



**Working Less for More in the Musical Theatre  
Studio: Connecting Expectations from the  
Industry with Practical Solutions for Young  
Singers**

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# Workshop Overview

- Current Industry Expectations
- Exercises
  - General Characteristics
  - Starting Point for Younger Singers
- Vocal Samples
- Suggestions

# Background of Current Musical Theatre Singing Expectations

1980s and 1990s

- *Cats* - Memory
- *Les Miserables* - On My Own



Traditional Belt up to C<sub>5</sub>

Full, Brassy, Chest Voice Dominant Production

- *So You Want To Sing Musical Theatre: A Guide for Professionals*, K. Hall

# Background of Current Musical Theatre Singing Expectations

2000s

- *Thoroughly Modern Millie* - Gimme Gimme
- *Wicked* - Defying Gravity, Popular



Contemporary Belt up to F5


Higher, Brighter, Powerful Mix-Belt Approach

Chest (dominant)-mix or Head (dominant)-mix

- *So You Want To Sing Rock 'n' Roll: A Guide for Professionals*, M. Edwards

# Background of Current Musical Theatre Singing Expectations

2010S

- *Frozen* (Film - 2013, Broadway - 2018)
  - Let it Go, For the First Time in Forever
- *Mean Girls - I'd Rather Be Me* 

"Movicals," Jukebox Musicals - Pop/Rock influence

# Casting for Young Adult Singers

## Broadway Casting Example - *Mean Girls*

Cady: Female, 18-27 - Broadway mix with exceptional range

Janis: Female, 18-27, Broadway alto with a rock belt

Regina: Female, 18-27, Broadway rock with an exceptional range

Aaron: Male, 18 - 27, Broadway and pop tenor

Damian: Male, 18 - 27, Broadway Tenor

# Casting for Child Singers

## Broadway/Tour - Child Principal Audition Examples

*School of Rock* - "Tomika," 8 - 12, A girl of ethnicity with a killer rock/gospel voice. Please prepare a short rock or gospel song to sing

*Finding Neverland* - "Michael/Jack," 8 -10, must have an unchanged pop/rock voice

*The Secret Garden* - "Mary," 10 - 12, a pure, unchanged girl soprano. Vocal range Ab3-D5

*The Secret Garden* - "Colin" - 10-12, Vocal range A3-E5

# Background of Revivals of Golden Age Musicals on Broadway

## Revivals

- *My Fair Lady* - 2018
- *Carousel* - 2018
- *Hello, Dolly!* - 2017
- *She Loves Me* - 2016

## New Musical Theatre Works in Style of Golden Age

- *The Light in the Piazza*
- *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*



# Versatility of Contemporary Musical Theatre Singers

“Broadway musical theatre actors are continually responding to the pressure to sing in diverse styles, from Golden Age classics to pop, country, rock, and hip-hop musicals.”

- *Cross-Training in the Voice Studio: A Balancing Act*, N. Spivey & M. Saunders Barton

## Example - Jessie Mueller

- “Jenna” *Waitress* - 2016, Tony Nominee
- “Julie” *Carousel* - 2018, Tony Nominee



# **Versatility** required for 2017-2018 College Musical Theatre Audition Requirements

## **Example 1:**

Two contrasting 32-bar song selections

- One 32-bar cut must be from the published musical theatre cannon
- One 32-bar cut may be from either musical theatre or a published contemporary piece
  - Pieces may be from rock, pop, hip-hop, jazz, gospel, country, opera, classical, etc.

## **Example 2:**

Two contrasting vocal selections (no longer than one minute each). One ballad, one uptempo. \*One selection must be written prior to 1970.

## **Example 3:**

Prepare two musical theatre song selections (32 bars to 1 minute per selection) that best represent your work. Selections may be from Golden Age, Contemporary Music Theatre, or Pop/Rock.\*At least one of the two selections should be contemporary (90s or later).

How do we, as a **profession**,  
balance *expectations* with the  
*needs* of young singers?



# Who are we talking about?

7-12 (unchanged voice)

12-14 (changing voice)

14-18 (developing voice)

18-22+(continuing to develop towards maturity  
around 25 y.o.)

## Changes include:

### 1. *Vocal folds:*

a) Size – rapid growth through puberty

b) Development of lamina propria

Develops 3 layers by 7 but not defined, developed by 12/13

vocal ligament, developed by 12/13

c) Cartilage/membranous ratio

Equal in childhood: adults 2/3 (membranous) 1/3 (cartilagenous)

Ossification:

d) Growth and ossification of larynx

initial growth until maturity

○artynoids calcify to anchor by 25 y.o.

○Changes again after 50

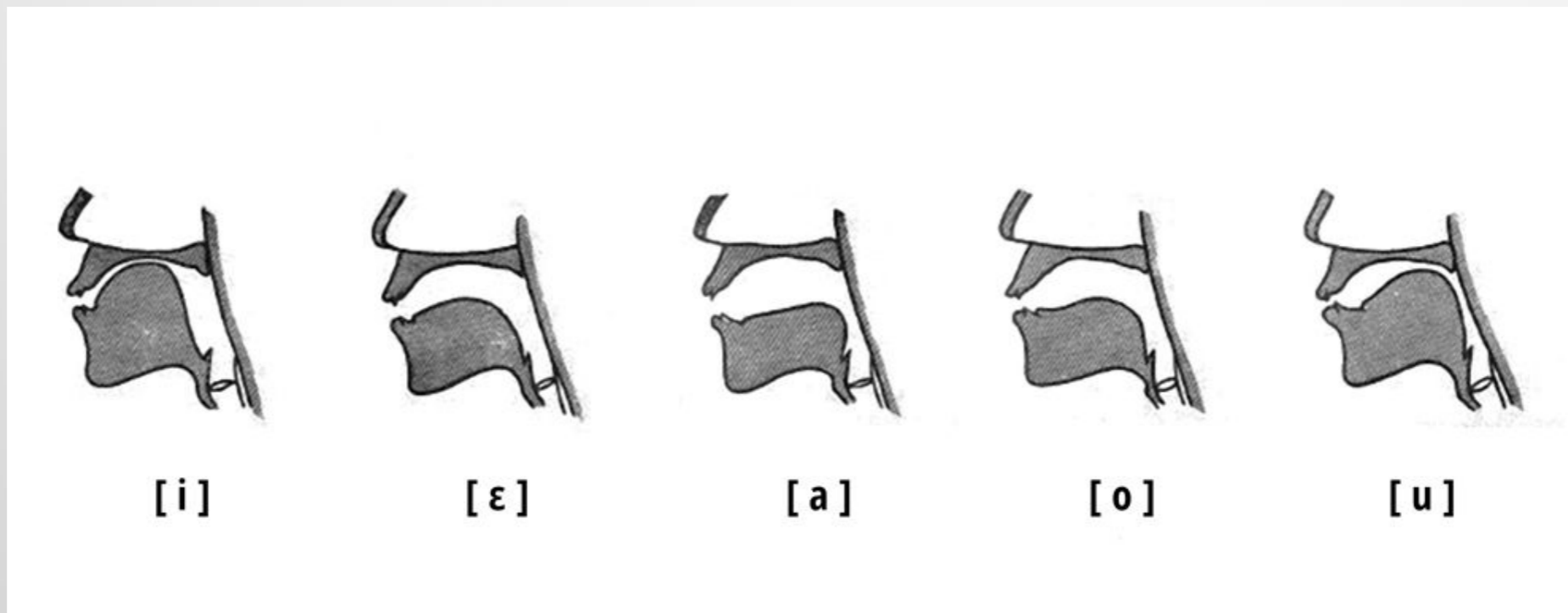
### 2. *Vertical Positioning/height (extrinsic musculature)*

### 3. *General body growth*

### 4. *Changes with muscles, tissue, and cartilage/bone with age*

### 5. *Hormones*

# What do our vowels look like in our throat and mouth?



# A review of traditional registers

- Fry or pulse                      Mode 0
- Modal, heavy, chest            Mode 1
- Falsetto, light, head          Mode 2
- Whistle, flute                    Mode 3
- *Overlap between registers*
- Laryngeal break @ c<sub>4</sub>-d<sub>4</sub>-e<sub>4</sub>-f<sub>4</sub> (ALL VOICES)
- Acoustical break (females) @ c<sub>5</sub>-d<sub>5</sub>-e<sub>5</sub>-f<sub>5</sub>
- Whistle @C#6

# Female CCM Voice

- When do we we “bend” the rules?
- Standard Belt – chest register is continued to C<sub>5</sub>
- High Belt – chest belt is “narrowed”, creating a new passaggio in effect, and taken to E<sub>5</sub> or higher.
- Mix is another qualifier in MT which has a different quality than the classical middle voice.
- Lissemore states: “the highest note to belt is the highest note of the whistle range, down an octave”



# How do we adjust registration?

- Laryngeal positioning
- Shaping of the oral-pharyngeal cavities by
  - Tongue placement
  - Jaw opening
  - Embouchure alterations
  - Relative tension and lift of soft palate
- Breath management
- **Doscher:** “Thus all 3 factors, air management, laryngeal positioning, and resonance coupling combine to determine register events...It seems only logical, then, that blending of registers should precede bigness of sound...”

# Categories and Sequence of Exercises - Females & Unchanged Voices

1. Middle voice exercise
2. Top down/heady
3. Middle/mix/nasal
4. Transition down to chest voice
5. staccato - minimal pressure
6. bottom up belting

**Adding text and improvised language (“What did you eat for breakfast?”)  
ASAP**

# Male CCM Voice

- Middle voice standard
- Baritenor voice
- Top voice options: minimal “cover” so options include lighter belt, mixing (voix mixe) or some type of falsetto

# Categories of Exercises - Males

1. Middle voice
2. Falsetto
3. Middle/nasal
4. Lower voice - stabilize larynx
5. bottom up/cover or belting
6. Middle voice

**Adding text and improvised language ASAP in the exercises**

# Faching our students

- We look and listen for:
  - Range
  - Tessitura (comfortable range)
  - Passaggi points
  - Color or timbre of the voice
  - Age and experience
  - Type and/or personality
  - What do the singers do well?

# Where do we agree....?

- Consider challenges in working with voice types other than your own.
- Consider variability in voices
- Where do we start when working with voices?
- What do we have in common in our approaches?
  - Top down
  - Middle voice
  - Vary ranges
  - Bottom up last

To Continue the Conversation:

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