



VOICEPrints

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NYSTA Past Presidents: A History

Leon Carson	1940–1942	Lola Hayes	1970–1972
Walter Golde	1944–1946	Donald Read	1972–1974
Carl Gutekunst	<i>(Dates of term unknown)</i>	Craig Timberlake	1974–1976
Walter Mattern	<i>(Dates of term unknown)</i>	Ingrid Sobolewska	1976--1978
Edgar Schofield	<i>(Dates of term unknown)</i>	Cesare Longo	1978–1980
Walter Bogert	<i>(Dates of term unknown)</i>	Robert Latherow	1980–1982
Edward Harris	<i>(Dates of term unknown)</i>	Helen Lightner	1982–1984
Homer Mowe	<i>(Dates of term unknown)</i>	Thomas Rexdale	1984–1987
Bernard Taylor	<i>(Dates of term unknown)</i>	Jeannette LoVetri	1987–1990
Solon Alberti	1950–1952	Mara Waldman	1990–1993
Cecile Jacobson	1952–1954	Jan Eric Douglas	1993–1996
George Rasely	1954–1956	David Adams	1996–1999
Carl Gutekunst	1956–1958	Janet Pranschke	1999–2002
Burton Cornwall	1958–1960	Dora Ohrenstein	2002–2004
Earl Rogers	1960–1962	Josephine Mongiardo	2004–2008
Dolf Swing	1962–1964	David Sabella-Mills	2008–2014
Willard Young	1964–1966	Judith Nicosia	2014–2017
Constance Eberhart	1966–1968	Matthew Hoch	2017–2020
William Gephart	1968–1970	Elizabeth Saunders	2020–present

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I continue to delve into NYSTA archives, I am struck by just how much “the more things change, the more they stay the same” holds true within our organization. Over 20 years ago, in the March 2000 issue of the NYSTA *Bulletin* (precursor to our current *VOICEPrints*), president Janet Pranschke celebrated a member vote that allowed NYSTA to change tax status to that of an educational, charitable league. This has allowed NYSTA to expand our membership base, solidify our financial base, offer benefactors tax deductions, and increase the quality of the events we offer members. In that issue Janet also encouraged members to participate in what was at that point “our most ambitious project ever,” the all-day Symposium 2000 which was a precursor to our highly regarded Oren Lathrop Brown Professional Development Program (PDP).

Working to give our members the best in current knowledge in the field of vocal pedagogy has pushed us to continue to take on ambitious projects, most notably the development of that Professional Development Program (PDP) under Janet, and increasing our reach to enable what is now worldwide membership with a vastly expanded website offering the PDP and video archives of all live events developed by past president David Sabella.

This year we have a brand new website and a soon to be released PDP that has been revamped in both content and online experience under the brilliant expertise and tireless efforts of Amanda Flynn and Jared Trudeau. And what Janet said in March 2000 about the Symposium still holds true today for the upcoming PDP rollout, even if you are already a NYSTA Distinguished Voice Professional: should you choose to participate in this learning opportunity, “you will be changed forever in the way you view teaching voice.” I will also add, that as an organization, we are only as strong as the knowledge and expertise of our membership. As Janet stated then, “I want to urge every single NYSTA member to show your commitment to the advancement of great teaching by attending this Symposium. Our organization can be a leader—but only with your personal involvement.” Replace the words “attending this Symposium” with “completing the new NYSTA PDP,” and you will know my 2021 sentiment. For the price of just a few voice lessons per course, you will receive mountains of information that you can put immediately into your own teaching and singing.

Elizabeth Saunders

President, New York Singing Teachers' Association (NYSTA)



Elizabeth Saunders



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

There has never been a better time to become a member of NYSTA! Our board meetings are filled with great ideas to move the organization forward with innovation and inclusivity. I can't wait to try out the new Professional Development Program (PDP). I applaud Amanda Flynn for finding fantastic course curators and reaching out for interviews to include in *VOICEPrints*. I have enjoyed learning more about these distinguished teachers. The new program will undoubtedly become a great resource in our virtual learning environment.

This issue's feature article by Robert Thies offers a welcome perspective on the Singer/Pianist relationship titled "Might We Accompany Each Other: How Audiences and Presenters Perceive the Singer/Pianist Dynamic." Thies' narrative mingles quotes from artists such as Graham Johnson, Gerald Moore, and Armen Guzelimian, and highlights the level of respect crucial for successful partnerships. I have been considering how we can utilize Thies' perspective, particularly at the level of academia, to promote equality among our young musicians who perform together. It is my hope that by turning our focus to strengthening these relationships in academia, it will continue to be the standard in professional working relationships.

I am pleased to include a book review of *So You Want to Sing with Awareness: A Guide for Performers* edited by Matthew Hoch, written by Susan Williams. Williams' expertise in voice and yoga makes her a perfect candidate to assess this edition of the *So You Want to Sing...* series. This text appeals to those interested in cognitive studies and the mind/body equation during singing. It's a great place to start if you're interested in learning more about singing and mindfulness.

On a personal note, I urge you to continue to reach out to one another via social media or email, particularly the folks who have made an impact in your musical or professional life. Recently, I sent a bunch of small video messages on the app Marco Polo to friends I hadn't talked to in a while. The videos achieved their purpose of a surprise check in, despite being a special mix of awkward and entertaining. I feel lucky to still be able to make music and connect with others. I'm grateful to have had so many wonderful partners in my music making, and I hope your connections are equally fruitful.

Please send questions, comments, or article submissions to me directly at voiceprints@nysta.org or through the website at <https://nysta.org/submit-an-article/>.

Jennifer D'Agostino

Editor-in-Chief, *VOICEPrints*



Jennifer D'Agostino

VOICEPrints

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Editor-in-Chief

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Associate Editor

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2021 EVENTS CALENDAR

Spring Online Event

Teaching Voice Students from East Asia

Understanding the Linguistic Challenges and Advantages Unique to Native Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Japanese Speakers

With Ryu-Kyung Kim, Stephen Ng and Sahoko Sato Timpone

Sunday, May 16, 2021 2:30–4:30 PM EDT

Voice teachers today are often working with students for whom English is their second language. It is increasingly helpful for them to understand the linguistic tendencies of represented languages. This presentation, followed by Q&A, will explore specific examples for speakers of Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, and Japanese, where these languages present both challenges and advantages to vocalists compared to American English speakers. The goal of this presentation is to help voice teachers become more acquainted with these languages and to provide them with practical tips to apply in their studios. Through examining linguistic perspectives and providing specific exercises, we aim to advance vocal teaching for East Asian singers.



Ryu-Kyung Kim



Stephen Ng



Sahoko Sato Timpone



NYSTA Professional Development Program

Spotlight on the PDP

As we near the launch of the revamped Professional Development Program, we are thrilled to be spotlighting our new, exciting faculty. Dr. Jeanne Goffi-Fynn has had a long relationship with NYSTA, and we are thrilled she is offering a course in the PDP Core Curriculum. If you're interested in being on the PDP mailing list, please email Amanda Flynn at PDPDirector@nyst.org.

Amanda Flynn: Tell me a bit about your background as it pertains to the class you are teaching.

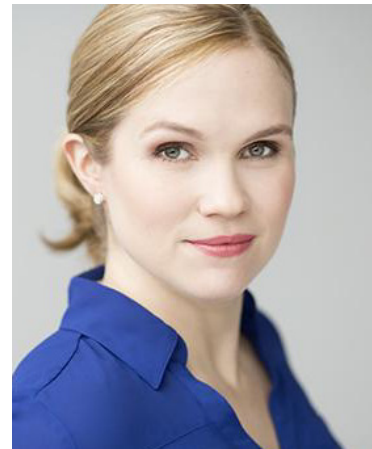
Jeanne Goffi-Fynn: I've been teaching vocal pedagogy, studio pedagogy, and advanced pedagogy for about fifteen years, but my interest in the subject began about 25 years ago when I studied with Dr. Barbara Doscher. As the field evolves and we add new ideas and repertoire to teaching, I've enjoyed putting together a ten-week course to help singing pedagogues and educators improve upon their teaching.

AF: Can you tell us a little about any considerations you took in putting this course together for NYSTA?

JG-F: Working in the online medium is convenient, but of course challenging. How to be present when you're not present, how to invite collaboration when virtual and asynchronous? I have been teaching online for almost 20 years but as with technology and teaching in general, there is always room for change and improvement!

AF: What are you most looking forward to with being involved with the Professional Development Program?

JG-F: I was one of the originators of the program back in its initial stages when Janet Pranschke first started thinking of the program for private studio teachers. I was actually the Director of PDP for a period back in the days BC (before children), before I had to cut back on aspects of my career! But I'm thrilled with the new direction and so happy to be involved as we all move forward with an inclusive and diverse practice including collaboration and self-reflection in an evolving field. I will add that Teachers College, Columbia University has a strong tradition in the PDP with myself, Dr. Felix Graham, and now Amanda Flynn, doctoral candidate!



Amanda Flynn is currently on faculty at Pace University and is also the owner of a private studio with clients performing on Broadway, Off Broadway, national and international tours, regional theater, and with careers as recording artists. Amanda was Production Vocal Coach for The Lightning Thief and Be More Chill, both on Broadway. She also served as a Vocal Consultant for the regional premiere of Love in Hate Nation.

She holds a MM in Vocal Performance with a Musical Theater concentration and an Advanced Certificate in Vocal Pedagogy, both from NYU. She completed the Vocology Mentorship at Mt. Sinai, the Distinguished Voice Professional certificate from NYSTA, and completed her Certificate in Vocology from NCVS. A recipient of the Van Lawrence Fellowship, Amanda is a voice researcher and has presented at conferences across the country. She is thrilled to be on the NYSTA Board of Directors as the Director of the Professional Development Program.

www.amandaflynnvoice.com

Jeanne Goffi-Fynn, EdD., MM, is a Senior Lecturer and Director of the Doctoral Cohort Program in the Program of Music at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her areas of interest include Development and Performance for Singers, Applied Studio Teaching, Voice Development and Pedagogy across styles, Collaborative Mentoring, and Ensemble Singing. She is also a Singing Voice Specialist, specifically in the retraining of singers, with MTD a specific area of interest. She has presented workshops and pedagogical presentations with NATS, The Voice Foundation, NYSTA, CMS, ACDA, NYSSMA, ICVT and ISME. She is currently a member of the American Academy of Teachers of Singing (AATS) and serves with Opera America on their Singers Training Forum, Board of Overseers and Strategic Committee. She also is currently President of NATS_NYC where she developed a new Mentorship Program, currently in its fifth year. Additionally, she is Chair of the National NATS Mentoring Initiatives, which oversees aspects of mentoring with NATS. Finally, she has developed Vocal Workshops at TC, aiding both the education of graduate students while developing young singers between ages 11-17, a program which grew out of her experience with Every Voice Choir. She teaches at International Lyric Academy during summers as well. *JeanneGoffiFynn.com*



Jeanne Goffi-Fynn



Might We Accompany Each Other?

*How Audiences and Presenters Perceive
the Singer/Pianist Dynamic*

By Robert Thies

Twenty years ago, I was touring Germany with Brigitta, a mezzo-soprano, in performances of art song. For one concert, she arranged that we would split a modest fee 50/50. That morning, Brigitta awoke without a voice. Feeling distraught that she would have to cancel the concert, I told her that I would be happy to offer a full-length solo piano recital instead. And so later that afternoon I managed a 75-minute concert—from memory. Any feelings of accomplishment were quickly vanquished when the presenter said he only needed to pay half the fee because he “got only half of the concert.” Fortunately, Brigitta came to my defense and explained that what I just pulled off was no small feat and was deserving of a full fee.

To presenters there are solo pianists, occasionally referred to as *artists*, and then there are *accompanists*, a pianist who is there simply to support a *soloist*. Even after switching roles to play a solo piano recital, an effort that requires months of preparation, the presenter felt short-changed, as though I was a “pre-show” for the main attraction that never came. This is but one example of how labels are confusing and damaging.

Audience Perception

Some years earlier, I played a recital with a cellist that included a work by Chopin. The piece was characteristic of most chamber works of the 19th century, in that it features the pianist.

After the concert, an elderly woman lavished praise upon the cellist first and then turned to me, “Oh, and YOU! YOU were a very fine background accom-pianist!” Behind the grin I mustered, I was stunned and unable to respond beyond the obligatory “thank you.” Did I dare start enumerating all that was wrong with her kind-hearted, well-intentioned compliment—for one, that although *accompanists* are usually pianists, the two words had nothing to do with each other? By saying “accom-pianist,” she echoed a common misspoken hybrid of two unrelated words.

But to consider my contributions as “background?” This should have been a neon sign signaling to me early in my career that, should I continue sharing the stage with one other person, I would forever battle an identity crisis, not with myself but with how I am perceived.

In a brilliant lecture entitled “The Unacclaimed Accompanist,” pianist Graham Johnson addresses this universal problem. “We are ignored or damned with faint praise,” he says.

“I came to realize that many of those who seem too lofty to comment on our playing had simply not taken it in, I mean, really heard it. Listening to music in parts requires aural exercise. Many people who attend concerts of vocal music have no such training; they’re only interested in, or only able to hear, the top line, usually a singer. Anything beneath that top line, including the accompaniment appears to be a fog of indeterminate sound.”¹

This “Chopin recital” was an omen of what would come whenever I performed with just one other musician, whether a singer, violinist, or cellist. And it created room for much rumination. Why is it that when we took our bows, the audience’s eyes were seemingly only on my partner?

Accompanist Versus Collaborative Pianist

Johnson made a very convincing argument for the title “accompanist” versus the more politically correct American construct “collaborative pianist.” (One might ask whether pianists are the only musicians to collaborate.) The word “accompanist,” fabricated by singers in the early twentieth century, comes from the verb “to accompany.” This suggests, particularly in the intimate setting of chamber music, *going along with X* on a journey. In its purest form, “accompanying” does not imply *following* or *servicing*, nor should it in a musical collaboration.

I have never liked the terms “accompanist” or “collaborative pianist” because of the obsequious connotations. Ironically, those most responsible for perpetuating them are pianists themselves. Many accompanists prefer to be differentiated from their solo pianist counterparts, taking pride in specialized skills supposedly foreign to solo pianists. Many admit to stage fright, preferring to share the spotlight, and sparing themselves the pressure of performing music from memory.

However, any successful pianist understands that being well versed in chamber music enhances one’s musicianship as it develops the ear to hear beyond one’s own part on the page.

On the Nature of Chamber Sonatas and Art Song

In an earlier article entitled, “I am NOT an Accompanist,”² published in the *California Music Teacher*, I explained how the “Violin Sonatas” of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms were actually conceived as—and entitled—“Piano Sonatas with the accompaniment of a violin.” It certainly seemed appropriate as the brunt of musical material fell on the pianist.

Schubert’s Lieder became such an important pillar of the vocal literature, in part because the piano went far beyond a supportive role and was as integral to expressing the poetry as the voice. Schumann expanded on Schubert’s example by adding

¹ “The Unacclaimed Accompanist,” YouTube video, 1:03:53, Gresham College, July 1, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ35CL2j_nA



Graham Johnson

² Thies, Robert, “I Am NOT An Accompanist” *California Music Teacher* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 7.

significant piano preludes and postludes to his songs. Foremore, piano and voice were intertwined, accompanying each other on a journey, capturing the essence of the poet's world in the space of just a few minutes.

With two partners who understand the true nature of art song, the experience can be transcendent for audiences and performers alike. Everything I love about Schubert and Schumann is enhanced by the presence of a poem. In fact, it was the vocal music of these composers that opened my ears to their instrumental music much in the same way that Mozart's operas informed my understanding of his instrumental works.

Unfortunately, audiences—and occasionally musical partners—perceive the song or sonata to be a solo vehicle, with the pianist relegated to “accompanist.” The tragedy is not so much the bruising of pianists' egos as it is the misunderstanding of the composition itself. Audiences are simply not *listening* correctly.

But whose fault is it?

The Presenter and the Critic

Last year a renowned chamber music presenter invited me to play with a violinist. After I agreed to participate, the presenter said, “I will contact the violinist to see what the program will be and when he is available for rehearsal.” It didn't occur to the presenter that I might want to discuss the program and schedule with the violinist directly. Perhaps he thought it normal that an accompanist is told what to play. To be fair, this presenter's mindset was not out of the ordinary, but I decided to decline the invitation. Had this presenter merely acknowledged me as an equal to the violinist, I would have played the concert.

Public perception reflects the publicity and billing for the concert. In his memoirs *Am I Too Loud?*, the great pianist Gerald Moore affirms this.

“If the first-class accompanist does not receive the recognition that is his undoubted due, it is the impresario or concert promoter and the undiscerning journalist who should be indicted. Nothing would persuade me to accompany any singer in America, for I lack the meekness and lowliness of heart to swallow the anonymity which would be my lot. The accompanist is not supposed to have any feelings in this matter; in fact, I sometimes wonder if he is considered as an artist at all. Even the critics will allude to his craft rather than to his art as if he were a carpenter or a weaver.”³

“Did my name appear in the same font size as my partner's name?” asks pianist Armen Guzelimian. “In Europe it does. This was true at Vienna's Musikverein.” He continues, “American mismanagement and attitude, by contrast, have



Gerald Moore

³ Moore, Gerald, *Am I Too Loud? Memoirs of an Accompanist* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1962)

relegated us to be either non-existent or requiring a microscope to see who's playing. The audience doesn't get educated any differently. If management and presenting organizations treated everyone equally, audiences would eventually learn."⁴ After Guzelimian appeared in recital with famous baritone Thomas Hampson, a seasoned critic wrote a review in the *Dallas Tribune* that made no mention of the pianist. "The principle of not even being mentioned!" Guzelimian exclaimed.

Inequality of Fees and the Questionable Soloist

When Graham Johnson counsels young pianists who have been seduced by the beauty of art song and want to pursue it professionally, he warns them of the drawbacks and inequalities. He explains that an idealistic pianist/singer duo might come out of college prepared to share fees 50/50. But eventually agents and arts organizations come into play, "and suddenly the pianist is walking away with a fee one-third that of his partner," Johnson says. Presenters hire singers first, and if the singer invites a pianist, sometimes the singer will pay out of her own fee. More often the presenter will be responsible for payment in a separate contract.

I was once hired by a reputable orchestra to appear with a singer in a chamber concert of some art song. The employer erroneously cc'ed me on his contractual dealings with the singer. To this day I regret seeing that correspondence and learning that I was receiving a fee seven times below that of my partner. My fee was non-negotiable. "This is what we give our musicians," I was told. Apparently, there are musicians, and then there are soloists.

Even if she is a veteran of the opera stage and box office draw, is she a soloist if she shares the stage in a performance of art song? No. A singer and pianist are partners on the musical journey. They accompany each other. Until this attitude is embraced by both, the dynamic will suffer and the performance will fall short of the composer's intentions. Hierarchy simply has no place in chamber music. Oddly, Graham Johnson sometimes refers to the singer as the "soloist." Is this by habit, or is he acquiescing to the general perception?

The Teacher

We cannot forget the influence of our teachers. At conservatories, many teachers are bent on creating soloists. After all, a student who achieves stardom will always reflect well on the reputation of the teacher. While most vocal students must perform art song in their diploma recitals, the emphasis leans toward opera. Arguably this is a practical choice, as careers are not typically made on the recital stage. But without deep immersion in the treasure trove of art song, how does a singer fully develop musicianship? What principles do teachers impress on students? What is the role of the pianist? Are

⁴Armen Guzelimian, interview by author, Los Angeles, September 23, 2020.



Armen Guzelimian

singers conditioned to believe that they are soloists, and the pianist or orchestra serves them? What etiquette are voice students taught? Guzelimian once played for a young singer who took her bows and left the stage without him. He sat onstage dumbfounded for a moment before he took his own bow and left.

I often chuckle when I walk through the halls of a music school and easily spot a voice teacher's studio. It will inevitably be furnished with a piano with a closed lid, covered with a shawl and a vase. What does this teach?

The Lid of a Piano

There is a widespread misconception among instrumental and vocal teachers that a piano lid at half stick is softer in volume. Indeed, when standing or sitting in front of an open piano, the percussive quality of the hammers is pronounced and takes some getting used to. However, an interesting study by DMA candidate Paul Lee measured concert hall acoustics and piano lid height. He concluded that the decibel level between half stick and full stick is nearly imperceptible. "With the impression that the piano's sound pressure level is less than what it is for the audience, the performer may actually create more issues of balance than trusting their collaborative partner and the response of the concert hall with the piano at full stick," Lee writes.⁵

Pianists generally agree they are more capable of performing pianissimo with the lid open to full stick. In fact, the lowered lid muffles the tone so that a pianist will generally overcompensate for the lack of clarity and play *louder* than with the lid open. Guzelimian tells us, "Many experienced singers prefer the lid at full stick as it serves as a sounding board and cushion for their own sound, and they feel that they sing better as a result."

Ego and Insecurity

Ego and insecurity plague most musicians. Without some insecurity, musicians might have little incentive to develop and grow. To stand on stage and perform for hundreds of people requires a great deal of self-assuredness. Singers are notoriously insecure, and reasonably so, because their instrument is their body—criticism feels much more personal. But when the ego grows faster than musicianship and music is used as a platform to display prowess, much is lost. Ideally, we are stewards of a long tradition, doing our part to keep the art form alive and thriving. For both the musicians and audience, the focus should be on the music, not on those making the music. Otherwise, the musician ceases to be an artist and becomes more like an entertainer or showman.

⁵ Paul Lee, "Concert Hall Acoustics and Piano Lid Height, A Study of Five Arizona Concert Halls" (DMA diss, Arizona State University, 2017), 70-72

What a Singer Seeks in a Partner

These are the qualities that Priti Gandhi, a seasoned opera singer, looks for in a recital partner.

“A good pianist can read a singer’s energy and knows instinctively what a singer needs to hear. A good partner is empathic in that she breathes with the singer. She puts her ego aside to make the singer better and instills confidence; she has my back. Neither of us has an agenda, and we support each other. Also, we share a high regard for the music we’re doing, but we don’t take ourselves too seriously and get too precious about it. If there is a difference of opinion on interpretation, we’ll stop and talk about it. From a character standpoint, I might feel certain urges, but the pianist might point out the composer’s intentions and explain that the piece needs to be this tempo because of this or that.”⁶

⁶ Priti Gandhi, interview by author, Los Angeles, September 20, 2020.

Guzelimian advises pianists: “A singer wants to be sure that the pianist is bringing them something familiar, what they’re used to.” A good pianist understands that his instrument can be goliath and overwhelming next to a singer. And so pianists need to create a sonic tapestry that feels supportive and allows clear expression of the poetry’s text.

Johnson reminds us that in art song, the two “parents” are the composer and the poet. Most pianists are not accustomed to translating a poem or mastering multiple foreign languages. Guzelimian adds: “Musically, artistically, we are equals to singers, but we are supposed to know the words so well that we color our playing accordingly.”

What Singers Can Do

“My Pianist” Versus “My Partner”

If a singer refers to me onstage as “my pianist,” I am at least relieved she didn’t say, “my accompanist” or worse “my collaborative pianist,” but there is still a connotation of ownership. The intent might be affectionate, but imagine a pianist referring to you as “My singer this evening...” and you might feel as dispensable as an old vacuum cleaner.

The best solution to making the pianist feel cherished is to refer to him as *my partner*. Why? Because partners are viewed as equals, engaged together in the same objective. In music, the two accompany each other. When a pianist feels cherished as your equal, imagine to what lengths she will help you sing your best and create a memorable musical experience.

Show Trust

Even if you’ve never collaborated with a particular pianist, show trust in your partner. Allow him to play his instrument as he feels comfortable. Regard the piano as an extension of

the pianist much like your vocal instrument is an extension of your body. Some singers have felt empowered to lower the lid of my piano without consulting me, and each time I have considered it a personal violation. It makes me feel distrusted in my abilities and intentions, and the dynamic between us is damaged. If something feels uncomfortable, discuss your concerns. The more you can show trust in your partner to put you in the best light, to offer you the support you desire on stage, the faster you'll get there.

And Finally...

Singers can insist that their partners get equal billing on all publicity and print. Consult the pianist about the program. In rehearsal, the singer might ask, "What do you need from me?" This will be an unexpected but welcome gesture as it shows interest in the pianist's burden. You will be colleagues for a long time. Onstage when the applause begins, give the pianist a handshake or hug acknowledging the musical journey you took together, and then bow together.

Conclusion

By the end of Johnson's presentation, there is an air of acquiescence, even sadness, in his tone. It is human nature to seek acknowledgment for our efforts and to want our life's work to leave a positive mark. Johnson identifies the role of "the accompanist" to be the least understood profession in live performance. Despite his valiant efforts, it will likely continue to be misunderstood.

Why do it, then?

Why do pianists subject themselves to this invisibility? Johnson answers: "The only thing that is eternal is the music itself and it is the only point in doing this work. The music will never disappoint you and great composers will never let you down. They are our armor against being taken for granted and in serving them we find a purpose and dignity that is impervious to belittlement."



Pianist **Robert Thies** is an artist renowned for his consummate musicianship and poetic temperament. He first captured world-wide attention in 1995 when he won the Gold Medal at the Second International Prokofiev Competition in St. Petersburg, Russia, and became the only American pianist to win a Russian piano competition since Van Cliburn's triumph in Moscow in 1958.

Thies enjoys a diverse career as an orchestral soloist, recitalist, chamber musician, and recording artist. He has already performed forty different concerti with orchestras around the world, including the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Auckland Philharmonia, Mexico City Philharmonic, Louisville Orchestra, and Naples Philharmonic.

He is highly sought after as a recital partner and collaborator in both instrumental and vocal chamber music. For four summers at the AIMS Festival in Graz, Austria, he coached singers in Lieder beside his mentor, Harold Heiberg.



BOOK REVIEW: *So You Want to Sing with Awareness*

A Guide for Performers

Edited by Matthew Hoch

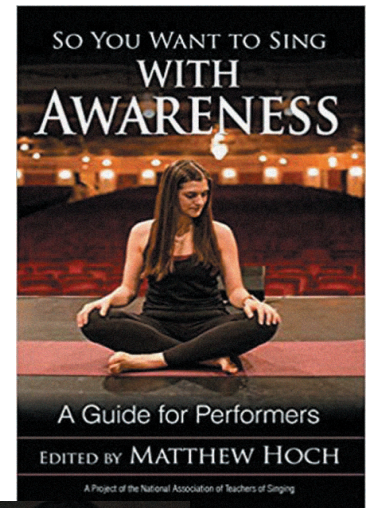
Review by Susan Williams

Rowman and Littlefield's *So You Want to Sing* series contains an impressive twenty titles, largely centering around musical genres. One of two 2020 publications, *So You Want to Sing with Awareness*—available in hard cover, paperback and as an eBook—takes a different approach to many of its predecessors, covering ten modalities centering around bodywork, listening, energy, and cognitive function.

Utilizing ancillary methods to assist with vocal development has long been common amongst pedagogues and singers. Thus, it seems a natural endeavor for the series to have developed a volume that introduces many such methods under one cover. Organizationally, chapters one through five discuss well-known bodywork methods, and chapters six through eight shift more towards mental acuity covering the CoreSinging® Approach, meditation, and Tomatis® Listening. The book's latter chapters address cognitive neuroscience and motor learning.

In chapter one, Larry Lee Hensel's chapter on Alexander Technique (AT), addresses the teacher's role at large with his overarching belief that "inquiry is one of the strongest pedagogical tools, as it often sparks self-discovery."¹ Indeed, F. Matthias Alexander's own voice dysfunction led to years of self-study resulting in the development of his technique. Hensel introduces the reader to the six AT principles, "use and function, habit, primary control, postural concerns, sense, direction, and whole-body integration"² and includes several experiments to examine basic movement or reactive patterns.

Elizabeth L. Blades and Samuel H. Nelson's second chapter introduces the Feldenkrais Method, a technique aiming to "reorganize our neurological connections" resulting in adjustments that "free the singer and the voice."³ They cover ten core principles of neuroplasticity, or the brain's ability to change with respect to its environment, and how these go hand in hand with the method. Most useful are five sample Awareness Through Movement (ATM) exercises empowering the reader to apply the concepts. Linda Lister, author of *Yoga for Singers: Freeing Your Mind and Spirit Through Yoga*, then presents a compact chapter including a brief history of yoga and breathing techniques (*pranayama*), offering *asana* suggestions to address various elements of singing such as alignment, rib expansion, focus, alertness, and calming down. In addition, she includes mantras and *mudras* that work with the mind, reminding the reader that yoga can assist many facets of the singing process.



Editor
Matthew
Hoch

¹ Matthew Hoch, ed., *So You Want to Sing with Awareness* (Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield,) 2020, p. 3

² *Ibid*, 3.

³ *Ibid*, 25.

Next, Joan Melton’s chapter on Pilates (also including information on Gyrotonics® and Fitzmaurice Voicework®) reviews fascinating studies involving abdominal muscle activation patterns (spanning 1989-2015). Melton discusses her own experience using body positions that incorporate spinal flexion or rounding in combination with gravity to influence laryngeal position. She further emphasizes the importance of “integrating” voice and movement, and she encourages pedagogues to continue collaboration and cross-training across disciplines for mutual benefit.⁴ Following Melton’s chapter, Jan E. Prokop defines Body Mapping as “the conscious correcting, adjusting, and refining of one’s body map to release muscle tension and produce graceful and coordinated movement.”⁵ She explains that if the brain’s perception of the structure and function of the body does not match reality, there is risk of dysfunction or even injury. This increases the necessity of a fact-based pedagogy. Kinesthetic awareness combined with proprioception should be nurtured along with our other senses. Prokop includes excellent explorations for each of the six points of balance, coined by Body Mapping creators William and Barbara Conable. Combined with subtle movement, these explorations can serve as touchpoints for returning to a state of non-static homeostasis.

⁴ Ibid, 90.

⁵ Ibid, 94.

Chapter six, “The CoreSinging Approach,” is authored by its creator, the late Meribeth Dayme (1938-2019). She describes this approach as “formed of five elements: energy, awareness, imagination, practice, and performance.”⁶ The method revolves around honorable maxims such as: “Have gratitude for each student and the opportunity to work with what he or she brings to the art of singing” and “Be supportive of other teachers of singing.”⁷ With an emphasis on fun, play, and nonjudgement, she works to influence energy. In her words, “Energy follows thought, and the most important thing we can relay to a student is a positive and healthy mind-set around singing—and life.”⁸

⁶ Ibid, 123.

⁷ Ibid, 124.

⁸ Ibid, 129.

Chapters seven through ten delve more deeply into cognitive process and function. Certainly, this book would not live up to its title without a chapter on meditation, and Michelle Murphy DeBruyn contributes her perspective on this theme. With subheadings such as “The Mind-Body Connection,” “Mental Health,” “Stress Response,” and “Anti-aging Effects,” she presents many compelling reasons for scheduling a regular practice: for instance, at the top of this list, “the reduction in anxiety from the fear response that correlates with the reduction in size of the amygdala.”⁹ She gives an overview of several meditation lineages and resources for future practitioners to get started.

⁹ Ibid, 164.

¹⁰ Ibid, 176.

¹¹ Ibid, 192.

¹² Ibid, 199.

¹³ Ibid, 201.

Readers may be less familiar with Tomatis® Listening, the subject of chapter eight, authored by Susan L. Hurley. French ear, nose, and throat doctor Alfred Tomatis developed the multidisciplinary field of audio-psycho-phonology. This field “constitutes a pedagogy of listening that encompasses

a psychological understanding of the listening function," in which "the ear directs all aspects of the physical coordination on which vocal emission relies."¹⁰ Recent research in the field has measured improvements in articulation, diction, and vocal energy in frequencies between 2,000 and 4,000 Hertz in response to Tomatis-based sound training.¹¹

In chapter nine, author Karen Leigh-Post asks: "How do our thoughts influence the heightened awareness associated with optimal or even peak performance?"¹² She explores conscious and unconscious processes in the field of cognitive neuroscience. Even though this material is complex, Leigh-Post keeps grounded in the practicality of this knowledge in our shared goal of communicating art. She encourages developing "selective attention" to allow intuition to take a front seat to judgement, thereby dampening attention on outcomes which are unwanted or not useful. Practicing mental "inner" singing allows vocalists to create a conceptual construct of what they want. Knowing this, she asserts, is the way desirable sounds are ultimately created. Her own study, conducted at Lawrence University, revealed notable improvement in its singer subjects through the utilization of many techniques that also receive attention in this book such as Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, yoga, and Body Mapping.¹³

Lynn Holding's chapter ten is an introduction to motor learning theory, positioning cognitive science as a "third pillar" of voice pedagogy alongside physiology and voice acoustics. Given the volume of knowledge one must learn for a career in singing, spending time examining how learning occurs can significantly facilitate the process. Distributed practice, randomly ordered practice, minimizing distractions, and practicing under variable conditions are just a few of the helpful topics Holding deftly explains to assist the reader on the path to acquiring needed skills.

Chapters eleven and twelve are the valuable, oft-included chapters in the series on voice science by Scott McCoy and vocal health by Wendy LeBorgne. Editor Matthew Hoch concludes the book with a succinct summary of the major "pillars" of voice pedagogy, both historical and present-day research, naming useful sources to guide the reader to a more complete holistic knowledge base—surely every musician's aim. One may easily pick up this book and go directly to a chapter of interest, but one of the revelatory insights of reading it start-to-finish is how often concepts overlap and reinforce one another across these varied modalities. As a teacher, it's a reminder of how many influences and experiences are drawn upon every day in an attempt to assist students.

So You Want to Sing with Awareness is recommended for teachers looking to infuse their studio teaching with fresh ideas, and for the singer who is ready to delve into self-examination as a path of vocal discovery.



Susan Williams, soprano, is Associate Professor of Voice at the University of Alabama. In 2019, she performed with the President's Orchestra of Tajikistan through the Pitch Pipe Foundation and gave masterclasses in Kathmandu, Nepal as a grant recipient of the US Embassy. She has twice toured in Kolkata, India with Kolkata Classics. She has been a soloist with the Akron Symphony, Cleveland Pops, Cleveland Bach Consort, Tuscaloosa Symphony, Duke Symphony Orchestra, Huxford Symphony, Master Chorale of South Florida, Frost Symphony Orchestra, and Johnson City Symphony.

In 2018 she was a faculty artist with the Bassi Brugnattelli Symposium for Conductors and Singers in Robbiate, Italy. In 2019 she made her third trip to Havana to teach and perform as part of the University of Alabama Center for Cuba Collaboration and Scholarship. Interested in how body movement systems and virtual anatomy technology can assist in singing, she is a registered yoga teacher at the 200-hour level. Her publications can be found in the *Journal of Singing*. In 2019 she received her second MTNA Teacher Enrichment Grant and completed a 100-hour pranayama course in Koh Samui, Thailand. She holds a DMA from the Cleveland Institute of Music.