

VOICEPrints

JOURNAL OF THE NEW YORK SINGING TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

January-February 2013



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FEATURED EVENT: WINTER 2013 ONLINE EVENT with Dr. Karen Wicklund

February 11, 2013 Monday, 9:00-11:00 PM (US EST)

Available worldwide via WebEx Video Classroom

Free to NYSTA Members, Students and Guests

Presentation and Q&A: "The Teacher's Role As Professional Voice Team Member: Knowledge and Skills Needed for Working with Singers with Voice Disorders"



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, American Speech and Hearing Association, and the Occupational Voice Foundation in London.

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She has presented sessions at the 2010 NATS national convention, for NATS Chicago in October 2011, at the NATS Winter Workshop in Tucson, and as a keynote speaker for Richard Miller in New Zealand.

OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FEATURED COURSE:

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Dr. Scott McCoy, DMA

Required text: *Your Voice: An Inside View* by Scott McCoy.

This course is available ON DEMAND at:

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MESSAGE *from the President*



DVP... SVS.... OMG!!!

This season's winter event will feature Dr. Karen Wicklund, Director of the Chicago Center for Professional Voice, discussing "The Voice Teacher's Role As a Professional Voice Team Member." Being a "team player" is not something we voice teachers are necessarily used to. Even if one is on faculty at a university, conservatory, or private voice studio, voice teachers tend to stay pretty sequestered within our own studios, and on a day-to-day basis we are (most likely) the last word in all things vocal in our own studio. Institutions may determine their curricula, but the delivery of content has always been very individual.

But what happens when we find ourselves in collaboration with other voice professionals, other faculty members with whom we may co-teach, répétiteurs/coaches, or on a team of practitioners that may include a physician (ENT or phonosurgeon), a speech language pathologist, or even a physical therapist? Divergent methodologies and conflicting, or even unfamiliar, vocabulary can lead to confusion for all involved.

Many voice teachers find their way to teaching through performance careers, in various genres, the result of this being no common vocabulary among the vast majority who did not have the luxury of graduating with a degree in vocal pedagogy, or any degree at all.

Long before the emergence of the vocal pedagogy degree, there was much discussion of standardized training and certification for voice teachers in order to facilitate a unified understanding and vocabulary. Since its inception in

1906, one of NYSTA's original mission statements was to create a nationally recognized standard and certification for singing voice teachers. Our Professional Development Program (and its online delivery) is a direct outgrowth of this mission statement.

During both the 51st and 52nd NATS conferences (in Salt Lake City and Orlando, respectively) I met with representatives from three of our sister associations—NATS, ASHA, and VASTA—to discuss how such certification could be accomplished. The curriculum exists now, through various sources, but the issue at hand is the determination of the exact curriculum to be used, and a synergy among the various sources. Our PDP core curriculum courses offer a substantial contribution to this endeavor.

In addition to our own "Distinguished Voice Professional" designation, a new title "Singing Voice Specialist" has now emerged. Both the DVP and SVS designations indicate a level of understanding in vocal anatomy, voice acoustics, and vocal health, as well as a working knowledge of certain protocols and vocabulary used by the medical and SLP community. But is this enough?

In truth, the SVS designation has no national standard of curriculum, and our own DVP designation does not include a practicum (internship with a medical professional) that all four major associations—NYSTA, NATS, ASHA, and VASTA—believe to be a crucial component

of the necessary curriculum. Additionally, these four associations are classified as "501c3 non-profits," and as non-profit organizations are prohibited from offering any certifications or licensing.

The question then remains, if all four organizations are prohibited from offering certification, how is a national standard ever to be achieved and certified? The answer may lie with Dr. Karen Wicklund and the Chicago Center for Professional Voice (CCPV). As a private institution CCPV is indeed able to, and does, offer an SVS certification. However, without complete cooperation and reciprocity from the other four associations, that certification remains a regional designation (albeit a prestigious one).

I continue to have discussions with Dr. Wicklund about including our PDP core curriculum courses as a part of the SVS training offered at CCPV. It is my hope that by combining our curriculum we can move one step closer to a truly national standard of recognition and certification. And, if we are able to accomplish this it will represent a culmination of NYSTA's original mission statement as penned by our founding members.

I highly encourage you to participate in our upcoming winter event, which will be held online. You can view and participate from the comfort of your own home or office, no matter where you are in the world. If you plan to attend this online event, you must send NYSTA an RSVP at events@nyst.org so we can send you the proper log in information for the session.

Until then, thank you for your continued support of NYSTA.

Sincerely,

David Sabella-Mills

President, NYSTA

MESSAGE *from the Editor*



Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year from all of us at NYSTA! 2013 is barely upon us, but our season is brimming with many opportunities for singers and teachers of singing in the coming weeks and months. Please check out our calendar for information about our events with Dr. Karen Wicklund and Martin Katz, as well as our 2013 Singer's Developmental Repertoire and Comparative Pedagogy PDP courses.

I hope that you enjoy our featured articles by Dr. Sarah Hoover and Dr. Deborah Popham, both members of NYSTA. Dr. Hoover gives us a wonderful retrospective of the life and career of the great Marni Nixon. Ms. Nixon's achievements as an artist are well-known, but many of you may also be interested in learning about her

long and distinguished career as vocal pedagogue. Dr. Hoover covers this angle beautifully and insightfully. I first met Ms. Nixon in 2002 when she gave an art song master class for undergraduate singers at the Hartt School in West Hartford, Connecticut. (I did not sing for her on this occasion, but rather served as one of the accompanists for the event.) The faculty and students were blown away by her grace, poise, consummate musicianship, and insight into the poetic texts. Ms. Nixon is also a longtime member of NYSTA, which makes this tribute even more meaningful and appropriate.

In the second article, Dr. Popham takes us

on a practical tour of using VoceVista and other voice analysis software in the voice studio. Even though these programs are becoming less expensive and more common in voice studios across the globe, many pedagogues are daunted by the steep learning curve that accompanies integrating such technology into their personal pedagogy. Dr. Popham's article offers one of the most user-friendly approaches that I have read on this topic, and I know that her insights will be valuable to our readers.

As always, *VOICEPrints* 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, *VOICEPrints*

NYSTA Calendar of Events 2013



WINTER 2013 ONLINE EVENT *with Dr. Karen Wicklund*

February 11, 2013 Monday, [NOTE NEW TIME:] 9:00-11:00 PM (US EST)

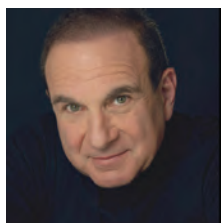
Available worldwide via WebEx Video Classroom

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JOSEPHINE MONGIARDO GREAT COACHES SERIES:

MARTIN KATZ *Master Class*

March 27, 2013, Wednesday, 7:00-9:00 PM

Columbia University Teacher's College, Grace Dodge Hall #179; 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.

NYSTA is deeply honored to present legendary pianist, conductor, and educator Martin Katz in a masterclass for five singer-pianist duos.

Martin Katz has been dubbed "the gold standard of accompanists" by the *New York Times*. His 40-year career has taken him to 5 continents, collaborating with the world's most celebrated singers in recital and recording. Marilyn Horne, Frederica von Stade, Kathleen Battle, David Daniels, Karita Mattila, and José Carreras are among his regular partners, and he has recorded for the RCA, CBS, BMG, EMI and Decca labels.

A member of the faculty at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor for more than two decades, he has chaired the program in collaborative piano and coached vocal repertoire for singers and pianists alike. Also active as a conductor and editor, Mr. Katz has led opera productions for San Francisco's Merola program, the BBC, Tokyo's NHK, and innumerable performances in Ann Arbor, and his editions of baroque and bel canto operas have been performed in Houston, Ottawa, and at the Metropolitan Opera. Mr. Katz's first opus, *The Complete Collaborator*, has been published by Oxford University Press.

OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM *

SINGER'S *Developmental Repertoire*

April 13 and April 14, 2013, Saturday and Sunday

Columbia University, Teachers' College, 525 West 120th Street, (between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue), NYC

Registration includes both on-site attendance and 24/7 On Demand viewing for four months.

Instructors (*subject to change*): **Christopher Arneson, Jeannette LoVetri, 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.

*Rescheduled from
November 2012*



NYSTA CELEBRATES *World Voice Day*

April 15-19, 2013 (All Week)

Locations throughout New York City and New Jersey

In a groundbreaking effort to raise awareness of vocal health issues, NYSTA has coordinated with several renowned NY metropolitan area physicians in care of the professional voice who are offering FREE vocal health screenings to all NYSTA members, their students, and members of the Actors Equity Association (AEA performers union). These screenings will take place on specific days during the week of April 15-19. The doctors have chosen the days on which their office will participate, and the specific times and number of clients/patients they can see on those days and times. Please visit www.nysta.org/events.html for participating physicians and protocols.

OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM *

COMPARATIVE VOICE 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.

Instructors: **Melissa Cross, Jeanne Goffi-Fynn, Matthew Hoch, Margaret Lattimore, Cynthia Munzer** and **Jan Prokop**. 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. Schedule, Course Titles: TBA.

* All PDP courses are \$250 (\$220 for NYSTA members) and can be registered and paid for online at www.nysta.org. One graduate credit per course is available from Westminster Choir College, for an additional \$150. A form will be obtained at the class. For more information, visit www.pdp@nysta.org or www.nysta.org/courses.

Getting to Know *Marni Nixon*

by NYSTA Member Sarah Adams Hoover, DMA

Marni Nixon has had, to date, a seven-decade performance career of astonishing versatility, breadth and longevity. Renowned for her shimmering soprano voice on screen, stage and recordings in American classics by Bernstein, Gershwin, Kern, and Lerner and Loewe, she has also excelled in operatic roles for coloratura as well as modern works by Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Along the way she became a teacher, sharing her passion, rigor and insight with aspiring performers. The story of *what* Marni has done is fascinating; her reflections on *how* she has done it serve as inspiration for performers and teachers of all ages and genres.

Born to a musical family in Altadena, California in 1930, young Margaret Nixon McEathron began playing the violin at age four and soon was performing as a soloist with Karl Moldrem's Hollywood Baby Orchestra and the Peter Meremblum California Junior Symphony. She played bit parts as a child actor in over fifty movies and performed in a singing group with her three sisters. "Music was something our whole family did," she recalls, "so it was no big deal. Singing has always been fun for me." Gifted with perfect pitch and a flexible, high soprano voice, she joined the Los Angeles Concert Youth Chorus under the direction of Roger Wagner at age fourteen (along with a thirteen-year-old Marilyn Horne). She won her first national voice competition when she was eleven, singing "The Blue Danube Waltz;" later she made the decision to give up the violin and began studies with former Vienna State Opera soprano Vera Schwartz.

It should come as no surprise that, after such varied training and professional experiences as a child, Marni's subsequent career has been a dizzying array of multiple musical personalities. She writes that, even as a teenager, she found herself one day "an opera singer, the next a fledgling movie starlet delivering mail at MGM, and the day after that a classical artist singing oratorios." In 1947 alone she made her musical comedy debut at the Pasadena Playhouse in *Oh, Susanna*, sang as a soloist in Hollywood Bowl under the direction of Leopold Stokowski in *Carmina Burana* and Mozart's *Requiem*, and provided the off-camera voice of Margaret O'Brien in the film *The Secret Garden*, her first experience of dubbing. "I had no idea at the time that I was beginning a new career," Nixon recalls, but instead "just the glimmer of a thought telling me this might be another door opening that would allow me to use my voice to make a living."

Entering Los Angeles City College as a freshman in the fall of 1947, Marni studied with Hugo Strelitzer and Leonard Stein, who introduced her to the avant-garde music of Arnold Schoenberg, Ernst Krenek, Pierre Boulez, and Igor Stravinsky (all living

in Los Angeles at the time), as well as Charles Ives and other contemporary composers. She met an aspiring composer named Ernest Gold whom she married in 1950.

Nixon's operatic skills flourished under the tutelage of Jan Popper (at UCLA Opera Theater and Stanford University) and Carl Ebert (opera director at USC and Intendant of the Städtische Oper in Berlin). In 1950 Nixon toured with Ebert and Los Angeles' Guild Opera Company as Blonde in Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* and was awarded a scholarship to Tanglewood, where she first worked with Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, Sarah Caldwell, and Serge Koussevitsky.

After the birth of her son Andrew, Nixon resumed singing concerts with the Roger Wagner Chorale (the era Horne called their "Doo-Wah years") and performed in operas by Stravinsky and premiered his 1952 *Cantata*. She dubbed the singing voice of Jeanne Crain in *Cheaper by the Dozen* (1950), and provided the high notes for Marilyn Monroe in "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953). When daughter Martha was born, the family temporarily moved to New York, where Nixon performed in theater, in concert and chamber music (appearing with the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Boulez, Bernstein, and Kostelanetz, among others), on TV variety and talent shows, and in commercials.

But it was dubbing over the voice of Deborah Kerr in *The King and I* in 1956 that proved pivotal, after which Marni was christened "the Ghostess with the Mostest" by *Time* magazine—one of the most often heard but least seen singing actors in

Hollywood. Deborah Kerr recounted that "Marni was so brilliant at adapting her voice to mine I could never be entirely sure whether it was she who was helping me on the high notes or whether I myself was responsible for the sounds which came out." In 1957 she again sang for Kerr in *An Affair to Remember*, followed by collaborations with both Natalie Wood and Rita Moreno in *West Side Story* in 1961, and Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady* in 1964. (Her voice is also heard in *Mary Poppins* as all parts of the geese trio.) She finally made her adult screen acting-singing debut in 1965 as Sister Sophia in *The Sound of Music*.

Back again in Los Angeles, her family expanded to include daughter Melani, and Nixon continued what she called her "zig-zagging course," taking on the roles of Zerbinetta, Gretel, Rosina, and the title role in *The Bartered Bride* while also performing with the Voices of Walter Schumann on NBC's Tennessee Ernie Ford Show and as a guest on The Lawrence Welk Show. In concert she performed Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Poulenc's *La voix humaine*, and the world premiere of Boulez's *Improvisation sur Mallarmé #1*, and recorded works by Webern, Stravinsky and Ives.

Appearances on The Bell Telephone Hour, The Danny Kaye Show, and The Ed Sullivan Show were followed by stints with Liberace in 1965 and Victor Borge in 1968. "For some lucky reason, with me, it was never 'or' but always 'and,'" she recalls.

Nixon's roles expanded to include teaching: she founded the vocal department at the brand-new California Institute of the Arts, a position she held from 1969 to 1971 during a period of personal struggle as her first marriage came to an end. In 1971 she moved to Seattle to marry Dr. Fritz Fenster (whom she divorced in 1975), teaching at the Cornish Institute and performing roles with Seattle Opera including Musetta, Violetta, and La



Marni Nixon with comedian Victor Borge (1968)



With Igor Stravinsky, *Les noces* (1947)



As Anna in *The King and I* (1958)



Poulenc's *La voix humaine* (1966)



In *the Good Old Summertime* (1949)

Périchole. Nixon recalls that *La traviata* proved to be “a great stretch for me and taught me a lot about singing in a more deeply connected way. As I progressed, I found a much richer sound than I had ever had before and was able to let my voice soar.” She also starred in a children’s television show, *Boomerang*, filming 169 episodes between 1975 and 1980 for which she earned four Emmys.

In 1980 Nixon moved back to New York, where she has lived ever since. She met and married Al Block, recorded the music of Gershwin, Kern, and Copland, and appeared on and off Broadway in *Taking My Turn* (1983), *Opal* (1992), *Cabaret* (1997), *James Joyce’s The Dead* (1999), *Follies* (2001), and *Nine* (2003). On screen she played the role of Aunt Alice in *I Think I Do* (1997) and created the voice of Grandmother Fa in Disney’s *Mulan* (1998), a role for which she needed what she called an “unvoice.” She battled breast cancer in 1985 and again in 2000; undaunted, she returned to performing within weeks after surgery and subsequent chemotherapy. Nixon has maintained a teaching studio at home, taught master classes and adjudicated competitions around the world, and served her profession as a member of NATS and AATS. In 2012 Nixon received the George Peabody Award for her “outstanding contributions to American music.” With superb musical skills, an unfailingly clear and sweet voice, a sense of adventurousness and the willingness to say “yes, of course I can,” even when she didn’t really know she could, Marni Nixon’s long tenure as a working musician is due in large part to her personality, which she describes as “skilled, precise, fun-loving, instinctual and perfectionist.” Long on talent and hard work but short on ego, she contends that “stardom isn’t really the goal. Staying in the industry and being successful at whatever you do is.”



VOICEPrints Associate Editor **Sarah Adams Hoover** is a performer, teacher and writer. She was educated at Yale University and the Peabody Institute, and has appeared in oratorio and chamber works as a soloist with the Goliard

Chamber Ensemble, St. Luke’s Chamber Orchestra, Huntington Choral Society, Bach and Handel Chorale, and Grace Choral Society, among others. Currently President of NATS-NYC, she is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music at Hofstra University where she teaches voice, and Guest Lecturer in music history at C.W. Post’s Hutton House.

Trained at the Johns Hopkins Center for Laryngeal and Voice Disorders, and with Margaret Baroody, SVS, she has also pursued additional studies in Alexander Technique, holds a certification in Pilates, and is a licensed instructor of Body Mapping through Andover Educators. She has presented workshops for organizations including the Voice Foundation, NATS, Washington Opera Summer Institute, and the Royal School of Church Music. She is founding director of the Oyster Bay Music Festival (www.oysterbaymusicfestival.com) and has written on music for the Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, Chamber Music Magazine, Symphony Space, Tilles Center, Strathmore Hall, and the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra.

This article is adapted from a program book essay originally published for NATS-NYC’s “Meet Marni” in April 2012. All quotations are taken from the author’s interviews with Miss Nixon and from Marni Nixon and Stephen Cole’s *I Could Have Sung All Night*, (New York: Billboard Books), 2006.

MARNI NIXON REFLECTS ON TEACHING

Marni Nixon began teaching singing in the 1960s. Her first student, a friend of her son Andrew, was an aspiring rock singer. “I was scared to death,” she recalls: “Where will I start? What will I do?” Since that moment, she has applied her intuitive nature, her musical intelligence, and her insatiable curiosity to the art of teaching. To that first student, she said “We’ll just improvise—maybe I’ll show you something you can use.” Six decades later, Nixon shares some of her “improvisations” on teaching:

Teaching is intuitively responding to the whole person and way of being. You need to be receptive and pick up clues.

How can you get to the essence of who this person is and take it from there? How can you make your students aware of the possibilities available to them and what they could do next?

The job of the teacher is to help a student develop the ability to imitate and to imagine—to envision what is possible.

Singers need to be aware of rich sonic worlds. The greatest fault and horror story is when students can’t sing a legato line because they don’t know what it is—they just haven’t listened enough.

It’s important to keep students engaged in feeling that it is *their* perception—help them know what they are doing and to keep sensing their own singing.

Have the scientific knowledge to use if it’s necessary. Help your students gradually acquire useful vocabulary in a way that’s inevitable—“Oh, you mean *this!*”—these are little clues, and the students learn to teach themselves.

It’s always important to find musical material that’s not too complicated and with which they can express themselves.

I must have had the right parents—my mother, a phonics teacher, taught us how to learn. As children we developed a strong work ethic and a “professional” mindset. We formed a family orchestra which played together on Sunday afternoons and shared this family fun time with anyone who wanted to come—our friends could partake or watch and get cookies. In our family music was both a serious pursuit and a social activity, an extension of my mother’s German heritage.

My vocal identity was always clear. The job of my teachers was to help me stay on track. As much as I might have wanted it, I couldn’t possibly have been hired to sing Aida—I’d have sounded like a cricket.

If it hurts, it’s bad! Help your students understand they may need to choose different repertoire or try another way.

Help your students come to the point of asking themselves: What is it that I want to do here that I don’t know how to do? What am I missing?

As you teach, it affirms your own knowledge about yourself. Say “yes” to every project. Learn something new.



Boomerang (1975)



In *Follies*, on Broadway (2001)



With Arthur Godfrey (late 1950s)



With actor Christopher Walken, *James Joyce’s The Dead* (2000)

VOCEVISTA: *Using Visual Real-Time Feedback*

By NYSTA Member Deborah Popham, DMA

Technology has permeated our daily lives. We communicate through text messages, emails, and Facebook. We go to YouTube and Spotify to listen to our favorite artists. This infiltration of technology has affected the teaching of singing as well. Some teachers now use digital devices to record lessons and use CD accompaniments instead of a traditional piano. Students as well as teachers use online translators, and some even teach lessons via Skype. A certain amount of technological proficiency is expected from today's professionals, regardless of the field. And yet, with respect to voice science, there seems to be a certain amount of resistance from some, particularly those who did not experience such trends when they were students. **VoceVista**, a program that gives acoustic feedback, can be daunting for those used to teaching singing the old-fashioned way—trial and error, by using our ears. However, if VoceVista is thought of simply as another technological tool that can be used to enhance our pedagogy, why should teachers shy away from it? Instead, we should be embracing a tool that helps to make our teaching more objective.

VoceVista is not the only program available, but it is one that is very singer-friendly. The program comes with Donald Miller's book, *Resonance in Singing: Voice Building Through Acoustic Feedback* (Inside View Press, 2008). It has been designed to be used with an Electroglottalgraph (EGG), which can be purchased through Donald Miller and the VoceVista website. The EGG has been designed with singers in mind, so it is small and noninvasive, and the price is significantly lower to fit the budget of the private/collegiate teacher. Despite this, the EGG can still be an expensive piece of equipment. Fortunately, there are many things that can be done with the software alone, and the book will help the novice understand what the visual displays signify.

Much has already been written on vowel formants and formant tuning in classical singing. While I maintain that resonance strategies are an extremely important element of classical singing and is one of the more obvious reasons to use VoceVista, there are a number of other elements of the sound where VoceVista can be extremely helpful.

One of the obvious reasons for using visual biofeedback is that students may not hear the differences in sounds. Because bone conductivity is less efficient at higher frequencies, students may not be able to hear differences in production at these higher frequencies. By *seeing* what is happening in the upper harmonics, the student who needs more "ring" may visually understand why the sound isn't carrying. Or for the singer who tries to over-brighten the tone, a visual learner will

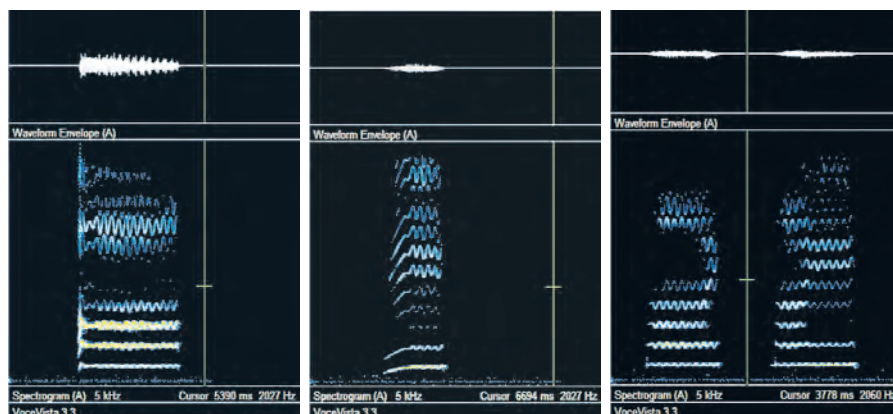
easily see why that tone is not balanced. If a singer cannot hear or feel a difference in the better tone production, by using sound analysis spectrum, the student now has a visual goal for the sound. It is a more efficient use of repetition and minute adjustments that allows for an *effective* behavior modification, rather than students simply going to the practice room and hoping they get it right. Further, VoceVista has the capacity to record, so when a breakthrough happens, the saved file can be used as both an auditory as well as visual goal against which to check the sound. Because VoceVista can display two spectrums simultaneously, the student has a specific goal sound while practicing.

Another aspect of VoceVista is the spectrogram. Utilizing this aspect of the program is helpful for a number of things, including diction and onsets/releases. As soon as one understands the frequencies of specific vowels (the formant structures), reading the spectrogram becomes very easy. Students often don't realize that the smallest change in the resonance tract will affect the vowel. I hear students saying that they don't feel the vowel migrating to a more neutral sound or substituting the American diphthong equivalent when singing in foreign languages. While teachers can tell the student the correct tongue position in reference to the vowel, it is often not practical to have the student view the tongue in the mirror because the student will have to open the mouth far too wide. With the program running, the tongue shape can be estimated based on where the vowel formant frequencies are. For example, if the student is trying to sing an [i], but the teacher is hearing [e], the teacher may ask that the tongue be moved more forward. Because the forward tongue constriction will raise the second formant while lowering the first, even if the student doesn't perceive a change in the sound, the visual aid should convince the student that the vowel has been corrected.

As previously mentioned, diphthongs are extremely easy to recognize on the spectrogram (see *example below*). After familiarizing oneself with the frequencies of the consonants, undesired coarticulation and consonant shadows also become easy to recognize. It is common for young American singers to anticipate [l] or [r], or to drop the velum too early for the nasal consonants, and the preceding vowel is affected. Once the student recognizes this, the undesired quality can be more easily eliminated. The spectrogram can display how much breath energy is necessary for the fricatives and plosives to be heard, thereby making the diction more discernable. When one keeps the time history low (<10 seconds or so), the changes in vowel, consonant, or coarticulation become apparent.

Scooping and spreading are also easily identified on the spectrogram (see *below*). While these qualities may be desired in some styles of singing, they are sometimes unintentionally used in classical singing, particularly when a young student is trying to be "musical" or communicative. When a student scoops up to the pitch, the spectrogram reflects this by seeing a rise in the fundamental. As the vowel is allowed to spread, the formant pattern will change, accentuating the higher formants, creating a harsher tone. Also to be avoided is vowel blooming, where the articulators are not in the correct vowel shape at the start of the vowel being produced. This creates a few milliseconds of incomplete harmonic structure, often appearing as an unintended crescendo visible in the waveform envelope as the insufficient airflow is corrected. This can occur at an onset or in the middle of a word.

Vibrato calculation is another feature of VoceVista. In addition to isolating the vibrato of a sustained tone to measure the rate and extent, it is extremely easy to recognize the presence and absence of vibrato within the tone. While a com-



Spectrograms performed by the author (from left to right): **Hard Onset, Scooping and Diphthongs.**

puter is hardly necessary for this—teachers easily hear vibrato in a student's sound—the spectrogram will exhibit whether the vibrato is present from the onset, and whether it remains consistent throughout the phrase. Along with the vibrato being present from the onset, the type of onset or release can be discerned. Despite the fact that the teacher may claim that the onset/release is too pressed or too breathy, the student may not truly understand how a balanced onset/release should feel. On the spectrogram, a dark band that is strong from the fundamental to the higher frequencies indicates an onset that is too strong (see *figure, bottom page 6*). Conversely, a breathy onset will be indicated by a tone that is immediately lacking energy in the upper harmonics. When looking at the release, a tone that has vibrato that tends to straighten when approaching the release may indicate tension as the student is getting "set" for the release. Similar to the pressed and breathy onsets, the respective releases will look the same on the spectrogram as the onsets, except that the extra energy or lack of energy in the higher harmonics will appear at the end of the tone.

Another remarkable attribute of VoceVista is the ability of the student to see if the singing is legato. He or she can recognize this without knowing the intricacies of the program or any of the complicated science behind the acoustics. Legato can be tracked not only in the spectrogram, but also in the waveform envelope. In addition to seeing if there are pauses in the sound between phonemes, one can also see whether consonants, voiced or unvoiced, are too long. By watching the strength of the relative sound pressure level in the waveform envelope, the student can see if their perception of volume is accurate. When performing a crescendo or decrescendo, it can be seen how even the execution of the task was. Further, especially with a decrescendo, the student can see just how much decrescendo is required for the change in dynamic level to be perceived by the audience.

It is important to remember that many of these functions of VoceVista are applicable to other styles of singing, not just Classical. Elsewhere, one would look for a different result. For example, with a musical theater female belter, one would expect to see a stronger second formant as compared to the fundamental. Despite differences in harmonic strengths between the different styles, clear diction should always be a goal and can be monitored. A program such as VoceVista can also be extremely beneficial when teaching students of the opposite sex. It is impossible for a female voice teacher to adequately describe what men feel when going through their *secondo passaggio*, and vice versa; a male teacher may have a hard time explaining how to sing in head voice to his female student. If a female student were to try to imitate the quality

of her male teacher, the result could be a tone with too high a closed quotient. VoceVista also has the ability to analyze recordings, and by finding a professional of the same sex as the student, the resonance strategies can be stored and a target sound for the student can be formed.

By giving the student visible target goals, the students may be able to create a more mature sound without imitating, going through the process hopefully with less manipulation or trying to "create" the tone.

Of course, VoceVista cannot tell *how* the sound is being produced, whether the tone is free or created by some form of compensation, and that is why there will always be a need for a competent teacher to guide the student. It should be kept in mind that VoceVista is simply meant to be used as a tool, another device to aid the student's learning. As teachers, knowing the science is useless unless the science can be applied toward a useful purpose, which is always the goal. However, as more becomes known of the science of singing, ignorance of this science can do the student a disservice. Using a program such as VoceVista can also help keep personal preferences out of a teacher's evaluation. While we all try to be as objective as possible, employing a spectrogram can be used to back up what a teacher is trying to get the student to achieve. However, because spectrograms are real-time feedback, this does not mean that it must be operated in that capacity; it can also be used to measure consistency *after* a practice session or after a performance. One should never sing with it all of the time, thereby creating a crutch—after all, the goal is good singing, even when the computer is off. The more technically proficient the singer, the more musical and artistic the singer can be, since there are fewer technical limitations.

While VoceVista is the most singer-friendly spectrogram program I have found, it is certainly not the only option. There are a number of spectrograms that can be downloaded free of charge, and apps for smart phones. One program that is free is Gram, a program developed by Richard Horne, who also helped create VoceVista. Vibrato extent can also be calculated on Gram, but unlike VoceVista where the extent is measured by the program for the user, Gram requires the user to do the calculations. Gram is simply a spectrogram and waveform envelope, and does not include the spectrum. Depending on the teacher's intended use, this free download may satisfy the needs of the student.

There are a number of references available to learn more about acoustics, formant tracking, and reading spectrograms. For resonance and understanding vowel formants, in addition to Donald Miller's book, I recommend *Your Voice: An Inside View* by Scott McCoy (Inside View Press, 2004). To learn more about reading spectrograms, I highly recommend *Voice Tradition and Technology: A*

State of the Art Studio by Garyth Nair (Singular Publishing Group, 1999). Nair's book not only shows the vowels on the spectrogram, but also the consonants, and there are many examples illustrating onsets, releases, etc. Both of these books offer sound research, but provide the material in language that can be understood by teachers of singing.

As we continue teaching in the twenty-first century, it is imperative that we use all resources at our disposal, including technology. While this approach may not work for all students, it will work for some, particularly the visual learners. As teachers, we should not be limited on how we teach, but rather use all tools that enable student learning and make the learning more efficient.



Soprano **Deborah Popham** attended the University of Akron, earning a BM degree in voice performance as well as BA degrees in English and philosophy. She concluded her studies at Arizona State University, where she earned an MM in music theater performance (opera) and her DMA degree in voice performance. A few of Dr. Popham's performing credits include *Madame Lidoine* in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *Vitellia* in *La clemenza di Tito*, and *Cathleen* in *Riders to the Sea*.

She has performed internationally as a soloist throughout Italy and Switzerland. Some of her opera directing credits include *La divina* (Pasatieri), *La canterina* (Haydn), *The Ballad of Baby Doe* (Moore), and *The Old Maid and the Thief* (Menotti).

As part of her dissertation, Dr. Popham produced and directed a performance of *Ricky Ian Gordon's Orpheus and Euridice*. She is an Assistant Professor of Music, Director of Opera Theater, and Coordinator of Vocal Studies at Shorter University.

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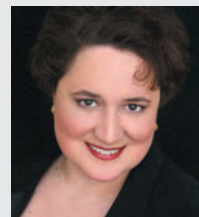


Marni Nixon with Liberace (1965)



Josephine Mongiardo with Dean Williamson

Participants in the October 15, 2012 Josephine Mongiardo Great Coaches Series Master Class with Maestro Dean Williamson
From left to right:
Joseph Lawson, *pianist*; **Jennifer Caruana**, *mezzo-soprano*; **Dean Williamson**; **Stefanie Izzo**, *soprano*; **Constantinos Tsourakis**, *baritone*; and **Julia Hamula**, *soprano*.



NYSTA New Member **Regina Zona**

Dr. Regina Zona has taught voice for over 23 years and has held teaching positions at Shorter College and Sacred Heart University. Most recently, she was the opera

program director at the University of Minnesota Duluth. In addition to directing two opera productions a year at UMD, including critically acclaimed productions of *Così fan tutte* and *Falstaff*, she taught a full studio of vocal performance, music education, and musical theater majors at the graduate and undergraduate level as well as graduate vocal pedagogy. She now lives in Yonkers, New York, and maintains a private voice studio in Yonkers and Manhattan.

As a singer, Dr. Zona has had a diverse international operatic and concert career. She recently completed two consecutive recital tours of South Africa. Specializing in the performance of American art song, she will be recording a CD of the song cycles of Jake Heggie for the NAXOS American Classics label.

Please visit her websites at www.reginazona.com and www.thezonastudio.com.