

Training Contemporary Commercial Singers

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Elizabeth Ann Benson

Foreword by Elizabeth Louise Blades

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PUBLISHING

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The CCM Serenity Prayer

Grant me the serenity to mix the notes that I cannot belt,
the courage to belt the notes that I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Anonymous¹

¹ Adapted from Reinhold Niebuhr, 1932.

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Reviews

Jeanie LoVetri, Creator of Somatic Voicework™ The LoVetri Method

As CCM Vocal Pedagogy becomes increasingly important in the 21st Century, singing teachers are seeking intelligent, grounded approaches to help students develop and flourish. In this book readers are exposed to a broad range of experts, both pioneers and those of the next generation, who provide a wealth of information about CCM. It is a welcome and wonderful resource for all singers and teachers of singing.

Sheri Sanders, Creator of the Rock Musical Revolution, Rock the Audition

Hungry for information and generous to share it, Elizabeth put together a KNOCKOUT book that will send you into pedagogical heaven. Get this book ONLY if you want to truly diversify your training in the most in-demand kind of singing: Contemporary Music.

Dr Melissa Forbes, University of Southern Queensland, Australia

Elizabeth Ann Benson's book arrives at a critical juncture in the development of CCM voice pedagogy as a discipline separate from classical voice pedagogy. The second generation of CCM singing teachers (many of whom have studied with the pioneering teachers interviewed for this book) are well-educated and effective pedagogues who are now rightfully taking their place within the academy, schools and in private studios. Training Contemporary Commercial Singers makes a valuable contribution to the field by drawing together various threads of CCM voice pedagogy and will assist future generations of CCM singing teachers to understand the foundations of their pedagogy.

Michelle Markwart Deveaux, Owner & Founder, faithculturekiss studios: Home of the SpeakEasy Cooperative

A fascinating and overdue peek into many of the personalities, histories, and methodologies that have helped to create a foundation for teachers everywhere. We've been teaching pop/rock/jazz/etc for a long time – and Teaching Contemporary Commercial Singers is a wonderful resource to have: A round-up of the most in-the-trenches pedagogues telling us their beliefs, findings, and experiences on singing the musics of the people!

Melissa Cross, Founder of the Zen of Screaming Instructional Series

Teachers of classical singing outnumber the opportunities available for classical singers. Non-classical singers and their respective career prospects outnumber the population of teachers to guide them. Elizabeth Ann Benson has provided an important resource and comprehensive survey of the collective wisdom of some of the world's most respected and esteemed instructors. This is a welcomed step forward towards evidence-based pedagogy for contemporary commercial music.

Dr. Maryann Kyle, Professor of Voice and Chair of Graduate Studies in the Alabama School of the Arts at the University of Mobile and Director of Teaching Fellowship, International Performing Arts Institute

Elizabeth Ann Benson's new book, *Teaching Contemporary Commercial Singers* is an innovative collection of ideas and methods pertaining to the vocal technique needed for a successful career in commercial music. Delving into issues faced in cross training the voice, Dr. Benson offers insight into how technology meets technique and artistry. She clearly presents philosophies and methods of different teachers without bias, allowing the reader to decide for themselves which is the most effective method for singing in the myriad styles of CCM.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Lisa Popeil and Jeanie LoVetri for their long-term investment in my development as a teacher and scholar. This book would not have been possible without their early contributions, mentorship, and inspiring tenacity. Matthew Edwards is responsible for planting the first seed which became this book, and he has continued to be a source of wisdom, humor, and creativity throughout its development. I am deeply thankful for my many friends and colleagues in the international community of singing teachers who have urged me forward and encouraged me. Thank you to Dale Cox for her keen eye and enduring positivity. Thank you to Auburn University's College of Liberal Arts and Department of Theatre for providing funding and teaching leave. Thank you to my colleagues Chase and Tessa for regularly asking me how it was going, and for filling me with confidence. I thank my parents, Suzanne and Tim, and my children, Lydia and Miriam, for believing that I can do anything. I thank my nurturing partner for sending me off to write while he took care of the dishes on countless evenings. The largest thanks must go to the 26 contributors to this text. It has been a remarkable privilege to soak up their wisdom, shared so generously.

Elizabeth Ann Benson

Foreword

July, 2016, 54th National Conference of the National Association Teachers of Singing (NATS), Chicago, Illinois:

Mary Saunders-Barton (Bel Canto - Can Belto) and I sit down to chat about my idea for a second edition of *A Spectrum of Voices: Prominent American Voice Teachers Discuss the Teaching of Singing*. I intend to retain the original 2001 manuscript, but to expand on significant advances in vocal pedagogy over the years since publication. The plan is to include teachers whose specialty extends beyond classical art song/opera, particularly music theater and other genres nestled under the umbrella term coined by Jeannette LoVetri: Contemporary Commercial Music, or CCM.

As Mary and I converse, she lists names of teachers she recommends I interview; in short order, I realize that I can only include a few in the revised *Spectrum*. To do the subject justice, I must consider writing a whole new book.

This is that book.

Fortunately, Elizabeth Benson beat me to it and the world of contemporary vocal pedagogy is better for it. Elizabeth walks the walk and talks the talk, having immersed herself in the CCM world as a performer, teacher, director, researcher and, now, author.

I first met Elizabeth when we were active members of the Colorado-Wyoming chapter of NATS. Her energy, curiosity and vibrant personality were evident. I've watched her life and career blossom over the past few years as her achievements collect: tabbed for the 2012 NATS Emerging Leader Award; hired in her current position at Auburn University; selected for the 2016 NATS Intern Program with study under master teacher, Jeannette LoVetri. Writing *Training Contemporary Commercial Singers* is the natural progression of those accomplishments.

Elizabeth has gathered an impressive group of teachers who represent the very best in their areas, which include multiple CCM styles: music theatre, gospel, jazz, pop, rock, and what is now called 'cross-training'. Following the same qualitative 'interview response' approach I used in *A Spectrum of Voices*, Elizabeth's questions cover a range of topics under general headings (Approach, Elements of Training, Special Demands from the Industry, and Aesthetic Context). As she has stated, 'some of these topics are unique to CCM pedagogy, having played no part in classical pedagogy, and the need to address their pedagogical implications comes directly from the demands of the commercial voice industry'.

July, 1997, International Congress of Voice Teachers, London, England:

I am in the audience of over 1,000 voice teachers from the classical world. The day's schedule is devoted to 'Training British Singing Theatre' (aka, 'Music Theatre'). We are assembled not far from the West End, where *Les Misérables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Blood Brothers* and so many other record-breaking musicals continue their enormously successful runs.

Murmurs and mutters of disapproval erupt into outspoken disqualification for this 'renegade form of voice teaching'. Revolution seems imminent as the masterclass comes to an abrupt halt.

And then, amidst the uproar, Edward Baird rises and in his deep bass-baritone voice, calms the raging sea:

"Times are changing, and we must change with them. If our students are going to find employment, they must be able to sing and perform in these non-classical mediums - because that is where 75% of the jobs will be".

Janice Chapman and Jo Estill stand to join him in agreement and solidarity... as do a significant number of us in the hall that day.

Such farseeing prophecy has more than proven true, and Elizabeth's book is clear validation of our profession's health and vitality. It fills a void that needed to be filled, and I am proud to have this opportunity to say, "brava"!

Elizabeth Louise Blades

Author of *A Spectrum of Voices: Prominent American voice teachers discuss the teaching of singing* 2ed.

Preface

I love voices. I sang before I talked. I was raised on Mozart and the Beatles. While performing “Country Roads” (John Denver) in third grade, I figured out that singing is what I wanted to do with my life. I studied classical singing in college because I was led to it by my teachers. That is what serious students did. I entered a master’s program at New England Conservatory, where I hid the fact that I sang in a rock band on the weekends. I completed a DMA at the CUNY Graduate Center while listening to Metallica and Hugo Wolf on the subway. In the real world, I started teaching at a community music school. My high school students wanted to know how to belt, and there was just no way around the demand for this skill set. I realized that my students were going to belt with or without my support, so I decided to learn how it works, in order to support them. Finally, I brought my love of CCM genres out of the closet.

Lisa Popeil taught me how to belt. I studied her Voiceworks® method and I have not stopped asking her questions ever since. Later, I added Somatic Voicework™, the LoVetri Method and Estill Voice Training™ to my toolkit. I earned a spot in the NATS Intern Program, working on CCM singing with master teacher, Jeannette (Jeanie) LoVetri. The impact of her investment in my teaching is impossible to overstate. Both Jeanie and Lisa have been tremendous pillars of support throughout the process of researching and writing this book. I have also significantly benefited from conferences, professional development and the endless support of colleagues (whom I also call ‘friends’) from all walks of vocal life.

Eventually, I learned that my path is not unique. Many came before me and endured the same struggles. Many of the pioneers listened to their intuition, which told them to ask more questions, to dig deeper. I was driven by the same nagging thought in the back of my mind : ‘Wait a minute, that can’t be right...’ I listened to that voice and it has taken me on the adventure of a lifetime.

Elizabeth Ann Benson

1

Introduction

Elizabeth Ann Benson

The type of pedagogical training for voice teachers varies widely. There is no uniform method for how to teach singing, nor how to train singing teachers. Some teachers have formal pedagogical training, while others have none. To qualify to teach at the university or conservatory level, academic hopefuls pursue graduate training. However, the predominant type of voice pedagogy training available in graduate programs is *classical* pedagogy. Due to the growing number of collegiate programs in music theatre and commercial singing, current teaching jobs are rarely limited to classical styles. The increased demand for contemporary commercial (CCM) pedagogical knowledge reveals that classical music's dominance in voice pedagogy and in higher-educational systems is being challenged. We are reinventing the field of voice pedagogy to fulfill the need for CCM training, and to preserve the formal study of singing, both classical and commercial. In order to produce the most employable generation of teachers, access to CCM training methods must increase. No book can teach an individual how to teach singing, but this text provides substantive information about several established methods of teaching CCM singing.

The term “contemporary commercial music” (CCM) was coined by Jeannette LoVetri as a critical alternative to ‘non-classical’. LoVetri championed the term because it allowed these styles of music to be evaluated on their own terms, rather than being viewed through a classical lens.¹ In 2008, the American Academy of Teachers of Singing (AATS) stated that classical and CCM styles “are different aesthetically, psychologically, and acoustically, and thus demand different pedagogic approaches.”² Several pioneer CCM pedagogues – including Lisa Popeil, Jeannette LoVetri, Jo Estill, and others included in this text – have developed their own methodologies through research, singing, and in many cases, through collaborative scientific studies. These methods are available to teachers in the form of workshop training with the method-creator. However, because the methodology functions as the creator’s ‘for-profit’ business, the contents are often trademarked and protected. In the past, this has prevented comparative discussion of the methodologies which would serve to advance the field. This book lifts the veil on several prominent methods to facilitate detailed examination. Because there is no singular approach that the voice community has determined to be the best, readers are encouraged to explore the numerous methods presented in this book.

1 Jeannette LoVetri, “Contemporary commercial music: More than one way to use the vocal tract,” *Journal of Singing* 58, no. 3 (2002), 249–252 and “Editorial: Contemporary commercial music,” *Journal of Voice* 22, no. 3 (May 2008), 260–262, doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2006.11.002.

2 American Academy of Teachers of Singing, “In support of contemporary commercial (nonclassical) voice pedagogy,” *Journal of Singing* 65, no. 1 (September/October 2008), 10.

Inside this book

There are 26 contributing authors to this text. The interview subjects were identified as exemplary CCM voice pedagogues through an anonymous survey conducted in 2017. The interview subjects come from all over the world, representing Australia, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and the United States. They include the pioneering generation of CCM voice pedagogues and the generations that have followed. These next generations have benefited enormously from the groundbreaking work of their predecessors who paved the way for both the accessibility of knowledge and the legitimization of the field itself. The interview subjects come from a variety of stylistic specializations, including pop, rock, gospel, jazz, music theatre, popular culture musics³, and cross-training (classical and CCM). Given the diversity of this pool, this text will present and celebrate a broad spectrum of responses. The chapters of the book are organized by interview question, allowing readers to see a variety of answers on each topic. This structure encourages readers to consider several approaches before embarking on a process of discovery towards their own.

At the start of the chapter, the topic of each interview question is contextualized through a brief introduction written by the author. This introduction provides an analytical overview of the responses and when appropriate, presents resulting data in column charts or pie charts. Significant points of agreement and disagreement are outlined and discussed. In some instances, lists of resources are provided. The individual pedagogues' responses are then presented in an order that highlights pedagogical trends. At the end of each chapter, a list of references and recommended reading on each topic is offered to encourage readers toward further exploration.

The bulk of the text is divided into four sections: (1) Approaches; (2) Elements of Training; (3) Special Demands from the Industry; and (4) Aesthetic Context. In Section 1: Approaches, teachers respond to questions about their particular method or approach, identify teaching philosophies, and share details about their own training and performing. Section 2: Elements of Training, includes several questions on how teachers address particular elements of vocal technique. Each teacher describes his/her approach to teaching posture and alignment, tension, breath, support, registration, (in)consistency, belt, vowels, and expression. In Section 3: Special Demands from the Industry, teachers discuss the use of audio technology in the CCM studio, how to teach improvisation, training beyond the voice studio, the role of voice science in the studio, and teaching CCM singing to younger students (under the age of 18). Some of these topics are unique to CCM pedagogy, having played no part in classical pedagogy, and the need to address their pedagogical implications comes directly from the demands of the commercial voice industry. Lastly, Section 4: Aesthetic Context, presents responses on admirable professional singers, teachers' perceptions of successful commercial singers, and the trademarks of excellent singing in commercial music. In response to the data, a brief discussion of where CCM pedagogy stands and where it may go is offered.

Several additional elements of training deserve specific exploration within a CCM pedagogical context, but they are beyond the scope of this text. In the future, the study of pedagogical approaches to extra-vocal techniques or distortions (such as creak, rattle,

3 Popular culture musics (PCM) is an Australian term equivalent to contemporary commercial music (CCM). More information may be found in Diane Hughes, "Contemporary vocal artistry in popular culture musics: Perceptions, observations, and lived experiences," in *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*, ed. Scott D. Harrison and Jessica O'Bryan (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 287–301.

growl, grunt, scream, yodel, squall, or whoop) would be of particular relevance. There is no discussion of agility training for CCM riffs, runs, and licks, which often utilizes modal scales, blues scale, major and minor pentatonic scales, and the minor hexatonic scale. Also missing is the specific training of onsets, offsets, articulation, and the role of percussiveness, both in relation to consonants and to vocal agility in CCM styles. Additional complications specific to CCM which would be worthy of further research are: learning to hear and monitor one's own voice in an amplified sound environment; playing an instrument and singing at the same time; and improvising vocal harmonies. Until the results of such future research are available, a list of published resources on these topics is included at the end of this chapter.

Commercial singing

Within the Academy, classical music has been the predominant genre of study in music departments for a century, while popular music has been marginalized. In *The Crisis of Classical Music in America* Robert Freeman states: "Because the introduction of classical music to America in the mid-nineteenth century implied the social and intellectual superiority of those who supported such music, we have acted as though those repertoires are *implicitly superior* to other kinds of music" (emphasis added).⁴ The study of 'music' has actually meant the study of 'classical music'. However, popular tastes are now challenging that structure with increasing demand for commercial music. According to the National Endowment for the Arts survey data, consumption of commercial music was reported at significantly higher rates than consumption of all other genres of music: 47% of U.S. adults use electronic media to consume broadcasts or recordings of rock, pop, country, folk, rap, or hip-hop music.⁵

The Academy has increased demand for those who teach multiple styles equally well, as noted by classical pedagogue Scott McCoy. He states: "Few, if any, of the pedagogy students at my university will have the option to pursue a teaching career as narrowly focused as mine".⁶ Modern voice teachers must expand beyond the classical aesthetic.

Musical theatre programs have exploded since 1968 and are now established at 140 institutions in the United States.⁷ Musical theatre singing can be viewed as a stylistic bridge between classical singing and CCM singing because it requires the application of technique in both classical styles (legit music theatre) and CCM styles (rock and contemporary musical theatre). Singers are being asked to become increasingly versatile in order to gain employment in musical theatre, requiring university programs to provide voice instruction in all rock styles, as well as legit and contemporary musical theatre styles. However, a survey published in 2009 found that only 19% of those teaching musical theatre had any pedagogical training in CCM.⁸ As a result, hundreds of teachers seek independent CCM training each year.

There are now approximately 30 university programs in the U.S. which offer a degree in 'commercial' or 'popular' music with a singing emphasis or concentration, and that

4 Robert Freeman, *The Crisis of Classical Music in America: Lessons from a Life in the Education of Musicians* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), xix.

5 National Endowment for the Arts, *A Decade of Arts Engagement: Findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2002-2012* (Washington DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2015), 27.

6 Scott McCoy, "Why I don't teach belting," *Journal of Singing* 70, no. 2 (November/December 2013), 182.

7 Wendy LeBorgne and Marci Rosenberg, *The Vocal Athlete* (San Diego: Plural, 2014), 225.

8 Edrie Means Weekly and Jeannette LoVetri, "Follow-up Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) Survey: Who's teaching what in nonclassical music," *Journal of Voice* 23 (2009), 371.

1 Introduction

number is growing.⁹ Many programs have been established within the past 10 years, and most have been added to previously established classical music programs. Many programs do not employ dedicated CCM singing teachers but instead, rely on classical voice teachers to provide commercial singing instruction. This is not ideal because most classical teachers would not have had any formal CCM training and therefore, would be unlikely to possess the skills required to meet the needs of both classical and commercial students without seeking further training. However, it reflects an institutional-level desire to integrate classical and CCM voice training.

Currently, there are only two university programs in the U.S. with graduate degrees in non-classical voice pedagogy: Shenandoah Conservatory (CCM) and Pennsylvania State University (Musical Theatre Pedagogy). These programs are well-designed, but they yield very few graduates each year. An undergraduate degree does not qualify one to teach at the university level, so most academic hopefuls seek graduate study in a variety of classical or jazz performance programs, or sometimes Ph.D. programs in music education. However, these programs rarely offer thorough pedagogical training to teach CCM singing at the university level. At this time, there are zero doctoral programs in CCM voice pedagogy in the U.S. This creates a troubling disparity between the number of CCM teachers needed and the number of teachers who have specific formal training.

A course in voice pedagogy is increasingly being offered to undergraduate voice majors, but it is not always required. Moreover, this course is usually conflated with vocal anatomy and physiology. Knowledge of vocal anatomy and physiology is critical for the development of kinesthetic awareness, and this is beneficial for every singer not just every aspiring teacher. Therefore, the study of anatomy and physiology may serve singing students better if it were included as a required unit within applied voice lessons. Even when a voice pedagogy course is focused on actual pedagogy, the content of the course is often limited to *classical* aesthetics to serve *classical* repertoire. In these cases, the outdated presumption persists that technical training in the classical aesthetic is sufficient to sing in any style.

For more than three decades, the classical pedagogy community has officially recognized the need for teachers to be familiar with pedagogical skills beyond the classical aesthetic. In a 1985 column in the *Journal of Singing* (then called *The NATS Bulletin*), Robert Edwin posed the question “Are we the national association of teachers of *classical* singing?”¹⁰ In a 2001 article, NATS past President Roy Delp asked “Could the mission of our new century be to turn our attention to teaching healthy singing in all styles?”, and he continued, questioning his duty to provide opportunities for his students beyond his “own artistic tastes and preferences.”¹¹ In a 2013 article, NATS Past President Scott McCoy states “Our curricula must be adapted to suit the needs and expectations of the real world, which includes skill in teaching both classical and CCM genres and techniques”.¹² If undergraduates could be exposed to the application of vocal technique in a variety of styles, young teachers would indeed be more prepared for the real world.

9 Jessica Baldwin, “Commercial Voice Degrees, Diplomas, and Certificates,” *Commercial Voice Resources Blog*, accessed on May 19, 2017, <http://www.commercialvoiceresources.com/commercial-voice-programs-us>.

10 Robert Edwin, “Are we the National Association of Teachers of Classical Singing (Revisiting 1985),” *Journal of Singing* 67, no. 5 (May/June 2011), 589–590.

11 Roy Delp, “Now that the belt voice has become legitimate...,” *Journal of Singing* 57, no. 5 (May/June 2001), 1–2.

12 McCoy, “Why I don’t teach belting,” 182.

Integration

The integration of commercial and classical music programs has significant benefits which the Academy should seriously consider. In traditional university music departments, Freeman states “...we have failed to adequately broaden our students’ interests and skills in non-European musics, in music of the twentieth and twenty-first century, and in the popular music beloved by the majors and non-majors alike”.¹³ By marginalizing the cultural and artistic importance of popular music, classical programs exclude countless prospective students. In an exclusively classical music program, students who enter college with a passion for popular music are unable to study their preferred genres. Unless they have had access to prerequisite skills and knowledge, they are also denied the opportunity to learn about classical music. This limits not only the number of music majors but also, the growth of new classical audiences.

As arts programs in primary and secondary public schools are cut, only the students who can afford private music study are receiving the foundational training which will allow them to compete in classical collegiate programs. Harvard University is one of the first institutions to publicly acknowledge that their traditional classical curriculum contained an implicit requirement that students come into the program with several years of previous study. The director of undergraduate studies at Harvard identified that requirement as “ultimately, a class-based implicit requirement”¹⁴ which prevented growth in diversity among their student body. They have recently revised their curriculum to offer students the opportunity to pursue a music major in any genre of music according to each student’s “artistic aspirations”.¹⁵ Most universities in the U.S. have an action plan to improve diversity and inclusion. Traditional classical music programs which continue to exclude commercial music from formal study are perpetuating class-based discrimination. While this discrimination may be unintentional, it is time to reexamine the status quo: an academic hierarchy which places classical music above all other styles. Integrating popular music into pre-existing classical programs can increase enrollment and ensure the viability of the entire department, but it will also require a commitment to consciously shaping the future of music education towards greater inclusivity.

The integration of commercial and classical programs does not pose a threat to classical programs. In fact, it could be the best way to ensure the survival of classical music programs, even as classical enrollment numbers decrease. John Covach states that the integration of pop music into a classical curriculum “offers the prospect not only of making significant advances in musical education, diversity, and inclusion but also of protecting and preserving the rich accomplishments of the American music-school tradition”.¹⁶ There will always be a path for the most talented classical singers at Juilliard, the Academy of Vocal Arts, and other top conservatories. Young artist programs such as Merola and Lindemann will continue to foster the highest echelon of young operatic talent. However, even in these elite programs, singers are asked to perform cabaret, jazz, musical theatre, and other CCM styles in order to fund-raise and reach a larger audience. Contemporary Art Song expert Sharon Mabry explains “We must capture the attention of a larger pool of listeners by offering a gourmet’s

13 Freeman, *The Crisis of Classical Music in America*, xix.

14 Anne Schreffler, Director of Undergraduate Studies at Harvard University, quoted in Robin William, “What controversial changes at Harvard mean for music in the university,” *The Log Journal*, accessed on 16 May 2017, <http://thelogjournal.com/2017/04/25/what-controversial-changes-at-harvard-means-for-music-in-the-university/>.

15 Ibid.

16 John Covach, “Rock Me, Maestro,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 61.21 (2015), accessed on 21 May 2017, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Rock-Me-Maestro/151423>.

delight in musical style, mood, and vocalism, and by giving the audience more choices and new alternatives to the standard concert fare”.¹⁷ In university and conservatory programs, teachers should provide this training for all singers.

Training singers

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing states that no matter the style of music or pedagogical methods employed, the goal of any singing teacher should be to guide the student toward “efficient, healthy, and artistically expressive” singing.¹⁸ Even when we can agree on the same goals, the methods used to attain them vary widely. Terminology itself has been a barrier to the debate and discourse critical to the development of the field. In academia, CCM pedagogues are already a marginalized population because they stand outside of the classical majority. This text seeks to move past terminological debate and into the substance of vocal function so that the field of CCM voice pedagogy may become aware of its own unity and embrace its inherent diversity.

In this text, ‘technique’ is defined as how one creates a desired sound with the voice, and ‘style’ is the application of learned techniques into musical repertoire. This critical distinction was presented by Cornelius Reid in 1975 when he advised pedagogues to clearly delineate between ‘function’ and ‘aesthetics’.¹⁹ If pedagogical approaches to technique can be separated from individual stylistic preferences, voice pedagogy could become a unified field, welcoming both classical and CCM approaches. In 1985, Robert Edwin asserted that a shift in pedagogic perspective from “exclusive (only certain vocalizations are acceptable)” to “inclusive (many vocalizations are acceptable)” is all that it takes to become a singing teacher of “great service”.²⁰

Voice science and voice pedagogy

When identifying technical and functional elements of voice use, scientific knowledge is critical. Voice science includes communication disorders, speech-language pathology, and laryngology. It can inform voice pedagogy, but voice science is a separate field. Voice pedagogy is and remains an *art*. The interview subjects in this text are all pedagogues. A few of them are also scientists, researchers, or clinicians, but the questions they answer have to do with their pedagogical methods. In this text, teachers describe how they use voice science in the studio, if at all. Some of the views expressed are rooted in voice science and some are not. It is important to note that university voice science courses are not regularly available to voice majors or music majors. Except for a few courses such as The Summer Vocology Institute offered through the National Center for Voice and Speech (NCVS), singing teachers must self-educate in the subject of voice science.

Discrepancies among the responses are to be expected; as the authors of *The Vocal Athlete* point out, both classical and CCM voice pedagogies still rely on “conventional wisdom and empirical observation combined with the research that does exist” in the process of perpetual

17 Sharon Mabry, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Vocal Music: A Practical Guide to Innovations in Performance and Repertoire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5–6.

18 American Academy of Teachers of Singing, “In support of contemporary commercial (nonclassical) voice pedagogy,” 10.

19 Cornelius L. Reid, *Voice: Psyche and Soma* (New York: Joseph Patelson Music House, 1975), preface.

20 Robert Edwin, “Are we the National Association of Teachers of Classical Singing?,” *The NATS Bulletin* 41, no. 5 (May/June 1985): 40, reprinted in Robert Edwin, “Are we the National Association of Teachers of Classical Singing (Revisiting 1985),” *Journal of Singing* 67, no. 5 (May/June 2011), 590.

refinement.²¹ Simply put, many of the responses are opinions based on significant experience, and the pedagogues reserve the right to change their minds at any point to keep up with the advancements in voice science. The most substantial discrepancies will be discussed and contextualized in the introduction of each chapter.

While some may argue that it is not possible, many master-level teachers report that they feel more aware of vocal function. These perceptions could be neurological, acoustic, or kinesthetic, or some combination thereof. It is reasonable to preserve the possibility that proprioception can increase with detailed study. Classical teachers have historically relied upon their eyes and ears to perceive vocal function, regardless of whether or not the perceived function reflected the actual function. Well-respected pedagogues still use the phrase “to sing off the breath,” even though it is scientific fact that singing can only be achieved “on the breath.” For hundreds of years, the eyes and ears were the best (and only) tools available to perceive vocal faults and to prescribe changes. Even if an approach is not fully aligned with the latest voice science, it can still be an effective means to achieve a desired result. Voice science cannot and should not replace the *art* of pedagogy. However, the two fields mutually benefit from an understanding of one another.

Collaborative scholarship between voice pedagogues and voice scientists is increasing. The singing voice specialist and the vocologist function to integrate “science, medicine and voice therapy with the artistry of singing and teaching”.²² Only a small number of singing teachers would call themselves singing voice specialists or vocologists, but this number is growing. Many of the pedagogues interviewed in this text are respected scholars who have collaborated in research and education with prominent voice scientists, including Johann Sundberg,^{23,24} Peak Woo,²⁵ and Ingo Titze.²⁶ The studies cited here are only a representative sample, and readers are encouraged to explore each interview subject’s own publications. Collaborative work demonstrates that these pedagogues are working to fortify the shared interests of the entire voice community.

Conclusion

Singing teachers should maintain flexibility in training methods as developments happen in science and pedagogy. In the concluding chapter of *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*, the editors state: “We have a responsibility to encourage unorthodoxy, welcome diversity and embrace openness to create the cultural and structural conditions to kindle (or re-ignite) learning”.²⁷ This is a monumental yet critical task for the future of voice pedagogy. The voice community has not identified any single method as the best or the most effective. Therefore,

21 Wendy D. LeBorgne and Marci Rosenberg, *The Vocal Athlete* (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2014), 225.

22 Scott McCoy, “Singing Pedagogy in the Twenty-First Century: A Look Toward the Future,” in *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*, ed. Scott D. Harrison and Jessica O’Bryan (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 17.

23 Johan Sundberg, Margareta Thalén, and Lisa Popeil, “Substyles of belting: Phonatory and resonatory characteristics,” *Journal of Voice* 26, no. 2 (January 2012), 44–50, doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2010.10.007.

24 Johan Sundberg, P Gramming, and Jeannette LoVetri, “Comparisons of pharynx, source, formant, and pressure characteristics in operatic and musical theatre singing,” *Journal of Voice* 7, no. 4 (December 1993), 301–310, doi.org/10.1016/S0892-1997(05)80118-3.

25 Jeannette LoVetri, Susan Lesh, and Peak Woo, “Preliminary study on the ability of trained singers to control the intrinsic and extrinsic laryngeal musculature,” *Journal of Voice* 13, no. 2 (1999), 219–226, doi.org/10.1016/S0892-1997(99)80024-1.

26 Jeannette LoVetri was a visiting faculty member at The Summer Vocology Institute in 2016.

27 Scott D. Harrison and Jessica O’Bryan, “Postlude: The Future of Singing Pedagogy” in *Teaching Singing in the 21st Century*, ed. Scott D. Harrison and Jessica O’Bryan (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 413.

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it may be beneficial for teachers to explore several methods in order to maximize their pedagogical skill set.

Increased demand for CCM pedagogical knowledge reveals that we are challenging classical music's dominance in voice pedagogy and in higher-educational systems. We are reinventing the field of voice pedagogy in order to fill this void and to preserve the study of singing, both classical and commercial. Due to the growing number of collegiate programs in music theatre and commercial singing, current teaching jobs are rarely limited to classical styles. Until doctoral programs are developed to prepare university-level teachers to teach CCM singing, the field will rely on private training. This book will not teach the reader how to teach singing. However, as demand increases for teaching CCM styles and techniques, it may be a helpful resource to aid the understanding of significant differences and similarities between several CCM approaches and to develop a personal pedagogical approach.

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SECTION I:
Approaches

2

Methods

A *method* is an organized process, a body of skills, and a systematic mode of inquiry. When defined broadly in this way, every voice pedagogue employs his or her own method formed by personal knowledge and experience. By contrast, a *methodology* is a “particular set of procedures” or “body of rules employed by a discipline”.¹ While it is difficult to categorize each pedagogical approach because each is unique and multi-faceted, some effort has been made to group the approaches into categories. They range from strict methodologies to the complete rejection of methodology in favor of an eclectic or independent model. Readers are encouraged to study each approach in more depth so that nuances may be understood at a deeper level than the scope of this text may offer.

Six pedagogues have developed methodologies of CCM singing, which are available to students of singing through workshops and masterclasses, and to teachers of singing through teacher training or certification. These methodologies are listed below, and some examples include Somatic Voicework, The LoVetri Method™ and Estill Voice Training®. These methodologies are the first of their kind in CCM voice training, and their founders have pioneered and defined the field. A CCM voice pedagogue should explore and study all of these invaluable methodologies as they form the foundation of “comparative” CCM voice pedagogy.

Four pedagogues have a well-organized point of view which may have a trademarked label but do not represent a rigid methodology of training. These models may or may not offer practitioner training. These more flexible approaches are listed below, and examples include *Bel Canto/Can Belto* and Soul Ingredients® Method. Details of each approach will be presented here and in the following chapters.

As the field has progressed, an increasing trend towards flexibility has emerged. The majority of pedagogues (60%) identify as practitioners who do not teach a particular methodology but instead, draw upon many eclectic sources, such as several methodologies included in this text, performing and pedagogical experience, and study of voice science. As more voice science research emerges on the topic of CCM singing, practitioners wish to remain flexible in order to be able to respond to these changes.

Ten of the pedagogues (40%) eschew the use of a single methodology in CCM voice training. They argue that every student is unique, and they draw from many sources to find solutions. Several pedagogues state that due to the complexity of the voice, there is no particular set of procedures which is vast enough to provide answers to every challenge. In response to this trend, some of the newer teacher training programs have no central approach to their

¹ Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/methodology, accessed on August 29, 2018.



About the Author

Praised for her ‘delightful’ (*The Boston Globe*) and ‘delicately compassionate’ (*Times Herald Record*) singing, Elizabeth Ann Benson is recognized as a dynamic and versatile performer. In her Carnegie Hall début, she created the title role of *Lucy* by Tom Cipullo, and her performance was acclaimed as ‘excellent’ (*The Big City*). She specializes in performing and teaching crossover vocal styles, spanning from opera to musical theatre to rock. She is trained in Somatic Voicework™, the LoVetri Method, Lisa Popeil’s Voiceworks® method, and Estill Voice Training™. She is a 2016 graduate of the Intern Program of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and a 2012 recipient of the NATS Emerging Leader Award. She has published research on contemporary voice pedagogy in *American Music Teacher* and has presented at national conferences for The Voice Foundation, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, the Association for Popular Music Education, and the College Music Society. She is a graduate of Occidental College (BA), New England Conservatory (MM), and The City University of New York Graduate Center (DMA). At Auburn University, she is Assistant Professor of Music Theatre and serves as the music theatre singing specialist for the Department of Theatre. www.elizabethannbenson.com

