

# INCORPORATING MUSICAL THEATER IN THE CLASSICAL VOICE STUDIO

by

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*To my grandparents, who taught me that everything goes better with a hint of Mozart.*

*To my parents, who blessed my heart with the sound of music.*

*To my beautiful wife, who inspires me to be my best self.*

*And to my children, whose songs remind me why art must always continue.*



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# Chapter 1:

## WHY MUSICAL THEATER?

We are living in a time when opera patronage is down.<sup>1</sup> Those who have previously supported it are dying and leaving few successors. This may explain, in part, why major opera companies across the United States have begun to program musical theater repertoire.<sup>2</sup> Anthony Freud, General Director of the Chicago Lyric Opera, has recently noted that the company is, “getting more and more experienced at producing musicals, and they are becoming increasingly important to us from a financial basis.”<sup>3</sup> As Renée Fleming explained, “The challenges that opera companies face are incredible, from audience development to funding to maintaining relevance in our lives today.” Bearing this in mind, she, in her capacity as creative consultant to the Chicago Lyric Opera, together with Freud, spearheaded an effort to collaborate with the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization and produce five of the eponymous duo’s classic musicals. Their efforts, Ms. Fleming notes, are aimed at reaching a broader audience because, “Opera houses are intimidating to some people, and programs like ... the musicals we’re doing let people come into the theater who might not have been there before.”<sup>4</sup> Their

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Cooper, “Metropolitan Opera Faces a Slide in Box-Office Revenues,” *The New York Times*, May 6, 2016, Accessed February 10, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/07/arts/music/metropolitan-opera-faces-a-slide-in-box-office-revenues.html>.

<sup>2</sup> David Belcher, “Musical or Opera? Stage Companies Are Drawing on Both Art Forms,” *The New York Times*, March 26, 2014, Accessed February 10, 2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/26/arts/international/opera-companies-turn-to-musicals.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/26/arts/international/opera-companies-turn-to-musicals.html?_r=0).

<sup>3</sup> John von Rhein, “Lyric’s new season promises to rock the house – not just with ‘Jesus Christ Superstar,’” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 2017, Accessed February 10, 2017, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/music/vonrhein/ct-classical-lyric-season-ent-0208-20170207-column.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Nance, “How Renée Fleming and Anthony Freud Convinced The Lyric To Stage ‘Oklahoma!’” *Chicago Magazine*, May 6, 2013, Accessed January 17, 2017, <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago->

experiment has paid off. Not only was 50% of the audience at the Lyric's production of *Oklahoma!* in 2014 in the opera house for the first time, but it also attracted "the most jaded of opera-goers and symphony subscribers weary of yet another 'Don Giovanni' or Beethoven's Fifth."<sup>5</sup> And lest one dismiss the Lyric's endeavor as a gimmick, it is apparent from the seasonal offerings of other companies that what may have been thought of as a quaint trend for summer apprentice programs in the early 2000s is not going away any time soon. Whatever the reason – patrons, marketing, *money* – musical theater is increasingly becoming a part of the operatic culture and this reality should not be ignored. Further, "cross-genre infusion benefits everyone, as long as the differences between the art forms are understood."<sup>6</sup>

For many classical voice teachers and singers, musical theater is an unnerving and, for some, even a forbidden term. This genre, while perhaps not appropriate for classical competitions or auditions, tends to get an unfair rap. Like much of the output of its operatic predecessor, not all musical theater works are of equal worth. However, there is a great deal of vocal literature within the genre that is well-written and extremely suitable for consideration within the classical voice studio. Its distinctly American flavor, seasoned with elements of the European art music tradition, can provide for many students the bridge between popular and classical. Musical theater really is not as distantly related to opera as it has often been made out to be as the overarching operatic ideal has always been the synthesis of music and theater. In the words of Anthony Freud:

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Magazine/C-Notes/May-2013/How-Rene-Fleming-and-Anthony-Freud-convinced-the-Lyric-to-stage-Oklahoma/.

<sup>5</sup> Belcher, "Musical or Opera?"

<sup>6</sup> Erick Neher, "From Theater to Opera: Directors Crossing Over," *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Autumn 2010): 462.

“I’m not sure there is a clear definition between operas and musicals. If you distill it down to its basics, it’s about telling stories through music and words.”<sup>7</sup>

It may be that some teachers and students struggle to understand where the boundaries lie between classical and theater music. This is understandable as it is a constant debate made up of completely subjective ideals. The technical definitions of opera and musical theater certainly do not aid in establishing clear bounds between the two. In fact, the assertion that any musical genre can have a specific rigid interpretation fails to recognize the artistic virtuosity and innovations that have provided us with an ever-changing understanding of “good” music.

Webster defines opera as, “an extended dramatic composition, in which all parts are sung to instrumental accompaniment.”<sup>8</sup> Adhering to this definition, we must automatically disqualify works such as *Die Zauberflöte* and other singspiels as opera. A musical is defined as, “a film or theatrical production typically of a sentimental or humorous nature that consists of musical numbers and dialogue based on a unifying plot.”<sup>9</sup> Perhaps singspiels then fit better in this category if we limit ourselves to such a textbook definition. And what of extremely dramatic musical theater works which are neither sentimental nor humorous, such as *Evita* and *Les Misérables*? It is obvious that the problem has very deep roots and is certainly not an easy one to solve. Furthermore, it is conceivable that the compositions that do not fit into the technical definitions of the

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<sup>7</sup> Belcher, “Musical or Opera?”

<sup>8</sup> Webster’s *New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, s.v. “opera.” (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, s.v. “musical,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com>, (Accessed January 25, 2017).

genres are those that cause confusion when defining what is and what isn't appropriate repertoire.

However, more important than the argument about what is what, is understanding that musical theater is the offspring of opera. And as Broadway composer Michael John Lachiusa aptly observed, the musical is a “magnificent creature that has swallowed its parent.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Michael John Lachiusa, “Genre Confusion,” *Opera News*, Vol. 67 Issue 2 (August 2002): 14.

## Chapter 2:

### THE PROVENANCE OF MUSICAL THEATER

Though it is difficult to trace the exact process through which musical theater emerged, and even more difficult to classify a single work as the true beginning of the genre, it is important to identify some key players. From its beginnings, the United States served as a transplant center for European art music. Colonial America was a regular spot for comic operas, particularly in British colonial centers such as Charleston, Philadelphia and Williamsburg. And as New York grew out of its early Dutch roots, which viewed stage entertainment as sinful, Broadway became home to a variety of musical offerings beginning with John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* in 1750.<sup>11</sup> Operas were still being shown on Broadway in the late Nineteenth Century. From the 1860s to the 1920s, the American stage hosted Europe's best-loved operettas, from the works of Gilbert and Sullivan to Johann Strauss. Their success was not limited to New York, however, as touring companies went throughout the country.<sup>12</sup>

Gilbert and Sullivan bear further scrutiny in the birth of musical theater. Occasionally their Savoy Operas are alleged to be the "first musicals." Volumes have been written about their unique brand, and while they seem to stand in a class all their own, they were undoubtedly part of the evolutionary process of musical theater.

W.S. Gilbert had begun his career as a writer for a publication called *Fun* but eventually became better known as a songwriter and dramatist. He was incredibly gifted in lyricism and rhyme. As a director, he was known as a shrewd control freak, but he had

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<sup>11</sup> John Kenrick, *Musical Theatre: A History* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2008), 50-51.

<sup>12</sup> David Ewen, *The Story of America's Musical Theater* (Philadelphia: Chilton Company, 1961), 9-10.



learned to be such from his time spent in Burlesque where it was common for performers to veer off-script (or off-song) to get the laugh from the audience.

Arthur Sullivan went to Leipzig as a young man to study piano but ended up a conductor. At age 20 he had catapulted himself into the upper echelons of the [British] musical world with his incidental music for a run of *The Tempest*. That same year he met Rossini and turned his attention to opera and all of its theatrical elements. Of his time with the great composer, Sullivan remarked:

Rossini first inspired me with a love for the stage and all things operatic...My necessary interviews with the stage employees, dancers, and others gave me much insight into the blending of music and stage management, which became very valuable to me as time progressed.<sup>13</sup>

Not since Purcell had there been a distinctly English school of opera, and Gilbert and Sullivan were able to provide just that. One of the features that links them to musical theater is the English language. When their partnership was beginning, Offenbach's music was all the rage. However, even though his works were translated frequently into English, those of Gilbert and Sullivan, with their natural-sounding text setting quickly eclipsed those of Offenbach and other European mainland transplants – both in England and the United States. As previously mentioned, Gilbert was very gifted at text setting and was also notorious for demanding impeccable diction from his performers in singing and speaking. This focus on text represents another precursor to the musical theater tradition.

Ironically, however, since the beginning of opera there has been a sort of “gentleman's” feud between the primacy of the text and the primacy of the music. Along with everything else split along binary lines in Europe (mind-body, master-slave, human-non-human, etc.) this debate was self-perpetuating. On the one hand

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<sup>13</sup> Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 8-17.

the story demanded clarity of conception and delivery, and on the other hand the music had a nasty way of defeating the words at almost all points, either through pitch, ornamentation, rhythm or orchestration. This duel makes endlessly entertaining history, too detailed to recount here, until finally the brawl spilled into the streets of the more self-consciously modern era in such works as Strauss's *Capriccio* (in which a poet and a composer literally duke it out) and Schönberg's *Moses und Aron* (in which Moses only speaks and Aron sings).<sup>14</sup>

Gilbert's prolific patter songs pay homage to his love of text and are loaded with multiple verses of witty prose, differing from the Italian operatic tradition of rapid-fire, repetitive text. For comparison, "Largo al factotum" (*Il barbiere di Siviglia* – Rossini) has 162 distinct words (not counting the repetitions); the famous "Major-General's song" (*The Pirates of Penzance*) has 355; and the "Nightmare Song" (*Iolanthe*) has 621.

Though legends abound about the turmoil in Gilbert and Sullivan's relationship, of note is the fact that we never refer to one without the other in relation to their collaborations – and we name the lyricist first! Though some operatic librettists are quite well known, it is extremely rare to reference them together with respect to their works. For example, it is uncommon to refer to *Le nozze di Figaro* as "Mozart and DaPonte's." Gilbert and Sullivan's dual moniker was not only unique, but also well deserved. Sullivan was very involved with the creation and fleshing out of plots (often to Gilbert's chagrin), and Gilbert's knack for text would help shape the music. This is a pattern that would be echoed in many of musical theater's best-loved partnerships: Rodgers and Hammerstein; Kander and Ebb; and Lerner and Loewe – the last a partnership that also lists the lyricist/librettist first.

Not only did Gilbert and Sullivan create an English-language opera format, they also often set their shows in a context that was contemporary and nationalistic. Even

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<sup>14</sup> Thalia Field, "Texts and Traces," *Conjunctions*, No. 28, Secular Psalms (1997): 114.

their “Japanese” opera, *The Mikado*, is a rather thinly-veiled gaze into British society.

And what of using “lighter” subject matter? Sullivan always aspired to write serious music, and in fact:

Part of the collaborators’ genius was their willingness to combine broad comedy with serious drama, not by inserting comic relief into a serious story but by making the same characters function both comically and dramatically. Despite the wit of their operas, their thematic substance is generally not comic. In fact, in nearly all of the operas, the most effective points are serious moments as often as funny ones.

The operas are at bottom a series of powerful, very human stories whose themes are as universal as their parody and satire are dated...[They] are, for the most part, serious works, not musical comedies, but comedies in the Shakespearean sense.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, Gilbert injected the operas with a dramatic style he had developed and called “topsy-turvy.” Unlike the complete ridiculousness of several of Offenbach’s (and those of other operetta composers) plots, it was very important to Gilbert (and certainly Sullivan), that no matter how much the plot twisted, it must always resolve and tie up loose ends. The duo’s ability to create this sort of entertaining juxtaposition was musically and textually based and may be found throughout their entire oeuvre from the beginning. As Richard Traubner points out, *Trial by Jury* finds its climax in a “*bel canto* burlesque *à la* Bellini (“A Nice Dilemma We have Here”) which is rather out of place in a British court, but straight out of *La Sonnambula* (“*D’un pensier*”).”<sup>16</sup> In *The Pirates of Penzance*, Mabel’s entrance aria is a “pastiche Gounod waltz,”<sup>17</sup> and it is difficult not to hear the following duet between Mabel and Frederic set against a gossiping chorus of maidens in an opposing meter (“How Beautifully Blue the Sky”) as a precursor to the end of the letter scene in *Falstaff*. Though it may seem easy to conclude that Sullivan was

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<sup>15</sup> Wren, *Paradox*, 4, 202.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 155.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

simply a gifted copycat, when observed as part of the whole, his musical storytelling instead shows his tremendous comprehension of crafting operatic scenes that covered a variety of styles. There are certainly musical nods to, and probably even some parody of other composers (parody was certainly a flavor of which Gilbert was particularly fond), but those are small pieces of the Gilbert and Sullivan puzzle.

It is not surprising that their unique version of opera did not make its way across the Channel with any noted degree of success. They were bordering on the era of *verismo* composition and on the heels of Wagner, both of which were steeped in high drama (as if there had been a lack of that previously), and English was certainly not a standard operatic language. However, their juxtaposition of operatic inclination and nationalism would make a lasting mark on American musical theater. And while their incredible output of songs, arias, duets, trios, and choruses will not be discussed herein, it would behoove any aspiring singer and most teachers who are aiding such pupils to look into the wonderful breadth that is available in the Gilbert and Sullivan catalog.

At the turn of the century on the European continent, Franz Léhar was heralding in what Traubner calls the “Silver Age of Viennese Operetta.”<sup>18</sup> The Hungarian-born composer has been lauded by Traubner as the composer most responsible for the shift in Viennese operetta from satire and dimwitted comedy toward romantic sentimentality. He asserts also that had Léhar endeavored to model his works after Johann instead of Richard Strauss, the operetta scene would have looked very different at the turn of the

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<sup>18</sup> Traubner, *Operetta*, 244.

century, and probably thereafter. Indeed, the composer shied away from the silliness of Offenbach and Strauss in favor of the “heady romanticism” of the *verismo* composers.<sup>19</sup>

One of his works turned out to be groundbreaking. *The Merry Widow* (1905) did not drip with romance, and maintained just enough of the glitter and gaiety of nineteenth-century operetta<sup>20</sup> to become one of the most popular offerings of its (and subsequently all) time. Supported by a lush score, the librettists, Victor Léon and Leo Stein, would change the shape of lighter operatic storylines, a pattern which would be followed in musical theater:

Up until *The Merry Widow*, all the characters took part in one central storyline. A secondary couple was often on hand to provide comic relief, but could invariably be edited out of the libretto without affecting the main story’s outcome. *The Merry Widow* was the first to make its main storyline and subplot completely interdependent. When properly used, such interwoven plots make librettos far more interesting, so it is not surprising that they became a standard feature. Hannah and Danilo were the first in a long line of musical stage lovers who would captivate audiences by refusing to say ‘I love you.’ Such couples had long been a literary staple, but the comedic tension generated by such relationships has proven particularly sympathetic to musicalization. Simply put, it is fun to watch lovers playing ‘hard to get,’ and that fun seems to increase when the game is set to music. *Oklahoma!*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *My Fair Lady*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Grease*, and many other musicals would echo *The Merry Widow*’s core theme of love denied in the name of pride.<sup>21</sup>

Not only did the ingénue couple of *The Merry Widow*, Camille and Valencienne, get an integral storyline, but also a more complex musical treatment than the leads, Hannah and Danilo, made up of romantic duets and arguably the best aria of the whole show for Camille.

Back in America, the prevalence of the theretofore-European art form, which had inundated the country, undoubtedly inspired composers to emulate and experiment with it

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<sup>19</sup> Traubner, *Operetta*, 244.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>21</sup> Kenrick, *Musical Theatre*, 132-133.

themselves. In 1885, Willard Spencer composed the first successful American comic opera, *The Little Tycoon*, in the style of *The Mikado*, with a similar plot and noticeably reminiscent music and satire. In 1890, Reginald de Koven, a native of Connecticut who had trained in Europe, composed the first significant American operetta, *Robin Hood*.<sup>22</sup> Even John Philip Sousa tried his hand at it, composing a string of operettas, most notably *El Capitan* (1896), replete, of course, not with waltzes, but marches.

America found its first multi-hit composer in Irish-born Victor Herbert. He had moved to Stuttgart as a young man and received formal training there, catching the eye of such talents as Brahms. He was a royal court soloist and played for the operas, where he fell in love with one of the prima donnas. When she received a contract at the Metropolitan Opera to sing he received one to play cello in the orchestra, and they relocated to New York. He strove to create works that were not simply vehicles for the reigning comic talent of the day, but ones that had better musical and plot integration with equal amounts of love and comedy.<sup>23</sup> Successful from the premiere of his first work, *Prince Ananias* in 1894, Herbert struck gold with *Naughty Marietta* (1910). Here he wove treasured European music traditions into the backdrop of 18<sup>th</sup> Century New Orleans, part of a technique he honed that would be prevalent in his work. He may, in fact, have taken a page right out of the Gilbert and Sullivan playbook; they were masters of juxtaposing setting and content (e.g. the not very Japanese subject matter of *The Mikado*). Herbert would employ such amalgamations in other shows such as *The Fortune Teller*, where there is a characteristic gypsy csárdás, but also an anvil chorus and

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<sup>22</sup> Ewen, *Story of Musical Theater*, 9-11.

<sup>23</sup> Traubner, *Operetta*, 366-367.

the beautiful “Gypsy Love Song,” that sounds much “more Irish than Magyar.”<sup>24</sup> Richard Rodgers, the American master of the Viennese waltz, together with his collaborator Oscar Hammerstein II, would also find great success with this technique.

In addition to its relatable setting and music, *Naughty Marietta* would establish a series of guidelines by which American operetta was written for the next twenty years:

- The plot requires a historic and/or exotic setting
- The music rules
- Both the music and lyrics should be flowery and poetic
- Romance is the main ingredient, not sex
- The heroine must be indecisive; the hero, stalwart and macho
- A class difference (real or imagined) between the leads is preferred
- Productions should be handsome and lavish
- Comedy is a spice that must be used sparingly
- Wit? Never heard of it. Whatever it is, it need not apply<sup>25</sup>

Surprisingly, this was not a far cry from the formula Puccini was following at the same time in Europe with his highly dramatic operas such as *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Turandot*.

As the century progressed, slight variations in the formula began to occur. The focus shifted from passion to compassion and psychology. There began to be better segues into songs that were more sophisticatedly woven into the plot. The ingénue couple began to be better utilized. And the term “musical play” became a euphemism for romantic operetta. On the heels of the success of Victor Herbert and drawing from their own European roots, Sigmund Romberg found huge success with *The Desert Song* and Rudolf Friml with *Rose-Marie*.<sup>26</sup>

From about 1910 on, the art music tradition had a heavy influence on musical theater, and certain composers began to wield their prowess and insert what were

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>25</sup> Kenrick, *Musical Theatre*, 117.

<sup>26</sup> Traubner, *Operetta*, 377-379.

considered their “serious” intentions. In fact, George Gershwin remarked that he chose the form he did for *Porgy and Bess*, “because I believe that music lives only when it is in serious form.”<sup>27</sup> Lachiusa points out that what may seem archaic by today’s standards, such as the lyrics to Harbach and Hammerstein’s *Rose-Marie*, were considered quite sophisticated at the time, and Broadway audiences had come to expect such sophistication.<sup>28</sup> Lyricists and librettists began to draw from dramatic sources that were highly regarded in America<sup>29</sup>, and composers drew from their formal classical training. Victor Herbert was a classical cellist; George Gershwin had formal training in counterpoint; Cole Porter studied with Vincent d’Indy in Paris; Stephen Sondheim studied composition with Milton Babbitt; and Andrew Lloyd Webber was trained classically in horn, violin and piano.

At the same time, the art music scene was changing drastically, also setting the stage for blurred lines between the genres. Mass experimentation with various styles of art music was prevalent, especially in Europe. For the first time in history, art music and popular music really began to diverge as separate entities. The gap between the two grew larger and Broadway composers were not eager to experiment with the new styles, especially since theirs was an art aimed at and funded by popular culture. As the new art music was not overly accessible to the public, Broadway composers were “left free to continue to explore the possibilities of a musical style which in learned circles had

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<sup>27</sup> Larry Stempel, “The Musical Play Expands,” *American Music*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer, 1992): 152.

<sup>28</sup> Lachiusa, “Genre Confusion,” 14.

<sup>29</sup> Stempel, “Musical Play,” 138.



become old-fashioned and, in the individualistic world of the twentieth century, unacceptable.”<sup>30</sup>

The composers began to use this freedom to incorporate popular styles, and the best composers realized that they could use their newfound combinational techniques without sacrificing dramatic possibility. In essence, they created their own style of music, which fused American popular song and Classical, operatic elements:

American popular songs are simple in form and are generally quite short. These features limit not so much what can be expressed, but to what degree it can be conveyed. It is vain to hope for the affective climaxes one hears in the classical operas because there is not enough time to prepare them in a Broadway song. Mozart can prepare a climactic finale for twenty minutes, and Wagner for an entire act, but a theater song must make its point and quit within a very few minutes. Only by constructing musical relationships across the entire drama could Broadway composers create similar effects, and that level of composition was beyond all but a handful of the best musical plays of the tradition.<sup>31</sup>

One of the earliest composers to achieve that vision was Jerome Kern, who spent his early career padding the popular comedies of the day with his own compositions in their London and New York performances in a practice akin to the interpolation of arias in operas when they didn’t suit the singer or audience. His first hit came in the New York production of the Edwardian musical comedy *The Girl From Utah*: “They Didn’t Believe Me.” Though written in the standard 32-bar format of the American popular song:

It artfully changed the traditional AABA structure (A and B designating contrasting eight-bar musical sections) to something resembling ABAA’, and it held its graceful melody to a span of no more than an octave. It thus broke, on one hand, with earlier American traditions represented by the AABA songs of Stephen Foster and, on the other, with the operetta tradition, imported from Europe, that reached two octaves or more for high B-flats at emotional

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002), 8-9.

<sup>31</sup> Swain, *Broadway Musical*, 10.

climaxes... [It] convey[ed] its very real emotion, not with the extravagance of operetta, but in a quiet conversational style in which, almost paradoxically, emotion is rendered more, not less real. Its modest thirty-two-bar format allowed [the singer] to make a statement and comment on it with the intimacy of a confession. Its little ‘change from major to minor’ (to quote from a subsequent Cole Porter lyric)...was genuinely moving precisely because the scale was so small.

It was a song touched with real feeling, written with sophistication, and yet it was something anyone could sing. (Possibly that is why the critics chose at first to ignore it.) ‘They Didn’t Believe Me’ was content with and confident about the potential for dramatic expressiveness in the small compass of the American popular song. It had no need for the larger scale of Victor Herbert, though that dean of Broadway operetta was perceptive enough to see what the new song was doing. ‘This man will inherit my mantle,’ he said of Kern.<sup>32</sup>

When he began composing entire shows of his own, Kern continued the trend.

Instead of strictly using the watered-down European style, he integrated the same types of songs he had been composing for others: two-step, ragtime – American popular songs.

His work paid off in 1927 with *Showboat*. The first several minutes are almost completely made up of uninterrupted music with only transitional dialogue. He streamlines the plot process a bit and introduces the story and the lovers quickly. Is their love at first sight a little unbelievable? Perhaps, but no more so than that of Rodolfo and Mimì. His clever juxtaposition of blues, ragtime, spirituals, mostly set against Southern coloration in the orchestra (with many a banjo), and against standard operetta-style numbers, all well-integrated into the plot, make this show a huge triumph. Additionally, it tackles serious social issues, not the least of which is racism, including a miscegenation scene.<sup>33</sup> “The constant in all of this diversity is Kern’s own pioneering style, grown from the days of ‘They Didn’t Believe Me’ to an artful, kaleidoscopic blend of indigenous

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<sup>32</sup> M. Owen Lee, *A Season of Opera: From Orpheus to Ariadne* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 182-183.

<sup>33</sup> Traubner, *Operetta*, 394-395.

American elements with Viennese operetta and with his own patented conversational idiom.”<sup>34</sup> Kurt Weill would later comment:

This form of theater has its special attraction for the composer, because it allows him to use a great variety of musical idioms, to write music that is both serious and light, operatic and popular, emotional and sophisticated, orchestral and vocal. Each show of this type has to create its own style, its own texture, its own relationship between words and music, because music becomes a truly integral part of the play – it helps deepen the emotions and clarify the structure.<sup>35</sup>

In 1934, Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* became another embodiment of the fledgling genre. Reviews from those on both sides of the classical/popular table were unhappy with what they considered too much of one and not enough of the other. It seems to have bothered some that the organization of *Porgy and Bess* reconciles the structural demands of through-composed opera with the populist forms of the musical. Jazz fans dismissed the inclusion of African-American music and opera critics claimed that the work was nothing more than a string of hit tunes.<sup>36</sup> One critic, who was known for his Wagnerian tastes remarked that he hated the “song hits...scattered throughout [the] score...They mar it. They are its cardinal weakness. They are a blemish upon its musical integrity.”<sup>37</sup>

Gershwin defended his compositional style:

It is true that I have written songs for *Porgy and Bess*. I am not ashamed of writing songs at any time so long as they are good songs. But songs are entirely within the operatic tradition. Many of the most successful operas of the past have had songs. Nearly all of Verdi’s operas contain what are known as ‘song hits.’ *Carmen* is almost a collection of song hits. Of course, the songs in *Porgy and Bess* are only a part of the whole...I have used symphonic music to unify entire scenes.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Lee, *Season of Opera*, 187.

<sup>35</sup> John Graziano, “Musical Dialects in Down in the Valley,” in *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, ed. Kim H. Kowalke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 299.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew Boyden, *Opera: The Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides Ltd., 1997), 491.

<sup>37</sup> Lehman Engel, *The American Musical Theater*, (New York: CBS Records, 1967), 144.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Kimball, “The History of *Porgy and Bess*,” Liner Notes for *Porgy and Bess*, Houston Grand Opera, RCA compact disc RCD3-2109, 1977.

Famed lyricist Alan Lerner (*My Fair Lady* and *Camelot*) echoes Gershwin and refutes harsh criticism when he asserts:

What Gershwin had done was take the song form and give it a depth, a height and an emotional expansion that on the normal operatic stage would be achieved by aria. He called it a folk opera and that is precisely what it is. There was recitative, but there was also dialogue, which by strict definition was opéra-bouffe. But intellectual definitions in the case of *Porgy and Bess* seem irrelevant. It was the first of its kind and remains to this day the greatest triumph of the modern musical theater.<sup>39</sup>

It should have been no surprise to Gershwin's critics to see him cross-pollinate his classical roots with the dialectic and populist forms of the American south. Such ideas were not unprecedented on the opera stage. Janáček was perhaps the first connoisseur of the inclusion of folk and/or other colloquial and native rhythms, heavily weaving the cadence of the Czech language into *Jenůfa*. Bartók continued the trend with *Bluebeard's Castle*. Gershwin had certainly struck a vein with his (not so) "new" American recitative. It would be adopted by other composers such as Kurt Weill, whose self-proclaimed "Broadway Opera," *Street Scene*, is ridden with pre-aria recitative (i.e. "What Good Would the Moon Be"). In fact, Weill aspired to create a type of drama "interweaving the spoken word and the sung word so that the singing takes over naturally whenever the emotion of the spoken word reaches a point where music can 'speak' with greater effect."<sup>40</sup> Marc Blitzstein's opera *Regina* contains a variety of recitative patterns, including southern drawls and "Negro speech." When it opened on Broadway, Leonard Bernstein fretted over:

The search for a substitute word which can describe the Broadway equivalent of what was once known as opera, and which excludes the forms we know so well as

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<sup>39</sup> Alan Jay Lerner, *The Musical Theatre: A Celebration* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1986), 133.

<sup>40</sup> Graziano, "Musical Dialects" 299.

“musical comedy” and “revue...” “Musical play” has served nobly and well until now, most recently in the case of *South Pacific*; but *Regina* is a far more ambitious undertaking, containing more music, more kinds of music, more complicated music, and more unconventional music than *South Pacific*.<sup>41</sup>

This identity crisis was caused, in part, because opera composers were not the only ones to continue the recitative trend set by Gershwin. The same treatment had been previously integrated into *Show Boat* and was continued in shows such as *The King and I*. *The Most Happy Fella* contained more than twice the customary number of musical numbers for a standard musical theater piece of the time, and these were connected by a flexible scheme of musically contracting and expanding ariosos and recitatives.<sup>42</sup> *Les Misérables* is linked throughout with recitative, as are Webber’s *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and Sondheim’s *Into the Woods*.

In 1943, *Oklahoma!* would set a new standard in the operetta-musical overlap. A truly American show, its roots are still steeped in European tradition. It is a 20<sup>th</sup> century example of the pastoral tradition<sup>43</sup> and emphatically American, from its incorporation of dialect to its setting that transported a war-weary audience back to simpler times, free from European location or influence. It began without a chorus, and in lieu of a big choral finale, Act I ends with a ballet – and not just a ballet for ballet’s sake, but rather a dance sequence that is musically and dramatically linked to the story, as are the other integrated dances throughout the show. There is a strong element of psychology implemented on top of a routinely melodramatic plot with the inclusion of the villain Jud Fry. And all of these elements work in tandem while allowing the entire piece to

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<sup>41</sup> Stempel, “Musical Play,” 150.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>43</sup> Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 175-176.

maintain its country western feel, juxtaposed against the hypnotic European waltzes of Richard Rodgers. It was truly a game changer.

The techniques that cement a work as opera have not stayed uniquely within the opera world. Their frequent inclusion in musical theater has caused the lines to be less solid between the genres. For example, Andrew Lloyd Webber, whose classical background heavily influences his theater ventures, prefers the sung-through style of music and the Wagnerian sense of control associated with it: “The most important thing for the composer is to be able to control the piece from A to B. If you have any dialogue, no matter how brilliant, that interrupts the flow, it means the composer is not in the driver’s seat.”<sup>44</sup> His works, as well as those of some other composers, most definitely reflect that thought process. *Evita* and *Les Misérables* are two shining examples. The stories and the high drama which drive them are linked musically, sung-through, and are irrefutably reminiscent of the stylistic traits associated with “classic” opera.

It is clear then that musical theater was born of opera and that it kept, adopted, and/or adapted several operatic techniques. In fact, particularly when speaking of the American opera, the birth process may be considered reciprocal. Leonard Bernstein considered the Broadway musical theater idiom to be a wellspring for the creation of American national opera.<sup>45</sup> Add into the equation some classically trained composers, and it is easy to see how, for many works, the classification as opera or musical theater is a difficult one. Lachiusa offers the following insight:

Both opera and musical carry cultural connotations that are challenged periodically... But what we experience when we hear a new opera or musical is

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<sup>44</sup> Jessica Sternfeld, *The Megamusical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 90.

<sup>45</sup> Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 721.

informed by our expectations of either genre...it's the well-tended marriage of music and word that gives us the great masterworks we cherish in the opera house as well as on Broadway.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Lachiusa, "Genre Confusion," 13.

## Chapter 3:

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF MUSICAL THEATER REPERTOIRE

There is much to be gained by “trying to get classically focused people to hear classical influences in popular music, and to lead those people who prefer popular music to recognize the musical roots which lie in classical repertoire.”<sup>47</sup> Working from this knowledge, teachers and students alike can develop at least a respect if not an appreciation for musical theater, and in some cases find common ground that may be of great benefit in a teaching setting. Michael Ballam, Founding General Director of Utah Festival Opera, relates the following anecdote:

I have witnessed countless students who were “locked up” in their own techniques (both vocally and histrionically), who have opened up and made tremendous strides in both areas. Susan Dunn, who was from my studio had a very small (English boy choir) sound in her graduate work. She could not break through into the rich full sound we knew she had until she was required to sing some show tunes. It was something she had never done before. Within months her operatic sound grew to the point that she won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Award in 1981 and made her Met debut in 1990 as Leonora in *Il trovatore*.<sup>48</sup>

In her book, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Vocal Music*, author Sharon Mabry poses the question, “Why sing twentieth-century music?” She asserts the absurdity of failing to consider and summarily discounting one hundred years’ worth of music without applying some good study. Her argument continues that the musical offerings are so diverse and many so relatable to the modern world that everyone should be able to find something to study or perform.<sup>49</sup> While her text is aimed at those delving into what is

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Edwin, “POP Goes the Classical!” *Journal of Singing*, Volume 69, No. 3 (January/February 2013): 331.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Ballam, Email to the author, January 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Sharon Mabry, *Exploring Twentieth Century Vocal Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.



considered twentieth-century music of the classical tradition, it is baffling to think why any singer would not consider, in addition, the distinctly twentieth-century art form of musical theater, which was so clearly drawn from the same roots. In fact, when one looks at much of the twentieth-century classical repertoire, it would be hard to justify how it is more closely related to previous European art music than much of the musical theater library.<sup>50</sup>

It follows then that it is not without the bounds of possibility to consider individual songs from musicals as art songs. Several of the *26 Italian Songs and Arias* are part of larger works. After all, as Ms. Mabry suggests, musical performance can only survive when the artists “capture the attention of a larger pool of listeners by offering a gourmet’s delight in musical style, mood, and vocalism, and by giving the audience more choices and new alternatives to the standard concert fare.”<sup>51</sup> An exploration of the musical theater canon undoubtedly works toward this goal. In fact, one scholar believes that Kurt Weill was striving to achieve something similar, noting that

[He] tried to write music that accomplished two things at once: it served an ethical purpose, community formation; and it succeeded as absolute music, music that would make perfect sense if it had no text at all. Weill perhaps understood these two things as aspects of a single goal: any piece of music that makes perfect internal sense, from a Mozart string quartet to a rousing workers’ song, serves the cause of human liberation.<sup>52</sup>

There are a host of technical and performance methods that may be introduced and honed through the singing and/or study of musical theater. Theodore Chapin, President and Chief Creative Officer of the Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization,

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<sup>50</sup> See Example 3.1

<sup>51</sup> Mabry, *Exploring Twentieth Century*, 5-6

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Albright, *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 123.

cautioned, “In opera, the music tends to be all-important, and in musicals the drama is all-important. But I think that’s led people to misconceive musicals as making the music not that important.”<sup>53</sup>

A generalization may also be made in suggesting that musical theater is easier for many young singers to relate to than arias or art songs. After all, musicals are in English and often have plots and subject matter that is more current and seemingly more relevant than operas. Furthermore, a student who has little or no familiarity with Italian vocal style might relate better to singing with the healthy sense of line present in a Rodgers and Hart song.<sup>54</sup> This is not to say that art music is not relatable, but it is more likely that a young freshman woman will have had a “Look at Me, I’m Sandra Dee” (*Grease*) moment than a “Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel” moment. However, ask the same woman to reference the character Rizzo from *Grease* and put her more into the context of “There Are Worse Things I Could Do,” and suddenly Gretchen doesn’t seem so far off.<sup>55</sup> The pathos of each piece will not be an exact match, but it is about finding something for the student to relate to. In order to produce artists of the utmost quality, it is imperative that they be given every opportunity to truly connect with the stories they tell. Naturally many, if not most, will lack the requisite life experience to instinctively take over the characters they portray, but musical theater can provide useful tools to help bridge that gap. Ned Rorem has commented specifically on the detriment of the American way of training singers who hardly understand their own language:

Our singers now learn every language except their own. In this country of specialists, the one area of general practice is vocal literature. In Europe, where

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<sup>53</sup> Nance, “How Fleming and Freud Convinced the Lyric.”

<sup>54</sup> Joan Melton, *Singing in Musical Theatre* (New York: Allworth Press, 2007), 66.

<sup>55</sup> See Example 3.2

general practice prevails, a singer nonetheless masters his native language first; our students prefer singing badly in languages they don't comprehend to singing well in their own. Their excuse, and the excuse of their brainwashed teachers, is that English is ungrateful—but that's only because, understanding English, they see the pitfalls more clearly. The only thing bad about English as a vocal medium is bad English.<sup>56</sup>

Such character studies as those described above may easily be extended beyond the text to help a student make connections. For example, a baritone preparing to sing the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro* would most likely benefit greatly from studying the predatory and abusive nature of the likes of Jud Fry (*Oklahoma!*) or Bill Sikes (*Oliver!*). These characters offer situations that are likely to be much more relatable (either through personal experience or popular entertainment) than that of the Count, especially because so much of his lasciviousness is not blatantly shown on stage during the opera.

One of the great but often forgotten tools that can be applied from musical theater into classical singing is recitative. As mentioned previously, recitative is one of the clearly inherited classical traits that remains present in musical theater. For those unfamiliar with the three standard operatic languages, understanding the cadence and shape of recitative can be a daunting task. Even for more advanced singers, it is often difficult to grasp the contrast between the speech-like and more arioso sections. Many people don't realize that several musical theater songs they already know include recitative-like sections. Almost anyone can hum the tune to, or even sing the title song from *The Sound of Music* but not many could recall its recitative – textually or musically. This is perhaps due to the fact that so many songs of Broadway became the popular songs of the mid-twentieth century, and their versions in the hit parade did not generally include

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<sup>56</sup> Ned Rorem, "The American Art Song From 1927-1972: A Personal Survey by Ned Rorem," Liner Notes to *But Yesterday Is Not Today: The American Art Song 1927-1972*, Bethany Beardslee, Robert Helps, Donald Gramm and Donald Hassard, New World Records, 80243-2, Compact Disc, 1996.

the opening sections; just as many of the arias sung on television at the same time by performers such as Leontyne Price and Marilyn Horne forego their recitatives. After all, the recitative is the connective, speech-like tissue that holds a work together between the elevated moments known as arias. And without the context of the greater work, the recitative may at times seem out of place. That, however, does not diminish its integrity.

In the case of the titular tune “The Sound of Music,” those who have seen the stage version of the musical might recognize the opening recitative which begins, “My day in the hills has come to an end, I know...” Those who are more acquainted with the movie version of the soundtrack (from which the recitative text was omitted) might find they aren’t unfamiliar with the tune of the recitative, which in that version becomes a major theme of the prelude leading into the song. Visually and aurally it is easy to detect the switch from the recitative into a more arioso section. At “But deep in the dark green shadows,” the phrases become longer, and there is suddenly more motion in the accompaniment. To a seasoned singer, this may seem an obvious point of reference, but for a young (or, rather, inexperienced) student it may be a connection they can transfer to an operatic recitative.<sup>57</sup>

Other popular songs that have lesser-known recitatives include “Hello, Young Lovers” (*The King and I*), “I Dreamed a Dream” (*Les Misérables*) and “If I Loved You” (*Carousel*). Then there are songs such as “Feed the Birds” from *Mary Poppins*, which have lovely, seamless transitions between recitative and arioso sections.<sup>58</sup> This technique has been adopted into much of our American opera such as Adamo’s *Little Women*,

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<sup>57</sup> See Example 3.3.

<sup>58</sup> See Example 3.4.

which relies greatly on the easy back-and-forth between speech-like singing and more arioso sections, without the distinguishable presence of many arias.

Drawing from the theater repertoire to teach recitative technique to students can be a beneficial tool. Even the beginning student can identify a difference between the “recitative” and “aria” sections of a musical theater song after one or two listenings. From there, it is easy to build up not only their musical understanding, but also their musical technique and vocabulary. These are natural moments to introduce or reinforce terms like legato, line, and speech-like, to name a few. As the singer begins identifying sentence structure and develops a heightened sense of the cadence of the English language, they will be able to apply recitative techniques to classical repertoire and have a solid base from which to draw as they begin applying the same techniques to other languages.

This approach is not limited to beginning students. Even more advanced students struggling with the recitative of an aria might benefit from a corresponding musical theater activity. For example, a teacher could choose a musical theater song with a recitative and invite the student to identify and experiment with the differences between the two sections. The instruction might include asking the student to try different ways to distinguish the “recitative” from the “aria” by way of manipulation of the text, line, breath management, etc., all the while observing how these differences affect the way the song feels and sounds. It is not even necessary to learn more than the first line of the song – just enough to experiment with the distinction between the two sections. The study may then be continued by asking the student to apply the same technique to the classical aria recitative, helping them to identify where and how some of the same

features may be applied. This is of particular use for arias that have *accompagnato* recitative, as the verse-refrain structure of musical theater is directly related to the classical structure of recitative-aria, albeit on a smaller scale.

One bonus of using musical theater songs as learning tools is that the musical structure is often simpler than in classical music; the recitatives tend to be in simple meter with simple beating patterns, and are often strophic in nature. In addition, they tend to have a fairly restricted range, occasionally just being one repeated note as is the case of “I Dreamed a Dream.”<sup>59</sup> Coupled with a singer’s inherent familiarity with the language, these features make these songs a natural choice. It should be noted that in musical theater anthologies, songs often appear without their recitative sections. It may be necessary to seek out source material to find them.

The recitative section of “I Dreamed a Dream” presents several good practice tools in addition to the aforementioned feature of being on one note. Just as in opera, there is some leeway regarding the exact flow of recitative in musical theater. That is to say, it is extremely common to hear a recording that does not adhere strictly to the written rhythms. However, to practice recitative, one might begin by asking the student to adhere strictly to the written rhythms. The text of this particular recitative is actually set quite nicely, but perhaps not with the exact inflection that a student might inherently give each word. First, the student should speak the words in rhythm, observing all rests. Next, ask the student to use a monotone pitch and read the words again while maintaining the natural accents of the phrase structure and without breaking up legato or losing the rhythms. Add the piano while the singer speaks again, in monotone and with correct

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<sup>59</sup> See Example 3.5.

rhythms. Finally, it is time to sing. It is often surprising how difficult it is for students, even in their native language, to grasp some of these concepts. It's as if adding specific value to a syllable somehow makes it foreign. But that difficulty is only amplified when applied to a foreign language. Hopefully after such an exercise, the student can approach a classical recitative with a better understanding of all the working parts.<sup>60 61</sup>

Another feature of musical theater pertinent to the classical studio is the strong emphasis placed on text. One example of this is the fact that we tend to identify many Broadway shows by their composers and lyricists/librettists: Rodgers and Hammerstein; Rodgers and Hart; and Lerner and Loewe, whose moniker echoes that of Gilbert and Sullivan, in that the “words man” is listed before the “music man.”

While in opera there has been a longstanding preoccupation with vocal virtuosity,<sup>62</sup> Broadway prefers to highlight the importance of the words. This results in some distinct stylistic differences such as a generally lower tessitura and limited range,<sup>63</sup> in order to assure that the text may be understood clearly. This, of course, does not preclude beautiful singing, a thought that seems to occasionally discourage classically-oriented singers from wanting to approach the repertoire. While musical theater is not always as vocally challenging as classical repertoire, it presents the singer with the opportunity to really hone their diction.

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<sup>60</sup> Jennifer Peterson, a New York-based vocal coach and conductor presents a wonderful approach to learning recitative in a post she wrote for The Collaborative Piano Blog entitled, “Coaching Recitative: Subliminal Recit Technique.” Her system is a useful resource for students and teachers:

<http://collaborativepiano.blogspot.com/2009/03/subliminal-recit-technique.html#.WlaJBrYrLBI>

<sup>61</sup> See Example 3.6

<sup>62</sup> Michael Bawtree, *The New Singing Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 170.

<sup>63</sup> Scott Harrison, *Perspectives on Teaching Singing* (Bowen Hills: Australian Academic Press, 2010), 171.

One aspect of that is the fact that from the patter-style songs of Stephen Sondheim to the lovely waltzes of Richard Rodgers, there seems to be more syllabic text setting in musical theater as compared to classical song. With our heavily consonant-filled language and the sheer volume of words, diction becomes paramount, and its clarity facilitated by the melody sitting in a generally comfortable register. In her book, *Singing and Communicating in English*, Kathryn LaBouff points out the importance of training good diction:

If we are native speakers, we tend to be very careless with our language. Since English is easy for us to speak and understand, we assume our facility with it will automatically be transferred to our singing in English. As native speakers, we focus usually on the ideas that we are trying to communicate, not on the specific sounds that make up the words we are using to express ourselves. For most of us, little time is spent analyzing the specific vowel sounds and consonant sounds. If we are to sing effectively in English, we must treat the English language with as much care and precision as we give the foreign languages in which we sing. The distinct vowels...must be very clear and precise when they are sustained in music. In everyday speech, vowel precision is not a requirement for intelligibility. But when a word must be sustained musically in slow motion, it is very important that the vowel sound is precise or else no one will know what we are singing about!<sup>64</sup>

A teachable example can be found in “Falling in Love With Love,” from *The Boys From Syracuse*.<sup>65</sup> Even just the first line of the refrain is an excellent exercise in crisp diction:

Falling in love with love is falling for make-believe

Falling in love with love is playing the fool

There are several challenges to overcome in this little couplet. The alliterative sounds produced by the repeated ‘L’ should give the phrase a fluid, romantic sound because of the movement of the tongue. However, it is tricky not to let each of those curl the tongue so far as to cut off the flow of air prematurely or alter the following vowel, thus

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<sup>64</sup> Kathryn LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer’s Guide to English Diction*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>65</sup> See Example 3.7.



interrupting the fluidity. Furthermore, the final ‘L’ of “fool” must sound so as not to become the colloquial “foo.” For that matter, all the final consonants or clusters in the phrase need to be articulated in order to be understood. All of this should be achieved while maintaining the integrity of a beautiful fluid line. What a fantastic challenge to articulate all of the consonants clearly without taking away from the musical line! It could even be useful as a precursor to voicing Italian double consonants. Finally, the vowel on “fool” must be taken into account. Not only is it at the end of a rising line, but it also lands on a D5 (D4 for a male), which for many singers is a *passaggio* area note.<sup>66</sup> Singing a pure [u] is probably not an option, and so the discussion can begin about modification or adjustment – whatever the personal style of the teacher. Within this short excerpt is enough material to fill an entire lesson and all of the facets are easily and directly applicable to any classical repertoire. It is also a great segue into a discussion of consonant usage in other languages.

Again, in repertoire where the students do not have a keen sense of the language, musical theater songs can be a huge asset. Even if students have a word for word translation and IPA written in their score for an art song or aria, it does not indicate a true understanding. It should also be noted that even advanced singers who have had a university-level year of training in a language often struggle to be able to perceive its natural cadence. To illustrate this point, consider the Fauré favorite, “Lydia.”<sup>67</sup> The text is syllabically set, which tends to create its own set of problems, the largest being disconnected, note-to-note singing. It is easy for a younger singer (or a student who is

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers: Tools for Performers and Teachers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 131.

<sup>67</sup> See Example 3.8.

less familiar with French), because of the sustained notes, to hear the phrases as short and almost choppy, perhaps as such:

Lydia/  
 Sur tes roses joues/  
 Et sur ton col frais/  
 Et si blanc/  
 Roule/  
 Étincelant/  
 L'or fluide/  
 Que tu dénoues

To help combat these potential problems, let's compare the text of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Some Enchanted Evening" (*South Pacific*).<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the text is set syllabically and the sustained notes and rests seem to break up the poetry as follows:

Some enchanted evening/  
 You may see a stranger/  
 You may see a stranger/  
 Across a crowded room/  
 And somehow you know/  
 You know even then/  
 That somewhere you'll see her/  
 Again and/

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<sup>68</sup> See Example 3.9.

### Again

Of course, if it is sung in this fashion, from note to note, the singer and the listener are left with an unsatisfying, inartistic experience. One major advantage of this English text is the ability of the teacher to ask the student to read it poetically, asking where there should be connections between phrases, where to breathe, etc. Once the student has identified the poetic cadences, the work of building a vocal line can begin. The teacher should ask the student to sing it as they have just spoken it, and there will most likely be an immediate improvement, but the careful ears of the teacher are necessary in continuing to encourage the student to sing more fluidly. This is also a natural point to introduce the concept of the intention of the vocal line continuing even when the written values indicate a breath, a lift/pause, or a sustained note in the middle of a phrase.

After spending some time on this, it is time to apply the same techniques back to the Fauré song. It may be necessary to demonstrate the cadence of the French poetry for the student. Thereafter the process can begin of speaking the text with the desired intention and subsequently singing it. This time the teacher can apply references from “Some Enchanted Evening.” For instance, by picking a phrase the student sings particularly well in that song and asking them to apply the same connection, fluidity, etc., to a specific phrase of “Lydia.” Other good theater songs that work well for teaching line are the waltzes of Richard Rodgers, such as “Falling in Love With Love” (*The Boys From Syracuse*); “Hello, Young Lovers” (*The King and I*); and “Ten Minutes Ago” (*Cinderella*). The perpetual motion and easily recognizable dance rhythms help to foster connected lines and fluid motion. Even without making a conscious effort to do so,

students will often sing these songs smoother than other repertoire. This can be used as a major building block.

Musical theater repertoire can be helpful even for advanced singers. There is a great deal of it that can be used as a segue to singing American opera. After a study focused primarily on the ease of the *bel canto* tradition and romance languages that are so vowel-focused, singing opera in English can quickly become a challenge. Not only are there more consonants to consider, but American opera tends to be heavy with recitative. Additionally, there seems to be more pressure, at least when performing American opera in the United States, to have the text be intelligible. These are problems that plague native and non-native English speakers alike.

The most obvious works to consult with regard to this challenge are those whose genre is constantly debated as either being musical theater or opera, e.g. *Candide*, *Street Scene*, and *Porgy and Bess*. There is certainly a wealth of beautiful music to choose from in this repertoire, but to really get a sense of the sung potential of the English language, it would be wise to consider songs that can act as transitions to the rather difficult “Glitter and be Gay,” “Lonely House,” and “Summertime,” which students often prematurely approach simply because they are in English. Musical theater is replete with big ballads that ask for the same style of singing and equal character dedication. Even though the vocal range is often more restricted than in opera, it nonetheless presents similar challenges. These include passaggio negotiation, blending of the registers, and learning to avoid pushing into the lower range of the voice. They provide opportunities to hone skills that can easily be applied to the operatic literature. *Kismet*, much of the music for which is based on themes of Alexander Borodin, has a fantastic score that includes the

powerful “And This Is My Beloved,” as well as the love-struck “Stranger in Paradise.”

*Carousel* also delivers two powerhouse songs demanding of a classical technique:

“You’ll Never Walk Alone” and “If I Loved You.” One need only hear the likes of Renée Fleming or Gordon MacRae sing these classics to appreciate the breadth and mastery these theater pieces require in order to be performed. Ultimately, these songs could provide singers with a strong technical foundation as they continue to work toward challenging American opera arias such as “Ain’t it a Pretty Night.”

**Example 3.1 Excerpts from Luciano Berio’s “Sequenza III Per Voce Femminile” (1966) and its accompanying performance guide.** An example of 20<sup>th</sup> century classical



### **Look at Me, I'm Sandra Dee (Grease)**

*Rizzo pokes fun at squeaky clean and innocent Sandy by comparing her to the film star Sandra Dee.*

Look at Me, I'm Sandra Dee  
Lousy with virginity  
Won't go to bed 'til I'm legally wed  
I can't; I'm Sandra Dee

Watch it! Hey I'm Doris Day  
I was not brought up that way  
Won't come across,  
Even Rock Hudson lost  
His heart to Doris Day

I don't drink  
Or swear  
I don't rat my hair  
I get ill from one cigarette

Keep your filthy paws  
Off my silky draws  
Would you pull that crap with Annette?

As for you Troy Donahue,  
I know what you wanna do  
You got your crust  
I'm no object of lust  
I'm just plain Sandra Dee

Elvis, Elvis, let me be!  
Keep that pelvis far from me!  
Just keep your cool  
Now your starting to drool  
Hey Fongool, I'm Sandra Dee!<sup>70</sup>

### **There Are Worse Things I Could Do (Grease)**

*Worried that she is pregnant, and unwilling to come to terms with the paternity, Rizzo reflects on the consequences of her actions.*

There are worse things I could do  
Than go with a boy or two  
Even though the neighborhood  
Thinks I'm trashy and no good  
I suppose it could be true  
But there are worse things I could do

I could flirt with all the guys  
Smile at them and bat my eyes  
Press against them when we dance  
Make them think they stand a chance  
Then refuse to see it through  
That's a thing I'd never do

I could stay home every night  
Wait around for Mr.Right  
Take cold showers every day  
And throw my life away  
On a dream that won't come true

I could hurt someone like me  
Out of spite or jealousy  
I don't steal and I don't lie  
But I can feel and I can cry  
A fact I'll bet you never knew  
But to cry in front of you  
That's the worst thing I could do<sup>71</sup>

### **Gretchen am Spinnrade (Schubert, with text from Faust by Goethe)**

<sup>70</sup> Jim Jacobs, Warren Casey, and John Farrar, Metro Lyrics, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/look-at-me-im-sandra-dee-lyrics-grease.html> (Accessed January 25, 2017).

<sup>71</sup> Jim Jacobs, Warren Casey, and John Farrar, Metro Lyrics, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/there-are-worse-things-i-could-do-lyrics-grease.html> (Accessed January 25, 2017).

*Abandoned and pregnant by Faust, Gretchen reflects on her longing and desperation.*

My peace is gone,  
my heart is sore,  
never shall I find  
peace ever more.

Where he is not,  
there is my grave,  
all the world  
to me is gall

My poor head  
is crazed,  
my poor wits  
destroyed.

Only for him I gaze  
from the window,  
only for him I go  
from the house

His superior walk,  
his noble air,  
his smiling mouth,  
his compelling eyes.

And his words—  
their magic flow,  
the press of his hand,  
and ah, his kiss!

My heart craves  
for him,  
oh, to clasp  
and to hold

and kiss him,  
just as I liked,  
and in his kisses  
pass away!<sup>72</sup>

**Example 3.3 Excerpt from “Feed the Birds.”<sup>73</sup>** Note the transition from the recitative to a more arioso section beginning at “Come feed,” before finally entering the “aria” section at “Feed the Birds.”

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<sup>72</sup> George Bird and Richard Stokes, trans. *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder: The Texts of Over 750 Songs in German Chosen and Introduced by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 235-236.



Ear-ly each day to the steps of Saint Paul's The lit-tle old bird wom-an comes. In her

The first system of the musical score is in 3/4 time, key of D major. It features a vocal melody and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Ear-ly each day to the steps of Saint Paul's The lit-tle old bird wom-an comes. In her".

own spe-cial way to the peo-ple she calls, "Come, buy my bags full of crumbs;

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: "own spe-cial way to the peo-ple she calls, 'Come, buy my bags full of crumbs;".

Come feed the lit-tle birds, show them you care And you'll be glad if you do; Their

The third system continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Come feed the lit-tle birds, show them you care And you'll be glad if you do; Their".

young ones are hun-gry, their nests are so bare; All it takes is tup-pence from you.

The fourth system concludes the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are: "young ones are hun-gry, their nests are so bare; All it takes is tup-pence from you."

<sup>73</sup> Louise Lerch, ed. *The Teen's Musical Theatre Collection: Young Women's Edition*, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1997).

**Example 3.4 Excerpt from “The Sound of Music”<sup>74</sup>** Note the visual/aural cues of longer phrases and more present accompaniment at “But deep in the dark green shadows.”

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 4/4.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with a half rest, followed by the lyrics "My day in the hills has come to an end I know. A star has come out to tell me it's". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

**System 2:** The vocal line continues with "time to go. But deep in the dark green shadows are voices that urge me to stay. So I". The piano accompaniment includes a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

**System 3:** The vocal line continues with "pause and I wait and I listen for one more sound, For". The piano accompaniment includes a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

**System 4:** The vocal line concludes with "one more lovely thing that the hills might say.". The piano accompaniment includes a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *Broadway Volume 2*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1981).

**Example 3.5 Excerpt from “I Dreamed a Dream.”<sup>75</sup>**

There was a time when men were kind, When their voices were soft

and their words in-vit-ing. There was a time when love was blind And the world was a song

And the song was ex-cit ing. There was a time. Then it all went wrong.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Walters, ed. *The Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology: Mezzo-Soprano, Belter*, Vol. 2 (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000).

**Example 3.6 Excerpts from “En fermant les yeux”<sup>76</sup> and “En vain, pour éviter.”<sup>77</sup>**

Both serve as examples of the type of recitative that can be aided in understanding by looking at musical theater recitative. Note the contrast of long and short phrases, dryer and more *accompagnato* recitative, and montone phrases.

The first musical system shows a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics "C'est vrai..." are under the first three notes. The piano accompaniment features a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

The second musical system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics "fol - le!" are under the first three notes. The piano accompaniment continues with a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

The third musical system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The lyrics "l'a fait si lé-ger qu'on a tou-jours peur qu'il\_ s'en - vo - le!" are under the first three notes. The piano accompaniment features a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

<sup>76</sup> Robert L. Larsen, ed. *Arias for Tenor* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1991).

<sup>77</sup> Robert L. Larsen, ed. *Arias for Mezzo-Soprano* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1991).

“En fermant les yeux,” continued

A ta - ble! A ta - ble!

In - stant char - mant où la crain - te fait trê - ve où nous

som-mes deux seu - le - ment! Tiens, Ma -

non: en mar-chant, je viens de faire un rê - ve.

## “En vain, pour éviter”

Score for the piece “En vain, pour éviter”. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: “Voy - ons que j’es - saie à mon tour. Car-reau! Pi-que!”

The score consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The second system continues the piano accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal melody and piano accompaniment.

**System 1:** The vocal melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F#4. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of chords: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, and C4-E4-G4.

**System 2:** The piano accompaniment continues with a series of chords: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, and C4-E4-G4.

**System 3:** The vocal melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note F#4. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of chords: C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, and C4-E4-G4.

“En vain, pour éviter,” continued.

La mort! J'ai bien lu moi d'a-bord, en-sui-te lui

pour tous les deux la mort!\_\_\_\_\_

**Example. 3.7 Excerpt from “Falling in Love With Love”<sup>78</sup>**

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff with treble and bass clefs). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

**System 1:**

Vocal line: *Fall-ing in love with love is fall-ing for make - be- lieve.*

Piano accompaniment: The right hand plays chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a steady bass line with eighth and quarter notes.

**System 2:**

Vocal line: *Fall-ing in love with love is play-ing the fool;*

Piano accompaniment: Continues with similar harmonic support for the vocal line.

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<sup>78</sup> Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, *Broadway Love Songs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2008).



**Example 3.8 Excerpt from “Lydia.”<sup>79</sup>**

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are in French.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment features a series of chords in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand.

**System 2:** The vocal line continues with a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, and a half note A4. The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic support.

**System 3:** The vocal line concludes with a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment provides a final harmonic resolution.

Ly - di - a, sur tes  
ros-es jou - es, Et sur ton col frais et si blanc, roule é -  
tin - ce-lant L'or flu - i - de que tu dé - nou - es.

<sup>79</sup> Laura Ward and Richard Walters, ed. *Gabriel Fauré: 50 Songs, High Voice* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1995).

**Example 3.9 Excerpt from “Some Enchanted Evening.”<sup>80</sup>**

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

**System 1:** The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Some en-chant-ed eve ning— you may see a stran- ger— you may see a stran- ger". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

**System 2:** The vocal line continues with "— a-cross a crowd - ed room. And some-how you know, you know e-ven then". This system includes triplet markings over the notes for "know," and "you know". The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns.

**System 3:** The vocal line concludes with "— that some-where you'll see her a - gain and a - gain.". It also features a triplet marking over the notes for "a - gain". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support throughout.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, *Broadway Love Songs, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation).

## Chapter 4:

### SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MUSICAL THEATER REPERTOIRE

In addition to making a good bridge to American opera, musical theater songs are appropriate and useful to have in the professional singer's repertoire package. In today's operatic world when major companies are increasingly adding musical theater titles to their repertory,<sup>81</sup> and with several requiring selections at their auditions,<sup>82</sup> singers would be remiss not to study musical theater and add it to their personal packages. It can only serve to make one a more marketable artist. Arabella Hong-Young, who enjoyed a favorable career as a classical recitalist and also debuted the role of Helen Chao in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song* notes, "It is important that opera singers do musical theater. The classical singer brings a vocal richness seldom achieved [therein]."<sup>83</sup> Famous (classically trained) ghost singer Marni Nixon, who could at times be found racing back and forth between movie sets and opera houses,<sup>84</sup> was called in to Hollywood recording studios frequently (and unfortunately without credit) to dub portions of singing or, in some cases, all of the singing for big name movie stars. Even though Audrey Hepburn had done some singing onscreen in *Funny Face* and made a best-seller of "Moon River" in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, the vocal demands of *My Fair Lady*

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<sup>81</sup> Belcher, "Musical or Opera?"

<sup>82</sup> See Michael Ballam's commentary, page 49.

<sup>83</sup> Arabella Hong-Young, *Singing Professionally* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 93.

<sup>84</sup> Steve Schonberg, 2017, "Marni Nixon: The Voice of Beloved Movie Musicals Reflects on 'The Sound of Music,'" Blog, Huffington Post Blog, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-schonberg/marni-nixon-the-voice-of-\\_b\\_6976634.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-schonberg/marni-nixon-the-voice-of-_b_6976634.html).

proved too “technical” for her, and Nixon was asked to do the dubbing.<sup>85</sup> Michael

Ballam has found great success in his personal career and with his company from the inclusion of musical theater repertoire:

Having made my living since 1967 exclusively on the stage in recital, opera and musical theatre, I attribute my longevity (50 years) and success to understanding and employing both styles of vocalism. My invitations to sing on the stages of San Francisco, Santa Fe, Los Angeles, Dallas, Houston, Metropolitan, St Louis, Chicago Lyric, Kentucky, Kansas City, Central City and 16 other American Opera Companies were [dependent upon] the fact that I was equally at home with the American Musical Theatre and Operetta repertoire. I have been able to amass independent wealth by performing both genres. I don't believe I could have done that with only one repertoire. The “Golden Age” American Musicals (1930-1960) were written with the intent of using classically trained voices who could project through a 40-piece orchestra.

There was once a time when serious vocal students could survive by learning only the serious (operatic, lieder) repertoire and have a career. That day is past. Opera in America has become more “real” than it was 30 years ago. Audiences insist upon more theatrical productions with singers who act as well as they sing. Having run an opera company for 25 years, I insist upon hearing a singer present both operatic and musical theatre songs. Even when hiring a Senta for *Der Fliegende Holländer*, I insisted upon hearing a “show tune” as well. It immediately informs me as to how good a “performer” she is. Modern audiences insist upon “performers,” not vocalists. Teachers who choose not to deal with the Musical Theatre repertoire are curtailing their students' ability to compete in the industry.<sup>86</sup>

Looking beyond the audition package, it is prudent for singers to, at the very least, be familiar with musical theater, as it will most likely be asked for at any sort of event that is not strictly classical in nature (pops concerts, luncheons, etc.). For some patrons who consider themselves classically oriented, a little *Phantom of the Opera* or *Les Misérables* is probably not beyond the range of possible requests. Singer and teacher Sylvia McNair, who enjoyed an enormous international opera career counsels:

If a singer is lucky enough to become a principal artist for a major company other than the Met, he or she will have to sing at parties, galas and fundraisers. Mozart

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<sup>85</sup> David Thomson, “An Imperfect Union,” *Film Comment*, 47, No. 1 (2011): 33.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Ballam, Email to author, January 2017.

often doesn't work in those settings. A personal experience is worth sharing: in 1996, after a decade of singing lead roles in opera productions in Salzburg, Vienna, Berlin, Amsterdam, London and New York, I was invited back to sing at the Santa Fe Opera. The SFO is a very social company. It was embarrassing and even shameful that I had nothing to offer but Handel, Mozart and Stravinsky for the many festive social events. What those people really wanted to hear in those settings was a great Gershwin song or a Porter tune or just about anything with some light entertainment value. I had *nothing* and that summer I vowed I'd never be caught out again. I started singing Gershwin and Porter and Bernstein and Sondheim and have never regretted it for a second.<sup>87</sup>

Learning the possibilities for programming musical theater into personal recitals also adds a new dimension for the performer and the audience. As much of the repertoire is lighter than many art songs, it can be a nice break for the singer whether in an entire theater set, or adding a song to a set of classical pieces. Additionally, a recognizable (or at least more relatable) tune may suddenly engross an otherwise unengaged audience member and awake them to the entire realm of musical possibilities in the recital. After all, one of the aims of a good artist should be to treat the audience to a higher understanding of the communication that is possible through song. The portal for that understanding will be different for every audience member, and the singer should plan to accommodate those needs. There are several ways to search for compatibility with art songs, including textually and/or musically. Consider, for example, the following groupings:

For a lighter, comedic set about the insecurity of dating life –

“Mein Liebster ist so klein” (Wolf)

“Nel cor più non mi sento” (Paisiello)

“I Hate Men” (*Kiss Me, Kate* – Porter)<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Sylvia McNair, Email to author, January 2017.

<sup>88</sup> See Example 4.1.

For a set about first love, perhaps as part of a bigger love story –

“Notre amour” (Fauré)

“Hello, Young Lovers” (Rodgers)

“Hat dich die Liebe berührt” (Marx)<sup>89</sup>

Even to a teacher familiar with musical theater, it can be overwhelming when a student asks, “What musical theater song can I sing?” It should be recognized that, as with art song, not all theater songs are created equal. Furthermore, there may be a hidden gem in the midst of a forgotten, poorly-reviewed, or perhaps even ugly musical.

Examples include “Why Did I Choose You” from *The Yearling*, which was a complete failure at the box office; and “Smoke Gets In Your Eyes” from *Roberta*, a forgotten hit. Consider these in the same vein as “Vainement, ma bien-aimée” from Lalo’s *Le roi d’Ys* or “Vision fugitive” from Massenet’s *Hérodiade*. They may not be competition winners, but they are fantastic teaching aids. By the same token, the entirety of a composer’s oeuvre should not be discounted because there are some songs (perhaps even the majority) that are not appealing or are poorly written. Andrew Lloyd Webber, who seems to have become the bane of every classical purist, has a good deal of valuable output such as “Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again” (*The Phantom of the Opera*), which is a fantastic precursor (or review) to aria study, that can be used for teaching.

A plethora of musical theater anthologies exists, including an entire collection published by Hal Leonard entitled “Musical Theatre for Classical Singers,” which encompasses every voice type. The Internet also makes readily available for purchase many single titles, which is often more convenient than buying a whole book. Several websites offer the capability to transpose pieces purchased online to make them suitable

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<sup>89</sup> See Example 4.2.

for any fach. In musical theater, the unspoken rules are much more relaxed regarding key, gender pronouns, rearrangements, etc., than in classical music. In fact, most songs pulled from an anthology will have very basic accompaniment (which often includes the undisguised melody in the right hand), and it behooves a singer to find a good pianist or an arranger to spice them up for performance. A Google search will usually reveal the show from which a song originates, and the source material may then be sought out at a library.

Teacher and student alike can benefit from investigating the enormous musical theater catalog. The range of styles and characters in this vast repertoire is suitable to the needs of all voice students, and should be readily included in any artist's teaching and performing. It is not necessary to love musical theater, but, at the very least, one should develop an appreciation for it and acknowledge its worth as a truly American art form born of classical, European roots. Learning to view the genre as such will expand the artist's toolbox and lead to greater understanding between teacher and student and performer and audience.

**Table 4.1 Useful Musical Theater Songs**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Show</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Recit</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Almost Like Being in Love	Loewe	Brigadoon	X	X	X	Jazz feel, limited range and simple melodic patterns.
And This Is My Beloved	Wright	Kismet	X	X		Quite operatic, can really sing into it
Bali Hai	Rodgers	South Pacific		X	X	Good for mezzos; leaps and steps good for teaching tonality
Begin the Beguine	Porter	Jubilee	X	X		Jazz feel, sexy
Bewitched	Rodgers	Pal Joey	X	X	X	Limited range and simple melodic patterns
Can't Help Lovin' That Man	Kern	Showboat		X		Good for mezzos
Climb Ev'ry Mountain	Rodgers	The Sound of Music		X		Somewhat operatic; opportunity to open the voice at the end
Come to Me, Bend to Me	Loewe	Brigadoon	X	X		Wonderful upper passaggio work; tender ballad
Edelweiss	Rodgers	The Sound of Music	X	X		Good for young singers
Embraceable You	Gershwin	Girl Crazy	X	X		Teaches continuity of intention
Empty Chairs at Empty Tables	Schönberg	Les Misérables	X			Good passaggio work for tenors and baritones
Falling in Love With Love	Rodgers	The Boys From Syracuse	X	X	X	Waltz tempo; passagio work on ascending lines
Feed the Birds	Sherman	Mary Poppins	X	X	X	Good for younger singers, teaching line
Goodnight, My Someone	Wilson	The Music Man		X		Good for teaching register shifts through leaps
Hello, Young Lovers	Rodgers	The King and I	X	X	X	Contrasting 6/8 and 3/4 waltz tempi; perpetual motion for teaching line
Hey There	Adler	The Pajama Game	X	X		Teaches speaking/singing contrast
I Could Have Danced All Night	Loewe	My Fair Lady		X	X	Good for younger singers; fast text, requires lots of breath
I Enjoy Being a Girl	Rodgers	Flower Drum Song		X		Register work with lots of leaps
I Have Confidence	Rodgers	The Sound of Music		X	X	Fun, upbeat song that can be an "art reflecting life" moment
I Loved You Once in Silence	Loewe	Camelot		X		Melancholy love song; limited range
I Miss the Music	Kander	Curtains	X			Passaggio work for baritones and tenors; speaking and singing
I'll Be Seeing You	Fain	Right This Way	X	X	X	Sentimental; long phrases for teaching breath and line
I'll Know	Loesser	Guys and Dolls	X			Good for young baritones or tenors
If Ever I Would Leave You	Loewe	Camelot	X			Beautiful love song for bass or baritone
If I Loved You	Rodgers	Carousel	X	X	X	The voice can really open up on this; good diction work in passaggio
The Impossible Dream	Leigh	Man of La Mancha	X			Good for young baritones or tenors
In My Own Little Corner	Rodgers	Cinderella		X		Good for young singers; very wordy; cute
Many a New Day	Rodgers	Oklahoma!		X		Good for teaching movement and leaps to young singers
Maria	Bernstein	West Side Story	X		X	Exercise in pitch; passaggio work that applies to aria singing
My Romance	Rodgers	Jumbo	X	X		Limited range and simple melodic patterns
No Other Love	Rodgers	Me and Juliet	X	X		Tango feel; big leap at the end on accessible vowel
Oh, What a Beautiful Morning	Rodgers	Oklahoma!	X			Teaches young baritones to sing into the voice
On the Street Where You Live	Loewe	My Fair Lady	X			Good for young baritones or tenors



Title	Composer	Show	M	F	Recit	Comments
Our Language of Love	Monnot	Irma la Douce	X	X	X	Limited range and simple melodic patterns
Over the Rainbow	Arlen	The Wizard of Oz	X	X	X	A classic; octave leaps; passaggio work
People Will Say We're in Love	Rodgers	Oklahoma!	X	X		Limited range and simple melodic patterns
Ribbons Down My Back	Herman	Hello, Dolly!		X		Tricky counting; good for voices that sit lower; pretty
Send in the Clowns	Sondheim	A Little Night Music		X		Short, repetitive phrase structure - good for honing pitch
The Simple Joys of Maidenhood	Loewe	Camelot		X		Good for young singers; cute and relatable
Sixteen Going on Seventeen	Rodgers	The Sound of Music	X	X	X	Good for young singers; cute and relatable
So in Love	Porter	Kiss Me, Kate	X	X		Sentimental; best for lower voices
Some Enchanted Evening	Rodgers	South Pacific	X			Good for teaching smooth line to young tenors or baritones
Somebody, Somewhere	Loesser	The Most Happy Fella		X		The voice can really open up on this; good diction work in passaggio
Someone to Watch Over Me	Gershwin	Oh, Kay	X	X	X	Contrast between the "recit" and "aria" is good for teaching
Something Good	Rodgers	The Sound of Music	X	X		Beautiful, easy love song for lower voices
Something Wonderful	Rodgers	The King & I		X	X	Good for mezzos
The Sound of Music	Rodgers	The Sound of Music	X	X	X	Familiar tune; good for teaching young singers to create line
Speak Low	Weill	One Touch of Venus	X	X		Lots of triplet figures; sexy sound
Stranger in Paradise	Wright	Kismet	X			Operatic ballad
The Surrey with the Fringe on Top	Rodgers	Oklahoma!	X		X	Good for teaching smooth line and breath over staccato setting
Ten Minutes Ago	Rodgers	Cinderella	X			Waltz tempo; perpetual motion good for teaching line
Till There Was You	Wilson	The Music Man	X	X		Sustained notes good for teaching continuation of intention
Try to Remember	Schmidt	The Fantasticks	X	X		Sustaining line in this piece is a challenge
Vanilla Ice Cream	Bock	She Loves Me		X		Diction practice; good for singing into the voice; big, operatic ending
Warm All Over	Loesser	The Most Happy Fella		X		A chance for the voice to play with colors
We Kiss in a Shadow	Rodgers	The King & I	X	X		Good for younger singers, teaching line
Where is Love	Bart	Oliver!	X	X		Limited range and simple melodic patterns
Where is the Life That Late I Led	Porter	Kiss Me, Kate	X			Excellent cadenza at the end for baritones
Whistle a Happy Tune	Rodgers	The King & I		X		Good for young singers; very wordy; cute
Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again	Webber	The Phantom of the Opera		X	X	Covers all registers; big leaps; good precursor to arias
You'll Never Walk Alone	Rodgers	Carousel	X	X		Can be sung operatically; inspiring text
Younger Than Springtime	Rodgers	South Pacific	X		X	Good for young baritones or tenors

**Example 4.1 Recital song set texts about the insecurity of dating life.**

**Mein Liebster ist so klein (Wolf)**

My sweetheart's so small, that without  
bending  
he sweeps my room with his hair.  
When he went to the garden to pick  
jasmine,  
a snail scared him out of his wits.  
Then when he came in to recover,  
a fly knocked him all of a heap;  
and when he came to my window,  
a horse-fly stove in his head.  
A curse on all flies—crane – and horse –  
and whoever has a sweetheart from  
Maremma!  
A curse on all flies, craneflies and midges  
and whoever, for his kiss, has so to stoop!<sup>90</sup>

**Nel cor più non mi sento (Paisiello)**

In my heart I no longer feel  
youthfulness glowing;  
The cause of my torment, love,  
is your fault.  
You tickle me, you tease me,  
you prick me, you bite me;  
what is this, alas? Have pity!  
Love is a certain something  
which makes me despair<sup>91</sup>

**I Hate Men (Porter)**

I hate men.  
I can't abide 'em even now and then.  
Than ever marry one of them, I'd rest a maiden rather,  
For husbands are a boring lot and only give you bother.  
Of course, I'm awfully glad that Mother had to marry Father,  
But I hate men.  
Of all the types I've ever met within our democracy,  
I hate most the athlete with his manner bold and brassy,  
He may have hair upon his chest but, sister, so has Lassie.  
Oh, I hate men!  
I hate men.  
They should be kept like piggies in a pen.  
Avoid the trav'ling salesman though a tempting  
Tom he may be,  
For on your wedding night he may be off to far Araby,  
While he's away in Mandalay 'tis thee who'll have the baby,  
Oh I hate men.  
If thou shouldst wed a businessman, be wary, oh, be wary.

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<sup>90</sup> George Bird and Richard Stokes, trans., *Book of Lieder*, 258.

<sup>91</sup> Martha Gerhart, trans. *Italian Song Texts From the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: With International Phonetic Alphabet Transliteration, Word-For-Word Literal Translation, and Ideomatic Translation* (Mt. Morris, N.Y.: Leyerle Publications, 2007), 288-289.

He'll tell you he's detained in town on business necessary,  
 His bus'ness is the bus'ness with his pretty secretary,  
 Oh I hate men!  
 I hate men  
 Though roosters they, I will not play the hen.  
 If you espouse an older man through girlish optimism,  
 He'll always stay at home at night and make no criticism,  
 Though you may call it love, the doctors call it rheumatism.  
 Oh, I hate men.  
 From all I've read, alone in bed, from A to Zed, about 'em.  
 Since love is blind, then from the mind, all womankind should rout 'em,  
 But, ladies, you must answer too, what would we do without 'em?  
 Still, I hate men!<sup>92</sup>

#### **Example 4.2 Recital song set texts about first love.**

##### **Notre Amour (Fauré)**

Our love is light and gentle,  
 Like fragrance fetched by the breeze  
 From the tips of the ferns  
 For us to breathe while dreaming.  
 —Our love is light and gentle.

Our love is enchanting,  
 Like morning songs,  
 Where no regret is voiced,  
 Quivering with uncertain hopes.  
 —Our love is enchanting.

Our love is sacred,  
 Like woodland mysteries,  
 Where an unknown soul throbs  
 And silences are eloquent.  
 —Our love is sacred.

Our love is infinite  
 Like sunset paths,  
 Where the sea, joined with the skies,  
 Falls asleep beneath slanting suns.

Our love is eternal,  
 Like all that a victorious God  
 Has brushed with his fiery wing,  
 Like all that comes from the heart,  
 —Our love is eternal.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Cole Porter, ST Lyrics, <http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/kissmekate/ihatemen.htm> (Accessed January 24, 2017).

<sup>93</sup> Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes, trans., *A French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 182.

### **Hello, Young Lovers (Rodgers)**

When I think of Tom, I think about a night,  
When the earth smelled of summer  
And the sky was streaked with white,  
And the soft mist of England was sleeping  
on a hill.

I remember this, And I always will...  
There are new lovers now on the same  
silent hill,  
Looking on the same blue sea.  
And I know Tom and I are a part of them  
all —  
And they're all a part of Tom and me.

Hello young lovers, whoever you are,  
I hope your troubles are few.  
All my good wishes go with you tonight,  
I've been in love like you.

Be brave, young lovers, and follow your  
star,  
Be brave and faithful and true,  
Cling very close to each other tonight.  
I've been in love like you.

I know how it feels to have wings on your  
heels,  
And to fly down the street in a trance.  
You fly down a street on the chance that  
you meet,  
And you meet — not really by chance.

Don't cry young lovers, whatever you do,  
Don't cry because I'm alone;  
All of my memories are happy tonight,  
I've had a love of my own.  
I've had a love of my own, like yours-  
I've had a love of my own.<sup>94</sup>

### **Hat dich die Liebe berührt (Marx)**

If love has touched you,  
Softly amid noisy mankind,  
You walk on a cloud of gold,  
Led safely by god

You gaze about you  
As though you are lost,  
You do not begrudge others their happiness,  
Only one thing do you desire.

In shy and rapt introspection,  
You deny in vain  
That life's gleaming crown  
Now adorns your brow.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Oscar Hammerstein II, ST Lyrics, <http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/thekingandi/helloyounglovers.htm>  
(Accessed January 25, 2017).

<sup>95</sup> Richard Stokes, trans., *The Book of Lieder: The Original Texts of Over 1000 Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 220.

## Chapter 5:

### PROFESSIONAL OPINIONS

The following commentary is given by educators who have found success with the inclusion of musical theater repertoire in their studios and professional lives. All of their comments were provided via email or in person for inclusion in this document.

**Sylvia McNair (noted hereafter as SM)** is a two-time Grammy Award winner. Her 35-year career has taken her all over the world primarily as an opera singer. Her focus has now shifted more toward musical theater and jazz, in which she continues to maintain a busy performing schedule.

**Michael Ballam (MB)** enjoyed a thriving career as an opera singer and recitalist, singing at many of the country's biggest houses, before becoming the Founding General Director of Utah Festival Opera. In addition to his duties with the company, he continues to teach, perform, and encourage youth to participate in the arts.

**Timothy Noble (TN)** is a Distinguished Professor of Voice at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. His long career has taken him to some of the major opera houses in the world and has included a major musical theater influence. He was nominated for a Grammy for his performance of Harold Hill in Telarc's recording of *The Music Man* and he wrote the music and lyrics for an original musical, *Alamo*.

**Ray Fellman (RF)** resides in NYC and Bloomington, Indiana, where he is a Professor of Musical Theatre Voice at Indiana University, and continues to have an active career as a music director, pianist, singer, and vocal coach. Ray's students have been seen in Broadway and Off Broadway shows, national tours, regional and summer stock theatres, theme parks, cruise ships, TV and film. Voice coaching credits include

Tribeca and Toronto Film Festival selection *Greetings from Tim Buckley* (2013) starring Penn Badgley, and Twentieth Century Fox film *Joy* starring Edgar Ramirez and Jennifer Lawrence.

**On the influence musical theater can have on classical technique:**

**SM:** I am the rare singer who believes that singing pop music and musical theater rep with a microphone actually *helps* my classical singing. It has taught me that tension, any and all tension while singing, is bad. There's nothing quite like a microphone to show you where your tensions are. On a mic, like an actor in a close-up on camera, every little imperfection becomes amplified. The more I sing with a mic, the more I know how important it is to keep the singing apparatus relaxed, free, open and easy. That helps in every genre.

**TN:** In the musical theater genre I have always been of the mind that text is the most important component for the artist. That being said I spent a great deal of time trying to marry text and voice in the classical sense once I started my operatic career, and I think that I have been successful. There are many in this business that think that voice is the only thing important in opera and the text is secondary, but I disagree. When an opera singer is in the middle and lower part of the voice there is not much excuse for not being understood. There is leeway when at the top of the voice due to vowel modification, but that is it. Opera is still a drama that is sung, so there is a story to be told, and that happens in the text.

**RF:** I think singing in one's native tongue can have a profound influence on technique. As an American singer, I have found using musical theatre repertoire to be incredibly influential. When we feel emotionally connected to the words we sing, we have a natural impulse to communicate those words in a way that feels different than when one is working in another language, even if one truly understands the translation. That emotional communication inspired by one's native language naturally gathers physical energy from the body—energy we can use to support our sound and focus the voice. I have often transferred a sensation I have felt from singing a musical theatre song to an aria, especially when it comes to breath support.

**On the benefits of including musical theater repertoire in the classical voice studio:**

**SM:** Good music is good music no matter what category it's in. The same principles apply to both styles. Singing with immaculate pitch applies to all genres of music. Singing with great care for lyrics applies to both classical and musical theater. Making a beautiful musical phrase and communicating well with your listeners certainly apply to both. In my experience, most young students are eager to do musical theater rep, they want to learn to do it well, they enjoy it at least as much as classical, and when a teacher gives them freedom to do any music they love, without prejudice and arrogance against any type, students respond by working more diligently at all their music. In a broad generalization, there are only two styles of music which can be called Uniquely American: jazz and musical theater. Just like European classical music has been imported to our country, so have jazz and musical theater been exported around the

world. And very successfully! All the more reason to explore it, study it, and participate in it anywhere and everywhere we can.

**TN:** It behooves a singer, particularly American singers, to be able to sing in the classical musical theater genre. Opera companies are more and more embracing the Broadway musical for their seasons due to the great popularity of the genre, plus it sells tickets. So, I often assign classical music theater to my students so they are prepared to work in this area, as well as opera. Unless one is at the top of the food chain in the business, opera alone will not sustain the career of the singer. Along with oratorio, concerts, etc., the music theater repertoire will help the singer put food on the table as it were.

**RF:** Because of the nature of our current culture, most young singers “find” their voices singing songs from musicals rather than from art song repertoire or opera. Being able to assess how a singer already sings when they begin their training is important in the “getting to know you” process. Often they already make beautiful sounds in repertoire other than classical repertoire and these sounds can be transferred into their understanding of what is correct when developing technique. Also, in developing technique, the lyrics from musicals can inspire a kind of direct connection to a song which can help in getting a singer to find the energy needed to support the sound. I have also found that certain musical theatre styles can also inspire focus in the voice (pop/belt), release of unwanted tension (jazz), real diction (patter), and can aid in helping a classical singer find his or her natural voice, rather than a produced or artificially darkened sound.



Although there are a multitude of styles in classical singing, influenced by the composer, and the time period and language it was written in, it can be argued that the musical theatre “style” is far more varied and requires far more versatility in order to master all of it in a way that is stylistically correct. Most of this has to do with the fact that projection does not have to be the major goal of the musical theatre performer. This allows for a singer to learn to sing in all of the styles that have developed since the invention of the microphone.

**On how the genres inform one another:**

**MB:** Opera stresses fine vocalism and technique. Musical Theatre stresses compelling delivery of the text. The combination is essential should a singer wish to have a performing career. Witness the success of Nathan Gunn and Stephanie Blythe in crossing over between the repertoires. Strong technique is the basis upon which performing careers are built. They *should* be the same.

**TN:** The main difference between the two genres for me is that Broadway is about words and diction, and in opera the voice comes first. That being said there is room for compromise on both ends so that the musicals are sung well and the classical repertoire can be understood. One Broadway star who really sings technically well is Kelly O’Hara, who is as good as they come these days. She also sang at the Met last year, and there are others including yours truly who have done both Broadway and the Met in their careers. So is it important? Manifestly so unless the student is not interested in the musical theater genre, but they would be smart to develop an interest.

**RF:** I think when a classical singer works on the goal of achieving the ultimate projection for a concert hall or opera house, it can sometimes cause that singer to develop tensions or a tendency to “push”. Most teachers agree that “pushing” often leads to a dampening of the resonance and ends up being counter-productive. An energetic approach to “less” usually results in “more”. If the classical singer knows that the goal of singing a musical theatre song is to connect emotionally and not worry so much about how much sound he or she is making, this new set of priorities can often help someone unlock his or her own true resonance. Also, different musical theatre styles can serve as aids in discovering certain tools or sensations needed for developing a consistent, solid technique.

**On the potential detriment of using musical theater in the classical studio:**

**TN:** There can be, I suppose, if the teacher in a given studio doesn’t understand the genre and tries to teach musical theater in a totally operatic way. And if the classically trained teacher tries to teach the “belt voice” in the studio, that too could be problematic.

**RF:** The only detriment would be to have a singer sing in a musical theatre style of which the teacher has no understanding. For example, I’ve heard many female students encouraged to push or force their head voice into a “fortified” belt with projection still being the goal. I find this kind of singing not only stylistically wrong, it often ends up being more fatiguing rather than useful to the student. In other words, I don’t think it’s useful for a soprano to sing a high belt song in head voice. What can be useful, however, is a low belt song in order to help access or build the chest voice.

**On the ways musical theater can help classical voice students:**

**SM:** The majority of undergrads I had the pleasure of working with enjoyed musical theater rep at least as much as classical, they had been doing it for years, they loved the relevance of it, the newness, the ability to tell a good story and connect with feelings they were dealing with every day in a language which was their first language. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times an undergraduate said to me, “I don’t really have any musical theater rep” and I always assumed it was because a previous teacher had clung to the long-gone ideas that musical theater is second-rate and has no value as a tool for teaching. Musical theater rep helps students be better story-tellers and communicators. It gives them music to sing that doesn’t tax the voice like an opera aria does. As long as the same disciplines are used (great pitch and diction, low breathing, mask-and-crown placement, releasing tensions) there is nothing to lose and everything to gain. It is important to include this repertoire, just as it is true that a student of musical theater will gain wisdom from working on a Bach aria or a Schubert song.

**TN:** Musical theater repertoire can really help young singers, not only in learning the literature of the Broadway theater, but also learning to deliver text and acting with the voice. So many young singers today who are classically trained are very presentational and really don’t have much to say in a dramatic sense. The musical theater helps unlock singers from notes and rhythms, and if taught properly will force the student to sing not only from the head, but also from the heart.

**RF:** I have seen musical theatre rep help singers: learn not to push, learn to become emotionally invested in text, find resonance, find support, release tension, find additional range, and help a singer find his or her natural voice.

**On whether crossover should be considered as a legitimate career option:**

**SM:** This is probably the space to address various styles of vocal writing in any genre. There is *at least* as much poorly written classical music (especially 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century compositions) that will, at best, fatigue a voice and, at worst, damage a voice, as there are pitfalls in popular music. Choose wisely! Regarding “crossover,” getting locked in boxes is never good for artists. Just because a writer wins a Nobel in journalism, does that mean she cannot write a great novel? Just because a classical ballet dancer has a wonderful career, should he never do modern dance? Should great landscape painters never take photographs? Should a Shakespearean actor never do a television comedy? Or should a comedian never do a drama? Crossing over strengthens everything. Get good at as many styles of singing as you possibly can!

**RF:** I think “crossover” should be an option for all singers interested in having long and varied careers in today’s competitive market. My issue with most classically trained singers is that they don’t often have a real curiosity or an honest respect for the repertoire. So I believe they should be encouraged but then also trained. That reverence for Mozart must also exist for Irving Berlin in order to be successful as a crossover artist.

**On what styles/time periods/etc., of musical theater should be considered in the classical voice studio:**

**SM:** One of the most beautiful things I know of is listening to singing that sounds effortless. And the reverse is also true, if it sounds hard it's no fun to listen to. When Frank Loesser wrote *The Most Happy Fella*, he was writing his first opera. (His second wife, who sang the role of Rosabella at the premiere, told me this). I'm sure when Richard Rodgers was writing "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "Climb Every Mountain" he hoped for someone who knew how to sing well and could make a full-voiced, well-supported sound. George Hearn, the original Billy Bigelow in *Carousel*, trained as an opera singer and Ezio Pinza, the original Emile De Becque in *South Pacific*, was a successful opera singer. I love giving songs from the more *classic* musical theater scores to young singers but the newer material is also rich with beauties.

**MB:** 1930-1960

**TN:** When I think of the classical musical theater, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter, Frank Loesser, Leonard Bernstein and other great composers from the 30s, 40s, and 50s are the composers that come to mind for inclusion in the classical studio. In a more contemporary sense, Steven Sondheim, Frank Wildhorn, Andrew Lloyd Webber, et al, could be treated as classical musical theater composers as well, and some of their music would be appropriate. At the end of the day it is probably up to the teacher in the studio to decide what is or is not appropriate for their students. Let me be clear about one thing though: I think that whatever genre is taught in the studio, the implementation of the "bel canto" philosophy really works. Even the great Tony Bennett, whom my wife

and I saw a couple of years ago, attributed his longevity in singing (he's 91 now) to the study of the "bel canto" technique, particularly the implementation of the *inhalare* breath technique.

**RF:** I believe that the creative voice instructor will find most musical theatre styles useful in the voice studio, if they can be implemented correctly.

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