

Critical Thought, Intrinsic Motivation, and the Voice Studio: Perspectives of Master Teachers

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“ANYONE WHO HAS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to observe and work with a number of young people studying singing,” observed Sergius Kagen, “no doubt knows the singular confusion and the extraordinarily haphazard manner in which most of them seem to approach their task.”¹ Though Kagen was describing the teaching of singers, I pondered the development of traits desirable within those who taught. When I began teaching in my voice studio, though I possessed education and experience, I still felt confused, haphazard, and that many of my instructive choices were based upon a questionable degree of intuition.

Literature on studio instruction is growing and spans diverse topics on many subjects. Which area is the strongest choice for research? Pedagogy? Style? Student or teacher centered instruction? In my own studio, I often oriented myself by referencing the results of Blades-Zeller’s study, published in her 2002 book, *A Spectrum of Voices*.² Filled with suggestions by those at the top of the field, I felt secure in my pedagogic choices. These concepts were externally focused, however, in the perspective of the instructor to the betterment of the student. What traits make for excellent students and which students will make strong teachers? I would ask questions based upon those posed by Blades-Zeller, but with an inverted focus to instructors and their thoughts to those new to the field.

I approached four master teachers: Linda Poetschke, co-founder of the Taos Opera Institute and voice instructor at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA); Jeanne Goffi-Fynn, Vice President of New York City NATS, Board of Overseers and Singer Training Forum member of Opera America, Every Voice Counts Board member, and voice instructor at Teachers College of Columbia; Gary Mabry, previously on faculty at the Interlochen Arts Camp, past president of the South Texas and Montana chapters of NATS, and voice instructor at UTSA; and Josephine Mongiardo, a NYSTA Distinguished Voice Professional, board member of NYSTA, member of the development committee for The Oren Brown Professional Development Program, and voice instructor at Teachers College of Columbia and Barnard College. Expertise within the field is desirable in studio instruction, including both depth and breadth of knowledge as well as refined and focused skills in organization and pacing.³ Angeline takes this a step further, suggesting a master teacher takes

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the knowledge gained through a lifetime of experiences and begins to work, rather than personal improvement, toward a goal of impact upon the field.⁴ Each of these instructors qualitatively meets these criteria and each agreed to be interviewed. Interviews took place in June of 2015 and each lasted about an hour.

I focused my inquiry upon philosophies behind teacher-student interactions within the studio and traits ideal to new-to-the-field studio instructors. The resulting questions and possible extensions were: Describe your approach to rapport with your students. What does rapport look like in your studio? How do you work with your students on self-motivation? Is self-motivation something students bring with them or is it something you must instill within them? What does that look like? Do you work with your students on goal setting or do they come to you with their goals? What is the place for critical thinking in the vocal studio? Which is most important in studio work: rapport, motivation, critical thinking, addressing musical issues, or goal setting? How do you assess students? How do you stay current in the field? Which attributes do you feel contribute to new voice instructors? What do you suggest for the training of applied teachers to develop desirable traits?

While questioning these master teachers, I reflected upon the degree of awareness each individual demonstrated: of his or her actions as leading to student growth, personal reflection as a means of developing the student experience, experiences in context of progress, and a dedication to the continual process of refined practice. This article will provide a synthesis of responses to the questions posed, the responses given, and literature within the field. Each topic will be illustrated via a selection of relevant quotes on the topic, gathered in block quotation form.

RAPPORT

“The work is what earns the respect.”

— MONGIARDO

Rapport is defined as a relationship “marked by harmony, conformity, accord, or affinity.”⁵ Clemmons’s multiple case study on rapport in the applied studio placed a focus upon the “close, sympathetic relationships” found in face-to-face interactions within the vocal

studio, finding the relationship imperative to the success of the students within the studio.⁶

Similarly, each master teacher interviewed placed a high value upon a professional relationship that included trust, a studio built upon the need for safety, and emotional connection between teacher and student. Most interesting, however, was the additional commonality of teacher as guide, what Kassner described as the “Guide on the side” as opposed to the “Sage on the stage.”⁷ All studio work was specifically performed with the intention of student responsibility for outcome. An instructional orientation focused upon self-directed learning is often provided as an efficient model for teaching.⁸ These interviews, however, suggest the model of teacher as guide may function simultaneously as a rapport-building facet of studio work as well as a method of maintaining student initiative.

Mabry: “I want them to know I’m there to lead, to mentor . . . I’m trying to keep the ball in their court. They are the best teacher, because they go work things out in the practice room and report back their discoveries.”

Goffi-Fynn: “I don’t want them to do it because I said it. They need to understand. They understand why they’re doing it. Rapport is letting people develop their competence and their singing voice as well as their teaching voice and developing confidence in themselves and what they need to do.”

Poetschke: “I spend a great deal of time getting to know them: their goals, what they enjoy, what they want to do. I need to know what they want and how they learn.” She spoke of the importance for a comfortable atmosphere for both student and instructor, saying, “Students must be willing to be engaged with the music, to emotionally connect with the music.”

Abeles suggests the need for connection is important in the music studio, saying, “While rapport is important in classroom instruction, it can be anticipated that rapport will even be more critical in applied music instruction, where the interaction is necessarily more continuous and more intense than in classroom teaching.”⁹ One on one instruction with an intense focus upon students and their effort, seminar performances with student observation and input, and performance expectations are all made easier if there is a healthy relationship between student and instructor. That healthy relationship, that rapport, is the connection in which

artistic development and expression can take place. Without the ability to be open and vulnerable to the instructor, the student may not learn to connect with the audience.

Poetschke: “They can do everything perfectly, but there’s something that is missing. That’s the artistic connection that we all want to have. Rapport has to be initiated immediately. It can take a semester. Sometimes longer.”

Goffi-Fynn: “[Rapport looks like] learner centered teaching. The role of power in the classroom.¹⁰ There is a hierarchy . . . and in teaching there is expertise. Also, really hearing what they are saying. Giving them confidence. Rapport is helping someone to be themselves.”

Mabry: “Rapport in the studio is building trust, showing respect, showing that I’m interested, and celebrating their identity and their individuality . . . their unique fingerprint. What their voice is, different from anyone else’s.”

The concepts of insights gained through instructor-student relationships and freed within the atmosphere developed by rapport point toward the development of artistry are the *raison d’être* of the applied studio. Richard Miller, as quoted in Blades-Zeller, said, “It is a false assumption that technique and artistry are separate entities. The only reason for acquiring a technique is to permit artistic communication, and that goal should be present in the earliest instruction.”¹¹ If this is so, and rapport allows this communication to take place, it is surely a worthwhile investment to make.

SELF-MOTIVATION

“It’s not my dreams for them that’s going to keep them going. It’s their dreams for themselves.”

— POETSCHKE

Another universally cited educational goal is student autonomy. Self-initiation, experimentation, and responsibility are linked with the concept of autonomy,¹² and, with varying forms of description, all three were mentioned in one form or another by each of the contributing instructors. “Intrinsically motivated behaviors, which are performed out of interest and satisfy the innate psychological needs for competence and autonomy are the prototype of self-determined behavior.”¹³

Student initiative was commonly seen as a component of self-expression, of the development of personal artistry. Each instructor spoke to the importance of student centered instruction and, to develop independent musicianship, the requisite for intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation was the drive to learn, the curiosity to experiment and discover, the motivation to develop endurance, and the will to cultivate a unique form of expression.

Mabry: “I’m not sure that I can motivate a student. I think motivation has to come from themselves. I am not, and cannot, be here to be a guru. I’m here as a guide, to point you in the right direction. There are some things we can discover together . . . but, for that to ever take root, you take that and, over a matter of [time], you work those things out.”

Poetschke: “We can only control the way we see ourselves and our motivation to sing, work, to do anything, to be the best that we can be . . . It [must be] more intrinsic than external. I try to lead them into thinking in a different way . . . to instill in them, ‘If you’re doing the very best at what you’re doing, *that* is success. It doesn’t have to be rewarded.”

Mongiardo (recounting an interaction with a student after a recital): “The student said, ‘I see how hard I have to work.’ It’s not that other students are (more) gifted . . . they have worked hard over a longer period of time. If the message is ‘I have to work harder,’ then I don’t need to [say it].”

Poetschke: “They must do it for themselves because it is part of their identity . . . They have to be their *own* energy; they have to be their *own* motivation.”

Goffi-Fynn: “[Self-motivation looks like] Initiation.” She describes this process as beginning when a student simply asks for lessons, an act supported by the value of self-initiation within her studio philosophy. “You [the student] come up with your initiated project. For me, that’s my goal . . . Finding the right performance is crucial, . . . a performance aspect that reflects them [individually].”

Individuality of expression and the repertoire choices that support this is a topic that arose independently within all four interviews. Each master teacher described encouraging students to take ownership of at least some repertoire selection and connected this to both development of rapport as well as student motivation. Student

connection to repertoire was also frequently cited as a means of establishing a setting of self-motivation. Deci and Flaste addressed this as, “How can I create the condition within (intrinsic) which people will motivate themselves?”¹⁴

Mongiardo: “I try to let them choose repertoire as much as possible because I think if they are invested in it, the work goes much better. With some students, I have to pick the repertoire and . . . direct our going to work. [Whether student or instructor selected,] I don’t think the procedure changes dramatically.”

Mabry: “I want to get them involved in the process of buying into literature. I want to get them to buy into it. Sometimes their eyes will twinkle . . . and they’ll say, ‘I’m willing to do that’ . . . Making them a part of the process has become an important thing.”

Another aspect of self-motivation that arose independently was practice, and that, sometimes, practice is a skill which much be taught within the studio. Mabry invoked Gladwell’s “10,000 hours of practice” rule. Though 10,000 hours can seem wildly overwhelming, Gladwell acknowledges this goal is reached by increment and over time.¹⁵ While the concept of regular practice is standard fare for the applied studio, each master teacher invoked the need for steady, dedicated, incremental, self-reflective, intentional work and connected this need to self-motivation and personal responsibility.

Poetschke: “You see me for 15 hours of lesson time a semester. 15 hours is less than two eight-hour workdays. Where do you think most of the improvement is going to come from? From our 15 hours of weekly lessons or from your practice hours each day?”

Mabry: “I throw things out to them, like, ‘It’s the regularity of it.’ I try to help them search for times when they can establish a sense of regularity. ‘Even if you practice seven times a day and each one were seven minutes long . . . you would rack up a fair amount of practice time. Isolate small elements . . . Be driven by substance.’”

Poetschke: “My ego would like to say, ‘If I have a student and they do well, it is because of me.’ But it’s not. It’s not at all. It is because they have worked it out. I’m there to give them tools and to guide them, and to help them to discover these things. That’s the role of teacher. It has to be a student work . . . And that is why some people excel—and some people do not—and they’re in the same studio.”

Three of the instructors specifically mentioned a method of reporting the results of practice as integral to studio work, and two identified journals or written records as a means of communication between studio instructor and student. Such journal work contains the concepts of self-reflection, practice as both method and means, and of concrete record keeping. Such records, whatever the form may be, may help both students and teachers communicate developing artistic awareness, insight, and integrity. Additionally, journals may shed light on needed areas of study.

Mabry: “I always ask for them to come and report back to me.” He describes the use of a practice log as a record, a studio tool, and as a means of self-accountability, saying, “It’s to help them be honest with themselves.”

Goffi-Fynn: “We do journals, and some aspect of checking in with me to give me a heads-up of what they’ve been working on . . . and how we should focus the lesson. It helps them think about the process.”

A process, focus, path, what to practice, what to do next—these concepts represent goals.

GOAL SETTING

“You actually need to learn something along the way.”

— POETSCHKE

All four instructors described working with students to establish both short term and long-term goals. Some instructors had precise and concrete methods such as a worksheet with descriptive headings or emailed communication of goals. Others addressed the goals verbally, within the natural interactions of a lessons. Each instructor specified a need for student goals to span a range of time, including lesson or practice goals, goals for upcoming performances, and long-term goals for a semester, a year, or more. Regardless, each master teacher focused goals to guide and address specific student developmental needs, each goal was used to initiate lesson dialogue, and dialogue was used to redefine and refocus goals. Always, each question places the onus of responsibility upon the student while also providing reassurance that the teacher is there as support and resource.

Mongiardo: “I often ask, ‘What do you want?’”

Mabry: “I ask, ‘What do you expect from me to help you accomplish those goals?’”

Goffi-Fynn: "It's about setting appropriate goals that are student directed or centered or some combination [thereof]. Some of it is just asking. It is a learning curve to begin to set your own goals. I'll say, 'What's your goal for your voice right now?' and they're like, 'No one has ever asked me that before.' I've had that more than once. It's really striking to have someone in their twenties or their thirties and no one's asked them what their goals are for their voice."

Goffi-Fynn was not the only teacher to mention the rarity of student goal setting skills.

Mabry: "I facilitate [goal setting] because, especially with younger students, they may not have a clear sense of goals or what to do in the practice room."

Poetschke: "I don't think it's something that is pursued strongly enough in them [the students] . . . particularly coming into a college situation for the first time. The outcome is so stressed, and not so much the journey that it takes and why you want to do well . . . We talk about it. What is their roadmap for doing these things? Sometimes it takes a whole lesson to do this, but I think it is worth it. Some of them have never thought about this before in their entire life."

CRITICAL THINKING

"It's always the why."

— GOFFI-FYNN

Woodford suggests critical thinking is more than an exercise for students of music; rather, it is a vehicle toward developing musicianship.

Ultimately, the best advice for music teachers is that they teach for critical thinking. This means that they must help students explore the world of musical beliefs and practices by continually exposing them to new musical experiences and ideas that present some reasonable degree of challenge to what they already believe. Moreover, teachers must provide students with ample opportunity to explain, discuss, and logically justify their musical beliefs. The more critical thinking is successfully imitated and carried through to its logical conclusion, the more likely it is to become a habitual and enduring part of the personality and belief system of the individual.¹⁶

The logical conclusion represents the "why" Goffi-Fynn mentioned. Allowing a student to take the time for this kind of reasoning is an investment of time, but

the results may be manifold. A mature ownership of knowledge, a transformative learning, and long-term independent musicianship are the goals of studio work. In other words, "Deep learning is when knowledge transforms you."¹⁷ Transformative learning happens when teachers address thinking skills, developing independence by putting students in the path of ambiguity and searching for personal meaning when each student must make and justify a choice when many options may be correct.¹⁸ These independent choices may also be described as artistry.

Brookfield identified two activities central to critical thinking: identifying and challenging assumptions, and exploring and imagining alternatives.¹⁹ Klickstein defines created meaning as meaning that is developed within one's own self.²⁰ This created meaning, arising from the critical thought process, would then be the root of creativity. Teachers are therefore custodians of the critical process providing the arena for critical questioning by guiding students with questions that require and promote awareness and then allowing space for that awareness to take hold. Asking students to generate descriptions requires the student to generate personal meaning, to practice critical thought.

Mabry: "Well, if the lesson is a target, [critical thinking] would be the bull's eye. If critical thinking is at the heart of studio study, then at the heart of that is the continuous questioning of 'how does that feel?'"

Mongiardo: "Until the student can identify what they are doing and when they are doing it, they haven't really learned it, and they can't take it away with them . . . so I ask, 'What did you notice about this particular thing?'"

All four instructors repeatedly described the use of dialogue between themselves and their students as the main engine behind studio work. Open ended questioning as well as allowing time for student consideration and response are the rule. Not only did every instructor emphasize this, every instructor specified open ended questioning as a key to critical thought, and three of them identified it as a main difference between their studio and the way they had originally been trained as students.

Poetschke: "Talk to me and put it in words! When I was in school, I don't remember any teacher I had in college asking me these questions. They just told me what to do

and I did it. I remember not really understanding what they wanted. It is so much more important to get the student totally involved in their entire learning process . . . to understand what they're doing in the process."

Modeling, demonstrating, lecturing, and drawing analogies are techniques commonly used by music educators. Each represents high level questioning, "The technique most likely to engage student's full attention and lead to the deepest thinking and sensitivity is high-level questioning in the cognitive and affective domains."²¹ This critical understanding puts students in the powerful position of making informed choices, being able to defend their ideas, and having the capacity for diverse experiences. Teach that the answer to Goffi-Fynn's "why" is always to be found within. Foster independence. Encourage self-actualization. In short, herein lies the potential for transformative learning. As Goffi-Fynn said, "That is how we create independent musicians. Give them autonomy. They need the facts. They need practice. They need to be led to an artistic choice. Give them the freedom to make artistic choices and give them decisions [to make]."

ASSESSMENT

"I watch for patterns and I call them on it, too. It shows them that I care. Caring. Genuinely caring. Failing to call them out when they are not acting in [an] accountable fashion is being neglectful."

— MABRY

Duke and Simmons describe the need for refined discernment of student work that is then "consistently articulated to the students so that the student learns to make the same discriminations independently,"²² implying moment to moment assessment within the studio. While Mabry did not specifically verbalize the teacher's act of continual listening as a means of assessment, it was inferable from the consistency of his descriptions of listening, questioning, and then acting. This pattern was common to all four instructors' accounts of studio work and the concepts of rapport and self-motivation arose in close combination with the concept of assessment.

Goffi-Fynn stressed the functional unity of the voice and the need to make assessments in the moment, assessments based upon what the instructor hears and what the students report, constantly putting these

aspects into the context of the moment. These steps may represent inductive reasoning as well as intuitive perception. In fact, each instructor commented upon the necessity for openness to intuition and the leaps of logic that occur during active listening to and dialogue with students.

Poetschke: "I do [assessment in] every lesson. I actively do that. I mentally do that. I have goals, too. I have goals for each student that are my own. Goals for them that I don't necessarily share with them."

Goffi-Fynn: "That's an area in studio we really need to work on. We need more formative assessment and less summative assessment. Getting the students to be more involved in their own . . . Being more aware. Comparing performances, comparing interpretations."

When I asked if she practiced benchmark type assessments or if she constantly assessed, Goffi-Fynn reported doing some of both. Her response supports a common practice of educational assessment, such as that which is forwarded by Equity Pedagogy, a method that places focus upon creating an environment and using strategies that foster success within diverse groups. "Assessing—valuing what is taught in the classroom, not privileging the advantages students bring, utilizing demonstrations of learning, performance based assessment, and continuous and varied methods of assessment."²³ Given the potentially diverse range of students represented in the applied studio, the mixed method approach to assessment as described by the master teachers both challenges the traditional educational structure of assessment and establishes the applied studio as a potential crucible for pedagogic change.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT

"It is all part of the package."

— POETSCHKE

I asked the master teachers to select which option is most important in studio work: rapport, motivation, critical thinking, addressing musical issues, or goal setting. All four responded with a moment of intellectual introspection followed by an understanding that each component was both a unique concept as well a portion of a distinct whole. This common insight represents a philosophy reminiscent of *Gestalt* theory, of shared

experience in the current moment. While Mongiardo specified the willingness to assess and keep reassessing as students grow and change, the other three refused to select any one item and, interestingly, two gave a visual description of their significance as circular.

Poetschke: "Every one of them. Every one of those is an [important] component."

Mabry: "You make a wheel out of them. Like a wagon wheel, every spoke has equal responsibility to strengthen the wheel because they're all attached very closely at the hub. Rapport is the bridge of learning. If you take out goal setting, then you take out the sense of direction in the process. If you take out critical thinking, you take out the landscape of delivering information."

Goffi-Fynn: "It's a circle with many entry points. It's also cyclical, there's not really an end. That's why you keep learning. That's why people can start it at different points. There's not one method."

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

"I wonder."

— MONGIARDO

To stay current in their field, all four instructors cited NATS, the *Journal of Singing*, other literature within the field, workshops and/or conventions, and personal study. Three suggested attending master classes and observation of others. While the focus of this study was specific to the unique interests of each professional, each instructor clearly placed a high value upon ongoing investment in professional growth. All four instructors specified, either directly or indirectly, that keeping current in the field was often driven directly from working with students. Additionally, each also described an ongoing process of figuring out their approach over time, a process which often had its genesis within intuitive leaps in logic.

Mongiardo: "For me, it has to do with my own intellectual curiosity . . . I learned by observing others and by studying . . . or, over time, the figuring out . . . 'I wonder why that is?'"

Mabry: "I learn new things every semester (by) watching, living with, and listening to my students."

Poetschke: "Teach your students and by your students you will be taught."

Instructors learn by active participation in their field, from working with their students, and from pursuing

their own curiosity. Three master teachers emphatically identified studio instruction as a process of lifelong learning. This demonstrates a challenge presented within the private studio— isolation. The master teachers suggest demonstrating a willingness to seek new insights, to be open to new information and change, is a strength. More, a willingness to move beyond the isolating walls of the studio can be a sign of healthy instruction.

Poetschke: "Other people have answers, too. I don't have all the answers."

Mabry: "As long as I maintain that lifelong learner attitude, and the fact that I may not know everything—I don't know everything—it's a very healthy process. It's why I continue to like teaching voice. I keep learning."

Poetschke: "If we ever get to the point on our own journey where we don't think we can learn from other people in our field, it shades our teaching and interactions. If we get to the point where we can't learn from each other, we might as well hang it up."

DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES FOR NEW INSTRUCTORS

"The learning comes from doing it."

— POETSCHKE

While every studio instructor will arrive with unique training and experience, once the door to the studio closes, studio instructors are alone with their students. This isolation can present challenges for teachers, especially novices. Each participant acknowledged feeling a lack of preparation in the face of the challenge of preparing a singer, and each spoke to the adage: Just begin; the rest will come.

Mongiardo: "We all start from the beginning, and I can imagine we all start with some kind of trepidation and with some kind of hubris." [This was followed by laughter.]

Poetschke: "I would suggest doing it [teaching]. There are things those classes can't teach you until you're out in the field. That's part of it."

Mongiardo: "The idea of being the receiver of information, as opposed to the giver of information, is a very important thing for young teachers to understand."

Goffi-Fynn: "Humility. Seriously. I think a lot of new teachers don't have the confidence to say, 'I don't know. I'll get some help.' Voices are tricky to put together.

They're not easy to unravel . . . They [new instructors] have to have the right information."

Mongiardo: "Have your ears open all the time. Listen carefully. Hear—and I do mean hear—what their tongues are doing. Certain qualities of sound imply certain conditions."

A commonly cited quality necessary for new instructors was flexibility, a willingness to listen and act based upon what was happening in that studio moment. Often, the teachers made a connection between flexibility and the relationship between the student and the instructor. The willingness to be flexible, to be humble, to change in the moment, to be open to the student's needs clearly connects with the desired studio rapport.

Mongiardo: "You can teach a technique or you can teach a student who walks into the room."

Poetschke: "We have to be flexible in our teaching and our thinking."

Mongiardo: "I think there is a relationship between this [flexibility] and rapport."

Poetschke: "Caring for students. You have to put the student above yourself, to realize there's not any one way to do this . . . to get an end result."

Mabry: "There's a degree of flexibility that is a subheading of rapport."

Mabry described his counsel to new teachers from a personal vantage point, connecting the concepts of what new instructors should keep in mind with actions novice instructors can take as the begin their careers.

"They have to be brave. I know, as a young vocal instructor myself, I felt so green when teaching for the first time. I encourage them to just launch out . . . Take advantage of mentorship. Talk to other voice teachers. Go into other studios and see what other teachers do—how we teach, what [we] teach. Take advantage of summer workshops. Every time they go, their learning curve is adjusted on a pretty steep trajectory. The main thing is they just do it. Try it. Ask questions. Don't be afraid to observe. Don't be afraid to look around and see what other people are doing. Go to master classes. Continue to perform. Get out of yourself."

ADDITIONAL COMMONALITIES

One of the gifts of a semistructured interview is learning information other than that which was originally

sought. In this section, I have provided new subtopics as they arose within the major headings of the survey. A few other concepts surfaced that did not directly connect to the original questions yet are worthy of notice, such as knowing what kind of learner the student is, as within Garner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences.²⁴ This concept was directly mentioned by two instructors and alluded to by another.

Each instructor described the student as receiving his/her undivided focus. Mongiardo asked, "What's going on in the room right now and how do we work with that." Mabry specified, "It's very important that they understand when I'm there in my studio, I am intensely interested in them. I focus my attention on them during the time that they're here."

Modeling was cited as a direct and uncomplicated means of communication. "The most important thing that I have learned," Mongiardo said, "is modeling has the capacity to be inspirational when it is not about you. Sometimes I sing and students are like, 'Oh, my god,' and I say, 'That's just nonsense . . . It's about what you could do.' That's much more important."

The master teachers commonly emphasized each voice as unique and the student is best served by discovering how to use her own voice rather than imitating someone else's voice. Goffi-Fynn iterated, "You're not comparing your voice to anybody. You're figuring out your own voice. Trying to sound like someone else is not helpful . . . just be yourself." Mabry connected this as evidence of rapport, saying "[Rapport looks like] celebrating their individuality. Not trying to get them to sound like somebody else. Not trying to get them to sound like a professional they would hear on YouTube."

The unique voice in the act of singing is a sensory experience. "I take them back to what their sensory feedback has been," specified Mongiardo, "because that is what they go home with." Mabry described this process more fully, saying, "I really can't hear my own sound. I hear via bone conduction and Eustachian tubes. I can only feel my voice. The [students] have to be able to trust me and what I hear, and that I'm constantly going to come back to them and ask what they feel, because I can't feel what they feel, [and] continually asking them, 'How does that feel?'"

No one ever has just one teacher and learning musicianship is a journey. Poetschke invoked this ongoing

process, saying, “I try to take them through a journey rather than (to) a destination.” “All of this can be summarized in an attitude of discovery,” said Mabry. “Some of these things will be discovered in their lessons. Some they’ll discover on their own. And some of those things will be a result of what continues from the lesson. Some of those things [will be learned] with somebody else.”

While there were many commonalities within the interviews, there was also room for other connections and further corroboration and refinement. By approaching the master teachers a second time and asking a few more questions, generalities could be more concretely connected and specific philosophic underpinnings for concepts made clear. New concepts that arose during the interviews, such as intuition, brought forth several rich topics, which, if pursued, could be valuable to the field. In my single set of interviews, I did not address many other topics worthy of note, including master teacher recommendations of areas in need of study²⁵ and goals for the field as a whole. Studio instruction is profoundly important in the development of individual artistry and technique. Studying the philosophies, methods, awareness of, and practices of master teachers will continue to provide insights to many invested in applied studio instruction: students, stake-holders, teacher training programs, and teachers themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

Singers and their needs are diverse. Thus, studio instruction, approaches to that instruction, and the training needed by studio instructors must be equally diverse. Further research is warranted in several areas, including self-assessment of one’s own teaching, means of student assessment with attention to individual learning styles, identifying and defining signifiers for “intuitive” leaps in logic, and pinpointing guides for developing critical thought in passive students.

Within the realm of singer and studio diversity exist many commonalities. Kagan’s concern of confusion on the part of singers may continue to be justified, but studios are no place for haphazard approaches. Master teachers seem to agree upon many foundational studio philosophies; likewise, they seem to agree upon several traits ideal within instructors new to the field. Critical thought, motivation, rapport, and other common aspects

of studio work continue to command an importance of focus within the master teacher studios.

All experts were once beginners; all beginners have the potential to become experts. By focusing upon the perspectives of master teachers, novice vocal instructors may ease the journey.

NOTES

1. Sergius Kagen, *On Studying Singing* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1950), Preface.
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Kimberly has appeared with the San Antonio Mastersingers, the San Antonio Opera, the San Antonio Choral Society, Steven Stoli's Playhouse, and the Sheldon Vexler Experimental Theatre. She also took part in the Coyote Kids, a quartet of vocalists and dancers in conjunction with the San Antonio Spurs that performed shows in elementary schools in the San Antonio and South Texas area. Kimberly has served as a quartet soloist, cantorial soloist, and section leader in a variety of churches and temples throughout San Antonio. She has adjudicated Texas Region choral auditions as well as solo and ensemble competitions for both public and private middle and high school programs. Additionally, Kimberly has served as children's choir director, drum ensemble leader, recorder ensemble director, hand bell choir director, substitute choir director, children's church music leader, music librarian, and drum circle facilitator.

If there be, on thy psaltery,
Father of Love, but one tone
That to his hear may be pleasing,
Oh, then, quicken his heart!
Clear his cloud-enveloped eyes
Over the thousand fountains
Close by the thirsty one
In the desert.

Thou who createst much joy,
For each a measure o'erflowing,
Bless the sons of the chase
When on the track of the prey,
With a wild thirsting for blood,
Youthful land joyous
Avenging the injustice
Which the peasant resisted
Vainly for years with his staff.

But the lonely one veil
Within thy golden clouds!
Surround with winter-green,
Until the roses bloom again,
The humid locks,
Oh Love, of thy minstrel!

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,
from "Harzreise im Winter" (trans. unknown)