

Evolving the Master-Apprentice Tradition: A Pathway Back to a Student-Centered Pedagogy

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This article explores one of the oldest structures of formal education, the master-apprentice tradition, and how it has both persisted and evolved in the Western classical singing community in both name and practice. By studying the history of the master-apprentice tradition, contemporary pedagogues may contextualize their current practices while considering modifications that may yield a more student-centered pedagogy.

The master-apprentice tradition is rooted in the experiences of the master. This teacher-centered pedagogy establishes a clear hierarchy of power in the teacher-student relationship. From an inferior position, students may become dependent on their teachers and ultimately silence their own technical and artistic instincts.

Student and teacher interaction play a crucial role in the development of a student's concept of self and their agency to embrace autonomy. Teachers and students often assume the dependent relationship of the master-apprentice tradition as it allows them to fulfill roles they understand, and earnestly continue to honor traditions established by the singers and pedagogues of the past. The period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century is often regarded as the "golden age" of Western classical singing. During this time, Manuel Garcia II, Mathilde Marchesi, the Lamperti's, among others, codified much of the *bel canto* technique that continues to resonate throughout voice studios today. Much of the research concerning these revered pedagogues focuses on *what* they taught, but not *how* they taught. However, writings of the "golden age" pedagogues and their students infer that their primary focus was on the individual and independent development of each student. The teacher often relinquished the traditional role of "master," and assumed the role of mentor and co-learner. By examining the *how*, contemporary pedagogues may realize adjustments in their teaching that honor and build upon the knowledge and experiences of students, ultimately devising a more student-centered pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

THE PERIOD FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH to the early twentieth century is often regarded as the last "golden age" of Western classical singing.¹ Since this time, many singers, voice pedagogues, critics, and opera aficionados have mourned "the decline of classical singing."² Lamentations for the bygone days of this cherished art form frequently begin with questions: *Where have all the big voices gone? Why don't contemporary singers have the same dynamic flexibility of their predecessors? Why do singers today appear to struggle through phrases that the old guard seemed to toss off with ease and bravado?* Looking for answers, blame is often assigned: *Contemporary productions and overbearing stage directors don't*

allow singers to exhibit their full vocal potential. Casting directors and company management focus too much on the physical appearance of singers and not enough on their voices. Singers today do not have a deep enough understanding and appreciation for the traditions of Western classical singing. Perhaps some readers may have overheard or even participated in a similar exchange of grievances. Though they may begin with the best of intentions, these conversations are often as frustrating as they are unproductive. Lamenting singers of a past era or assigning blame to an industry seeking innovative ways to remain relevant and adapt to the demands of an ever evolving twenty-first century global society are complaints that do not offer solutions, nor do they provide a path forward.

It is all too tempting to focus on the singing, performance practices, and aesthetics of the “golden age” idols. One may get lost imagining what it must have been like to hear a live performance of the legendary stentorian power of famed tenor Francesco Tamagno, the deep sumptuous tone of illustrious contralto Clara Butt, the seemingly effortless flexibility of storied soprano Nellie Melba, or the time-honored resonance of the oft-lauded baritone Mattia Battistini. However, rather than focusing on the celebrated sounds these revered artists were able to create, perhaps it would be more productive to consider the pedagogy that gave birth to this unprecedented, and arguably, yet-to-be-replicated era of Western classical singing.

Contemporary teachers of singing often discuss voice pedagogy in terms of anatomy, science, and function. This invaluable information provides teachers and students of singing with a clear foundation in voice technique and instruction that is grounded in scientific evidence. In other words, it defines and explains *what* voice pedagogues teach. However, singing teachers should also consider voice pedagogy from the perspective of *how* they teach. Student and teacher interaction plays a crucial role in the development of a student’s concept of self and their agency to embrace autonomy.³ By examining the teacher-student relationship, voice pedagogues may find clearer means of communicating the *what*.

One of the oldest structures of formal education, the master-apprentice tradition, has both persisted and evolved in the Western classical singing commu-

nity since the seventeenth century in both name and practice — for example, *masterclass*, *master teacher*, young artist *apprentice* program. Though the art of Western classical singing and educational philosophy have changed over the last 400 years, in some cases certain teacher-centered aspects of the master-apprentice tradition continue to permeate contemporary voice pedagogy, establishing a clear hierarchy of power in the teacher-student relationship. By examining the history of the master-apprentice tradition, contemporary voice pedagogues may determine if any teacher-centered aspects of this tradition persist within their pedagogy as well as contextualize those aspects within the evolution of the tradition. Equipped with this information, teachers of singers can consider how and why the master-apprentice tradition may affect their current interactions with students, which could ultimately help forge a path toward a more student-centered pedagogy.

HISTORY OF THE MASTER-APPRENTICE TRADITION

The master-apprentice tradition evolved out of the European guild system of the late Middle Ages.⁴ These guilds established definitive rules and standards of quality, professionalism, and ethics, as well as provided support for infirmed members and the families of members who were deceased.⁵ In the sixteenth century, the master-apprentice tradition was universally adopted by the European guilds to educate young people in a trade or craft.⁶ At a young age, an apprentice would enter a contract with a master and move into their home, ultimately becoming a member of the master’s family. The sixteenth century concept of family was quite different from the contemporary one, as the family included everyone living in a household regardless of blood relation.⁷ A family was essentially a system of governance with the master of the household at the top and all other members—including his wife, children, apprentices, and servants—subject to his authority. Rooted in a patriarchal philosophy, the master-apprentice relationship was akin to that of an absolute monarch and his subjects. Robert Cleaver, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century author of the highly popular domestic guidebook, *A Godly Form of Household Government* wrote,

The governors of a family be such as have authority in the family by God's ordinance, as the father and mother, master and mistress. To whom, as God hath given authority . . . not only for their own private profit, credit, or pleasure, but also for the good of those whom they are to govern . . . If masters then or parents do not govern but let servants and children do as they list, they do not only disobey God and disadvantage themselves but also hurt those whom they should rule.⁸

Masters were encouraged to view their authoritarian rule as not only serving God but also providing the necessary structure for their subjects. Exercising their perceived divine authority, masters oversaw all aspects of their apprentices' education including professional training as well as morality and religion.⁹ The fabric of the master-apprentice tradition discouraged young people from exercising autonomy or expressing themselves freely.¹⁰ Individualism would upset the conventional values of the master-apprentice hierarchical framework and would not become popular until the Industrial Revolution.

The master-apprentice tradition was not only a form of education, but also an important part of a larger socioeconomic structure. The selective and domestic scheme of the master-apprentice tradition limited admittance to those few who were deemed worthy to receive training.¹¹ The framework of the master-apprentice tradition limited the opportunity for social and economic advancement by controlling access to education.

Young singers who demonstrated promise in the seventeenth century may have received the opportunity to study with a master teacher of singing. If selected, their family would enter them into a contract requiring the young singer to move in with the master teacher. In her book, *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice*, Janice Chapman recounts a perspective from her colleague, Gordon Stewart.

Adopting your pupil was possible and being regarded as a parent was quite common. Or a deputy one—in *loco parentis*. Until modern music colleges came to be the norm, even conservatory students lived in the house belonging to their teachers and could come downstairs for a lesson after a shout from a window.¹²

Cohabitation allowed master teachers the opportunity to monitor the singing of their apprentices closely

and consistently. Apprentices typically received daily voice lessons and were often forbidden to practice when not under the watchful eye of their master teacher. Eighteenth century castrato and voice pedagogue Giambattista Mancini reflected on the experiences of his teacher, Antonio Bernacchi when studying with Francesco Antonio Pistocchi.

One of his [Pistocchi] most famous pupils, was Antonio Bernacchi . . . Bernacchi undertook his difficult task bravely, willing to study the necessary length of time as the rules of his teacher required. He never missed his daily lessons, in order to avail himself of his teacher's advice. During this time of his study, he not only refused to sing in any of the churches and theatres, but even refused to sing for his most intimate friends. He continued living this way, until his teacher gave him permission to do otherwise, and at that time he startled the world with his art.¹³

Bernacchi's experience illustrates how the singing voice was developed slowly over many years and under extremely close supervision. It was quite common for apprentices to sing nothing but vocalises in their lessons for several years before they were permitted to sing repertoire. Eighteenth century master teacher, Nicola Porpora famously required his student Caffarelli to study a single page of exercises—composed by the maestro himself—for six years before he was allowed to attempt singing any repertoire.¹⁴ Many master teachers required their apprentice singers to complete a twelve-year course of study before they were permitted to sing in public or embark on a professional career.¹⁵

In most cases, master teachers were not paid for their tutelage until their apprentices started working professionally, often causing them to select their apprentices with much scrutiny.¹⁶ When it came time for the apprentice singer to embark on a professional career, it was the master teacher who acted as impresario or artistic manager. Masters commonly took half of their apprentices' earnings for the first couple years of their professional careers as compensation for their instruction.¹⁷ As famed late seventeenth/early eighteenth century voice pedagogue Pier Francesco Tosi wrote, "If the Singer should make his fortune, it is but just the Master to whom it has been owing, should be also a sharer in it."¹⁸ Since apprentices were a financial investment, it

was in the best interest of master teachers to take every step necessary to ensure their singers' successes.

One may imagine the individual attention provided by daily voice lessons and career guidance from a committed master teacher would be a welcome structure for many contemporary young singers. However, vocal instruction during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries left little room for young singers to exercise and develop their individual artistry. The authority of master teachers over their apprentice singers was absolute. Master teachers took charge of every aspect of an apprentice singer's training. Not only did they teach vocal technique, but also musicianship, languages, history, performance practice, religion, and morality.¹⁹ It was the job of master teachers to inculcate their apprentices in the many traditions of Western classical singing. The master teacher's authority, however, did not stop with aspects of their apprentice's education. If a prepubescent boy showed promise as a singer in the seventeenth century, it was the master teacher who often made the decision whether he would be castrated to preserve his unchanged voice.²⁰ The inherent authoritative architecture of the master-apprentice tradition clearly honored the *traditions* of singing over the *individuality* of the student.

A PHILOSOPHICAL DIVIDE IN THE TEACHING OF SINGING

Contractual apprenticeships continued to evolve throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the late nineteenth century, voice teaching began to bifurcate into two divergent philosophies—those who taught singing as an *art* informed by science, and those who taught singing as a universal *method* determined by science. This statement is not meant to paint a picture in which there were only two distinct philosophical perspectives among late nineteenth century voice pedagogues—honest critical historical analysis rarely adheres to the confines of such a binary. However, writings from turn of the century pedagogues and their students indicate a palpable division in the way members of the Western classical voice community utilized scientific advancements in their teaching and singing.

The attempt to codify vocal instruction as a scientific method perpetuated the master-apprentice tradition,

providing teachers with an intellectual rationale for ignoring students' observations of their own bodies. Famed nineteenth century soprano Sybil Sanderson studied for a while with Giovanni Sbriglia—teacher of legendary tenor Jean de Reszke. Sbriglia maintained that Sanderson must push more from her diaphragm, often causing her to leave lessons without the ability to phonate. Sbriglia advised Sanderson to purchase dumbbells so that she may exercise the muscles surrounding her diaphragm.²¹ Sbriglia wielded his scientific understanding—albeit misinformed—as an intellectual weapon, ignoring Sanderson's observations of her own body as she struggled to phonate. When weaponized to create an intellectual hierarchy between teacher and student (as Sbriglia appears to have done with Sanderson), one size fits all methods for singing can discourage individual and autonomous artistry while perpetuating the inherent cycle of gatekeeping in the master-apprentice tradition.

Many voice pedagogues embraced the advancements in science yet without allowing the teaching of singing to resemble a laboratory experiment. Teachers such as Mathilde Marchesi as well as Francesco and Giovanni Battista Lamperti, used science to inform their teaching, but not to create a universal method for singing. Even Manuel Garcia II, the pedagogue who is credited with inventing the laryngoscope and is often referred to as "The Father of Modern Voice Science,"²² did not allow science to triumph over the individuality of the student in front of him. Sir Charles Santley, accomplished baritone and student of Manuel Garcia II wrote,

Manuel Garcia [Jr] is held up as the pioneer of scientific teachers of singing. He was—but he taught singing, not surgery! I was a pupil of his in 1858 and a friend of his while he lived, and in all the conversations I had with him, I never heard him say a word about larynx or pharynx or glottis, or any other organ used in the production and emission of voice . . .²³

Malcolm Sterling Mackinlay, another pupil of Garcia II who studied with the great Maestro when he was in his nineties proclaimed, "His Method may be perhaps summed up in the doctrine that it was not a method—in the sense that he had no hard and fast rules—his object always being to make each pupil sing in the way most natural and involving the least effort."²⁴ In reference to his invention, the laryngoscope, Garcia II exclaimed,

“If it is used under the pretense that it can show how one must sing while the throat is opened in phonation, it is clearly an instrument of torture, and deserves to be thrown away without hesitation.”²⁵ Though Garcia II and many of his contemporaries studied and wrote like scientists, firsthand accounts of their teaching suggest they taught as artists. Science may have informed instruction, but a voice lesson was not a lesson in anatomy and physiology. William Earl Brown, reflecting on the pedagogy of his teacher Giovanni Battista Lamperti wrote, “Most great singers know very little or nothing about their vocal organs and lungs—and are largely self-taught. Each has a different idea of “how he does it” and that “method” is not exactly like the one his master taught him. The fact is—each voice is a law unto itself.”²⁶ Many of the revered voice pedagogues of the last “golden age” of Western classical singing approached singing as an inherently flexible artform, understanding that students learn best when they feel acknowledged as unique beings.²⁷ Learning to sing did not adhere to a predetermined calendar. Students were respected as individuals and encouraged to develop artistic independence and creative autonomy in their own time.

This philosophical divide continued throughout the twentieth century and now lives on in the twenty-first century.²⁸ There is no question that developments in voice science have served, and continue to serve, the art of singing. Understanding how and why the voice functions is inarguably a valuable contribution to voice pedagogy and research. However, when scientific evidence is valued over the sensations and experiences of individual artists, it further exacerbates the master-apprentice divide. Master teachers are commonly elevated in the eyes of their students to the level of infallible consummate artists.²⁹ Such an elevation may cause students to value the teacher’s observations of their voice over their own—silencing their thoughts as they seek the teacher’s approval, ultimately creating a teacher-centered learning environment. In a teacher-centered learning environment, the knowledge and experiences of the teacher are valued over those of the student.³⁰ From an inferior position, students become dependent on their teachers—afraid to make technical and artistic choices without approval. Some teacher-centered practices include requiring complete control over repertoire selection and not permitting students

to perform a piece in public until it has been heard by the teacher. In the lesson, teachers may limit space for students to share their thoughts, insist they understand a student’s voice or body better than the student, treat students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge of the art of singing, and perpetuate studio politics as they claim to possess the “secret” to a sound vocal technique. If young singers are taught to trust science over their own bodies, then they ultimately must depend on their scientifically informed teachers to evaluate the efficiency of their technique and the quality of their sound.

In his book, *We Sang Better* (a critical study of the pedagogy that yielded the last “golden age” of Western classical singing), James Anderson writes, “Approaching singing as an art, rather than a science, allows for the individuality of each singer and allows for the pursuit of ideals—different perhaps for each artist, but meaningful nonetheless.”³¹ Legendary “golden age” soprano Nellie Melba further illustrated this point when she observed, “Learn from the very beginning to depend upon yourself. Your teacher can do no more than point out the way. You must walk along it yourself. Use your own ears and do not depend on anyone else’s opinion.”³² Melba eloquently expressed the importance of autonomy. When one considers that Nellie Melba studied with Mathilde Marchesi, who was herself a student of Manuel Garcia II (“The Father of Modern Voice Science”), this quote resonates even stronger.

Voice science is not the only intellectual weapon with the potential to create a dependent student-teacher relationship. Traditions, such as style or performance practice may also be used to establish an intellectual hierarchy.³³ When students are convinced that their artistic choices are invalid if they are not grounded in historical performance practice, then they may become dependent on their teacher to validate or even provide them with an artistic perspective. Revisiting the great diva Nellie Melba, she noted, “When studying, do not ask yourself how the teacher would treat such and such a phrase. Delve deep down into your own self until your own feelings are reached.”³⁴ Turn of the century soprano Geraldine Farrar further illustrated Melba’s point.

How to lend color to one’s operatic impersonations is another thing with which no teacher can endow the singer. The latter must have her own vision of the

character she desires to create from her point of feeling, physical and mental. And this vision must come out of her own brain and heart—it cannot be built up out of studio coaching.³⁵

The famous French soprano and student of Mathilde Marchesi, Emma Calvé, echoed the sentiments of Melba and Farrar. “For only the artist who radiates a personality of her own, who expresses her own self, her own mind, her own soul, instead of traditions of others, wins to greater achievement and success.”³⁶ From these quotes, and many more like them, we may infer that several voice pedagogues of the last “golden age” of Western classical singing provided their students with the space to develop artistic autonomy by inviting them to make committed artistic choices in their singing. The teacher relinquished the traditional role of “master” and instead assumed the role of mentor and co-learner—listening with an empathetic ear and responding to the needs of students while encouraging their sense of individual agency.³⁷ Historically incongruent or anachronistic artistic choices are a valuable part of an artist’s development and the evolution of any artform. Throughout the history of Western classical music, composers and musicians shared artistic ideas with each other as they collaboratively created new traditions. Artistic individuality breathes new life into an historic artform, paving the path forward and providing relevance in an ever evolving twenty-first century global society.

THE VOICE AS IDENTITY

The voice is often a crucial component of one’s musical and cultural identity.³⁸ The vocal aesthetic produced in the moment of singing can be an expression of innermost feelings, something primal and courageously vulnerable. Living and teaching in a twenty-first century global society, voice teachers must provide space for students to embrace aesthetics beyond the Western classical sound. Vocal technique presented in binary terms—valuing the Western classical sound as “correct” and other sounds as “incorrect”—potentially denies students the opportunity to embrace their musical and cultural identity in the moment of singing.³⁹ In her dissertation, “Bodies That Sing: The Formation of Singing Subjects” Victoria M. Joyce writes,

Bel canto singing is a technique of singing that has come to dominate the discourse about what constitutes ‘good’ singing generally and ‘classical’ or formal professional singing in particular in the West. Central to the pedagogy of bel canto vocal technique is the perfection of the singer’s ‘tone.’ Without having vocal training, most people (in the West) can recognize this tone immediately as the sound of the operatic singer and associate this with bourgeois culture. In some cases bel canto singing appears to act as a kind of musical trump card whereby the bel canto singing voice receives more than its due recognition, often to the point of deferential homage.⁴⁰

Historically, the vocal technique associated with *bel canto* tradition was entwined with Victorian British colonialism. Emily Good-Perkins, contributing author to the book *Humane Music Education for the Common Good*, summarizes the research of music historian Grant Olwage,

In nineteenth-century Britain, vocal pedagogy was referred to as “voice culture,” where “culture” in the nineteenth century was synonymous with “civilization.” The “othering” of singing voices justified the use of vocal teaching to “civilize” and refine those who were not part of white bourgeois culture for the betterment of society . . . voice culture provided the opportunity for re-forming the voice, for colonizing yet more of the other’s body . . . the singing voice . . . became the vehicle for “symbolic violence.”⁴¹

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the concept of “voice culture” traversed the Atlantic Ocean to the United States, permeating the voice pedagogy community and ultimately American society. In 1908, Richard Cone, a voice instructor at the Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word in Boston, Massachusetts, lamented the bleak state of the American voice in his monograph, *The Speaking Voice: Its Scientific Basis in Music*.⁴² This monograph, and many others like it, were part of the “voice culture” movement in the United States, which strived to create standards for elocution and singing that would represent the cultural and socio-economic achievements of the country.⁴³ As the United States looked for its place among the elite economic and imperial nations of early twentieth century global society, it quite literally attempted to unite the voices of its citizens. In his article, “Forging a Sound Citizenry: Voice Culture

and the Embodiment of the Nation, 1880–1920” Scott A. Carter writes

Though unrefined voices could be heard throughout the national populace, authors regularly singled out the voices of African Americans and of the recently arrived European and Asian immigrant populations as particularly vexing. These Other voices posed for the cultured elite an aural and physical threat to what was perceived as a fragile national culture by transforming urban soundscapes into polyvocal communities beset with racial and cultural tensions . . . The voice culture movement responded to such change by delimiting which vocal expressions, and in turn, which bodies, could (and should) sing for the nation . . . Voice culture, in this sense, served as a means to exercise the power of race in order to forge sound citizenry.”⁴⁴

The American “voice culture” movement sparked a national multi-decade long campaign to reform voice instruction beginning in elementary music classes through collegiate and conservatory professional training programs.⁴⁵ Education historian Ruth Gustafson notes a long history, predating the twentieth century “voice culture” movement, of utilizing singing instruction in the United States to “fortif[y] the qualities of citizenship, duty, patriotism, and manliness as aspects of whiteness” in public school music education.⁴⁶ However, the use of science in voice pedagogy literature and scientific evidence to rationalize the efficiency of a civilized sound was new to the turn-of-the-century “voice culture” movement. In order to comprehend most writings about American “voice culture,” one required at least a cursory understanding of human anatomy and physiology. Carter writes, “. . . voice-culture authors suggested that by scientifically training the body and, in turn, vocal expression, one could literally sing the progress of American civilization.”⁴⁷ This is a clear example of the burgeoning field of voice science being used as an intellectual weapon to justify the “voice culture” movement in America and the othering of vocal aesthetics outside of the *bel canto* tradition.

Contemporary voice pedagogues must adopt an awareness of the Eurocentric aesthetics of beauty that may permeate their pedagogy, and the use of evidence-based instruction as well as historical based performance practices that are indicative of the Western classical sound to rationalize this aesthetic. While honoring the

teacher’s identity over that of the student, the master-apprentice tradition—both born and raised in the *bel canto* aesthetic—perpetuates hegemonic colonialist practices. It is not *bel canto* technique, historical performance practice, nor voice science that are inherently hegemonic, rather it is the use of such “standards” to other historically marginalized voices. Contemporary teachers of singers must shoulder the responsibility of creating space in the voice studio for a polycultural vocal aesthetic and a multiplicity of musical genres by utilizing student-centered and aesthetically non-binary vocabulary in their instruction that embraces the infinite shades of beauty the human voice can create.

POWERFUL DYNAMICS

Beyond the ethical and moral issues embedded in the master-apprentice tradition, this practice has been removed from its original context while attempting to preserve certain aspects of its antiquated pedagogy. Rarely do twenty-first century voice students live with their teacher, receive daily voice lessons, sing only vocal exercises for the first several years of their study, and fail to compensate their teacher until they begin a professional career. However, in their 2018 publication for Oxford University Press titled “Solo Voice Pedagogy,” authors Jean Callaghan, Shirlee Emmons, and Lisa Popeil wrote

The master-apprentice tradition of pedagogy has continued despite a breakdown in many of the assumptions underpinning it, and despite modern educational pressures. This continuous tradition has become fragmented, since teachers now confront a genre and style proliferation encompassing a wide span and geographical spread.”⁴⁸

In the book *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*, Jessica O’Bryan and Scott D. Harrison acknowledge that despite the evolution of voice pedagogy, “the transmission of knowledge remains one that follows the master apprentice tradition.”⁴⁹ Perhaps contemporary teachers of singing continue to embrace the dependent relationship of the master-apprentice tradition because it allows them to fulfill a familiar role they experienced throughout their education, as well as adhere to current institutional expectations.⁵⁰ The inherent hierarchy and gatekeeping of the master-apprentice tradition smoothly

aligns with the sclerotic top-down bureaucratic structure of most intuitions of higher education. Beyond the hierarchical foundation of both structures, both bureaucratic institutions and the master-apprentice tradition establish dependency and thwart autonomy.⁵¹ The authority—whether it be the administration in the case of institutions of higher education, or the master teacher in the case of the master-apprentice tradition—provides structure and security for the dependents, while the continued commitment of the dependents justifies the existence of the authority. Some contemporary teachers of singers working in higher education may feel painted into the master-apprentice corner by Western traditions such as classical-centric curricula as well as repertoire requirements for both matriculated and prospective students; specific musical and vocal benchmarks often communally assessed in semesterly jury examinations and recital hearings; and pressures from upper administration for quantifiable assessment data and increased graduation rates. Holding all students to the same aesthetic of vocal beauty as defined by the *bel canto* tradition, assessing artistry based on the accurate execution of historical performance practices indicative of the Western classical sound, and the use of scientific evidence to prove the efficiency of vocal technique may provide equality in assessment but fail to deliver equity for students. Some students may feel forced to choose between their artistic impulses and the expectations of the institution, ultimately requiring them to look to their teachers for approval and permission when making artistic, musical, technical, or career decisions. Some teachers may feel pressure to embrace their power over students to meet the requirements of their institutions and ultimately preserve the integrity of institutional bureaucracy.

The authors of the book, *A New Weave of Power, People, and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation* discuss four different types of power—power over, power with, power to, and power within.⁵² Power over is constructed by domination or control and motivated by fear. This concept of power is predicated on the belief that a finite amount of power exists in all relationships, which therefore requires individuals to claim power to achieve dominance. Historically, power over has been the bedrock of the master-apprentice tradition. The implicit gatekeep-

ing and dependent structure of the master-apprentice tradition puts masters in a clearly dominant position over their students. Power with encourages mutual collaboration that empowers all parties in the relationship. In power with, choices are made collaboratively, while considering the unique perspectives of all involved. Power with requires space for both teachers and students to share their thoughts and experiences in a lesson, ultimately making choices informed by their collective experience. Power to is the distinct potential each individual brings to a relationship. Without the need for domination, power to provides each person the capacity to shape and define their unique world that exists harmoniously with the worlds of everyone else in the relationship. Power to recognizes the legitimacy of individual experience in that teachers and students may experience or navigate aspects of the singing process differently from one another. Power within refers to a person's sense of self, and their agency to recognize what they contribute to a relationship while respecting others for their unique contributions to the dynamic. Power within emboldens both teachers and students to identify and value the opportunities for reciprocal learning in the voice studio. By embracing power with, power to, and power within, contemporary voice pedagogues may find ways to modify the power dynamic in their teaching, encouraging students to embrace their autonomy. Considering most twenty-first century voice students typically receive a maximum of one voice lesson per week, it is imperative that they become their own best teacher. Turn of the century soprano Luisa Tetrazzini wrote, "After all, each one must do the real work herself."⁵³ Rather than an environment determined to claim power over artists, voice lessons can empower students to embrace their independence while providing them the tools to teach themselves how to sing and explore their artistic potential while practicing.

CONCLUSION

Authentic singing requires vulnerability and autonomy, as it compels singers to contextualize their artistry within their worlds.⁵⁴ If the ultimate goal of teaching voice is to inspire a culture of autonomy, then voice teachers should reflect this in their pedagogy and process.⁵⁵ Contemporary teachers of singers must move beyond

the fundamental tenets of the master-apprentice tradition, grounding their teaching in a student-centered philosophy which leads to actions in the voice studio that provide space for agentic students. It is not enough to remove the labels of *master* and *apprentice* from the Western classical singing community, but the requisite teacher-centered practices of this tradition must also be removed. Rather than mourning singers of a bygone age, contemporary voice pedagogues may need to question their *how*—actively and purposefully considering or reconsidering the way they interact with students. *Do my actions encourage autonomy or perpetuate dependence? Is this mid-lesson voice science lecture for me or the student? Am I valuing science over the sensations of students? How can I include students in the selection of repertoire, making it a formative experience for all involved? Is now the time to teach this student about historical performance practice, or celebrate their bold artistic risk? How might I navigate the focus of instruction from curricular expectations to providing space for students to develop as artists in their own time? Am I denying students the opportunity to express their identity in their singing by imposing the bel canto aesthetic on them? Can I propose policy and curricular changes that provide more space for autonomy within the bureaucratic structure of higher education? Can I develop a rubric that provides the opportunity for formative and equitable assessment of singing?* Grappling with questions like these can cause discomfort but may ultimately provide both teachers and students more space for vulnerability and autonomy in voice lessons. Perhaps by paying heed to the pedagogy of the revered turn-of-the-century voice teachers who ushered in the last “golden age” of Western classical singing, contemporary pedagogues may find a pathway back to a more student-centered philosophy.

NOTES

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2. James Anderson, *We Sang Better Vol. 2 Why it was Better* (Barcelona: Beuthen Press, 2012), 67.
3. Christine A. Brown, “A Humane Approach to the Studio,” in *Humane Music Education for the Common Good*, ed. Iris M. Yob et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 94.
4. Jessica O’Byran and Scott D. Harrison, “Prelude: Positioning Singing Pedagogy in the Twenty-First Century” in *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*, ed. Scott D Harrison et al. (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), 2.
5. Kay Brainerd Slocum, “Confrérie, Bruderschaft and Guild: The formation of musicians’ fraternal organizations in thirteenth and fourteenth century Europe,” *Early Music History* 14 (1995): 258.
6. Steven R. Smith, “The Ideal and Reality: Apprentice-Master Relationships in Seventeenth Century London,” *History of Education Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (Winter, 1981): 449–459.
7. *Ibid.*, 449.
8. Robert Cleaver, “A Godly Form of Household Government,” in *Sexuality and Gender in the English Renaissance : An Annotated Edition of Contemporary Documents* Lloyd Davis, ed. Vol. 10 (Taylor & Francis, 1998), 183–211.
9. Smith, “The Ideal and Reality: Apprentice-Master Relationships,” 450.
10. *Ibid.*, 450.
11. *Ibid.*, 449.
12. Janice Chapman, *Singing and Teaching Singing: A Holistic Approach to Classical Voice* (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2017), 284.
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