

**THE
SINGER'S
COMPANION**

BY

MARIANNE MATHY



VAN DYKE PRODUCTIONS

THE SINGER'S COMPANION



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\$1.25

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To
Sir Bernard Heinze

Madame Mathy is one of the Senior Teachers in the Conservatorium, who is responsible for having trained in recent years some of Australia's finest Singers who have won International renown.

In "The Singer's Companion" Madame Mathy asks the reader a number of leading questions and gives answers to them, which will be found invaluable to prospective students and singers alike.

—Sir Bernard Heinze.

I have known Mrs. Marianne Mathy since many years. She played a leading role in Berlins' musical world. I should like to recommend Mrs. Mathy most warmly.

—Sir Thomas Beecham.

Mme Marianne Mathy is a Coloratura of irreproachable skill and control of voice. Furthermore, she has extraordinary musical ability, including not only exceedingly rhythmical correctness and purity of intonation, but, what is more, the exhaustion of the full musical contents of her songs. She is an excellent artist and singing teacher, especially gifted to convey her own splendid singing technique to her pupils.

—Bruno Walter.

Madame Mathy has given me great knowledge of music and voice production. I would thoroughly recommend her to any artist, whether they may be a budding youngster or a well established singer.

—June Bronhill.

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FOREWORD

It appears to me that in our time, with its greater demands on a singer's discipline and mental alertness, there is need for a reference manual which should not deal principally with technicalities, but with ways of awakening and forging an artist's mental approach to singing; without which there can be no art.

I firmly believe that, through perfect harmony of body and mind, singing can become a living art. This approach gives the answer to why one singer becomes the favourite of every audience, while another, whose High C is just as brilliant, cannot 'warm-up' his listeners. Almost always this second singer cannot 'warm-up' himself since he is a worshipper of technique alone and has neglected that cultivation of mind without which his voice must fail in its true purpose. That is, to become an adequate instrument to serve faithfully the composer's intentions and to awaken the audience's receptiveness to be moved by the characteristic inherent in the respective work. Many singers and most students, though I have found them to be earnestly devoted, have no conception of this fundamental requirement, they can only think in terms of their own emotions.

In writing this manual I felt it was pointless to attempt anything revolutionary. If it may help in being a guide to a better understanding of what it takes for a singer to reach his goal, then I have fulfilled my purpose.

Basically, the knowledge I have set down was handed to me by great masters. My own addition to that knowledge comes from my experience as a singer, a vocal coach and a teacher of singers. I feel, that I can therefore, speak with authority.

Marianne Mathy
Sydney, 1965

AUDITIONING

Invariably these are the first questions put to me by those seeking my advice or guidance:

Q. HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT WILL TAKE ME TO BECOME A SINGER?

A. I have found that in a singer's development, however gifted you may be, time limits do not exist. There are so many factors to be considered. These either accelerate or retard your progress and you will have gradually to become accustomed to the thought that you will remain, to a certain extent, an eternal student. The more you progress, the more you will discover that the development of physical and mental assurance necessary to control your voice and to stir your imagination will become a never ending task.



Q. Do you think I have the POTENTIALITIES to make singing my career?

A. There is a lot to be taken into consideration before giving you a positive answer which will depend, first of all, on your age, your background, your general knowledge, your aims and, of course, the quality of your voice. After having heard you sing, perhaps two contrasting items, and having tested your ability to sing exercises which are unknown to you, I will probably ask you to give me your reasons for the way in which you sang. Your reply will show me whether you have any subconscious inhibitions which definitely will become apparent in your expressions, your gestures and your posture. It will also give me a good idea whether your own conception is correct or at fault, and, whether you have been previously rightly or wrongly advised. Only after having considered all these factors will it be possible for me to give you a definite answer and to explain how you could improve your voice and/or where you have missed out on the imagery of your presentation.

If you have shown me

signs of a vocal quality (even if only limited to certain tones),

signs of a natural sense of pitch,

signs of a natural sense of rhythm,

signs of alertness of mind,

signs of a healthy physique and
signs of self-discipline,

my answer to your question will be positive and encouraging. But realise that there are no short cuts on the road of a singer and that this road also demands endurance and permanent self sacrifices on the alter of art. This road demands implicit faith in yourself, despite setbacks and, last but not least, it demands implicit faith in your singing teacher, if you are fortunate enough to find one who is a sensitive pedagogue and an artist as well. Only with such assistance can your voice and your mind be forged to develop and progress to make 'Singing your Career'.



Q. What would be my principal concern when SEEKING A TEACHER OF SINGING?

A. Firstly, you have to make sure that the teacher possesses musical integrity as an educator and is well acquainted with the entire vocal literature, including the contemporary composers.

Secondly, he must be a fairly good pianist and sight-reader. Moreover he must have endless patience, understanding, artistic sensitivity and be a specialist in the field of styles.

One outstanding student is not a sign of the teacher's competence. Only a cross-section of pupils who have developed into more than average professional singers will definitely prove the merits of the teacher. If he is a master of his profession, he will, in the beginning, ask nothing more from you than that you faithfully imitate what he, the master, demonstrates and he will confine himself to the briefest technical advice, while calmly watching your hesitant, searching efforts for progress.

Added to this he will not urge you to put a roof on a visualised building before the foundation has been completed and, therefore, he will wait patiently for the growing and maturing of your vocal apparatus and your

mental awareness.

What more can a capable teacher of singing give you apart from training you physically and mentally in the principles of well known technical and musical laws, about which you can read in many an excellent book on voice production?

Last, but not least, he can demonstrate, with perfect mastery, sounds, colours, clear effortless diction and the shaping of melodic lines. In this way he will awaken in you your imagination and your desire to explore the various resonance zones of your voice.

The task of a capable teacher of singing is to show you the road which leads to your goal. To walk this road is a task that you alone must do.

A capable teacher of singing is just as rare as a gifted student. If you cannot find such a teacher, it seems to me safer to let your instincts guide you rather than to follow a poor example or advice, prompted by wishful thinking, even if it is passed on to you with the best of intentions.



Q. What is a BEGINNER?

A. A beginner is not necessarily one who begins studying singing. He, or she, is a person who has not yet experienced the integrated functioning of his mechanism and who has not consciously formed a mental picture of his own voice and the colouring his voice has to lend to the text.

Such a singer could have had many years of study and even be performing in public and would still remain a beginner.



Q. What is understood by a NATURAL SENSE OF PITCH?

A. If you are able to pitch a given tone independently of any related tones, and if you are able to determine height or depth of a tone, you will have a natural sense of pitch.

Some people are born with absolute pitch; they can even determine the pitch of the ringing of bells, but this does not necessarily make them musicians.



- Q. How do I know I have a SENSE OF RHYTHM?
- A. If you are able to clap, speak and sing strictly in a given time, this shows that you have a natural sense of rhythm.

A natural sense of rhythm does not express itself solely by note values but also through spontaneous reaction in meticulously timing the rise and fall of the musical and the poetic metre.



- Q. What is understood by ALERTNESS OF MIND?
- A. Alertness of mind is the instinctive ability to sense the text and the musical structure of the work you sing and to discover with your imagination the composer's inner language which is hidden beneath his symbols, i.e. crotchets, quavers, rests, etc.

Alertness of mind is also the ability to revise your mistakes in building a new pattern of the task you wish to master.



Q. Why is it essential for a singer to have a **HEALTHY PHYSIQUE**?

A. A healthy physique is of the greatest importance to the development and maintenance of your voice, since your body has to become your living instrument and has to serve you throughout the whole of your singing career. Therefore, you should accustom yourself, from the start, to the conditioning of this living instrument in such a way that your various muscles will function independently of each other in order that you attain command over your voice and, in turn, vocal freedom.

The first person, to my knowledge, who recognised the all-important influence of physical exercises to improve volume, range and vocal quality, was the French tenor and teacher of singing, F. A. Delsarte (1811-1871). Delsarte's physical exercises are still the basis of our modern physical culture.

Freedom of vocal tone and freedom of diction can hardly be achieved with a physique beset by inhibitions, or dependant on stimulants. This explains why it is essential to train your body (not only your voice) by reasonable physical exercises which should not strain your muscles unduly. Your muscles are part of your singing instrument and have to serve your vocal impulses

skillfully.

I do not consider sport of any kind, apart from fencing, to be beneficial for improving your voice. The muscles of a singer must be kept flexible and playful; they should not be forced into hard labour, despite the fact that singing is an athletic achievement.

Your diet also plays a considerable part in maintaining your physique. Eat sensibly balanced food; avoid, as much as possible, animal fats, starchy food, sweets and white sugar.

Regarding smoking; you should be well aware of the risks you take if you smoke. Smoking undoubtedly affects the membranes of the pharynx, the larynx and those of the mouth.

Certainly, there are singers whose exceptional constitutions were not harmed by smoking, but where is the guarantee that you number amongst them?

The few who win lotteries do not prove that you, too, can gamble successfully.

Q. What is meant by SHOWING SELF-DISCIPLINE?

A. If you show signs of self-discipline it means that you possess the readiness to overcome the many obstacles you are sure to encounter and that you are endowed with perseverance to tame your unwieldy material so that it may serve the manifold tasks a singer has to accomplish.



Q. Is there a rule as to HOW I SHOULD CARRY MYSELF in singing?

A. A correctly balanced carriage is a 'must' for anyone who wishes to sing with freedom. If you get into the habit of imagining that you are carrying a flowerpot on the crown of your head, your weight will be balanced on the balls of your feet, on your coccyx, your pelvis and on your spine. With your muscles so conditioned, their functioning will in time become second nature and will assist your correct carriage and the volume of your voice. Consequently you will be physically and mentally ready to respond to any declamatory and melodic demands of the music.

Common sayings such as "chin up", "he cannot stand up to it", or "he has no backbone" are most significant. If you are fidgeting; if you lounge, your hands in your pockets or behind your back; you are mistaken in thinking you are relaxed. Your sluggish carriage will be a sign of your sluggish mind and of a lack of concentration. One can recognize a good singer by his deportment before he has even opened his mouth.

Deportment, carriage, whatever you may call it, will create in you a sensation of balanced harmony and will undoubtedly influence your personality as time goes on.

Q. Does it help my singing to BREATHE WITH THE STOMACH?

A. No, you have not to breathe with the stomach, simply because we cannot breathe with the stomach. We breathe with the lungs, a sponge-like mass, which fills with air and consequently distends in the act of breathing in. This distention of the lungs will influence all muscles surrounding them to expand. Provided that your posture is correctly balanced and that your mind is at rest, your rapid, yet effortless, intake of breath will enable you to keep the muscles of your throat and those of your larynx relaxed. At the same time, your lower abdominal muscles will instantly respond in a forward movement combined with the tightening sensation of these muscles which you can slightly lift at will in an upward direction. It will be your task to discipline these muscles to such a degree as to make them flexible as steel springs, resistant to any air emission and declamation; only by training these muscles can the base of your throat be held in open repose, undisturbed by any breathing activity.

You should not think of air emission which, in fact, produces sound vibrations, as a sensation of 'giving out' air or 'losing' air. With correct singing air emission is converted into firmly woven sound waves.

During the whole act of singing your intercostal muscles and those of your ribs are not allowed to sag or to collapse as would be the case in ordinary breathing out. It will be a great help to you if you regard intake of breath as a means to express emotion, anticipating the mood that will follow. By so doing you can learn, according to the tempo, to time your intake of breath rhythmically so that it becomes part of your melodic line and your phrasing.



Q. How can I make my voice RESONANT?

A. No one, to my knowledge, has yet been able to solve scientifically what makes a voice resonant, because a singer's resonance is a phenomenon that cannot be laid down by any law. We know that resonance is scientifically termed as "transmission of vibrations from one vibrating body to another". Many books on voice production deal with resonance and how to achieve it. They speak in more or less wishful and fanciful terms. The word 'resonance' comes from the Italian "resonare" meaning to resound, to sound back, to echo.

The facts are that primary vibrations originate in your larynx by means of your breath emission which causes the vocal chords to resound (vibrate). These vibrations, if undisturbed by physical interference, are caught and amplified by resonance zones of the body, such as chest, pharynx, mouth, sinus and the skull cavities. You can learn to inter-relate these zones when singing and you eventually will come to a point where uninterfered, firmly woven vowel sounds will "resound back" from these zones.

You cannot fabricate resonance but, by eliminating self-willed activities, you can learn to rely on the mysterious happening which echoes from within yourself.



Q. Does SLUGGISH OR SLOVENLY SPEECH affect my singing voice?

A. A sluggish or slovenly speech undoubtedly affects your singing voice. In some cases, it even injures your vocal chords.

As a child you learned your mother tongue in a parrot like fashion and, as you talk more during the day than you sing, the mis-use of muscles of your vocal apparatus and those muscles needed for enunciation will subconsciously affect your singing voice. A conscious training of these muscles will be definitely beneficial to your endeavours to sing correctly.

Do not confuse my expression "consciously training" with elocution training. In singing, which is exaggerated speech, every consonant and every vowel is subject to meticulous actions of the tongue, lips and jaw. These actions differ from each other in a most delicate way. You should first get yourself acquainted with the feel of those tiny but, oh, so precise movements before you attempt to intertwine them with your vocal work.

For ordinary correct speech this meticulous feel is not as all-important as for singing. Still, it would be a good idea to speak the text of your music in the re-

spective rhythm and with the respective phrasing of the melody before you learn to sing it. This will help you to free yourself from the printed word and the casual way you may speak and thus enable you to picture the rising and falling of your words without breaking the melodic line.



Q. What is meant by LEGATO SINGING?

A. The word "legato" is taken from the Italian "legare", which means to tie, to bind. In your vocabulary it is the foundation on which you build your voice. Compared to an instrumentalist you are faced with a far greater task to perform a perfect legato, owing to the complexity of the language; in particular regarding the unvoiced consonants which you learn to toss between vowels or sometimes if several consonants fall together to bunch them, without impairing the melodic structure of the music. I would advise you to have a sensation of leaning from one note to the following one without perceptible interruption between the notes regardless of whether your phrase increases (crescendo) or decreases (decrescendo) or whether you sing from one note to the next either varying or repeating the pitch. The outcome will be that while you linger on one note you are actually already singing the following one and this without losing the steady flow of air. Do not be afraid that in this way you are scooping or slurring. Perfect legato singing originates from a physical repose plus an alert mind; this gives an impression of strength and power in even the softest passages.

You cannot possibly sing legato if you interrupt (even

unconsciously) your notes by clumsiness of diction or by uneven quantity of sound.

Visualise your mother tongue as a language of vowels undisturbed by precise yet effortless diction which will become one with the musical phrasing.

All this does not apply where declamation has to be given preference over the musical language.



Q. What is the meaning of an ACCENT?

A. Accent comes from the Latin "accentus", meaning a stress, an emphasis, a mark used to indicate stressed syllables, or the quantity of a vowel sound or certain consonants. In other words, an accent is a rising inflection. In the art of singing we know of two different accents; the Agogic Accent and the Dynamic Accent.

The Agogic Accent is achieved not through dynamic stress, but by a lingering on the note, thus lifting it out of the phrase. In other words, you lean for a split second on the consonant or vowel. To do this, your muscles concerned with the vowel or consonant have independently to remain in an unaltered position for this split second. In this manner, accents can gain greater power as the air-flow from the vowels or consonants is slightly condensed before release: also you can see no external movements such as jerking of hands, feet, jaws, etc., during even the most dramatic elaborations.

The Dynamic Accent should be a sudden acoustical increase of a syllable, but this can be disastrous to a voice if not executed correctly. Too often do I hear misconceptions of musical declamation by ejaculating words supported by jerks of the diaphragm on gusts of

purposeless air. This will not only destroy the melodic tension and the meaning of the sentence, but will eventually injure the correct functioning of your vocal chords. Consequently, the correct way to execute accents requires a consistent technical conditioning thus making the whole of your singing apparatus body resistant and flexible. Above all this, the ultimate outcome will become not merely a matter of disciplining your muscles concerned, but a matter of your mind. It comes from within, and is a sudden mental release, an impulse, at the right moment, controlled by the muscles of the diaphragm and those of enunciation.

Sometimes we find a great divergence between the accents of the spoken language and those of the musical language. Sensitive artists will have to find the right compromise by weighing with intelligence and musicianship whether the accent of the words or the music should be given preference. In most cases the musical accents should be given preference, as the music speaks for itself.



Q. What is the significance (meaning) of a MUSICAL REST?

A. The interpretation of a rest depends whether it ends a sentence or whether it lies in the middle of a sentence (phrase). In the first case it will mean that you interrupt your singing and that you take a breath; in the second case, that you stop singing without taking a breath, thus maintaining the mental continuity of your sentence and that of the musical phrase. In many cases, you breathe unnoticeably and treat the rest as an eloquent pause. You see, a rest does not necessarily mean that your thoughts come to an end or that you have to fill your lungs with fresh air because there was no air left. My advice is to treat all rests as eloquent pauses, in which you can pre-shape, in a split second, the vowels or consonants that follow. Where a rest falls together with an intake of breath, use this intake of breath as an impulse to express your anticipated emotion for the phrase to come.

Q. What is meant by SINGING ARTISTICALLY?

A. To sing artistically is to be aware of your voice and to be able to apply colour and texture to your rendition; a most decisive revelation when you arrive at the stage and recognise the mysterious happenings in your voice which neither intellect nor emotion can ever analyse. This state of mind, which permits to unlimited repetitions of musical and verbal phrases and an unlimited variety of expressions, will transform the real into the unreal.



Q. Are FACIAL EXPRESSIONS hindering or furthering my vocal rendition?

A. If you are pre-occupied in producing your voice or maybe in trying to remember your text, or have no concepts of what expression in singing means, then involuntary facial expressions will befall you. Constrictions, maybe even contortions of your face and body, will creep into your muscles and hinder you in any attempt to express text and music uninhibitedly. Similar constrictions and hindrances may occur if you misconceive the meaning of your work or if you are embarrassed to show deep feeling. In all these cases the outcome will be nothing else but meaningless grimaces, e.g. fixed eyes, purposeless activities of your tongue, your lips, your lower jaw and your limbs.

Even though you may think that you have the "right feeling" and express it, these unintended activities will mar the colour of your voice and your vocal rendition. Keep in mind, at all times, that any activity of your face whether intended or not, will inevitably carry its own expressive language to an audience. There is nothing worse than an involuntary facial expression which, in most cases, is but a photograph of yourself.

On the other hand, facial expressions prompted and

roused by the imagery of your soul and of your mind can further uninhibited vocal rendition considerably. But do not overlook the fact that before allowing yourself to be stimulated in such a way, you will have to learn the voluntary independent use of your facial muscles which have to serve both a sensitive enunciation and a free vocalisation. At the same time you have to learn how to respond, to think right and how to feel right.

Then, only, will you be ready to convey the poet's and the composer's message by means of a spontaneous expression, which originates from thought plus impulse. Then, only, will your voice be capable to reflect beauty and colour of tone in joy as well as in sadness, in love, in hate, etc.

If your thoughts are pedestrian, your face will reflect them and in turn, your voice will lack nobility.

A frozen smile or an empty pose will never substitute for poetic or dramatic feeling. It will also never further your vocal rendition.

It is not always easy for a singer recitalist to mentally picture the poet's and the composer's language. The

concert singer's task demands a greater self-reliance than would be required from an opera singer, who has the conductor's support in imparting the meaning of the music and moreover, the producer's guidance for mime as well as for actions.

Consequently, the concert singer has to recreate and portray the original composition through his own inspiration and his own imagination; and this without allowing his imagination to run amok. To achieve this you will have to get used to creating a spell and putting yourself aside to such an extent that all your emotions can be measured by the depth of your feeling and not by misconceived extrovert facial expressions.

This reminds me of a tenor who had to sing "Onaway, Awake Beloved" from Hiawatha by Coleridge Taylor, He stood there woodenly with a sullen expression and with a brassy voice sang: "If thou only lookest at me, I am happy as the lilies of the prairie, when they feel the dew upon them". When I tried to impart to him the poetic meaning which he should reveal he replied: "How the dickens do I know what the lilies feel when the dew falls upon them?" !!!

Q. How long should I PRACTICE each day?

A. Before you begin to practice you have to be familiar with the purpose of your exercise. Unless your teacher has given you a clear conception of why and how you have to practice a specific musical form or exercise, practising is not advisable.

It is far better not to practice at all, than to do so in a vague manner, running up and down Scales and Arpeggios.

On the other hand, if you have been given a clear picture of how to correct the faulty habits of your vocal muscles, in the beginning you can practice for about 10 minutes three times a day. In a more advanced stage of your development you may increase the practice time up to 30 minutes.

A singer has to have a different approach to his practice than an instrumentalist. Instrumentalists can train for hours and hours. A singer in doing so, would only strain his muscles and end with a sore throat.

Your progress will be far safer and you will benefit more if you concentrate for a short time each day on what your teacher has demonstrated to you.



Q. How shall I PRACTICE?

A. The funny thing about Practising Singing is that you should always start with exercises or phrases which come easily to you; thus limbering up your mind and muscles. Actually it is not so much the exercise itself, which will bring you results, but the way you approach this exercise.

You should carry out the advice given to you without becoming physically or mentally tense. Sing all your exercises with a sense of joyfulness and positivity. Half-hearted practice or listening into your voice, possibly with one hand behind your ear, will never enable you to get mental and physical command over your voice. Your only achievement would be practising your mistakes.

Of course, it is of the utmost importance not to sit at the piano while practising. You have to stand erect; and this with perfect physical balance. It may be helpful if you tread the pedal and hold the respective key while singing your exercises.

When practising never think of merely bare sounds, keep at all times in mind that your exercise has a certain musical line and a certain musical rhythm.

Practice with imagination!

Never practice immediately after a meal.

Singlemindedness directed to any muscles of your vocal apparatus will become your greatest enemy; it will only create constriction.

From time to time it is advisable to check up on your posture as well as the actions of your lips, tongue, jaw, while singing, with the aid of a large mirror.

The co-ordinating of your body and mind will bring about a sensation of harmony and ease, and will help you to overcome your shortcomings.



Q. How long will it usually take a singer to memorise and to perform his work in public?

A. This depends, of course, on yourself and on the length of the work you have to memorize. It also depends on the amount of preparatory work you have done on your own before you rehearse with your accompanist. Memorizing your text and your melody and being able to put your score aside is far from being good enough. You must have time to absorb your work mentally and musically before you present it in public.

In English, the term "memorizing" is used synonymously with the phrase "singing by heart". This phrase, however, has a deeper meaning for me. Freedom of rendition can come only through "singing by heart". I mean, only after you have lived with your songs for a good while and after having incorporated them into your emotional awareness.

The famous Lieder Singer, Lula Mysz-Gmeiner, with whom I have studied, often said that she would never present a song in public until she had carried it for a considerable time within her heart.



Q. How do I BUILD A PROGRAMME?

A. To build a programme, even if it consists only of two or three groups, is an artistic achievement in itself.

As a rule, one starts with items of pre-classical period, (English, German, French, Italian), or Oratorio, then continues with groups of Lieder and Art Songs, and concludes with Operatic Arias or some good folklore music, such as Negro Spirituals, etc.

Always make sure that your numbers are in a contrasting mood and of a contrasting tempo. It is also advisable not to sing two consecutive items in the same key, unless you wish to maintain a kindred mood.

Do not make anti-climaxes; rather build your groups in such a way that you end either with a great vocal exhibition on something that catches the ear and mind of your audience.

Endeavour to group your items in chronological order. It will be a sign of your good taste, not to mix Lieder with Art Songs in the same group.



Q. WHAT SHOULD I WEAR when singing in public?

A. If a concert starts in the evening, a female should wear a long frock on the platform, and a dinner suit would be appropriate for a male. For a more official occasion, tails. Remember, black socks!

Should you have to sing in an oratorio, refrain from extreme décolleté and beware of vivid colours, especially red. If the oratorio takes place in a church, a formal afternoon dress and head covering are required. A male should wear a dark suit. Do not wear anything that would detract from the seriousness of your work.

For a matinee performance, a short, elegant dress is advisable; a male wears a dark suit.

The way you dress is not only dictated by the occasion on which you sing in public, it is also subject to your good taste.



Q. Are there any particular PLATFORM MANNERS to be observed?

A. If you are blessed with a natural grace and serenity, you will not need much guidance but it might be helpful to keep in mind that, right from the moment you walk onto the platform, you have to maintain an inner readiness to move or to give joy to your audience through the depths of your feeling. Your audience should then respond and become part of you.

But should YOU BE A WITHDRAWN, EMBARRASSED person or maybe even a tasteless exhibitionist, who gets a "kick" out of appearing before an audience, then you will need a lot of guidance and grooming. First of all you will have to learn to leave your personal self at home; secondly, you will have to be shown how to control and improve your deportment and your expressions. Your face should at no time reveal any inner insecurity which befalls you and this, in any case, cannot be covered up by a frozen smile or an empty gesture. It will also be necessary to maintain your engaging deportment not only when appearing on the platform acknowledging applause and while you concentrate in readiness to sing, but when you turn your back to the audience in leaving

the platform. THE VIEW OF YOUR BACK IS NEARLY AS TELLING TO AN AUDIENCE'S REACTION AS WAS YOUR FACE.



Q. When and how should I ACKNOWLEDGE APPLAUSE?

A. You should always acknowledge applause; this is a matter of politeness. But wait until the audience acknowledges YOU. I advise you to bow modestly and gracefully. The way you do this is dictated by your personality, it is also dictated by the mood of your item, and moreover by the end of the song. My experience has taught me to acknowledge even the most turbulent applause after a contemplative or tragic song with restraint. Of course, I was gay when I ended a happy story. By no means blow kisses or wave your arms, and, for Heaven's sake, do not smile at anyone you know in the audience - you would only make a public spectacle of yourself.



Q. Why are singers limited to certain parts of the Opera Literature even though they may possess the necessary range of voice?

A. You should, from the start, become accustomed to the thought that each character in opera expresses itself with a different calibre of voice and also with a contrasting colour of voice.

Just as your build will influence, to a great extent, the parts for which you will be cast, so will the inherent colour of your voice determine the character for which you will be suited.

Many operas have parts which call for particular characterisation and in such cases you have to change deliberately your specific colour of voice and also, sometimes, the colour of the way you articulate to fit the role you have to portray. This is called "characterising a role".

In most cases, the range of voice will not be the decisive factor. A Mezzosoprano may have the same compass as a soprano and yet a Carmen will most likely not be right to portray an Elsa. A lyric tenor who sings the Count in "The Barber of Seville" would not sing an Andrea Chenier.

A single aria you might be able to sing "nicely" will not be proof that your voice could cope with the demands of the whole opera. For instance, the Willow Song from "Othello" by Verdi, is sung in a lyrical, pensive mood and yet this is no test for the role of Desdemona which calls for a dramatic spinto. The same applies to many other similar parts.

I think you will now understand that the classification of roles depends mainly on the particular colour of a voice and where its potential timbre reveals itself.

The safest way for young singers is to stick to their specific type of voice and not let themselves be lured for the sake of glamour into parts unsuited to their voices.

If your voice has not been fully trained and has not yet fully matured, it will be sometimes hard to predict whether you will end as a mezzo, a contralto, a dramatic soprano, or a baritone or a dramatic tenor, etc.

Many Opera conductors unfortunately do not take into consideration this necessary classification of voice and tend to push a young promising singer, whose voice might show a rich timbre, prematurely into dramatic parts. This will inevitably stop any vocal development and, in the long run, will ruin the chances of a long

career.

Limited finances of Opera companies nowadays compel many a singer to accept engagements for roles which differ widely from the characteristics of the singer's voice and in such instances singers are apt to overstep their vocal limits. This can become very dangerous.

There were and are always exceptions of course and we know of singers such as Lilli Lehmann who sang practically all the leading soprano roles of the operatic literature. In later years she even sang an Ortrud in Lohengrin. Caruso started as a lyric tenor and sang in his maturing age dramatic tenor roles.

My advice to you is that wherever possible familiarise yourself with complete operas rather than single arias, and also whether your own voice is suited to portray the parts you desire to study.



Q. How can I overcome my NERVOUSNESS when giving auditions or before performing in public?

A. Common symptoms of a singer's nervousness or stage fever are: a parched mouth and throat, an unsteady tone, lapses of memory and a helplessness to concentrate on the task; - all of which seem unconquerable.

I know of singers whose nervousness caused them to develop imagined illnesses, such as colds, gastric upsets and many others, before the important day drew near.

Whatever your personal nervous symptoms maybe, try to reason with yourself what could lie at the bottom of all this.

I am confident you will soon discover, provided you are honest with yourself, that you were too occupied with the thought of how your 'little self' might impress your superiors or your audience. Of course, it is quite natural to be ambitious and to try to be at your very best, but this very desire can take on such huge proportions in anticipating the keyed up feeling necessary for the occasion itself; that you feel powerless to plunge into your artistic work when the occasion arises.

Things may become even worse if yours is a critical

mind which has the habit of listening into itself. Then all spontaneity and necessary vocal thrust will have left you. This fallacious state of mind creates insecurity, numbness of your whole being, disturbance of glandular functions and of your blood circulation. It will not be surprising that all this makes you feel off colour.

The sooner you recognise that your mental approach is the arch-enemy, the quicker you will be able to overcome it. Also the less you feel sorry for yourself if some indisposition seems to befall you, the faster these signs will disappear. Added to this a reliable technique and ample preparatory work play an important part to assist you.

I recommend that you try to put all thoughts of failure aside and instead carry the desire for achievement permanently in your mind. In overcoming anxiety your gifts will grow. Fill your mind with enthusiasm for what lies ahead of you. Success depends on your inner drive and on your positive thinking. The more you progress in this direction, the faster all signs of indisposition and shakiness will disappear.

On the day of the event, a light distraction of any kind, e.g. some manual work, will also be helpful. I do not believe in the old-fashioned idea of going to bed in the afternoon. Your 'engine' has to be kept more or less in the same rhythm as on normal days. Before leaving for your commitment, a mild physical exercise will limber you up.

Try this exercise.

While you hold yourself perfectly erect without rigidity, let yourself gaze into an imagined far distance, breathe freely in and stretch your arms and hands upwards in a straight line, your finger tips pointing to the ceiling. Breathe out letting both arms and hands flop down. Repeat this three times as follows:-

Breathe in; lift arms and hands;

Breathe out; flop arms and hands,

Pausing while counting silently 1, 2, 3.

Breathe in; stretch arms and hands up;

Breathe out; flop; wait counting to three.

Repeat once more.

Rest for a few minutes after you have finished this exercise and then begin to warm up your voice with some phrases or some vocal exercises which come easily to you.

Do not sing for more than about 10 minutes. You may also go over some passages of the work you intend to sing.

In this way you will steady your nerves. Once you have accustomed yourself to adopt the same relaxed frame of mind as when you were rehearsing and singing well, all these devilish symptoms of nervousness will progressively disappear.

Q. Should I adjust the VOLUME OF MY VOICE to suit the surroundings or the circumstances in which I sing?

A. I do not advise you to adjust your voice according to the surroundings or to the circumstances in which you sing. As the sound of your voice travels away from you, you will be unable to judge correctly the intensity and the quantity of the sounds you produce. Provided you are in command of your voice and will use it as you do in everyday practice or during full orchestral rehearsals, you will need no additional vocal adjustment regardless of whether you sing in large auditoriums or with powerful orchestra or organ accompaniments or vice versa, in halls with bad acoustics.

Inexperienced singers will find this pretty hard. They are mostly led into forcing the volume of their voices because they try to hear themselves.

On the other hand over acoustic surroundings may mislead them to take things the easy way thereby losing intensity in projecting their voices. The outer ear hears voluminous, amplified sound, which seems to need no support. Think of the bathroom singer!

To avoid these mistakes learn to adjust your inner ear and your mind to a volume which is specifically yours and which may be required for the respective work.

Actually, you have to train your inner ear plus your mind to visualise sounds beforehand and, this, in forte as well as in piano singing. The result will be that you get a physical and mental 'feel' for how your voice should sound. In turn, you will acquire the ability to let your tones and your words rest upon an uninterrupted flow of breath, while imagining that your voice travels to far off regions.

Thus, external matters should not influence your inward feeling towards the volume of your voice.

All this does not apply when singing with a microphone or in broadcasting studios in which the panel operator controls the volume of the sounds.



CONCLUSION

Q. What method do you teach?

A. I do not teach a method. I teach a system which will enable you to use all your senses through which you will gradually become aware of the independent functioning of various muscles needed to produce voice and diction with perfect freedom. At the same time you will also be able to learn to eliminate any activity of those muscles which have no part in the actual process of singing and which should be kept in repose.

Thus, you will become more and more aware of the revelation that being in a state of taut activity does not mean being in a state of rigid tension, nor that relaxation is a synonym for sluggishness or passivity. Then the clumsy monster of inhibitions will no longer dominate your efforts. Discipline will emerge with spontaneity and playful skill will become ego-less art.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Madame Marianne Mathy was born in Mannheim, southern Germany. Her musical education, which was mainly carried out in Germany, comprised Piano, Theory, Speech Training, Interpretation and Voice Production with a special course for the treatment of damaged vocal chords.

Madame Mathy became famous as an Interpreter of Lieder and of the Early Music of many countries. Well versed in German, French, Italian and English, she sang in Opera, Oratorio, gave numerous recitals and sang as soloist with various

Chamber Orchestras. She received the State Certificate, Berlin, with Honourable Mention, in recognition of her public performances and her ability as a teacher of singing. Such was her musical reputation that she won the enduring admiration of every leading singer, conductor and musician of the day. Bruno Walter speaks, in a letter, of her "extraordinary musical ability" and of her remarkable gifts for teaching. He describes her as "a coloratura soprano of irreproachable skill and control of voice".

With the coming of the Nazis, life in Germany was no longer possible for Madame Mathy and she made her way, via England, to Australia in 1939. She arrived here with glowing recommendations as an artist and teacher of singing from Bruno Walter, Sir Thomas Beecham, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Dusolina Giannini, Coonraed V. Bos and others, equally famous.

Now, a Professor of music at the Sydney Conservatorium, Madame Mathy has trained many successful singers and numerous competition winners. Four of her pupils have won the Sun Aria Competition including the 1965 competition. The latest triumph of her teaching career also occurred in 1965 when Althea Bridges, who studied with Madame Mathy for eight years, won the 14th International Music Competition held at Munich.

She has worked as a translator into English for the ABC, Ricordi of Paris, the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, and others.