

# A Brief History of Lyric Diction Pedagogy:

## PART I—TWENTIETH-CENTURY BEGINNINGS

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This is the first article of a two-part series in which associate editor Matthew Hoch explores the history of lyric diction pedagogy from its formal twentieth-century beginnings to the present day. In part I, early attempts at formulating a systematic pedagogy are chronicled through an examination of academic articles in the *Journal of Singing*, seminal textbooks, the integration of language proficiency into standards of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), and the increasing importance of the International Phonetic Alphabet to linguistics. Part II will explore twenty-first century developments and the shifting landscape of lyric diction pedagogy that singers experience in the current milieu.

WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN MANY ARTICLES in the *Journal of Singing* devoted to lyric diction, there has never been an article dedicated to a comprehensive overview of the history of lyric diction pedagogy in the classroom and studio.<sup>1</sup> Such an undertaking is not easily approached; as long as there have been singing teachers, pedagogues have offered their students instruction and advice on how to approach the enunciation and delivery of texts—both in singers' native tongues and foreign languages. The earliest history of lyric diction in voice pedagogy is somewhat murky with few written accounts preserved and no universal system in place. A formalization of a more uniform approach to lyric diction pedagogy did not arise until the emergence of professional organizations and accreditation standards in the mid-twentieth century.

To explore the early history of this topic in a systematic way, I have structured a fivefold methodology through an analysis of (a) early academic articles published in the *Journal of Singing*, (b) seminal textbooks that received wide distribution and use, (c) the inauguration of lyric diction as a required standard in the rubrics of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) accreditation agency, (d) the increased use and standardization of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and (e) the availability of published transcriptions. Due to the complexity of this topic—and the lack of previous articles that have undertaken such a survey—this article will primarily concern itself with American pedagogical developments within the context of academia and classical singing, which comprise the professional communities who most frequently encounter and utilize IPA transcriptions of opera, art song, and choral repertoire in their work and practice.<sup>2</sup>

### PRE-TWENTIETH-CENTURY APPROACHES

To state that “as long as there have been singers, words have been sung” is an obvious truism; one can reasonably assume that early singing teachers must

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have addressed lyric diction to some extent with their pupils. Presumably teachers in the *bel canto* tradition had some opinions about the delivery of text (and the technique behind such delivery), but in the discourses that have been preserved from earlier eras, the subject of diction is largely addressed peripherally.

Several maxims of Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1839–1910), for instance, mention words and music, but they occur within the context of more comprehensive discussions about vocal technique. For example, William Earl Brown relates the following advice from his teacher:

The throat feels “open” only when diction controls vibration, resonance and breath-energy as a unit. . . . Good diction alone excites the pneumatic action in the throat, causing it to feel “free,” at the same time it commandeers the energies throughout the whole body and mind.<sup>3</sup>

This quotation addresses phonation (and, indirectly, perhaps implies articulation) but offers no input regarding correct pronunciation of the words themselves.<sup>4</sup> There was far more academic discourse in the world of speech, however. In 1867, Alexander Melville Bell (1819–1905)—the father of Alexander Graham Bell (1847–1922)—published a system of phonetic symbols called *Visible Speech*, which was primarily concerned with the position of the articulators during various sounds while speaking.<sup>5</sup>

One of the earliest books that confronts the issue of lyric diction directly is *Pronunciation for Singers*, written in 1877 by Alexander J. Ellis (1814–1890), a pupil of Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894).<sup>6</sup> While Ellis makes some early observations about acoustics (in the spirit and lineage of his teacher’s primary interest), *Pronunciation for Singers* is primarily a summary of nineteenth-century beliefs about articulatory phonetics, which, according to James Stark,

. . . concentrated on the manipulation of the ‘articulators’ (tongue, jaw, lips, velum) in forming the sounds of speech. Ellis created *Glottic*, a system of phonetic spelling that antedated the modern International Phonetic Alphabet.<sup>7</sup>

While “Glottic” was never widely adopted and quickly fell into disuse upon Ellis’s death, the International Phonetic Alphabet was invented the following decade, thus laying the first foundation stone in the development of modern lyric diction pedagogy.<sup>8</sup>

## EARLY ACADEMIC ARTICLES

While there were some writings about diction for singers in the early twentieth century, there was little progress in the development of lyric diction as an academic discipline in American colleges, conservatories, and universities during this era.<sup>9</sup> The year 1944, however, marked the founding of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and, in turn, the first issue of *The Bulletin: Official Organ of the National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc.*—the publication that would eventually evolve into the *Journal of Singing*—in October of that year.

Soon thereafter, in the June/July 1947 issue of *The Bulletin*, Sonia Sharnova authored the first NATS article on lyric diction, one that she titled—simply—“Diction.” In this essay, she forecasts the need to take the study of diction more seriously as an aspect of a singer’s training:

Another important facet of the technique of singing is being treated too lightly. Namely, the knowledge of how to produce good diction. In order to keep the throat free and to be able to project words with ease, it is necessary that a thorough, systematized application of the rules of diction be given to a student at the very beginning of his work. . . . Diction is not something separate and apart from singing, to be studied sometime in the vague future, it is singing, unless we want to sing vowel vocalizes [*sic*] the rest of our lives.<sup>10</sup>

While Sharnova’s article stops (far) short of citing specific “rules of diction,” her identification of the (a) the need for diction as a course of study and (b) the need for a systematic set of “rules of diction” for singers makes her article noteworthy as another foundation stone on lyric diction’s long journey toward becoming an academic discipline.

In the years that followed, several subsequent articles followed Sharnova’s in *The Bulletin*. In 1948, Karl Theman embeds the concept of diction within the context of technique (*à la* Lamperti), beginning his brief discussion with the phrase, “The messa di voce provides a means of analyzing diction”; no “analysis,” however, seems to follow.<sup>11</sup> The same year, Spencer Green devoted an entire (albeit brief) article—also titled “Diction”—that is essentially a compendium of “in the trenches” advice from his own experiences as a singer and teacher.<sup>12</sup> In 1951, William Wheeler penned a similar one-page article.<sup>13</sup>

In 1953, the composer Virgil Thomson (1896–1989) wrote a short article for the *New York Herald Tribune* titled “Singing English” that was reprinted in the *NATS Bulletin*.<sup>14</sup> His thoughtful observations are decidedly more forward-looking in the pedagogical sense, offering practical advice on matters such as vowel length and schwas (which Thomson called “unaccented vowels”)—topics still actively discussed in modern lyric diction textbooks. However, while this discourse represents a small step toward a rubric-oriented approach to lyric diction, a giant leap was about to occur in the form of a book that was to be published in the same year as Thomson’s article.

### THE FIRST TEXTBOOKS: MARSHALL AND COFFIN

If there were a seminal year in which a systemized approach to the teaching of lyric diction began, it would likely be the year 1953, when Madeleine Marshall (1899–1993) first published *The Singer’s Manual of English Diction*.<sup>15</sup> Marshall was a pianist and vocal coach at the Juilliard School who, under the pseudonym “Graham Jones,” wrote a successful new English translation of Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride* for the Metropolitan Opera in 1936. Copious notes from her professional experience—in addition to some study of the few pronunciation books that were available at the time—paved the way for Marshall’s book.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to *The Singers Manual of English Diction* being the first textbook of its kind—establishing clear rules and rubrics easily digestible and suitable for use in both the classroom and studio—it is also the first widely available lyric diction resource that implemented the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet, albeit somewhat sparingly compared to future lyric diction pedagogues who would follow in the author’s footsteps. In the preface of her book, Marshall writes the following:

You will find phonetic symbols in the course of these lessons. These excellent aids are employed only when they provide the most concise identification of a sound. You won’t see many of them in the consonant chapters, but they are well in evidence in the vowel sections. If you’ve studied phonetics, of course, you know them as old and welcome friends; if you haven’t, you will get on good terms with them as you study the vowels. The symbols

are enclosed in square brackets to distinguish them from traditional spelling.<sup>17</sup>

Note Marshall’s acknowledgment to the discipline of “phonetics,” which at that time referred only to the spoken word; the application of the International Phonetic Alphabet to singer’s diction was something entirely new—as was a book on diction for singers that utilized the system. In addition to Marshall’s rubrics for “a series of lessons about English diction,” the use of IPA to transcribe words (in the “square brackets” still in use today) is significant as it represents a turning away from the rote and imitative learning widely used in singing studios at the time toward a more systematic and phonetic approach.<sup>18</sup>

Eleven years later, in 1964, Berton Coffin (1910–1987), a voice professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, published the first edition of *Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias*, which expanded Marshall’s groundbreaking rubric-phonetic (i.e., “rules and IPA”) approach to Italian, German, and French.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to Marshall—whose brief acknowledgments mention only experiences and mention no published models or forerunners—Coffin meticulously bases his prosaic instructions and tables that preface each of the three sections of his book on a long list of linguistic pronunciation resources.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Coffin enlisted three coauthors to assist him—Ralph Errolle, Werner Singer, and Pierre Dellattre—who were fluent speakers of Italian, German, and French, respectively.

In 1972, Coffin released a second edition of *Phonetic Translations of Songs and Arias*, this time with Scarecrow Press, which provided an updated list of secondary resources that consequently necessitated a revision of his German transcriptions.<sup>21</sup> Coffin’s approach to lyric diction pedagogy is thus illustrative of the important link between early scholars and linguists and, in his case, the crucial relationships necessary between music and language departments to create diction courses at this time within an academic environment.

During the 1950s and 1960s, there were also sporadic articles in the *NATS Bulletin*, including what appears to be the first article on diction and legato, written by Richard Miller (1926–2009).<sup>22</sup> De’Ath provided an overview of articles on diction (and language) written by NATS authors during these decades.<sup>23</sup>

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF LYRIC DICTION COURSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) had not yet adopted any requirements for lyric diction education in the curricula of accredited music programs.<sup>24</sup> Singing teachers and coaches in the academy who wished to offer lyric diction courses in their programs formed them through their own advocacy, often as elective classes.

Like many localized events that occurred during the analog age, few if any syllabi and course catalogs from this era still exist.<sup>25</sup> A reconstruction of pedagogical practice during this era thus depends on primary resources and firsthand accounts.

An archival letter to Marshall dated March 1, 1950, from Frederick Prausniz, assistant dean at the Juilliard School, outlines her teaching assignment: three sections of “English Diction I” and one section of “English Diction II”; these were surely some of the first courses of their kind in higher education.<sup>26</sup> Cheri Montgomery reports that her father, Archie Kliewer, established a diction course at Belmont College (now Belmont University) in the late 1960s that utilized the Marshall and Coffin books.<sup>27</sup>

Dennis Jackson, who began teaching at CU Boulder in 1971, reports that Coffin established lyric diction courses prior to his arrival on campus. These classes were taught by John Glenn Paton, who was fluent in Italian and German. Jackson began teaching French lyric diction there the following year.<sup>28</sup>

Patti Peterson, who earned both of her graduate degrees in piano and voice at CU Boulder in the 1970s, recalls that incoming MM and DMA students from that era did not have a diction course requirement but did have an IPA proficiency entrance examination, thus implying that remedial coursework in lyric diction would need to be completed if the student failed to receive a passing score.<sup>29</sup> Graduate and doctoral students at CU Boulder also were required to prepare repertoire in Italian, German, and French when auditioning for these programs.<sup>30</sup>

Proficiency in lyric diction is not mentioned in the *NASM Handbook* until 1974, when it appears as a standard for the “Master’s Degree in Performance.”<sup>31</sup> In this document it is stated that the graduate degree should comprise “at least one third of the total requirement.

Voice majors are expected to have skill in German, French, and Italian diction.”<sup>32</sup> This broad requirement, however, only applied to the graduate degree in voice performance. No mention is made at this time of lyric diction as a standard for baccalaureate programs.

It was not until the 1980s that an NASM standard for lyric diction instruction was instituted for the undergraduate degree. The first appearance of these revised standards occurred in the 1985–1986 edition of the *NASM Handbook*, which for the first time published an appendix (B) that lists undergraduate “Standards and Guidelines for Opera and Musical Theatre Programs.”<sup>33</sup>

These paragraphs describe five “Performance Skills” under the rubric of “The Common Body of Knowledge and Skills for Career Entry.” The fifth and final skill—after ones pertaining to technique, interpretation, musicianship, and theatrical skills—is the following:

Language skills. For Opera: diction/pronunciation skills in English, Italian, German, and French. Reading/speaking proficiency in Italian and working knowledge of French and German. For Musical Theatre: diction/pronunciation skills in English and dialects.<sup>34</sup>

The 1985–86 edition of the *NASM Handbook* also added a second graduate degree for singers, the “Master’s Degree in Opera Performance,” which—like the performance degree established in the 1970s—included a lyric diction requirement:

The integration of musical, theatrical, and diction skills required in opera performance constitute major study in this degree program and require at least one-third of the curriculum. . . . The curriculum includes but is not limited to the development of advanced theatre skills and advanced competence in English, Italian, French, and German diction, and at least one graduate-level course in both music theory and music history.<sup>35</sup>

From this time forward, lyric diction remained a NASM standard in all subsequent handbooks. The 2023–2024 edition of the *NASM Handbook*—which has been much expanded from the installments of the 1970s and 1980s—still lists proficiency in “phonetic knowledge and skills” as a standard for both undergraduate and graduate degrees in voice performance and opera, and the requirement has expanded to include degrees in choral conducting and musical theater.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of this proficiency requirement, courses in lyric diction are now common at NASM-accredited institutions that offer these degrees, although the specific offerings, course content, and number of semesters required are variables not specified by NASM; there are numerous ways in which this standard is implemented.<sup>37</sup>

## A SECOND GENERATION OF TEXTBOOKS

Marshall and Coffin established a pedagogical foundation where none had previously existed in any cohesive way. Their textbooks, however, had obvious limitations: Marshall's was rife with rules but only for English; Coffin's book covered Italian, German, and French but his rubrics for transcription were brief and not as thorough as Marshall's.<sup>38</sup> More significant, students needed to purchase multiple textbooks to adequately cover the language requirements of their respective degree programs.

These shortcomings were recognized and remedied in 1975 with the publication of *Diction: Italian, Latin, French, German . . . the Sounds and 81 Exercises for Singing Them* by John Moriarty (1930–2022).<sup>39</sup> This book could be fittingly labeled a “textbook” in the truest sense of the word; Moriarty wrote it specifically for the classes he taught—to both undergraduates and graduates—at the New England Conservatory of Music.

For the first time, collegiate instructors, coaches, and private studio teachers had a single-volume reference work that included rules for IPA transcriptions across the three major foreign languages in which voice students were required to sing . . . plus (as a sort of “bonus”), church Latin. Those who still desired an English methodology could supplement their courses with Marshall's book. Moriarty's *Diction* quickly became a staple of university lyric diction classrooms, with instructors and students alike attracted to the convenience of a single-volume resource.

More specialized volumes devoted to specific languages (in the spirit of Marshall) also appeared, some of which saw widespread distribution. The most notable included Evelina Colorni's *Singer's Italian: A Manual of Diction and Phonetics* (1970), Richard G. Cox's *The Singer's Manual of German and French Diction* (1970), Thomas Grubb's *Singing in French: A Manual of French Diction and French Vocal Repertoire* (1979), and William

Odom and Benno Schollum's *German for Singers: A Textbook of Diction and Phonetics* (1981).<sup>40</sup> The fact that all five of these books (including Moriarty's) were all published by Schirmer during an eleven-year interval is noteworthy and speaks much about the importance of this publisher to the history of lyric diction pedagogy. These titles or descendent editions (or printings) of them are still widely known and referenced at the time of the publication of this article.<sup>41</sup> Richard F. Sheil's *A Singer's Manual of Foreign Language Dictions for Singers* (1975) was also published during this time.<sup>42</sup>

Toward the end of the twentieth century, several additional authors published multi-language resources that soon saw wide use within the academy. Joan Wall released two books almost simultaneously that were meant to be used in tandem with one another—*International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers: A Manual for English and Foreign Language Diction* (1989) and *Diction for Singers: A Concise Reference for English, Italian, Latin, German, French, and Spanish Pronunciation* (1990).<sup>43</sup>

The selling points of these volumes to many instructors were largely the workbook-style format of the former and the expansion to six languages in the latter. Marci Stapp's *The Singer's Guide to Languages* (1991) also enjoyed a small but loyal following.<sup>44</sup> In 1999, David Adams published the first edition of *A Handbook of Diction for Singers*.<sup>45</sup>

Covering Italian, German and French, this book was, in many respects, an updated and more scholarly version of Moriarty's textbook, which it largely replaced at institutions that utilized a one-volume approach in their courses. Additional articles in the *Journal of Singing* published during the last two decades of the twentieth-century supplemented these resources.<sup>46</sup>

## STANDARDIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

Although the International Phonetic Association—the organization that gave birth to the International Phonetic Alphabet—was established in 1886, the IPA system itself took gradual shape over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>47</sup> While the current system looks almost nothing like the original 1888 version (inaugurated two years into the organization's existence), the most radical revisions occurred during a relatively

short period of time between 1987 and 1993.<sup>48</sup> Since then, the system has remained relatively unchanged; the minor revisions that have taken place have, for the most part, not impacted symbols used by the singing community. These changes have been preserved in the second edition of the *Phonetic Symbol Guide*, published in 1996 by Geoffrey K. Pullum and William A. Ladusaw, and remains the definitive resource for symbol names, phonetic categorization of sounds, and usage.<sup>49</sup>

This late-twentieth-century standardization has called for a revision of many of the classic textbooks that were published prior to these revisions. Some resources, most notably Adams, have been revised several times and have striven for more synergy terminologically with the International Phonetic Association.<sup>50</sup> Other resources are more based in traditional tried-and-true resources.<sup>51</sup> This has resulted in inconsistencies across resources that will be further discussed in part II of this article.

In sum, the tradition of using the International Phonetic Alphabet as a universal standard for lyric diction transcriptions was inaugurated by Marshall and Coffin and subsequently adopted by virtually all mainstream and widely distributed textbooks.

The applicability of IPA to foreign languages and its usefulness as an authoritative standard—as opposed to nonstandardized orthographic transcription systems that can vary widely from resource to resource—made the adoption of IPA attractive for singing teachers and coaches tasked with teaching the basics of lyric diction across multiple languages to their students.

### LEYERLE PUBLICATIONS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MULTILINE FORMAT FOR TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

William Leyerle elevated the practice of IPA transcription a step further by inaugurating a now-standardized three-line format in a prolific series of publications. In the early decades of lyric diction pedagogy, translations were published separately from transcriptions. This is exemplified by Coffin's respective books: *Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias* was published separately from his *Word by Word Translations of Songs and Arias*.<sup>52</sup> Leyerle, however, combined transcriptions and translations into one three-line format—sometimes with the

addition of a fourth line for a more prosaic rendering of the text when necessary for clarity.

Regarding his invention of this format, Leyerle articulates his creative intentions as well as the professional mission of his company, Leyerle Publications:

The now famous Leyerle three and four-line Phonetic-Translation System consists of the International Phonetic Alphabet spelling of the foreign language text on the first line, the original foreign language on the middle line, and the word-for-word English translation on the third line. When further explication of an otherwise difficult-to-understand passage in the word-for-word translation is needed, a fourth line, presented in a more literary translation, is given. . . . As the creator of the above system in 1977 and with the national publication of *Song Anthology One* in 1980, Leyerle Publications feels committed to make the system available in as much of the great song and operatic literature as we can.<sup>53</sup>

Leyerle's contribution to the history of lyric diction pedagogy is thus twofold: First, his multiline approach to translation and transcription—text in the middle, translation above, and IPA transcription below—has now become industry standard in the lyric diction world. Second, Leyerle's vast catalog of opera libretti and song texts that utilize this format has resulted in an extensive library of translations and transcriptions of much of the standard repertoire. Authors of these volumes have included such experts as Nico Castel, Robert Gartside, Martha Gerhart, and Beaumont Glass.<sup>54</sup>

Subsequent books by other publishers have imitated this approach, thus further expanding the canon of translations and transcriptions of vocal literature.<sup>55</sup> A generation ago, students of singing often undertook their own transcriptions; now their first instinct is to find a published transcription of the repertoire they are working on. This shift in practice has profound implications for the teaching and learning of lyric diction and will be discussed in greater detail in part II of this article.

### CONCLUSION OF PART I: ENTERING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

As lyric diction pedagogy entered the twenty-first century, myriad new issues emerged, including an expansion of languages, internet resources, integration with the choral community, and a burgeoning volume of new

scholarship and published resources. These pedagogical milestones have resulted in a shifting landscape in the discipline of lyric diction and have tasked coaches and teachers of singing with emerging challenges. These issues and a prospective future for lyric diction pedagogy will be considered and discussed in part II of this article.

## NOTES

1. For a list of these articles, please search the *Journal of Singing* index via the article summary keyword “diction”: <https://www.nats.org/cgi/page.cgi/journal-of-singing-index.html>. Many of these columns were written by Leslie De’Ath, who served as the associate editor of the “Language and Diction” column from 2002 to 2023 (under the aegis of former editor-in-chief Richard Sjoerdsma). Two of these columns—both of which will be referenced in this article—explore the early history of lyric diction resources. See Leslie De’Ath, “Things Have Indeed Come to a Pretty Pass—The Early Years of Lyric Diction Literature,” *Journal of Singing* 72, no. 1 (2015): 61–77; and Leslie De’Ath, “Early Articles on Language and Diction in NATS Journals,” *Journal of Singing* 76, no. 1 (2019): 47–54.
2. While many books and articles pertaining to lyric diction are listed throughout this article, this essay is not intended to be an exhaustive account of every resource that has been published or that is available to today’s singer. Rather, the resources mentioned are ones that, in the author’s judgment, have played a unique or important role in the history of lyric diction pedagogy. Likewise, the use of IPA in the classroom and studio is now so well established that it is not necessary to make a case for its usefulness in this article; rather, the emphasis is placed on the system’s important role in the establishment of a systematic approach to lyric diction pedagogy over the past seventy years. For a more exhaustive list of resources published prior to 2015, see the select bibliography in De’Ath, “Things Have Indeed Come to a Pretty Pass,” 73–77.
3. Giovanni Battista Lamperti, *Vocal Wisdom*, enlarged ed., transcribed by William Earl Brown (Marlboro, NJ: Taplinger Publishing, 1931), 101.
4. De’Ath notes similar discussions of diction during this era in the writings of Manuel García II (1805–1906), Mathilde Marchesi (1821–1913), and Julius Stockhausen (1826–1906). See De’Ath, “Things Have Indeed Come to a Pretty Pass,” 61.
5. James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 47.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.; De’Ath has written more extensively about Ellis, but refers to his system as “Glossic” (instead of “Glottic”). See De’Ath, “Things Have Indeed Come to a Pretty Pass,” 61–68.
8. Geoffrey K. Pullum and William A. Ladusaw, *Phonetic Symbol Guide*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xxi.
9. There were, however, several diction books published during this time. Two of them—Louis A. Russell’s *English Diction for Singers and Speakers* (1905) and Clara Kathleen Rogers’s *English Diction for Song and Speech* (1912)—are believed to have been studied by Madeleine Marshall. Neither, however, came close to the popularity and wide distribution of Marshall’s book, *The Singer’s Manual of English Diction* (1953). For more information, see Sheri Cook-Cunningham, “The Many Facets of Madeleine Marshall: A Historical and Cultural Perspective of Madeleine ‘Graham Jones’ Marshall Simon (1899–1993), Author of *The Singer’s Manual of English Diction*,” *International Journal of Research in Choral Singing* 4, no. 2 (2013): 72. De’Ath also writes about both of these volumes, as well as Henry Gaines Hawn’s *Diction for Singers and Composers* (1900). See De’Ath, “Things Have Indeed Come to a Pretty Pass,” 66–68. This article also includes discussion of some forerunners of German, French, Italian, and Latin resources that were published in the early twentieth century.
10. Sonia Sharnova, “Diction,” *The Bulletin* 3, no. 6 (June/July 1947): 4. The italicized word appears in boldface in the original article.
11. Karl Theman, “A Musical Approach to Singing,” *The Bulletin* 4, no. 4 (February/March 1948): 5.
12. Spencer Green, “Diction,” *The Bulletin* 4, no. 6 (June/July 1948): 2.
13. William Wheeler, “Diction—What It Is,” *The Bulletin* 7, no. 5 (1951): 7.
14. Virgil Thomson, “Singing English,” *The Bulletin* 9, no. 5 (May/June 1953): 17. This article was originally published in the *New York Herald Tribune* on April 12, 1953, and was reprinted with permission by *The Bulletin* almost immediately thereafter.
15. Madeleine Marshall, *The Singer’s Manual of English Diction* (New York: Schirmer, 1953).
16. See note 9. According to Sheri Cook-Cunningham, “[t]he original handbook, titled *Lessons in English Diction*, consisted of twenty-five typewritten pages with copyright dates of 1946 and 1947. The manual contained a very straightforward set of rules for diction, beginning with consonants and proceeding to vowels.” Sheri Cook-Cunningham, “The Many Facets of Madeleine Marshall,” 68.
17. Marshall, *The Singer’s Manual of English Diction*, 4.

18. Ibid., 1.
19. Berton Coffin, *Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Press, 1964).
20. Ibid., iii–4, 85–88, 252–55.
21. Berton Coffin, *Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias*, 2nd ed. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1972). This book was originally released as “Volume VI of ‘The Singer’s Repertoire’ series of aids for the singer and teacher of singing”; Ibid., v.
22. Richard Miller, “Legato in Singing—Part II: Diction in Relation to the Vocal Legato,” *NATS Bulletin* 22, no. 4 (1966): 18–20. This is the second installment of a two-part article on legato in singing. Other lyric diction articles from this era include the following: Patricia C. Annable, “The Teaching of Foreign Language Diction to Music Students,” *NATS Bulletin* 12, no. 4 (1956): 21; Patricia C. Annable, “Materials for Teaching Foreign Language Diction to Music Students,” *NATS Bulletin* 16, no. 3 (1960): 11, 32–33; Constance Eberhart, “Diction,” *NATS Bulletin* 18, no. 4 (1962): 8–9, 32–34; Berton Coffin, “The Singer’s Diction,” *NATS Bulletin* 20, no. 3 (1964): 10, 19; John M. Belisle, “Some Factors Influencing Diction in Singing,” *NATS Bulletin* 24, no. 2 (1967): 4, 6, 8, 28.
23. De’Ath, “Early Articles on Language and Diction in NATS Journals.” Incorporating both language and repertoire articles, this article is more general and encompassing in nature.
24. A thorough review of archival NASM handbooks made available to the author first mentions proficiency in foreign language diction as a standard in 1974. This will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.
25. John Nix, who recently reviewed the contents of the Coffin archives at CU Boulder, reports to the author that they contain no record of Coffin’s diction courses during this timeframe. Author’s personal correspondence with Nix, October 16, 2024.
26. Sheri Cook-Cunningham, “The Many Facets of Madeleine Marshall,” 65. According to Cook-Cunningham, Marshall’s affiliation with the Juilliard began in 1935; however, the first record of a diction course taught by her did not occur until 1950.
27. Author’s personal correspondence with Cheri Montgomery, October 16, 2024. Archie Kliever (1922–2013), Montgomery’s father, was an important figure in NATS during the 1960s and 1970s, serving as governor of (what was at that time) the Southern Region from 1970–1974. He also coauthored the 1967 NATS convention report, which was published in the January/February 1968 issue of the *NATS Bulletin*. See Peter Archie Kliever and Lawrence Gould Rickert, “1967 Chicago Convention,” *NATS Bulletin* 24, no. 3 (1968): 26–29.
28. Author’s personal correspondence with Dennis Jackson, October 17, 2024.
29. Author’s personal correspondence with Patti Peterson, October 20, 2024.
30. Author’s personal correspondence with Patti Peterson, October 21, 2024.
31. *NASM Handbook 1974* (Reston, VA: National Association of Schools of Music, 1974), 44. The author is indebted to Liza Weisbrod, music librarian and professor at Auburn University, for her assistance in acquiring archival editions of NASM handbooks containing these data.
32. Ibid.
33. *NASM Handbook 1985–1986* (Reston, VA: National Association of Schools of Music, 1985), 99–100.
34. Ibid., 100.
35. Ibid., 68. At this time, foreign language proficiency was also added to the “Master’s Degree in Performance,” which carved out the following caveat for singers enrolled in that program (alongside instrumentalists): “. . . voice majors are expected to be proficient in German, French, and Italian diction.”
36. *NASM Handbook 2023–2024* (Reston, VA: National Association of Schools of Music, 2023), 116, 136–38, 168, 171, 176, 182, 185.
37. This lack of course standardization and the number of semesters of diction various institutions offer will be discussed in greater detail in part II of this article.
38. Marshall, *The Singer’s Manual of English Diction*; Coffin, *Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias*, iii–4, 85–88, 252–55.
39. John Moriarty, *Diction: Italian, Latin, French, German . . . the Sounds and 81 Exercises for Singing Them* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1975).
40. Evelina Colorni, *Singer’s Italian: A Manual of Diction and Phonetics* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1970); Richard G. Cox, *The Singer’s Manual of German and French Diction* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1970); Thomas Grubb, *Singing in French: A Manual of French Diction and French Vocal Repertoire* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979); William Odom and Benno Schollum, *German for Singers: A Textbook of Diction and Phonetics* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1981). The Colorni and Cox were published in the same year and intended to be used alongside one another.
41. Cheri Montgomery’s “Lyric Diction Workbook” series (published by STM publishers), for example, bases her French and German titles on Grubb and Odom/Schollum, respectively. The latter book, now its third edition, has added



- a coauthor and is distributed by a different publisher. See William Odom, Benno Schollum, and Christina Balsam Curran, *German for Singers: A Textbook of Diction and Phonetics*, 3rd ed. (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2023). Odom passed away on January 4, 2024, at the age of 84.
42. Richard F. Sheil, *A Singer's Manual of Foreign Language Dictions* (Farnham, Surrey: Palladian Publishers, 1975). This book is now in its sixth updated edition and published by YBK in New York.
  43. Joan Wall, *International Phonetic Alphabet for Singers: A Manual for English and Foreign Language Diction* (Redmond, WA: Pst, 1989); Joan Wall, *Diction for Singers* (Redmond, WA: Pst, 1989).
  44. Marci Stapp, *A Singer's Guide to Languages* (San Francisco: Teddy's Music Press, 1991).
  45. David Adams, *A Handbook of Diction for Singers: Italian, German, French* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Oxford released a third edition of this volume in 2022.
  46. Richard Miller, "Diction and Vocal Technique," *NATS Bulletin* 38, no. 3 (1982): 43; Robert Edwin, "Diction: Standards and Double Standards," *NATS Journal* 51, no. 2 (1994): 43–44, 63; Nico Castel and Arthur Graham, "Pedagogical Opinion: German Diction—A Dialogue," *Journal of Singing* 53, no. 1 (1996): 21–26; Leslie De'Ath, "Dictionaries of Pronunciation: A Bibliographic Guide for Musicians—Part I (English)," *Journal of Singing* 55, no. 3 (1999): 27–42; Leslie De'Ath, "Dictionaries of Pronunciation: A Bibliographic Guide for Musicians—Part II (languages other than English)," *Journal of Singing* 55, no. 4 (1999): 4–16.
  47. Pullum and Ladusaw, *Phonetic Symbol Guide*, xxi.
  48. *Ibid.*, viii.
  49. *Ibid.*
  50. David Adams, *A Handbook of Diction for Singers*; International Phonetic Association, *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). For example, in his most recent edition Adams updates the "closed" description of certain vowels to the "close" designation that has long been standard in the phonetic community; this scholarly reconciliation and others will be discussed in greater detail in part II of this article.
  51. Cheri Montgomery's French and German workbooks, for example, are based on Grubb and Odom/Schollum. While Grubb as a resource has held up remarkably well over the past forty-five years, Odom/Schollum's book has undergone two revisions; some of these adjustments have tracked with changes in the revised International Phonetic Alphabet.
  52. Coffin, *Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias*; Berton Coffin, Werner Singer, and Pierre Delattre, *Word-by-Word Translations of Songs and Arias, Part I—German and French* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1966).
  53. Leyerle Publications, accessed October 20, 2024, <https://leyerlepublications.com/pages/about>. Minor formatting changes were made when transferring this text from the website version.
  54. Nico Castel, *The Complete Puccini Libretti: Volume I—La bohème, Edgar, La fanciulla del West, Madama Butterfly, and Manon Lescaut*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1994); Nico Castel, *The Complete Puccini Libretti: Volume II—La rondine, Tosca, Il trittico (Il tabarro, Suor Angelica, and Gianni Schicchi), and Le villi*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1994); Nico Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti: Volume I—Aida, Alzira, Aroldo, Attila, Un ballo in maschera, La battaglia di Legnano, and Il corsaro* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1996); Nico Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti: Volume II—Don Carlo, I due Foscari, Ernani, Falstaff, La forza del destino, Giovanna d'Arco, and Un giorno di regno* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1996); Nico Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti: Volume III—I Lombardi; Luisa Miller; Macbeth; I masnadieri; Nabucco; Oberto, contedi San Bonifacio; and Otello* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1996); Nico Castel, *The Complete Verdi Libretti: Volume IV—Rigoletto, Simon Boccanegra, Stiffelio, La traviata, Il trovatore, and I vespri siciliani* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1996); Nico Castel, *Four Strauss Opera Libretti: Der Rosenkavalier, Elektra, Salome, and Ariadne auf Naxos*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2002); Nico Castel, *French Opera Libretti: Volume I—Werther and Chérubin (Massenet); Carmen (Bizet); Samson et Dalila (Saint-Saëns); Lakmé (Delibes); Pelléas et Mélisande (Debussy); Don Carlos (Verdi); and Les contes d'Hoffman (Offenbach)*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1999); Nico Castel, *French Opera Libretti: Volume II—Faust and Roméo et Juliette (Gounod); La Juive (Halévy); Mignon and Hamlet (Thomas); Thaïs and Manon (Massenet); and Les pêcheurs de perles (Bizet)*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1999); Nico Castel, *French Opera Libretti: Volume III—Le prophète and Les Huguenots (Meyerbeer); Cendrillon and Don Quichotte (Massenet); Louise (Charpentier); and Les Troyens (Berlioz)*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1999); Nico Castel, *German Miscellaneous Opera Libretti: Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, and Der fliegende Holländer (Wagner); Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor (Nicolai); Hänsel und Gretel (Humperdinck); Fidelio (Beethoven); and Der Freischütz (Weber)*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2005); Nico Castel, *Gluck and Monteverdi Opera Libretti: Orfeo ed Euridice, Alceste, Iphigénie en Aulide, and Iphigénie en Tauride (Gluck); L'Orfeo, Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria, and L'incoronazione di*

*Poppea* (Monteverdi), ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2008); Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti: Volume I—Rodelinda, Alcina, Agrippina, Giulio Cesare, Rinaldo, and Ottone*, ed. Hemdi Kfir (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2005); Nico Castel, *Handel Opera Libretti: Volume II—Ariodante, Serse, Orlando, Partenope, Tamerlano, Radamisto, and Lotario*, ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2005); Nico Castel, *Italian Belcanto Opera Libretti: Volume I—Il barbiere di Siviglia and Il turco in Italia* (Rossini); *Lucia di Lammermoor, L'elisir d'amore, and Lucrezia Borgia* (Donizetti); and *Norma and I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Bellini), ed. Scott Jackson Wiley (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2000); Nico Castel, *Italian Belcanto Opera Libretti: Volume II—La Centerentola and L'italiana in Algeri* (Rossini); *La sonnambula and I puritani* (Bellini); *Anna Bolena, Maria Stuarda, Roberto Devereux, and Don Pasquale* (Donizetti), ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2000); Nico Castel, *Italian/French Belcanto Opera Libretti: Volume III—Il viaggio a Reims, Semiramide, and Otello* (Rossini); *Beatrice di Tenda* (Bellini); *La fille du régiment and La favorite* (Donizetti); *Le comte Ory and Guillaume Tell* (Rossini), ed. Marcie Stapp (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2000); Nico Castel, *The Libretti of Mozart's Completed Operas: Volume I—Bastien und Bastienne, La clemenza di Tito, Così fan tutte, Don Giovanni, Die Entführung aus dem Serail, La finta giardiniera, and La finta semplice* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1998); Nico Castel, *The Libretti of Mozart's Completed Operas: Volume II—Idomeneo; Lucio Silla; Mitridate, re di Ponto; Le nozze di Figaro; Il re pastore; Der Schauspieldirektor; and Die Zauberflöte* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1998); Robert Gartside, *Interpreting the Songs of Gabriel Fauré* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1996); Robert Gartside, *Interpreting the Songs of Maurice Ravel* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1992); Martha Gerhart, *Italian Song Texts from the Seventeenth through the Twentieth Centuries: Volume I* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2002); Martha Gerhart, *Italian Song Texts from the Seventeenth through the Twentieth Centuries: Volume II* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2002); Martha Gerhart, *Italian Song Texts from the Seventeenth through the Twentieth Centuries: Volume III* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2014); Beaumont Glass, *Brahms' Complete Song Texts* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle

Publications, 1999); Beaumont Glass, *Hugo Wolf's Complete Song Texts* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2000); Beaumont Glass, *Schubert's Complete Song Texts: Volume 1* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1996); Beaumont Glass, *Schubert's Complete Song Texts: Volume 2* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 1996); Beaumont Glass, *Schumann's Complete Song Texts* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2002); Beaumont Glass, *Selected Song Texts of Great German Lieder* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2004); Beaumont Glass, *Richard Strauss' Complete Song Texts* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle Publications, 2004).

55. Recent publications that have perpetuated Leyerle's system include the following: Jonathan Retzlaff and Cheri Montgomery, *Exploring Art Song Lyrics: Translation and Pronunciation of the Italian, German, and French Repertoire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Cynthia Vaughan and Meribeth Dayme, *The Singing Book*, 4th ed., ed. Matthew Hoch (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024). The web-based transcription archive IPA Source also utilizes the three-line approach in their downloadable transcriptions: <https://www.ipasource.com>. These resources will be discussed in more detail in part II of this article.

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