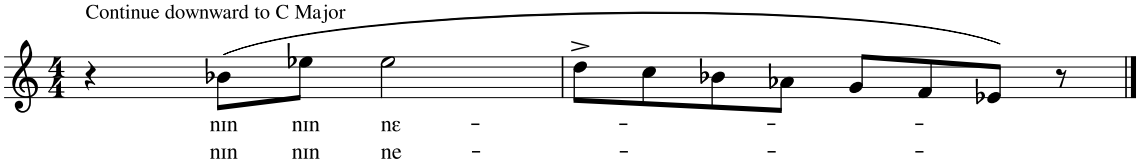


Figure A.29. *Exercise 13: Descending Arpeggio on [njɪ] to [ni]*. Vidal exercise.

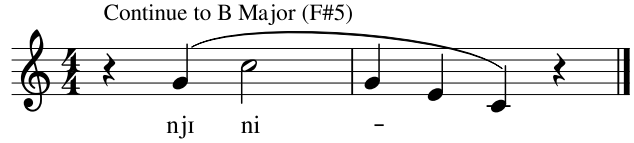


Figure A.30. *Exercise 14: Sailor/Loewe Descending Arpeggio*. Vidal exercise.

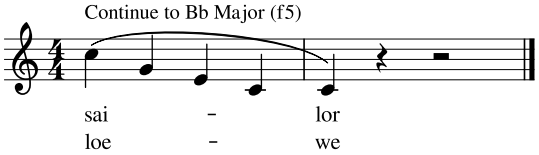
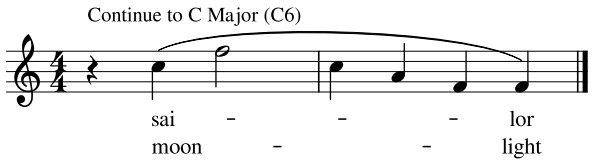


Figure A.31. *Exercise 15: Sailor/Moonlight Arpeggio*. Vidal exercise.



APPENDIX B

GRADED REPERTOIRE FOR THE YOUNG

DRAMATIC SOPRANO AGES 15-22

The repertoire selections presented are by no means exhaustive. Most were chosen based on success in the studio, recitals, juries and competitions. The focus is primarily song repertoire.

Repertoire for the High School Student, 15-17

English
"I Know Where I'm Goin'" arr. Luigi Zaninelli
"Into the Night" Clara Edwards
"In the Mornin'" arr. Charles Ives
"Crucifixion" Samuel Barber
"When I Have Sung my Songs" Ernst Charles
"I Attempt from Love's Sickness to Fly" Henry Purcell
"Weep You no More Sad Fountains" Roger Quilter

German
"Das verlassene Mägdlein" Hugo Wolf
"Lied der Mignon" Franz Schubert
"Widmung" Robert Schumann
"Du bist wie eine Blume" Robert Schumann
"Wie Melodien zieht es mir" Johannes Brahms

Italian
"Non lo dirò col labbro" George Frideric Handel
"Alma del core" Antonio Caldara
"Sebben, crudele" Antonio Caldara
"Se tu m'ami, se sospiri" Alessandro Parisotti
"Intorno all'idol mio" Antonio Cesti
"Star vicino" Anonymous
"Selve amiche" Antonio Caldara

Freshman Repertoire

English
"Strings in the Earth and Air" by Samuel Barber
"She Never Told Her Love" Joseph Haydn
"Come Again, Sweet Love Doth Now Invite" John Dowland
"The Daisies" Samuel Barber

German
"Ich liebe dich" Ludwig van Beethoven
"Der Nussbaum" Robert Schumann
"Als Luisa die Briefe" Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
"Heidenröslein" Franz Schubert
"Vergebliches Ständchen" Johannes Brahms
"Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt" Pyotr Tchaikovsky
"Die Stille" Robert Schumann

Italian
"Bella vittoria" Giovanni Bononcini
"O cessate di piagarmi" Alessandro Scarlatti
"Per la gloria d'adorarvi" Giovanni Bononcini
"Pietà, signore!" Alessandro Stradella
"Vergin, tutto amor" Francesco Durante
"O del mio dolce ardor" Christoph Willibald von Gluck

Sophomore Repertoire

English
"Do not go, my Love" Richard Hageman
"Music when Soft Voices Die" Samuel Barber
"My Lizard" Samuel Barber
"Rain Has Fallen" Samuel Barber
"Sure on this Shining Night" Samuel Barber
"Give me Jesus," arr. Hall Johnson
"A Spirit Flower" Louis Campbell–Tipton

German
"An den Mond" Franz Schubert
"Das Echo" Franz Schubert
"Rastlose Liebe" Franz Schubert
"Jucche!" by Johannes Brahms
"Das Mädchen spricht" Johannes Brahms
"Ach Lieb, ich muss nun scheiden" Richard Strauss

Italian
"Tutta raccolta ancor" by George Frideric Handel from *Scipione*
"Alma mia" George Frideric Handel from *Floridante*
"Ch'io mai vi possa" George Frideric Handel from *Siroe, re di Persia*
"Che fiero momento" Christoph Willibald von Gluck from *Orfeo ed Euridice*

French
"Dans les ruine d'une abbaye" Gabriel Fauré
"Automne" Gabriel Fauré
"Oeuvre ton coeur" Georges Bizet
"Violon" Francis Poulenc from *Fiançialles pour rire*

Junior Repertoire

English
"Come Ready and See Me" Richard Hundley
Three Browning Songs Amy Beach
"Ride on! King Jesus" arr. Hall Johnson
Saracen Songs H.T. Burleigh
"With rue my heart is laden" Samuel Barber
"A Nun Takes the Veil" Samuel Barber
"Love's Philosophy" Roger Quilter
Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson Aaron Copland
"Song" Benjamin Britten
"Silent Noon" Ralph Vaughan Williams

German
"Ein Traum" Edvard Grieg
"Der Jüngling und der Tod" Franz Schubert
"Gretchen am Spinnrade" Franz Schubert
"Zueignung" Richard Strauss
"Mondnacht" by Robert Schumann
"Anakreon's Grab" Hugo Wolf
"Abendempfindung" Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
"An eine Äolsharfe" Johannes Brahms
"Die Mainacht" Johannes Brahms
"Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?" Gustav Mahler
"Liebesbotschaft" Franz Schubert
"Mein gläubiges Herze" Johann Sebastian Bach
"Dank sei Dir" George Frideric Handel

Italian
"Sommi Dei" by George Frideric Handel from *Radamisto*
"Terra e mare" Giacomo Puccini
"Non t'accostare all'urna" Giuseppi Verdi from *Six Romances*
"Perduta ho la pace" Giuseppi Verdi from *Six Romances*
"Deh, pietoso, oh Addolorata" Giuseppi Verdi from *Six Romances*
"Donzelle semplici" Christoph Willibald von Gluck from *Paride ed Elena*
"Verdi prati" George Frideric Handel from *Alcina*
"Ah! spietato!" George Frideric Handel from *Amadigi di Gaula*

French
"Air Grave" Francis Poulenc from *Air chantés*
"Ce doux petit visage" Francis Poulenc
"Les chemins de l'amour" Francis Poulenc
"C" Francis Poulenc from *Deux Poèmes de Louis Aragon*
"Comment, disaient-ils" Franz Liszt

Spanish
*La maja dolorosa (*Nos. 1, 2 and 3) Enrique Granados

Senior Repertoire

English
"Bess of Bedlam" by Henry Purcell
Three Dream Portraits by Margaret Bonds
Hermit Songs Samuel Barber
Songs for Leontyne Lee Hoiby
Four Songs of Emily Dickinson Lori Laitman
"When I am Laid in Earth" Henry Purcell from *Dido and Aeneas*
"Ah, Belinda, I am Prest with Torment" Henry Purcell from *Dido and Aeneas*
Cantata John Carter

German
Brettl-Lieder Arnold Schönberg
Mignon Lieder Hugo Wolf
"Morgen" Richard Strauss
"Ich trage meine Minne" Richard Strauss
"Mein Herz ist stumm" Richard Strauss
"Kling!" Richard Strauss
"Wiegenlied" Richard Strauss
"Traum durch die Dämmerung" Richard Strauss
Rückert Lieder Gustav Mahler
Zigeunermelodien Antonín Dvořák
"Meine Lippen, sie küssen so heiss" Franz Lehár from *Giuditta*

Spanish
"Tus ojillos negros" Manuel de Falla
"Triste" Alberto Ginastera from *Cinco canciones populares argentinas*
"El Vito" Fernando Obradors
"El Molondrón" Fernando Obradors
Poema en forma de canciones Joaquín Turina

French
“Fleur jetée” Gabriel Fauré
Trois Mélodies Olivier Messiaen
Les Nuits d’été by Hector Berlioz
“L’attente” Camille Saint-Säens
“Il est doux, il est bon” Jules Massenet from *Hérodiade*

Italian
”O si he non sapevo sospirare” Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari
“Quando ti vidi a quel canto apparire” Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari
“Porgi amor” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from *Le nozze di Figaro*
*“*Dove sono i bei momenti” Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from *Le Nozze di Figaro*
“Ah, fuggi il traditor!” Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from *Don Giovanni*
“Come scoglio” Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from *Così fan tutte*
*“*Signore, ascolta!” Giacomo Puccini from *Turandot*
“Tanto amore, segreto” Giacomo Puccini from *Turandot*
“Chi il bel sogno di Doretta” Giacomo Puccini from *La Rondine*

APPENDIX C

IRB EXEMPT LETTER

UNLV Social/Behavioral IRB - Exempt Review
Exempt Notice

DATE:	October 28, 2020
TO:	Alfonse Anderson, DMA
FROM:	Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects
PROTOCOL TITLE:	[1664001-3] Developing the Young, Dramatic Soprano Voice Ages 15-22
ACTION:	DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
EXEMPT DATE:	October 28, 2020
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exemption category #2(ii)

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this protocol. This memorandum is notification that the protocol referenced above has been reviewed as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46.101(b) and deemed exempt.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence with our records.

PLEASE NOTE:
Upon final determination of exempt status, the research team is responsible for conducting the research as stated in the exempt application reviewed by the ORI - HS and/or the IRB which shall include using the most recently submitted Informed Consent/Assent Forms (Information Sheet) and recruitment materials.

If your project involves paying research participants, it is recommended to contact Carisa Shaffer, ORI Program Coordinator at (702) 895-2794 to ensure compliance with the Policy for Incentives for Human Research Subjects.

Any changes to the application may cause this protocol to require a different level of IRB review. Should any changes need to be made, please submit a **Modification Form**. When the above-referenced protocol has been completed, please submit a **Continuing Review/Progress Completion report** to notify ORI - HS of its closure.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects at IRB@unlv.edu or call 702-895-2794. Please include your protocol title and IRBNet ID in all correspondence.

Office of Research Integrity - Human Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway . Box 451047 . Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047
(702) 895-2794 . FAX: (702) 895-0805 . IRB@unlv.edu

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Developing the Young Dramatic Soprano Voice Ages 15-22

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