

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening, that is translated through you into action and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable it is, nor how it compares with other expressions. It's your business to keep it yours, clearly and directly, and to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work; you have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open.

No artist is pleased. There is no satisfaction whatever at any time. There is only a queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and more alive than the others.

— *Martha Graham to Agnes de Mille*

If you are really a Queen of the Night, every role you list should be consistent with that.

PAPOLOS, continued from page 1

With that said, let's take a look at some very basic résumé questions.

What is the purpose of a résumé? It gets you the audition; it does not get you the job. You're only asking to have your résumé put in a pile of papers, to get one phone call, and then to have the courtesy of someone listening for a few minutes. If your résumé presents you in a way that enables the reader to understand who you are, and does so in a very professional way, he or she will probably extend you that courtesy.

What is a résumé? It's an historical outline designed to give practical information and pique future interest. That's it. It is not your obituary! It must accomplish four subliminal agendas: Acquaint, Impress, Assure, Intrigue. If you fulfill that subliminal agenda, the reader will not put it aside.

How do you meet those four goals? The résumé has to speak very dynamically to the reader and, at the same time, be as specific as possible. For example, if you are a lyric coloratura you should include roles that strongly underscore that point, rather than listing roles that cross over between *Fachs*. This may mean leaving some things out! If you are really a Queen of the Night, every role you list should be consistent with that. Don't include a lot of extras in an effort to be all things to all people. (Certainly, someone like Marilyn Horne would not have been able to follow this advice, because she could do almost everything. But there aren't too many Marilyn Hornes around, and most people should merchandise to what they are in a very targeted way.)

How long should a résumé be? One page,

never longer. And even that page should contain a lot of white space. The more you put on a résumé, the more confusing it becomes, and the more it appears that you're scraping the barrel's bottom to list everything you've ever done. The more white space on the page, the less discouraging it looks, and the greater the chances that it will be read.

Another benefit of brevity? You won't have auditioners shuffling through your papers trying to figure out who you are. They'll take a quick look and be able to pay more attention to you. They'll even like you more because you saved them the trouble of digging for information on each page of a multi-page résumé. You'll feel the difference at the audition as you respond to their interest and give a better audition.

Getting It Onto the Page

Now that we've covered the purpose of writing a résumé—to acquaint, impress, assure and intrigue—let's take a closer look at how to get your information down on the page in a way that supports those goals. Turn to page 5 and follow along.

Use high-quality paper. You can photocopy or print your résumé onto any tasteful color of paper—just be sure that legibility does not suffer. But make sure to choose high-quality paper. If you look through a stack of résumés from graduates of Harvard or Yale, you'll notice that all are on wonderful stock. A bright color can be part of your look, or a very high quality pure white. Just make sure that it works for you!

Don't use your letterhead for your résumé. It tends to grab the reader's atten-

tion away from what follows, which is what really counts. If you want continuity, use the same typeface as you do on your letterhead, and perhaps repeat any logo you use in a smaller size.

Place your name at the top, centered, in the middle. Put it in bold type, 24 point, logo style, in a very-nice font. Presenting your name in this way helps your name remain fresh in people's minds. When they encounter you the next time around, they'll think they read your name in the New York Times! On a subliminal level, it's very persuasive.

Under your name, center your vocal category. Put it in type slightly smaller than your name: Lyric Soprano, Countertenor—whatever! Don't make people hunt for this info!

Next, list union memberships in upper-case letters. Why place them so prominently? Union membership implies professionalism: "This person has worked before."

Next, put your address and phone on the left margin. Next to your phone number,

"This is as good as it gets!"

New York Opera Newsletter
1992 Training Program Survey

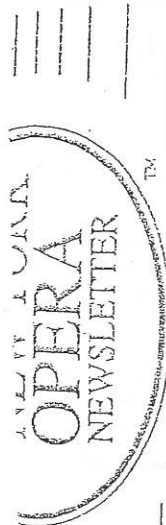
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JUNE 25 - JULY 15, 1995

FOR PERFORMERS AND DIRECTORS

...not only gave us marvelous tools to



The Classical Singer's Connection

Secrets of a Sexy Résumé

Janice Papolos,
résumé expert
extraordinaire, helps
you craft your ideal
résumé

Do you know how many brain cells there are in the human brain? About 10 billion. Do you know how many will be devoted to your résumé when it comes into a very hectic office and lands on a desk that is already loaded with important correspondence about upcoming concerts, contracts, and hundreds of other details? I'd estimate that about 20 brain cells are going to be devoted to you!

So it follows that your résumé has to be extremely dynamic and high-impact in order to cut through the clutter. The person who gets it has to be able to read through it in 20 seconds, understand who you are, and be impressed. Otherwise, he'll put it over on the left side of the desk, and three days later he'll say, "I already looked at that" and he'll throw it in the garbage. So you don't want to become leftovers. You want to be acted on today!

continued on page 3

Don't put "brown hair, brown eyes"! On paper that looks very boring.

write "Answering machine." This assures the reader that, with one phone call, you can be reached. (When the company director comes in at the end of the day and asks, "How many people did you reach?" that person will be able to say, "TEN!" And you will be one of them.)

Next, print your true height and weight on the right side of your résumé, right across from your address. And I mean your true weight. I give you five pounds, but no more than that. If you lie about more than that, you have to go on a diet as soon as you write your résumé. Also on the right, include your hair color and your eye color. Don't put "brown hair, brown eyes"! On paper that looks very boring. Try using "light brown," "auburn" or "chestnut" to mitigate the chance that "brown hair, brown eyes" will be perceived as drab.

The Body of the Résumé

After you've gotten the top of your résumé together, it's time to tackle all the main headings that follow. They should be the only text

in your résumé that is in capital letters (along with your union affiliations), since caps are harder to read and should be used sparingly. (Remember, you are trying to make the best use of those 20 brain cells that are being allocated to you!)

What headings should a singer use? Here are the main ones, but remember to use them flexibly. If you have nothing to put in one of these categories, you should obviously omit it. If you have seven things to put in one category, and only one in another, combine them. (Examples: you can create a hybrid category called ORCHESTRAL ENGAGEMENTS/RECITALS, or, PRIZES/REVIEWS.) It is also possible that you might put only one credit in a certain header if it is something you especially want to highlight: a wonderful review from a major critic, for example. So there are always exceptions if your reason for making them is strong enough.

With that said, here are the main categories you can use, omit, or combine to suit your purposes.

* **OPERA**—In this section, you list the roles you have performed. (A little later in this article, you'll see how to list them.)

* **ROLES PREPARED (or ROLES STUDIED)**—This shows who you really are, what your voice really is—and where your *Fach* is really going. So it can be even more important than the information listed under **OPERA**.

* **ORATORIO**

* **SOLO ORCHESTRAL ENGAGEMENTS**

* **RECITALS**

* **RECORDINGS/SOUND TRACKS**

* **FESTIVALS/TOURS**

* **RECORDINGS/REVIEWS**

* **AWARDS/COMPETITIONS**—List prizes won, and years.

* **EDUCATION or TRAINING**—List academic degrees, acting teachers, coaches. What about voice teachers? List only three or four, and list them alphabetically.

* **SPECIAL SKILLS**—This is very important. So important, in fact, that I'll devote some additional space to it later in this article.

How to List your Performance Credits

How should you choose which roles or performing credits to emphasize? You have to analyze your greatest strengths—one or two, no more—and showcase the most important one first. That may mean making some choices. If you did a small role with an important company and a leading role with a smaller company, deciding which to put first can be difficult. I feel that in most cases, it is more important to put your more impressive roles up front. If, for example, you have done *La Voix Humaine*, even with a small company, it is important to establish up front that you are the kind of singing actress who can handle a part like that—probably more important than listing that you did a walk-on with a major company.

Should you list Broadway roles performed, or operetta, along with opera? Probably not. If, however, you have done a part that is very operatic with an important company (and it serves to burnish your image as a singing actress, a character baritone, or whatever), do list it. If you performed Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* in an Equity theater, for example, include that! That's going to get you

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A fine indication of things to come!

Listing Bach shows good musicianship

A very vital credit in this Fach!

Means she's a smart singer!

She must be fit and able to move on stage!

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AGMA-SAG

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Weight: 135 lbs
Hair: Auburn
Eyes: Hazel

OPERA
Le Nozze di Figaro
Don Giovanni
Hin und Zurück

Susanna
Zerlina
Wife

American Opera Center
Opera San Jose
Rhoda Levine, director

ROLES PREPARED
The Rake's Progress
La Fille du Régiment
Ariadne auf Naxos

Anne Trulove
Marie
Zerbinetta

ORATORIO/ORCHESTRAL ENGAGEMENTS
Christmas Oratorio (Bach)
Mahler Symphony #4

Soprano Soloist
Soprano Soloist

Yale Philharmonia

EDUCATION
M. Mus.
B. Mus.

Yale School of Music
Indiana University

Voice
Minor in French

Voice with Klara Barlow, Ruth Falcon, Doris Yarick-Cross
Master Classes with Phyllis Bryn-Julson, Phyllis Curtin (Tanglewood), Ellen Faulstich
Coaching with Ross Barentyne, Benton Hess, Donald Nold

PRIZES
Metropolitan Opera

Winner, Eastern Region

1993

SPECIAL SKILLS/INTERESTS
Skilled Accompanist - Rock Climbing - Tennis - Breeder of Norwegian Elkhounds

Memberships in caps help her make the cut.

The truth, please!

Better than: brown hair, brown eyes.

A student performance, notable due to important director!

Headings combined for greater impact.

Shows smarts.

Only three teachers listed. More left off!

A vital category. Put it in your résumé!

Interesting, humane person! I'd like to talk to her.

in the door. Just put it under your OPERA heading, and let the reader decide whether *Sweeney Todd* is an opera or not.

How should you list each credit on the page? I think the best approach is to divide this section into three columns. In the first and middle columns, list the name of the work (italics are optional), and then the name of the role:

The Marriage of Figaro Susannah

Then in the third column, list the venue (if it is a prestigious company) or the name of the conductor, director, company, or an-

other important member of the cast, if that is more important.

Some examples:

Faust Marguerite Glimmerglass Opera
or ...

Faust Marguerite Lou Galterio, director
or ...

Faust Marguerite with Neil Shicoff

Resist the compulsion to include something in the third column every time. If you have mostly academic credits, for example, list your opera roles performed in only two columns and leave out venues in the third column. If there is too much academic aus-

pices on the right, people may be turned off.

Example: I was helping one tenor prepare his résumé. He had a number of extremely impressive performance credits, which we highlighted—at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and elsewhere. He had also performed a number of roles in school, which we listed under ROLES PERFORMED without listing the venues. One of those roles was Ferrando in *Così*. When a major management was trying to find a Ferrando for some upcoming performances of *Così*, they called him and he got an audition and the job. Listing the higher-end venues gave a clear indication of the kind of singer he was;

You have to give top billing to the things that are going to make someone sit up and take notice.

listing the fact that he had done his only *Così* in college would have only worked against him. I doubt he would have been called. This is a clear indication of a case where including less information can produce better results!

What About Dates?

People often ask, "Should I include a date for every performance I've done?" My answer is an emphatic no. I disagree strongly with people who say, "I wouldn't look at a résumé unless there is a date for every performance on it."

What do the dates do for you on your résumé? Will the reader go to bed at night thinking about them? No. Dates only limit you and lock you in. Let's say that your most impressive performing credit was a performance with Catherine Malfitano, or Edo de Waart, or a *Messiah* in Carnegie Hall. Facts like that establish right away who you are. But let's say that you did that performance five years ago. So are you going to lock that important credit somewhere in the bottom

quadrant of your résumé, simply because you think you are supposed to follow a chronological order? NO! You have to give top billing to the things that are going to make someone sit up and take notice. Put them up top.

In addition to locking you in, dates also reveal weaknesses: if you didn't have any major credits for four years, people are going to wonder, "Why was there this break in her performance trajectory? Did she have a vocal crisis? Was she sick?" It is better not to beg those questions.

Are there instances when you should put a date on a résumé? Yes. You should include them for the years you won contests or competitions. You can't say that you were a Met finalist, for example, and not give a date! You should also list the year when you expect to be awarded a degree, if you have not yet completed it.

Why List Special Skills and Interests?

Since there are a million Mimis, good use of the SPECIAL SKILLS section of your résumé can go a long way toward setting you apart from other people. And the SPECIAL SKILLS section can really break the ice when meeting people. So your résumé can serve as a tool that helps you establish rapport with strangers by providing something to laugh about or talk about, which can serve as a natural entree for you.

What kind of things should you include?

Fluency in languages other than English. If you speak Spanish, French, Mandarin, list that ability up front! Write "Bilingual in French and English" or "Bilingual in Spanish and English" or whatever. Why not just say, "Fluent in Mandarin"? Because,

unfortunately, the human mind finds nasty thoughts more compelling than the nice and the reader may conclude that your English is faulty if you were not born here! By listing yourself as bilingual, you short-circuit that negative process and underscore the fact that your abilities are a strength. (Should you list your basic language skills such as ability to sing in German, French, Italian? No, it is a given that any professional singer can do so. If you have proficiency in more unusual languages—Czech, Russian, Japanese—you might do well to list those under special skills.)

Ability to play musical instruments. If you play any musical instruments, list them. Doing so helps dispel the idea that you are an unmusical, dumb singer.

Sports and exercise. If are involved with some physical discipline, list it—it could be dance, or anything else that helps assure the reader that you are in very good physical shape.

Unusual interests. I worked with one singer who included in his résumé that he was a "Cultivator of carnivorous plants." And you know, every time that he walked into an audition, they would start asking about that! In another case, I encouraged a singer to include "Caribbean island connoisseur; gardener; attempts at bridge." It was witty. When he followed up to ask whether his résumé had arrived, the person who answered the phone said, "We got it this morning, we were all laughing, and we think you have such a wonderful sense of humor!"

So don't soft-pedal the SPECIAL SKILLS thing. It really helps you connect. Even if you only play tennis, put that down! The

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So don't soft-pedal the SPECIAL SKILLS thing.
It really helps you connect.

music director of the company may be looking for a singles partner. You never know what might work for you. Some things I've seen listed include: Monopoly champion, Star Trek aficionado (the original series), jogging, swimming, horseback riding, tennis, dance, gymnastics, photography, barn renovation. Let something of yourself shine through.

Things Not to List

What should you never put under SPECIAL SKILLS? Don't put down that you meditate, practice yoga, or are very religious. Those facts, no matter how important they are to you, can only give people reasons not to like you. (As I said, people tend to gravitate toward the negative. I even advise people not to wear a cross or a mezuzah in a photo, unless they are applying for a church or cantorial job.)

And don't put down the fact that you are a

parent. If you say you are the mother of two, people will assume that you won't be able to travel or stay late for rehearsals. And you are trying to assure the reader, not raise unnecessary questions. □

Janice Papolos has been on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music since 1987, where she teaches a graduate course called The Business of Music: Anatomy of a Career. She is also author of The Performing Arts Handbook, a terrific career guide which many of us have used in years past—and which is now lamentably out of print. Ms. Papolos also works as a consultant to Chamber Music America, for whom she counsels young musicians and groups on career building—including that ever-baffling question of how to construct a résumé. She also offers private consultations on designing résumés and press packets.

Answers to the Toughest Résumé Questions

There are certain ticklish questions that everyone asks regarding résumés.

* *Should you list your age?* No.

* *Should you list chorus church jobs?* No.

* *Should you include quotes from reviews?* If you have them, by all means include them. If you have a good quote, the reader may keep your résumé on file. It can also be worth getting a coach or famous teacher to say that you have a "beautiful voice" or something similar, and then put that on your résumé. If you worked with Phyllis Curtin at Tanglewood, for example, see if she will give you a quote.

* *Should you write "References Available"?* Not unless you are a coach. People list references on business résumés or add a line that says, "References are available upon request." Not a good idea on a singer's résumé.

* *Will a computer-produced, elegant résumé turn people off?* Never. I don't think a résumé can ever be too polished. The only cases when I've seen someone get angry at professional-looking materials was when I saw a jealous teacher say to a student, "Who do you think you are to present yourself in such a professional way?" (The student, wisely, decided to use the materials anyway.)

* *Should you exaggerate?* Never. Be honest. Don't try to gild the lily. If you're young, be young. If you're experienced, frame your experience in the best possible light.

* *How should you present the résumé?* Get it cut down to an 8x10 size, back to back with your photo. Staple them together on all four corners, with the points of the staples coming through the résumé side, since the staple points ruin the look of the photo and can crack the emulsion. Staple tightly, so that the reader won't cut his or her finger on the staple. If you draw blood, you won't get the job! Why not use wax or glue? Because they dry up and your photo and résumé will separate, so the filer will be able to find only your photo or your résumé.

* *Should you list opera chorus work?* In most cases, no. But there are instances where it can work in your favor. I worked with one soprano, for example, who participated in the world premiere of a new opera by an important composer. She put that down under her OPERA heading, adding the word "Ensemble" in the second column. Another way to elevate an ensemble credit is to give the name of the character you portrayed, if the character had a name.

* *Should you write in recent credits instead of producing a new résumé?* It is fine to write in one additional performance. Write it in red. But rather than adding two things, revise your résumé. If there is no room, drop something less important.

If you send in your résumé and get some important new credit within a few months, send a new résumé right away with a letter stating that you have an important new credit, and circle it on the revised copy.

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