

# VOICEPrints

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November-December 2010



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## HOLIDAY EVENT:

*Beret Arcaya: "How We Think is How We Sing"*

**December 5, 2010**

Sunday, 4:00 PM

Noted singer and Alexander teacher **Beret Arcaya** will examine how thinking differed 100 years ago by listening to old records and contrasting them with current performances of the same arias. The emphasis is not on the singing but on how *Use Affects Function: How Thought Becomes an Action*.

**Location:** Columbia Teachers' College, 120<sup>th</sup> Street, between Broadway & Amsterdam, Grace Dodge, Room 179. **Free to all.**



**Beret Arcaya**

## MESSAGE from the Editor



Membership and interest in NYSTA is burgeoning, and I am acutely feeling our increased energy and activity as editor of *VOICEPrints*. I am in the fortunate position of being literally snowed under with articles, new member biographies, and other information that deserves to (and will) be published as soon as possible. While this makes for more difficult and selective editing, the sensation that we are reaching critical mass also a great place for us to be.

I am thrilled to publish in this issue an article by Dr. Wendy DeLeo LeBorgne, Director of the Blaine Block Institute for Voice Analysis and Rehabilitation and the Professional Voice Center of Greater Cincinnati. I first met Wendy in 2007 at the annual Contemporary Commercial Music Vocal Pedagogy Institute at Shenandoah University, and found Dr. LeBorgne's work as a Singing Voice Specialist to be extremely relevant and valuable to our work as vocal pedagogues. I am grateful that this important voice in our field was willing and able to contribute something to *VOICEPrints*.

Also in this issue, longtime NYSTA member Barbara G. Eubanks remembers Catherine Wall. In addition to her long and

successful career as a singer and voice teacher, Ms. Wall was also a former co-editor of *VOICEPrints* (formerly called *The Bulletin*) from 1999–2004. NYSTA remembers Catherine fondly and celebrates her life with gratitude for her important service to the organization.

On behalf of NYSTA, best wishes for a terrific holiday season. As always, please remember that *VOICEPrints* is YOUR publication, so please send all questions, comments, and ideas for future articles to me at [voiceprints@nyst.org](mailto:voiceprints@nyst.org).

Sincerely,

*Dr. Matthew Hoch*

Editor-in-Chief, *VOICEPrints*  
[voiceprints@nyst.org](mailto:voiceprints@nyst.org)

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## MESSAGE *from the President*



### SINGING ON MARS!

Big news! Life has been discovered on Mars! They sing there too, and they are willing to pay top dollar for quality vocal instruction!

Not really. But imagine for a moment what it might be like to pick up and move your voice studio to a whole new world, or even a new country, where you do not understand the culture, customs, language, and especially the musical style and taste of the population. Could you do it? Well, welcome to the world of the Contemporary Commercial Music Voice Teacher.

CCM voice teachers all over the country deal with the issues of popular culture, foreign performance practices and customs, idiomatic diction, and varying musical tastes and styles every day in our studios—not to mention emerging repertoire, as it is being written by or for the student in front of us. It is a daunting task and one that reminds me of the physician's creed: "above all, do no harm."

NYSTA member Nancy Bos recently raised these issues at the NATS conference in her presentation "Singing from the Fringe." And, as a CCM teacher myself, this got me thinking about my own studio and just how radically different it may be from other, more traditional, studios, and how I might be able to contribute to this important dialogue. I thank Nancy for her inspiration for this month's missive.

The majority of my students are indeed singers of commercial music repertoire, which can range from musical theater to grunge rock (admittedly, hard to tell the difference these days). Many of them come to the studio with guitar, cello, or other accompanying instrument in hand. They sing music that they write. They tell stories that are unique to their experience. They sing in styles that are both physically challenging and possibly damaging. And they come to me for guidance and help in their artistic pursuits.

"Above all, do no harm" also applies to the singers' souls, to their musical expression, and to the creation of their art. Of course, dangerous vocal production must be mitigated. But in some cases the very unique, identifying quality of the voice stems from the presence of a pathology. Imagine Rod Stewart's voice without the characteristic rasp. And, what if Louis Armstrong had voice lessons and was able to correct his "acoustically noisy signal?" Certainly Dolly *would* have gone away again. To completely correct a pathology that in itself identifies the artist may damage the singer's ability to create

his art and earn a living. So, it becomes more a question of maintenance than mitigation: "Above all, do NO MORE harm."

But what to do first, and how to do it? First off, in the case of a student with obvious (or even suspected) pathology, put together your team. Many of these students may have never been to an ENT before and need to be referred to someone that you can work with (and that will work with you). Many ENTs in care of the professional voice have release forms granting permission for the doctor to discuss the patient's medical condition with their identified voice teacher. Be sure you are on that form. Communication among team members is vital. You may find yourself working with both an ENT and an SLP (Speech Language Pathologist) in service to your student. Arm yourself with the knowledge needed to be able to converse with these medical professionals in an appropriate manner. (Our upcoming *Vocal Health for Voice Professionals* course will help with that.) Don't underestimate your own experience. The voice teacher brings an entirely different perspective to the team, whose other members may be primarily concerned with the mitigation of the pathology, as opposed to the artistic life of the individual in front of them. You are a champion for your student. Don't be shy.

Secondly—do your research. The internet is your friend. In the absence of any true pathology you may still need to brush up on your understanding of the common performance practice of the given genre and or vocal sound spectrum. For those of you who haven't discovered this yet, [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com) is an incredible resource for performance clips from almost every artist in the world. If you need common performance practice information, this is the place to begin. (iTunes is also very helpful.)

Third—don't be afraid to admit what you don't know. The CCM field is constantly expanding and it is an unattainable goal to know every single piece of music ever written by everybody, ever! If you are unfamiliar with the genre or sound spectrum of the piece at hand, take a moment and look it up (on iTunes or YouTube as suggested above). I will often say to a student, "OK, I need a minute to figure out the world we are in" as I pull up a particular sound or video clip for reference. Within seconds, any well trained voice teacher will be able to tell what the registrative and resonance issues

are of any given song. Take the 30 seconds you need to make sure you are steering the student down the right path.

And lastly—be careful not to judge the artistic merits of a song (or sound spectrum) using the "Western Classical" model. In a CCM studio where there is no one right sound spectrum to be heard, our goal is not to train students into a specific style or aesthetic, but rather to teach them the boundaries of health, safety and appropriateness to task, even when the task at hand might contradict our own musical tastes.

A couple of years ago the NYSTA website featured various YouTube players that highlighted randomly-selected performances. One particularly controversial (and at the time, unknown) artist was prominently featured on one of the players. Several members emailed me with reactions ranging from disappointment to outright disgust that our organization would promote such a performance on our site. Some were vehement that this type of singing was not to be tolerated on our website. Well, the artist in question was the now well-known and multi-Grammy award-winning Lady Gaga.

I will admit that as I get older it does get increasingly difficult to make allowances for the various sounds that come into popular fashion. I feel myself thinking—if not actually saying—"oh, these kids today... (fill in the blank)." But I also know that an important component of my job is to stay current and see the value inherent in all styles of music, even when I think they are from Mars. In return, I am truly blessed to be able to be on the receiving end of such creative energy as it walks through my door each hour of the week.

My own dear mentor, Marie Traficante, once said to me "David, you must remember that YOU are the greatest living authority on your talent. NO ONE knows your talent or ability better than you." I often repeat this to my students, knowing that one of the greatest gifts I can give them is the ability to create their art without fear or judgment.

To all of my CCM colleagues out there, I applaud your commitment to your craft and studios. And, at the risk of sounding "too classical"—BRAVO!

*(For more enlightenment on the subject of "Teaching Students On the Fringe," please be sure to order Nancy Bos' Presentation DVD from the 51<sup>st</sup> NATS Conference.)*

Sincerely,

*David Sabella-Mills*

David Sabella-Mills  
President, NYSTA  
[president@nysta.org](mailto:president@nysta.org)

# NYSTA *Calendar* 2010-2011



Beret Arcaya

## HOLIDAY EVENT: *Beret Arcaya "How We Think is How We Sing"*

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**Teachers' College**, Columbia University, 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC, Grace Dodge, Room 179.

### OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM \*

## VOCAL HEALTH *for Voice Professionals*

**January 18-March 8, 2011**

Faculty includes: **Robert Bastian, MD; Peak Woo, MD; Benjamin Asher, MD; Linda Carroll, PhD, CCC/SLP; Anat Keidar PhD, CCC/SLP**

A detailed exploration of vocal health issues relevant to singers and teachers of singing. This course addresses vocal fold injury and includes the mechanisms of vocal pathologies, their diagnosis and treatment. Common conditions such as nodules, polyps, edema, reflux, and hemorrhage will be covered. The goal is to enable teachers to advise students on vocal hygiene, to recognize the necessity of medical intervention, to be conversant with commonly used drugs for performers, and to be able to participate as part of the medical treatment team in the rehabilitation of the singing voice.

LIVE ONLINE (participate from home) and On Demand ONLY. No on-site class.



Sheri Sanders

## ROCK THE AUDITION—*Mastering the Rock Musical Audition with Sheri Sanders*

**February 13, 2011** Sunday, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

**Sheri Sanders**, a pioneer in the Rock Musical world, will lead the class through an exploration of rock and pop music from the 1950's through the present, addressing aspects of style, vocal dynamics and music arranging. She will demonstrate how to integrate these concepts and confront the challenge of learning how to successfully "act a rock song." Her book, *Rock the Audition*, is scheduled for release by Hal Leonard Publishing in Spring 2011, and is the first book to be published on auditioning for Rock Musicals.

**Teachers' College**, Columbia University, 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC. Free to all.

## DEVELOPMENTAL REPERTOIRE *for Singers*

**April 9 and 10, 2011**, Saturday and Sunday

This course establishes methods and criteria for selecting repertoire appropriate to different voice types at various stages of development. Classical voice categories will include soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, and baritone/bass. In Musical Theatre, male and female voice types will be discussed as well as an introduction and short history of musical theatre, cast breakdowns and vocal requirements of several musicals, choosing appropriate audition material suitable to the style of the show and that of the singer, and a look at contemporary shows and the demands they make on the singer.

Faculty includes: **Christopher Arneson, Judith Nicosia, David Sabella-Mills, and Jeannette LoVetri**. On Demand presentation ONLY.



Jack Lee

## JACK LEE *Musical Theater Masterclass*

**April 11, 2011**, Monday, 7:00 PM

**Jack Lee**, the renowned director and conductor of countless Broadway shows, national and international tours, will coach singers on standard musical theater repertoire.

**Teachers' College**, Columbia University, Room TBA, 120<sup>th</sup> Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC. Free to all.

### OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM \*

## COMPARATIVE *Pedagogy Weekend 2011*

**June 11 and 12, 2011** Dates and Instructors TBA

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.

**Teachers' College**, Columbia University, 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.

\* All PDP courses are \$220 and can be registered and paid for online at [www.nyst.org](http://www.nyst.org). One graduate credit per course is available from Westminster Choir College for an additional \$150. A form will be available at the class. The courses take place at Columbia University, Teachers' College, 525 West 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC. Check desk at entry for class location. For more information contact Janet Pranschke at [pdp@nyst.org](mailto:pdp@nyst.org) or [www.nyst.org](http://www.nyst.org).

## **An International Survey of Singer Self Perceptions Regarding Vocal Performance with and without Vibrato**

PARTICIPANTS BEING SOUGHT FOR A RESEARCH STUDY ON SINGING VIBRATO.

Investigator John Nix, MM, ME, Certif. in Vocology, at The University of Texas at San Antonio, USA is seeking participants for a research study. The purpose of this study, "An International Survey of Singer Self Perceptions Regarding Vocal Performance with and without Vibrato," which is being carried out under the guidelines of UTSA IRB Protocol # 11-004, is to examine aspects of singing training and to collect singer perceptions regarding singing with and without vibrato. The survey apparatus guides participants to answer only those questions appropriate to the singing they do. If you agree to take part in this study, you would click on the link provided below and take the survey. You must be between the ages of 18-75 and able to sing with vibrato to participate. The total time required for this survey should not exceed 10 minutes. Your responses are completely anonymous. There is no compensation for your participation.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please click upon the following link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/internationalvibratosurvey>

Questions about the study—contact John Nix, 210.458.5678, or online at [john.nix@utsa.edu](mailto:john.nix@utsa.edu)

## REMEMBERING *Catherine Wall*

by NYSTA Member Barbara G. Eubanks

Marietta Catherine Wall (1929–2010) was born December 22, 1929, in Beijing, China, the second daughter of a prominent Chinese family. Both of her parents were educated in the United States but later returned to China to practice their professions. Despite constant pain from bound feet, her mother, Gwei Hsin Ho, received her PhD from Bryn Mawr in Pennsylvania. She was a professor of Biology and Latin in China. Catherine's father, William Ho, obtained his PhD from Iowa State University, where he studied with the noted American scientist and botanist, George Washington Carver. Dr. Ho was later appointed Minister of Agriculture and Economics for the Chinese government.

Catherine and her two sisters grew up in Shanghai, where she attended the French *Lycée* and studied violin and piano. Her first language was French, the language spoken by her government. She recalled that her parents would speak Latin to one another when they didn't want the children to understand their conversation.

After the bombing of Shanghai at the outset of World War II and the subsequent political upheaval in China, Catherine's family immigrated to the United States permanently in 1949, settling in New York City. Her mother taught Latin and physics in various schools and universities in the States, and both parents were employed as professors.

Catherine had graduated from Hsi-Chian Girls Middle School in Shanghai in 1946, then attended Barnard College, receiving her Bachelor of Science degree from Columbia University in 1952. She subsequently earned the following graduate degrees from Teachers' College: ME in Music Education and MA in Teaching of Singing, Columbia University, 1980; and ME in Teaching of Spanish Literature, 1990.

Catherine traveled to Europe for extended periods, refining her lyric coloratura voice, studying and performing *bel canto* roles with opera companies throughout Europe, and polishing her Italian and German. She studied in New York with Carlo Menotti, who claimed in a press piece dated August 29, 1963: "Cathy Ho, coloratura soprano, has a range of low A to high B above high C."

"A real polyglot," said Anthony CeCe in describing his friend and colleague at *Il Ponte*. "Catherine was fluent in five languages—



An early photo of the Ho Family.

Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish, Italian and English—and proficient in German." In addition to teaching piano and voice privately, she worked as a translator and tour guide. She conducted foreign language tours in New York and Europe, and eventually led groups on tours of China. From 1980 to 1985 she was Manager of China Worldwide Travel in New York.

Throughout her multi-faceted career, Catherine expressed her exceptional linguistic skills in myriad creative ways. She worked in publishing at Wall-to-Wall Press in New York and was a contributing poet to magazines, newspapers and anthologies as well as a translator of books and periodicals. She edited close to fifty books by renowned Italian playwright, Mario Fratti.

An active member of NYSTA and NATS, Catherine was an innovator of new methods in vocal pedagogy, voice placement, voice and speech therapy, and vocal interpretation. In the months preceding her unexpected death, she was working on a book on classical vocal technique. In addition to her exceptional writing and editorial skills and her recognized expertise in vocal technique and vocal pedagogy, Catherine Wall became a skilled graphic designer and was employed as design director for several foreign-language publications and cultural organizations, including *La Follia*, *Il Ponte*, and *L'Italico*.

From 1985 to 1995, she worked as the graphic designer for *La Follia di New York*. This Italian-American publication company first published Caruso's hand-drawn caricatures and presented well-known opera singers—Renata Tebaldi, Anna Moffo, Licia Albanese, to mention a few—at its annual Town Hall galas and at Alice Tully Hall. When *La Follia's* owner Michael Sisca died, Catherine continued her collaboration with its editor, Dr. Orazio Tanelli, Professor of Italian and Spanish literature at Montclair State University, to develop a new Italian-American cultural magazine—*Il Ponte Italo-Americano*—a bi-monthly publication focusing on poetry, art and culture and the Italian-American community. She held the post of *Il Ponte's* graphic designer and copy editor until her death. She also served as the graphic designer for *L'Italico*, a quarterly newspaper under the direction of Giovanni Pinto.

At the invitation of NYSTA's past president Janet Pranschke, Catherine served from 1999 to 2004 as co-editor and graphic designer of *The Bulletin*, NYSTA's monthly newsletter now known as *VOICEPrints*. Of Catherine, Janet writes: "Catherine will be remembered at NYSTA for improving the appearance of the bulletin when she was editor, making it a much more professional-looking periodical. She would add whimsical pictures and cartoons that made one smile while reading the more serious articles. We are grateful to have known her and to have benefited from her creative talent." For this service, Catherine was awarded a life-time membership in NYSTA.

In addition, she edited newsletters and journals for opera companies, professional organizations



Catherine Wall

and nonprofits including the Center for Contemporary Opera, Encompass New Opera Theatre, and a number of Senior Citizen groups. She also designed countless programs and brochures for individual artists, chamber groups, and choral ensembles, including the New York Liederkrantz Chorus, the New York Community Chorus at the Holy Apostles Church (a group under the direction of NYSTA Member Jack Eppler), and The Aviva Players, a chamber music group founded by NYSTA Member Mira J. Spektor.

Catherine's musical acumen, artistic eye, and linguistic genius contributed greatly to the excellence that characterized all of her work. Even during the last week of her life, she was still "burning the midnight oil" in order to meet publication deadlines. She was a master at multitasking, a voracious reader, and a person who never stopped learning. According to her longtime friend and fellow Francophile, Dr. Andy Solomon, she was enrolled in French, Chinese and Japanese language courses at the Fashion Institute of Technology during the spring semester of this year. In addition, she loved to keep up with the latest technologies and spent hours at the Apple Store attending lectures, discussing fine points at the genius bar, and learning new computer applications. She recently taught a web design course at her local "Y."

For several years Catherine hosted a showcase program on cable television that featured emerging opera singers and local opera producers in an interview format. She often went to the Metropolitan Opera (where her niece is a harpist with the Met Orchestra) and also supported new works in progress presented by the more innovative opera companies in the metro area. However, she was quite opinionated when it came to singers and was always happy to discuss the achievements and shortcomings of each performer.

Catherine was also interested in making audio recordings. To that end, she set up a small sound chamber in a closet in her home and was preparing the repertoire to be recorded. According to long-time friend, engineer and technical advisor Paul Liantonio, only a week before her death Catherine purchased a new keyboard and a high-end, state-of-the-art music editing system. With this new equipment she was planning to record her version of the Christian hymn, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" and post it on YouTube.

In recent years, Catherine spent her leisure hours listening to great performers on the Arts and

Entertainment Channel and creating beautiful, full-color portraits of famous musicians and entertainers, as well as personal friends. She served on the board of Serate Musicali Foundation, Ltd., an international philanthropic organization supporting overseas study and audition programs for young professional singers from Europe and North America. Catherine herself founded Culture Corps, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, to fund creative projects and provide scholarships for talented but needy voice students.

Her kindness and generosity were known to everyone with whom she came into contact. She was always cooking her homemade Chinese dumplings for someone, collecting used eyeglasses for the poor, donating goods and clothing to the Hudson Guild, or feeding homeless people in her Chelsea neighborhood.

Almost every weekday Catherine could be found at the Hudson Guild's Fulton House luncheon for seniors. When cultural institutions—

Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and many Off-Off Broadway shows—sent tickets for the seniors, Catherine would encourage the others to go. She called around and could always get a crowd from the luncheon.

On June 5, 2010, Catherine Wall died peacefully in her home. She is survived by her sisters: Margaret Ho Paradise and Betty Ho Elkan, and her six nieces and nephews; her children: Roland Wall and his wife Maryann, Diana Wall Sutton and her husband Peter, and Mark Wall and his wife Kathy; and her three grandchildren: Joanna Sutton, Amelia Wall and Julia Wall.

Catherine Wall was a wonderful, brilliant and talented lady who touched many lives. She will be greatly missed. A memorial service was held on Saturday, June 12, 2010, at Reddens Funeral Home on West 14<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. At the family's request, any contributions in Catherine Wall's memory may be made to the New York Singing Teachers' Association (<http://www.nyst.org/>).



**Barbara G. Eubanks**

Barbara Eubanks has taught at Manhattan School of Music and given master classes at the Vocal Arts Institute. A passionate advocate for contemporary music, she serves on the boards of Encompass New Opera Theatre, Center for Contemporary Opera, New York Singing Teachers' Association, and Serate Musicali. She also maintains an active New York voice studio. In 1984, Ms. Eubanks founded Associated Artistic Enterprises to present artists in concert at such venues as Lincoln Center, Merkin Hall, and Carnegie Hall. For the past decade, she has been grants consultant to The Nathan Cummings Foundation, The Surdna Foundation, and Young Audiences, Inc.

## VOCAL HEALTH IN THE MUSICAL THEATER PERFORMER: *What Is Normal?*

by Wendy DeLeo LeBorgne, PhD, CCC-SLP, Voice Pathologist and Singing Voice Specialist

As a voice teacher, when you envision a "perfect" vocal instrument, pearly white vocal folds with smooth, straight edges that are agile and flexible may be what come to mind, especially when considering elite performance (Image 1). And when you envision a "damaged" vocal instrument, red, swollen vocal folds, nodules, polyps, or lesions may fill your thoughts (Image 2).

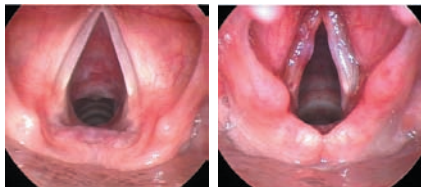


Image 1.

Image 2.

However, a study by Elias (1997)<sup>1</sup> found 58% of professional singers had abnormal videostroboscopic findings in the absence of any vocal problems or complaints. Similarly, Heman-Ackah, Dean, and Sataloff (2002)<sup>2</sup> found vocal fold masses in both non-symptomatic and symptomatic voice teachers. Physiologic findings of reflux were also noted to be equally common in voice teachers in both the symptomatic and non-symptomatic groups. This research provides voice teachers the following insight: even what we hear as healthy voices may indeed have an underlying abnormality which does not necessarily affect performance. Voices that sound good may not look good upon examination; conversely, pristine vocal folds do not necessarily dictate good singing or career potential.

Moreover, musical theater performers (and belters in particular) often get a bad rap for having "unhealthy" vocal habits and/or singing style. These vocal athletes have been shown to be at

increased risk of vocal injury due to the physical and vocal demands required (Koufman, 1996).<sup>3</sup> Specifically, Koufman and colleagues reported that non-classical singing styles consistently had higher muscle tension scores. The styles with the highest muscle tension scores included: musical theater, gospel, jazz/pop, and country-western.

In the professional world of musical theater, singers are required to have a sample of all of these styles in their audition book. Musical theater performers are considered at high risk because they perform 5-8 shows per week at high vocal intensities for prolonged periods of time. Additional physical fatigue due to movement demands results in a compromised respiratory and phonatory system. Given this population's intensified vocal load, what exactly should be considered "normal" in collegiate level and professional musical theater performers?

Because talking about unhealthy vocal folds and/or vocal injury is often considered taboo, we do not know much about the vocal health of these vocal athletes; minimal research has been done looking specifically at the injury rates among professional musical theater performers. Only two previous studies investigating the epidemiology of injury in the elite musical theater performer have been completed (Evans, 1996<sup>4</sup> & Evans, 1998<sup>5</sup>).

Findings of these studies indicated: within the Broadway population, 17% of performers who completed this survey (during the 1996 season) reported a vocal injury, while West End performers reported a 15% injury rate. Another study, which looked at theme park performers, found that 100% of the study participants presented with abnormal laryngeal findings (Hoffman-Ruddy, 2001<sup>6</sup>). Despite the fact that these performers may

have an injury, they are often able to perform eight shows a week. The question then becomes whether it is necessary to have "perfect" vocal folds to maintain a professional career in a professional arena; might abnormalities in fact contribute to the vocal "uniqueness" of a sought-after performer?

A parallel to the professional athletic world provides insight into this matter. For over 30 years, sports medicine, exercise science, exercise physiology, and dance medicine have long established guidelines for injury prevention and management in pre-professional and professional athletes and dancers. The results of their research have established that many elite athletes do not have "normal" bodies. Take for example Michael Phelps (Image 3). He excels at his sport because of specific physiological and anatomical attributes that result in "superhuman" abilities. Similarly, many of the



Image 3.

singers who do nightly "vocal gymnastics" are not always physiologically and anatomically "normal" in terms of their respiration, phonation and use of

their resonators. But the result is often an amazing vocal output that is hireable and desirable in the professional world of musical theater (and other genres). Often that “something” a little different about a particular person or voice launches a performer into stardom and then the rest of the musical theater population strives to achieve “that voice.”

Clinical observation of vocal athletes confirms that injury often occurs when an inexperienced singer attempts to re-create a sound produced by another singer when it is outside of his physiological abilities.

As a voice pathologist, singing voice specialist, and voice consultant for Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, I have developed a proactive and innovative screening protocol to assess incoming freshman musical theater majors to help identify high-risk performers and detect any vocal problems they may have prior to beginning a rigorous pre-professional vocal training program. In conjunction with the screening, every student is required to attend a lecture on vocal health and hygiene for the professional vocal athlete and on-site office hours are provided to the students for consultation. Using the analogy of a collegiate sports team: no college level football team practices without physical therapists and athletic trainers on site. They establish baselines for their athletes, triage injuries, provide rehabilitative services, and refer players to physicians as appropriate. The musical theater screening protocol (which has now been expanded to voice and drama majors) was used to establish a database of information and provide the students with a “baseline” exam for their own records. The information obtained in these screenings was never used against the student in any way, should a non-symptomatic problem be found. Rather, what we have discovered through examination of over 100 musical theater students at this time is that “perfect” vocal folds are not a good indicator of professional success. The professional success rate of graduates of this pre-professional training program is very high with most graduates (90%+) working professionally (regional, national tours, or Broadway) within a year of graduation.

The findings presented here were previously presented at the 2007 Voice Foundation’s 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium in Philadelphia.<sup>7</sup> Over a five-year time frame, ninety-two musical theater freshmen were screened prior to beginning coursework at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Each participant completed a history related to vocal health and hygiene habits, signed an informed consent, and completed a videostroboscopic screening. These screenings were reviewed by an ENT for confirmation of findings and the results were shared with each student. Within this group of students, 4% reported a “current” vocal problem, while 11% admitted to a past history of voice problems. However, 35% of the students presented with a vocal pathology (edema, erythema, nodules, polyp, cyst). What is most surprising is that 50% of those who were identified with a vocal pathology (or abnormal laryngeal findings) had no vocal symptoms or complaints. They were singing without difficulty for over three

hours per day. Perceptually, these singers sounded normal (no hoarseness, difficulty with dynamic control, or decreased frequency range) in both their singing and speaking voices. This is consistent with the findings of the non-symptomatic classical singers previously noted above. Reflux findings were as prevalent (35%) as actual pathology without perceived vocal problems. In the group of singers who presented with abnormal vocal findings, their biggest complaint was vocal fatigue. (Some of these singers reported singing upwards of 7 hours per day, 6 days per week.) Most of these collegiate level, musical theater singers had no problems throughout their undergraduate careers and we are beginning to track some of these singers into their professional careers.

A longitudinal examination of four professional musical theater performers—one lead on Broadway (female/legit), one lead in a national tour (pop), one ensemble member in a national tour (male/legit) and one ensemble member in a national tour (female/pop)—tracked these performers from their freshman year of college into their professional performing lives. Findings revealed that none of these performers had perfectly smooth, straight vocal folds and yet were capable of performing consistently without difficulty at an elite level (Korovin & LeBorgne, 2009).<sup>8</sup> As with any elite level of performance, vocal compromise often occurs during acute illness; most collegiate and elite vocal injuries requiring medical and/or surgical attention are often the result of pushing through an illness (the “show must go on” syndrome).

Collegiate level musical theater performers do not have to have perfect voices to be hired and perform professionally. But they do need to be educated about making smart vocal choices, minimizing unnecessary phonotrauma, and recognizing the signs and symptoms of vocal injury. Optimal balance of respiration, phonation, and resonance towards a given vocal aesthetic through high-level training will provide performers with the best tools to maximize the efficiency and reliability of their instruments with minimal cost to the laryngeal mechanism. Continued research and longitudinal data need to be collected to reach more global conclusions regarding the vocal health and injury rates of these performers. This will also help further establish normative data related to this population. Unique voices that can do extraordinary things get hired. These voices may not always fit our optimal vocal fold “ideal”, but if the instruments are flexible and agile, possessing strength and stamina without compensatory measures, they will likely have a long career.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>4</sup> Evans RW, Evans RI, Carvajal S, Perry S. “A survey of injuries among Broadway performers.” *American Journal of Public Health*. Jan; 86(1): 77–80 (1996).

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<sup>7</sup> LeBorgne W, Gorman S, Ishikawa K, Kereikaes T, Manders E. “Self-perceived Vocal Problems and Actual Incidence of Pathology Among 92 Freshman Musical Theatre Performers.” The Voice Foundation’s 36th Annual Symposium: Care of the Professional Voice. May 29–June 3, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Korovin, G and LeBorgne, W. “A Longitudinal Examination of Potential Vocal Injury in Musical Theater Performers.” The Voice Foundation’s 36th Annual Symposium: Care of the Professional Voice. June 3–7, 2009.



**Wendy DeLeo LeBorgne, PhD**, CCC-SLP is the director of the Blaine Rock Institute for Voice Analysis and Rehabilitation in Dayton, Ohio and The Professional Voice Center of Greater Cincinnati. She holds a B.F.A. in Musical Theater from Shenandoah Conservatory and both a master’s and a doctoral degree from the University of Cincinnati in Communication Sciences and Disorders with a specialty in voice disorders. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Voice* and she is a contributing author to the book *Voice Therapy: Clinical Studies*. She has recently authored a training DVD, *Laryngeal Videostroboscopic Images: Normal and Pathologic Samples*.

Dr. LeBorgne presents nationally and internationally on the professional performing voices at, among other venues, ASHA Conventions in San Francisco and New Orleans, The Voice Foundation in Philadelphia, workshops on vocal health at Cincinnati Conservatory, Shenandoah Conservatory, the West Side Vocal Academy, Ohio Music Education Association and a poster presentation at the First International Conference on the Physiology and Acoustics of the Singing Voice in Groningen, Netherlands.

She has provided vocal evaluation and therapy for singers and actors at Cincinnati Opera, Cincinnati Broadway Series, Dayton Opera, Wright State University and Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. In addition to her duties as a voice pathologist, Dr. LeBorgne continues to maintain an active professional performing career.

## NYSTA'S *New Members*



**Richard Bozic** began his career as a hard-rock musician, gradually shifting his focus from the basement practice space, where he was self-taught, to a classical education at the Peabody Conservatory, where he earned an MM degree in vocal performance and pedagogy. He is an active member of the Voice Foundation and NATS. Today Mr. Bozic maintains an extensive teaching schedule and performs in the greater New York/New Jersey area. His students range from the casual hobbyist to the serious professional, spanning pop to musical theater and classical genres. For more information, visit his website: [www.richardbozic.com](http://www.richardbozic.com).



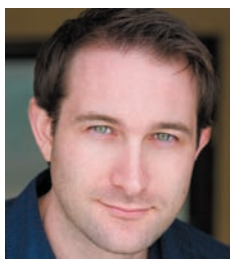
**Steve Capra** has taught acting for actors and singers for many years. His work is based on the books of two of his teachers: Fred Silver (for many years *Back Stage's* Audition Doctor) and Michael Shurtleff (author of *Audition*). Steve has worked in cabaret in New York, London, and Boston. As an actor, he has also worked at NYC theaters, including the Public Theatre, and he currently works with the Living Theatre. In addition to NYSTA, Steve is a member of Equity, SAG, and AFTRA. He also works with the International Committee of the American Theatre Critics Association. Read more about him at [www.stevcapra.com](http://www.stevcapra.com).



**Robin Lynne Frye**, mezzo-soprano, is a concert repertoire specialist. She has performed as soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Connecticut Early Music Festival, the choir and orchestra of St. Ignatius Loyola in New York, and the New York Virtuoso Singers, as well as in recital in several states. Following a 20-year career as a Manhattan-based freelance performer, Ms. Frye moved to North Carolina in 2002, where she was a member of the music faculties at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Methodist University, and St. Andrews Presbyterian College, and appeared as soloist with the North Carolina Master Chorale, Choral Society of Durham, and Cumberland Oratorio Singers. Ms. Frye has been recognized by NYSTA as a Distinguished Voice Professional. Recently relocated in New York, she again regularly performs in the area and maintains an active voice and piano teaching studio in New Rochelle. For more information, visit [www.robinlynnefrye.com](http://www.robinlynnefrye.com).



Born in Busan, South Korea, **Sun-Joo Oh** holds BM and MM degrees from Sung-Shin Women's University, Seoul, South Korea. She has also studied with Doris Andrews at AIDA Academia in Rome, and completed her GPC at Boston Conservatory. She earned her DMA at the University of South Carolina. She actively gives recitals in the United States and Korea and performs regularly with symphonies and chamber groups. Sun-Joo Oh is an Assistant Professor of Voice at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee where she has taught applied voice, diction, vocal pedagogy, art song literature and other voice related courses since 2005.



**Robert Rokicki** has a BFA in musical theater performance from the University of Michigan and many years of experience as an actor, composer, and music director. He is a member of the Dramatists Guild, Actor's Equity, and an alumnus of the Tony Award-winning BMI workshop. He music-directed Joe Iconis's *ReWrite* at Goodspeed and *Departure Lounge* at the Public. As a composer/lyricist he is the winner of the American Harmony Prize for his show *Love, NY*, which played a sold-out concert at New World Stages. His works have been featured at Lincoln Center, The York, Joe's Pub and many universities. As an actor, he has appeared in numerous regional productions across the country, earned a Carbonell Award nomination, and was part of the 25th anniversary tour of *Evita*, directed by Hal Prince. As a coach, he specializes in pop/rock, along with audition preparation, "book building," and transcription/transposition. Please visit him at [www.robertrokicki.com](http://www.robertrokicki.com).



Mezzo-soprano **Rachel Velarde** began her music career at Indiana University. After receiving her BA in Music from Smith College, Rachel earned two Master of Music degrees (in vocal performance and vocal pedagogy) at Arizona State University. After a 2008 performance tour of Italy, she continues to perform regularly in Arizona. She was a finalist in the 2009 Giulio Gari Foundation International Vocal Competition (NYC), was the first place Arizona winner at the 2008 NATSAA competition. Rachel teaches an active studio of singers. This year her former students will be voice majors at Northern Arizona University, University of Arizona, University of Southern California, and Marymount Manhattan College. Rachel continues to explore and improve her own voice through practice, private lessons with Mary Sue Hyatt, and regular performances. She is the President of the Valley of the Sun chapter of NATS, the secretary/treasurer of the local AGMA union, and is a member of MTNA and NYSTA.

# VOICEPrints

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Catherine Wall (1929–2010)



Dr. Wendy DeLeo LeBorgne

## Voice Lessons 2.0

by NYSTA Member Sally Morgan

How does an American Idol “wanna’ be” in rural Arkansas study with a top New York City voice teacher? What about a Broadway “gotta’ be” in Boise? And how does a rock musician on the road keep in shape vocally? Simple. Voice Lessons 2.0.

Monetizing a vocal studio is a real challenge in the current economic climate. Here’s a solution that includes teaching via the internet plus goes several steps further.

[www.SingLikeYouSpeak.com](http://www.SingLikeYouSpeak.com) is a membership website. Voice Lessons 2.0. There are only two or three of us in the country who are teaching this way. This site offers video voice lessons, video technique basics, video practice tips, video of a master teacher working with private students, practice tracks, a monthly Q&A with Sally and much more. The top level of membership includes a private lesson with the master teacher each month, which can be done in person or via Skype.

The drawbacks to building this type of site have been many. Only time will tell if the investment of time, money and sweat are worth it. I’m talking \$20,000 thus far and two years of very hard work for the membership template, my web developer and designer, social media marketing help, cameras, lights, editing programs and the

education to actually use them, and on and on.

The good part is that I know we are over-delivering on the content—giving members everything they could possibly need to learn and then some. Once the site takes off (and once I pay off my debts) then I have a form of nearly passive income. Of course, a website is never passive, but it’s as close as it’s going to get.

Technology has changed the way we listen to music, the way we record and the way we produce our recordings. Technology has also changed the way consumers purchase and listen to our music. Technology has changed the way A&R people find new talent. Now you can even keep your vocal skills sharp with the help of online voice lessons—Voice Lessons 2.0.

I was searching for a way to share my vocal method, SingLikeYouSpeak™ around the globe without leaving my dog too often. Technology has offered me the perfect solution. It’s been a challenging, frustrating and rewarding journey to develop a membership website while always keeping the learning experience of its members as the primary focus.

Studying online gives performers a low-cost alternative to face-to-face private lessons. It’s not quite the same experience, but we have all adapted to email, websites, Google, iTunes, etc. We can also adapt to online training. Online training is the

next wave in many areas of education. It’s a great way for teaching musicians to monetize their business. Warning: this endeavor is not for the faint of heart or those who don’t want to work 24/7 for a couple of years. I invite you to check out the site and sign up for a free video lesson. I’d love to have your feedback.



**Sally Morgan** is truly passionate about helping performers sing as simply and naturally as they speak. She has been performing her job successfully for more than 25 years

and is the author of the cutting edge vocal technique, *Morganix Method: Sing Like You Speak™*, and a singer, speaker, actress and vocal trainer.

Sally’s infectious energy and laser-precise expertise make her a sought after speaker who challenges her audiences to become vocally empowered and professionally polished. Her clients appear on Broadway stages, Off-Broadway, regional theater, major label recordings, national television and radio, in federal courts, and the United States Senate.