

*NATS National Conference 2018*

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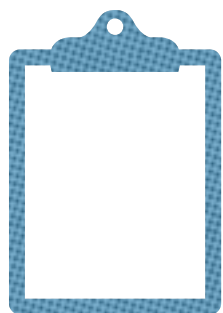
# **Training the Whole Voice: In Pursuit of a New Paradigm**

Tanya Kruse, DMA

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- How can pedagogues set a paradigm shift in motion within existing voice training curricula?
- How can we put the power of choice, regarding their vocal training, back into the hands of our students?

This session will begin a dialogue about these questions and aid teachers in beginning to discover what they value in training versatile singers.



Look for this icon

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# What is the existing paradigm of voice training?

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- ❖ Teach everyone “classical technique” because it is the foundation for everything else
- ❖ Breath is the “golden ticket” to fix nearly all technical problems
- ❖ Teacher knows best (major, repertoire)
- ❖ Pedagogy courses assume classical
- ❖ If someone has a “good voice”, steer them towards operatic and classical repertoire only

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American singers are still considered some of the best trained in the world, so...

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Why is a new paradigm needed?

## Jeannette LoVetri, *Journal of Singing*, September/October 2013

“It is truly impossible to know whether or not classical training is helpful without knowing which particular tenets a teacher uses. Understanding how to sing “Caro mio ben” or “An die Musik” does not prepare a singer to do “Out Tonight” from *Rent* or “Defying Gravity” from *Wicked*. It may not automatically teach you to sing in an appropriate sound if you are performing “Misty” or “Stardust” in a jazz combo. It may or may not help you sing “Girl On Fire,” a current Alicia Keys hit.

Unless the teacher can make the distinction between the **coordinative responses** the singer needs to cultivate and the effect those responses have on **breath management, vocal strength and flexibility, range extension, vowel clarity, articulation, and pitch accuracy** (and certainly none of those things have to do with any one style exclusively), classical training can be useful or a waste of time.

Further, the overall sound found in styles other than classical that would be considered professionally viable, particularly in women, has to do with the use of **vocal quality**, and not all classical singing teachers address that issue. In those that do, there is often disagreement about what vocal quality is best and why.”

**AND...**

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# Why is a new paradigm needed?

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- The marketplace for singers is changing rapidly and the voice pedagogy world needs to respond quickly to educate students who will be competitive (and healthy) in this environment.

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# Renée Fleming

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- ❖ Played Nettie Fowler in the spring 2018 Broadway revival of *Carousel* and was nominated for a Tony Award
- ❖ From *Vanity Fair* magazine: Accustomed to projecting her voice “over the orchestra” and “in a foreign language,” she says, Fleming will instead perform with electronic amplification—and in a Maine accent. “I’ve had to rethink how I sing,” she notes.







Kelli O'Hara at the 12th Annual Opera News Awards at the Plaza Hotel on April 9, 2017, Dario Acosta Photography

## Kelli O'Hara

From her interview with *Playbill*, April 2017:

- “Anytime I can diversify the types of work I do, I feel like I am growing and learning—and hopefully becoming a better artist overall.”
- “I got my degree in opera almost 20 years ago and left the dream to go to acting school. But people still dream. I hope more crossover work can happen because artists never have just one dream. We dream endlessly.”



Kelli O'Hara as Despina, photo owned by Metropolitan Opera

*The King and I* (Tony Award)  
*Jekyll and Hyde*  
*The Light in the Piazza*  
*South Pacific*  
*The Bridges of Madison County*  
*Nice Work If You Can Get It*  
*...and now...*  
*Despina in Così fan Tutte at the Metropolitan Opera, spring 2018*



There is a stated desire for:  
“diversity, cross over, better overall artistry, microphone technique, acting in singing”  
in just these two examples.

World renowned pedagogue Scott McCoy discussed a change in his approach in  
“The Old Dog Learns a New Trick (or Why I Now Teach Belting)”,  
*Journal of Singing*, September/October 2016:

“In the studio, I focus on aspects of singing that are similar, if not the same across genres, as well as accept and encourage technical elements that are divergent.

I also believe that my understanding of anatomy, vocal function, and vocal health is sufficient to help my singers stay on the razor’s edge between success and voice damage—both in the high impact singing that can be required for opera as well as for CCM.

We can celebrate the past and the golden age of *bel canto*, but also must embrace the glories of singing in all its varied current and future forms.”

- We do not know what skills an eighteen-year-old entering college as a voice major will need upon graduation, because we do not know how the market will change by the time the student reaches maturity, but we can look at current trends as a guide.



What are the trends?

- We are living in a time where versatility is demanded and marketable, as evidenced by Fleming, O'Hara, Chenoweth, and more.
- A study by Green, Freeman, Edwards, and Meyer published in 2014 showed that within the musical theatre marketplace:
  - 5% of the auditions studied requested Classical/Legit (Julie Andrews, John Raitt, i.e. *Golden Age*)
  - 25% Pop/Rock (Jessie Mueller, Adam Pascal, i.e. *Next to Normal*)
  - 30% Contemporary Musical Theatre (Sutton Foster, Norman Leo Butz, i.e. *Avenue Q*)
  - 40% Traditional Musical Theatre (belt, Ethel Merman, Joel Grey, i.e. *Cabaret*)
  - This, as well as a thoughtful look at the titles on Broadway, show that legit music theatre no longer reigns supreme in one of the largest markets for young performers.

But that's just for the music theatre majors, right??

Nope!

## Even our “classical” students are affected by these changes

- My 2017 study, “The inclusion of CCM and Music Theatre singing styles in the nation’s Young Artist Programs: A study of repertoire, practices, and longitudinal analysis”, shows that out of the 52 YAPs analyzed, 9 of them programmed non-classical repertoire in their 2007 season. In 2017, 18 of them included it. That’s a 50% increase in 10 years within our country’s opera YAPs.
- Major YAP’s, such as the Ryan Opera Center at the Chicago Lyric, are featuring non-classical repertoire in concerts.
  - Who was in attendance for the concert they performed in at the Chicago NATS 2016 Conference? We heard Michael Bublé’s music, music from Africa, and traditional music theatre from these young singers.
- Many YAP’s now require that singers bring a music theatre selection to their audition.
- This means that even students focused solely on developing classical singing careers and aiming for high-level operatic YAPs need to be educated on how to sing healthily and stylistically in non-classical styles.

# What about existing curricula?

## I can't teach all of that AND non-classical!

- Change the curriculum, if possible. We revised curriculum at UW-Milwaukee to reflect some changes, but these were minor edits. Most of what we do involves tweaking existing courses to be more inclusive.
- Harvard, for example, redesigned its concentration in music to allow for less credits of traditional theory and history courses:
  - According to an article in the March 2017 *Crimson*, “the new curriculum would not be less rigorous, but would allow students to better tailor their courses to their interests.”
  - Not every school, however, is going to be able to re-write their curriculum.

Can we use existing curricula and degree programs to educate students for the current market as a vocalist? I believe we can.

(There is also the issue of NASM requirements. It's important to note that there are schools who are leaving NASM because the association gets in the way of industry-driven growth. Shenandoah University, Michigan, Juilliard, and more have already left. I do believe, however, that it's possible to work within the requirements, if needed.)

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# How do we proceed?

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- Rather than teaching with the philosophy that “classical technique gives students a foundation that will allow them to sing everything”, what about teaching function, guiding an exploration of the whole voice, and then allowing students to apply this to a variety of genres within their undergraduate education?
- By developing this way, we allow students to discover their own instrument and tastes, giving them the power to decide how to evolve. It also allows music education students to develop an appreciation for the many styles they will teach.
- This presentation aims to begin a national dialogue about learning to use the whole voice, training beginning singers to be general vocalists first, thereby leaving many options open for specialization as the student’s voice and musical aesthetics mature.
  - By adopting this mindset, we can better serve our students and the rapidly evolving profession.

1. How might you allow your undergraduates more choice in their studies?
2. What are some basic skills that you are currently teaching that are not genre-specific?



## How can we create a new paradigm of voice training within an existing system?

1. First, the undergraduate degree should be a place for general vocal development and graduate work can be where the specialist is created. There's beauty in allowing a student to make a choice in what genre they would like to specialize after they have explored what music fits them vocally and aesthetically.
2. Second, there is skill acquisition. We (voice teachers) all help to develop the skills of our students, but what skills are necessary to toggle between many styles? The basic skills are much the same in all styles, and most voice pedagogues understand this already, but the key in changing the paradigm is **versatility**.

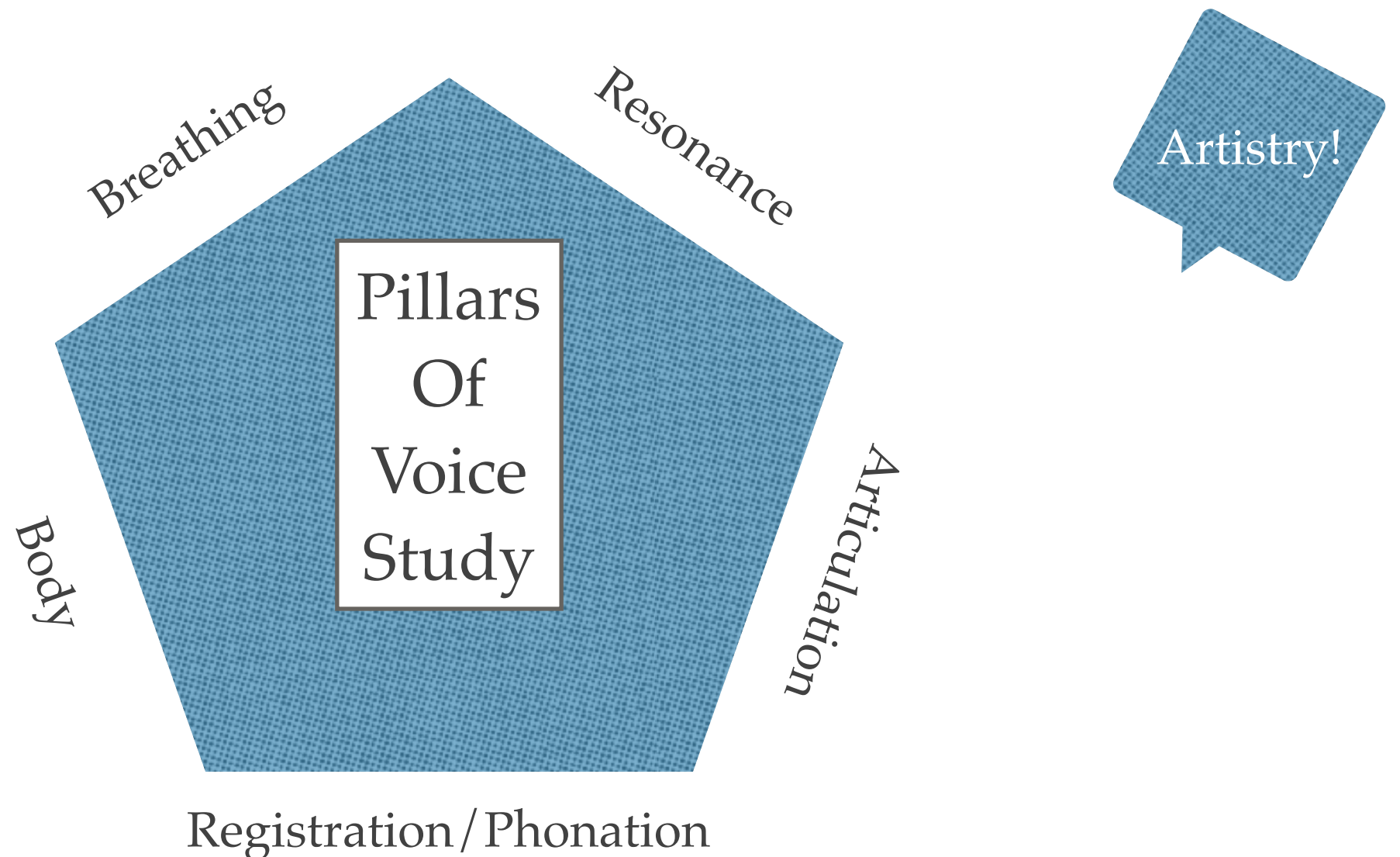


Let's explore

# 1. General vocal development - The whole voice, a generalist

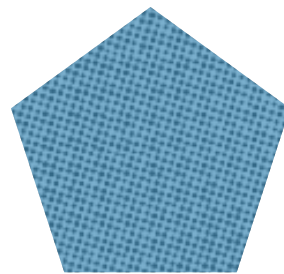
# Celebrate that which is the same

Breathing, resonance, phonation/registration, articulation, and body work are some of the pillars of many singing lessons and concepts that most teachers, regardless of their specialization and training, will understand.



**If we understand and teach singers the ways in which these pillars can be mastered AND modified, they can be versatile in many styles.**

**(The idea is that if you're already teaching the concept, why not teach the whole of it? Reframe the “old paradigm” AND incorporate the new.)**



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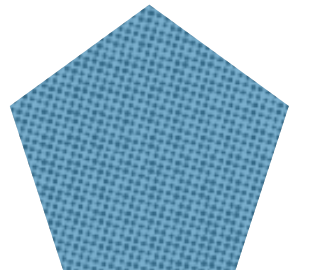
# Breathing

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## *Inhalation and exhalation\**

- “Power”
- Old paradigm: We breathe for the phrase which is long and breathe low (PLEASE EXCUSE THE GENERALIZATIONS)
- New paradigm: Breathing strategies differ according to body type and airflow needed at the vocal fold level to create specific sounds is varied
  - Think of a thin and muscular music theatre major highly trained in ballet and how they would breathe for singing music theatre repertoire verses a student who is larger and singing opera
  - Breathe for the phrase - music theatre and pop phrases tend to be shorter than opera and art song
  - Less air is needed for belting due to the longer closed quotient
  - Taking a low breath can involve tracheal pull, thereby lowering the larynx and changing the vocal tract so that it is shaped to be more conducive for classical/operatic sounds

\*All as defined by AATS



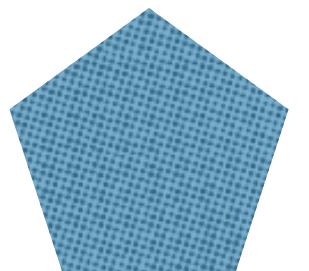
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# Resonance

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*How and where the vocal sounds are amplified*

- “Filter”, vocal tract
- Old paradigm: Open throat is used to allow for chiaroscuro balance
- New paradigm: We are making shapes in order to make sounds - the good, the bad, the ugly
- Vocal tract shape varies for different styles but students can gain an understanding of how they can shape it through play. What sounds can be made and how are you doing this?
  - Laryngeal position needs to be flexible so that it can hang out lower in classical styles and possibly higher in CCM.
  - Students need to play with varying degrees of open and narrow throat coordinations (note - this doesn't mean tight) to attain timbres needed in many genres.
  - Silken will demonstrate an “operatic” and a trumpet-like sound for us



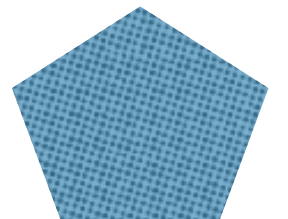
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# Registration/Phonation

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*The interaction of phonation and resonance/Making vocalized sounds*

- Modes, chest, middle, head, falsetto, whistle/“Source”, vocal folds
- Old paradigm: Unify the registers so that shifts are undetectable, women should not use TA dominant function much
- New paradigm: Develop coordination and strength in all registers
- I use a continuum model for mix in my studio that ranges from chest to head and we play with coordinations throughout it.
- Making many sounds (twangy, breathy, belty, operatic) and validating them, with thick fold and thin fold strategies, is necessary.
- By working on the chest voice/TA dominant function, women can gain strength and varied color in the tone.
- Smooth registration should be mastered, but knowing when to camouflage it and when to highlight changes in it, as well as how to mix TA/CT function for stylistic effect, increases versatility.
  - Think of some pop singers that use an abrupt transition into falsetto/whistle for artistic effect, such as Sam Smith in “Money on my mind” or Mariah Carey in “Emotions”



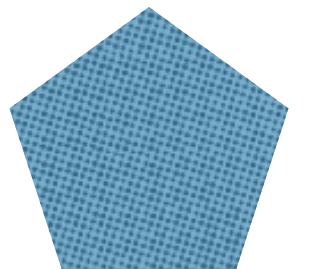
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# Articulation

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*How and where the vocal sounds are shaped into language*

- Tongue, lips, teeth, velum
- Old paradigm: Vowels reign supreme and they are tall
- New paradigm: Consonants get some love (text is more important in CCM/ music theatre than the one perfect sound desired in classical and we don't need to have unification in resonance because we don't self-amplify), Vowels can be more horizontal for a brighter timbre
- Lips can change the shape of the resonator, such as lengthening the tube with their protrusion, thereby modifying the timbre toward oscuro = good for classical, not always good otherwise
- Classical repertoire usually requires a raised velum, but this is not always the case in CCM/ music theatre
  - Allowing some resonance in the nasopharynx can help to alleviate some pressure in a high belt
  - Character voices



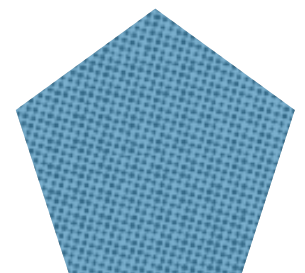


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# Body

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- “The instrument”, whole self
- Old paradigm: Posture, (perhaps “park and bark”?)
- New paradigm: Alignment, mobility, movement
- Building physical awareness and coordination using tools such as *What Every Singer Needs to Know About the Body* and Stephen Austin’s “Training Strong Voices in 12 Ways” (*Journal of Singing*, three-part article throughout 2013), are voice building tools that I use regardless of the style that the student wants to sing.
- Many models are appearing in voice studios such as Alexander Technique, Feldenkreis, etc. that teach how to best use the body. Students need to decide what works best for them.



Which of these pillars do you use?  
Could you be more inclusive in how you teach  
them?



Back to this...

## How can we create a new paradigm of voice training within an existing system?



1. First, the undergraduate degree should be a place for general vocal development and graduate work can be where the specialist is created. There's beauty in allowing a student to make a choice in what genre they would like to specialize after they have explored what music fits them vocally and aesthetically.
2. Second, there is skill acquisition. We (voice teachers) all help to develop the skills of our students, but what skills are necessary to toggle between many styles? The basic skills are much the same in all styles, and most voice pedagogues understand this already, but the key in changing the paradigm is **versatility**.

Sharing what we are doing at UW-Milwaukee

## 2. Skill acquisition (voice, performing)



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## Incorporate acting and movement within curriculum

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- **Acting 101** has become a requirement for our undergraduate performance majors
- **Alexander Technique** has become a requirement for our BFA students in voice performance
- **Movement** (dance, stage combat, etc.) and **monologues** have become a regular part of our Opera Workshop course
- Many students take dance and acting courses as electives as well
- These are skills that are useful for all singing actors

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# Incorporate Diverse Staged Performances

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- ❖ *La Périochole* (Offenbach, operetta with movement) was our show two years ago, but this coming year, we are staging *La Clemenza di Tito* (traditional Mozart).
- ❖ In our “Opera Workshop” performances, we’ve staged scenes from traditional opera alongside Sondheim (*Sunday in the Park with George*), Guettel (*Light in the Piazza*), Flaherty (*Ragtime*), and more. It’s ALL “music theatre”, isn’t it?
- ❖ Students also cross over in repertoire within full roles. For example, recently our Aeneas (*Dido and Aeneas*) was a music theatre major and last month a BA Voice major was Judy in *9 to 5* (she’s also currently in Italy covering the role of Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*).
- ❖ **WORD OF WARNING:** Incorporating music theatre into performances without teaching students how to sing it properly and stylistically is doing a disservice to them and to the art form.



## Silken's experiences

What has been her path  
in performing vocally  
diverse roles  
and studying in this manner?





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# Solo repertoire

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- Allowing the student to explore many genres within their solo repertoire gives them an opportunity to practice what they are learning about the way that they can use their whole voice to be expressive.
- I have a list that I now use of suggested repertoire that is a combination of genres and eras. My music theatre students use this as the basis for their “Rep Book” and my classical students use it to be sure to cover all of the bases that would be needed for future graduate work.

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# Celebrate Diversity In Performance Class

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- Some techniques we work on in our master class:
  - Microphone technique as well as technique for self-amplification
  - Pop and rock technique and presentation (using the brilliant work of Matt Edwards and Sheri Sanders)
- A sample of repertoire polished in class:
  - Music theatre
  - Opera
  - Art song
  - Folk song
  - Singer-songwriter and student composed pieces of various genres
  - Jazz
  - Pop and rock from many eras
  - Oratorio

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# Diction without classical bias

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- Students learn English diction for both opera / art song and music theatre / CCM styles in our diction courses.
- As stated earlier, the way that we shape language in classical singing tends to involve more unity among the vowels and a generally tall mouth shape. CCM demands more conversational vowel shapes that tend toward a horizontal shape. This effects acoustics and can aid in attaining the appropriate resonance in a genre. If students are taught this whole spectrum and when to use these shapes, they will be able to toggle between styles with greater ease. Diction courses can reinforce this.

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# More

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- Other music courses that might exist within music degree programs and can be interesting/helpful to versatile singers are:
  - Song literature
  - History of music theatre
  - History of popular music
  - Let's brainstorm together!
- COLLABORATION FOR THE WIN! (It takes a village)
  - Rely on colleagues who have specialties other than yours to work with your students
  - Bring in professionals who work in diverse genres and areas of expertise other than your faculty to supplement the work

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# Musical parallels between CCM and classical

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- Riffing in CCM/music theatre is the equivalent of ornamentation/cadenzas in classical music. Therefore, teaching flexibility/agility and how to shape phrases musically serves all genres.
- Vibrato has parallels between its use in Baroque music and CCM styles. Therefore, teaching non-vibrato and vibrato coordination is essential for versatility.

Silken will demonstrate



Think about your studio and / or program

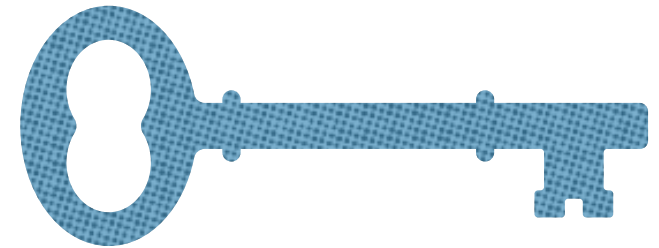


- None of the items mentioned here are out of the realm of possibility for most existing degree programs, it is a matter of modifying what already exists.
  - How might you incorporate some of these curricular ideas?

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# Versatility?

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- Teaching function through a fact-based and musically unbiased method is the key to being versatile, allowing singers to more easily cross over from one style to another. We are giving students the power of choice by training them in this way.
- We are teaching students to use the WHOLE VOICE (all of the sounds), including those that might not be “beautiful” to the classically trained ear.

But how do we train people do **teach** in this way?



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# Voice Pedagogy

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Scott McCoy, *Journal of Singing*:

Pedagogy: “I’ve previously advocated for new teacher training paradigms that prepare aspiring teachers for the realistic demands of new and emerging markets. With each passing year, fewer and fewer positions are open in the academy for teachers whose expertise is focused solely on opera. And very few metropolitan areas have sufficient numbers of students exclusively in pursuit of an operatic career to support more than a small handful of independent teachers.

It is time to acknowledge that the world has changed, and that our curricula must be adapted to suit the needs and expectations of the real world, which includes skill in teaching both classical and CCM genres and techniques.

Many schools have already jumped on this bandwagon.

It’s time for more of us to join them.”

# What about university pedagogy courses?

- We must include information now on how to TEACH versatility, or we are doing our students a disservice.
  - What percentage of a home/private studio's repertoire is classical? The market demands versatility in both home studios and at the university level.
- Again, if we are teaching function in pedagogy courses as their foundation, then we can study how these functions work in many coordinations within many styles.
- This is not just for future performers! Our future music educators (they are also undergraduates who need to be generalists in their voice pedagogy) need to understand the basics about how to sing in CCM/music theatre styles.
  - They do not stage operas in their middle and high schools! They stage and coach musicals! I've seen tragic performances, such as the musical "Aida", where the leads didn't know how to belt properly and couldn't make it through the show. Those students were not coached on how to sing healthily in this style and repertoire was chosen without considering that one cannot sing this show in the same way one sings most choral selections. This can be avoided.
  - They are incorporating more diverse repertoire into their choral concerts.

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# Extra curriculars apply, too

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## **UWM SNATS Mission Statement 2016-present**

“We strive to inspire a passionate,  
inclusive community of students and teachers  
of the art and science of singing-  
a community that works to promote  
a variety of singing styles,  
instill lifelong learning,  
and enrich its surrounding communities,  
including UWM and the NATS organization.”

- Recent guest artists who have given workshops for the UWM SNATS group include:
  - Chadley Ballentyne, “The acoustics of belt”
  - David Hoffman and Colleen Brooks, “Exploring cabaret”
  - Jean Broekhuizen, “The German Fest System”

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# Observations since adopting this model

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- Women have a richer, more robust middle voice with lots of color in their classical music after working on variations of mix.
- Men have a more seamless transition into falsetto after cross training.
- Students are winning in NATS Student Auditions simultaneously in BOTH classical and music theatre categories.
- Music theatre undergraduate received an encouragement award in the Lotte Lenya competition singing Jason Robert Brown and zarzuela.
- Graduate students want in!
  - MM tenor was a semi-finalist this spring in the American Traditions competition, singing in 9 genres while working on his classical graduate recital.
  - Mezzo who had an undergraduate degree in music theatre just finished her MM in Voice Performance, singing songs made famous by Edith Piaf, sets of Bolcom/Bellini/R. Schumann art songs, and a set of songs by Lippa including high belt.

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# Is everything coming up roses?

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- Being more diverse does mean that there is more to cover in lessons and in the curriculum, therefore there cannot be as deep of an understanding of styles as one would have if focused on one style. We are struggling to get all of the language study into the curriculum as well. I do believe that artistry deepens with diversity, but the sacrifice is depth within the varying subjects. There is more work to be done here.
- In the long run, it remains to be seen.

“Why not train the entire singing systems of both men and women to make a variety of sounds that create a healthy balance in the instrument? It’s all about vocal health, strength, flexibility, coordination, endurance, as well as artistic expression...It’s called cross training, and it is simply good voice pedagogy...”

–Robert Edwin, *Journal of Singing*, September / October 2008



Take a moment to think through this and make a mental note about how you might use this information.



(And check out the resources on the next slide)

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- For more, explore the work of Matt Edwards, Robert Edwin, Sheri Sanders, Jeannie LoVetri, Mary Saunders-Barton, the Contemporary Voice Institute at Shenandoah, and more

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# Thank you! And thanks to:

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- ❖ **Silken Amelia** is pursuing a BFA in Musical Theatre at UW-Milwaukee, studying voice with Dr. Tanya Kruse. Some of her recent credits include Doralee Rhodes (Dolly Parton) in *9 to 5: the musical*, *Carnival* (ensemble), *The Little Mermaid* (Atina / Princess / Maid), *La Pèrichole* (Brambilla-Dance Captain), and *Dido and Aeneas* (Chorus-Sorceress Cover). She attended the Musical Theatre Educators Alliance (MTEA) conference in January and intends to stay active in that group as well as NATS. Her passion for vocal pedagogy has intensified as she has progressed through college. Silken believes all the knowledge she gains as a performer will help her teaching, choreographing and directing, in the same way the tools she learns from a teachers point of view will fuel her performing. A life-long learner, Silken is always excited to try something new.
- ❖ And her fellow researcher, **Katie Gruell**



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# About me and contact info.

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Tanya Kruse, DMA, is an Associate Professor of Voice at UW-Milwaukee (UWM). Tanya teaches voice to students in the undergraduate and graduate programs at UWM who are interested in developing their whole voice, singing opera, art song, pop, music theatre, country, and more. She teaches the pedagogy series at UWM using a fact-based, functional method, addressing how the voice and body work in many styles of singing. Although she was trained to sing classical music, she has sought out additional instruction to honor her interest in the contemporary commercial music that she grew up listening to and is a graduate of the CCM Voice Pedagogy Institute. Her students recently have been seen on the Metropolitan Opera stage, as a prize winner in the Lotte Lenya Competition, as a semi-finalist in the American Traditions Competition, in innovative renderings of traditional opera, and in professional, contemporary musical theatre. Tanya also enjoys training large/dramatic voices.

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# Questions?

Silken and I will gladly answer them!

Please see the digital handout in Guidebook and be in touch with me