



The Singer's Library: Inside the (Singing) Actor's Studio—Grooming Smarter Actors

BY BRIAN MANTERNACH

Read about a book discussing vocal performance in music theatre from a new perspective—the singing actor.

Music theatre degree programs are often framed around building the requisite “triple-threat” skills that are viewed as crucial for success in the professional world: acting, dancing, and singing. Many students take on a performance identity based on their stronger skills, perhaps referring to themselves as dancers who sing or singers who act.

But which skill is most important? Authors Tracey Moore and Allison Bergman believe that, while singing and dancing are necessary skills for music theatre, acting is “by far” the most important element since, “musical theatre performers are, above all, actors.” Therefore, their book, *Acting the Song: Performance Skills for the Musical Theatre*, provides a curriculum designed to help teachers, students, and “self-learners” thoroughly understand all that goes into singing a musical theatre song.

Recently released in its second edition, the book has been updated to better fit the ever-changing demands of the industry. In my conversation with co-author Tracey Moore, she discusses their perspectives, the business of musical theatre, and the collaborative nature of the art form.

You write that the book was written “to remedy a particular approach to singing musical theatre songs that seemed old fashioned and out of step with advances that had been made in regular actor training.” What sort of approach would now be considered old fashioned? In what ways was that approach not serving modern actors?

I had observed an approach to music theatre singing that was primarily voice centered, rather than acting or body centered. Working on musical theatre material in class or rehearsal assumes a certain competence with the singing. Singing actors work on the singing and the voice in the practice room and in voice lessons or studio classes, and then bring their voice into “Acting the Song” class or show rehearsal as just one piece of their overall instrument—no more or less important than any other piece of communicative “equipment.” The beauty is that when you focus on acting issues with a singer, many singer problems get fixed as well, and I have



Brian Manternach



Tracey Moore

first-hand experience of that using every one of the techniques and exercises offered in this book.

I wrote the book because to simply focus on beautiful singing (when it comes to musical theatre) isn't the whole picture. Acting programs and actor training have been steadily moving in a more physical direction for several years. The

focus on psychological motivations and heady approaches that dominated training in the post-actor's studio years has been recently enhanced by approaches that seek to bypass the "thinking" piece of the brain: approaches like Meisner or Rasaboxes or Viewpoints or Williamson or Chekhov—these all seek to find wisdom in some other part of the body besides the controlling, thoughtful brain. This book brings

those techniques and approaches to the study of musical theatre.

You also explain that in the years since the book was published, changes in the industry necessitated a second edition. What aspects of the book had to adjust the most as a result of changes in the industry?

The two areas that needed the most updating were technology and repertoire. There have been many new shows penned and produced since the first edition, which came out in 2008. The "contemporary musical theatre song" means different things to different people, and no matter how you define it, that heading covers a lot of ground. In this edition, repertoire is divided into categories that reflect not only the style of music but also take into consideration the demands on the singer.

A show can open on Broadway in 2013 and be considered new (like *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*) but yet require an approach to singing that has more in common with the last century, and a show like *My Fair Lady*, than with contemporary music theatre. There's some new explanations about pop/

AMHERST EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

July 9-16, 16-23, 2017

Connecticut College, New London CT

Programs for Young Artists

Purcell's *King Arthur*

Fully-staged opera with Baroque orchestra. Directed by Drew Minter, conducted by Adam Pearl

Cavalli's *L'Erismena* Opera scenes with chamber ensemble. Directed by Julianne Baird and Richard Stone, staged by David Morris

Beggar's Opera

Staged and directed by Grant Herreid, with pit band

Ensemble Singing Intensive with Julianne Baird, Michael Barrett, Geoffrey Williams



Come sing with us!

audition info at amherstearlymusic.org

International Opera Performing Experience



Perform Opera in Italy!

Train with top-tier opera professionals from the USA and Italy

Comprehensive programs for singers, collaborative pianists & conductor apprentices

Learn Italian! Experience Italy!

July 7 - August 8, 2017

www.InternationalOperaPerformingExperience.com

rock music. For example, people might group *Grease* in the same category as *Rock of Ages*, since they both are based in pop music, but a singer's approach to those two shows must be vocally and stylistically different. In this edition, we talk about repertoire not only from a historical perspective but a singer's point of view.

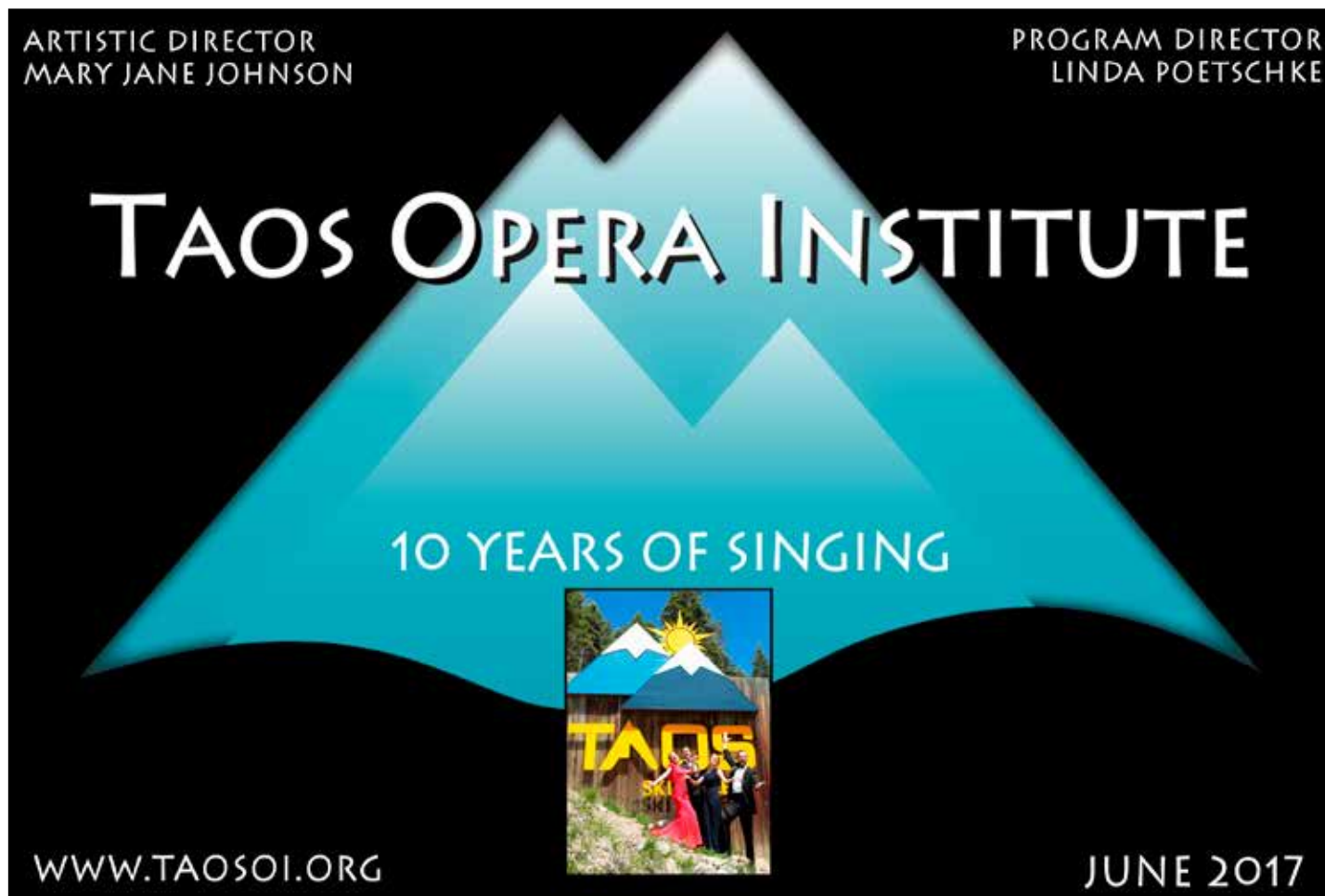
Technology changes so fast that there is no way to get ahead of it, but it was important to acknowledge that the ease of taping and recording things has changed the face of auditioning (whether that be auditioning for college or auditioning for Broadway). Singers raised on small-screen technology and earphones may also face some challenges when it comes to music theatre performance. One quick example of this is when students shy away from big, bold gestures because those feel fake or "too much," not understanding that performing for the camera is vastly different than performing in a 1,500-seat theater. The availability of recordings on YouTube has also generated a very savvy audience; the challenge there is often figuring out how to interest your students in music from the 1930s when the modern stuff is so available and well-produced.

The audition chapter got a revamp as well, since changes in repertoire and technology are immediately pertinent to the craft of auditioning.

Of the exercises and philosophies you share, were they primarily formed through your own experience as a performer, director, and educator or were they built specifically to address the needs you have witnessed in the industry?

I think the answer to that is both. I began my career as a classical singer, studying voice with Virginia Zeani at Indiana University. In my senior year, I made the realization that musical theatre was where my heart was and so I moved to New York after graduation. Since I didn't have a strictly musical theatre background, I had to get up to speed very quickly. So, I became a sponge: I read everything I could get my hands on, I tried to take classes in everything (and I had wonderful teachers) and, of course, anytime I was in a show I would watch and learn from everyone—directors, other actors, music directors, and so on. I had to put things together for myself. Sometimes, I'm really glad about that.

Today's students have classes and preparation




ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
MARY JANE JOHNSON

PROGRAM DIRECTOR
LINDA POETSCHKE

TAOS OPERA INSTITUTE

10 YEARS OF SINGING



WWW.TAOSOI.ORG

JUNE 2017

in everything—singing, acting, and dancing, of course, but also auditioning, marketing, developing new musicals . . . I sometimes fear that it creates a sense that there is one, best way to do things. In fact, there are many roads to artistry and success. Because I didn't have all that prep, I had to find what worked for me, and much of what is offered in the book—worksheets and warm-ups, personalization techniques, and audition behavior—is stuff I figured out while an actor. Later, when I became a teacher, I began to road test my ideas in the classrooms, and the worksheets—which are a special feature of the book—were a way of making things easy for everyone in a tangible, write-it-down kind of way.

I think the best actors have made a lot of mistakes and learned from them! And I hope that in building these comprehensive musical theatre programs, we have not taken away the opportunity for our students to make some mistakes and find their own way. In any case, I have been fortunate to have wonderful teachers and directors—and I've stolen things from all of them and then made them my own.

You write that the book is designed to help all those who teach music theatre—including voice teachers, dance instructors, acting faculty, English teachers, communications professors, pianists, coaches, music directors, directors, and choreographers—so that each reader can “come to a deeper understanding about what’s involved in singing a musical theatre song.” How did you approach the book in order to keep it relevant for such a diverse audience?

Again, I think it is in the variety of approaches that the book contains. For example, the book offers both inside-out and outside-in approaches. Inside-out is the more traditional, Stanislavski-based approach: you figure out given circumstances, motivations, relationships, and you build a road to get to the result you want. Outside-in is a way of getting to the result first and letting the actor find a home there. Then, once the actor is comfortably home, they can look back at the road and say, “Oh, I see how I got here.”

The Stanislavski-based approach is terrific for acting teachers or those who have been trained in that methodology. The outside-in is great for directors or choreographers who can see what they want and explain it, but maybe don't understand the actor's inner-workings on how to get there.

The book contains exercises that dig deeply into the kind of music analysis that a conductor or music director might do, other exercises break down the words into sounds and resonance just like a voice

(continued on p. 78)



MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS PROFESSIONS

Summer Classical Voice Intensive

July 23-August 5, 2017

Explore the techniques of classical vocal performance from the perspective of the singing actor.

- Group and individual instruction in voice, interpretation, diction and repertoire
- Master classes with Harolyn Blackwell and Dr. Robert C. White, Jr.
- Being a Singer 101: Auditioning, applying for schools, programs, and agents, utilizing today's technology, building your resume, song and aria preparation
- Yoga for singers, dance and stage movement
- Attend concerts and other cultural events in the evenings

ALSO:

- **Summer Study in Music Theatre, June 25-July 8**
- **Contemporary Vocal Workshop, July 9-July 22**

For high school and college students 16 and over

Visit steinhardt.nyu.edu/classicalvoice2017 or call **212-998-5154**.

Book Review

Gone are the days when a singer's glorious voice could excuse poor acting skills. Modern audiences are increasingly accustomed to more complete performances in both music theatre and opera.

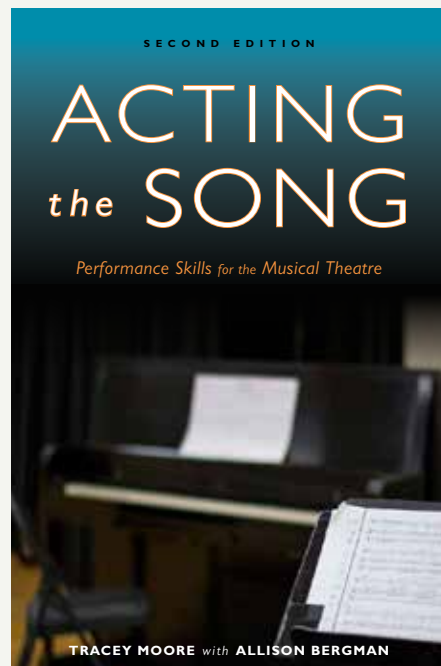
Accordingly, training programs are placing more emphasis on building actors who are willing to explore, collaborate, and develop unique, connected interpretations of their material. On this journey, *Acting the Song: Performance Skills for the Musical Theatre* can be an invaluable companion.

Authors Tracey Moore and Allison Bergman (both of whom are actors, directors, and teachers themselves) divide their book into three sections. Beginning with the "Elements," they explore the voice and body, as well as discuss acting principles. This introductory section is designed to provide an overview and a common vocabulary without being comprehensive. The chapter on voice, for instance, is not a manual for singing technique. Rather, it serves to acknowledge stylistic differences and to offer

working definitions of pertinent terms like "legit singing," "belting," and "mixing," among others.

The second section, the "Classroom," uses the groundwork established in section one to provide a curriculum for a two- or three-semester performance course. This "musical theatre workshop" is divided into three chapters (perhaps one for each semester) for beginning, intermediate, and advanced students, providing exercises, teaching suggestions, and worksheets. It also explores some of the core philosophies from which the authors operate, including "The objective of the musical theatre classroom should not be to find the 'right' or even the 'best' performance but to try all kinds of things in an effort to increase the skills of the individual actor."

They share the maxim of a former professor who said, "If I can't see it or hear it, you didn't do it," and they warn instructors, "You will not get very far with the methods espoused in this book if your goal (to teach, to enlighten, to inspire) is at odds with the student's goal (to stay the same)."



Section three, "Practical Use," moves out of the classroom to address auditioning, rehearsing, and performing. Here the authors discuss the preparation, deportment, and professionalism that is expected once students leave the university setting.

There is much to be gained from *Acting the Song*. Teachers will find endless exercises to explore with their students and the philosophies



AIMS in Graz 2017

American Institute of Musical Studies

Summer Voice & Collaborative Piano Program

GRAZ, AUSTRIA • JULY 3 - AUGUST 14, 2017

For complete program details visit www.AIMSGRAZ.com/AUDITION

Live audition cities and dates listed below. Audio/Video recorded auditions also accepted.

- Atlanta GA • Sunday, February 19
- Boston MA • Saturday, February 18
- Chicago IL • Sunday, February 12
- Denton TX • Saturday, February 11
- Flagstaff AZ • Wednesday, February 8
- Fort Worth TX • Friday, February 10
- Houston TX • Sunday, February 12
- Kalamazoo MI • Tuesday, February 28
- Kansas City MO • Wednesday, March 8
- Knoxville TN • Thursday, February 23
- Las Vegas NV • Sunday, February 5
- Los Angeles CA • Friday, February 3



- Morgantown WV • Wednesday, February 15
- Nashville TN • Wednesday, February 22
- New York NY • Friday, February 17
- Philadelphia PA • Monday, February 20
- Phoenix AZ • Tuesday, February 7
- Rochester NY • Saturday, February 25
- San Francisco CA • Saturday, February 4
- Santa Barbara CA • Thursday, February 2
- Seattle WA • Sunday, February 5
- Tallahassee FL • Sunday, March 5
- Tampa FL • Saturday, March 4

Sarah Halley, General Director

Bridging the gap between fine musical training and a career in music in a unique European environment.

“The chapter on voice, for instance, is not a manual for singing technique. Rather, it serves to acknowledge stylistic differences and to offer working definitions of pertinent terms like ‘legit singing,’ ‘belting,’ and ‘mixing,’ among others.”

provided can serve as topics for discussion. The book is further bolstered by suggested reading lists at the end of each chapter

and a companion website where many of the resources may be downloaded for classroom use. The authors recognize and honor each

teacher’s ability to alter or expand the provided exercises or even to dismiss them as needed, as they state in their overarching objective: “Our goal is to give you some new ideas to enhance your teaching, not to overrule it.”

A tremendous guide for singing actors from student to professional, *Acting the Song* provides effective tools to unlock every singing actor’s creative potential.

—Brian Manternach

OBERLIN IN ITALY
AREZZO, ITALY JULY 8 - AUGUST 8, 2017

Prepare for the next step in your operatic career in the country where opera was born!

Singers
Pianists
Directors
Conductors
Instrumentalists
Designers

Professional Quality Productions
Master Classes
Workshops
Concerts

WWW.OBERLIN-IN-ITALY.COM

INSTITUTE FOR 17TH CENTURY MUSIC AT QUEENS COLLEGE

Baroque Opera Workshop

June 18-24
2017

Christa Patton and David Ronis
Co-directors

Julianne Baird
Baroque Vocal Style

Drew Minter
Guest Director

The Institute for 17th-Century Music at Queens College will offer a one-week, intensive training program in baroque opera for singers, continuo players, and string players culminating in a performance of Francesco Cavalli’s *L’Ercole Amante* (Paris, 1662) including *intermèdes* by Jean-Baptiste Lully and staging by world-renowned countertenor, master teacher and stage director, **Drew Minter**.

Classes include:

- ◆ Daily coachings and masterclasses with **Julianne Baird**
- ◆ Baroque vocal technique
- ◆ Ornamentation and elements of baroque style based on 16th and 17th century sources
- ◆ Daily classes in baroque gesture and theatre craft including *Viewpoints*, a physical approach to theatre, adapted by master teacher, **Drew Minter** for opera singers

Tuition: Singers: \$695 ◆ Auditors: \$60 per day
On-campus housing: \$55 per day

Application forms and further information are available online at <http://www.qc.cuny.edu/music/baroqueopera>

AARON GOPLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC, QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY
65-30 KISSENA BLVD. FLUSHING, NY 11367

(continued from p. 75)

and speech class, and still others reference bodywork straight out of a movement class. The idea is that teachers reading the book should pick the exercises that they gravitate toward and are already experts in. My thought in writing the book wasn't so much a "you must do this" but more of a "you could try this."

In what ways will a dance instructor or communications professor, for instance, benefit from a deeper understanding of what is involved in singing a musical theatre song?

Music theatre programs are springing up everywhere you turn; you have no idea who might be pressed into duty to direct or teach young people about music theatre. It would not be unusual for an adjunct instructor to find

themselves suddenly directing the school show or teaching "Scene to Song." More informed teachers results in better training for young people. If those young people eventually become full-time performers, great. If not, understanding all the factors that go into performing musical theatre will make them a more educated audience.

To sing a musical theatre song well requires substantial integration: one must be working on many levels and creating harmony among many disparate elements, continuously. That experience has benefits beyond music theatre.

Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about *Acting the Song*?

The teacher who uses *Acting the Song* in conjunction with the new

student companion e-book will have a complete package for two or three semesters of musical theatre training—everything from song interp to auditioning to developing a role and keeping it new. Visit www.actingthesong.com and let me know of any questions or discoveries! I love hearing from readers.

Tenor Brian Manternach teaches voice at the University of Utah in the Musical Theatre Program. He holds degrees in vocal performance from Saint John's University in Minnesota (BA), the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (MM), and the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music (DM). He can be reached at bmantern@gmail.com.



nautilus
music-theater

The 2017 Wesley Balk Opera/Music-Theater Institute

An innovative and intensive three-week session featuring an outstanding staff of directors, coaches, and instructors working in a wonderfully stimulating, noncompetitive developmental environment!

For performers, directors, and coaches

"I've been stretched body, mind, and soul · I'm ready to embrace new challenges and situations full of imagination, creativity, sensitivity and an acceptance of myself I've never had before · It truly changed my entire way of thinking!"



June 25 to July 15, 2017
at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, MN
www.wesleybalk.org · 651-298-9913
balk@nautilusmusictheater.org
TUITION: Special early-bird rate: \$1,600
After March 31: \$1,800
Registration due April 29, 2017

GREVE OPERA ACADEMY



Don Giovanni in Greve's Piazza Matteotti - 2016 Program

Connecticut Lyric Opera, New England's fastest growing opera company, and the CT Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra are pleased to announce the third season of their summer residency program in Italy, the *Greve Opera Academy*, part of the *Greve Opera Academy and Music Festival* in Greve-in-Chianti in the heart of Tuscany.

June 12 - July 8

Featuring fully staged performances with orchestra in Greve-in-Chianti and historic San Gimignano of

Tosca* and *Così fan tutte

Additional concerts, chamber music performances, excursions to Florence and Siena, Italian language, vocal technique, coachings, acting and more...

Participants will have the opportunity to compete in the **Greve International Vocal Competition**
Grand prize includes 2017/18 contract with Connecticut Lyric Opera, other cash prizes

Application deadline is January 31
Auditions early February in New York City or by recording
Visit GreveFestival.org for details and application