

M. Marchesi
 The Art of Singing
 Book 1, Opus 21

PREFACE

The present Second Edition of my "Art of Singing," which I have revised and enlarged in accordance with the experience of the last twelve years of my teaching, comprises the theoretico-practical part of my system. It includes Exercises and elementary and progressive Vocalises for the development of the mechanism of the voice; a series of two-part Vocalises, for practice in singing a second part; and lastly, Melodies with words, to combine articulation with vocalisation.

I embrace this opportunity to again call attention to the fact already set forth in various prefaces to my other works, namely, that in order to achieve speedy and successful results, it is necessary to set difficulties before the pupil one by one, and to assist him in overcoming them by presenting them in natural and progressive order.

Teachers and students cannot be too strongly urged to spend as much time as possible over the elementary vocal studies, and to pass on to singing with words only when the pupil's voice is perfectly placed throughout its entire compass, when the three registers are completely blended, and when the vocal organ has acquired a sufficient degree of ease and flexibility.*

* Besides the Vocalises contained in this Method, I have also published a series of special Progressive Vocalises for Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano and Contralto, as well as Bravura Studies with words, which may be employed to advantage for the development and perfect control of the voice.

These are published by Messrs. Aug. Cranz in Hamburg, B. Senff in Leipzig, and B. Schott in Mayence and Cologne.

I assume that each teacher, before undertaking the difficult task of the formation of the voice, and the weighty responsibility for the artistic future of his pupils, will have studied anatomy, physiology and acoustics to the extent requisite for explaining and enforcing the following precepts.

1. *Position of the Pupil*

The position of the body, while singing, should be as natural and unconstrained as possible. The pupil should stand straight, the head erect, shoulders drawn back without effort, and the chest expanded. All stiffness in the body must be avoided in order to secure the greatest possible freedom of action to the organs concerned in voice-production.

2. *Position of the Mouth*

The smiling mouth recommended by so many early and modern masters is entirely contrary to the laws of the formation of tone. The pupil should open the mouth quite naturally, lowering the chin, as though to pronounce the vowel A (ah) slightly darkened, and should keep it unmoved during the continuance of the emission of the tone.

It is necessary to remind the student, that the lower jaw alone opens, the upper jaw remaining fixed; hence the necessity of lowering the chin.

3. *Respiration*

Normal respiration, characteristic of a healthy person, is diaphragmatic or abdominal. In the

two other ways (which we reject), namely, clavicular and lateral respiration, the lungs are but partially filled, hence the necessity of breathing more frequently and the impossibility of singing long phrases in one breath.

4. *The Attack of a Tone* (Stroke of the Glottis)

The mechanical action which constitutes the attack, or placing of the voice, is produced by preparing the glottis and the mouth to form some particular vowel-sound. Now, the type of vowel preferable for the formation and development of the voice is the Italian A (ah), slightly darkened as indicated in § 2.—

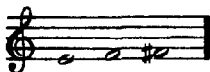
The pupil should understand clearly that the stroke of the glottis is a normal function of the vocal organ, and that he has simply to subordinate to his will the spontaneous action which was developed at his first attempt to cry as an infant. It is, in point of fact, by means of this innate aptitude that we form all vowels in speaking.

5. *The Three Registers of the Female Voice*

Female voices are classed thus:

Contralto, Mezzo-Soprano, dramatic Soprano and high, light Soprano (*sforzato*).

The upper limit of the chest-register in all female voices varies between these notes:



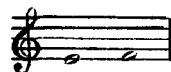
Contralto and Mezzo-Soprano voices usually have a chest-register of much greater compass than Soprano voices, extending more or less into the lower notes.

In order to equalize and blend the chest-register with the middle register, the pupil must slightly darken the last two chest-notes in ascending the scale and open them in descending. Every strain made on the upper notes of a lower register not only increases the difficulty of developing the strength of the first notes of the following register, but in the end renders the blending of the two registers completely impossible.

When the limits of the registers are not clearly defined, there will always be a series of uncertain, weak and false tones in singing scales with full voice, or in sustained passages.

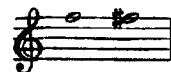
According to the modern pitch, the highest

chest-note of almost all Contralto and Mezzo-Soprano voices will vary between:

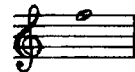


There are some Contralto voices which, on account of an unusual position of the larynx, never succeed in developing the head-voice. Such voices of narrow compass, which use only the chest- and middle registers, are, however, rare exceptions, and can aspire only to a concert-career.

The limit of the middle register for all female voices may vary between the following notes:



The general rule, however, places *f* as the high note:



6. *Method of Practising*

Rational and progressive study is capable of developing great elasticity as well as considerable suppleness in the muscles of the sound-producing organs without ever fatiguing them; whereas, the least excess of practice produces exhaustion.

At the commencement of his studies the pupil should, therefore, not sing too long at a time, and during the first few days he should not practise more than five or ten consecutive minutes. Practice thus limited may be repeated three or four times a day at long intervals. The time devoted to exercising the voice may be increased five minutes at a time up to half an hour.

If, as happens frequently, the pupil, not taking these precepts to heart, practises at home longer than the teacher has sanctioned, the sad result, the over-taxing of the voice (of the vocal cords), will speedily ensue.

7. *Analysis*

Most pupils who study singing are not very musical. Consequently, they begin to sing the exercises and scales mechanically, guided solely by ear, without paying any attention to the length of each measure and to rhythmical division, and thus without appreciating the value of each separate note. This habit of allowing oneself to be guided by ear is very harmful, and causes an incalculable waste of

time to the pupils. Furthermore, by thus always feeling for the note, the pupil is obliged to repeat the same passage incessantly, which, instead of assisting progress, ends by fatiguing the vocal organs. From the first lesson, therefore, the student should accustom himself to analyse, that is, to reflect on what he has to do; in a word, it is necessary that practical work should be preceded by mental study.

If this analytic system of study be adopted by the pupil from the beginning, it will prove very useful to him throughout the progressive stages of his studies, and also in the practice of his profession when studying new rôles.

8. *Style*

With the exception of national songs which have an entirely popular and local character, peculiar to each nationality, there are only two styles in the world, a good style and a bad style, just as there are but one good and one bad method of singing. It is utterly wrong, therefore, to talk of a German, French, English or Italian style or method of singing in the strict sense of the term. In all ages, in fact, we have had hundreds of examples to show that great singers of both sexes, belonging to diverse nationalities, have been received with equal enthusiasm in Rome, Paris, London, Vienna, St. Petersburg, etc.

Many teachers of singing maintain that in modern vocal music, where sustained and declama-

tory phrases have replaced rapid runs and graceful turns, singers do not need to develop the mechanism of the voice, as this only fatigues the vocal organs and robs the pupil of valuable time.

As regards fatigue of the voice from study, its avoidance depends entirely on the skill of the teacher and the intelligent receptivity of the pupil.

As to the technical requirements of sustained and declamatory phrases, the truth of the matter is quite the contrary of the above statements.

A singer who has learned to breathe properly, equalized her voice and blended the registers, and who has systematically developed the flexibility of the larynx, and the elasticity of glottis and resonant cavities, so as to be able to produce all possible shades of *timbre*, intensity and expression, can unquestionably sing sustained and declamatory phrases perfectly well without fatigue or effort, that is to say without exaggeration or screaming; whereas, another singer, who is struggling with her breathing and the mechanism of her voice, and who consequently exaggerates and disfigures the modern musical phrase by screaming, very soon ends by fatiguing her voice.

Every art consists of a technico-mechanical part and an æsthetic part; he who is insufficiently prepared to overcome the difficulties of the former, will never attain perfection in the latter, be he even a genius.

January, 1890.

MATHILDE MARCHESI.

Exercices élémentaires gradués pour le développement de la voix.

Progressive elementary exercises for the development of the voice.

Émission de voix.

L'élève ouvrira la bouche sans affectation aucune, en la tenant parfaitement tranquille et en aspirant lentement. Il attaquera ensuite les sons très nettement sur la voyelle A, en serrant la glotte et en évitant toute secousse ainsi que tout effort.

Emission of the voice (Attack).

The student must open the mouth without any contortion, hold it quite still and then breathe slowly. Then each note is to be clearly uttered, upon the vowel A (ah) contracting the glottis beforehand, but without spasmodic effort or jerkiness.

Lento, con forza eguale.

Canto.

1.

Piano.

Port de voix chromatique.

Portamento in semitones.

2.