

A Common Purpose: Healthy Relationships Between Choral Conductors and Voice Teachers

Florida Music Educators Association, Annual Conference
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Room: TCC 11

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Dr. Peter Steenblik (choral conductor) and Dr. Sheila Dunn (director of voice) discuss strategies for maintaining collegiality between the private voice studio and the choral ensemble. Such topics as audition procedures, vocal placement, warmup routines, literature selection, rehearsal process, and performance practices will be explored. The sum of micro-decisions can cultivate a supportive environment of growth or can result in toxicity between departments. We recognize that the studio and ensemble goals are the same -- communication and implementation is key. These efforts bring a happier, healthier, supportive relationship.

Conductor as voice teacher (Sheila) –

- Choral conductor hours vs. private voice hours
- Know your lane, but be curious

Venn Diagram (Peter) –

- Different goals, Shared goals, SAME goals
- Conductors, seek opportunities to **DO** THE THING
- Participate as a vocalist, at whatever level you can
 - Professional, civic, church, volunteer, receiving lessons, etc.
 - When was your last voice lesson? When is your next?
- Conductors, **invite** your local voice teachers to also do the thing
 - Invite voice teachers to sing solo. Don't want to "rob" your students? What might they gain? Could also make it a standalone.
 - Ensure its collaborative.
 - Add'l advantage – the voice teacher models for students. They also see *you* and *their students* in rehearsal/performance.

Semantics (Both) –

- your students / our students / my students
- Everyone's a soloist
- Straight-tone debate
 - Vibrancy
 - Minimize? Be specific...where? At the cadence. Why? Stylistic

(Pause for brief discussion)
- Pedagogy defined

Vocal Pedagogy Resources (Both) –

- Continued education. When was the last time? Revisit with new perspective?
- Some recommendations:

McCoy, Scott. *Your Voice: An Inside View*. 3rd ed. Delaware, OH: Inside View Publishing, 2019.

Hines, Jerome, ed. *Great Singers on Great Singing*. Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions, 1982/2004.

Brown, Oren. *Discover Your Voice: How to develop healthy voice habits*. San Diego, CA: Singular Pub., 1996/2004.

McKinney, James. *The Diagnosis & Correction of Vocal Faults*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1994/2005.

Smith, Brenda. *Choral Pedagogy for the Older Singer*. San Diego, CA: Plural Pub., 2012.

Garrett, Matthew & Joshua Palkki. *Honoring Trans and Gender-Expansive Students in Music Education*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 2021.

Bos, Nancy, Joanne Bozeman & Cate Frazier-Neely. *Singing Through Change: Women's Voices in Midlife, Menopause, and Beyond*.

Suquamish, WA: StudioBos Media, 2020.

Activity for students...and you (Sheila) –

- Anatomy playdough

Audition procedures (Peter) –

- Truly eval & listen
- Not just about range, but tessitura, timbre, and goals within voice studio
- Define – timbre, tessitura, range (Sheila)

Vocal placement (Peter) –

- Within range of “healthy”
- **Discuss** with voice teacher
- Feedback letter
- Fach & choral labels (Sheila)

(Pause for brief discussion)

Warmup routine –

- Top-down approach (Peter)
- Whoo-op (Sheila)
- Keys – start/stop/progression? (Both)

Solo Literature Selection (Sheila) – Singer should connect with and like their music

- Voice accompaniment doubles and/or supports
- Avoid uncomfortable key changes or modulations
- Utilize students’ language abilities
- A healthy singer can sing fast/slow, high/low. Explore all
- Fach free (see above)
- Chest voice / middle voice / head voice. Use them all.
- Musical Theatre Rep
- Singing is an extension of speech

Solo Repertoire Resources –

Kimball, Carol. *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2005.

IMSLP – www.imslp.org

SUNY Fredonia [Institute for Composer Diversity](http://www.composerdiversity.com) - www.composerdiversity.com

Song Helix – www.songhelix.com

The African American Artsong Alliance – www.artsongalliance.org

The Art Song Project – www.theartsongproject.com

Choral Literature Selection & Rehearsal Process (Peter) –

- Duration of rehearsal & tonal approach
- Rehearsal order & Program order affects tone & production
- Seating arrangements can assist or damage
- Is the director constantly modeling good vocal behavior
 - Lanyard? Appropriately used?
 - Moments of vocal recovery.

Questions?