

Technique

Although the concepts of technique and 'craft' may seem debatable, I see a fundamental importance in conveying a solid knowledge of the function of the vocal instrument. Teacher and student must practice, 'apply', and continually deepen this knowledge together through practical experiencing the 'instrument body', thus trying to achieve the best possible development of the artistic expression.

A selection of topics that are important to me in vocal tuition:

- the detailed work on 'support'/*appoggio*,
- the appropriate, correct, elastic use of the intercostal, abdominal, pelvic floor and back muscles,
- the direct and indirect effects on the functions of the diaphragm,
- reflexive and other breathing exercises for experiencing the breath,
- the anchoring/connection of the singing tone to the body as well as the good 'grounding' of the whole instrument,
- the free, sustainable, flexible sound of the voice, based on the dynamic process of a responsive tension equilibrium,
- a relaxed throat position,
- free, flexible transitions between a vocal-fold-edge-dominated, 'heady' piano attack to powerful, full-bodied forte tones without pressure,
- the voice production/placement 'in the mask',
- the examination of vowels and consonants as well as their blending,
- the continuous quality and 'carrying' capacity of the sound through the blending of vowels and vocal registers, and
- the gradual and organic expansion of vocal range, voice size, flexibility, and other parameters.

Interpretation and performance

Here I work primarily on the following content, among others:

- vocal literature of different styles and languages,
[I think that a good voice teacher must have a broad knowledge of the repertoire for all voice types and '*fachs*', as well as at least a rudimentary knowledge of the piano.]
- musical phrasing, agogics, and accentuation,
- decisions regarding *klangfarben* and dynamics,
- technical-interpretative handling of the forms of expression in different epochs (e.g. vibrato, ornamentation, coloratura...),
- physiological and semantic research of language: phonetics and content,
- connection of linguistic diction and vocal tone as well as of linguistic and musical narration,
- in the case of excerpts from larger works: good knowledge of the entire work as well as, if applicable, the character to be portrayed and the dramaturgical context,
- stylization versus 'naturalism' in the different styles,
- opening of contextual fields, nurtured by individual life experience, by the historical context of the work, by other art forms (visual arts, literature...).

Communication and pedagogical relationship building

The relationship between teacher and student is a professional relationship. This is very important to me. Precisely *because* the voice is so closely connected with the singing individual and their soul, I consider it crucial to keep a professional distance, not engaging in private nearness. This does not conflict with the high level of empathy and sensitivity that characterizes good singing education; on the contrary: it ensures optimal protection for both parties in the necessary and appropriate *professional closeness*.

In any communication, especially in a didactic context, what matters most is not what is said, but what is understood. In my opinion, a good voice teacher is characterized not only by a profound knowledge of singing technique, repertoire, interpretation, and styles, but also by a wide variety of ways and means of communication. Each student contributes individual prerequisites: Some are more accessible through images, others through precise explications of physiological processes; some learn more easily through imitation and doing, others want to be given explanations. Some find it easier to grasp things through movement, others through stillness and concentration. One finds the way towards artistic expression through technical work, the other goes the opposite way. The sooner I grasp the communicational behaviours and approaches of my counterpart, the more efficiently I can support his/her singing development.

On the other hand, it is important to know one's limits: If, for example, I suspect that a student's vocal development is stagnating due to psychological problems or blockages, I will beware of dabbling in psychotherapy, but rather refer them to trained professionals or involve the latter in the overall process.