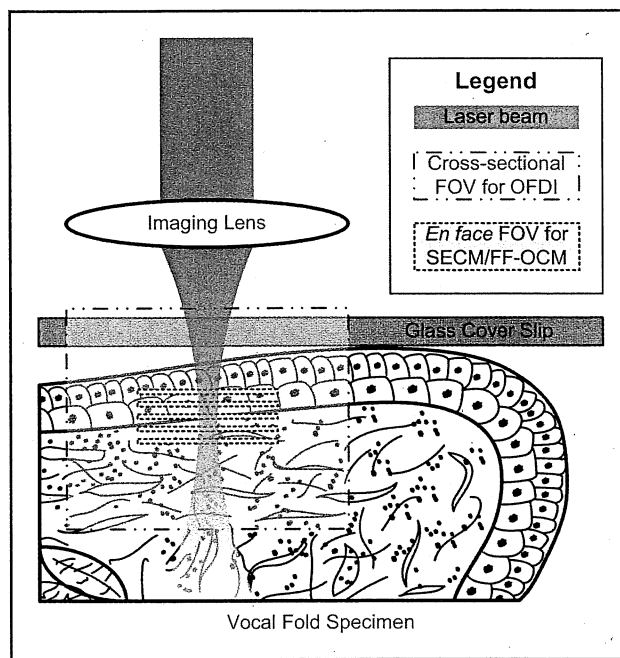


JOURNAL OF

VOICE



Official Journal of the Voice Foundation
and the International Association of Phonosurgery

VOLUME 23, No. 3 : MAY 2009 : ISSN 0892-1997

 Mosby

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www.jvoice.org

Follow-Up Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) Survey: Who's Teaching What in Nonclassical Music

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Summary: A previous study, published in the *Journal of Voice* in 2003, revealed that a majority of teachers of Music Theater (MT), a style of Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM), had little professional experience and little formal training in vocal pedagogy for this style. Those who did indicate that they had had training did not describe the training nor quantify it in any manner. To ascertain what type of training was available for CCM in general and MT, in particular, a follow-up study seemed warranted. A new questionnaire was developed which asked for further information from teachers of MT in several areas including performance experience, training methods, teaching philosophy, the use of terminology, knowledge of voice science and medicine, and other parameters. Responses were gathered from 145 singing teachers throughout the United States and several foreign countries. Statistical analysis obtained from the data may lead to both a better understanding of the kind of training available for teachers of CCM repertoire, and of its content and applicability.

Key Words: Contemporary commercial music–Belt/belting–Mix–Chest/mix–Legit–Head voice–Music theater–Resonance–Vocal technique–Vocal pedagogy–Voice science and voice medicine.

INTRODUCTION

In a study conducted by the authors in 2003, it was determined that singing teachers, both in private voice studios and at colleges and universities, are being asked to give instruction on Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) in Music Theater (MT).¹ The research established a picture of a typical singing teacher and gave demographics regarding age, experience, training, and other parameters to help determine the background teachers had to address CCM.

In academia, singing teachers are frequently professional vocalists of recognition and/or those with degrees at the masters or doctorate levels. In all but the rarest cases, the vocalists are experienced in performing classical music, that is, opera, oratorio, orchestral, chamber, and art song repertoire. Expertise has been gleaned through formal education at a university or conservatory, outside research, and through life experience.

In the first study published by the authors in the *Journal of Voice* in 2003, it was determined that 34% of the university faculty respondents teaching CCM had neither professional experience nor university training (graduate, undergraduate, or noncredit).¹ Because of increasing demand of students desiring an MT degree, many colleges, universities, and conservatories have begun to offer degrees in MT and commercial music. In such schools, the singing teacher who has been teaching classical vocal production is also often expected to teach CCM styles.

Because it had previously been determined that college faculties had had little opportunity to participate in formal training, it seemed important to further understand what those who stated

they had had some training had learned, and how much time had been spent in the educational process.

METHODS

A four-part questionnaire (Figure 1) containing 21 questions and demographic data was used to survey voice teachers. The questionnaire covered all styles of CCM and included (1) performing experience, (2) teaching experience, (3) knowledge of voice science and medicine, and (4) teaching MT, including a section on Terminology. Many of the items in the questionnaire were open-ended. There was also a section on the respondents' demographics. The survey was similar to the one used for the 2003 article,¹ with some minor revisions.

The most significant revisions to the questionnaire were done to allow more thorough examination of the training MT singing teachers have received. Space was provided for the respondent to indicate the specific courses, seminars, or workshops attended. In the 2003 study, someone who had taken one seminar of only a few hours duration, or attended one master class was still in the category designated as "trained." The four sections of the questionnaire reorganized some of the questions and "pop" was separately identified and added as a CCM style. In both the current and the previous survey, only those respondents who teach MT were asked to fill out "Teaching Music Theater" section.

The new questionnaire was distributed for the three consecutive summers from 2003–2005 at Shenandoah University's CCM Vocal Pedagogy Institute. Students filled out the survey before course instruction; 145 surveys were returned.

As in the first study, the responses to the questions and information regarding the respondents' age, sex, education, training, experience, and pedagogical preferences were entered into a database for examination. CCM was defined as any kind of music that was not classical. The categories included the following styles of music in alphabetical order: cabaret, country, experimental, folk, gospel, jazz, MT, pop, rock, rhythm and blues (R&B). The term CCM was used to generically describe these styles of music.

Accepted for publication October 18, 2007.

Presented at the 35th Annual Symposium: Care of the Professional Voice, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 2, 2006.

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Journal of Voice, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 367-375

0892-1997/\$36.00

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doi:10.1016/j.jvoice.2007.10.012

Contemporary Commercial Music Instruction Survey

(Cabaret, Country, Experimental, Folk, Gospel, Jazz, Musical Theater, Pop, Rock, R&B)

Performing

1. Do you currently perform any type of Contemporary Commercial Music? Yes / No
If yes, which styles? (circle all that apply)

Cabaret, Country, Experimental, Folk, Gospel, Jazz, Musical Theater, Pop, Rock, R&B
2. If you are not currently performing a style of CCM, did you in the past? Yes / No
If yes, which styles? (circle all that apply)

Cabaret, Country, Experimental, Folk, Gospel, Jazz, Musical Theater, Pop, Rock, R&B
3. If you answered Yes to questions 1 or 2, how many years have you performed any style of CCM? ____
Do (or did) you do this professionally? Yes / No
4. Is there any difference in the way you sing (or sang) any of the styles of contemporary commercial music than the way you sing (or sang) classical music? Yes / No

If yes, please explain _____

Teaching

5. Is your clientele primarily (indicate one)
 Private Voice students
 If so, what ages do you teach (circle all that apply)
 6-12 yrs. 13-18 yrs. 19-24 yrs. 25-45 yrs. 46+ yrs.
 University students
 High School students
 Middle School students
 Elementary students
 Other (please explain) _____
6. Do (or did) you teach CCM? Yes / No
If yes, which style of CCM do (or did) you teach most? (circle one)

Cabaret, Country, Experimental, Folk, Gospel, Jazz, Musical Theater, Pop, Rock, R&B
7. Is there anything related to singing you don't/won't teach? _____
8. How do (or did) you primarily instruct? (prioritize 1 – 5 all that apply)
 Teach Vocal Technique
 Teach Song Interpretation
 Teach Master Classes
 Act as a consultant with other professionals/organizations
 Other (please explain) _____
9. What activities do (or did) you do? (indicate all that apply)
 Accompanying
 Administrative work
 Audition preparation
 Career counseling
 Choral conducting
 Joint sessions with other professionals for your own students
 Other (please explain) _____

FIGURE 1. 2005 CCM survey.

RESULTS

Except where noted, the responses were generally similar to the 2003 survey.¹ From the demographic section of the four-part questionnaire, approximately half of the respondents noted that they were affiliated with a university or a Junior College (Figure 2). In the 2003 survey, the second largest group was private teachers who had their own studios. However, in the new survey, the next largest group was primarily affiliated with high schools. One half of the total respondents identified that they were members of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS). This is less than the 75% in the previous survey, but is not surprising because the bulk of the previous

surveys were obtained at the 2001, NATS Winter Workshop and at other NATS events.

Again, most of the respondents in this survey were female (85%). The average age of the respondents was 43 years for females and 45 years for males, approximately 6 years younger on average than the 2003 survey respondents¹ (Figure 3).

Voice science and voice medicine

Most respondents claimed familiarity with voice science and voice medicine. A small number (11%) considered themselves to be experts (Figure 4). Forty-one percent indicated little or no familiarity with voice science and 30% with voice medicine.

Contemporary Commercial Music Instruction Survey

Voice Science and Medicine

10. Are you familiar with voice science (acoustics/research protocols, etc.)? Yes / No

If yes, please choose how familiar you would rate yourself to be

- extremely familiar
- quite familiar
- somewhat familiar
- just a little familiar

11. Are you familiar with voice medicine (vocal health, hygiene, surgery, clinical practice, etc.)? Yes / No

If yes, please choose how familiar you would rate yourself to be:

- extremely familiar
- quite familiar
- somewhat familiar
- just a little familiar

Questions 12 through 21 are for those who teach musical theater:

12. Do (or did) you receive any training to teach musical theater vocal technique specifically? Yes / No

If yes, please identify (indicate all that apply)

In college or university, undergraduate total hours in private voice lessons _____
 Classical _____ lessons / week; CCM _____ lessons / week
 Classical _____ hours / week; CCM _____ hours / week

In college or university, graduate, post graduate total hours in private voice lessons _____
 Classical _____ lessons / week; CCM _____ lessons / week
 Classical _____ hour / week; CCM _____ hour / week

In college or university total hours for vocal pedagogy for non-classical singing course for credit _____
 How many times a week did this class meet _____; Semester Credit Hours _____

In outside courses, uncredited, at a school (indicate whether you were a singing participant (P) or observer (O))

Course Title	Instructors	Date	Duration	Total Contact Hours	P/O

In a seminar or class, uncredited (please indicate whether you were a singing participant (P) or observer (O))

Seminar Title	Instructor	Date	Duration	Total Contact Hours	P/O

Privately, from an individual

Instructor	Length of study	Total Contact Hours

At a workshop or workshops at a college or university (please indicate singing participant (P) or observer (O))

Workshop Title	School	Date	Duration	Total Contact Hours	P/O

FIGURE 1. (continued).

Generally, the more familiar a respondent was with one area, the higher he or she rated himself or herself in the other area. Voice science included acoustics and research protocols. Voice medicine included vocal health, hygiene, surgery, and clinical practice. University-affiliated teachers tended to be more familiar with both voice science and medicine than the other respondents.

Performing experience

Those having performing experience in CCM were asked to indicate the length of that experience (Figure 5). The survey also asked if the performing experience was professional or amateur, as it was assumed that this was a significant measurement of a certain level of skill as a vocalist. Most (90%) of those

responding to the survey had performed some type of CCM, either currently or in the past, and 41% had done so professionally. Those who had performed professionally had done so for an average of 15.5 years.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the type of experience in performing CCM, choosing from the previously stated list (Figure 6). Again, the largest majority of performing experience was in MT, followed by jazz, pop, gospel, folk, and cabaret with the other areas of CCM further behind.

Teaching experience and activities

In the General Teaching section of the survey, 74% of the 145 survey respondents teach CCM (Figure 7). Almost all (89%)

Contemporary Commercial Music Instruction Survey

- ___ Through a NATS workshop (please indicate singing participant (P) or observer (O))
- | Workshop Title | Instructor | Date | Duration | Total Contact Hours | P/O |
|----------------|------------|-------|----------|---------------------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
- ___ Other (please explain) _____
13. Do (or did) you significantly draw from other sources to teach musical theater vocal technique? Yes / No
If yes, please identify (indicate all that apply)
- ___ Observation of singers and/or teachers
Names of teachers and singers you have observed _____
- ___ Experimentation with teaching and/or with your own voice
- ___ Reading books
Author and Title _____
- ___ Reading articles
Publications _____
- ___ Talking to colleagues
- ___ Other (please explain) _____
14. Do (or did) you also teach classical vocal technique? Yes / No
If yes, do (or did) you teach classical and CCM styles to (circle one): the same students different students
- If yes, how many private student lessons per week do you currently teach?
- Classical _____ lessons / week; CCM _____ lessons / week
Classical _____ hours / week; CCM _____ hours / week
15. What is (or was) the main thrust of your approach to musical theater? _____
- _____
16. Do (or did) you use the term belt or belting in your training? Yes / No
17. Do (or did) teach belt or belting in your training? Yes / No
18. Do (or did) you use the term mix or chest/mix in your teaching? Yes / No
19. Do (or did) you teach mix or chest/mix in your teaching? Yes / No
20. If you answered Yes to any of questions 16 through 19, please define what you mean by these terms:
- belt/belting _____
- mix _____
- chest/mix _____
- other (related terms only) _____
21. Is (or was) your approach to teaching musical theater different than teaching classical singing? YES / NO
Using the following scale, rate and explain each listed attribute
1 - completely different; 2 - some differences; 3 - very similar; 4 - no differences
- ___ breathing/support -
- ___ dramatic interpretation -
- ___ dynamics/intensity -

FIGURE 1. (continued).

of the respondents who teach any CCM also teach MT. None of the respondents claimed to teach any experimental styles. Experimental styles include music of contemporary composers who follow no particular set of rules or guidelines, either musical or vocal. Composers of this music often write across several styles within one piece, and do not use typical vocal categories such as soprano, alto, tenor, and bass in their compositions.

The respondents had taught voice for an average of 15.8 years, with the most experienced having taught for 41 years (Figure 8). It can be inferred from the above teaching and performing data

that most respondents are teaching and performing professionally simultaneously. Approximately three fourths of the respondents did audition preparations (72%), and half did accompanying (54%) and choral conducting (51%). Almost one third indicated they did career counseling (31%).

MT voice instruction

The second half of the questionnaire was directed specifically at those who were teaching MT. Sixty-six percent (95) of the 145 respondents were teaching this style of CCM. For those

Contemporary Commercial Music Instruction Survey

- language/diction -
- musical style -
- personality differences -
- pitch range -
- terminology -
- tone production -
- vowel sound resonance/placement -
- other: _____

Demographics

I am a (check all that apply)

- Teacher
- Student
- Professional Singer
- Coach
- Choral Conductor
- Music Director
- Other (please explain) _____

Age: _____
 Sex : Male / Female
 Date: _____
 Years teaching: _____
 NATS member: Yes / No
 State or country of residence: _____

Name (optional): _____

School and/or Professional Affiliation(s) (optional): _____

Address (optional): _____

Comments

Use the space below or a separate piece of paper if you think something important is missing from this questionnaire.

FIGURE 1. (continued).

teaching the MT style in private voice lessons, 96% also teach the classical style, overwhelmingly (90%) to the same students. The teachers averaged 11.5 hours of classical instruction per week; based on the number of lessons per week, the lessons averaged approximately 45 minutes in duration. Less time was spent providing CCM lessons, 6 hours/week, and these averaged 30 minutes in duration.

Training of MT voice teachers

Only 18 (19%) of the 95 respondents who teach MT were assessed as having training to teach MT singing (Figure 9). This

is considerably less than the results from the 2003 survey¹ (45%), but reflects a higher standard for the respondent to be considered trained. Only 13 of those assessed as “trained” had training from a university on teaching MT in any form (private voice lessons, courses, or workshops). Most of MT pedagogy provided for these MT teachers was provided outside of the university environment, from NATS workshops, non-university-sponsored workshops and seminars, and private instruction.

Three fourths (78%) of the respondents who teach MT acquired knowledge from a variety of other sources. This includes experimentation by themselves, discussion with colleagues,

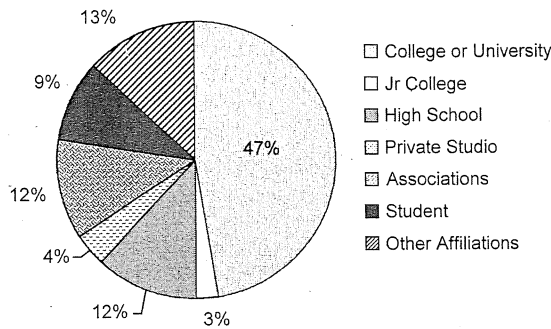


FIGURE 2. Survey respondent school or professional affiliation.

observing other singers or teachers, and reading books and articles. University-affiliated MT teachers were even more likely to read articles, discuss the techniques with colleagues, and to experiment.

Four significant categories were also gleaned from this same area of the data. They were those teaching CCM with (1) training and experience, (2) experience only (no training), (3) training only (no experience), and (4) neither experience nor training. The data were broken down further to include those with professional experience as opposed to nonprofessional—or amateur—experience only.

Analysis of the data indicates that only 7% of the MT voice teachers have both training to teach MT and professional experience (Figure 10). Additionally, almost one half had neither training specifically oriented to teaching MT nor professional experience. The percentages remain approximately the same for each of the qualification categories (MT training, professional experience, both, and none) for the 36 MT voice teachers affiliated with colleges and universities.

Terminology

The survey asked if the respondents used the terms belt (or belting), mix, and chest/mix in their MT training. Eighty-five percent use one term or the other, and most (61%) use both terms in their training. Not all considered “belting” a positive or a healthy sound and only 40% claimed to teach it in their instruction. However, 80% claimed to teach mix or chest/mix as part of their MT teaching.

The respondents were also asked to define the terms and nearly three fourths (72%) did so. The responses were generally:

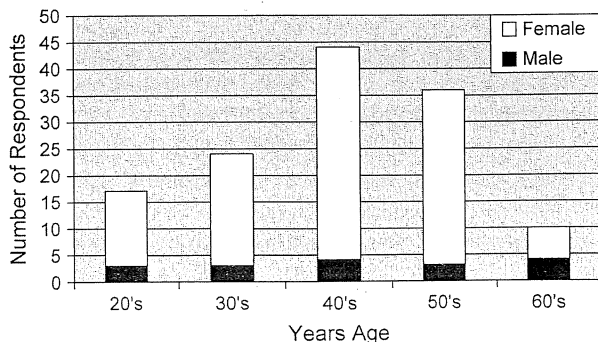


FIGURE 3. Survey respondent age.

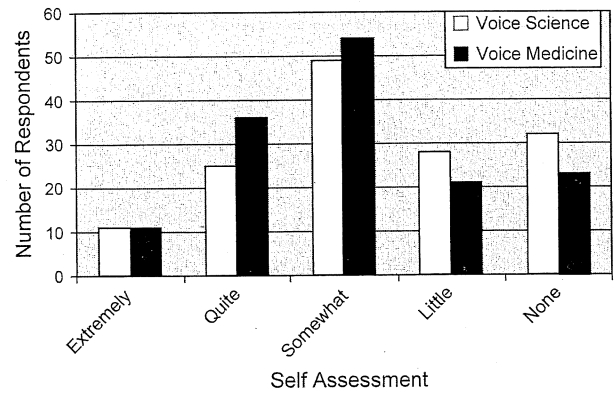


FIGURE 4. Survey respondent familiarity with voice science and voice medicine.

Belt/belting: high, loud, chest-dominant elevated larynx, long closed glottal phase, heavy, and thyro-arytcroid (TA) activity.

Mix: balance of TA and crico-thyroid (CT) activity (blend of chest and head register sounds).

Chest/mix: chest dominant, heavier mix, and more chest present in mix.

These responses were similar to those in the 2003 survey,¹ with the same uncertainty.

Teaching differences

The questionnaire asked if MT was treated differently from classical singing by the teachers. The respondents evaluated the level of similarity and difference for 10 factors contributing to their approach to teaching MT singing. The factors were rated on a scale of completely different, somewhat different, very similar, and no difference. Over one half indicated one or more factors were completely different (Figure 11). Almost three fourths of the remainder of the teachers indicated some differences in their approach to teaching MT from their approach to teaching the classical voice.

For the respondents of this survey who were associated with a college or university, the results are similar. In the current survey responses, 7% of those affiliated with a university indicated that their approaches to teaching were very similar and none indicated that there were no differences. In the 2003 survey,¹

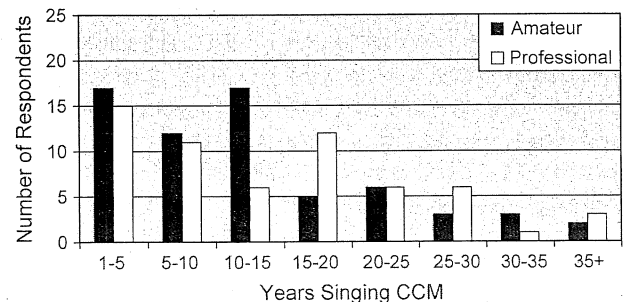


FIGURE 5. Survey respondent years experience singing CCM.

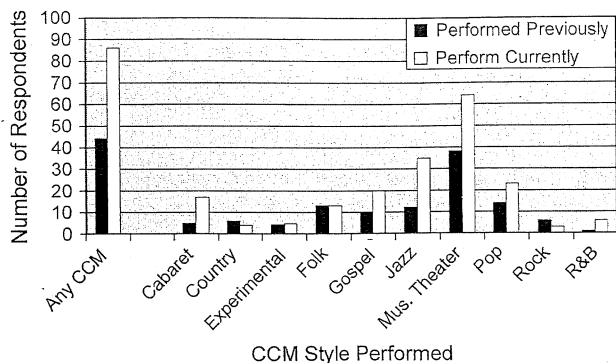


FIGURE 6. Survey respondent CCM performed.

approximately one third of the university-affiliated MT teachers thought the approach was similar or there was no difference.

The teachers identified the musical style as the most significant difference between their approaches to teaching MT and classical singing (Figure 12). The other characteristics rated completely different or some differences in descending order are vowel sound resonance/placement (58%) and tone production (55%). Approximately half of the respondents identified language/diction, dynamics/intensity, dramatic interpretation, and personality differences as completely different and some differences. These rankings agreed with the earlier survey results and generally held for the university-affiliated MT teachers.

DISCUSSION

Over the 3 years between the first survey and the present one, little has changed regarding the status of teachers seeking training and the availability of organized courses in CCM. The original 2003 survey¹ indicated that many teachers were not trained or trained in very inadequate ways to deal with teaching CCM MT. This questionnaire was an attempt to find out exactly what types of training singing teachers had obtained in seeking to learn more about CCM and how to approach teaching it in a codified and valid manner.

The survey provided insight into several areas. There continues to be a significant number of people teaching CCM at colleges and universities who have no professional experience or appreciable training related to it. The training of singing

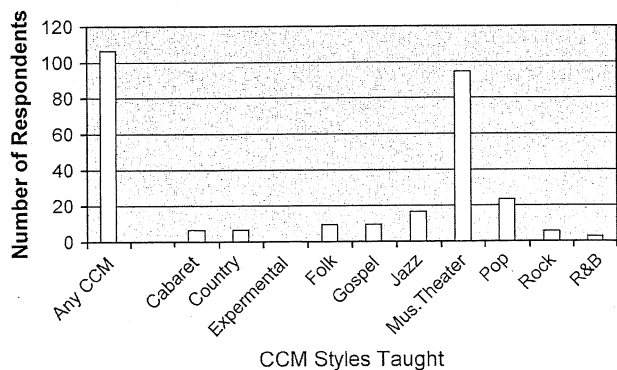


FIGURE 7. Survey respondent CCM styles taught.

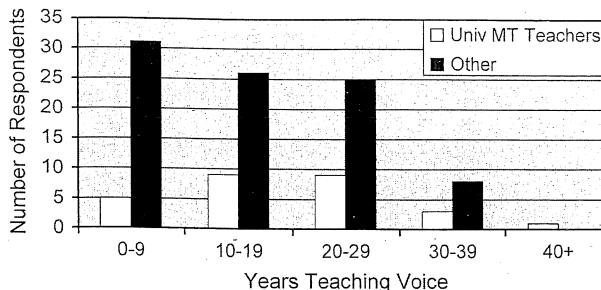


FIGURE 8. Survey respondent years teaching voice.

teachers does not yet appear to have adjusted to growing demand for teachers with expertise in both classical and MT styles.

The teachers who considered themselves to be trained had taken a range of courses with a variety of teachers, largely in the form of workshops and short seminars. A few individuals had attended courses in colleges, but it was not clear from the data obtained what type of information was covered in these courses and whether the presentations were in lecture format or the participants were also asked to demonstrate CCM teaching ability. Some specified a number of course hours or days but it was not possible to determine the content of the courses, nor was it always possible to ascertain the proficiency of the person teaching in terms of CCM experience and teaching expertise. Very few individuals had extensive training with a recognized authority in the field of CCM teacher training.

Many teachers who were trained only in classical vocal technique themselves admitted in the survey to having no idea how to sing a piece of music in any other style. A number of teachers remain conflicted about the two disciplines, classical and CCM, in various ways. A variety of opinions continue to be presented at various workshops and seminars by a range of experts who do not agree on basic vocal functions for CCM. Perhaps it is because this kind of music is constantly evolving and few pedagogues have been involved with it long enough to know its consequences over time.

Examples of this confusion may be reflected in data from the survey. The respondents identified the most significant difference between teaching classical and CCM is the music style itself. Although it has been established in various scientific studies over the past 20 years that the subglottic pressure and airflow for CCM are different from for classical,² none of the respondents identified a significant difference in the

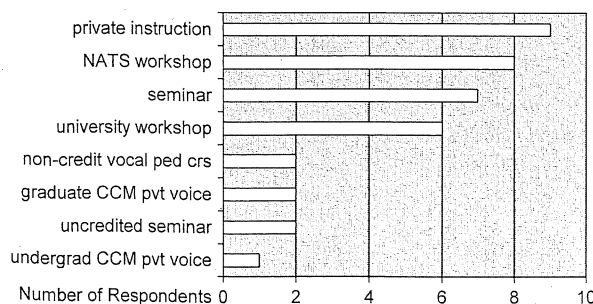


FIGURE 9. MT voice teacher training source.

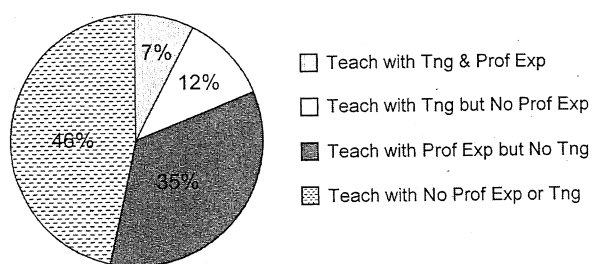


FIGURE 10. MT voice teacher qualifications.

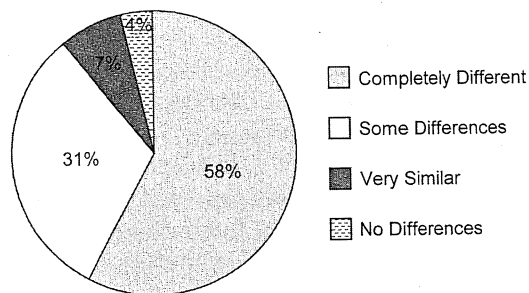


FIGURE 11. Similarity of approach in teaching MT and classical singing.

breathing and support between the two styles. A relatively small group (13%) thought the breathing was somewhat different.

There are also mechanical, physiological differences, and vocal acoustic changes. It is important for voice teachers to be aware of the anatomical changes that occur in a CCM singer. A study of female MT singers documents the relationship between tonal quality and changes in the configuration of a singer's vocal tract.^{3,4}

Respondents had some difficulty defining the words *nasality* and *nasal resonance*. Resonance is defined as "a relationship that exists between two vibrating bodies of the same pitch."⁵ The sound produced by the vocal folds is shaped by the vocal tract. These are the laryngopharynx (the throat), the oropharynx (the mouth), and the nasopharynx (the nasal port). Good CCM

singers greatly vary their sound quality by altering the shape of these cavities without sounding "nasal."

It was not clear from the data whether the respondents were generally confused, whether they had not seen pertinent research, or perhaps there was a lack of understanding of the functioning of the vocal mechanism and how the correct sounds are produced, that is, which exact physiologic correlates are involved in various CCM styles.

CONCLUSION

It would seem reasonable from the results of the data analysis of the information gathered that most teachers desire to be more experienced in the teaching of CCM. As in the 2003 study,¹ teachers continue to desire the following:

- (1) Availability of clearly organized and consistent vocal production information for CCM, which can be easily learned by a wide variety of singers of all backgrounds and ages, and courses, seminars, workshops, books, and articles on CCM conducted or written by reputable experts who have been acknowledged in the academic and performing communities.
- (2) Increased knowledge of voice science and voice medicine, which has been incorporated into practical vocal use for singing all styles of CCM.
- (3) Training to learn how to use their voice and teach correctly, in a healthy, musical, and artistic manner the various CCM styles.

It is also reasonable to surmise from the data analysis that there is a need for universities to offer a CCM Vocal Pedagogy course and quite possibly make it a requirement of Vocal Performance, Music Theater, Commercial Music, Vocal Pedagogy, and Music Education degree programs.

From the section Terminology, it is clear that it would be useful if one of the large organizations such as NATS or Music Educators National Conference (MENC) undertake a major study to codify the terminology into a more cohesive and unified system.

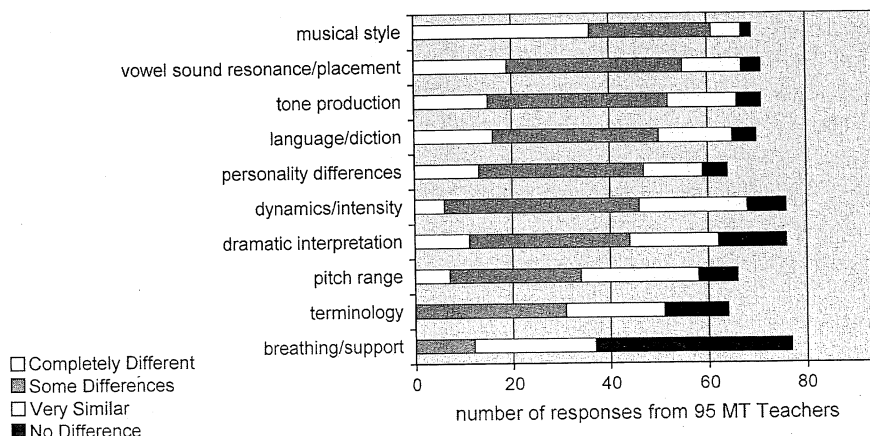


FIGURE 12. Ranking of factors differentiating teaching MT and classical singing.

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