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An analysis of vocal pedagogical techniques employed by voice teachers and vocal coaches in universities along the East-West corridor in Trinidad.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the pedagogical techniques used by voice teachers and vocal coaches in universities along the East-West corridor in Trinidad. It examines their pedagogical approaches and compares them to international standards. In so doing, the paper identifies the range of pedagogies being used in this part of Trinidad and explores how these methodologies are utilised to address vocal fundamentals and vocal faults. This study seeks to fill a gap in academic literature in the field of vocal pedagogy. The information presented in this paper was garnered through interviews with four active voice teachers and vocal coaches in three local universities. The universities represented in this paper are the University of the West Indies, the University of the Southern Caribbean, and the University of Trinidad and Tobago. This study presents an interrogation of voice teachers' approaches to teaching breathing and posture as the two primary fundamentals of singing. It also examines the techniques used to aid students in the development of tone and navigating the *passaggio*. In so doing, specific warmup exercises and technical studies are presented. As a conclusion to this examination of pedagogical techniques, an overview and analysis of international pedagogies used by local teachers is presented.

Key Words: vocal pedagogy, pedagogue, tone, *passaggio*, breathing, vocal faults.

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INTRODUCTION

Trinidad and Tobago has a proliferation of vocal and choral singing. A plethora of vocal performances exist in the popular music arena, and there is a longstanding tradition of vocal and choral music in the classical tradition. As a result, many private tutors and educational institutions offer courses in voice and/or vocal training or coaching. These persons who study the art of vocal instruction and its use in teaching are referred to as vocal pedagogues.

Internationally, many vocal pedagogues have researched and presented specific methodologies and approaches to teaching singing (Vaccai, Lamperti, Jones). These methods are not standardised, and their usage and acceptance varies from teacher to teacher. In Trinidad and Tobago, at a tertiary level, various methodologies and approaches are intermingled and combined to form unique teaching methods that vary not only amongst the universities, but also amongst teachers at the same university.

Rationale

There is very little comprehensive literature on the field of vocal pedagogy globally and, in Trinidad and Tobago, no comprehensive texts on local vocal pedagogical techniques are available. This lack of information creates a hindrance to the improvement of the quality of vocal music in Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, various methodologies exist internationally and the lack of local research makes it unclear which international methodologies are being utilised, and if any unique methods have been created in Trinidad and Tobago. An investigation into this particular topic will provide a base of research that can be built upon by future researchers and should be considered critically important to the development of vocal pedagogy in Trinidad and Tobago. This study will also be useful to other voice teachers as it allows them to clearly identify

and compare their methodologies to the pedagogies being used by their colleagues. Students like myself who have not trained with many teachers can also benefit from this study. It allows them to identify a range of approaches that are used locally and identify a teacher whose methodology might be better suited for them.

Parameters

This paper explores the varying pedagogical techniques utilised by voice teachers and coaches at the University of the West Indies, the University of the Southern Caribbean, and the University of Trinidad and Tobago which are located along the East-West corridor of Trinidad. This limited geographic focus is as a result of the locations of the three major universities that offer some form of vocal training within the bounds of an undergraduate degree in music. In an undergraduate research setting a comprehensive study of each vocal pedagogue is not possible. As a result, this study focuses on four specific teachers. One teacher from each university, and one teacher who works at two of the universities were selected as the subjects of this study.

Methodology

Data for this descriptive study was collected using both primary and secondary sources of information. The primary data for this project was collected through interviews with four voice teachers (refer to Appendix A for a sample interview). Paul Cort of the University of the Southern Caribbean, Ravae Isaac of the University of the West Indies, Leah Brown of the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and Natalia Dopwell-Gomez of the University of the West Indies and the University of Trinidad and Tobago discussed the topics explored in this paper in personal interviews with the author. Interviews with Cort, Isaac, and Dopwell-Gomez were

conducted in person. However, Brown's interview was conducted via "Zoom" as a result of precautions taken to minimize the spread of the novel corona virus.

Secondary sources of information include books, articles, and *websites that explore international pedagogical techniques and the science of the human voice*. *Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Teachers, and Singers* written by Julia Davids and Stephen La Tour is a text that is frequently referenced throughout the paper as a book that provides a basis of much research.

Each chapter of the study qualitatively analyses the data collected through the interviews. The approach that each teacher uses was derived from these interviews. These approaches were then compared to each other and to international standards.

Chapter Outline

This study comprises three chapters. Chapter one presents the fundamental principles in singing and focuses on two main concepts: breath and posture. It explores generally accepted ideas on these concepts and presents the perspectives of four local teachers. Chapter 2 addresses the primary function of voice teachers which is addressing vocal faults. The chapter explores how each teacher guides and develops singers' tone, ability to navigate the *passaggio*, and associated warm ups and vocal exercises. Chapter 3 provides an overview of each teacher's pedagogical approach and outlines the internationally recognised methodologies that are used locally.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocal pedagogy, like many musical pedagogies, is not internationally standardised. As a result, few texts comprehensively survey the wide array of pedagogical techniques that exist across varying styles. Within the arena of Western art music, most texts focus on a particular school of thought and seek to provide a detailed analysis of the techniques employed in that methodology. One such text is *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*. In this well documented and well researched book, James Stark provides an overview of the *bel canto* tradition of singing from the late sixteenth century to the twentieth century. Using Manuel Garcia's treatise, *Traité Complet de L'art du Chant en Deux Parties* (Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing in Two Parts), as a reference point, Stark analyses discussions on singing techniques and provides a detailed investigation into a number of vocal 'problems.' Stark also deals with topics such as the emergence of virtuoso singing, the castrato phenomenon, national differences in singing styles, controversies regarding the decline in the art of singing, and the secrets of *bel canto*. While this book is a detailed and comprehensive text on *bel canto*, it provides a very limited comparison with other schools of thought. Despite this, the book is a useful resource for teachers who do not necessarily teach *bel canto* singing as it thoroughly examines the physiology of singing. The first half of this text explores and explains the science of singing and how human physiology makes singing possible.

Another useful resource is *English, French, German and Italian Techniques of Singing* wherein Richard Miller surveys four schools of thought on vocal pedagogy. After examining the techniques and importance of each element of singing for each of the four schools, Miller summarises their differences as intent:

...the Italian singer wants to make beautiful visceral sound which will excite and thrill both the ear and the heart; the French singer wants to present the inherent beauty of the spoken word in sung tone; the German singer wishes to express his or her inner emotions and sentiments to a listening world through poetic insight and the use of illustrative vocal colors; the English singer wishes to perfect the vocal craft itself so that he or she can deal as effectively with musical demands of the literature as can any other instrumentalist.

(Miller, *English, French, German and Italian* 194)

Any singer may desire to achieve the intent of each of these schools to varying capacities and Miller's text clarifies the relationship between the priorities of the singer and the way in which each school of technique addresses them.

The subject of breathing is critically important in any study of vocal pedagogy. In order to produce sound, air must be taken in and exhaled at the right time and pressure to create the desired tone. Breath controls the quality of the sound, its volume, its pitch, and the tone and timbre of the voice. It is universally acknowledged that breath is therefore one of the most important fundamentals of singing. However, many questions arise in examining the process of breathing for singing. How should a singer breathe? Where should that breath originate from? Are there special techniques of breathing that differ from how humans naturally breathe? Miller spends a great deal of time answering these questions in relation to the four schools with a focus on the schools that present the largest difference in approach: the Italian and French schools. The Italian school favours the *appoggio*, a concept which is thoroughly investigated in Stark's text, whereas the French believe in natural breathing. Miller presents an argument for the Italian technique over the French on practical and scientific grounds, stating:

Since what appears to be natural to one singer will not be the same breath approach which comes naturally to another, a number of techniques or great number of techniques or great deficiencies in the applications of the breath often exist where the natural breathing is taught...

When viewed with the findings of scientific investigation...singers trained in the tradition of the Italian School do less violation to natural physical function than do singers trained in several other schools. (Miller, *English, French, German and Italian* 40-44)

Other texts and works also focus on one or more of these four schools of thought. Joshua Whitener's dissertation *The German School of Singing: a Compendium of German Treatises 1848-1965* is noteworthy. Many English-speaking audiences are only exposed to German technique through English writings or translations of scholarly works by Marchesi, Stockhausen, and Lehmann. However, an array of writings by seminal German pedagogues remains inaccessible to English-speaking audiences. Whitener's study partially fills that gap through an examination of approaches purported by nine German pedagogues. In so doing, Whitener identifies the essentials of a German school of singing. Significantly noted is the German systematic approach to vocal pedagogy. Whitener writes:

His system consisted of a regulated program to properly train a student, beginning with what he called 'the construction and development of the voice as an instrument.' Students then progressed to tackle 'the technical development of the voice as an instrument.' Finally, training concluded with 'expressive aspects,' which dealt with what he called material attributes. In contrast, the Italians worked with each student to correct his/her unique problems on an individual basis. (Whitener 148-149)

While Whitener's dissertation presents an analysis of one of the four major philosophies, most modern writings on vocal pedagogy are published by self-described authorities on singing and present the author's opinions on vocal pedagogy. Very often, these texts are rooted in one of the abovementioned schools but this is rarely fully acknowledged. One of these books is *The Free Voice* by Cornelius Reid which seems diametrically opposed to pedagogues like Miller. Reid suggests that teachers often mistake the habitual for what is natural. Reid posits that a 'natural' approach may still be poor technique that has become natural over a period of time. As such, he emphasises that singers should be pushed outside of their comfort zone to achieve their full potential.

Reid's approach can be summarised into two concepts: gaining voluntary control over the involuntary action of the vocal cords and, the shape of the resonators and voice-building. The second idea is indicative of a German approach to singing with Reid advocating for an initial separation of the head voice from the chest voice which is then unified by two types of muscular action. However, Reid makes no mention of the German school as the source of this approach.

Reid's explanations and approach, which were likely used by many German and Italian singers, utilise an understanding of anatomy that was previously unknown to older pedagogues. Yet, Reid derives a different philosophy from the treatises of these older pedagogues than his counterpart Miller. To contrast Reid, Miller writes "a wise route...would be to understand the acoustic principle of resonator coupling in singing, and to find some objective technical language to communicate this information" (Miller, *The Structure of Singing* 61). Both Miller and Reid base their pedagogical approaches on historic and scientific principles. However, the specifics of their processes differ.

Numerous other texts have been written on vocal pedagogy and pedagogical practices across Europe and North America. However, literature specific to the Caribbean is lacking. One paper that seeks to fill this gap in academic literature is Chloe Bishop's undergraduate thesis, *An Investigation of Vocal Pedagogy across Selected Musical Styles within Trinidad and Tobago*. Bishop attempts to identify the pedagogical techniques used in teaching classical/operatic, gospel/jazz, folk/calypso, and Indian classical styles of singing in Trinidad and Tobago. However, this paper does not interrogate the specific techniques used in each of the styles and has a very limited base of research. Bishop interviewed one local tutor in each style and used their particular methodology as the basis of her analysis of each style. This presents a very limited review of the style as it is taught throughout the country. However, despite its limitations in source material, Bishop's paper serves as a base of research that can be further investigated to create a repository of local literature in the field of vocal pedagogy.

The available literature, though sparse, consists mostly of pedagogical texts. It is possible that more theses and dissertations on vocal pedagogy also exist. However, they are not publicly accessible. Regardless, almost every piece of available literature discusses methods and approaches that were developed and are widely used in Europe and North America. Literature written in and about the Caribbean is lacking and literature specific to Trinidad is almost non-existent. This study therefore broaches this underexplored aspect of vocal pedagogical literature and will add to the limited local research and resources.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 The Fundamentals

Vocal pedagogy is a study of the art and science of vocal technique and singing, and its application to vocal training. Vocal pedagogues therefore study various schools of techniques which present differing methodologies in teaching singing. Each school of technique examines what it considers to be the fundamentals of singing or the foundation of vocal technique.

The voice teachers interviewed at the three major universities all differed in the number of fundamentals they believe existed and what they considered those fundamentals to be. Cort posits that the two fundamentals from which all other aspects of singing can be derived are breath and relaxation (Cort). Dopwell-Gomez agreed, but also added that the balance between nasal resonance and space is an equally important fundamental that must be addressed when teaching singing (Dopwell-Gomez). Brown believes that the primary fundamental of singing is breath, but also states that posture and awareness of the body are essential to understanding breath (Brown). Isaac believes that more aspects of singing should be considered as the fundamentals. She includes: aural skills, rhythm reading skills, sight-reading skills, breathing, tone, and posture (Isaac).

1.2 Breathing

Tetrazzini says, "... uncontrolled breath is like a rickety foundation on which nothing can be built, and until that foundation has been developed and strengthened, the would-be singer need expect no satisfactory results" (Caruso and Tetrazzini 9). Voice teachers acknowledge that breathing is the foundation of singing because the human voice is a wind instrument. Sound is

created when air passes through the vocal cords causing the vocal folds to vibrate. The sound produced by these vibrations resonates in the resonating cavities of the chest, mouth, pharynx, nasal cavities, and the head (Cole).

Amongst vocal teachers, a common phrase used when speaking about breathing is “sing from the diaphragm.” The diaphragm is one of the most discussed muscles in singing. Lying underneath the lungs, it contracts and expands to create a vacuum within the lungs which fills with air and then displaces this air. Voice teachers throughout the world disagree on most things. Breathing technique is no exception. While it is commonly agreed that the diaphragm is essential to inhalation and exhalation, schools of techniques disagree on the role of the mouth and nose in inhalation with some teaching that breaths should be taken only through the nose while others instruct the singer to take a sip of air through both the mouth and the nose (Davids and La Tour 24-25).

According to Cort, the use of the nose and mouth are dependent on the space available for the singer to breathe. He states that if there are long spaces wherein the singer breathes, then all of the air needed can be taken in through the nose. However, singers often have much shorter spaces to breathe. As such, air must be taken in through the mouth and nose (Cort).

Dopwell-Gomez takes a similar approach to breathing technique, emphasizing the need to always have relaxation in the breath and not letting the additional demands of singing on breathing interrupt the vocal apparatus (Dopwell-Gomez). The student is encouraged to access the most primal breathing mechanism, taking a cue from toddlers. Dopwell-Gomez teaches this breathing technique logically and sequentially. She begins by asking students to yawn with each inhale in order to feel the open space and relaxation created in the throat. Next, students cough with their hands on their stomach to feel the ‘primal’ movement of the abdominal muscles and

intercostal muscles pushing the diaphragm up to expel air. Once this movement can be identified, the glottal attack of the cough is removed, allowing the sound to become a sharp “huh.” Next, a consonant such as “p” or “f” is added. Finally, the exhale is lengthened on a hiss to begin work on breath control (Dopwell-Gomez). The goal of this process is to show that good compression on the exhale results in a relaxed inhale. Therefore, the singer has the optimal amount of control and relaxation necessary to produce a good sound.

Brown’s takes a more technical approach by discussing the mechanics of breathing in order to teach physiological awareness. The student should understand the breathing cycle and where that cycle begins. She posits that the breath begins in the brain which sends signals to the intercostal muscles and the diaphragm that form a part of the respiratory system (Brown).

Although all humans involuntarily perform this function, the singer must be aware of where the breathing apparatus lies so that a conscious effort can be made to manage it. Figure 1 shows the involuntary process of inspiration and expiration that singers must understand in order to control the breath.

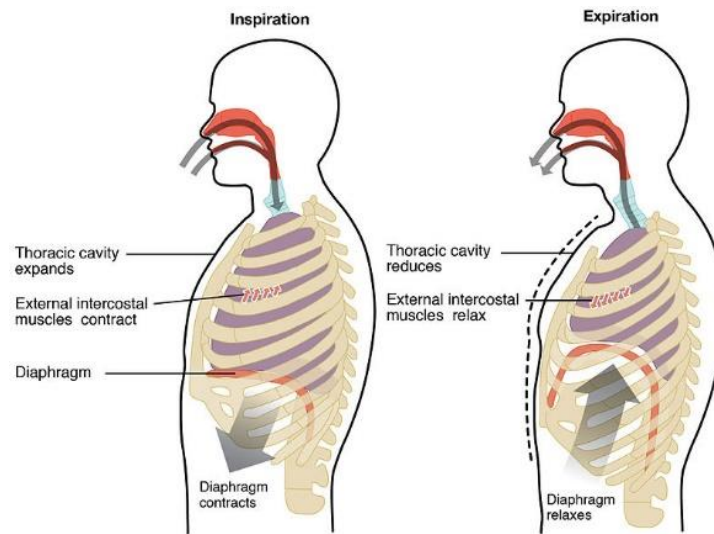


Figure 1

Diagram showing the process of inspiration and expiration at rest

Source; (Pandirajan)

The lungs are located in the posterior part of the thoracic cavity. Therefore, using the full capacity of the lungs in breathing causes the back to expand. This is the type of awareness that Brown teaches. When the singer is aware of where the breathing apparatus lies and how it functions, controlling their breathing becomes easier. Brown teaches a two part breathing technique. It involves expanding the diaphragm, and the abdominal and intercostal muscles, and then taking another breath on top of it that pulls the air up into the back (Brown). Thus, it is a two part, but one breath mechanism. An understanding of this mechanism is only achieved when the singer understands the physiology of breathing.

Unlike her counterparts, Isaac is very particular about breathing through the mouth. This is to ensure that the singer can take quick sips of air, or “uplifts” which she says cannot be done through the nose (Isaac). However, similarly to Brown, Isaac emphasizes the importance of the

conscious use of the abdominal muscles and diaphragm in breathing so that the singer has more control over tone and volume.

1.3 Posture

Posture is critically important to the singer. Improper singing posture, standing or seated, is the cause of many vocal faults (McKinney 33). Proper posture is one aspect of singing that most teachers can agree on. The four voice teachers interviewed in this study all agreed that the singer's posture should be erect but relaxed. Singers should stand with the feet shoulder width apart, relaxed shoulders, and an erect torso. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate proper standing and seated singing postures.

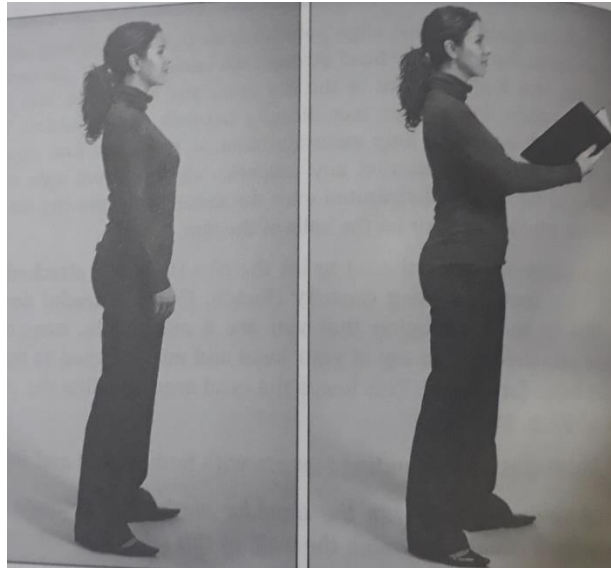


Figure 2

Illustrations of Good Standing Posture

Source; (Davids and La Tour 14)

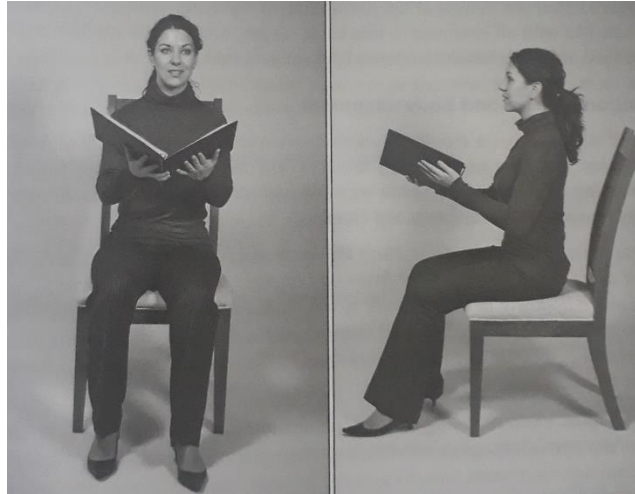


Figure 3

Illustrations of Good Seated Posture

Source; (Davids and La Tour 19)

Common posture problems can include rounded or hunched shoulders which create tension. Another common problem is a collapsed chest. This restricts the use of the diaphragm which in turn affects breath control. Similarly, an “overeager” posture restricts the capacity of the lungs and therefore affects breath control (Dayme 56-61). Figure 4 illustrates these hunched and “overeager” positions.

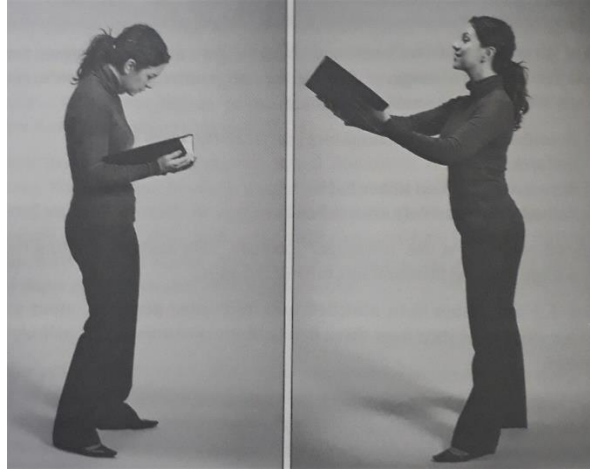


Figure 4

Illustrations of Hunched and “Overeager” postures

Source; (Davids and La Tour 18)

It is important to note that posture is not limited to tableaux. In the classical music tradition, many teachers emphasize the need for the singing student to stand still. As such, opinions on how much movement a singer should incorporate into their performance are varied. Davids and La Tour posit that body movement, amongst other things, is a subconscious indicator of inappropriate tension (17). Renée Fleming also said, “...singers have to...rid themselves of the popping veins, the trembling jaws...and the inability to...move the voice without moving the whole body” (20). Isaac, like Fleming, believes that movement invites tension. As such, students are encouraged to avoid movement while they are solidifying technique. Even after technique is secure, Isaac says that movement should only be used for dramatic pieces but sparingly. A singer may gesture with the arms, but should not move around the space excessively. Others take an opposing approach and encourage movement. Dopwell-Gomez’s answer to the question on movement was “Move!” Her experience performing in operas has only served to reinforce her conviction that singers should move freely and fluidly like a dancer. Dopwell-Gomez believes

that tension can always be avoided. The singer must simply find the techniques that work (Dopwell-Gomez). Others find a middle ground and agree that movement should be used depending on context. Brown believes that movement should be used differently in different contexts. An aria from an oratorio may only need simple arm gestures, or none at all whereas as musical theatre piece generally calls for more involved use of the entire body (Brown). However, she notes that one should maintain good vocal technique throughout every performance. However, the singer should still use whatever is appropriate to enhance the performance, movement and gestures included.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Addressing Vocal Faults

All singers struggle with vocal faults throughout their musical careers and an important function of the voice teacher is identifying and addressing these vocal faults. A teacher who is unable to identify areas of weakness in the raw vocal sound and make adjustments to improve it is an ineffective one. James McKinney compares the process of identifying vocal faults to the medical diagnostic process. This process involves informal observation of the patient, self-evaluation by the patient, and systematic testing by the doctor (McKinney 11-14). However, the purpose of diagnosis is not to merely identify the disease, but to understand it in order to plan proper corrective measures. To do this, the doctor asks three questions: (1) What are the symptoms? (2) What are the causes? (3) What are the possible remedies? (McKinney 11-14).

McKinney presents strong parallels between medical diagnoses and diagnosing vocal faults. In medicine, the starting point is understanding anatomy and physiology. In vocal pedagogy, it is an understanding of the physical laws of sound and how the human body creates that sound. Just as there are established standards for judging an individual's health, the teacher establishes standards for acceptable vocal sound. The diagnostic process identifies how an individual differs from these standards. Similarly, the teacher must assess each student against their standard of good vocal sound. Identification of the vocal fault is the first question the teacher addresses. The second question requires a comprehensive knowledge of the vocal mechanism and how it works which is also essential to answering the third question. More important though, is the teacher's ability to express himself/herself in terms that the student can understand (McKinney 11-14).

2.2 Tone

Before the concept of tone can be addressed, one must understand the production of sound. The vocal apparatus involved in singing is extensive but can be divided into three categories: breath energy, sound source, and sound resonator. Refer to Davids and La Tour for a comprehensive explanation of how these three categories and their associated vocal apparatus work together to create sound (42-43). Figure 5 illustrates the basic vocal apparatus involved in singing. (Detailed diagrams of the larynx, glottis, cricothyroid muscles, and thyroarytenoid muscles can be found in Appendix B).

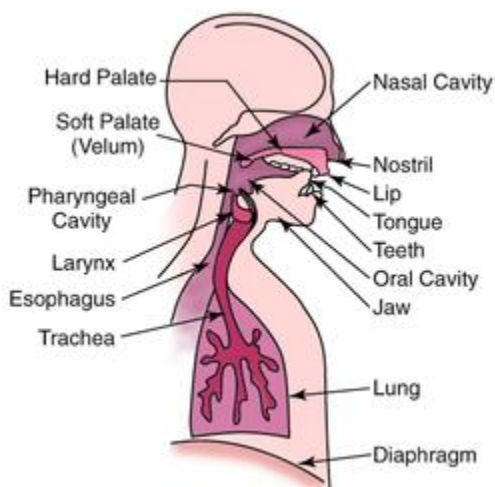


Figure 5

Diagram of vocal apparatus

Source; (Virse)

A singer's tonal quality is affected by the use of the above mentioned vocal apparatus, particularly the resonators. However, pedagogues approach teaching sound production and refining tone in different ways. Cort emphasises that the vocal apparatus should never be manipulated. In its natural state, the vocal apparatus produces sound. As such, he views the

process of teaching sound production as primarily reinforcing complete relaxation in breathing and singing (Cort). Many teachers instruct students to press the tongue against the teeth, on the bottom of the mouth. This contorts the shape of the tongue and causes the biggest part of the tongue at the back of the throat to curl upwards, blocking the sound being created. A relaxed tongue, which Cort encourages, naturally moves forward and curls, making space for the sound. He posits that producing text is ninety percent tongue shape and movement, and ten percent jaw movement (Cort). The position of the tongue is not only essential to producing good tone, but is also important in diction.

Dopwell-Gomez believes that sound production is one of the biggest challenges in vocal pedagogy. Unlike instruments where a teacher can demonstrate how to hold one's hands and the student can see how the instrument is being manipulated, the vocal apparatus is all internal. To teach sound production, the teacher describes what the student should feel. As a high soprano, Dopwell-Gomez's description of what she feels will resonate well with another high soprano but not particularly well with a heldentenor. It is important for the teacher to constantly research the needs and intricacies of different voice types. In approaching the upper register, sopranos are encouraged to form the vowel [a]. However, baritones, heldentenors, and contraltos are encouraged to use the vowel [ɑ]. It is also critically important that the student be exposed to different sources of information through masterclasses and working with different teachers (Dopwell-Gomez).

Isaac takes a more varied approach. In her first two classes she explains how each part of the vocal apparatus works to create sound. However, in working to refine tone, Isaac's methods do not require a distinct understanding of the vocal apparatus. She uses vocal exercises that seek

to create a natural and relaxed sound which is then transferred to singing repertoire such as the “sigh” (Figure 6) and scalar passages on nasal sounds (Figure 7) (Isaac).

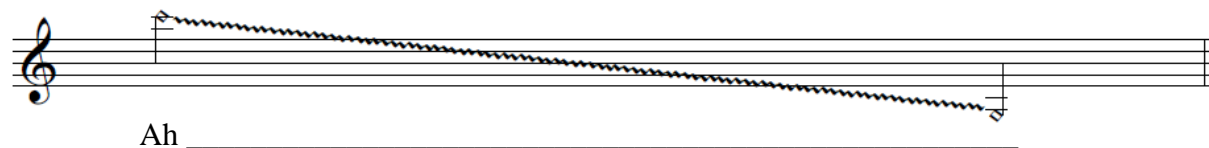


Figure 6

Illustration of the “sigh”

Source; (Isaac)

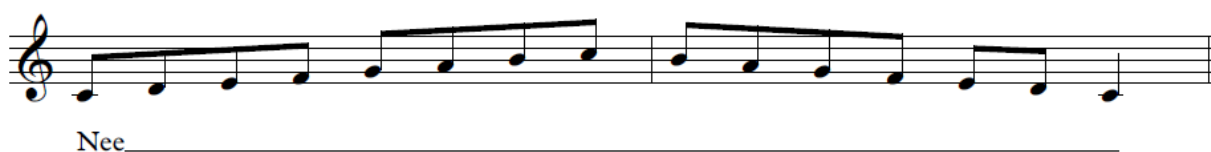


Figure 7

Illustration of a nasal scale

Source; (Isaac)

Brown takes a similar approach to teaching sound production, explaining where the breath comes from, what occurs in the larynx, and the function of the vocal folds. She also uses YouTube videos that show the action of the vocal folds to reinforce this physiological understanding of sound. She places emphasis on the resonators and how they are manipulated to create different tonal qualities. Once this physiological awareness is established, Brown uses lip trills to refine tone because they connect the mechanism of the breath to the sound that is created in the upper apparatus without putting force on the vocal folds. Thereafter, Brown teaches tone refinement through the use of organic imagery as opposed to directing the student on the exact manipulation of the vocal apparatus (Brown).

A term that first appeared in texts on the Old Italian school of singing that is used today is “a covered sound” (Stark 190). It refers to a resonant sound that is often associated with operatic singing. The term arose out of a need to use imagery to describe sound production to students. It is a topic of much contention in modern vocal pedagogy and is approached in different ways. According to Cort, a covered sound is merely a manipulation of the vowel. He suggests that creating a covered sound is created through the use of open, rounded vowels as opposed to vowels with more spread (Cort).

Dopwell-Gomez never uses the term “cover” with her students, believing that teachers should be more direct when speaking to students. However, in teaching the concept of a well-rounded tone, she takes a similar approach to Cort. She begins with vowel modification and the use of an open throat through the sensation of a yawn (Dopwell-Gomez). However, different methods of creating a specific tonal quality are used for different voice types. As with the general concept of sound production, the teacher must understand the needs of each voice type and teach varying techniques based on the student.

Isaac distinguishes between a “covered” sound and a natural tone. Unlike her colleagues, Isaac teaches that the facial masque and the oral cavity create a covered sound. She posits that the oral cavity is opened wider when creating “cover” (Isaac). This method implies that vowel manipulation is not the basis of “cover” but rather, “cover” is more resonance than the voice naturally creates. The opened oral cavity is an adjustment of the jaw to create more space within the mouth. This approach encourages more manipulation of the resonators and less manipulation of the tongue.

Like Isaac, Brown posits that covering is based on accessing the space in the masque and creating space inside of the mouth to create more resonance. She describes a covered tone as one

that is round, forward, and spinning. Brown starts by asking students to sound like an opera singer. She believes that the student will naturally manipulate the vocal apparatus in order to emulate the associated sound. Once that external sound is achieved, Brown works towards correcting improper technique caused by the emulation and teaches the student how to manipulate the sound by lifting the soft palate and creating an open space in the throat (Brown).

2.3 Navigating the *Passaggio*

The human voice has been referred to as the perfect instrument. But, like any other instrument, it strives to create the illusion of perfection despite unavoidable limitations (Stark 57). The most distinct and difficult limitation to disguise is the presence of vocal registers. When a singer ascends from his lowest to his highest note, physiological and acoustical discontinuities occur. The concept of vocal registers began with the nineteenth century pedagogue, Manuel Garcia when he used a laryngoscope to observe the vocal folds. He noticed that they vibrated differently at low pitches and high pitches. He then developed the concept of vocal registers which sparked an emphasis on the use of laryngeal muscles to create seamless transitions between these registers (Bernardoni 3-14).

The Old Italian school posits that there are only two registers, the chest and head voices. By the nineteenth century, a three register theory had gained prominence (Stark 57). Today, teachers are still divided on the number of registers in the human voice. However, they agree that a vocal break occurs at the point of transition between registers, referred to as the *passaggio*. Navigating the *passaggio* is one of the most common vocal faults and each teacher has a different method for achieving smooth transitions.

Though many teachers use various vocal exercises to assist the student in navigating the *passaggio*, Cort believes that they are of little use if the student cannot recognise and create a fundamentally free sound. He uses scales as the primary exercise but emphasises the sensation that the singer should feel while singing the exercise as opposed to the exercise itself (Cort). A relaxed and open throat is the first step in conquering the transition through the *passaggio*. The teacher should also be able to demonstrate changes in colour when moving from one register to another, and the manipulation of vowels that facilitate a smoother transition. While he explains the concept of the *passaggio* and registers, Cort's focus is describing the sensation the singer feels with the correct shape and configuration of the throat (Cort). This is to ensure that the singer's ability to navigate the *passaggio* is not limited to a particular exercise, but is a sensation that the singer feels whenever they sing.

Similarly, Isaac does not use specific exercises to conquer the *passaggio*. She states that a student can never get over the break easily. A seamless transition is created after years of training and practice. However, she uses the sigh (figure 6) to help the student discover the sensation that they should feel when transitioning between registers (Isaac). The sigh allows the student to move through every register in the voice while maintaining an open and relaxed throat. She believes that emulating the tone produced by the sigh creates the sense of openness and relaxation in the throat that allows easy movement through the *passaggio*.

Unlike Cort and Isaac, Brown believes that specific exercises help the singer to link the upper and lower registers. However, when the tonal quality of the chest and head voice are largely different, it is difficult to mix them and to transition between them. Brown uses a head down approach with these students. She begins by focusing entirely on the head voice and explores what sounds can be achieved in that register, ignoring the lower register. She seeks to

develop a sense of comfort and confidence in the singer's head voice before she returns to the chest voice and does a similar process of exploration (Brown). Brown posits that a singer can only learn to move through the registers after they have explored and become comfortable in both registers. This begins the slow process of working through the *passaggio*. Her approach is building confidence in approaching a different register and then accessing that register. For this process, Brown relies heavily on vocal exercises that span across the break.

Similarly, Dopwell-Gomez uses specific exercises that help the student to feel the transition between registers such as the "alleluia" (figure 8) and arpeggiated octaves (figure 9).



Figure 8

Illustration of the "Alleluia"

Source; (Dopwell-Gomez)

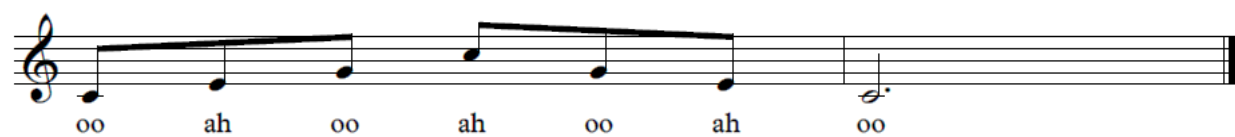


Figure 9

Illustration of the arpeggiated octave

Source; (Dopwell-Gomez)

However, the teacher must be aware of the types of *passaggio* problems different voice types experience and must adjust his/her method to suit each student. Sopranos usually have little

to no problems bridging the middle and high registers, but struggle to bridge the chest and middle registers. Conversely, contraltos struggle to bridge the middle and high because they tend to be uncomfortable with their upper register. Dopwell-Gomez emphasises the need to work on the less comfortable half of the voice. Many students hesitate approaching and crossing the break because they are uncomfortable with their sound past the bridge. Dopwell-Gomez therefore encourages students to cross the bridge and make whatever sound that comes out in order to help students feel more comfortable in that part of the voice. Thus, there is less hesitation and tension when approaching the *passaggio* which makes the transition easier.

2.4 Warm-Ups and Vocal Exercises

The concept of a vocal warm-up is similar to the concept of athletic warm-ups. It seeks to stretch and engage the muscles in the vocal apparatus in a gradual process to avoid strain and injury to the voice when singing. Warm-ups have different areas of concentration such as resonance areas, diaphragmatic engagement, range extension, intonation, and articulation (Murray). Many take the form of scales, arpeggiated patterns, vocalises, and other patterns that progressively move higher and lower, preparing the voice to sing at the extremes of the vocal range. It is generally accepted that this is an essential part of a singer's preparation.

Both Isaac and Brown encourage the use of warm-ups. Isaac posits that a person's environment plays a major role in their need to warm-up. As an example, Isaac works in a cold office. At the end of the day, if she has to sing, she needs to get the vocal apparatus moving fluidly. Some persons posit that once an individual is talking and using the vocal apparatus throughout the day, there is no need to warm-up in the evening. Isaac disagrees and insists that the environment determines the need for a warm-up (Isaac). Isaac divides her warm-up routine

into four categories: jaw techniques, breathing techniques, vocal techniques, and physical warm-ups. For the jaw, students imagine that they are chewing a large piece of gum. This relaxes the jaw and the face. A breathing technique exercise is taking a sip of air and exhaling on a hiss. Her quintessential vocal warm-up is a pentascale pattern that engages the diaphragm (figure 10) (Isaac). The physical warm-up involves stretching the neck, shoulders, arms, and legs because she believes that singing involves the use of the entire body.



Figure 10

Illustration of the pentascale warm up

Source; (Isaac)

Brown views singing as an athletic activity. Just as an athlete warms up before performing a sport, the singer should warm up before performing repertoire. Warm-ups get the vocal apparatus moving and allow the singer to reach his/her highest and lowest note. She states, “if we want to perform at our best, we need to warm up” (Brown). Brown recommends that students begin each morning with a physical warm-up to relax the body and release tension, followed by a vocal warm-up. Thus, the singer is prepared to sing throughout the day. She also recommends rewarming closer to performance. The specific exercises that a singer uses is dependent on the repertoire. Most warm-ups like Isaac’s pentascale get the diaphragm moving. However, according to Brown, the warm up is always dictated by the demands of the repertoire being performed.

However, some teachers dismiss the proposed merits of vocal warm-ups. Cort and Dopwell-Gomez fall into this category to varying extents. Cort states that it is not a matter of whether the voice is warm or cold. Rather, it is about singing with the correct technique. Once the body is not dehydrated and there is no phlegm in the throat, proper technique ensures that the voice functions as it should. He posits that warm-ups more about providing the singer with psychological security that the voice is working properly. Cort references the opera singer Birgit Nilsson. She does not spend much time warming up. She simply hums for a few minutes. If you have to sing for a five hour opera, why tire your voice on a warm-up? Vocalise and humming is all that is needed to ensure that sound is being produced clearly and freely. “What is warming up other than singing?” (Cort). The act of singing warms up the voice. Once a singer begins with something that does not immediately use the extremes of the range, the repertoire allows the voice can be warmed up without wasting time on exercises and studies.

Dopwell-Gomez’s approach is more conservative. She acknowledges that vocal warm-ups help to guide new students to the resonant sweet spot in their voice. Specific consonants and vowels guide tone refinement and help the student to through the *passaggio*. She uses vocalises with beginner students because it is easier to provide guidance through these concepts with vocalises as opposed to repertoire. As with all other aspects of her teaching, Dopwell-Gomez emphasises that every voice type has different needs and vocalises should be carefully selected based on the student’s needs. Students who lack nasal resonance are given exercises that use [ŋ]. Alternatively, students with too much nasal resonance are never given these exercises. She asks, “What is the purpose of this vocalise and why is it useful to this student?” (Dopwell-Gomez). Teachers often become complacent with vocal exercises and they become a routine rather than a targeted exercise at improving specific vocal faults. However, like Cort, she believes that

extensive vocalises and vocal warm-ups become unnecessary at a professional level. The vocalise aids vocal development. Once the singer's technique is solidified, vocalise only tire the voice before a performance. For professionals, she recommends very short lip trills and light humming (Dopwell-Gomez). When approaching warm-ups, it is about where the individual is in his/her development as a singer.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Pedagogical Approaches

Vocal pedagogy scholars have created specific methodologies and courses of study that they believe to be the best way to teach the art of singing. Notable vocal pedagogues include Mathilde Marchesi, Nicola Vaccai, William Vennard, David Jones, and William Leyerle. Each pedagogue focused on a particular style of singing and developed an approach and/or a series of vocal exercises and studies to achieve a good sound.

Many were proponents of the *bel canto* style of singing. This legato style of singing was a defining quality of Italian art songs and is still popularly taught today. Marchesi, Vaccai, and Lamperti wrote methods of teaching *bel canto*. Marchesi's *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method* first provides the student with an overview of singing fundamentals (the shape of the mouth, respiration, *coup de glotte*, registers of the female voice, method of study, analysis, and style) and then presents a series of vocal studies aimed at developing a sense of legato singing (3-10). Many of these exercises are scalar in nature as is shown in figure 11 (Refer to Appendix C for further illustrations of Marchesi's exercises). However, while Marchesi's method can be transposed and used for most voice types, it was written for the female voice and as such, is limited as a comprehensive method.



Figure 11

Illustration of Marchesi's 21st exercise from *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*

Source; (Marchesi 19)

Another proponent of the *bel canto* style was Nicola Vaccai. Vaccai, unlike Marchesi, only wrote fifteen lessons that comprise his *Metodo Practico di Canto*. Vaccai also omits any lengthy explanation of embouchure, breathing technique, and posture, but presents a different technical challenge in each lesson. Also noteworthy is Vaccai's use of ariettas for each lesson as opposed to repetitive vocal exercises (Refer to Appendix D for illustrations of Vaccai's studies). While it presents a good overview of the *bel canto* style, it is not a comprehensive text on singing. Although it is still popularly used by vocal teachers internationally, it is always used within another methodology. Isaac and Brown use the Vaccai method with their students. However, Isaac notes that her methodology is not limited to Vaccai's method or even to *bel canto* technique. Rather, it is an amalgamation of the various methods taught to her by her voice teachers. She uses Vaccai's studies to aid in the student's development in specific areas (Isaac).

Marchesi and Vaccai produced practical method books for singers and teachers. Other pedagogues focused on a more theoretical understanding of singing rather than outlining specific exercises for the singer. One such pedagogue is Vennard. In his book, *Singing: the Mechanism and the Technic*, this American singer and teacher explores human anatomy and physiology as it relates to the study of singing. His approach is based on contemporary scientific research which caused a shift from many of the beliefs and practices of the *bel canto* era. Of particular interest is his study on vocal registration and vocal resonance (Vennard).

Vennard is one of many pedagogues that Cort references in discussing his methodology. However, like Isaac, Cort notes that no singular approach is comprehensive and, as such, draws on information from various methods and personal experiences in his teaching (Cort). Vennard, Doscher, Nesheim, Lamperti, and Dobbs all form part of his base of information. These pedagogues focus heavily on a theoretical understanding of singing. Cort's preference for

theoretical pedagogy texts over practical texts are reflected in his approach to teaching the fundamentals of singing and addressing vocal faults. No exercise will solve a singer's problems if the singer does not have a fundamental understanding of how to sing without tension.

Another theoretical text is Leyerle's *Vocal Development Through Organic Imagery*. This book focuses heavily on the human voice and vocal production. Though highly technical, illustrations are used to guide the reader through the process of developing the singing voice. The primary focus of Leyerle's text is the use of imagery and human anatomy to guide vocal development. Brown is a proponent of Leyerle's work and teachings. Like her counterparts, her method is influenced by various pedagogues and personal experiences. However, Leyerle's approach is one that she emphasises as a result of her personal focus on physiology and how understanding it aids in vocal development more than anything else.

One of the most recently published vocal pedagogues is David Jones. After studying with Allan Lindquest and discovering the concepts of Enrico Caruso, Joseph Hislop, Maestro Rosati, and other proponents of the Swedish-Italian School of singing, Jones compiled his learnings and thoughts in his book, *A Modern Guide to Old World Singing: Concepts of the Italian and Swedish-Italian Singing Schools* (Jones, *Biography*). Jones' book includes in-depth descriptions of concepts used to develop healthy vocal technique and, addresses and illustrates vocal exercises used in the Italian and Swedish-Italian Schools of Singing over the last one hundred years. His examination of these methods is influenced by his understanding of human physiology (Jones, *A Modern Guide*). As such, Jones offers more modern explanations of Old World vocal techniques. This new perspective is one that Dopwell-Gomez bases much of her teaching on. Although she utilises other texts, Jones' approach has most heavily influenced her methodology

(Dopwell-Gomez). As a result, she has a more clearly defined vocal pedagogical technique than her colleagues.

CONCLUSION

Chapter one identified what each teacher determined to be the fundamentals of singing and explored two of these common fundamentals: breath and posture. This chapter highlighted the different approaches to the same fundamentals and how those approaches impacted the method of teaching.

Chapter two addressed the manner in which the voice teachers approach specific vocal faults. Two of the major vocal faults are tone and navigating the *passaggio*. While each singer has a unique challenge regarding these vocal faults, the general approach to addressing them is explored in this chapter.

Chapter three explored the use of specific pedagogical approaches and identified the methodologies that each of the four teachers employ. Although it is not a comprehensive overview of the pedagogies each teacher uses, it explores the works well-known and accepted pedagogues such as Marchesi, Vaccai, Vennard, Leyerle, and Jones.

Throughout this investigation, it is evident that a pedagogical standard does not exist amongst the teachers at the three major universities in Trinidad. While there are some similarities and overlaps in approaches, each teacher addresses varying aspects of singing differently. Cort and Dopwell-Gomez share common ideas with regards to the importance of breath and the purpose of the warm-up. However, their approach to teaching these shared ideas differ greatly. It is also important to note that all but one of the teachers interviewed for this paper utilise many different pedagogies, intermingled with personal experiences. This seems to indicate that there may not be any singular pedagogical approach that provides a complete and well-rounded approach to singing.

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APPENDIX A

Sample Interview:

1. Can you talk about what you view as the foundation of singing?
2. How do you approach breathing and breath control?
3. Should we breathe through the mouth, nose, or both? Should breaths be noiseless? What are your thoughts on movement while singing?
4. Is a physical warm-up as important as a vocal warm-up?
5. How do you approach teaching sound production and how the various vocal apparatus need to be manipulated to produce a good sound?
6. We are often told to create a covered sound. Should sound be covered or should we work toward refining the natural voice?
7. What is your approach to teaching diction? Should students have an understanding of different vowel sounds, monothongs, diphthongs, and triphthongs before beginning to sing?
8. How do you help a student to refine their tone?
9. How do you help students to conquer the transition between vocal registers?
10. Is there a particular method/methods that you use in teaching singing?

APPENDIX B

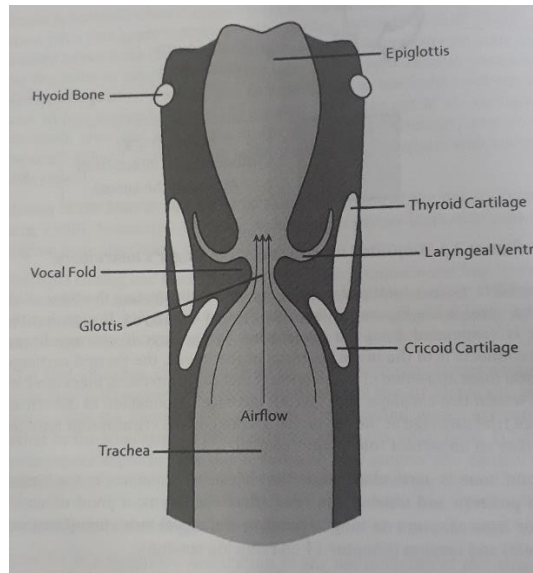


Figure 12

Illustration of the larynx (cross-section, posterior view)

Source; (Davids and La Tour 44)

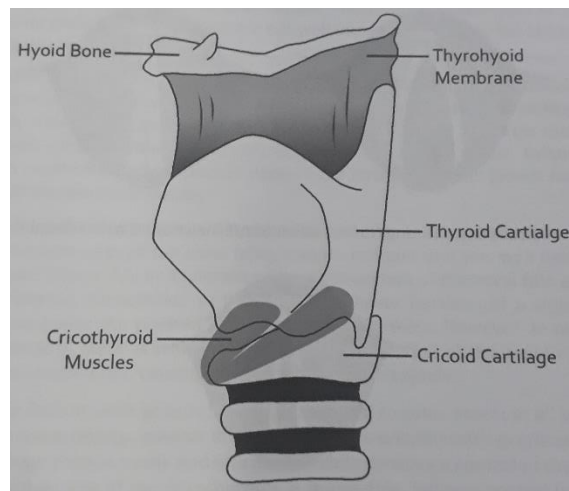


Figure 13

Illustration of the side view of the larynx

Source; (Davids and La Tour 45)

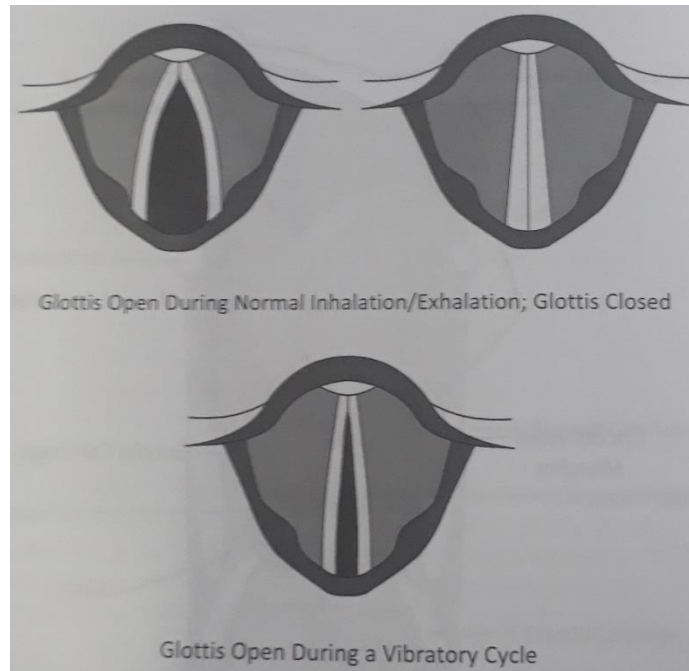


Figure 14

Illustrations of the glottis

Source; (Davids and La Tour 46)

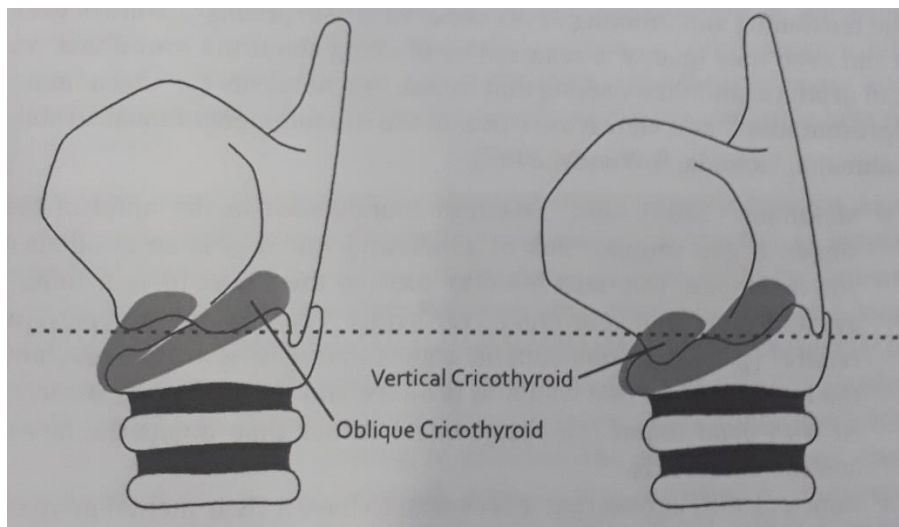


Figure 15

Illustration of tilting of the thyroid cartilage by the cricothyroid muscles

Source; (Davids and La Tour 47)

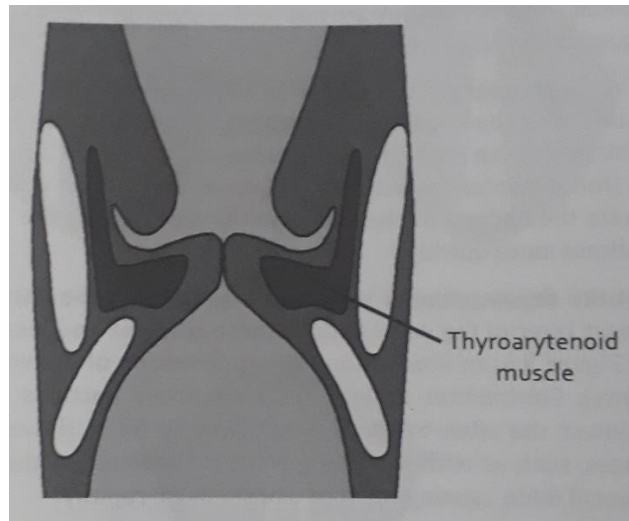


Figure 16

Illustration of the thyroarytenoid muscles (cross-sectional view)

Source; (Davids and La Tour 48)

APPENDIX C

11.

The musical score for exercise 11 consists of three systems. The first system is a vocal line in 2/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features two triplet patterns of eighth notes. The second system is a piano accompaniment in 2/4 time, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a key signature of one flat. The piano part consists of chords and single notes. The third system continues the piano accompaniment with a key signature change to two flats. Both the vocal and piano parts end with the word "etc.".

Figure 17

Illustration of Marchesi's 11th exercise from *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*

Source; (Marchesi 16)

14.

The musical score for exercise 14 consists of two systems. The first system is a vocal line in 3/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time with a grand staff and a key signature of one flat. The second system continues the vocal and piano parts with a key signature change to two flats. Both parts end with the word "etc.".

Figure 18

Illustration of Marchesi's 14th exercise from *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*

Source; (Marchesi 17)



Figure 19

Illustration of Marchesi's 29th exercise from *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*

Source; (Marchesi 20)



Figure 20

Illustration of Marchesi's 37th exercise from *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*

Source; (Marchesi 21)



Figure 21

Illustration of Marchesi's 74th exercise from *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*

Source; (Marchesi 34)



Figure 22

Illustration of Marchesi's 165th exercise from *Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*

Source; (Marchesi 47)

APPENDIX D

CANTO VOICE

Adagio *p*

La - scia il li - do e il ma - re in - fi - do a sol -
 Far from home and shore and safe - ty Must the

Adagio *p*

4

- car tor - nail noc - chie - ro, e pur sa che men - zo - gne - ro al - tre
 pi - lot steer his ves - sel, Tho' he knows the traitorous wa - ters Have de -

8

vol - te l'in - gan - nò, al - tre vol - te l'in - gan - nò, al - tre
 - ceiv'd him oft be - fore, Have de - ceiv'd him oft be - fore, Have de -

12

vol - te l'in - gan - nò, al - tre vol - te l'in - gan - nò.
 - ceiv'd him oft be - fore, Have de - ceiv'd him oft be - fore.

Figure 23

Illustration of Vaccai's Lesson II: Intervals of a Fourth

Source; (Vaccai 13)

CANTO
VOICE

Andantino

Ben - ché di sen - so pri - vo fin
The weep - ing wil - lows grow - ing Be -

p

Detailed description: This system contains the first three measures of the piece. The vocal line is in a soprano register, starting with a half rest followed by a series of eighth notes. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Andantino' and the dynamics begin with a piano (*p*) marking.

4

l'ar - bo - scel - lo è gra - to a quel - l'a - mi - co
- side the lit - tle riv - er Their life and leaf are

Detailed description: This system contains measures 4 through 6. The vocal line continues with eighth notes. The piano accompaniment maintains the same rhythmic pattern. The lyrics describe a willow tree by a river.

7

ri - vo da cui ri - ce - ve u - mor: per
ow - ing To moist - ure from the pool: And

Detailed description: This system contains measures 7 through 9. The vocal line concludes with a half note. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern. The lyrics describe the willow tree receiving moisture from a pool.

10
 lui di fron - de or - na - to bel - la mer - ce' gli
 grate - ful to the giv - er, They bow their droop - ing

13
 ren - de dal sol quan - do di - fen - de il
 branch - es To shade the kind - ly riv - er And

16
 suo be - ne - fat - tor, dal sol quan - do di -
 keep the wa - ter cool. To shade the kind - ly

19
 - fen - de il suo be - ne - fat - tor.
 riv - er And keep the wa - ter cool.

Figure 24

Illustration of Vaccai's Lesson VII: The Acciaccatura

Source; (Vaccai 33-34)

CANTO VOICE

Moderato

Quan - do ac - cen - de un no - bil pet - to è in - no -
When a pure heart burns with love's de - vo - tion, 'Tis a

6

- cen - te e pu - ro af - fet - to, de - bo - lez - za a - mor non
love - ly and ho - ly e - mo - tion, From all - pas - sion and weak - ness

12

free, è quan - do ac - cen - de un no - bil pet - to è in - no -
When a heart burns with love's de - vo - tion 'Tis a

18

- cen - te e pu - ro af - fet - to, de - bo - lez - za a -
love - ly and ho - ly e - mo - tion, From all - pas - sion and

23

- mor non è, de - bo lez - za a - mor non è.
weak - ness free, From all pas - sion and weak - ness free.

Figure 25

Illustration of Vaccai's Lesson X: Introduction to the Turn

Source; (Vaccai 42)

CANTO VOICE

Allegretto

O pla - ci - doil ma - re lu - sin - ghi la
 O pla - cid blue o - cean, So calm and de -

5 spon - da o por - ti con l'on - da ter - ro - ree spa -
 ceiv - ing, Then sud - den with thun - der - ous bil - lows up -

9 ven - to e col - pa del ven - to, sua col - pa non
 heav - ing, The wind is the cul - prit the fault is not

13 e: e col - pa del ven - to, sua col - pa non
 thine, the wind is the cul - prit the fault is not

17 e: e col - pa del ven - to, sua col - pa non è.
 thine, the wind is the cul - prit, the fault is not thine.

Figure 26

Illustration of Vaccai's Lesson XIII: The Second Type of Portamento

Source; (Vaccai 56)