VOICE*Prints*

JOURNAL OF THE NEW YORK SINGING TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

September–October 2012

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FEATURED EVENT:

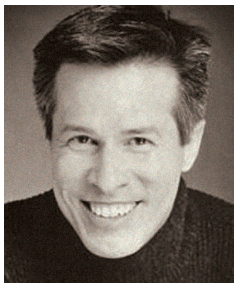
JOSEPHINE MONGIARDO GREAT COACHES SERIES: *Maestro Dean Williamson Master Class*

October 15, 2012, Monday, 7:00–9:30 PM

Location: Columbia University, Teachers' College, 525 West 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.

Reception to follow. Free to NYSTA members, their students and guests.

Maestro Dean Williamson will present a French and Italian opera arias master class.

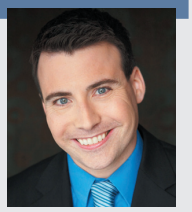


Acclaimed by London's *Opera* as a virtuoso at the keyboard, **Dean Williamson** was for twelve years principal coach and pianist for the Seattle Opera. As a co-founder of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program and its music director until 2002, he led all of the program's productions until 2007. From 2007 until 2010 he was Artistic Director of Opera Cleveland. His productions there were considered the best in the history of the company and garnered critical praise in *Opera News*, *Opernwelt*, and *Opera Now*.

In 2005 he made his Seattle Opera main stage debut with a new production of *Les contes d'Hoffmann* followed by conducting engagements at Minnesota Opera, Opera Colorado, Spokane Opera, Wolf Trap, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Lyric Opera of Boston, San Francisco Opera/Merola, Chautauqua Opera, Manitoba Opera, Nashville Opera, and Kentucky Opera. In addition to his thriving conducting career, Maestro Williamson has also performed throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe as accompanist with some of the world's leading singers. He has given master classes at universities around the country, and regularly serves on the judging panels of many prestigious competitions and scholarship auditions.

The October 15 master class will also offer an extensive Q & A session covering Young Artist programs, agents, conductors, what makes a good audition, marketing oneself, the current difficult state of the economy and its effect on the regional companies. Maestro Williamson will share his knowledge on the "nuts and bolts" of the business to help singers prepare for a career in today's economy.

MESSAGE *from the Editor*



Dear Colleagues,

Another season of NYSTA has begun, and I can scarcely believe that this is already my fifth year as your editor. There are many wonderful events to look forward to this year.

I am grateful to Jeanie LoVetri for her double-length feature article on belting. In it she, draws upon her 41 years of voice teaching and reveals her personal insights on an important—yet sometimes controversial—topic. In David Sabella-Mills' President's Letter, he pays sentimental tribute to his beloved voice teacher, Marie Traficante. Both articles offer stimulating "food for thought" for the singing teacher, and I look forward to the stimulating conversations they will spark among voice teachers.

As always, VOICE*Prints* is YOUR publication, so please send all questions, comments, and suggestions for future articles to me at *voiceprints@nyst.org*.

Sincerely,

Dr. Matthew Hoch

Editor-in-Chief, VOICE*Prints*

MESSAGE *from the President*

AN OPEN LETTER OF THANKS

As I gear up for another productive (and often far too busy) semester, meeting new students and trying desperately to convey the multi-layered intricacies of our craft to each of them, I am reminded of my own days as an undergraduate student and the tremendous effect my first voice teacher had on my life. With each new student, I too now have this same responsibility and opportunity to influence the course of a young artist's life, as she did mine.

I remember, as if it were yesterday, the summer of 1983. I had been accepted into the undergrad program at SUNY Purchase, and enrolled in a summer vocal technique course. I was greener than grass after rain, and singing completely incorrectly (I now realize), but the gentle woman leading the class handled my nerves with kid gloves. She encouraged me to get up and sing. I sang "The Lord's Prayer" and "Softly as in a Morning Sunrise," pushing out a high C that I now know would have peeled paint off the wall. After I finished, there was a long pause before she spoke, then a full breath. She lowered her half-glasses to the tip of her nose and asked "You've just been accepted here at SUNY Purchase?" "Yes, ma'am," I said. "And do you have a voice teacher?" she asked tactfully. "No, ma'am, I don't." "Well, you do now."

That teacher's name was Marie Traficante. Throughout my college career, and indeed for the past thirty years, Marie has been not only my voice teacher, but also my emotional and spiritual rock, my moral compass, surrogate mother, confidant, my constant in a life of swirling seas.

She guided me through undergrad life as a tenor, coaching me through juries and in operatic roles. After college she was there, apprehensive but supportive, when I traveled the world with La Gran Scena Opera Company, singing major soprano roles in falsetto (and in drag). Later, she guided me through my transition to countertenor, and beamed with pride when I won the Luciano Pavarotti International Competition. She was there when I made my operatic debut as Julius Caesar, she was there for every appearance at Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher, and she was there when I made my Broadway debut in *CHICAGO, the Musical*.

As much as these triumphs were crucial to me professionally, they were equally important personally, because they validated all her hard work and effort on my behalf—the years of lessons, several times a week, and even for free when I couldn't afford them, the hours of sweat and preparation that only now do I realize she endured for my sake. As much as I give—try to give—each of my students now, I know it is only a fraction of the dedication and commitment I received from this amazing woman, professionally and personally.

Marie gave me so much more than just a singing technique. She taught me a "being" technique, how to live life as authentically as possible. This was perhaps the most difficult lesson of all. She saw me through the tumultuous years of my life—when I came out to my parents, when later I was married (to a woman) and the divorce that followed. Ever-vigilant, guiding me back to center, Marie's counsel steered me through the not so "right and perfect" relationships of my 20s and 30s, and showed me another possibility. Finally, she rejoiced with me when I did find that right and perfect match, got married (this time to a man), and have adopted each of my children, who now know her simply as "Aunt Marie."

More than anyone else, Marie is responsible for my being a voice teacher today. It's her set of vocal exercises I still use most every day of my teaching and singing career. It is her careful attention to detail that I most try to emulate in my own studio. And it is her knowledge and respect for the anatomy and acoustics of the voice that propelled me into my own pedagogy and still resonate with me today. She even introduced me to NYSTA (she was a longtime member) and by extension to each of you reading this today. In case you are wondering, I was not her only student! To my amazement I know, from hearing other students recount their own tales, that she was as present and supportive with them as she was with me.

Marie Traficante some years ago *(at left)* **and more recently** *(at right)* **with David Sabella-Mills.**

Life has a funny way of speeding up as we get older. Weeks turn into months and then years, and suddenly you realize you've lost touch with those most important to you. I don't get to see Marie now nearly as much as I would like, although her presence remains with me in almost every waking moment. She recently called to tell me she was (at last) retiring, and moving across country to Oregon to be with her grandkids. Even though I haven't seen her in recent years, this news cut me to the quick. I suddenly realized that there may come a time when I may not get to see her again. Before distance and time separate us against our best efforts to stay in touch, I knew that in these pages, before she left, I had to publicly and humbly thank her for what she has meant in my life:

My dearest Marie, THANK YOU for all that you gave to me and all your students. I cannot comprehend how you managed to do it all with such grace and dignity. We put our trust in you and you've cherished it, held it tight. You are a shining example of the best of our profession and the best of our humanity. Your compassion, commitment, and perseverance have carried your students to glorious triumphs, both personally and professionally. May God's grace go with you, now and always. With all my love and respect. Your devoted student, David.

Voice teachers know that this profession often necessitates our acting as surrogate parents, and sometimes surrogate therapists. After all, creating great art requires great self-examination. But times have changed: we live in a different era. In recent years as our profession has developed a more standardized vocabulary for dealing with pedagogical issues, I fear that the other half of the conversation—the half that is more esoteric, that deals with the artist's heart, mind and well being—has been displaced. Now we are warned against "getting too close" and "blurring our professional boundaries." I am the first one to champion our profession's current standard of practices. Still, as that awkward undergrad, I will be indebted for life to my dedicated teacher who *did* blur a few boundaries because she saw that she had to. She "raised" me vocally, emotionally, and spiritually to be the person I am today.

Will our profession ever be able to quantify all that a voice teacher does, all the lessons that are learned, in and outside the studio? I don't know. But perhaps we should revisit that other "half"of the conversation? As this new semester begins in a flurry of activity, as I meet my new students for the first time, I will try to take a moment to remember, to cherish the opportunity I have—that we all have—to affect a life forever. That may be the greatest lesson Marie ever taught me.

We have a wonderful, exciting NYSTA season planned. It is detailed in these pages along with a most stimulating article by NYSTA favorite Jeanie LoVetri. I look forward to seeing all of you throughout this year. And as always, I welcome your input. Please feel free to email me at *president@nyst.org*.

Sincerely,

David Sabella-Mills

David Sabella-Mills
President, NYSTA

NYSTA CALENDAR *2012–2013*

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SINGER'S DEVELOPMENTAL *Repertoire Class*

November 3–4, 2012, Saturday and Sunday
Registration includes both *on-site attendance and 24/7 On Demand viewing* for four months.
Location: Columbia University, Teachers' College, 525 West 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.
Instructors: Jeannette LoVetri (On Demand only), Christopher Arneson, Judith Nicosia and David Sabella-Mills.
This groundbreaking course establishes methods and criteria for selecting repertoire appropriate to different voice types at various stages of development. All vocal categories (SATB) in both classical voice and musical theater voice will be discussed. The Music Theater section will also include a detailed examination of contemporary Pop/Rock shows and the vocal demands they make on the singer, and will address choosing appropriate character-driven audition material.

CCM MASTER CLASS WITH MELISSA CROSS *& Holiday Reception*

December 3, 2012, Monday, 7:30–9:30 PM
Location TBA. **Free to NYSTA members, their students and guests.**
Melissa Cross will offer a master class covering the healthy production of extreme phonation: the "damaged" and "raspy" sounds that are widely used in commercial music. Melissa Cross is sometimes referred to as "The Scream Queen" since Alfred Music's international release of their number one selling vocal instructional DVDs, *The Zen of Screaming* (2005) and *Zen of Screaming 2* (2007). Having taught genre-free contemporary commercial music for 22 years, Melissa has sensed an urgent need for assistance regarding vocal health because of the ever-growing presence of extreme phonation in popular music. Having scientifically addressed the issue since 1999, she has become the "go-to" person for anyone wishing information and technical advice regarding intentional vocal distortion. She has appeared on national and international television, radio and press, regularly presents and attends the Voice Foundation Annual Symposium. She maintains that "The basis of learning to scream lies in the solid foundation of already established classical voice training." Classical and musical theater voice technicians will be introduced to the common ground that is shared between these seemingly divergent styles of vocalism and learn how the intersection of their technique with new ones can bring about the healthy creation of this extreme acoustic profile.

After traditional music and theater study at the Interlochen Arts Academy and at England's Bristol Old Vic Theatre School (BA with honors), Melissa Cross entered a career as a performing rock artist only to find that all the years of perfecting her voice through classical training suddenly made little sense. It was only through a long journey of figuring out how to really deliver those raw, heartfelt rock vocals without holding anything back—and *without* damaging her voice—that she discovered the technique that she teaches her students today. The exploration and subsequent technical development of this concept has made her a highly sought-after vocal teacher for countless major label artists as well as on-the-rise stars. Her vocal technique is unique and it works. "My frustration with having learned in a very 'contrived' way and not finding this helpful to what I was doing allowed me to build the bridge between GOOD technique and REAL technique," she explains, "and they SHOULD BE THE SAME." A new DVD is forthcoming that will use animation in such a way she hopes may revolutionize vocal pedagogy.

WINTER 2013 ONLINE EVENT *with Dr. Karen Wicklund*

February 1, 2013 Monday, 7:30–9:30 PM (US EST) Available worldwide via WebEx Video Classroom
Presentation and Q&A: "The Teacher's Role as Professional Voice Team Member: Knowledge and Skills Needed for Working with Singers with Voice Disorders"
Free to NYSTA Members
Dr. Karen Wicklund, DM, MHS CCC-SLP, SVS, is Director of the Chicago Center for Professional Voice where she provides singing lessons, licensed voice therapy, foreign and regional accent modification and corporate speech training, singing voice specialist training for voice teachers, and continuing education offerings for speech-language pathologists. An internationally-known vocal pedagogue and singer's wellness specialist, Dr. Wicklund has presented her research at the national conventions of the Voice Foundation in Philadelphia, National Association of Teachers of Singing, National Center for Voice and Speech in Denver, the American Speech and Hearing Association, and the Occupational Voice Foundation in London, and has published articles on the Medical Problems of Performing Artists in NATS Journal of Singing, Liturgy 90, American Organist and Women of Note Quarterly and Voice Notes of NYSTA. Her textbook, *Singing Voice Rehabilitation: A Guide for the Voice Teacher and SLP*, was called "a monumental addition to the field of vocal health" by the NATS *Journal of Singing*. She has presented sessions at the 2010 NATS national convention, for NATS Chicago in October 2011, at the NATS Winter Workshop in Tucson, and in New Zealand as keynote speaker for the Richard Miller workshop.
Dr. Wicklund is a regular presence on vocal health and healthy belting techniques for Vandercook College of Music in Chicago and in workshops around the country. Her singers have been seen on the stages of Broadway (*Legally Blonde*), Drury Lane (*Spelling Bee*), Marriott Lincolnshire (*Guys and Dolls*), Chicago Light Opera Works, Lyric Opera Chicago, and other theaters throughout the country.

Dr. Karen Wicklund has performed leading roles with the San Francisco, Santa Fe, and Lake George opera companies and appeared as soloist with conductors including Sir David Willcocks, Semyon Bychkov, John DeMain, and Thomas Hoekstra.

OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM *

COMPARATIVE PEDAGOGY *Weekend 2013*

June 8 and **9, 2013**, Saturday and Sunday
Location: Teachers College, Columbia University, Room 435, 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.

During this course, six master teachers will present teaching demonstrations after case histories of students have been discussed. Concrete links will be made between various teaching strategies and the scientific and medical information covered in other courses of the PDP program. Dates and Faculty: TBA.

The Confusion About Belting: *A Personal Observation*

By NYSTA Member Jeannette LoVetri

[Note: Please understand that this article expresses my subjective opinions, based upon my life experience, and is not meant to present "hard science" in any way.]

It has been my perception over forty-one years of teaching singing that the subject of belting has caused all manner of confusion, especially in those who are strictly classically trained and have only classical experience.

There are several things about belting that add to the problems, no matter who is teaching and what their approach may be to this special sound.

Authentic belting is hard to understand and nearly impossible to teach if you do not make the sound yourself. Teaching belting through "resonance" function is an unreliable, although not always unsuccessful, approach. Teaching it from the outside in, if you do not do it, is hard, as vocal production perceived through external sound alone can be misleading.

More and more universities that were exclusively classical are adding music theater programs as degrees or as "emphasis," and singing teachers are also being asked to teach belting more frequently than in any past time. A good number of the successful Broadway shows in recent decades have been rock-based and it is impossible to address rock singing without also knowing about belting. Teachers, therefore, frequently find themselves in a quandary. What's the right direction?

How Do Belters Define Belting?

I am in the midst of completing research done with colleagues on professional belters who were asked to describe belting in a number of ways. Out of the total 138 who filled out the survey the vast majority of respondents said that belting was "loud," "forward," "more chesty," "more like speech," "more supported," "powerful," "energized," or "dynamic." About 75 percent of the belters taught themselves to belt through trial and error. Far fewer had formal lessons. None of those answering the survey mentioned "head resonance" or "head tones" as being part of the sound. Most of the respondents were female, but there were some men as well. There was a lot of consensus about what belting was, although the word choices varied by individual with the exception of those who were taught to associate belting with the word "twang." They had their own set of terms to describe their belted sounds.

The historical association with the word "twang" is with country music, arising now out of Nashville. The Broadway word was and still is "brassy".

There has been a persistent idea in classical pedagogy that belting is always harmful. That has never been established through any research and is, in fact, not true for many performers who have had long careers as professional belters. It can certainly be challenging to sing in a Broadway rock and roll show eight times a week but it's also challenging to sing *Fidelio* for a series of performances, unless, of course, that's what you do!

History and Description

The word belt is a verb. The dictionary defines it as "to hit hard" and that's what the vocalist seems to be doing to the notes. There is no origin as to when the word began to be used musically but it is likely that it had its beginnings in New York in Vaudeville. The word "belter" is the description of someone who can sing in this vocal quality and is *identified with it*. The term "belt" when applied to a song is an adjective. A "belt song" is one that is meant to be sung in the vocal quality called "belt." You could be a belter, belting out a belt song. Because the words derived from belting occupy three grammatical categories, it can be confusing just understanding how to use them. Further, we have no comparable term in other styles. For instance, you wouldn't say "I am a classical-er. I classical the song," nor would you say "I am singing a classical song in a classical sound" because that would be implied. You could, of course, sing a classical song in a belt sound, but I hope you would know better. I also hope you would not sing a belt song in a classical quality, although I have heard that many times, and it is always unsuccessful.

The history of the sound we associate with the word belting goes back a long way. It can be found all over the world—in African music from many countries, in *flamenco* from Spain, in *mariachi* from Mexico, in Middle Eastern music, particularly in religious applications. In the USA it can be found in music theater, gospel, country, pop and rock music and occasionally in other styles as well. Generally, it is a speech-oriented sound that carries well because of its acoustic configuration. It is an offshoot of speech, particularly low speech, but this is a generalization, not a rule.

In theater, up until the advent of amplification in the late 20s and early 30s, the only way a person could be heard was to have "projection." The two kinds of singers who could "fill a house" without amplification were the opera singers (the "legitimate" ones) and the shouters (the belters). [Note: I suppose this implies that belting was "illegitimate," and perhaps this is part of the reason why the sound was rejected as being "low class" for such a long time.] Early belters were frequently African-American, like Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey, and were called "shouters," but Sophie Tucker was a belter, too, and she was Caucasian.

After electronic amplification arrived a softer, gentler kind of singing became possible. It was this sound, as represented by Bing Crosby when he was young, that came to be called "crooning." The classical singers thought this wasn't singing at all, since it was "off the voice," and they didn't like the "shouting" sounds either. The public, however, had other ideas. Crooners became the stars of the day and have never really gone away since then. You could think of someone like today's Usher as a crooner.

Belters, too, continued to flourish, especially in Tin Pan Alley in Broadway shows and Vaudeville. Voices that were powerful and clear and could carry well on their own were sought after by many composers. Irving Berlin and Cole Porter both loved the young Ethel Merman because her voice was trumpet-like, powerful and clear. Berlin wrote *Annie Get Your Gun* for

Bessie Smith (1894–1937)

Bing Crosby (1903–1977)

Sophie Tucker (1886–1937)

Ethel Merman (1908-1984)

Al Jolson (1886-1950)

Rosemary Clooney (1928-2002)

Merman and Porter wrote *Anything Goes* with her in mind. Her loud, distinctive sound carried easily and her diction and intonation were always impeccable. The sound was never beautiful but it could be plaintive when she wanted it to be, at least when she was young and in her prime. I have heard many times amongst my classical singing teacher colleagues that Ethel Merman "wasn't a belter." I find that comment silly, since she referred to herself as one throughout her career and surely she knew what she was. A good belter is a good singer and as such can sing softly and easily when the material calls for it. It does not mean, however, that Merman wasn't a belter just because she wasn't always belting. I have heard the same about Connie Francis, Barbra Streisand, and Whitney Houston. Those who espouse the opinion that these singers were not belters, since they called *themselves* belters demonstrate great ignorance. Who knows better, the artist or a singing teacher? [Observe YOUTUBE CLIP #1 of Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand and Ethel Merman in 1963: Notice that Merman refers to all of them as belters at about the two-minute mark.]

There are singers who could go into a wonderful belt when needed as an expressive musical gesture. Rosemary Clooney was great at this in her prime. She could also sing gently but she could belt with the best of them when she wanted to. It all depended on the song and its style. [Take at look at her *Mambo Italiano* in YOUTUBE CLIP #2. Pay attention to that last word, sung, not shouted, in a good solid, chesty belt, which seems quite loud, produced in the traditional style popular in the 1950s.] This isn't a very high pitch, it's not "driven" like the sounds we hear today, but it can't be confused with a classical sound and it certainly isn't head register or CT dominant. Most of the time Ms. Clooney sang in a warm quality we call "mix" which is neither full head register nor a fully belted chest sound. How she chose to interpret the music was the determining factor of her style. This is a mark of good singing.

Women were not the only ones who could belt. Al Jolson entertained Vaudeville audiences and became the highest paid entertainer of his time, all without electronic help. His voice, too, was powerful and energized. This trumpet-like sound (brassy), gave the illusion that the vocalist was hitting the sound hard. It was exciting, thrilling and filled with emotion and audiences loved it.

It is highly unlikely that any of these belters learned to make their signature belt sound through formal training.

Pedagogy

If you are trained as a classical singer in one of the many widely respected pedagogies that does not use or address registration as an important aspect of vocal function, you may find belting an elusive concept or behavior, both to do and to teach. This is magnified if you were taught that "chest register" or "chest tones" were unacceptable or harmful. If you do not correctly understand registration functionally, you will not understand belting. One thing belting definitely is *not* is deliberately nasal, but the belt quality is often described this way by classical singers. They mistake the edgy brightness (the brassiness) for nasality. Nasality can be a useful teaching tool, however, and it is found in the approaches of most teachers who deal effectively with belting. Neither is belting only shouting, although it can be quite loud. Shouting from time to time on certain pitches might be helpful or even necessary, but it shouldn't be the entire basis of belt production. Additionally, contrary to popular belief, belting often has a strong steady vibrato.

A Simplified Overview of Vocal Function

If we assume the vocal folds have two primary response modes, driven by the musculature that control those responses, we can also assume that the larynx is typically in a TA or CT mode. In TA, or thyroarytenoid dominant production, the full length of the vocal fold is vibrating. In CT dominant production, or cricothyroid mode, the CT is contracting, pulling on the thyroid cartilage, drawing it toward the cricoid, stretching, thinning, and tightening the vocal folds so that they vibrate along their upper edges. The TA sound is called modal in science and the CT is called loft. Singers refer to them as "chest" and "head" registers. The interplay between these two pulls varies according to the pitch being sung and the loudness. The vocal folds are the source of the sound.

Understand here that *register* is not *resonance*, which is a function of the vocal tract. To confuse one with the other is to guarantee that that confusion will carry over to your understanding of belting. A generally accepted definition of register is: a group of pitches that have the same texture or quality.

Another ingredient in vocal production takes place in the vocal folds. It is call the "open/closed quotient" which is the length of time the vocal folds are touching in each vibratory cycle. [For the pitch A440, that would be the amount of time in 1/440th of a second that the folds are open or closed]. Thanks to scientific advances in voice analysis we now know that a long, closed phase is generally associated with a chest register dominant quality and high sub-glottic pressure (basically, loudness). Sub-glottic pressure is the amount of air in the lungs underneath the closed vocal folds as phonation begins.

There are other ingredients in play as well. One is the place in the vocal range where traditionally registers "shift gears." If they do not somehow adjust, often there will be a break or crack. The location of this break varies from person to person and instrument to instrument in terms of range (SATB), but it is generally above Middle C, in the range of E/F. The belter does not shift gears. The sound remains in the TA or chest register (as comfortably as possible) until the singer can't rise further in pitch. The vowels do not "modify" and the volume remains "loud." Soft chest register dominant singing is not belting, it's a form of "mix." Some vocalists can carry their belt up to the top of their range, often more than two octaves.

Since the larynx is suspended from the muscles of the tongue in the front and the sidewalls of the pharynx inside the throat (the constrictors that assist in swallowing), it can move higher or lower in the throat. It generally drops when we yawn and rises when we swallow. The dropped position is considered more relaxed, particularly when the larynx is at rest. It allows the vocal tract to be long and deep, facilitating a "richer" tone. A higher position has traditionally been considered unhealthy. Research on belting has generally shown that it is done with a higher vertical laryngeal position when compared to classical production, although the amount of tension and

exact degree of vertical height can vary from person to person. Insofar as I am aware, no one has proved definitively in any research that singing with a raised larynx is always a negative. The raised larynx shortens the vocal tract and helps to "brighten" the sound.

The vocal tract is the throat and mouth coupled together as a tube. The vocal tract is the filter of the sound. The shape made in this space above the vocal folds, also called supra-glottic space (because the open space between the vocal folds is called the glottis) is where we shape vowels. We produce the different individual vowels in the front of the mouth using the position of the tongue, jaw, lips and face more or less deliberately. We indirectly shape the inside of the back of the mouth through mental imagery to create "colors," "timbres" or "resonance strategies" in various vowels.

All these factors combine to create the sounds we use in singing, no matter what sounds they may be. When coupled with pitch and volume, sustained vowels do most of the work of singing, with consonants interrupting continuous vocal sound as needed.

Therefore, the most consistent ingredients in belting are that it is "chest register" or TA dominant, it's loud, it "carries" and it has elements of speech production through all but perhaps the highest pitches, and it doesn't "kick in" as belting until it is near or above the traditional "break" or "*passaggio*." The singer wouldn't experience "singing on the breath" as a classical vocalist does because the volume generated produces a longer closed phase in the vocal folds therefore not a lot of air escapes as the vocalist is singing. It would be associated with some tension due to the raised larynx adjustment, but not with struggle or efforting. Everyone should understand: you really cannot belt in a head register dominant sound unless perhaps you are in a very high pitch range. The belt sound is carried continuously up without deliberately adjusting to a significantly lighter, headier sound. Doing this consistently without problems, however, could be difficult and would require secure and reliable control over both physical and vocal behavior. In someone who is not a "natural belter" (and there are people who can belt naturally) it can take quite a bit of time to learn. Because belting is a high energy vocal and physical event the likelihood that it will cause vocal fold problems increases, especially in those who do not understand its ingredients. That does not mean, however, that it always causes problems or vocal pathology or that belters are dysfunctional in any way.

More Than One Kind of Belting

Just as classical singing is not "one thing," belting too is wide ranging. Singers such as Barbra Streisand, Céline Dion and Linda Eder have a similar vocal production or sound. In fact, Streisand and Dion can be hard to tell apart unless you are very familiar with their styles, which are different. It isn't the same as the "old style" belting as made by Betty Hutton, Carol Burnett, Elaine Paige, or Patti LuPone. And Sherie Rene Scott's belting could be considered as being close to that done by Idina Menzel but not so similar to that done by Bernadette Peters. All of these styles may be considered as being chest register driven/dominant, with a high closed quotient, and a high decibel (sound pressure) level or intensity but they are not the same from one *group* to the next. Just as in classical singing we have dramatic sopranos, lyrico-spinto sopranos, lyric sopranos, and lyric coloratura sopranos, (and many other subdivisions) so we have a wide range of belters, high and low, "warm and round," "edgy and cutting." Maybe could call them dramatic belters, lyrico-spinto belters, lyric belters and coloratura belters. (Just joking!) And, an alto belter is going to sound different from a soprano belter, on the same pitches, utilizing all the same acoustic parameters. The instrument is unique even if the function is almost the same. The best analogy here is that a violin and a viola can play the same pitch at the same volume. A string player would probably easily distinguish which instrument was playing which pitch, but someone who isn't familiar with either instrument might have to guess, or perhaps couldn't tell the difference at all. Further, an experienced listener would not mistake any of the real belters for classical singers. Those few classical vocalists who have ventured into other styles have generally been unsuccessful, at least commercially.

One reason for their lack of success might be due to the register break. A belter goes up higher in pitch in chest register than a classical singer would. For instance, some sopranos can go to C5 in either register, but when the music goes higher than that, it really asks for a great deal of stamina and strength to continue without modifying the sound to a lighter production. Once you get used to being up there in a loud chesty sound it becomes hard, if not impossible, to get into a classical sound that behaves decently on the same pitches. This is where specialization becomes a professional necessity. I know of no one who is a professionally established, successful "high rock belter" who also sings in a classical sound with equal success at a professional level. There are limits to what can be managed on both sides of the equation. Perhaps this is related to running: long distance runners don't also sprint.

There are all kinds of belters and all kinds of ways to do a belt sound. As mentioned, rock belting can be quite different from the traditional "Merman" belt sound. Because there are so many variables, including those of anatomy and physiology as well as personal preference, there can't possibly be only one way to do a belt sound. And, if you do not have seasoned eyes and ears, you may confuse all these elements. They interact but they are interdependent, not "all stuck together," but one needs acute perception to recognize them as individual aspects of the overall sound. The music, too, asks for different things stylistically. Most of these differences have been more or less ignored thus far by belt researchers. In research, all belting is "the same." This has also added to the confusion about what constitutes belting and what does not.

Terminology Issues

It seems a natural by-product of the creative process for people who believe they have discovered a "new and different" thing to want to give it a label. This has lead to a maze of words to describe what is essentially a very limited number of vocal/musical responses that a human throat can encompass. Due to very passionate resistance by teachers of singing to meet each other in the middle of the road about terms, there is almost no consensus about what anything means. If we were all agreeable and sought to find science-based words that explained long-held and highly regarded pedagogical terms, we would be moving in a good direction. In the case of belting, however, there are no such traditions to guide us, except for words found in the marketplace. We are left with a hodge-podge of ideas about production and aesthetics that leaves each teacher alone with his or her own approach. This does not move the profession easily into the 21st century. When vocal pedagogy can be hooked to vocal function as understood in voice science, the entire profession will be better off. Then, the terminology can be more standardized and this will help both singers and teachers share useful information.

The Unique World of Broadway

In music theater, specific register qualities are expected and frequently *required* as part of the abilities a vocalist must have in order to get a job. Casting notices frequently state: "Must belt to D, must mix to F," "must sing legit to A." Sometimes they state: "Must be able to sing a rock belt and a classical legit," for the same role! Aspiring Broadway performers are expected to know what these words mean; not to understand them is to risk losing a job. Broadway vocalists, then, must cross-train the vocal mechanism to be comfortable in a number of adjustments. Functionally, they are more like the triathletes—those who do several sports—rather than those who do just one. Many music theater singers, particularly women, can belt, or sing in a mix or in a legit/classical sound and do well in all of them.

In other styles of Contemporary Commercial Music (that which we used to call "non-

classical), the vocalist just sings whatever vocal quality he or she has, without outside dictates. Therefore, this kind of terminology has slightly less impact in these styles.

Meanwhile, along with the theatrical casting directors who continue to create ways to describe vocal qualities and capacities, we must add the teachers of singing who join them in making up new descriptors. The list of these terms is almost endless and increases daily. Here are a few: pure belt, weightless belt, good belt, healthy belt, twangy belt, chesty belt, heavy belt, power belt, super belt, mix belt, belt/mix, pop belt, rock belt, gospel belt, country belt, high belt... even "legit belt"! (Add your own words here.)

If you include here the arguments made for the quality called "mix" which may or may not be TA driven and will not be addressed in this article, then you can combine most of the above descriptors with the same second word: pure mix, weightless mix, good mix, healthy mix, etc.

And, of course, you can do the same with "head" register: pure head, weightless head (spun tone), good head, breathy head, twangy head, etc.

Each of these terms has to be hooked up to a live vocal production by the teacher or the singer and the singer has to identify the vocal behavior in some meaningful way *while it is happening* in order to replicate it again. If the label is assigned to a vocal quality that is squeezed, forced, or stuck, knowing what the label is won't help the person singing do the sound in a better way. An incorrect label can cause the vocalist to think that he or she is making a desired sound when, in fact, it isn't even close. The two criteria here that sway the balance are vocal health and market viability. For both, the teacher needs to have experienced eyes and ears as well as accurate life information about the music industry. If you are teaching and you think you hear a belt, but you don't really know, since you do not make a belt sound yourself, and you tell a student that he or she is "belting" when, in fact, the sound is just a tinny head register shout, you have not done your student a service.

Finally, the idea that belting requires a singer or singing teacher to deliberately strive for constriction, tightness, or ugliness of tone in order to generate an authentic sound is faulty. Just as with other styles, we seek to create freely made, non-manipulated musical sounds in belting. We want to sing in an exciting, energized tone that allows for easy, authentic emotional expression and maintains the uniquely recognizable quality of any vocalist in any CCM style.

Conclusion

If singers understand register function and can isolate vowel sound function from it, it is quite possible to cultivate belting slowly and effectively in anyone who wants to acquire this sound, but the process has to be done carefully in order to avoid problems. If, however, your vocal tool kit includes only various kinds of "resonance" or "placement" and "breath support" you may run out of options quite quickly.

Further, if you are a man teaching a woman, you may mistake your vowel sound changes for vocal fold adjustments. A classical tenor with a good hefty sound can affect a decent facsimile of a belt sound by brightening his vowels and broadening his mouth position. Those changes do not carry over well into a young person with an undeveloped instrument, particularly if it is a lyric soprano or baritone. And, very little of this has anything to do with breath support since a true belt sound restricts airflow. (The vocal folds control the airflow. Belt = long closed phase, low airflow). Defaulting to changes in "breath support" before the vocal folds can correctly create the desired vocal quality will only confuse the vocalist and inhibit the learning process.

Ideally, we need research conducted in the field on professional belters of long standing who have a clear approach to the sound and who have been healthy. With past research done only in voice labs on small populations of belters, we don't yet have a global sense of belting as function. Those who teach belting are still left to approach it strictly through our own life experience as belters or through association with other belters who have shown us the way.

We're All in This Together

We can conclude that the confusion about belting is honest. If you are only familiar with classical singing, it can be a very complex sound to address, particularly if you have not sung this sound yourself, in a song, in front of an audience, in a professional venue. Even those who have life experience do not necessarily understand what they are doing functionally in a way that can be discussed accurately and some people have been taught to label their vocal production with words that are not grounded practical "real world" function.

If you want to teach belting, or be a belter, be sure to talk to someone who is. Ask someone who understands what he or she is doing and can explain it in terms that make sense and that follow what we understand about vocal function.

If you don't want to teach belting, not teaching it won't diminish your effectiveness as a teacher, as it is never a requirement. If you do wish to teach it, there are now many fine teachers who offer training in their approaches to belting. If you want to know more, find one of them and sign up for their courses.

YOUTUBE CLIP #1:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7AViKc52P0

YOUTUBE CLIP #2:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9prJXEhNhPA&list=PL7C5837D57A9B7836&index=5&feature=plpp_video

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MOVING ON UP!

Congratulations to the following Apprentice Teacher Members who are moving to FULL SINGING TEACHER MEMBERS as of fall 2012. They have completed five years of teaching and may now hold office in the NYSTA organization.

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NYSTA TESTIMONIAL

"I have (finally!) had a chance to sit down and view my Singer's Developmental Repertoire sessions on the NYSTA website and I have to THANK YOU! Words cannot express how amazed I was by your presentation. I have taught singing for over twenty years and felt like I'd been presented a whole new world of vocal pedagogy for music theater. Thank you for opening my mind and my teaching! Wow!"

DR. MONICA MURRAY
Vocal Studies Coordinator, Concordia University, St. Paul

A NOTE ABOUT MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Very shortly, those of you on email will be receiving electronic notice about renewal of your NYSTA membership fee. The due date, as always, is November 1. Those of you with a subscription need do nothing further—the subscription will revolve automatically and NYSTA will receive your payment. Those of you who do not have a subscription have more options. You may:

A. Send a single payment electronically through the ***www.nyst.org*** website. You do not need your user name and password to do this. Look on the left of the home page for the RENEW MEMBERSHIP banner.

B. Begin a subscription—same directions as above.

C. Send payment through the mail. In this case, the check would made out to NYSTA and sent to: Judith Nicosia, Registrar, 13 Fisher Drive, Franklin Park, NJ 08823-1344.

Please do include the membership information sheet that will come in the email. We need this to keep the database current.

In any of the above cases, *payment must reach NYSTA on or before November 1 to avoid a $10 late fee.*

Two common problems arise this time of year:

#1. Members forget they already have a subscription and begin a new one, necessitating a refund (we like you but we cannot keep the extra cash!)

#2. Subscriptions don't revolve automatically because the information associated with the subscription has changed, i.e. address or credit card number (typically, it's expired and you have not updated with PayPal). In this latter case, you will receive notice from both PayPal and the Registrar, reminding you that the subscription has not gone through. PayPal will try to repost the subscription payment three times, after which it will cancel your subscription. Then, if you wish to continue paying via subscription, you will have to go to the NYSTA website and set up the information again.

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Best wishes for a wonderful fall. We hope to see you at our events.