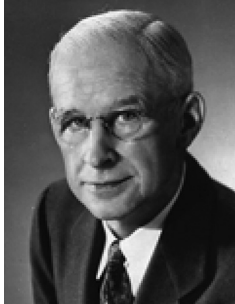


The Singer's Imagination

Richard DeYoung



Richard DeYoung

These booklets are copies of lectures delivered at various meetings of teachers of singing, as a part of a national movement to maintain a high level of teaching competence in America. They represent the views of but one member of the profession who hopes they will stimulate thought and discussion in a field where complete agreement is admittedly rare. They refer directly to the singer's thinking and his presentation. The young American singer should be the beneficiary of such activity.¹

DOES AN AMBITIOUS PHRASE like “creative imagination” have anything to do with me, just another student of voice? Did you ever hear a truly great artist sing, and then for a moment dream the dream that some day you might do that same entrancing thing? The only way you ever will is by first seeing yourself doing it. Nobody does anything positive that he does not see or hear first. We would not have even such a simple object as a nail if somebody had not first thought of it. Such thoughts represent creative imagination at work. You may not manage to do everything you imagine, but such a picture will always move you from where you are, and move you in the right direction.

We might call the creative imagination God's working ground, for it is there that production and creation take place. Something is born that did not exist before.

You can do whatever you see and hear yourself do; but every step between here and there must be faithfully taken. Who said the way was easy? Should it be? Great achievements are for those willing to stir out of their cozy grooves. A great teacher once said, “There are many who are willing to improve, but few who are willing to change.” We love our cozy grooves, and slip back into them time and again. Only the courageous keep struggling out of them, seeking to recapture and realize their vision. Lack of faith murders the dream, and leaves ambition drifting into slow suicide.

Picture yourself doing what you see great people do, doing what you yourself hope and mean to achieve. Act as though it were already so. Work and live accordingly. Creative imagination is the architect of your future.

It takes a creative mind to picture yourself in your desired future state, but if you can do so until you are filled with the *feeling* it is already so, you will be governed by that feeling.

The whole act of expression is mental, each individual choosing the expression channel that provides the best outlet for him. The artistic singer communicates his inspiration and demonstrates his equipment through the orderly use of certain of his mental faculties.

Journal of Singing, January/February 2017
Volume 73, No. 3, pp. 325–27
Copyright © 2017
National Association of Teachers of Singing

And so you, when you are striving to master yourself and to command effective performance, *you* must necessarily turn your attention to the mental faculties upon which your results depend. By stimulation and practice you must make them stronger and more effective.

At different times fashions in psychological terminologies change. If you have studied certain schools of psychology, perhaps you would use different terms in place of some of mine. But I wish to make it clear that I adhere to no particular school, and use such terms as I have found most practicable as a student and teacher of singing.

The singer does well to stress the importance of the memory, the will and the imagination. The most fascinating of these three is the imagination, the creative faculty. In its literal sense imagination is that power of mind by which we form pictures of things not present . . . “the ability to present a mental product as an image, as a reality,” says E. F. Bartholomew.² The will itself, that majestic force that impels all action and upon which every muscle waits, must in its turn await the call of imagination, to learn the model it is to follow and to receive the incentive to spur it to action.

On its weak side, the imagination may be considered an untrustworthy citizen, a fallible guide, leading to caprice and tempting with the impossible. Yet in this very freedom from limitation lies imagination’s value. Our imagination is the pioneer of our progress, like a prospector venturing out into untried fields, and pointing the way for us to follow.

The fine poise and command of the consummate artist is no accident; it is the result of a long development—a course in scientific self-scrutiny and experiment in improved self-mastery. In your daily singing you must ever learn to know yourself better. Especially you must learn to understand and feed the sources of your own imagination.

Imagination depends upon memory for a great part of its materials. It rearranges the materials of memory into new combinations and new forms. It does not reproduce, but produces something new. Yet often the imagination depends upon past experience, to yield materials that it may shape to the heart’s desire.

This is a powerful consideration for the singer: he should gain experience upon which his imagination may feed. A rich life produces a wealth of imagination.

When a voice student complains of a lack of progress or a diminution of interest, the cause is seldom far to seek: He has generally neglected to provide his imagination with that abundance of experience upon which it feeds. Human contacts, recitals, art galleries, books, opera, the drama—it would be banal for me to attempt anything like a complete list of the possibilities. But believe me, a singer of the class you aspire to be cannot let his time slip by in humdrum activities or in idling his time. Are the people you know worth knowing? What are you doing steadily to increase your culture? What are you doing to keep your mind open, and quicken its receptiveness?

This article is not a mere addendum to the one on culture. To my mind imagination is even more important. Imagination makes culture dance. Imagination can change a rustle of leaves into a tango, or the whine of a bus into the refrain of a lyric poem. Mailing a letter or watching smoke from a factory chimney can be intense experiences, when imagination is there too.

But how, you say, can I be imaginative when I am not? Could Cleopatra have altered the shape of her nose? Well, we can do something about our imagination, something less painful than plastic surgery. It seems that fundamentally imagination rests upon desire—we all have desires, I hope. The memory of pleasant past experiences, watching others—such things feed and comfort our desires, and stimulate our imagination.

For our purposes here there are two phases or conditions of imagination. One is phantasy and the other is constructive imagination. The first is involuntary and undirected, while the second can be guided and put to use.

Phantasy is spontaneous, instinctive, actuated by desire and without intelligent choice. Constructive imagination provides a second, more conscious, step. Just to imagine yourself a great artist does not put you where you wish to be—though such a desire and such a phantasy is of great dynamic value in itself. Do not despise your phantasies—treasure them; but build on them, and go beyond. They arise from your unconscious. The artist must always be receptive to his unconscious, receptive and respectful; but he must also always have conscious purposes, and use his will to achieve them.

We should keep in mind this distinction between phantasy, day dreaming—the playground of the mind—and creative constructive imagination. There need be no

conflict between them; better have them in balance. The first provides raw materials, the second sees that aimless play is followed up by action, and thus made purposeful.

The singer's is an imaginative art. Imagination is ultimately related to nerves and muscles. A thought can make the face flush or turn pale, the body tremble or gloat in entranced buoyancy. The creation of a single beautiful tone needs a positive, sensitive act of imagination. The effectiveness of a good attack, a pure vowel, a colorful tone, is heightened and takes on new meaning to the degree that the whole is imbued with imagination. This imagination, this visualization of the total effect, harmonizes the various elements of technique into a beautiful whole. Only from this aesthetic quality of mind can emanate beauty, in which ideals become realities.

Our creative imagination is a response to our personal experience. If we live on a low level we can expect little more of our imagination. The voice student especially must face this as a fact. What are your musical ideals? You make daily decisions about their nature by the musical experiences you seek, the musical atmosphere you live in, the companions you see every day. The stream does not rise higher than its source. So associate with the best you can, in everything. We all fall short in this respect, sometimes; but it is a crucial element for our artistic salvation. The gaudy, trashy, showy things are always with us—in dress, in music, in art, in people—we must frequent greener pastures and deeper waters to the best of our ability. "The gods approve the depth and now the tumult of the soul," as Wordsworth said.

We can steadily cultivate our imagination by following rules which have the force of educational laws. Remember three things: First, everything grows by cultivation, and perishes by misuse or neglect. The unused gift is rendered fruitless, but the used and cultivated gift flourishes and is multiplied. Second, all things grow by what they feed on. Ponder the meaning of that statement. Third, before you attempt any effort or any project consciously "image" everything you are going to do.

Extend your knowledge, multiply your points of contact with the world of art and thought and achievement. Your imagination must have abundant materials from which to shape its creation. Read the best poetry, read history and science, cultivate acquaintance with the heights of art, architecture, painting, drama, and music. Study the songs of Schumann and Schubert. You cannot

be familiar with anything by Shakespeare and Milton, Mozart and Beethoven, or Raphael and Michelangelo without catching some of their inspiration.

To live finely you must think and imagine finely. Thought and imagination depend upon experience. Experience consists not only of our everyday conventional living and not only of our cultural strivings, but also of our sensations, our direct perception through the senses of the world around us. We must look far, we must look everywhere; yet materials are ever at hand. The coloring of the autumn leaves; the light and shadow of forest and field, of streetcar and telephone wire; the songs of birds and the roar of waterfall or city traffic—such sensuous experiences are touchstones of our aliveness, fragments of busy life in all of its phases. All these exist in abundance, everywhere, rich materials for developing an active imagination.

It is a law of life that we have a deep and impelling desire for only those things for which we possess a mental equivalent. It is not common to find someone who has an intense desire to do something of which he is not capable. But if it is your wish to sing importantly, then so carry yourself, so live and walk and talk as though you already possessed that degree of ability.

This implies another law. Each time you visualize the desired effect, you drop the impression into the subconscious much as a farmer or gardener drops a seed into the ground. Ultimately it appears, sometimes without thought or intention.

In a moment of practice or rehearsal you may suddenly have a thrilling experience that embodies the newly formed image. Singing springs forth spontaneously from the habit life. It is your business to be forming those habits constantly by visualizing them, by practicing them repeatedly until they have through repetition become a part of your being.

This act of creating a desired condition through thought and feeling has a basis in sound psychological law which is as reasonable as the laws governing the use of electricity or any other force of nature. Learn to use it. It can transform your life, so that it will seem to you that you have been born again.

NOTES

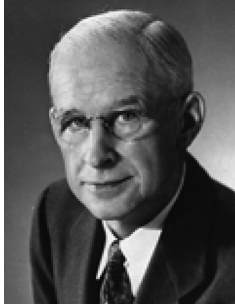
1. This preface appears at the beginning of each of DeYoung's five pamphlets comprising *Repeated Notes*: "The Singer's

Imagination,” “The Singer’s Memory,” “The Singer’s Culture,” “The Singer’s Goal,” and “The Art of Performance: Song Interpretation.” The collective articles have been lightly edited to conform with the eighteenth edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *Journal of Singing* house style.

2. Edward Fry Bartholomew (1846–1946) was professor of English literature and philosophy at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, from 1888 to 1932. He was the author of several books, including *The Relation of Psychology of Music* (1899).

The Singer's Memory¹

Richard DeYoung



Richard DeYoung

MEMORY IS MORE than the ability to recall either a list of telephone numbers or a sheet of music. In its broadest sense, the word embraces the total personality, as it is at this time. Everything one does in a moment of emergency, such as the instant one appears before a new audience, everything depends upon memory. You are what you have done, and been in the past.

Every conscious thought, every act, every impression you have “taken in” or “given out” has become a part of your subconscious mind. The subconscious prompts all action without thinking. We call it habit. Essential as the memorization of your words and music is, the full use of memory involves far more. It requires you to train yourself to be ready at a time of emergency to use everything you are and all you possess.

All singers and teachers of singing are urged to study psychology and learn all they can from what the psychologists have to tell us about the human mind, its habits and capacities. This principle of going to the best available authorities in all the varied fields that concern our art is one I earnestly recommend.

In the meantime, here in brief I give the fruit of my own experience. In this instance I am referring to memory in its active sense of ability to recall. Possibly the central nervous system never forgets anything that the organism has experienced; but we are concerned with a singer's ability to master and control his experience. The cultivation and improvement of the active aspect of memory depends upon six factors.

The first factor is proper *physical condition*. Whatever affects the general health affects the memory. Indigestion, headaches, fatigue, undernourishment and so on naturally affect the brain and the memory. It is simple wisdom for a singing artist to obtain a proper amount of exercise, diet, rest, and other elementary hygienic necessities. Although the mills of retribution sometimes seem to grind slowly, careless habits, dissipation, or reliance on stimulants will sooner or later exact their toll.

Next comes *clear perception*. How easily we recall depends on how clearly we receive first impressions. A distinct and vivid impression is readily reproduced, with much of its original character and force. So cultivate the visualizing habit. In memorizing music, make the eye image—as well as the sound image—stand out distinctly. A visual picture is a great aid to memory. First impressions are most easily retained; so let the first impression be clear.

Then comes *close attention*. What we attend to we remember. Great minds are distinguished by their power of attention. The degree of attention given to a subject determines the permanence of the impression.

The fourth factor is *rational association*. Bring every possible faculty to bear upon the subject. Somebody who sees an apple for the first time will

remember it far better if, besides seeing it, he also feels and smells and tastes it. If in addition he thinks about it—and organizes it into his general system of concepts—he is going to remember that apple. The same applies to music. In committing a song, do not merely go over the words and the notes. Study their meaning; know what they say. Inquire into word meanings, and learn to create new ideas about the text. Establish the mood of the song, analyze and repeat its musical and verbal structure until it is yours. Become acquainted with the great composers and observe with what sweep of thought they range over their whole field. Good memory is good knowing.

The fifth requirement is *repetition*. An act often repeated comes more easily, for both psychological and physiological reasons. After much repetition, the muscles are fully prepared for action, and freedom of performance results. Hard tasks become second nature. But I must warn that repetition should mean more than just going through the motions; I am speaking of repetition with a reasoned purpose, performed attentively and with feeling.

The sixth and final factor is the *principle of interest*. Our interests may lightly be described as so many pegs on which to hang our attention. Certainly we pay attention more easily to something that interests us. So an avid curiosity toward everything concerning our art will carry us a long way. When it is hard to get enthusiastic over some task or exercise, it may help to think of the results you mean to obtain from it. Interest, attention, concentration and repetition—of these memory is made.

All music must be memorized. The artist who has not learned his song is not ready to sing it. He must have sung it often enough so that it is “sung in” and his responses therefore are subconscious and automatic.

But still, memory means more to us than this. It embraces all that goes to make up the human personality. If we have the will, the humility and the courage to cooperate, these faculties are at our disposal.

So far, we have spoken of memory only as a retentive act. Surely memory is retentive, but its use is in recall. This is an entirely different function and is a far greater test of mental efficiency. Unless trained according to the principles governing it, it is likely to prove capricious and not fully dependable.

Among the conditions that make immediate recall possible are these:

1. The groove of *learning by rote*. Here the psycholo-

gists tell us our repetitions have worn a mental “path of discharge” whereby words and phrases follow each other automatically. This is remembering without thinking. It does not use the intelligence, but releases the content of the subconscious mind. This may be the best kind of memory, the automatic response, but unless fortified by factors of intelligence, may easily be made impotent by some unexpected distraction, a moment of mental blackout brought about by allowing an element of self-consciousness to enter the mind. At such a time we need the aid of . . .

2. *Rational association*. Here we find that the music suggests the words, or the words suggest the music. In memorizing songs in strophe form, such as the song cycles of Schubert, there are always key words that lead to the next subject, even though the music is repetitious.
3. Another kind of association is the *photographic image*. Here the singer has an aid to memory in the fact that certain phrases appear at the top of the page or there is some other kind of an eye image, such as a change of key or tempo. Some singers have a visual image of a whole page.
4. Then there is *logical sequence*. Certain words or musical phrases are brought to mind because they logically follow one another, and make sense instead of jumbled nonsense in a phrase.
5. Memory demonstrated by *ready recall* is a mental skill, and like all skills, is the result of practice. Many singers have trouble memorizing because they do not exercise this valuable mental faculty enough. All vocal music must be performed from memory to be effective. We all know the difference in the effectiveness of extemporaneous speaking in public in contrast to reading a paper or book. The latter may be more studied and exact, but the former makes for more enjoyable listening. Musically, intonation is better, tone is clearer, and words are more distinctly articulated if the whole song is clearly in mind. Imagine an actor reading a play from the book or an opera singer singing from the score. We appreciate more than ever how important good memory is to realism in performance.

With material well memorized, the singer and the song become as one; the poet, composer, and performer

unite to present a performance that is satisfying and complete.

Memory in the broader conception of the term is much more than the power to recall words or music, past events, facts, or experiences. It has been said that an individual is today no more than the accumulation of his past experiences. Therefore, memory is the vital structure of self—the mental consciousness, the conscious ego, in its present state.

These are days when one who has vision, who has the intelligence to see his task in its entirety, soon supersedes him whose idea of his work is merely to follow a given routine.

Since we are today the accumulation of our experiences, and our experiences are largely a matter of choice, and the memory is the unfailing recorder of these experiences, the connection between experience and memory is readily seen.

The first impression made upon an audience is a *personal* impression. The ego—the self-demonstrated through attitude, mood, posture, carriage, manner, dress, voice quality, diction, etc., attracts their attention. This may help to explain why there are those rich in the possession of the means of expression, yet who lack the power to impress simply because, with the means at hand, there is no great store of experience from which to mold a vital message. The individual growth has not yet reached the stage of knowledge and appreciation which makes it the source of compelling interest. It may also explain why some singers always have many eager listeners despite the fact that they possess but a meager technical equipment.

The existence of the need of a creative background to our art is incontestable. It is the great need of the day. This background, a fascinating subject of study in itself, is the accumulation of knowledge, experience, opinion

and impression, which the memory has welded into a usable whole.

E. F. Bartholomew says that memory is that faculty of mind by which we retain the knowledge of previous thoughts, impressions, or events, and by which such knowledge is recalled after it has once been dropped from consciousness. There are, then, these two principal elements of memory: retention and recall.

No fact that has ever come to mind, no concept that has ever originated in the mind, in short, no mental experience can ever be annihilated, any more than the mind itself can be annihilated, even though the experience itself may never return to consciousness.

Retention might be called the passive side, and *recall* the active side of memory. There is present also the element of personal recognition; the image is always of *our own* past experiences and not that of another person, which raises the importance of the *self* element, the conscious ego, the soul of man, of which the mind with all of its mysterious faculties is but the instrument.

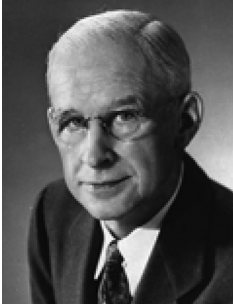
However, it is the larger aspect of memory which is of greatest value. The mental qualities and activities that constitute its elements are all marks of the great mind. The final result is always in the hands of the individual. These faculties are ours for use. The mind in its many forms is the willing instrument of the soul of man. And if he is actively striving upward toward ideals, will find means at his command to meet his every need.

NOTE

1. The other four essays were previously published as six *Journal of Singing* articles in 2016 and 2017 under the aegis of editor in chief emeritus Richard Dale Sjoerdsma. This final article was transcribed directly from the original pamphlet, all five of which were gifted to the editor in chief by Sjoerdsma in October of 2025.

The Singer's Culture

Richard DeYoung



Richard DeYoung

SINGING HAS BEEN CALLED “the flower of civilization”; and certainly we, who are its devotees, consider it the highest form of artistic expression that man has attained. Since artistic expression is the voice of culture, the singing artist must have a background of mental culture beyond the ordinary. It teaches us to see what goes on around us, and appreciate it. It makes us sensitive in our feelings. It shows us the spiritual reality that lies behind dirty streets, crowded buses, trips to the butcher, or paying the rent. By transcending them we give deeper meaning to everyday things.

Do we really think of trivial incidents and menial tasks as the essence of reality? There can be reality and beauty in them, if we transform them by seeing through and beneath them.

Culture means the appreciation of things that other people and other forces created for us. It means the cultivation of taste, and the construction within us of systems of motives, philosophies, and religion. It means studying and appreciating such things from the outside, and it also means finding something in ourselves that responds to them.

Culture makes you a citizen of the whole world—past, present, and future. It does not mean confining yourself to the events and people around you. It means cultivating your mind and your soul, as the soil of a good farm is cultivated. A cultured soul is a productive soul.

In its general, sociological application, the word “culture” today has an even wider range of meaning than “civilization.” What is meant here by the word, in connection with the individual artist, will become apparent as we proceed.

We who aim to increase and improve our culture must see it as something which is an activity rather than an acquirement, which is exercised rather than possessed. It is the conscious effort to improve the quality and content of our knowing and thinking and feeling. Each person of course must essentially do this for himself; but since this effort needs to take some definite direction, I am venturing to make some suggestions for cultural development. Tastes and ideals do vary with every individual, yet no book on singing as a fine art can neglect to speak of the sources of the singer's expression.

While there are many fine voices in America, there are few fine *singers*. Fine singing calls for a richness in feeling and meaning, an appreciation of poet's and composer's message, a total performance which involves far more than possession of a fine voice. The singer must develop in himself the power to arouse and stimulate the thoughts and feelings of others. This is not a chance power; it results from education, or *cultivation*.

Those qualities of magnetism that stamp a true personality are not accidents of fate. Besides having his voice, a singing artist must possess or develop such

qualities. They are flexible and pliant, and each must mold them in his own image. Once the goal is set, these qualities of mind and feeling can be trained and developed. I shall here list what I deem the main requirements for the singer's culture under three headings.

The first thing necessary is a *good education*, especially in the humanities. Get to know something about man and his evolution and history. Plan for yourself a course of education. You may use classroom instruction little, or much, or not at all. You will of course study the sources of vocal music, and the history of voice culture from the early Italian masters to the present. But beyond and behind such studies you need to undertake systematic reading and observation that will increase and deepen your insight into human experience. We all have a great legacy of history, science, philosophy, art . . . of culture, in fact. We must form our own links with essential parts of this culture. I do not mean that a singer (or anybody else) should be a dull index of cultural facts; it is better to know and appreciate *The Tempest* alone than to be able to reel off the plots and characters of all of Shakespeare's works; knowing and understanding and loving a few pictures will do more for you than lists and dates of artists whose paintings you would never recognize. When I speak of your culture, I am thinking not of an effort of intensive cramming, but of a steady, sustained application to good and true and beautiful objects that will endure your lifetime.

Secondly, I think an artist must work out his own *general point of view* towards existence. How does his life, private and professional, fit into the social order? What are the highest human virtues—and who or what decides such a question? What sort of personality and character does one desire to have? How does this differ from one's present private and public characters? Every responsible artist must face such problems, and in time develop his philosophy of life. Only thus can the highest qualities of manhood or womanhood be expressed.

The third thing is the stimulation and cultivation of *appreciation*. He must learn to apprehend emotionally and intuitively, as well as with his brain. Such appreciation greets not only human works of art, but also beauties of nature, social relations, and all of life's values. Loving as well as knowing, the singer's soul is supplied and enriched with that material from which beautiful utterances spring naturally.

Singing is a form of self-expression. But there must be a self to express. In many pathetic cases persons do have the instruments for beautiful expression, but even after they attain some vocal efficiency, their minds are so void of life experience that their singing remains a mere performance. One of the greatest responsibilities of the singer is to *feed the source* from the rich stores of beauty in creation, in nature, human and nonhuman, past and present, until one's own individual capacity to create beauty in new and individual forms is developed.

This task will challenge and inspire you if you hope to rise to distinction as a singing artist: it may also give a hint as to why there are so few truly great artists in the world.

After praising and advocating a general cultural development, I must now warn you against "spreading yourself too thin" over too great a field of interests. In this specialized age those who reach distinction are usually those whose life energies and resources have been directed to one objective. Some people devote time so impartially between music, business, society, and domestic affairs that conspicuous success in any one of them is impossible. The specialist should not be narrow, but he needs to devote himself single-mindedly to his task, turning to other activities only when the demands of this chosen activity have been met. The singer directs his main attention towards a broad and comprehensive grasp of his own subject, which of course is a large field in itself.

When the ambitious singer has begun the task of acquiring a general education for himself, he will find that the principles which govern the singer's art are to some degree present in all the arts. His own work will gain in power and authority from what he learns from them. Poetry, of course, is a "must" for him; how a singer expects ever to succeed without knowing and appreciating good poetry is a mystery to me; for every song is a poem *first*. Poetry teaches beauty in the expression of ideas, conveys emotion, and illustrates rhythm and beauty of verbal expression.

The visual arts are sources of rich treasure too. Painting shows you color, form, design, composition, and balance; architecture and sculpture provide beauties of mass and outline; music itself has comparable qualities, parallel though not precisely similar to the statuesque and pictorial. Wider experience with music,

with symphony orchestra or the opera or recital, will broaden the singer's musical experience and strengthen his creative power. Aesthetic dancing, too, will develop appreciation of grace in movement, and of rhythmic motion and beauty of form and outline. The reader will understand that I am speaking of observation and appreciation of these arts and not of active participation in all of them.

If you have the good fortune to come into contact with great artists and performers your cultural education will be quickened, and you will receive added inspiration for your high endeavors.

The task of working out for oneself a way of life is both individual and social in nature; it is concerned with one's attitudes toward both self and society. Here we are not concerned with gathering knowledge from outside, but with turning our sight inward and finding those qualities of self that will both please others and give oneself poise and leadership.

Naturally this is a demanding and continuing quest, requiring analytic observation and firm self-discipline. We can grow constantly if we study what is effective in the behavior of others, and what usually pleases people; in general, what "human nature" seems to be like. This is necessary—that we keep growing; and keep studying our motives and the objects of our affections and desires, critically.

A cultured individual has a definite sense of self-center; he is poised upon his own sense of the origin of his being. His demeanor is generally calm, and his behavior subject to his will. His attitude toward himself will be seen in his carriage and posture, in his mode of address to others and the care he gives to the details of his appearance. Here is indeed a rich field for young men and women to cultivate, especially if their early environment was not too advantageous.

One important external criterion of a cultured person is the tone of his speaking voice. Since the same set of laws governs the use of the voice, the speech tone is produced in the same manner as is the singing tone. It goes without saying, too, that one should take care to pronounce words and construct sentences properly, in ways that would be approved by the best judges. Majority

rule does not apply in grammar and pronunciation; only the best is correct.

Although concentrated on his goal, the cultured individual does not impose his standards upon others; he is never self-centered to the point of seeing no values other than his own. In himself, however, he is notably inspired by an idealism that colors his views of life as well as his artistic standards.

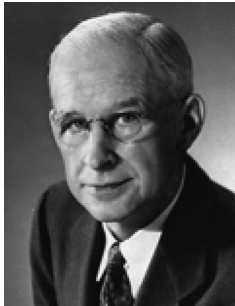
I hope that in this article I have not appeared to be building up the "conventionally good" individual. A truly developed individual is free from the bondage of collective opinion, and therefore has the courage of his convictions in the matter of human conduct. But he recognizes social claims as well as the demands of his own individuality. If he has developed his sense of appreciation to the full, he is unselfish because he has learned to love humanity. He has learned to have tolerance for the opinions and actions of others. He is unfailingly kind, and shows under the most trying conditions a true (because heartfelt) politeness and courtesy. He has a genuine interest in others, which makes him a "good listener" because he is a considerate and attentive one. He has good sportsmanship—is always fair even in difficult circumstance, and is a good loser when he cannot help losing. His good manners in company show that he has taken the trouble to learn how to behave in any possible situation.

"Culture," then, includes a wide field, from the details of book-learning to the delicacies of etiquette, and goes far deeper than either of those. But we can observe cultured individuals in daily life; and as far as external social techniques are concerned all we need is an alert open mind coupled with adequate self-control.

However, good manners in society is only the outward reflection of an inner grace. The singer's culture rests mainly upon the cultivation of a true sense of beauty, in art and nature and life. Individuals differ so much that we must not forget that very often "beauty is in the eye of the beholder rather than in the object beheld." Beauties in nature, in human relationships, in the works of great creative minds, will unfold insofar as our individual minds are ready to receive and appreciate them. They offer a thrilling challenge to the ambitious young man or woman who is bent on achieving distinction.

The Singer's Goal

Richard DeYoung



Richard DeYoung

A SUCCESSFUL SINGER IS ONE who has a goal and who thinks, acts and lives in a straight line toward it: He will not tolerate distraction, diffusion of effort, and scattered activities. He is going somewhere. He fixes his attention with singleness of purpose upon the end he has chosen. Someday he will stand upon the stage, elected to distinction while the average person, who does entertain interruptions to his main course in life, sits in the audience. The spotlight is no place for one whose lack of concentration destines him to remain average.

There are conspicuous examples of development of the mental and physical faculties in every branch of human endeavor. The finger dexterity of the pianist, the balance of the tightrope walker, the strength of the wrestler, the accurate eye of the expert marksman—all of these illustrate possible development of extraordinary abilities by means of concentrated attention and diligent practice.

Since consciousness is mental, it must be the mind rather than mere motor responses that has been developed. It is indeed remarkable that the mind possesses the power to draw unto itself the materials necessary for growth, but also the ability to utilize these materials to increase skill and capacity.

If voice students today would only wake up to these powers and realize that they carry within themselves the magic formula with which they may achieve tonal beauty, musical skill, and creative interpretative artistry, then there would be such singing as the world has rarely known.

The mind of man is a great instrument of still unfathomed capacities. With its varied faculties it resembles a great departmentalized organization which, working harmoniously and with coordination, is capable of producing marvelous results. But, as with other organizations, if one department fails to perform its role, others may be rendered impotent. The study of this instrument—the mind—can help us develop outstanding ability in our art.

The first need of the singer is self-knowledge, since he himself is the singing instrument. Surely he must know his own thinking processes and how to make his mind function according to his will. In short, *he must know himself*. This is a condition rarely found in these days of restless confusion and high pressure. The needs of the moment keep pushing the young person from a normal course of development. But the “must” is still there. The course must be pursued until self-discovery is complete.

No one arrives at any degree of greatness in any art who does not have a profound appreciation of its value, not only to himself, but to human life in general. He must love it with a passion that will give strength and virility to every effort he expends upon its development. If he would represent it wor-

Journal of Singing, March/April 2017
Volume 73, No. 4, pp. 435–437
Copyright © 2017
National Association of Teachers of Singing

thily, he must believe in it so deeply that he is willing to sacrifice all other ambitions to the artistic development of his own personality. To this end he concentrates his effort, his time, his means, and his very life. He belongs to it rather than it to him, and he plans his life and directs his energies accordingly.

If this appreciation is deep enough and his devotion to the cause complete enough, enthusiasm will follow as a matter of course. The emotional power of enthusiasm is stronger than a devotion purely mental. The coolly calculative individual is likely to be selfish and so rob himself of the zeal that gives him the courage of his convictions.

One must lose one's self in order to be one's best self. This is a thought most worthy of contemplation. Losing one's self under the power of conviction, begets enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is power. It is creative, it is daring, it gives courage and strength. With appreciation, enthusiasm and concentration as the qualities of mind the singer brings to his work, his faculties become more alert, obedient, and productive. Among these qualities clear perception comes first to our attention.

The effective mind is not content with vague or hazy ideas. Clear concepts always precede definite action. I have heard singers confess that after years of singing, they were just beginning to hear themselves. In many of us the listening faculty is notably weak. We hear and accept sounds without penetrating them, without recognizing their elements or inquiring into their causes; yet, the listening faculty is both the creator and the judge of all tone. We not only listen to tone, but we listen for it as well. To give impetus and impulse to the nerve and muscle centers that produce tone, we must hear it mentally before phonation. The aural judgment of the vocal sound is the only guide for the next creative impulse.

Clear perception also implies definite understanding of the principles involved. There are principles governing breathing, phonation, vowel formation, tonal texture, and coloring; yet, how shall we guide our actions without a thorough comprehension of their objective? Clear perception of tonal values may be acquired through observation, explanation, and example, and later through experience. Another mental faculty upon which it depends is attention.

Here we have the very heart of concentration. Concentration in the larger sense means bringing all the mental powers to bear upon one subject.

Attention is inclined to wander. If left to itself, it is capricious; we must learn to command it. If in the course of the next practice period you find your mind wandering from one subject to another, firmly lead your attention back to what you are doing. Make it comply with the system and order which must ever distinguish your work.

When you have assured yourself that you are amply supplied with materials, with ideas, with exercises and songs, then hold the attention to the objective in view. Never think back at yourself, for that is the way to limiting self-consciousness. Always think toward the result desired.

To attention add indomitable will. This is the king of mental faculties, the power to accomplish. If you hear your ideal clearly, think it, do not just think about it. Will it, and trust your will. Rely on your will as a creative power. Demand the result; mistrust is its enemy; fear is its enemy. Rout them. Nothing may stand in the way of his majesty the king.

If you would strengthen clarity of your imagery, add the mood of joyousness. In concentrating upon the desired effect, we are likely to become too abstract in our thinking and to become absorbed and preoccupied with ourselves, and thus lose our objectivity. The mood of joyousness adds impetus to will and gives it courage.

Persistence has long been acknowledged as one of the vitally important keys to success. If we are to be masters of voice, musicianship, and interpretation, we must be thorough. Every worthy idea deserves to be proven, and to be pursued to its successful conclusion. The appearance of other ideas must not be permitted to diffuse your concentration upon the immediate subject.

Concentration is not fully understood until we are sure that it means the focusing of all that we have and are, upon an intensely desired objective. We have not effectively concentrated until we have brought every available force to bear upon the subject. Nor does concentration mean the direction of mental powers alone. It refers to time also. It means making every minute count. It means giving our work the first call upon our time, leaving the quest for leisure, diversion or amusements of doubtful value to those who have no career at

stake. If a life is intelligently programmed, it can still be a reasonably balanced life.

Concentration also means saving one's strength for the work. We cannot spend the major part of our physical strength on diversionary pursuits and still expect to gain the heights as a singing artist. The ambitious singer must consider late hours, a busy social life, or overly vigorous physical exercise or labor as enemies to his progress. On the other hand wholesome association, normal recreation and healthful exercise are his allies. If he is without ambition, he should stop singing.

Another important item is the conservation of money toward the desired objective. Many students have failed, or at least delayed their success because they have found sacrifice difficult. A choice may have to be made between the satisfaction of having the things we want at the moment and availing ourselves of the opportunity for development. The decision is usually in favor of our greatest desire. Is it necessary to repeat the cliché, "You can't eat your cake and have it too"?

There must also be the conservation and direction of interest. To sing greatly requires not only a keen interest in life, but also in the desire to know life generally. An artist must associate with the great minds of the past and the present. Their thoughts, philosophies and accomplishments are his constant interest.

If the young singer means to reach the high places, he must consider himself, his time, money, and strength, his emotions and his very soul, as belonging not to himself—in any narrow selfish sense—but to his work. This is what being a dedicated person means. Dissipation for him does not mean the questionable amusements often associated with the word, but the scattering of his forces and their diversion from the chosen channel.

Does this seem too rigorous a regime? Do these suggestions seem too difficult to follow? They are the price of success. Remember we are aiming at personal power, and it is held at a price that can be paid only in terms of self.

As you look about you at the successful artists and stu-

dents whom you know, do not the reasons for the success of some and the failure of others become apparent? We need a new vision of the power that lies in the mind, of the strength that dwells within us ready for use, and the freedom of the soul to contemplate great things and to bring its aspirations into actual experience.

Our greatest deterrent is the tendency to follow the lines of least resistance, to travel on old paths only because new ways are difficult and exacting. We yield to the temptation to be what others think us to be, and accept the status given us by others rather than hew out new paths and establish new standards for ourselves.

The mental faculties grow by adding the qualities of spirit. Faith is a part of the equipment of every fine artist; faith in himself, in this beautiful art and faith in God. God is operative in your life and mine whenever new qualities and powers appear. Faith opens the way to the infinite capacities available to us, and to the creative power to convert capacity into ability.

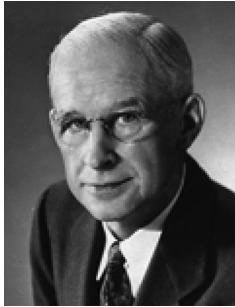
To faith add courage; courage to face the new and untried, and to carry on in the face of discouragements and adverse conditions. It is often astonishing to observe how rapidly obstacles disappear when we cease to recognize them and so drive the fear of them out of our minds. Confidence is too important a quality to overlook. A performance must be both convinced and convincing to be a success.

Finally, the true artist is never without *vision*. Vision keeps the ultimate end in view, and imbues the difficult task of today with a glow of interest. Vision, ever expanding, brings the distant height of achievement into personal experience. It makes the desired object its own. Vision directs action, renews courage, strengthens the will, feeds the fires of enthusiasm and is the pilot that points the way to success.

Search your present mental life and see if it is healthy. Measure it by these standards and decide in what way you may more effectively direct its efforts. Eliminate the unessential, the shallow, the inharmonious elements. Be the master of your fate, and the captain of your soul!

The Art of Performance: Song Interpretation

Richard DeYoung



Richard DeYoung

THE FIRST IMPRESSION A PERFORMER MAKES upon an audience is the evident level of his personal development. By the time performance in public is undertaken, heredity, environment, education, and experience have resulted in an aura of feeling which is immediately apparent to an audience. Poise, emotional control and the degree of mastery of the task at hand [are] sensed by all who are prepared to listen to him.

Before song interpretation takes place they have noted his attitude toward himself, toward them, and toward his work. His carriage, his facial expression and every movement combine to constitute his stage deportment. He wins the receptivity of his audience if he is poised, confident, evidently free, and filled with a love of his work.

Those who make the best impression are those who greet their audiences as a welcoming host or hostess would greet a pleasant guest or guests he holds in high regard. He reflects the attitude of being glad to be here and finds the experience a pleasure. He seems to look forward eagerly to doing something he loves to do, and has every confidence in his ability to do it. A certain inner illumination or radiance is a help toward breaking the ice of an atmosphere that sometimes can be formidably formal. On the other hand, an inner acceptance of himself that makes no effort to project “personality” at this early stage is of great value.

The speed at which one walks to his place on the stage is important. Walking too slowly may seem pompous or reluctant. Walking so rapidly that one seems to be plunging or running has the effect of diminishing the importance of the occasion and injects a note of hurry. Again that balance which indicates inner poise is the key. Once in place the performer should never fidget or move the hands or feet too much. Once the audience is faced, hold their attention by concentration of attention on them. Then, when ready to sing, transfer the attention to the song, establish the mood and from that moment share its atmosphere with the listener.

The art of interpretation has its foundation in feeling. The very word “interpretation” means the translation of the inner meaning of the text and the music in our songs to our listeners. In other words, in the act of interpretation we become actors and actresses with voice and body, and we must bear in mind constantly that as a rule audiences look as well as listen.

Before we can interpret effectively we must have reached that stage in personal development which finds emotion under complete control, social graces and winning ways so developed that we are a pleasure to see and to

Journal of Singing, May/June 2017
Volume 73, No. 5, pp. 553–55
Copyright © 2017
National Association of Teachers of Singing

Journal of Singing, September/October 2017
Volume 74, No. 1, pp. 95–97
Copyright © 2017
National Association of Teachers of Singing

Journal of Singing, November/December 2017
Volume 74, No. 2, pp. 221–24
Copyright © 2017
National Association of Teachers of Singing

hear. It is not enough to have outstanding talent, good training and to know our songs. We must be *personally free* so that we can *communicate* with those who listen on a mutually sympathetic plane.

Freedom from nervousness, sometimes called “stage fright,” is gained at the price of faithful practice and adequate preparation. These in turn result in confidence, and confidence combined with a certain amount of experience gives one a quality before the public that we call “presence.” All sense of timidity or of seeming to be absorbed in one’s self and in one’s own task must vanish, and the singer must seem to devote himself completely to the listening and expectant attitude of his audience. They have come expecting to enjoy themselves. Therefore, you, the singer, must accept them as your well-wishers. They are intelligent, pleasant people who are prepared to give you their whole attention. Any suggestion of fear of them embarrasses them, and it is reassuring to have you at your ease and prepared to give of yourself to the best of your ability.

This confidence in yourself is a quality that you do not come by easily. It is held at a price and a rather high price at that. The price is preparation. It is not enough that you practice. *You must practice until every technical problem has been overcome, and until the words and music are yours without the conscious exercise of memory.* A great teacher was once heard to say, “Do not sing a song in public until both the voice and the song are automatic.” This would mean that the artist has the song in his blood and can sing directly from feeling without having to go through the slower process of conscious thought.

There are too many singers today who practice to no avail or who practice without seeking to change habits or effects in demonstration of new principles they have learned. Too many depend upon talent and native gifts to see them through. No matter how fortunate native talent may be, it must be converted into knowledge and technical skill or it will soon vanish. Personal freedom rests upon vocal mastery. It needs secure foundations. Freedom and security in the mechanics of singing is the first of these. Beauty of vocal tone is not possible without vocal freedom. After vocal freedom comes vocal control of the elements of expression—emotional aliveness, tone, color, flexibility in terms of dynamics, and amenability to subtle variations of feeling. If the voice is to be an effective medium, it must be a responsive medium and

there must be something in you to which it is moved to respond.

There are too many people who feel that the medium with which they sing is the voice. This is not true unless you make a new interpretation of the word “voice.” The physical element involved in singing is not the body but air, vitalized breath. The active means we use to communicate with the public is *language* and *music*. To these the voice is a vehicle rather than an object in itself.

Posture and breathing for singing are the techniques which must be learned and developed until they give you control and vocal flexibility. Flexibility is the capacity to *move* easily in terms of dynamics. It should be capable of a wide range from your softest to your loudest tone, and a tone quality that is as quickly responsive to feeling as is the expression in your eyes and in your face when you speak. A correct posture that does not sag or weaken with the expiration of breath is the anchor of control. This posture is not merely a position of the body, but a developed strength. Nor is your breathing right if you do not have adequate range and sufficient agility to move about in the whole pitch range with combined accuracy and speed. Only through strict disciplining in these foundational elements can effectiveness of interpretation be realized.

Another mechanical element interpretation requires is that kind of enunciation of vowels and consonants which leaves the entire vocal tract free and unengaged in the act of reinforcing tone quality. The speech parts must be free of any involvement in tone production. The tongue, jaw, soft palate, and lips must be mobile and completely obedient to the demands of clear understandable speech. If your singing in any way limits the freedom of any of these parts, the error must be corrected.¹ To name them again, they are: the *tongue* (watch the under side of the tongue, the tongue base) and *jaw* (watch the chin surface; it must never be tense). The jaw must be relaxed and the *soft palate* including the uvula, which is constantly in action, creating that sensitive balance between registers of the voice and the resonance of the tone must also be responsive. All these must function freely in the movements of vowel formation, pitch changes and volume variation. There should be emphasis on this point because this condition is so rarely found and those who have it find singing a simple and pleasurable task. Our first objective then should be

absolute simplicity and complete freedom in the field of the mechanics of voice.

Facial expression while singing always calls attention to itself. It should reflect the inner meanings of the song and should never be an indication of effort or of direct awareness of one's self. At the risk of sounding repetitious, it should be emphasized that we always reflect what we mean on our faces, in our eyes and in the tone of voice when we speak, naturally and without tension. This should be our guide and our mirrors will soon tell us the truth about ourselves if we have the courage to look into them frankly when we practice. Wrinkles in the forehead indicate pharyngeal tension, frowns indicate concentration or personal concerns that do not interest the audience, and peculiar malformations of the lips and unnatural positions of jaw are indications of local effort. *The singer belongs to his song.* This truth should keep him from unnatural expressions and from the intrusion of his faults into the listener's consciousness.

You will note here an absence of the word "naturalness." One should say right off that the right way to sing is to sing naturally, but experience proves that there is scarcely any adult human being who knows what naturalness is in terms of himself. This is because we are inclined to confuse the *natural* with the *habitual* and most people think that the natural way is whatever they have always done, when, in fact, that is a long-standing habit and takes no account of nature's laws at all. Therefore, let us seek simplicity. If we could only get ourselves out of the way of the words and the music, the poet and the composer would speak for themselves to the audience, even if you did not add much of your own personality to the performance.

But mechanical freedom is not enough. There must be *personal* freedom as well. Freedom from *fear*, freedom from uncertainty of any kind and this requires fully adequate preparation. Freedom requires confidence on your part. Confidence in your musical training and preparation, confidence in your voice, confidence in your memory and confidence in your personal relation to the public. This line of thought would lead us directly to a study of personality and personal behavior, but this is a study of such deep psychological and philosophical significance, that if pursued here would be a diversion. It is a fascinating study, nevertheless, and should interest every singer and teacher of voice.

MUSICIANSHIP

Our study of musical interpretation should rest upon the premise that as a means of human expression, music is a beautiful thing, one of the few means of spiritual communication given to mankind. As creatures of the same Creator, we live on three levels: the *physical* level, the function of which is sensation; the *mental* level, the function of which is thought; and the *spiritual* level, the function of which is feeling. On the physical level we have no means of communication except the limited means of the sense of touch. On the mental level we have direct and free means of communication through the medium of language. On the spiritual level, the function of which is feeling, we have no direct means of communication, yet since the realm of the soul is the most sensitive of all, it is here the human race finds its greatest hunger for communication and association. However, the soul *does* have a language, a language of intuition, which, by implication and subtle suggestion, can arouse the imagination and excite feeling until communication is all but complete. One medium of the communication is art, art in its various forms: painting, sculpture, poetry, dancing, and for us most significant, music.

You will find music lovers everywhere, but the greatest lovers of music should be found among those who are its disciples, its practitioners and who are its performers. In these days of noise and confusion, cynicism and supersophistication, it might be hard to find a true music lover. Our American way of life has placed so much value upon money as a symbol of success that in these days of radio, television, movies and inconsequential popular songs, he is a truly hardy soul who can keep his love of good music from being overwhelmed by the clamor all about him. Nevertheless, there never was a time when there was a more open market for the truly great artist than there is today. We are coming of age, musically, in America. While the patronage of good music in terms of audiences and the number of records sold does not have the benefit of press agents and mass media of publicity, yet it is steadily forging ahead.

Some time ago this writer had the pleasure of a visit from a well known European artist. She was famous for her singing of *lieder*, especially Mozart, Schubert, and Strauss. She heard a talented young singer sing some Schubert songs, and in making some suggestions for their

improvement, sang part of them herself. She was asked, "What is it that you do that makes these songs sound so distinguished when you sing them? Other singers sing them correctly and well, but when you sing them they sound entirely different. It is as though you read something into them that does not appear on the printed page."

She replied, "I think if there is any reason at all, it is because I am first of all a musician." There was something impeccably clean about the intonation of couplets and short scales, and something about the length of the pure vowel. Madame Lehmann is now helping young American students use their creative imagination, but her suggestions almost always go directly from the mood to the music. Her book "More Than Singing" is good reading for any singer aiming to be an artist.

If a college a cappella choir can sing through a wide range of dynamics and variety of tempi to achieve their music interpretations, there is no reason why an individual singer cannot use these effective devices in achieving musical interpretation too. What are the elements of musicianship that result in sensitive interpretation?

The first step is the determination of the mood of the composition to be sung. It is joyful, triumphant, grieved, fearful, resigned, devotional, gay, or any other one of the various human emotions. This in turn will suggest the proper tempo. The composer does not always trust you entirely, so he will place the word *allegro*, *moderato*, or *lento* at the beginning and may add a metronome rate also. Whether he does or not, the tempo must suit the mood of the text. Moreover, tempo has more than one kind of movement. Watch an orchestra conductor. Sometimes his beat is long and sweeping; other times it is short and crisp. Sometimes the tempo form is large and grand. Other times it is smaller as in Grieg's "To a Water Lily" or Schubert's "Wohin?"

Once the tempo, the pace of your song, has been established and you feel its beat, it becomes necessary to establish its rhythm as well. The tempo is the speed, the rhythm is something quite different. Some of our most advanced singers lack an adequate sense of rhythm. You might say that tempo is something you *count*, but rhythm is something you *feel*. It is more than that regular repetition of pulsation which puts pressure on the first beat of a 3/4 measure, or a primary and secondary accent of the first and third beats of a 4/4 measure. It is the *life* of music, the secret of its movement and aliveness. When you hear

a piano or violin concerto with orchestra, you come away with the strong sense of its rhythmic movement still in your mind. While tempo is time, rhythm is *timing*. This is something far more sensitive and is the only means of keeping an ensemble together, whether it be a singer and an accompanist, or a soloist and an orchestra.

If your audience is to enjoy your song, it must enjoy it *as a whole* and not in parts. Therefore, never make the mistake of vocally "sitting down" at the end of phrases. Audiences listen with a sense of movement, and it has been well said, "Break your rhythm once and you have lost half your audience, break it twice and you have lost them all." Never let rhythm be lost during rests or interludes. "Sing mentally across your rests" is one of the first three rules of musical interpretation. Then when you resume you will give the impression of never having stopped.

One reason why rhythmic insecurity is so often encountered is that singers frequently neglect learning the time value of the final note of a phrase or section, and then rely upon familiarity with the accompaniment or help from the accompanist or conductor to lead them into the entrance of the next phrase. But orchestra conductors and even piano accompanists are frequently so absorbed with their own instrumental responsibilities that they have no time to indicate an entrance to a singer. Every singer should make a habit of knowing what beat of each measure he is on. Then orchestra conductors and accompanists can proceed safely with their own responsibilities without feeling the need to guide or conduct the singers into the next entrance. Orchestra conductors as a rule will cue you in if they can. Opera conductors can frequently be seen giving a definite entrance indication to a singer on the stage. Oratorio and radio orchestra conductors will sometimes lead you in by glancing in your direction, or raising their eyebrows. But if they are at all preoccupied with their own orchestral or choral duties, they frequently do not pay any attention to you at all. Yet a missed entrance is considered an unpardonable sin. Weakness of rhythm is a common fault among average singers, many of whom transfer this responsibility to their accompanists.

In learning a new song it is often advisable to mark out the rhythmic pattern. After having established the tempo, beat out the time with your hand, recite the text giving each syllable its proper time value. Have the patience to go through your song several times in this manner and

you will find that you have the foundation of memorization. It is called the “chant” method. Be sure that your recitation of the text allows accurate time for the rests. Then play the voice part alone on the piano. Finally see if you can sing the song through with accurate pitch, time and rhythm values, without accompaniment. Also aim for accurate pitch intonation in passages requiring agility; watch intonation in the unstressed portion of phrases. Thus you will be learning the song by reading instead of by ear as so many do.

If this makes learning a song seem tedious or dull, remember that we are seeking the way to sing with distinction and authority. There must be some discipline somewhere. Having learned the time pattern, the rhythmic pattern, and the musical outline, you are now ready to study the text and the dynamic variations which give it shape.

There are comparatively few singers today who have the patience (talented though they may be), the vision or the money to pursue the development of vocal technique to a point of mastery. In the fields of breathing, diction, musicianship, agility, vocal flexibility, and varying tone color, those who are richly endowed with vocal and personal gifts seem the most likely to leave some element of fundamental equipment weak. Personal freedom needs to secure foundations and the first of these is freedom in the mechanics of singing.

We are not ready to interpret our music in public until we have mastered fundamental technique, posture, breathing and vowel formation to the extent that these elements serve the performance rather than prove a handicap. In this connection we should constantly be reminded that the mechanical element with which we sing is not the body but the breath, and that we do not work in the realm of sensation, but of sound.

There are many who employ the medium of voice with which to sing, while the real means with which we communicate is language and music. Though the voice is the vehicle of expression, it is a functional response rather than an end in itself.

Posture and breathing are the fundamental elements of control which in turn give us vocal flexibility, range, volume, and quality.

Nor is the breathing right if it does not result in adequate range combined with accuracy and speed. Agility and flexibility must not be confused. Agility is speed plus accuracy. Flexibility is dynamic variety and tone color.

Freedom from interference, that kind of freedom which leaves the whole vocal tract free for clear articulation, and which leaves the vocal mechanism unengaged in the act of reinforcing tone quality, is absolutely necessary to effective performance. This requires facility in the use of tongue, lips, jaw, and soft palate so that they are completely obedient to the demands of understandable speech.

In the study of diction there should be as high a standard for the purity of the vowel sound as there is for pitch. We know that the consonantal framework of words needs to be clearly articulated. We should give special attention to word endings and to double consonants, for we never quite do justice to these in our daily speech. The percussive pressure of consonants changes with the mood, and the effective enunciation of a word often requires a degree of exaggeration, depending upon the mood and the size of the auditorium in which we are performing.

American English includes many dialects. As a result we seem to lack a definite standard of English pronunciation, but there *is* such a standard, and it has been demonstrated frequently, mostly by people on the stage, well-developed singing artists or people who have made public address a profession.

Many variations of the vowel “ah” have found acceptance, but it is still a point of interest to the singer, because the position of the vowel in the throat and mouth has a direct effect upon the quality of the tone. Evenness of vowel scale is as important as evenness of pitch scale. Unless these two elements have been well established, a singer is hardly ready for important public performance.

It should be apparent that a thorough study of the use of phonetic symbols is absolutely essential to an accurate use of language, and for a sensitive appreciation of the delicate gradations of vowels and consonants that give a language its native flavor. The *sounds* of the language are so different from their spellings and the diacritical signs in our dictionaries are not sufficiently accurate to place complete dependence on them. For example, there are twenty-six letters in our English alphabet and several of them are duplications. But for each *sound* in English there is a phonetic symbol and most modern dictionaries now furnish them. Phoneticians have appeared on the faculties of our major universities. Approaching the language from this side, its phonetic value gives a new

appreciation of the function of the lips, the tongue, the palate and the pharyngeal area, and these can therefore be trained to a greater degree of efficiency.

There are a number of text books on this subject, but the best of these are *An Introduction to the Phonetics of American English* by Charles Kenneth Thomas (Ronald Press) and the *The Singer's Manual of English Diction* by Madeleine Marshall (G. Schirmer).

When distinctiveness of enunciation is attained, there remains the coloring of the word which is the direct response to the feeling aroused by appreciation of the artist's feeling. When we add expressiveness, imagination, and enthusiasm, we find the whole being in a total response to the act of expression.

Completeness of self-expression is a joy that few people ever know, believe it or not. It is one of the most delicious, rewarding and satisfying experiences in life, and life has very few fully satisfying moments.

The art of expression has a most revealing way of taking the measure of one's culture. A cultured person has a developed mind, not because he has acquired learning, but because he has exercised that mind in terms of its power to perceive and discern. He has developed positive attitudes and philosophies of life; he has adopted definite principles and disciplined himself to live by them.

He has culture because he has exercised his tastes and appreciations, also because he is not satisfied with a mere attitude of receptivity to meanings. He has cultivated and developed his capacity to respond to his appreciations, so that his acts of expression have a quality of awareness that distinguished the creative mind from the passive one.

If a vocal performance is going to have strength, it must have that quality of authority which comes from a thorough grasp of all the subtle shades of meaning hidden in the subject matter.

Convincing interpretation imposes a double obligation, first that the singer develop mental qualities of appreciation, sensitiveness of feeling, and capacity for response on the one hand, and a thorough penetrating understanding of his material on the other. Both of these things are so much easier to say than to do. Appreciation, sensitiveness of feeling, and capacity for response may require so much improvement on one's background that it almost amounts to a total awakening.

Every type of song literature has its basic characteristics which must be understood, not only by close study but by familiarity with a sufficient quantity of examples so that there is a real acquaintance with its particular nature.

In studying the poetic text of a song or aria, it is possible to skim the surface merely, and to take its inner meanings for granted. Unfortunately there are few singers whose understanding of music is sufficient to include the fact that music itself is a language that can convey feelings that are not found in the words. Then the poet and the composer should find in the singer a kindred soul, who, because he lives in the same world, can speak their language, understand their idiom and recreate it.

Style is a difficult thing to capture into a definition, but we might begin by saying that style is the *manner* in which you sing. It has two sources. The first is found in the composition and the second in the personality of the singer. The composition may be what we call classic Italian, baroque, old English, romantic German, French romantic or impressionistic, modern or contemporary, dramatic or light opera. In any case, here is the first key to the *manner of singing*. The English have a word for it, which is *verisimilitude*. It means appropriate presentation. When we consider song styles we must not forget those genius composers who transcended their time and their nationality. Among these are Bach, Mozart, and Handel. In all of these, refinement of manner and pure diction are especially important.

In the other sense the style is *you*. "Style is the man, nor can it be anything else," said Ffrangcon-Davies in his great book, *The Singing of the Future* (John Lane). Here style is a manner of address. What is your attitude when you sing? Is it inspired and determined by your music, or is it just your reaction to yourself?

A singer, the moment he prepares to sing a song or aria, becomes an ambassador representing a cause. If his music and subject be noble, he can embrace it with a spirituality or a quality of emotion that has a hypnotic effect.

He reflects his feeling about his music, about himself, and about his audience. If he faithfully serves his cause, he will not allow people nor things to swerve him from his course. That is why nervousness or stage fright have no part in this picture. Singing is for the emotionally mature. He must express his self-respect, have pride without arrogance and confidence without conceit.

Naturalness is his keynote, and it must be a naturalness that springs from a refined background.

The singer's attitude toward people has already been discussed, but it belongs here too. While he holds their taste and receptivity in high regard, he must make it evident that he holds the cause of his art in still higher esteem. How does he look when he sings? Can he see himself reflected in the faces of his audience? Has he found himself? Does he sing in their world, the world of the listener? If not, he has no style worth mentioning. A singer without style is like a person owning an instrument he can't play. The finest voice in the world means nothing to one who has not learned the art of communication. Style means authority; it means conviction. Without these, we are weak indeed.

No matter what phase of the singing art interests us most, we come, finally, to that moment when we stand before the public and then we find that our measure is being taken in terms of our capacity to *interest people*. This is the crux of the whole matter. People *want* to be interested. They hope to be moved. They would love to be fascinated and swept on to a point of thrill, if that is possible.

The subject of convincing performance requires much thought and clear statement. We can easily become confused. One seems to arouse interest because of exceptional vocal gifts, another because of personal appeal. Another because of the novelty of extreme youth or extended range. In any event, to become victorious *we must all do the best we can with what we have*.

The appeal of one singer may be in the sensuous beauty of his voice; the appeal of another may lie in his talent for expression through words, but there is nothing to keep anyone who has even an average endowment from learning to sing beautifully. Achievement of vocal effectiveness through skill and development is usually more lasting and satisfying than the accidentally beautiful voice. There have been so many with beautiful voices in the beginning who have turned out to be failures, that the gift of a beautiful voice seems often to be more of a liability than an asset. It often tempts its possessor to feel that hard work is not necessary. In any event a talent, whether a beautiful voice, musical aptitude, extraordinary showmanship or whatever it is, is a valuable thing, but only by diligent application and

faithful work will a well balanced, fully adequate singing equipment be realized.

But all this still leaves the heart of the matter untouched. Given the ability to sing beautifully, that which gives it that final touch which makes it a convincing and soul satisfying effect, is a great but simple principle.

To put it briefly it is:

- The ability to lose all sense of self, and to "lose" it in the complete service of what you do.
- To have full and complete awareness of the inner meaning of each word of the text, of the musical line which expresses it, and the ability by means of the various devices—tone color, dynamics, word emphasis, facial expression, etc.—to give that meaning complete and graphic translation and expression.
- The ability to present your performance in an attractive package. This means personality. It means an inner calm which never lets one's own feelings interfere with the mechanics of expression. It means all the elements of stage deportment and eloquence of manner. It means self-presentation carried to the point of skill.

The idea of getting outside of yourself, of losing yourself in what you do is easy to grasp mentally, but it is a most difficult thing to do in performance. The instinct for self-preservation is so strong that it cannot be laid down at will. That is possible only when something stronger takes its place. Contact with the public demands a degree of social adjustment which few people have the opportunity to attain. While the secret of interesting your listener is that you must perform in terms of *his* consciousness, rather than your own, such an ability represents a personal skill far beyond the development of a mere vocal or musical technique.

The fortunate singer is the one who so passionately loves to sing that he uses anything and everything to fully express what he feels. He would rather endure humiliation, failure, or that awful feeling of appearing ridiculous than be frustrated in expressing what he feels. This is why the capacity to appreciate and to feel must be so constantly fed and encouraged.

This is why only a person who knows how to feel can really sing. Only the person who thinks and feels in terms of his listener will grip and hold his listener's attention.

This is it, then. You must sing in terms of the consciousness of the listener, and you must sing with a full understanding of what you have to say.

NOTE

1. This sentence is reproduced directly from the original pamphlet. Indeed, DeYoung only mentions two of the four elements he purports to name again. While the soft palate is mentioned in the following sentence, there is no further discussion of the lips.

Richard DeYoung was a founder and charter member of NATS, serving as the association's third president from 1948 to 1950. Based in Chicago, DeYoung served on the faculties of Chicago Musical College at Roosevelt University from 1943 to 1948 and DePaul University, where he was chair of the voice department from 1948 until his death in 1960. He was active in the Chicago Singing Teacher's Guild, which performed a seminal role in the founding of NATS in 1944. DeYoung's teachers included Karlton Hackett, Thomas MacBurney, Louis Bachner, Oscar Seagle, and Jean de Reszke. His publications include *Repeated Notes*, a series of five pamphlets devoted to various aspects of singing, and *The Singer's Art: An Analysis of Vocal Principles*, published in 1958.