BRIDGING THE GAP
Transitioning Vocalists from Academia to Career

DMA Document

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Laura Michele Portune Cordell, B.A., M.M.

Graduate Program in Music

The Ohio State University
2011

Committee:
Robin Rice, Advisor
Joseph Duchi
Jere Forsythe
Copyright by

Laura Michele Fortune Cordell

2011
Abstract

Each year, promising students graduate from universities with degree in hand and sights set on a career in the arts but without the necessary information to achieve this goal. In a demanding, competitive field such as vocal performance, additional preparation and knowledge can make the difference between success and missed opportunities. Bridging the Gap is intended to provide information, teach necessary skills, and act as a resource for talented students transitioning into the professional world. It draws from information learned in academia and integrates it with information necessary for a career in the music industry. By accumulating past experience, advice from professionals in the field, and common expectations, students can use this information to better prepare themselves and gain an edge for a professional career in the arts.

Although intended specifically for vocal performance majors in classical voice, many of the topics in this document are applicable to other instruments or fields in the realm of music. This information can serve as a graduate level class text on preparatory career information for students entering a professional career in voice, or can be useful to an individual looking to further his/her own development.
To my husband
Acknowledgments

Vita

1976......................................................... Born Dayton, Ohio

1998.............................................................. B.A. Music (Voice) cum laude, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN

1999.............................................................. RECIPIENT, Margaret Speaks

Distinguished Singer Award, The Ohio State University

2000.............................................................. M.M. Vocal Performance, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

2002.............................................................. District Finalist, Metropolitan Opera National Council Awards, San Diego, CA

2002.............................................................. LOCAA Finalist, Lyric Opera Center, Chicago Lyric

2003.............................................................. Certificate of Language and Culture, L’Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Perugia, Italy

2005.............................................................. Visiting Professor, University of Notre Dame
2007 ................................................................. Master Class, St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, IN

2007 ................................................................. Master Class, University of Notre Dame

2008 ................................................................. Adjudicator, Dayton Opera Association, Vocal Competition

2008 ................................................................. Master Class, The Ohio State University

2008 ................................................................. Opera Business Lecture, The Ohio State University

2009-2010 ......................................................... Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Music, The Ohio State University

2010 ................................................................. Singing Health Specialist Certification, The Ohio State University

2010-2011 ......................................................... Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Music, The Ohio State University
Publications


Recordings

*Prophets of Joy*, Notre Dame Folk Choir, Ave Maria Press, South Bend, IN, 1997


*Animal Opera* (SISTER MOUSE), Myron Fink, San Diego Opera, 2001

Fields of Study

Major Field:  Music


Studies in Opera Directing: Peter Kozma (2009-2010)
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................... Error! Bookmark not defined.

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................... iv

Vita ....................................................................................................................... v

CHAPTER ONE: GETTING TO KNOW THE BUSINESS ........................................... 1

Understanding The Career ................................................................................... 1

What It Takes ........................................................................................................ 2

Dealing With Rejection ........................................................................................ 3

Building The Repertoire ....................................................................................... 4

Familiarize Yourself With Singers ...................................................................... 5

Attend Live Performances .................................................................................... 6

Building Relationships ........................................................................................ 7

Building Skills ..................................................................................................... 9

Empower Yourself ............................................................................................... 10

CHAPTER TWO: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES .................................................. 11

Work Opportunities ............................................................................................. 11
Artist Diploma (AD) Programs ................................................................. 11
Young Artist Programs ........................................................................... 12
Pay To Sing Programs ............................................................................ 12
Competitions ........................................................................................... 14
Opera Chorus ........................................................................................... 18
Church Soloist ......................................................................................... 19
Colleagues ............................................................................................... 20
Finding Information .................................................................................. 21
Do Your Homework .................................................................................. 22
Be Discerning ............................................................................................ 23

CHAPTER THREE: CHOOSING AUDITION REPERTOIRE ......................... 24

How To Choose Appropriate Repertoire ................................................ 24
‘Selling’ A Piece: ...................................................................................... 25
Prepare The Role, Not Just The Aria ....................................................... 26
Building The ‘Fab Five’ Package ............................................................... 27
Choosing A Good Starter ......................................................................... 28
Combination Of Repertoire .................................................................... 29
Starting Out .............................................................................................. 29
Big House, Small House ......................................................................... 30
Research ......................................................................................................................... 43
Knowing Your Character ................................................................................................. 43
Characterizing Every Sound ............................................................................................ 44
Blocking Your Own Arias ................................................................................................. 46
Finding Your Own Words ................................................................................................. 48

CHAPTER SEVEN: PREPARING A ROLE ......................................................................... 49
Studying The Entire Opera ............................................................................................... 49
Recordings ........................................................................................................................ 49
Translations ..................................................................................................................... 50
Inner Monologue .............................................................................................................. 51
Text ................................................................................................................................. 51
Learning The Notes .......................................................................................................... 52
Singing The Notes ............................................................................................................. 52
Putting It All Together ..................................................................................................... 53
Memorizing ...................................................................................................................... 53
Coaching .......................................................................................................................... 54
Rechecking The Score ..................................................................................................... 55
Characterizing .................................................................................................................. 55
Pacing .............................................................................................................................. 55
Cold Call Email ............................................................................................................. 70
Follow Up Email .......................................................................................................... 71
Update Email ................................................................................................................ 72
Request Email ................................................................................................................ 73
Do’s And Don’ts Of Emailing ......................................................................................... 73
Other Types Of Communication ..................................................................................... 75
CHAPTER TEN: HEALTH .............................................................................................. 76
Job Depends On It .......................................................................................................... 76
Finding An Ent .............................................................................................................. 76
Baseline .......................................................................................................................... 77
Tips For Vocal Health .................................................................................................... 78
Hydration ........................................................................................................................ 78
Speaking Voice ............................................................................................................. 79
Vocal Rest ...................................................................................................................... 79
Sing Appropriate Repertoire .......................................................................................... 80
Pace new repertoire into your voice .............................................................................. 80
Do not sing sick ............................................................................................................. 81
Reflux .............................................................................................................................. 82
Don’t be a VAP (Vocally Abusive Person) .................................................................... 84
When To Cancel......................................................................................................................... 85
Medications ............................................................................................................................. 86
Basic Knowledge Of The Voice .......................................................... 87
Therapy Options ..................................................................................................................... 89
Resonant Voice Therapy ....................................................................................................... 89
Twang Therapy ........................................................................................................................ 90
Vocal Function Exercises ..................................................................................................... 90
Overall Health ....................................................................................................................... 91
Stress ....................................................................................................................................... 92
Be Proactive ............................................................................................................................ 93
CHAPTER ELEVEN: SELF PROMOTION ............................................................................... 94
Materials .................................................................................................................................... 94
Resume ..................................................................................................................................... 94
Head Shot ................................................................................................................................ 95
Repertoire List .......................................................................................................................... 97
Website ...................................................................................................................................... 97
Recent Recordings ................................................................................................................... 99
Business Cards ....................................................................................................................... 99
Creating Opportunities ......................................................................................................... 100
Agents- To Have Or Not To Have ................................................................. 102

Negotiating ................................................................................................. 105

Know Thyself ............................................................................................. 105

CHAPTER TWELVE: SELF EMPLOYMENT .................................................. 107

Taxes ............................................................................................................. 107

Unions And Agma ....................................................................................... 109

Insurance ...................................................................................................... 110

Retirement ................................................................................................... 112

Piecing Jobs Together ............................................................................... 112

Budgeting And Discipline ......................................................................... 114

Appendix A: Complete Vita ........................................................................

Appendix B: Helpful Resources .................................................................... 122

Appendix C: Character Analysis Model .................................................... 125

Appendix D: Reflux ..................................................................................... 128

Appendix E: Sample Resume ....................................................................... 129

Appendix F: Repertoire List ......................................................................... 131

Appendix G: Tax Deductions ..................................................................... 132

References ................................................................................................... 134
CHAPTER ONE:
GETTING TO KNOW THE BUSINESS

Many students focus on preparing themselves for recitals, roles in the university opera, and auditions outside of the university, but few know how to prepare themselves for an actual career in voice after graduation. In such a competitive and demanding business, any edge can help you stand out from the crowd, marking the difference between success and a missed opportunity. There are many things you can do now to prepare you for a singing career.

UNDERSTANDING THE CAREER

It is important to understand what a singing career actually entails— the demands, lifestyle, and day to day activities associated with the business. Similar to free-lancing, the jobs are intermittent and vary in length and pay. You lack the security of an employee with a company, since you need to constantly look for the next job and paycheck even while being employed. There is never a point in this career when you can sit back on your past successes and relax. You need to be continuously promoting yourself and networking so as to line up your next gigs.

In reality, the actual job of a singing career is to audition and seek out opportunities, with intermittent gigs as perks. As you gain experience and get your name into the mainstream community, the perks will become more plentiful and the networking will become more
productive. Do not forget, however, that this is a highly competitive field of extremely talented, hard-working people. Each one of you deserves a job. Keep things in perspective and remain diligent and patient. Overall, it is an endurance test.

**WHAT IT TAKES**

Once you get the gig, the hard work is just beginning. There is a lot of pressure when performing for others, particularly when being paid and when working with other talented colleagues. You need to know your own strengths. Do not compare yourself to the other singers, this is not the place for competition. Everyone is singing his own role, and everyone is dealing with his own insecurities. Be a supportive colleague, and learn to be confident in your own abilities. You were hired to be dynamic onstage- be your own best self regardless of what is going on around you.

Be professional. Always. Be on time, be congenial, be accommodating, be prepared. There is no excuse for arriving at a gig without knowing your notes or not having your music memorized. Ever.

Constantly improve. It is understandable to start out in this career with limited experience and while working out certain technical issues, but as you progress in the career you need to show marked improvement and more experience on your resume. Every time you sing for someone a second or third time, she should be aware of how you are progressing, and how this is
represented by your additional experience. This takes self-discipline to continually improve. It also takes hard work to keep pushing yourself to the next level.

Work to maintain a healthy perspective and surround yourself with positive support. The constant state of auditioning and self-promotion can be draining, and you need to find a way to make it work for you for the long haul. Cultivating other interests and passions in your life can also help you find balance, making it easier to keep hard work and rejection in perspective.

DEALING WITH REJECTION

Do not live and die by every rejection letter, it will drain you and make you leave this career prematurely. In order to keep rejection in perspective, it is important to understand the casting process. It is not just about how you sing, act, look, or emote. It is also about whether you fit with a cast, are agreeable, a strong musician, come recommended, your level of experience or inexperience, and your availability for the job.

You cannot take auditions personally. They may have loved you and have a perfect role in mind for you in the future, but simply have no spot for you in the current casting. Companies rarely give you feedback; they will say ‘thank you,’ and you are left to wonder about their opinion. It is better for your sanity and your longevity to replay the positive things that occurred in each audition and see each one as another opportunity to introduce yourself and your talents as a wonderful colleague.
Find a way to turn rejection into something positive and manageable. “After receiving a rejection, try to detach your ego and search for ways to benefit from the experience. Consider which aspects can be improved in the future.”1 Give yourself a timeframe for being disappointed, and then move on and put it behind you.

BUILDING THE REPERTOIRE

If you want to make classical singing your career you need to know the repertoire, and you can start preparing while you are still in school. There are a plethora of resources available at universities that may not be accessible after leaving the school. Take advantage of online access to classical collections and library collections of scores, CDs, DVDs, and repertoire books. It can be overwhelming to jump into a pool of operas, so start slow. Choose operas that you may have already heard, or operas that contain roles appropriate for you.

Ask teachers and coaches to suggest repertoire that should fit your voice, both now and in the future. Then take out the CD, score, or DVD and spend a few hours listening to the music and various artists to see if you are drawn to it and if the character resonates with you. Watch DVDs, go to Met broadcasts, host opera viewing parties with your colleagues. This type of research will not only hone your ear and your dramatic abilities, but it will begin to build your knowledge of repertoire and composers.

1 Cutler, 27.
Familiarizing yourself with operas will continue throughout your career. Important to note, however, is that you should never be singing a piece from an opera before you have studied it completely. *Once you enter the professional world, learning arias is not the goal, but rather singing roles.* Do not walk into an audition with an aria if you do not know about the character, the plot, what happens before and after the aria, etc. Take the extra time to make the role your own before presenting anything to a panel of listeners. The homework will show.

**FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH SINGERS**

Start learning the names and voices of singers, both past and current. You will want to build your ear as well as speak intelligently of others in your field.

You can find information through CDs, DVDs, and websites such as Operabase.com. Opera News and Classical Singer constantly showcase new singers while reviewing past and current greats. You can either subscribe to the magazines or find them in your library. Youtube\(^2\) also has become a popular resource for research. You can either search a singer or a particular aria to see how to interpret the piece. The goal is not to imitate another singer, as you want to represent a unique you, but rather to see other interpretations and new ways to perform that may be inspiring.

For the most accurate presentations, listen to live recordings. There are so many ways to manipulate a voice in recording studios today that it is difficult to hear pacing and mastery in a

---

\(^2\) [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
studio recording. There is also a difference between a recording that is done while the artist is acting onstage versus one that is recorded in a concert venue with minimal movement. Adjustments are necessary when a singer is negotiating more than just the notes he is singing, and changes for breath control need be made accordingly.

You will begin to see how even the professionals at the top of their game still make mistakes. Strive for consistency but know that in live performances with real people things happen. Learn to go easy on yourself, too.

**ATTEND LIVE PERFORMANCES**

An enjoyable way to expand your repertoire, familiarize yourself with new singers, and make connections with a company is to attend live performances of all kinds. Every time you see a live performance you can learn something from the artists.

If you are attending a professional performance, start to observe the differences of the demands between professional and school productions. What do the singers do to create polish? Do they seem like they are acting or are they embodying the character to bring it to life? Regardless of the level of performing or professionalism, you should be able to find elements that you will work to incorporate in your own performing.

When attending performances, you will want to be discerning with what you hear, but not critical for the sake of being critical. It helps little when you like nothing of a performance. Observe
what works and what you see as less successful, and learn from it. But refrain from being harsh or negative of other singers in general. Remember how much work, concentration, and courage goes into performing. It is always easier to sit back and judge others rather than doing it yourself. The less critical you become of others, the less they may criticize you. This does not mean you need to change your opinions of what you like and dislike, only that you should refrain from terms like ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ Find a vocabulary that can become useful so that you can learn something from other’s work.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

It can be very difficult to cultivate relationships in this career. You are constantly traveling, focusing on your health, and working to shield yourself from criticism and rejection. First and foremost, you have to know yourself very well.

Be kind to yourself, and find supportive friends. Although you may feel like your entire world is this career, challenge yourself to have outside hobbies and interests. The amount of work necessary to be successful can be encompassing, but burning out can make you leave the business altogether. Have a mantra, talk to a therapist, write in a journal. Find a way to keep yourself mentally healthy. You will spend a lot of time alone in this career. Learn to embrace it and really get to know and like yourself. And if you are someone who needs constant companionship, know how to get it. Find colleagues with whom to socialize, skype or email with friends, or make entirely new friends in cities where you are working. The bottom line is to know what you need and make sure you get it.
Romantic relationships can be difficult in a singing career, mainly due to the extensive amount of travel, but they are in no way impossible. It depends completely on the individuals. Communication is easier now with modern technology, which can help in long-distance relationships, and companies are typically open to having significant others visit during the rehearsal process and production weeks. Other singers are typically supportive of long-distance relationships, especially if they are in similar situations. Talk to colleagues to get ideas of what works and does not work for them.

Be careful with romantic relationships with your colleagues. It does happen, many times successfully, but remember that you are in a work environment first and foremost. If a relationship with a colleague will hinder your ability to present yourself professionally, it may not be in your best interest to start something during the job. The opera world is very small, and chances are you will be working with the same colleagues numerous times. Try to maintain good, healthy relationships with all of them for the present and the future. If you do start a romantic relationship with a colleague during a show, be sure that it does not negatively affect the production or your other colleagues. You were hired for the drama onstage, not off.

In dealing with your colleagues, always be professional and congenial. Even if you have differences, learn to respect each person’s work. Never correct a colleague on staging or music; it is highly unprofessional and inappropriate to do so. Concentrate on your own work, and let
your colleagues rehearse in their own way. It is important that there is a level of mutual respect and individual creativity that occurs during a show.

When dealing with conductors and directors, come with your own ideas but be willing to try new ones that may be suggested. Tempo changes and rubato are typically worked out over the course of rehearsals, but be assertive if you feel you need a change. If a conductor requests that you try something a different way, try it out a few times before deciding if it will work for you. If a director has a completely different characterization in mind for you, you may feel the need to talk to him about other possible options. If you are asked to do something that you find offensive or dangerous, speak to the director after the rehearsal so that you can find an alternative that is mutually agreeable.

The bottom line is to treat others with respect, but to also respect your own opinion in this process. Come with your own ideas, something to present, but be open to molding those ideas so that they fit together with everyone in the production.

**BUILDING SKILLS**

As stated earlier, you need to constantly build upon your skill set in this career, but be discerning enough to know what you are ready to perform while still adding polish. Singers are always in a state of improvement, but that does not make them uncastable in the present moment. Know what you do spectacularly right now and market yourself with those skills at the forefront while
you work to improve other things. Have a list of goals and keep working towards improvement. Keep a list of successes as a reminder before going into a pressured situation like a job or audition.

Cultivate a balance of confidence and humility. Confidence sells, and companies want to hire dynamic individuals onstage who are sure of themselves to perform spectacularly. Humility is wonderful offstage, where you are easy to work with and striving to improve. Just as singing requires the balance of energy with relaxation, so does the career require the balance of confidence and humility.

**EMPOWER YOURSELF**

Start thinking of singing as your career, and get certain systems in place to set yourself up for success. Learn how to hone your arias and roles so that you can stand out in auditions. Learn to build up your resume so that companies are interested in hearing you even before you walk into the room. Start networking so that you have professionals in the business willing to back you up or recommend you for jobs. Start creating opportunities for jobs. Be confident with what you have to say and present, and never accept less from yourself.

Yes, this business is difficult and statistics are scary. But singers make careers in the arts every day. Why not you?
CHAPTER TWO:
EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES

Whether you are still a student or already starting out in a professional career, there are a number of opportunities available in the career of singing. It is important to know which opportunities may be appropriate for your current level, and which opportunities should be worked towards for the future.

WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Artist Diploma (AD) Programs

AD Programs are typically associated with a school, and the singer actively works towards a university degree while singing in the program. The degree is typically focused on career development and training, with such classes as acting, dance, and stage development. Coachings and lessons are included in the degree. Entrance into these programs is highly competitive and can come with a full scholarship due to the low number of students selected.

These programs are typically sought out by singers who feel the need for more instruction before entering into the professional world. Many times the singers are actively performing in a few professional gigs while participating in the AD Program, but not yet to the extent of a full-time
career. AD Programs provide a means of polish before the singer attempts to compete in the career.

**Young Artist Programs**

Young Artist Programs typically hire apprentices for an opera company anywhere from a few months up to a few years. They vary in the level of singer as well as the demands and perks for the singer. Many of these programs are used as outreach programs to promote the arts and the company in local schools and the community, giving the young artists opportunities to perform daily and get their name out into the business world. These programs can be vigorous and taxing on the voice, but usually offer good opportunities for growth and building endurance in a safe and lower pressure environment.

The artist is typically paid in a weekly stipend, housing is sometimes provided or offered at a discounted price, and training classes and coachings are usually included within the program. Some companies hire their young artists to sing roles in the mainstage shows, either while they are in the program or in subsequent years, and this connection to the company can be invaluable for resume building. Time off is usually given so that the artists can maintain their auditions and further career development.

Competition for these programs is high, as the selection process may be as small as one singer per voice type.
Summer young artists programs are typically larger and focus more on training the singers rather than outreach. The artists may participate in the chorus of the mainstage shows or perform smaller roles, as well as doing their own shows, promotional events, and scenes. Although a greater number of singers is accepted into many of these programs, the competition is still very strong.

YAPs are great for students who are beyond the academic stage of singing, but are not quite established into the professional career of singing. They provide a good bridge into the business, offering professional work as a singer but with training and support.

**Pay To Sing Programs**

Pay to sing programs are young artist programs that require an entrance fee for participation. Many of these are wonderful for young singers who are just starting out in the career, and they provide training, experience, connections, and much support with less pressure. Training classes, lessons, and coachings are usually included in the fee, as is housing many times. Travel is typically not covered. Many of these programs are offered only in the summer, when singers are out of school and available for further training.

Lots of Pay to Sing Programs are held overseas, which can provide the additional benefit of learning a foreign language and culture that may be necessary for understanding repertoire.
Depending on the program, the competition to be accepted into a Pay to Sing Program is less intense, and the number of singers accepted can be large. Many times, faculty members from prominent universities and conservatories serve as the teachers and coaches for such programs, and they can become valuable networking sources for the future.

**Competitions**

Singers should find any opportunity to get their names out into the community and the singing world, and competitions provide a means of networking with judges, colleagues and other professionals in the business. These can be done anytime in one’s career or pre-career, but it is necessary to be aware of the level of competition before entering. Many competitions have entrance fees, and you should be discerning about how to spend your money.

The goal should not be to win the competition, but rather to use it as an opportunity to introduce yourself to make new contacts. Award outcomes are highly varied and difficult to predict; it is unproductive to become too affected by the outcomes. You may, however, be able to receive feedback from the adjudicators, which is rare in other aspects of a singing career. Many times judges are willing to offer their comments after the competition, which is a great way to meet professionals in the field and possibly gain insight into how you are currently being received. Stay in touch with thank you notes and updates.
Participating in competitions can occur at any level of your career, and the level of competition can increase with your own skills. Many competitions have monetary awards that vary depending on the competition.

**Language Programs**

Although not directly associated with singing programs, further training of any language commonly used in classical singing is time well spent. There are various programs overseas and in the states that offer immersion while the student takes classes on the grammar and culture of a foreign language.

Diction classes are not enough for mastery of a language when you are trying to be convincing onstage. You need to have a complete understanding of the cadence of speech, as well as the words and culture behind it. Even a few months in a foreign language program may give you the polish needed to take your performing to the professional level of presentation.

Larger companies often hire international singers, and it is useful to know more languages than just English in order to communicate effectively with your colleagues. If you have a desire to sing overseas, knowing the language of the country where you are singing is an absolute necessity.
Programs such as *Rosetta Stone*[^3] can be useful, as can university classes. The best way to learn is still immersion into the language and culture by going to the country. This further development should be ongoing at any point in your career where you have time to donate to it.

**Connected Teachers/Coaches**

Working with teachers or coaches who have connections in the business can be very useful when trying to break in as a young singer. Be sure that first and foremost, though, the person is successfully helping you as a teacher or coach. Do not stay with someone solely based on connections, as it is far more important to first build your skills as a singer with someone who is helping you progress.

Using connections from a teacher or coach’s recommendation can be done anytime that person sees it appropriate to recommend you. Typically this can be helpful with agents and companies where the contact has an existing relationship.

Make sure that your contact is well respected in the field before using them as a networking source. Always check with the colleague or teacher before using their name, and never speak on their behalf without permission.

**Seminars**

Attending seminars and workshops can connect you to people within your field in a low pressure

[^3]: www.rosettastone.com
environment of learning. Not only should the information be useful to you, but the contacts you will make may lead to work in the future. Typically these programs require an entrance fee and may have a number cap on attendance, but entrance is usually not hard to come by.

You can attend seminars and workshops at any point in your career for further development and connections.

**Opera Companies**

Working with opera companies is the goal for many singers in this field. Companies range from highly competitive, elite houses to more regional companies with smaller budgets. The range of pay is not always equivalent to the quality of the production, and many smaller companies have wonderful artistic standards and output.

It is useful to know the level of the company before auditioning. Research the pay scale, the caliber of singers hired, whether or not unmanaged singers are hired, and the typical season repertoire before ever requesting an audition.

If you are just starting out, it may be helpful to audition for larger roles in smaller companies and smaller roles in larger companies. As you gain experience and add roles to your resume, larger companies may be more willing to take a chance on hiring you. Most singers benefit from building up experience in places of less pressure before tackling roles on a larger stage.
When you are first building a career, pay scale is less important than experience on the resume. You need to be comfortable with your contract, and it is appropriate to negotiate with most companies, but realize that you need to build up your experience before demanding higher fees. That being said, the contracts typically get bigger as you return to sing with companies.

Singing for an opera company can occur at all levels of your career, with the level of the company and the role varying due to your level of experience.

**Opera Chorus**

Some singers start out by singing in the chorus of opera companies. Depending on the company, this may be a great way to introduce yourself and show your acting prowess onstage, as well as your good work ethic during rehearsals. Some companies move reliable chorus members into principle roles, while others see a marked distinction between the two. You can usually ask other chorus members to see into which of the two a company typically falls.

Chorus work can be wonderful experience, especially if you have limited stage expertise. Regardless of whether or not you are soloing, chorus work requires the same attention to detail and concentration that is required of the principles, but with the added support of colleagues to back you up. Most choruses are paid, and it provides professional experience for a resume, as well as connections to general directors, conductors, and other performers.
This typically should occur at the start of your career to accumulate experience and connections. Once you make the switch to principle roles, it is not usually recommended that you return to chorus work unless you are planning to make a career in the chorus. Choruses in larger opera houses, such as the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera have annual salaries, benefits, and options for small role opportunities. These can be lucrative, stable careers.

**Concerts**

As with opera companies, singing for symphonies and orchestras should be something you are constantly working towards in your career. The size and caliber of the concerts will vary depending on your skill level and role, but you should consistently seek out performance opportunities. Many symphonies will perform larger works requiring soloists, providing an opportunity for exposure without the pressure of carrying an entire show.

**Church Soloist**

Church jobs offer stable income and flexibility while giving you an opportunity to be paid to sing. Not all churches pay their singers, and most churches prefer that you worship as a part of the community, not simply as a soloist. Be sure to find a place that is a good fit for all involved.

Church jobs can occur at any point in your career, and can provide wonderful supplemental income as well as rewarding singing opportunities. Most communities are flexible with absences as long as you can provide a substitute in your stead.
Colleagues

Your colleagues can be a great source of opportunities for you if you cultivate a mutually advantageous relationship with them. Singers can have a negative reputation for being competitive and unwilling to help each other, but this is much more the exception than the rule in the singing world. Many of the difficult personalities are weeded out in the process of career building, as companies are not interested in working with disagreeable people.

If you are willing to help your friends with connections and possible job opportunities, they will be far more willing to later help you in return. This is not to suggest that you create more competition for yourself, but if you are in a position to help a colleague, then pay it forward. If you have to turn down a role due to a conflict, you could recommend that a colleague of yours audition. If you are in a show and a different role needs to be replaced, you may have someone to suggest. You know first-hand how difficult it can be to break into a new company, and it is wonderful to be able to help a colleague in the same situation.

Be sure to recommend only reliable colleagues that you trust to do the job as you would professionally do it. Do not recommend someone solely based on friendship if you disagree with her work ethic. The singer you are recommending is representing you.

Keep this in mind when working with others. Anyone may be in a position to help you one day, and you will want to constantly make a good impression so that you are easy to recommend. It is not good business to stick your neck out for someone who is unreliable. Make a good reputation
for yourself constantly so that if an opportunity does arise, someone need not think twice before recommending you.

**FINDING INFORMATION**

It is possible to find information about most of these programs on the internet. You can search for local companies, symphonies, churches, etc. online and obtain contact information directly from websites. Many sites will also direct you to the proper person to contact, as well.

Friends can be a valuable source of information. By comparing upcoming auditions and competitions, you are less likely to miss out on an opportunity. Talking to accompanists who may be playing for upcoming auditions is also a useful way to cover your bases. Attending performances to support a friend may give you the opportunity to make a new contact at an event.

You can contact companies directly to gain information on auditions and job opportunities. It is not advised to speak directly to the general director, but there may be a young artist program director or artistic director willing to meet with you or give you information over the phone.

Some trade magazines offer information on upcoming events and auditions. Classical Singer has a listing of current auditions in the back of each magazine, which may be worth the membership fee for this information alone. Bear in mind, however, that you are one of many

---

4 [www.classicalsinger.com](http://www.classicalsinger.com)
singers reading these advertisements. It is useful to find additional information elsewhere, thereby eliminating some competition simply by taking a few more steps to find information less readily available.

It is also possible to get information about job opportunities by talking to teachers or checking job postings at school or in chat rooms. Some sites even send you listings of auditions for a nominal fee.

See Appendix B for a listing of some helpful websites and publications.

**DO YOUR HOMEWORK**

Know the level of a company or audition before signing up to sing. It is not a negative thing to challenge yourself beyond your current level, but there is no need to continually disappoint yourself, either. Set yourself up for success and be able to introduce yourself well.

Find out if you have any connections to a company for whom you are singing, and network with them prior to auditioning. By simply reminding a former coach or director that you worked together in the past and are looking forward to singing for them again, you will have an advantage when you walk into the room to sing. With so many people auditioning at once, sometimes the most advantageous thing you can do is simply be remembered at the end of the audition day. If you have a prior connection to an individual, it is helpful to reconnect with
them. Do not feel the need to be pushy or insincere, just simply reintroduce yourself and send an update on your successes since your last meeting.

It can be helpful to get information from former participants prior to auditioning for a program. Anything that may be useful – such as a director offended by water bottles or a general director who dislikes 20th century music – may help you to avoid a potentially awkward situation. Take this information at face value, however, and know that you need not change yourself to please someone else.

**BE DISCERNING**

It can be expensive to do auditions, between the fees, the travel, and the time spent on coachings, lessons, and attire. Be discerning about how and where you spend your money. You need to get your name out into the singing world, but you do not need to throw money at every opportunity that arises.

You must constantly introduce and re-introduce yourself. Be sure to do it the best way you can every time.
CHAPTER THREE:
CHOOSING AUDITION REPERTOIRE

Typically you have five to ten minutes to present yourself to a company in an audition, sometimes less. It is important to choose repertoire that you can sell in any situation, pieces that give you confidence and best showcase your talents. Choosing appropriate repertoire is an ongoing process that will constantly change and evolve as you progress in your technique and in your career. You need trusted outside ears and you need to be honest with yourself throughout the process.

HOW TO CHOOSE APPROPRIATE REPERTOIRE

It is necessary to have pieces that showcase your individual talents. If you are still struggling to hit a high C, do not bring a piece that exposes this. We are all works in progress, but the audition repertoire should not be. Only choose pieces that you can confidently and consistently sell, not just get through.

Find pieces that fit your voice now, feel comfortable, and sound great. Do not be concerned if the piece is not showy enough, or is too popular or obscure. Judges simply want excellent presentations, regardless of repertoire. You can wear yourself out trying to read the minds of
those hearing you and anticipating what they will or will not like. Just pick your best pieces and execute them to the best of your ability.

‘SELLING’ A PIECE:

- You have such control and mastery of the piece that you are expressive with every note instead of just proving that you have the notes.
- You have something to say that is unique.
- You look the part, or you convince them with your acting that you are perfectly suited to play the part
- You embody the character so that you are not singing and acting, but being and expressing; you identify with the piece
- You can pace the piece so that you are not exhausted and have not lost the freshness of your voice by the end
- You feel great singing the piece, and you are consistently confident that you will succeed in presenting it the way you intend

If you find yourself in a rut while looking for appropriate roles, one way to guide you is to compare to other singers of your voice type. Research one of your arias in Operabase\(^5\) to see what other roles the sopranos are singing in addition to the role you share in common. Not all will be appropriate, but you may find something of which you had not previously thought.

---

\(^5\) [www.operabase.com](http://www.operabase.com)
PREPARE THE ROLE, NOT JUST THE ARIA

It is important to know the entire role, not just the aria. Certain arias may fit perfectly in a person’s voice, while the rest of the role is too taxing. It is important to know if a role is not right for your voice before presenting yourself as a character. Only present an aria if you can actually sing the role. Those hearing your audition will assume you know your voice well enough to only present a role you can successfully sing, not something that you hope to grow into in the future. The goal is not simply to get the job, but to do the job well enough to build a solid reputation.

Knowing the entire role is necessary for characterizing the aria. You need to know from where you came and to where you are going in order to convincingly portray your character. You will also want to be able to speak intelligently about the character if the company engages you in a conversation regarding the opera. Someone may even ask you to sing additional arias or sections from the opera, particularly if you are seen as a possible fit for the role. If you have prepared the other pieces and feel ready to sell them, have the music with you at the audition. If you are not ready to present your best self, do not sing additional music at that time. Ask if you could return to sing the following day and take the extra time to reestablish your performance.

There are also times when companies are in a pinch and may be looking to hire someone quickly. If you already have the entire role memorized and paced, you will be ready to sing it at a moment’s notice. If it is a role you expect to sing in the future, start preparing now so that you will be ready when the opportunity arises.
BUILDING THE ‘FAB FIVE’ PACKAGE

After having a number of options available, you want to choose a combination of pieces that will work well together to present you. You will typically not sing all of the pieces (but you may!), but each will be presenting you and the types of roles you sing. These are roles that you envision yourself playing, and this helps the listeners get to know you and how you see yourself.

Stay within the same Fach system. Some pieces cross-over between more than one category, but be sure not to choose pieces that are too different from each other. It will appear that you do not accurately know your voice and are still experimenting. If you are still determining your Fach, Richard Boldrey’s book, Guide to operatic roles and arias, can help clarify the Fach system and into which category your pieces may fall.

Show a variety of styles within your pieces. Start with Puccini if he is what you sing best, but find other composers whom also show your strengths. It is best to have English, German, French, and Italian all represented if possible. This is NOT necessary. Unless specific requirements have been stated, you have the freedom to put together your package as it fits you. This also means that you need not bring five pieces. If you sing four pieces excellently and one is still in progress, only bring four.

---

Only bring what you know will be successful. “Don’t base your repertoire decisions on an attempt to outguess the judges. It is far better to impress with what you can do than to dutifully perform something you think you should.”

CHOOSING A GOOD STARTER

It is helpful to have one piece with which you consistently start each audition. The more auditions you sing, the more confidence you will gain, and this piece will become engrained in muscle memory as a way for you to calm down and focus before having to switch to a piece of another’s choosing.

Sing this piece at all times of day and in a number of undesirable circumstances – while tired, hungry, late at night, early morning – in order to build your confidence and muscle memory. If you are sure that you will sell this piece regardless of the situation, it will give you a secure place from which to start your audition.

Qualities of a good starting piece:

- Not too long, but long enough to introduce yourself and show what you can do. Be aware that in some auditions you will only sing one piece.
- Something that draw attention to your unique talent – floating, acting, expressiveness, comedy. Showcase first whatever you feel your strength to be.

---

7 Highstein, 84.
- A piece you can sing anywhere, anytime with consistency. Do not start with a piece that is ‘sometimes’ successful. You will be adjusting to the room, the accompanist, and the panel; this piece should be second nature for you.

**COMBINATION OF REPERTOIRE**

As you build upon your repertoire, you will have a number of arias that will be appropriate to different situations and houses. It is important to know how to present yourself to a company, depending on the size of the house and caliber of the singers.

**Starting Out**

As you start your career, you may be auditioning for small roles in smaller, regional houses. It is still appropriate to sing arias from larger roles, but it may be helpful to master some secondary characters. For example, young baritones may consider such roles as Masetto in *Don Giovanni* instead of the Don himself. The title role may eventually be the perfect fit, but bear in mind that the other singers auditioning may be presently more appropriate for the larger role due to age and experience. Present yourself where you will be successful and build from there. Singing a fabulous Masetto in an audition may prove more convincing than presenting yourself as a young Don who is not quite polished yet. However, sing what you sing best and most impressively, and use the aria that will give you the most confidence. Even if the panel is not interested in hiring you for the role you presented, you may be able to impress someone enough to hire you as a different character with a better fit.
**Big House, Small House**

As your career and age progresses, more repertoire will fit your voice and you will have greater options with which to be competitive. As stated earlier, a helpful rule of thumb is to audition with larger roles for the regional houses and secondary roles for the larger houses.

**Crossover Repertoire**

You can show versatility by singing operetta or crossover repertoire for regional houses if you know a company to produce light opera or musical theatre productions. Do not bring this repertoire to an audition if the company does not present these works.

**Competition Repertoire**

Many times, competition repertoire tends to be showier and more elaborate by nature of the competitive atmosphere. It may be good to start with a piece that has more flare than you would in a regular audition, but make sure to work it into your voice so that it becomes as comfortable as your regular starter piece. The main objective still remains, however, that *how* you sing is more important than *what* you sing.

**Symphonic Repertoire**

Begin building your repertoire for Symphonic auditions. Although not required, some conductors may prefer repertoire from symphonic works. Handel’s *Messiah* is a great place to start, as many orchestras present this work during Christmas or Easter and the level of vocal difficulty varies within the work. In addition to oratorio and sacred pieces, it is appropriate to
also bring one or two arias in the event that a symphony is looking for a guest vocalist for solo work. It is best to come prepared with a number of options to present yourself.

MUST DO’S

- Only sing roles/repertoire that currently fit your voice, not something you will one day grow into
- Come prepared, do not waste your time or theirs
- Say something unique, do not just sing notes
- Be confident and proud of what you can do
- Stand out: find your talent and sell it
CHAPTER FOUR:
PRACTICING EFFICIENTLY

While in academia, singers are learning not only their craft and their vocal technique, but they are also building habits for how to practice on their own. Not all means of practicing are effective, and what may work in academia may not be focused enough to help you advance vocally in the professional world. It is necessary to create a system of efficient practicing that will keep you healthy as well as help you continue to improve upon your craft.

CREATING CONSISTENCY

While practicing does not always make ‘perfect,’ it does create muscle memory. It is important to use your practice sessions for building the right habits and engraining techniques to auto-pilot. Be aware of your body and the way your voice is responding while you practice, particularly while learning new repertoire. Although it is good to pace repertoire into your voice even on your less optimal singing days, know when it is necessary to take the day off. If you are too tired to sing without compensating or unable to focus due to outside circumstances, it is better not to risk setting bad habits into new repertoire. Learn to recognize the signs for good practicing versus phoning it in.
TAKING APART, PUTTING TOGETHER

Each practice session will vary depending on how well you know the music you are singing, but it is a good idea to have a general routine in mind that guides your practicing. Singing requires much concentration. Set yourself up for success by allowing your brain to focus on individual tasks rather than multiple layers at once. By breaking down the steps of a piece, you are able to work on sections in a healthy manner, allowing your body to concentrate on each task individually. Learning notes at the same time you are trying to sing foreign words is unnecessary. Separate the two to ensure that each is correct on its own before putting them together.

The following steps detail a practice session that can be applied to new or familiar repertoire. This process would occur after the translating and note-learning has already occurred outside of the practice room.

- Warm up your body, warm up your voice
- Speak through text in rhythm
- Sing through piece on lip trills, humming, alternating vowels. Focus on easy production through phrasing and breathing
- Sing through piece with words, focusing on technique
- Sing through piece with words, focusing on expression/acting
- Sing through piece putting together technique and expression/acting
- End with ‘performance’
- Warm down
You may repeat certain steps numerous times before moving onto the next step, and you may not work each step in every practice session. When you are first learning a piece, you may want to sing through the notes for a few days on lip trills alone to give your muscles a chance to acclimate to the phrasing before adding actual words. Steps four and five particularly should take lots of time before moving on. Eventually your finished product should be routine enough for technique and expression to be in muscle memory, leaving you to simply sing and emote.

When you are working on music that is already familiar, you may move faster through the steps or skip some steps altogether. The important thing is to have a system in mind that helps your efficiency in the practice room.

**ORDER MATTERS**

The order in which you practice your pieces is just as important as how you practice your pieces. Let’s use the Fab Five package for an example. If your starter piece is full of extremely high, fast coloratura and has your upper range fully utilized for five minutes, you will want to be sure to then practice the most contrasting piece in your package directly after singing the starter. It would be difficult for your voice to transition quickly to something contrasting to that style, with long, low phrases. Chances are, the panel listening to you will know this is a hard transition and may therefore want to see how you negotiate the range shift. If you are used to practicing the two pieces back to back on your own, you can teach your muscles to make that shift.
Practice your pieces in many different orders so that you are sure you can sing anything in your package regardless of what came before it. Also practice your pieces starting in places other than the beginning. Particularly with longer cavatina-cabaletta pieces, a panel may request that you start someplace in the middle of the piece, or ask for a cut in the piece. Practice these options so that it does not throw you on the spot. Also practice different tempi to ensure you will not be thrown by the accompanist.

BUILDING YOUR EARS

Since the singing mechanism is part of your body, it is impossible to get outside of yourself to listen impartially to your own voice. It is necessary to have outside ears that you can trust, such as teachers, coaches, or colleagues.

It is also important to build your own ears so that you can be empowered in the process of your improvement. Too often, singers become reliant on outside opinions while in academia and then have a difficult time trusting themselves when they move on to a career. You need constant awareness of what healthy vocal sensations feel like so that you can recreate them in various new spaces and situations.

You can also record yourself for feedback and critical listening purposes. Some singers dislike listening to themselves sing, but it is important to acclimate your ears to your own voice. There is impressive technology available today, as products continue to improve in quality for
reasonable prices. Video recording is another option available to critically practice your acting skills.

There is also software available for use on a personal laptop to help you work on technical issues while giving you real-time feedback. Systems such as Voce Vista\(^8\) and Voice Print\(^9\) show images relating to legato, onsets, pitch, etc, that may aid in faster learning through awareness. Most systems are available online or sold with useful pedagogical texts. Scott McCoy’s vocal pedagogy text, Your Voice: An Inside View,\(^{10}\) provides a useful description of the software as well as the software itself.

**COACHES**

Know that there are specialty coaches with whom you can work if you need particular attention in an area. Breathing coaches, such as Deborah Birnbaum\(^{11}\) in NYC, help you to train more efficient breathing for your singing; dramatic coaches, such as James Marvel\(^{12}\) and Marc Verzatt\(^{13}\), can help you stage your audition arias and hone your characterization; and health

---

\(^8\) [www.vocevista.com](http://www.vocevista.com)

\(^9\) [www.estillvoice.com/products](http://www.estillvoice.com/products)


\(^{11}\) Deborah Birnbaum, breathsupport.com

\(^{12}\) James Marvel, jamesmarvel.com

\(^{13}\) Marc Verzatt, music.yale.edu
instructors and body therapists strive to teach body awareness. Be discerning with your money and your trust, but know these coaches are available.

**SETTING GOALS**

Set one or two goals or focus points for each practice session. This will help your mind stay focused on a task and will give you an opportunity to work towards long-term improvement through short term sessions. Be specific, but not complicated; you do not want to overload your concentration.

Some example goals are as follows:

- Balanced onsets
- Legato
- Less tension
- Energy
- Efficient breaths
- Expression
- Dynamics
- Diction

**END WITH PERFORMANCE**

Regardless of what steps you take in your practice sessions, it is helpful to end each session with a ‘performance.’ Nerves can change a performance drastically by tensing the body and changing
the air flow. By simulating an anxious environment, you continually practice working through these nerves.

Once you are finished working through the piece, stopping and starting to change things, take a moment to focus for your final sing-through performance. This can be one piece or a number of pieces. In your mind, set up where the audience is sitting and who may be there – possibly the judges or panel at your next audition. Take note of how you are feeling, take a moment to focus, and then begin your performance. Do not stop if you make a mistake, continue as if you were in front of people. Be as expressive as possible and look around the room as if you were engaging the people in attendance.

This process may feel forced in the beginning, but it is an important step to efficient practicing. It is amazing how nervous you may feel simply by pretending to sing a performance. The more you do this, the more relaxed you will become. Soon you should be able to tackle your nerves even when the people listening to you are real.
CHAPTER FIVE:
SINGING - THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE PACKAGE

SELF AWARENESS
You need to know your voice and body better than anyone else. Develop a sense of awareness and know how to make changes so that you know when you are tired and need to take a day off from singing, or when you need to take a day off from talking altogether. Be tuned into your body and give it what it needs to be healthy. Know better than any coach or teacher how you pace a role, negotiate a passage or express a phrase in your own voice. In academia you have many people supporting and encouraging you. Now is the time to take the reins and take control of your own singing.

DEVELOP OWN TECHNIQUE
Although most singers work with teachers and coaches throughout their entire careers, it is important to also develop your own technical awareness. It is wonderful to have a teacher ‘put you back together’ when you are having problems, but often those problems can spring up when you are on the road away from your teacher. If you have your own technical knowledge to fall back on, you will know how to keep yourself in line. This is definitely a process that continues for a lifetime, as our bodies continue to change and grow and we adjust our voices accordingly.
Try out new ways to approach notes or phrases when you are practicing, applying the knowledge that you have gained from your teachers. Record any ‘breakthroughs’ that you have, and try to recreate them with awareness. You may surprise yourself by how much you already know on your own.

Keep a list of technical points as reminders. You can use this as reference when you are away from your teacher or working through new repertoire.

It is helpful to return to familiar repertoire when you run into technical problems, relying on muscle memory to help guide you into healthier singing.

MOVING BEYOND ‘ACADEMIC’ SOUND

A common critique of singers fresh out of schooling is that the sound is too ‘academic.’ This refers mainly to a sound that may be perfect in diction and musicianship but one that simply has little to say and takes no risk. Often students focus so much on doing things correctly that they have a difficult time shifting out of that mentality. Correct is important, but not more important than expressing the piece. Perfect is boring if it does not move you. “Many musicians become so obsessed with the idea of excellence, they refuse to even try anything that doesn’t guarantee 100% success. As a result, ironically, their growth is stunted.”\(^{14}\) There needs to be a balance between technique and acting so that the music can come alive while still being accurate.

\(^{14}\) Cutler, 28.
Separating the two in practice sessions and then putting them back together, as described above, can help move a singer beyond this hurdle.

**EXPRESSING THE MUSIC**

The most captivating performances are ones where the singer seems completely engaged and genuine, one who is committed to what he is saying and sincere in expressing it. This takes a great risk. Singers must be willing to be vulnerable, to test the boundaries of their comfort level, in order to bare their souls while singing. This is not something that comes easily to many people and needs to be practiced. Although in part due to acting, this passion come more from feeling and expressing the music on a deeper level, through the words and the phrasing. This is less about acting and more about letting your feelings out.

**THINKING FOR LONGEVITY**

It is exciting to learn new repertoire, especially as your voice continues to grow into coveted roles. Be careful to maintain a healthy outlook and shoot for longevity. A popular mantra for a long career is to sing repertoire that is high and light for as long as possible. While this may not ring true for all voice types, it is important to not overtax the voice or wear it out with repertoire too big for its current abilities. While it is good to have pieces for which to strive, be sure that the time given to practicing them is safely produced.
Stay physically healthy. Many programs such as yoga and Pilates have posturing and breathing techniques similar to those required for classical singing. Other forms of exercise are also important for maintaining optimal physical and mental health.

It is important to note that the need for physical health is not about appearance, but rather about being as physically capable of performing at your peak level as possible. Singers are athletes, and the career requires strength, energy, and focus. All of these things need to be physically cultivated in the body as well as the voice.
CHAPTER SIX:

ACTING - BECOMING THE CHARACTER

RESEARCH

Review Chapter Three for tips on preparing a role. It is necessary to thoroughly research every piece of music that you sing. There are a number of published sources from which to draw: online biographies on the composer and premiere, the novel or the play from which the opera is based, DVDs and CDs of the production, movies based on the same subject as the opera – these are only a few. You can draw inspiration by watching different characterizations of your character, drawing upon other’s ideas and experience. You never want to imitate another’s performance, but you can see what you like and dislike for your own use.

Translate the entire opera. This is an absolute must in order to know what each person is saying and thinking, and in order to completely understand your character. Be sure to include your inner monologue in your translations.

KNOWING YOUR CHARACTER

The best way to convincingly act as your character is to first convincingly know your character. From your prior research, some questions may already be answered for you, such as age, place in
family, intentions throughout the plot. Other things may have to be made up by you. Start with what you do know and work from there. Draw from novels, plays, composer notes and correspondences, if possible. Once you have a complete idea of whom the composer and librettist set the character to be, you can fill in your own blanks as needed.

Write out a character analysis. You need to know the age of your character, favorite color, place in family, etc. Even if the audience never knows these things from your representation, they will understand that you know them. You need to know from where the character is coming and to where the character is going at all times, as well as what happens off-stage that the audience does not see. It is necessary to know how your character changes throughout each aria, and how she is different at the end from where she began.

Appendix C provides a model for a character analysis.

Be genuine with your character and know how you relate to each person onstage with you. Find a way to relate to your character, to the parts that are both similar to and different from you. In the end, the goal is not to act the character well, but rather to become the character.

**CHARACTERIZING EVERY SOUND**

Once you have a clear understanding of who your character is, your voice must express these character traits through your singing. Every melisma, repeat of text, and breath needs to have a clear thought behind it, as well as those moments in the music when you are not singing.
Write out inner monologue for sections that need it, such as cadenzas, repeated text, and melismas. These thoughts may change as your character progresses, but this will be a clear place from which to start.

Know your arias in your own words, the inner monologue that overlies the actual text. At every point in the piece, it should be clear to the audience what you are thinking and feeling. Keep it simple and direct, as too many ideas muddy interpretation.

Repeated sections need some type of change. You may be repeating something for emphasis, or to convince yourself of something, or because the reality of the words is finally sinking in with a different meaning. But you must know.

Your best acting opportunities come in the preludes, postludes, and interludes of a piece. Whenever you are not singing, you can concentrate completely on your character’s emotions or intentions. Each moment needs expression and transition to the next section you will sing. Take advantage of these moments for acting opportunities.

There is never a time when you are able to zone out. You must always be thinking and being when onstage.
BLOCKING YOUR OWN ARIAS

Many singers are intimidated to stage their own arias, thinking that staging only occurs by a director in an actual production. Keep in mind that your intention in an audition is to represent a portion of a performance. This is not just the singing, but the acting as well. In order to convincingly portray a character onstage, you need to successfully portray that character in an audition. Do not leave it to chance how you will act the role when the time comes. Plan out what you want to do beforehand and practice your pieces with the staging in mind.

When blocking an aria, first work through the music in your mind as a scene. Picture the actual set and scenery, know who is onstage with you, and know from where you are coming and to where you are going. Think through the shifts of character while speaking through the words, imagining how you are reacting to each change.

Walk around the room as if you were in the scene. Try out various arm movements that seem natural to your character. Try this first without music, and then again with the music, noting how your movements need to change or slow to fit the tempo and mood of the music. When you have become more comfortable being the character in a ‘real’ setting, then modify the movements by scaling back to a more minimized expression. It is perfectly acceptable to move in auditions, but you do not want to travel too far away from the piano. Simplify your gestures but keep them genuine.
Using a mirror, try out various facial expressions first while speaking through the text and then while singing. The goal is to stay genuine, even when you are performing comedic repertoire. Widening your eyes, shifting your gaze, and tilting your head are all ways to express ideas with subtle but effective movements. Find what you like and work it into the singing so that it does not interfere with healthy vocal production.

Be sure to practice sections of anger, intense sadness, or any other gesture that could prove detrimental to healthy vocalism. In these instances, it is important to know how to create the impression of the emotion without becoming too caught up in the emotion itself, which could tense throat and neck muscles. Work these until you find a balance of accurate representation of the emotion with a healthy, open sound.

Some good tips to remember are to keep your eyes focused when you are expressing one thought, and use your shift of focus to express a change in thought. You can also establish where a character may be onstage with you, and then sing to that character, or refer back to that character periodically throughout the piece. It is best to keep your focus out, just above the heads of the audience. Do not make eye contact with the audience unless you are specifically ‘breaking the third wall’ to sing to them.

Practicing sections of the opera with colleagues may help you get a feel for the character you are playing. Think through each change that occurs for your character and how this affects his overall goals and intentions. By allowing your character to sing through other sections of his
music, a more complete character will be fleshed out. It is always best to learn the entire role when doing an aria from an opera.

After blocking and practicing the presentation of a piece, be willing to allow inspiration to move you while you are actually singing. You may find that certain days you are more or less involved in the character or you feel a different part of their personality expressing itself. All of this is natural, and it allows the character to remain alive and real. Remember that gestures are simply movements unless they are organically inspired. You want to have options available, but it is the inspiration that moves the body. Perhaps there is a section where you typically work yourself up to tears or anger, but on a particular day you just do not get to the intensity needed to convincingly portray such emotion. Alter your movements and expectations to represent where you are that day instead of forcing something that was previously planned out. Come with a plan, but be flexible.

**FINDING YOUR OWN WORDS**

Find a way to make your character your own. There have been hundreds of representations of roles, what makes yours unique? There may be a secret that you give your character, or a hurdle that your character has to overcome. Find something that gives your role a life of its own, and let that person speak.
CHAPTER SEVEN:
PREPARING A ROLE

Preparing a role takes a large amount of time and research, even before the singer opens her mouth. It is important to start early so that you are thoroughly prepared by the time your contract begins. Companies can fire artists on the spot if they arrive unprepared, and one such occasion could ruin a career. Begin the preparations early to ensure that you will be prepared regardless of what may arise in the future to distract you, such as another opportunity. The only thing you can control is this business is your preparation. Make it your reputation.

STUDYING THE ENTIRE OPERA

Before anything else, you need to familiarize yourself with the entire opera. Read through the entire libretto, not just the synopsis. Know the ins and outs of the plot (some can be complicated) and how your character fits into the storyline. Listen to different CDs while following along in the score. Note tempo options and artistic interpretations. Compare various DVD productions or watch clips on Youtube.

RECORDINGS

If you listen to recordings, be sure to listen to at least three different artists so as to not imitate any one singer. When critically listening as research for role, it is useful to get a feel for the
style and interpretation of pieces by listening to live recordings. Just be sure to put them away before they become a crutch, as you do not want to imitate another singer. Be inspired by other great singers, but sing with your own voice and own unique sound of expression.

It is always better to listen to live recordings to get the most accurate picture of a performance. Critical listening will reveal places where the singer needed to pace or had to modify the singing to accommodate the acting. Studio recordings have too many editing features to get a real picture of the performance. Though they may sound beautiful, you will learn more from real live performances.

Research basic background on the composer, the piece, and the time period of composition and premiere. This information will help you to understand the composer’s intent and influences.

**TRANSLATIONS**

If the opera is in a foreign language, translate the entire score, as stated earlier. You can use a libretto book such as Nico Castel’s volumes¹⁵ if you need help on the languages, but be sure to also consult a reliable dictionary. Some libretto books take artistic liberty with direct translations, and you need to know the exact word for word translation in order to effectively communicate. Be sure to translate everyone’s part, including choruses and cuts. It is necessary to know what each person is saying to you, about you, and about the situations in the opera.

---

¹⁵ Nico Castel, Leyerle Press, Geneseo
INNER MONOLOGUE

While translating the score, start writing in your character’s inner monologue on top of the literal translation of the text. Many pieces have melismas, repeated text, or one to two lines of poetry stretched out through the entire aria. It is important to maintain an emotional shift deeper than the actual words being uttered. At times, a character may be saying one thing but meaning another. It is up to the performer to decide the motivations of the character in each moment. The inner monologue will evolve throughout the preparation and rehearsal process, but start thinking of motivations while translating. It will help you absorb the character while better understanding the story.

TEXT

Speak through the text in rhythm. This offers you a chance to focus on musicianship, character, and stress for expression, as well as honing the diction of a foreign language. Write in IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) as needed to ensure accuracy to text right from the beginning of the process, and be very specific about proper diction. It is extremely difficult to change pronunciation mistakes once they have become engrained in muscle memory.

LEARNING THE NOTES

It is best to learn your notes yourself without relying on recordings, accompanists, or coaches to teach you. Even if you have limited piano skills, try to learn enough to teach yourself your music. Repetition at your own pace will better lead to accuracy of pitches. Recordings may be riddled with mistakes, and you run the risk of imitating the artist rather than using your own voice. Coaches and repeteurs can play the notes for you if you need the extra help, but it is better to begin cultivating a way to do this process of note-learning on your own. You may be in a situation one day when you do not have assistance and need to rely on your own skills.

SINGING THE NOTES

When the notes are comfortable in your memory, sing through the phrases on lip trills, hums, and vowel combinations. This allows your muscles to concentrate on the notes with healthy technique before adding another layer of concentration required for words. Keep it light, healthy, and accurate while you are working notes into your voice, concentrating on phrasing and breath support. There is no need for dynamics and expression in this beginning process, those are layers added later.

Finally, put the notes and words together. As this becomes muscle memory, work expression into the phrases, experimenting with various tempi, dynamics, and phrasing.
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Start with one act at a time and sing your parts throughout the entire act in order. Depending on the size of the role, this will require a variable amount of pacing into your voice. In the beginning, you may feel too tired to get through an entire act without strain or compensatory techniques. Stop when you feel your vocalism is being compromised and continue to work the act into your voice in a separate session. As you build up your endurance and muscle memory, the singing should become easier.

When it becomes easy to healthily sing through each act on its own, start putting them all together until you are able to sing through the entire opera top to bottom. Depending on the role, you may need to do this numerous times before feeling comfortable. It is good to start this process early enough that you can go at a pace comfortable for your voice and body without having to force the process to move quicker than is healthy to do so.

MEMORIZING

Typically by this point in the process you have already memorized the piece by the nature of how much work you have put into layering the music. If you are still struggling with sections, however, here are some tips for memorizing:

- Write out the text: Sit with a blank piece of paper and write out all your text in each scene, including all the accents in foreign language pieces. This process seals the words to memory, as well as providing a quick reference sheet for jogging memory.
• Speak the text from memory: Be sure to do this in a tempo faster than is required when sung. This helps your brain to recall the words faster when you return to singing them.

• At the end of each stanza, memorize the first word in next stanza along with that previous stanza. By memorizing the beginning of the next line of text, your brain will link the two lines together, making for a seamless transition and aiding in recall of the succeeding phrase.

• Make it auto pilot: Do not leave memorization to the end, this needs to be in muscle memory before you can successfully sing a piece without the need to concentrate on recalling words.

• Repetition, repetition, repetition.

COACHING

Once you have gotten your own preparation to its highest point, only then are you ready to take the piece to be coached. Go to a coach familiar with the repertoire and the language, and if possible, one who also knows your voice well. Be open-minded to new ideas, but also do not be afraid to state your own opinions on intent and vocal quality. This is a process, but you are ultimately the artist performing.

Working both with teachers and coaches is a process. You will decide how much time you need with each to help improve your preparation.
RECHECKING THE SCORE

Once you have been working on the score from memory for a length of time, it is always good to return to it to ensure you are staying true to the writing. Re-check notes, rhythms, and words, and reread your ideas on inner monologue.

If you have a different score than will be used by the company (the publisher will usually be stated in the contract), be sure to cross reference your score with the version being used to check for small changes or different orchestral numbers.

CHARACTERIZING

Refer to Chapter Six for steps on characterizing your role.

PACING

If you have prepared the role far in advance, you can take a break to work on other repertoire or sing other gigs. As the engagement nears, begin to pace the role back into your voice daily, until you are able to healthily and easily sing through the opera – possibly twice at once – without losing the freshness of your voice. At this point in the process, you should have a good idea how long you will need depending on the level of difficulty and how well it fits in your voice.

Depending on the company, director, and role you are playing, you may be in rehearsals up to six or eight hours for six days a week. To accommodate this much singing, be sure your voice can handle the intensity by singing through the piece daily, in all forms of physical state – tired,
hungry, early morning, late at night, etc. This helps to build your consistency as well as your confidence. It is rare to perform in ideal circumstances, and you want to teach your body to sing consistently in all environments.

**PERFORMANCE READY**

These steps should make you performance ready. Although it may seem like an arduous process, be aware that once you have done the work for a role, the work is then ready for subsequent performances, as well. You will need to pace it back into your voice and review your notes, but the time-consuming part is already done.

Bear in mind that characterization may change depending on your colleagues and your own state of mind when performing a role again. Be flexible to change where you need to change, but know you are working from a solid foundation.
CHAPTER EIGHT:
AUDITIONING/ PRESENTING ONESELF

In this competitive business, how you present yourself is a huge part of the audition process. Never assume that singing alone will make you marketable or castable. You need to consistently show yourself to be a reliable worker, good colleague, and dynamic performer to stay in the minds of employers.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Before singing for a company, do your homework on the company so you know what to expect.

- What shows have they recently produced?
- What caliber of singers work there?
- Does the General Director hire young or unmanaged singers?
- Do they have a young artist program?
- What is their upcoming season, and what is already cast?
- Do you have any connections to the company?
- Do they present crossover productions?
- Do they produce operas in original language or in English translations?
- Do they provide an accompanist for the auditions?
- Are the auditions held onstage or in a smaller room?
Who will be listening to the auditions? (be able to recognize them)

These are just a few of the questions that should be answered before presenting yourself to the panel. If you know that the company produces operas only in English, you should be sure to have an English aria prepared. If one of your best arias is “Quando m’en vo” and the company is casting for La Bohème and has a history of hiring young singers in lead roles, you will want to be sure to polish that aria. The more you have prepared, the less likely you will be caught off-guard in the audition and the more you can maximize your chances for success.

CONFIDENCE SELLS

Companies want to hire confident singers, ones they can trust to deliver reliable, dynamic performances. They also want singers who are friendly and easy to work with. You need to present yourself confidently in this business, secure in your talent and able to cope with the pressure of responsibility. Arrogance is not confidence, and insecurity is not humility. Timidity does not play well onstage, nor does it work off-stage. Being timid when dealing with those for whom you are singing only shows a lack of confidence. If this is difficult for you, find opportunities to practice presenting yourself in a strong, confident manner.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Set yourself up for success by having a solid starter piece that you feel shows your confidence. Only bring pieces in your package that you feel fabulous singing. If you are not feeling up to a particular aria one day, leave it at home. More often than they should, singers bring arias to
auditions that they hope will not be chosen. This creates unnecessary anxiety. You should want to sing every piece you bring, excited to show your unique take on the music.

Do not compare yourself to others at the audition. Remind yourself of your strengths before arriving to sing, and keep repeating them as if a mantra. Do not use this to feel superior to other singers, which can backfire. In every audition there will be singers who are more advanced than you and singers who are less advanced; but there will be no other you. You do not know for what the panel is specifically looking, so do not panic yourself by comparing to other singers. Focus on your own goals and express them.

Know that those listening to you are actually rooting for you to do well. They would love to have someone walk in the door and wow them… why not you? See every audition as an opportunity to perform for new people. Yes, you are hoping that it will lead to something more, but regardless of the outcome, an audition is a performance. Sing every performance as if it was the most important job you already received.

SHOW YOUR STRENGTHS

Know your strengths and show them. If coloratura is your calling card, make sure to show this in your performance. If you are a dynamic actor or you can float phrases in Puccini like no one else, be confident in capitalizing on these strengths. Under no circumstances should you feel compelled to sing a phrase in a way other than your best because you think that it is somehow expected of you. If you have not mastered a messa di voce at the end of “Quando m’en vo,” then
sing the final B with flare and sell it. If you do not have a high Eb at the end of “Sempre Libera,” then sell the ending as written and make no excuses. If you simply cannot shake the feeling that you are somehow letting the audience down by not complying with some performance practices, it is better to not sing the piece at all. Sing your best.

**DEALING WITH PEOPLE**

Be kind to everyone with whom you come in contact. When dealing with nerves, some people react to stress or bad situations by becoming short or abrasive. Remember that everyone you deal with at an audition is someone who may influence your getting a job. There are occasions where the General Director of a company will be the accompanist or the greeter at the door of an audition. Regardless of whether the piano is badly out of tune or the audition is running hours behind, do not take out your frustration on the people working the audition. Being kind is not only common courtesy, but the lack of kindness can be damning to your audition. Everyone involved in the audition process, regardless of who they are, is working for you to have a successful audition and should be treated with respect.

Be genuine and friendly, someone with whom they would want to work.

**KNOW WHAT YOU NEED**

Know what you need to be successful in your auditions. Each singer will deal with stress differently, and therefore, there is no one system that works for everyone. Some people are crippled with anxiety before an audition, others are excited. Some need to focus and be alone
with their thoughts while others want to be social and need to talk their nerves away. The key is to find out which type of personality you are and adjust accordingly.

Do not be afraid to ask for what you need. Typically there are many singers together waiting for their turn to audition. If you need to be alone or are not in the mood to be social, be polite but do not feel the need to carry on conversations. Bring an Ipod or find a secluded section of the room to be alone. Try to also be respectful of others’ needs for time to focus or concentrate. Many times auditions are a place where old acquaintances reunite after months or years of singing together, which can make for a highly social environment. If necessary for your focusing, keep your socializing to a minimum until after your audition.

If you are in need of a warm-up room, be sure to ask for one prior to the audition. It is not common for audition sites to provide rooms for singers, and bathrooms are typically too crowded for this purpose. If possible, come warmed-up, or warm-up in your car or outside before coming into the audition.

**PREPARING YOUR MUSIC BINDER**

Make sure that all of your music is organized in a binder for the accompanist. This is preferable to numerous books, which have a tendency to close easily. The music should be on double-sided pages that are taped together, never stapled. Do not put pages in plastic covers, as this can create a glare, making reading difficult. All cuts should be clearly marked or blocked out, and tempo
markings and ritardandi should be clearly pointed out. There should be no extra writing on the score (translations, notes to yourself) that does not pertain to your accompanist. Be sure the pages are in order and nothing is falling out when the pages are turned. Help the accompanist succeed in playing well for you.

Some singers find it helpful to have an index page with tabs in their binders so that the music is easily found by the accompanist. It becomes awkward if you have to help the pianist locate music. He should be able to hear the request and simply turn to the labeled piece of music. Make it simple and clear. This will show the panel that you are organized, and it will save you from having to stand there awkwardly while the accompanist hunts for the next piece.

**LEADING THE ACCOMPANIST**

The most important thing a singer can learn in working with an accompanist is how to lead. Often times a singer may not be aware of the control they have on the tempo of a piece, feeling that the piano is setting the tempo. Good accompanists are always listening and following the singer, you need to show them what tempo you want. If the singer is trying to follow the pianist then the entire piece can slow to a halt. Be confident to set your tempo and maintain it. If you feel that the tempo is slowing or speeding up when you do not want it to be, take control and lead the piano.

Know that your breaths give clues to the pianist for the tempo. If you take a breath in a slower tempo than you intend to sing, you will most likely confuse the pianist into setting a slower
tempo. Practice this in your rehearsals and ask for feedback. You should always feel in control of the tempo when you are singing, and know how to regain control if you feel it has been lost.

It is always best to bring your own accompanist with you, and to work out tempi and phrasing prior to the audition. Remember that the piano is half of the performance and can make or break your presentation if you are not in control. If you are not able to bring your own accompanist, try to schedule a rehearsal with the provided accompanist prior to the audition. Be aware that typically this is not possible, as there are simply too many singers for one accompanist to meet with ahead of time. Many accompanists have a policy to meet with none. In this instance, it is possible to email the accompanist a list of your selections, particularly if you have an obscure or difficult piece, and clearly mark the tempo at the top of the music.

**DRESS SUCCESSFULLY**

Be sure to dress appropriately when presenting yourself. What may look good for a night out with friends will probably look too casual or inappropriate for an audition. Err on the side of conservative if you are in doubt. Opt for classy clothing rather than revealing outfits, something that fits you well but also leaves room for you to sing easily. Remember that some clothes are perfect until you start to expand your ribcage, so be sure that you are not inhibited by your clothing. Having to suck in your stomach may make you look better in your clothing choice, but it will most likely derail your singing.
Men do not have to wear suits, although doing so is still appropriate and will not be seen as too formal. Commonly, men will also wear a tie without a jacket or vice versa, particularly in the summer. Collar-less shirts with a jacket are also becoming a popular choice for men’s attire.

Women should wear skirts or dresses that are below the knee. Keep in mind that you may be auditioning on a stage; any short hemline will look shorter if you are elevated. You do not want to make the panel uncomfortable. Sleeveless outfits are somewhat more common in the summer months, but be sure that the attire is appropriate. Strapless outfits may be overly formal, as well as difficult to sing in comfortably. Solid colors are best so as to not be distracting.

For women who audition with pants-role repertoire, it is appropriate to wear pants, but not necessary. Find an outfit that is still feminine but can give you the confidence you need for characterization.

Keep your hair out of your face so that the panel has no difficulty in seeing your expressions and your facial features.

For both men and women, find audition attire that makes you feel attractive and confident. If you are self-conscious in your clothing, you will have a hard time presenting yourself with ease. Although you do not need to dress for your character, you will want to feel like your character and appropriately represent yourself as such. If you are starting with Juliette’s aria, you would not want to wear a blazer; nor would you want to wear a revealing dress when starting out with a
pants role aria. Make it easy for the panel to see you as you are representing yourself, but do not feel the need to overdo it. First and foremost you are introducing yourself.

**READY FOR ANYTHING**

Be on time. Regardless of circumstances beyond your control, arriving late to an audition sets a bad reputation for yourself. Give yourself plenty of time to arrive early for focusing and warming up. You do not want to be running into an audition feeling anxious about being late or not knowing where you need to be. Take the drama out of the situation by making a conscious effort to be early.

Take a moment to settle yourself before you go in to sing so that you can concentrate on your performance. Say a prayer, a mantra, or whatever you need to put yourself in a secure place. Focus on what you can control, which is your performance. Do not be distracted by the panel of people listening to you. Some may be talking, some looking through your materials, some may be on a computer. Try not to focus on them or read into what they are doing. Get lost in your own performance and acting, and forget that there are people listening to you.

Be ready for anything. They may ask you to start in the middle of a piece or at the end. At times they will stop you while you are singing. They can question things on your resume, or request a piece that is not listed on your repertoire listing. With all of these unknowns, be professional and calm. Know that you can decline to sing something that is not prepared; you can also offer something more than what you have listed if you feel confident to do so. Prepare yourself to roll
with the situation as it unfolds. There are no right answers, and sometimes the panel is just interested in getting to know your personality a bit better by engaging you in conversation.

Even if you bring a repertoire sheet, be prepared to list your selections. Some panels want to hear your foreign language skills by listening to your titles; others may not have the sheet in front of them. Practice the names aloud until you are certain they are correct and easily remembered.

Be personable, and thank the panel when you leave. If the panel is talkative, feel free to chat with them a bit, but follow their lead. Some singers like to shake hands, others prefer to be more formal when introducing themselves. Just remember to be real. These are just people for whom you are singing a few pieces, there is no need to fear them or gush over them. Be sincere and genuine.

Follow up your audition with a thank you email or mailed letter. Do not expect to hear anything in return, as this is your opportunity to thank them. If you are interested in feedback, do this at a later time. Keep your first correspondence strictly to thanking them for their time.

**NEVER APOLOGIZE**

If a performance does not go the way you intended, never apologize. Chances are the panel did not hear the mistake you heard, or perhaps found your acting to be so convincing that the crack
on your high note only further conveyed your emotion. Resist the temptation to make excuses, and leave as confidently as you arrive.

If possible, do not sing when you are sick. You want the panel to hear you at your optimal level, and singing sick will not give the desired impression. Announcing that you are sick will only look like a disclaimer before you even begin your performance. Although it may be frustrating to cancel an audition, it is better to make no impression than a bad one. You also run the risk of injuring yourself if you are singing with compensatory musculature. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10.

Always present yourself to the best of your abilities.

**SELLING THE PERFORMANCE**

If you have decided to sing, decide to sell it! There is nothing to lose, give it your all and take a risk. There are no extra points for being careful. It will be obvious if you are having fun, and this type of security and confidence can be very impressive. You have been preparing for this, you are ready, and you have a chance to show what you can do. Just take those few minutes to really give it your all and do not hold back out of fear.

Remember that you are auditioning every time you interact with companies and colleagues who can influence you getting a job. Be confident, pleasant, and mature in all your dealings in this
business. It is a small world once you are in it, make sure that the reputation you have is the one you want.

**MATERIALS**

Your materials will represent you after you have left the building. They need to be precise, concise, and honest. See Chapter Eleven for information on materials.
CHAPTER NINE:

NETWORKING

This business is all about networking. You can get jobs from recommendations, from making a good impression at a competition or an engagement, or sometimes even from cold calls to a company. Keep in touch with everyone you meet, with everyone you work, and everyone in this business. Make it your job to stay connected. “Networking is a term which describes making and understanding those relationships which nurture and sustain a career. No career, in any field, can exist without supportive networks.”

ALWAYS MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION

Be easy to work with, be on time, be prepared, and be professional. Deal with everyone kindly and fairly, and never take for granted that your reputation is always at stake when you are working. This is a small business, and people talk. Be the type of singer that is easy to recommend. “Don’t fool yourself into believing that marketing is simply advertisements, business cards, and websites. These are critical, but it’s much more than that. Marketing is an attitude—a way of life… Your interactions, passion, punctuality, ‘phone presence,’ and thank-you cards are vital.”

17 Highstein, 96.

18 Cutler, 50.
KEEPING IN TOUCH

Keep lists of everyone who crosses your path. Save cast lists and contact information from shows, and make notes if you need to remember who was in what position. Create a directory specifically for business contacts and keep it updated and ongoing. In addition to conductors, directors, coaches, and program directors, keep the contacts for performers with whom you have worked, as well as technical personnel (stage directors, lighting designers, etc). People switch careers often in this business and no one should escape your attention.

Stay in touch with companies and performers, and do not allow so much time to ever go by where you would have to reintroduce yourself to them.

EMAILING

There are lots of different ways to email companies, and this skill needs to be perfected in order to maintain good contacts in this business. Mailing letters has its advantages and can show a sign of respect and formality, but emailing is far more efficient and more commonly used. The content within an email should always maintain a level of professionalism.

Cold Call Email

A cold call email is when you have not met the person to whom you are writing, and you are introducing yourself for the first time. This is the least efficient way to network with companies, but it does sometimes work. Times when this can be effective are when you are:

- Introducing yourself to companies, agents, teachers, symphonies, performers
• Requesting information, such as for a Young Artist Program
• Requesting an audition
• Responding to a posting
• New to the area and want to introduce yourself to the local contacts
• Currently singing the repertoire of the local companies and want to audition for them

Do your homework before emailing so that you know about the person to whom you are writing and how to address him. Keep these emails concise and polite. Always send your materials (resume, head shot) as an attachment with the email, and be sure to include your current contact information.

If you are cold call emailing someone as an initial introduction, do not expect a response; remember that the company may receive numerous such emails per day. Use this as an opportunity to introduce yourself and then follow up this initial correspondence later. Never be insulted when you do not hear back from a contact. Remember that networking is about sending out more information than you typically receive in return.

**Follow Up Email**

This is an email that you will send after meeting someone or working with someone for the first time:

• Conductors, directors, performers from a performance with whom you want to maintain contact
• Thank someone for an audition
• To obtain feedback after a competition (it is generally not good to ask for feedback after an audition)
• To send requested information

Many times, people will give you a card and say to keep in touch, but singers can be intimidated to do so. Use this opportunity to send an email to reintroduce yourself, tell the person how lovely it was to meet them, and how you look forward to connecting in the future. You can send materials at that time, if requested, or you can send materials a few weeks later with a second email. Since you have already met the person, keep it personable and friendly. Refrain from asking her for something, keep it to a simple ‘thank you’ or ‘nice to meet you.’

**Update Email**

These are the emails that help you stay on someone’s radar.

• To keep a company updated on your upcoming projects
• To congratulate someone on a recent show or success
• To send a new resume, headshot, or website
• To touch base about an upcoming season
• To remind them how you would love to sing for them again
• To drop a hello since you were just thinking of them
Do not ever forget how many singers are in this field. No matter how wonderful you are, or how much a company may like you, the first step to getting hired is having them think of you when they are hiring. If you sang a spectacular performance for a company a year earlier, you will still need to make sure that they have you in mind when they cast for the next season.

Keep these emails sincere and genuine. Do not see the person as an opportunity, but rather stay genuinely interested in keeping in touch.

**Request Email**

These emails can be sent either as cold call emails or to prior contacts. Typically they are sent when asking for:

- feedback (cold calls or contacts)
- information on a conductor, agent, etc. (needs established relationship)
- asking for advice (needs established relationship)

**DO’S AND DON’TS OF EMAILING**

**Do:**

- Be sincere. Develop a relationship with your contacts and be genuinely interested in them. No one wants to only be contacted when something is needed.
- Keep it short and to the point
- Do your research prior to contacting the company. Do not bother the contact with trivial questions, like an upcoming season, if you can find the information elsewhere.
• Stay alert on the contact; make it your priority to know what they are doing.

• Every five months or so drop an ‘update’ email to stay on their radar and keep them posted on your successes.

• Know to whom you need to write for each particular situation, and follow that chain of command. Do not write a General Director with a request that should go to a Young Artist Program Director.

• Know where the boundaries lie with each contact and be respectful of them.

• Keep your networking personal but professional.

• Network with all individuals in the field (assistants, stage crew, etc).

• Always present your best self

Don’t:

• Put a contact in an awkward position by being too pushy or demanding.

• Be too forward, keep it professional.

• Take it personally if you do not hear back from the contact. People are busy, and it does not mean that you are unimportant. Sometimes it may take a month or so for a contact to respond.

• Be afraid to write a second time if you have not heard back. Never be angry or pushy, just restate your case after a reasonable amount of time has passed.

• See people as opportunities for work.

• Use people just to get a job. This will become apparent very early on, and this is not the idea behind networking.
OTHER TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

There are other ways to contact companies besides emailing. Sending materials through the mail is also an option. Although it is faster and more efficient to use email, using snail mail sends a different message of formality and respect since it takes a little extra effort. It can be a nice gesture for a thank you or even an update. Do not expect to hear back from a snail mail correspondence. Use this when you are not in need of a reply.

Calling on the phone is a bolder move than email, since you will be dealing directly with the person. Be sure to have an established relationship with the contact ahead of time, and it is helpful to schedule an appointment before calling. This is useful when asking for information, feedback, or advice. It is not the best option for asking about upcoming jobs, as you do not want to put the person in an awkward situation.

Meeting with a contact is another direct approach to networking. This works best with colleagues and established contacts, such as directors and conductors with whom you have previously worked. Meeting for coffee to discuss upcoming gigs or how a company’s season is going is essentially the same as two friends meeting to catch up. If you cannot meet up with a contact to sincerely ‘meet up’ as friends without a hidden agenda, it is probably best to keep the relationship on a more formal level.
CHAPTER TEN:

HEALTH

JOB DEPENDS ON IT

100% of your job is your health. Regardless of how hard you work, how amazingly you sing, or how prepared you are for a role, getting sick negates everything. If you try to push through and sing anyway, you run the risk of injuring yourself or creating compensatory habits you will technically have to work out later. If you cancel, you either miss an opportunity to obtain work, or you lose the contract you have already procured. Singers who get sick or cancel frequently create reputations of being unreliable.

FINDING AN ENT

You need to find an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) doctor in your area that you trust. Keep in mind that many ENTs do not specialize in the voice, so look for a doctor with a specialty in vocal care. You many have to travel further to see a laryngologist, an ENT voice specialist, but the doctor may have a more thorough understanding of your specific needs as a vocalist. Singing requires fine tuning of the vocal structures, and many voice disorder treatments and medications that would work for a non-singer may not be appropriate for a singer.
Other specialists crucial to the care of your voice are Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP). You may be directed to an SLP for a stroboscopy of your vocal cords if you are experiencing problems, or you may be sent to them for vocal therapy. Again, not all SLP’s specialize in the singing voice, so it is best to find someone with that particular knowledge before giving them your trust and your time.

Ask other singers or professional companies in the area for health professional recommendations.

Build a relationship with these professionals. It can be very difficult to get an appointment with a specialist on short notice, and singers typically need to see someone immediately if they get sick around a performance. If you have an established relationship with your doctor, he may be more willing to see you in emergency situations. Never expect to be fit in, and only ask for such treatment if it is an emergency.

**BASELINE**

Once you have found an ENT, it is vital to get a baseline strobe of your vocal cords when you are healthy. This provides a guide of what is healthy and normal for your voice, which will be different from other singers. Too often, singers only see the doctor when they are sick. If there is no baseline picture or video for comparison, an abnormality that may be perfectly normal in you could be misdiagnosed as problematic.
A baseline strobe can show the natural color, size, and movement of your vocal cords when healthy. A video of this test will be taken at the office, and if you return while sick, it will be easier for the doctor to use the comparison of strobes to assess the health of your current state.

Most clinics keep a record of the pictures and videos in their system, so it is good to return to the same clinic for your appointments. You can always request copies of your video and pictures so that you have them available for comparison if you are singing out of town.

**TIPS FOR VOCAL HEALTH**

It is important to empower yourself with knowledge of your own voice. Do not rely solely on the advice and opinions of others to keep you healthy. Be proactive in your health and make it a priority in your career and life. Singing is not a career so much as a lifestyle, and you may have to forgo some things in order to keep yourself healthy for your singing.

**Hydration**

Be sure to keep your vocal cords and your body hydrated, especially if you are speaking or singing a great amount. Hydration is a long-term process; it is more effective to hydrate your system daily rather than tank up right before singing. Prolonged dehydration can cause irreversible damage to your vocal cords.
Speaking Voice

Singers may be diligent of vocal health while singing, but many have poor speaking habits. Speaking too much or at inappropriate volumes or levels can damage the voice the same way poor technique can. Do not push your voice to be heard over loud noises or in crowded areas, and be sure that you are always speaking with a healthy, supported production in a tone that is neither too high or too low to produce strain.

Vocal Rest

Know when your voice needs a break. If you have been singing for a great length of time or have been singing new or heavy repertoire, do not immediately leave the practice room to talk on the phone or go out socializing. Your vocal cords have engorged with blood while you were singing and they need a chance to relax and warm down before being taxed again. Make it a habit to warm down after practice sessions, and then be silent for a while. This gives your body a chance to repair.

There may be times when you need more than just an hour of so of time off from singing and speaking. Give yourself a day of voice rest. Resort to emails instead of phone calls, write on a piece of paper to communicate with others, and spend twenty-four hours without uttering a word. This can do wonders for repairing tired vocal cords. Return to singing and speaking with an easy production and lots of time to warm up. There should be no need to go on voice rest for longer than twenty-four hours, unless directed by your doctor. Too much under-use of the vocal cords can create atrophy and weakness.
Sing Appropriate Repertoire

One common way to misuse your vocal cords is to sing in the wrong Fach. Singing too heavy, light, high, or low in your voice taxes the muscles and causes them to create compensatory habits in order to create the desired effect. A multitude of problems can arise, such as vocal hemorrhages, polyps, nodules, or bowing. These are serious conditions that can terminate a career if left unattended.

Be honest and discerning when choosing repertoire, and resist the temptation to take roles that are bigger than you are capable of singing healthily. It can be very difficult to turn down a job, but you must think for longevity. If a role is not yet in your capability of mastering over a long period of rehearsals and productions, it is better to turn it down than to risk having problems that could injure you for months.

Pace new repertoire into your voice

Listen to your body when learning new repertoire, and go at the pace your body sets. There are times when it is necessary to learn something quickly for a performance, but you still need to listen to your body’s cues for the need of vocal rest and repetition. Do not force notes or pieces into your voice, keep everything as healthy as it can be produced at all times.

Follow the steps laid out in Chapters Four and Seven for strategies on healthy practicing and pacing a role into your voice.
Do not sing sick

Fear of losing a gig or missing an opportunity can tempt you to sing even when your body is too sick to sing healthily. Know when to cancel.

If you are practicing on your own, you may have a better gage on when to stop if it becomes too much for your voice. However, your body will constantly be modifying the technique in order to find a way to get a desired result. If you sing sick for too long, you may retrain your muscle memory. When you are finally healthy again, your body will want to revert to its compensatory habits because this is now your new muscle memory. Although it is frustrating to take time off, it is time better spent out of the practice room studying a score, learning a translation, or working on characterization.

Singing sick for a performance or audition can be even worse, since you may be willing to resort to unhealthy means in order to produce a desired sound for your audience. Pushing through a sickness can create a vocal pathology, such as those mentioned above (hemorrhage, polyp, nodule), which could force you to take time off for months or ruin your career entirely. Singing sick also presents you in a very negative light to your audience. Either they will question why you have chosen to sing when you are not at your optimal level, or they will think you sound fine and assume you are using this excuse as a disclaimer.

If you cancel, you either miss an opportunity to get work, or you lose the contract you have already procured. Many regional houses do not have covers, so your canceling may require the
canceling of an entire show, which is a huge amount of money and pressure. Singers who get sick or cancel frequently create reputations of being unreliable.

These are difficult decisions, and ultimately you need to decide when to cancel and when you should muster through to the best of your abilities. Tips on helping with this are at the end of this chapter.

Reflux

A common singer complaint is Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD). Acid reflux, commonly known as heartburn, occurs when stomach acids travel back up the esophagus and irritate the lining. Laryngopharyngeal Reflux (LPR) is when those same acids travel far enough up the esophageal tube to wash into the vocal tract and larynx, causing irritation, excessive mucus, and swelling. LPR can be a debilitating condition for singers, and “reflux is clearly a significant contributor to laryngeal dysfunction.”  

A variety of reasons have been given for the high instance of GERD and LPR occurring in singers, namely that there is excessive pressure on the abdomen while singing, and many times a singer’s lifestyle is conducive to exercise or sleep after meals, due to rehearsals or late night eating after rehearsals or shows. According to ENT and vocalist, Robert Sataloff, “Reflux laryngitis is common among singers because of the high intra-abdominal pressures associated with proper support and because of life-style requirements. Singers frequently perform at night. They generally refrain from eating before performances because a full stomach compromises effective abdominal support. They compensate at post-

19 Merati, 117.
performance gatherings late at night and then go to bed with a full stomach.” Stress can also bring on or worsen reflux. For the non-singing population, this can be an annoyance, but for singers, LPR can severely inhibit the fine-tuning of their voices. It is important to know the signs of LPR and some practical ways to avoid it.

Appendix D lists some helpful awareness tips.

If you suspect that you have reflux, make an appointment with an ENT. Although helpful to find the signs of reflux yourself, it is best to rule out other possible triggers that may be producing your symptoms before you self-medicate. There are behavioral, medical, and surgical means for treating reflux, and your doctor can make suggestions depending on your need. Some behavioral means include avoiding food triggers through dietary changes, especially at night. Another non-medical measure is to elevate the head of your bed four to six inches so that gravity will help keep the stomach acids down while you sleep.

If left untreated, reflux can become a serious medical condition in singers and non-singers alike. If you have any questions regarding your own health in regards to reflux, it is best to see your ENT for an evaluation.

---

20 Sataloff, 10.
Don’t be a VAP (Vocally Abusive Person)

It may seem that some people have ‘cords of steel,’ able to party all night, scream at football games, and still be able to phonate the next day. Although each individual has a different level of endurance, abusive behavior eventually does take its toll on a voice. Create healthy habits now, and protect your voice both when you are speaking and singing. The hardest part of healthy habits is awareness. Many singers are unaware of poor speaking habits until feeling hoarse the next morning, but by then the damage has been done. For the fine-tuning required of singers, you should never over-tax your voice unnecessarily.

Find other ways to participate in activities that require yelling or screaming. If you cannot healthily participate in an activity (coaching a sport), consider changing it for another one that lends better to your vocal health (assist so that you do not have to be the one yelling). For those who teach, it is good to use a microphone for projecting in a room, and never raise your voice over a loud crowd.

In some cases, it is necessary to retrain the muscles to work more efficiently and less abrassively while speaking, either by working with a teacher or therapist. Vocal therapy methods can be taught by trained SLPs over a number of sessions, and can greatly improve the speaking and singing voice. “In many instances, training the speaking voice will benefit the singer greatly and physicians should not hesitate to recommend such training.”

21 Sataloff, 27.
Know the limits of your vocal cords and try to maintain a lifestyle of health. Get plenty of rest, eat healthily, and exercise. Remember that you are an athlete.

WHEN TO CANCEL

Anytime you have pain when you are singing, or if you have felt a sudden pain and change of vocal technique, immediately stop singing until you can be evaluated by an ENT. It is always best to see your doctor before deciding whether or not it is healthy to continue singing.

If you having no engagements coming up, it is best to stop singing until you feel your health return. This will ensure that you are not damaging your vocal cords and not retraining compensatory habits into your technique.

If you have an audition or competition coming up, only sing if you feel you can accurately represent yourself. Do not announce that you are sick and expect the judges to assume you are usually better than you sound that day. They will evaluate you as they hear you, and they may be frustrated that you are wasting their time. It may be better to cancel and sing for them when you can impress them. First impressions are hard to erase, and you may not get another chance to sing for them if they have already decided against you based on your last audition.

If you are currently singing in a performance, it may be very difficult to cancel. You have a responsibility to your employer, and chances are they would have to cancel the production if they were not able to replace you in enough time. This can be career damning as well as harmful to
the company’s reputation. You may be able to find other options, such as making an announcement that you are indisposed and cutting your arias if need be. You need to be able to do this in the healthiest manner possible for you, however, to avoid further injury to your voice. A doctor may be able to give you medications to get through the show, but you still need to weigh the value of singing on such medications and possible damage that can occur. If you have a cover, the company will at least be able to produce the show, but without you as the headliner. Typically you will not be paid if you do not sing, even for your rehearsal time. Regardless of the fall-out, if it is in your health’s best interest to cancel, be sure to give your employer as much time as possible to find a replacement for you. Know that you are doing what is in your best interest for the longevity of your career.

**MEDICATIONS**

Be extra cautious when taking any medication, and check first with your ENT if you have any questions. Many drugs can have a drying effect on the voice, which can be damaging to your singing.

Never take Aspirin or Advil when you are singing. They are blood thinners and can create vocal hemorrhages.

Some over-the-counter medications are better for singers than others, but this will vary from person to person. Find what works for you when you are in a low-pressure situation, such as practicing, to see the effects of medication on your singing. This is important information when
you need it for a show while sick. You do not want to be experimenting with new medication at a high-pressure time.

Know your options. In lieu of allergy medication, which can be drying, allergy shots are often recommended by ENTs. Discuss the possibilities with a doctor who is familiar with the singing voice.

Do not expect quick fixes. It is possible to use steroids or other medications to get you through a performance, but you can still hurt yourself while singing on them. There is no alternative to singing while healthy. Do not assume that a drug which makes you feel better is actually making you healthy. You still need to proceed with much caution and catering of your voice when singing sick.

**BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE VOICE**

Empower yourself by having basic knowledge of your own voice. Do not rely solely on others to tell you how to stay healthy, make this your own priority.

Do not be afraid to ask questions when you see your ENT or SLP. The more information you have the better your chance of maintaining your health.

Seek out your own information. Find articles on reflux, on baseline strobos, on vocal therapy. There are many useful books and journals that can provide information to fill in the gaps of your
own knowledge. See Appendix B for a list of Helpful Resources. If you have a pathology or condition, gather information so that you can speak intelligently with your doctor. Take a pedagogy class while still in school, or talk to the voice specialists associated with the university or in the area.

Always be cautious. It is important to find doctors whom you trust, but do not be afraid to get second opinions. Good doctors will encourage this. The vocal cords can look different on different days and in different environments. Although small pathologies may feel huge and inhibiting for your vocal cords, they can be very difficult to diagnose. Many times doctors will want to compare different strobes so as to see improvement or weakening of the structures before they are able to make a diagnosis. Confirmation of a diagnosis usually cannot occur without a biopsy in surgery, which is usually only done if the lesion is being removed. Your doctor is working with the best information she has, and it is important to help her to be successful. Be able to give them as much information as possible, and follow their directions implicitly. If you find that you do not agree with or trust the advice given to you by your doctor, find one you do trust.

See a doctor immediately if you have persistent pain in your throat or pain when you are singing. Pain is your body’s way of signaling a problem, and you should not ignore it or try to medicate yourself and wait it out, as you can do more damage. If you cannot get into a doctor immediately, stay on vocal rest with minimal speaking until you can see one. In instances where
you feel sudden pain and a drop of range while singing, immediately stop singing and stay on full vocal rest until you are able to see a doctor. This is a typical sign of a vocal hemorrhage.

**THERAPY OPTIONS**

If you find yourself in vocal therapy, know that there are a variety of helpful options to rehabilitate the voice. Since each singer is different, a number of different therapies may be tried out to see which is most useful for the singer. These should be done with an SLP who also has knowledge of the singing voice, preferably classically trained.

**Resonant Voice Therapy**

Resonant Voice Therapy (Verdolini, based on Lessac, Boone, Cooper) typically refers to an easy vocal production focused on the vibratory sensations in the facial bones.\(^{22}\) Numerous speech-language pathologists have contributed to the concept, and a variation of methods is available for use: inserting “m-hmm” into conversation, using “ng,” or concentrating on a “forward focus” to find resonance, and then taking the sensation to speech.\(^{23}\) “Several studies now indicate that easy, resonant voice tends to be produced with vocal folds that are barely touching or barely separated. This posture appears to produce the strongest, clearest voice output for the least amount of vocal fold impact stress… [and] requires the least amount of lung pressure to vibrate

---

\(^{22}\) Titze, 28.

\(^{23}\) Titze, 28.
the vocal folds.”

Being attuned to the sensations of resonance is important for attaining freedom in vocal production to get the voice speaking and singing without added pressure.

**Twang Therapy**

Twang Therapy creates brightness in the voice by a narrowing of the aryepiglottic sphincter. “These exercises improve the voice by increasing volume and decreasing breathiness without the need to push at the vocal folds.”

By repeating and training sounds with a bright, forward quality, the patient can access better resonance for speaking and singing, making vocal production more efficient. In classical music, this is known as “squillo” or “ring.” Once the brightness is achieved, it is sometimes necessary for the larynx to lower to create the desired chiaro-scuro (light-dark) quality.

**Vocal Function Exercises**

Vocal Function Exercises (Stemple) are used in voice clinics as a means of rehabilitating the voice and exercising the laryngeal muscles through a system of glides and sustained pitches. “By practicing pitch glides to high and low pitches, the cricothyroid and vocal fold muscles should be exercised, increasing their strength, bulk, and perhaps endurance… [P]ractice on maximal prolongations should improve the strength and endurance of the vocal fold muscles and also the coordination of respiratory and laryngeal muscles.”

---

24 Titze, 28.

25 James Swallowing Clinic handout

26 Titze, 30-31.
similar to the efficient posture employed by Resonant Voice Therapy, balancing the voice to produce maximum efficiency with minimal effort and impact. The use of glides is an efficient way to assess a voice for pitch breaks or weaknesses in the range.

**OVERALL HEALTH**

You must be disciplined about your overall health. Poor eating habits and excessive weight can lead to reflux and an overall lack of energy. Lack of exercise can leave you unprepared for stage demands, and lead to health problems down the road. The goal is not to be thin, the goal is to be healthy in your own body. Poor sleeping habits leave you vulnerable to a weakened immune system and more likely to get sick. Start making health a routine in your life, and stick to it.

Find an exercise regime that works for you. Yoga and Pilates both have attributes that lend well to singing, using similar core strength and breathing techniques found in the voice studio. These exercises also focus on calming the mind, which can be helpful in this stressful career, and can be done with relative ease in a hotel room on the road.

Weight training is good for building muscle and tone, but be careful not to strain neck muscles or tighten the throat. More repetitions may be a better option than more weight, especially when first starting out.
Power walking is another great form of exercise that can be done while on the road. This builds endurance and lung power, but with only low-impact stress to your body. Walking is a great way to relieve stress and to increase your overall energy without draining your body.

**STRESS**

Dealing with rejection, working away from home and loved ones, singing in high-pressure situations, and constantly dealing with criticism can add intense levels of stress to a singer. It is important to find ways to cope with stress in your personal and professional life.

Have someone to talk to, either a friend or professional. Try not to unload constantly on colleagues unless they are close friends. If you are in constant need of a pep-talk and support, it is best to seek it outside of your work environment.

Find a balance in your life that gives you a bigger focus than just the career. Cultivate other hobbies and interests, spend time with non-singers (and refrain from talking about singing), and take breaks from cultivating your career when you feel you are burning out.

Try not to panic. Statistics are only statistics- remember that you can create your own opportunities. Cultivate a healthy outlook on rejection and criticism, and know when to shake yourself out of disappointment. Think for longevity, and do not let any rejection be bigger than it needs to be.
If you are crippled by anxiety or stress, talk to a doctor about the possibility of medication to help you. Talk to a therapist to get a better perspective. Remember that this is a difficult career to manage alone, and there is no shame in getting help.

**BE PROACTIVE**

Be proactive with your health. Know the warning signs to vocal problems or fatigue and listen to your body. Be extra cautious when singing sick, during your menstrual cycle, when you are taking medications, or when you are tired.

Be smart about your singing and speaking voice. Learn proper technique and do not cut corners. Remember that endurance breaks down with constant wear and tear on the voice. The best way to deal with health in this career is to do everything in your power to stay healthy.
CHAPTER ELEVEN:

SELF PROMOTION

You need to be your best advocate at all times, recognizing opportunities every place you go and every time you sing. Always have materials and promotional information on hand for possible distribution.

MATERIALS

Resume

Your resume needs to be impressive, clear, and above all, honest. Do not feel intimidated if your resume is not long, and resist the temptation to add things by stretching the truth. There is nothing worse than getting caught in a lie when you are trying to impress someone. Companies understand that young singers are in the process of building resumes.

When you are just starting out, it is acceptable to list school productions on your resume. You should add anything that is applicable as long as it makes you look like a professional. List any roles, opera scenes, or choruses you presented as well as any theatre experience. Do not list classes, only performances. If you are trying to fill out your resume, you can add a separate section listing choirs, particularly if you soloed with the group in a particular concert (simply list soloist).
Always put dates on your resume. If you are concerned you lack experience on your resume, create opportunities for filling out the gaps. (See ‘Creating Opportunities’ below).

As you gain more experience, move off the least important information from your resume to make room for new roles. Keep your resume to one page only, and always have your current contact information clearly stated. List an ‘updated’ date in the bottom corner so companies can easily assess which is the most recent version of your materials.

See Appendix E for a sample resume.

**Head Shot**

Your head shot should look like you, period. Yes, you want it to be the best, most attractive version of you, but the main objective of a head shot is to help the panel recall your face. If you look drastically different from your picture, they will have a harder time remembering you. It may be helpful to wear your hair similarly to how it is set in your picture. Men who have facial hair in their pictures should have facial hair when they walk in the door. Small details like these can make a difference when you are one of hundreds auditioning or sending materials. Keep in mind, “it’s great to look good, but not to look like some else looking good. Make sure that your overall appearance and style generally correspond to the way you actually present yourself on stage.”

---

Keep your pictures updated. If you have drastically changed your style or your hair, consider changing your picture.

Although black and white pictures have been the standard for many years, the current trend is moving towards color pictures. Unless otherwise stated, you can bring either. If you are sending materials through email to introduce yourself to a company for the first time, it may be helpful to use a color shot to provide a better idea of what you really look like. Ultimately the choice is yours.

Some pictures are more formal, some more casual. Either option is appropriate, but some companies may prefer to use them differently: one in a program, the other to promote the show in the local newspaper. It is good to have a few options to give an employer, but you need only bring one to an audition. Do not overwhelm auditioners with multiple pictures. Pick the look you want to represent you and stand by it.

If possible, use a professional photographer who has done other head shots. He should be able to put you at ease to get your best picture in the right style. Prices will vary depending on the photographer, but it valuable to get a PDF version as well as a negative from which you can make prints. More often than not, you will send just as many head shots as attachments as you will give out printed copies.
Always have a number of printed copies on hand for auditions and possible contacts who request your information. There are various sites available for printing in bulk for a cheaper price. Some will even print any additional information you request onto the border of the picture at no additional charge.

Have your name and contact clearly marked on all your pictures, either on the front border or the back. Only use information that you do not plan to change, such as your name, cell, and email. Website addresses are also appropriate. You need not put a home address on your picture.

**Repertoire List**

Some companies find it helpful to have a list of your repertoire, particularly if they are considering you for future seasons. Only list roles you have either sung or have completely prepared and memorized. If a company hires you on short notice to sing something from your repertoire list, they will expect the role to be prepared and ready to go immediately. Keep your roles fresh in your voice for such circumstances. Find time between gigs to sing through previous roles in order to keep it in muscle memory and paced into your voice.

For a Sample Repertoire List see Appendix F.

**Website**

It is now easy and affordable to create your own website. “A website is active 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It allows people to read about you (reviews, quotes, biography), hear
samples of your music, and see pictures of you, even when you yourself are not reachable. It lends credibility to your (forgive the expression) image, clarifies your artistic goals for the public, and makes them visible to a wide audience."

Many sites are affordable, but there are also free sites available to host your webpage. Use the option that gives you the best professional look within your financial plan. If you are not technically savvy enough to do your own website, you can either enlist a friend or colleague, or hire a web designer to create a site for you.

Go online to view sites of various colleagues and professionals to obtain ideas on how you would like to represent yourself. You can be as detailed or simplistic as you prefer. The important thing is to have information readily available to a company or agent by simply following a link.

Keep your information updated. Even if you have someone else design your main page, it is helpful to learn some basics for updating so that you can manage the site as your career progresses. Maintain a section on upcoming gigs as well as a one for reviews.

If possible, link recordings or videos to your website. Keep these updated, and give credit to the other performers presented. Have PDF versions of your most recent resume and head shot so companies can download the information if needed.

\[28\] Highstein, 73.
Keep your website professional. This may be the first impression someone makes of you.

**Recent Recordings**

It is always good to have a recent recording available in case one is requested of you. Many young artist programs and competitions require pre-screening recordings, so you may want to anticipate these requests before a deadline. Be sure to use quality recording devices or a professional studio. When numerous pieces are required, you may want to record them on separate days so that you have ample time and voice to do your best on each piece.

Videos are also great ways to showcase your talent, since you can show off your acting as well as your singing. Be sure that the sound quality of the recording accurately represents your singing, as some video recording devices present lesser sound quality. You can link a recording or video to your website for easy access.

**Business Cards**

Business cards are great ways to share information easily when you are networking. You need little information save your name, voice type, email, cell, and possibly website. Some companies offer affordable business cards in bulk and allow you to choose from a selection of designs. Some singers choose to spend more money and have their head shot image on the card, as well. The design is up to the individual. This is an easy networking tool to have on hand to make your image more professional.
Vista Print\textsuperscript{29} is one recommended site. The website explains options ranging from 250 business cards for only shipping fees (with some limited options and advertising on the back of the card) or for a fee (around $20 for 250) you can have your head shot printed on the card as well as your information.

**CREATING OPPORTUNITIES**

Get in the habit of networking. Sending emails to contacts is a good way to stay in touch, but there are many other ways to create opportunities for making new contacts. David Cutler writes, “here’s a valuable secret: *look for opportunities where they don’t currently exist*... With existing opportunities, there may be dozens or even hundreds of competitors… Invent new ways to create new markets and reap the rewards.”\textsuperscript{30}

Attend events where you can meet general directors, conductors, directors, and performers and show your interest in the company. Know ahead of time who is who and make a point of introducing yourself. You can follow up this initial meeting with an email congratulating the company after the performance. Face time is invaluable, and companies like to see your interest in their productions.

Offer to sing at promotional events, parties, fund raisers, etc., to get your name into the community. Pay may be less important than experience.

\textsuperscript{29} Vistaprint.com

\textsuperscript{30} Cutler, 18.
Sing in competitions and engage the judges afterwards in conversation. Even if you do not win a competition, there are plenty of people in the audience and adjudicating who may be interested in following your progress or hiring you for a job. Always bring extra materials and business cards to easily promote yourself if information is requested of you.

Promote yourself to a company by expressing interest in singing for their fund raising or promotional events. This is a fabulous opportunity to introduce your work to them, build up your resume with a professional company’s name, and get some needed experience. Do not be opposed to doing some free gigs when you are just starting out. This can be a mutually advantageous situation, where you gain experience and the company is able to promote themselves affordably. Beware not to sing for free for too long, however. Establish your willingness to work with the company, but do not lose sight of this as a career move. Ultimately you should be paid to sing.

Audition everywhere you can. Singing a house audition may give you an advantage if you are able to travel to a company rather than being one of many at a mass audition held elsewhere. Big city auditions (New York, Chicago) are convenient, but also loaded with lots of singers and long hours of listening for the auditioners. If possible, find a time when you can meet a company and sing for them in their own house. You will have to budget accordingly, so it is best to do a few houses close to each other so that you can travel by car in one trip.
Anytime you travel, audition for the companies in the area. If you visit friends, seek out the opera companies and symphonies to express interest in singing for them and introducing yourself. If even one company hears you, you will be one step closer to a job.

If you are performing in an area near another company, invite the general and artistic managers of that company to your performance. This gives you an opportunity to introduce yourself while working, and it gives them a chance to see you in a role as opposed to a five minute audition. Typically, companies are willing to give free tickets to each other for performances.

As stated earlier, promote yourself to churches in the area that perform larger works with soloists. Many churches perform Handel’s Messiah around the holidays, and others will have special services or concerts to present works such as Faure’s Requiem or Orff’s Carmina burana. These are wonderful opportunities to get your name out in the community, build your resume, and obtain valuable experience.

Do auditions in related fields, such as musical theatre or straight theater. Some companies produce crossover shows in their seasons and look for theatrical experience on a resume.

**AGENTS- TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE**

Representation is a tricky topic, and learning whether or not an agent is right for you will depend largely on the artist, the agent, and the situation.
Be aware that many agents charge retainer fees, a set fee that you pay monthly to have them work for you. Regardless of whether or not they ever set up a single audition or help you secure any jobs, you will be paying them. Before signing with an agent, be sure whether or not you will have to pay a retainer fee, as this can become very expensive. Not all agents charge one, and it may depend on the size of the roster.

All agents get a portion of your payment when you sing gigs. Even if they did not secure the gig for you, it is good business to pay them the fee as your agent, especially if they have helped negotiate the contract. Opera contracts typically pay 5% and concerts pay 10% to the agent. Companies no longer pay agent fees for artists, rather you will pay your agent directly after receiving your fee from a performance.

There are advantages and disadvantages to large and small rosters. An agent with a large roster may have more access to companies, and therefore may be able to procure more auditions. She may also be one of the first to know when a company needs an immediate replacement for a role that is vacant. The disadvantage is that you will be only one of many singers who sing your exact repertoire, and you will be competing with them for your agent’s attention. If you are the newest on the roster, you may not have the clout of the other singers and will have to wait for time and attention. An agent with a smaller roster may be able to spend more attention on looking for work for you, but he may not have the reputation to get you many auditions. It is a bit of a catch 22. The bottom line is to find a reputable agent who is very interested in you and has a reason to help you.
The best time to look for an agent is when you are able to successfully get your own work. This may sound strange, but an agent’s job is not to get you jobs, but rather to help you manage your jobs. You should be able to show them that you will be working regardless, so it would be in their best interest to help you and make money off of you. If you can show an agent that you are marketable, then they will have an easier time showing companies that you are marketable.

You need to have a clear line of communication with your agent. You need to trust each other, and that trust needs to be earned. Keep this a business relationship, not a friendship. And be clear where the ground rules are relating to your own networking. Some agents prefer that you leave all communication with companies up to them, which can be difficult once you have an established relationship with a company. Remember that the agent is working for you, and you should still control your career the way you would like. Communicate ahead of time to make sure that you are on the same page when it comes to this control. You do not want someone speaking on your behalf or representing you to a company inaccurately.

In this age of emails, cell phones, and websites, it is no longer a must to have an agent. Companies can contact you easily on the road, and you can have access to season information without having to go through a third party. Many companies will hire non-managed singers, and some even prefer to deal directly with the singers rather than agents. It is untrue that you must have an agent to be successful. What you must have is the self-discipline to do the networking work and research to create opportunities for yourself. Also, do not assume that getting an agent
means you no longer need to promote yourself actively. This part of your job is a constant for remaining active in the business.

**NEGOTIATING**

If you do not have an agent to negotiate for you, you need to become comfortable doing this yourself. A good rule of thumb is to be assertive, but flexible. If you have worked with the company prior, you should be able to negotiate a raise for returning, as well as for singing a larger role. If it is a new company, it is best to see what the contract offers and try to negotiate from there.

Asking for more money is not the only way to negotiate. You can request housing, travel, a rental car, or gym membership while you are singing with the company. Some companies may offer this in the contract, but others may use it in their negotiations. It may be easiest to do your negotiating through email so that you have the agreement in writing. It should then be followed up in the written contract. If you receive a verbal agreement, be sure to put it in writing, such as in an email, to have written confirmation as well.

**KNOW THYSELF**

In order to promote yourself, you first have to know yourself. Be honest when assessing your strengths and weaknesses, and really work towards becoming your best. If there is a part of your package that you have been neglecting—acting, languages, dynamics—work to improve these things while you are pursuing a career.
Be honest about what roles you should be presenting. Give yourself every opportunity to succeed by looking the part of the roles you play, and by singing them in your own unique voice. Always have something to say that will make you stand out. In this career, there is no such thing as *good enough*.

This business is an endurance test. Many amazingly talented singers decided that it was not for them because it was too much work. If you decide it is worth it, find a way to keep yourself motivated. Take breaks when you are burning out, and stay on the path of longevity. Only you can decide if music is your hobby or your career. David Cutler boils it down to three basic questions in his book, *The Savvy Musician*:

1. Are you passionate about music?
2. Do you have strong musical skills?
3. Can you sustain a career as a result of these abilities?\(^3\)\(^1\)

There are times when passion alone will keep you going, and other times when it seems like it is all work. It is not about being a good singer or liking to sing; you need to constantly stay at the top of your competitive pool to sustain this career. Before spending time and energy on creating a career, be sure that your focus and intent is clear. This job will require an extreme amount of work, work that can be amazingly gratifying.

\(^{31}\) Cutler, 4.
CHAPTER TWELVE:
SELF EMPLOYMENT

TAXES
Familiarizing yourself with the tax deductions for self-employed status can ultimately save you hard-earned money. If possible, meet with an accountant who is familiar with the entertainment industry tax policies and procedures or find materials that you can rely on for detailed information.

If you have contracts in numerous states, it may be worth it to have an accountant do your taxes, since the process becomes very complicated when filing in multiple states. You will need to file state taxes in every state where you sang and earned a fee high enough to be taxed, in addition to the state of your permanent residence. Be aware of state, county and local tax.

Keep a running track of your business expenses to have a clear list of deductions when you file. Expenses such as lessons, scores, and travel can be deducted from your overall income, but the amount you can deduct will vary by the item; some are 100% deductions while others are only partially deducted.
“Your home office or studio may qualify as a deduction. These rules are very strict and should be used only after careful consideration of your own circumstances. In some cases they may be allowed but may still not be a good choice for taking as a deduction due to other tax considerations.”

Get in the habit of keeping all of your receipts and entering them into a spreadsheet by category to keep them sorted. Appendix G gives a general breakdown of possible deductions.

You can use this model to keep a clear list of receipts in appropriate categories, but remember that not all will be 100% deductible, and some may not be accepted at all. If you are in doubt, check with an accountant.

Be honest. Singers can be audited just as easily as anyone else, and you must have clear, accurate records. The IRS requires you to keep your original receipts for up to seven years before shredding them. Having your spread sheet of deductions available when you hire an accountant will save them time and you money.

This information relates to 2011. Be aware that things change constantly, and keep yourself informed.

---

32 Forsthoevel, CPA, as per correspondence
UNIONS AND AGMA

There are different unions in the arts, and the main one corresponding to the classical vocal division is American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA). If you sing with an A house or union house (classifications are listed in Musical America), such as the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Diego Opera, and Dallas Opera, you are required to join AGMA. You are still able to sing in non-union houses while a part of AGMA, but you cannot sing in union houses without membership of good standing in AGMA.

A performance with a union house is all you need to be accepted into AGMA (this includes singing in the chorus as well as principle roles). Initiation fees are $500 and can be paid over the first three years or $2000 earned\(^{33}\). If you are already a member of Actor’s Equity, the initiation fee is only $250. Annual membership dues for AGMA are $78 and must be paid every year to remain in good standing. If you fall out of good standing, a fee of $250 must be paid to AGMA before you are able to sing a contract with a union house.

Being a part of the union can be beneficial in a number of ways. There is a minimum required payment per chorus member or principle role that a company may not fall below. While the company can pay you more than the minimum, they cannot pay you less.

\(^{33}\) Prices as of 2011
Hours are regulated and you cannot be required to work more than 6 hours a day, 6 days a week. Any overtime work will give you overtime pay of time and a half. This works both ways, however, and if you arrive late or leave early from a work call your pay will be deducted.

Depending upon which state you live in, you may be eligible for insurance under AGMA.

It is possible to request an Honorable Withdrawal from AGMA if you no longer expect union gigs in the future or are considering retirement. If granted, you are exempt from your annual dues. If, however, you do contract an AGMA gig while on Honorable Withdrawal status, you can pay a $50 fee to reinstate into good standing. You are then required to pay annual fees for at least three years before requesting Honorable Withdrawal again.\(^{34}\)

All of this information and more can be found on AGMA’s website: [www.musicalartists.org](http://www.musicalartists.org).

**INSURANCE**

As previously discussed, health is an invaluable part of this career, and having health insurance not only helps you avoid possible medical expenses but can also help you remain healthy. It can be costly to buy health insurance when you are self-employed, but being without health insurance could prove indefinitely more costly if you end up needing medical care. Not having health insurance may also put your health at risk if you avoid getting checked or treated for

---

\(^{34}\) As per conversation with Ken, AGMA representative
problems due to high costs. It is better to find something affordable than to take a risk on not having any coverage at all.

AGMA members may be eligible for health insurance depending upon their state of residency.

Some singers work an additional job that will provide health insurance while pursuing their musical career. The key is to find something that provides enough hours to give health insurance but is still flexible for your career.

You can have health insurance through your school if you are taking classes. Some schools require full-time status.

Some Young Artist Programs will provide health insurance.

There are various types of insurance you can buy. Some singers opt for Emergency Health insurance alone, which is cheaper but covers less. Again, you need to weigh the options and make the best decision for you. Gather as much information as possible before choosing, and have representatives explain anything that is unclear to you.

Keep in mind that the health insurance policies in this country are constantly changing. Stay informed and alter your decisions as you see necessary.
RETIREMENT

Being self-employed, no business is paying into your retirement fund. Be proactive, even at this early stage, and save a portion of your pay for the future. Look into investment options that give you tax breaks, such as a SEP IRA, which has a specific advantage for self-employed individuals. Even if you only give a small amount in the beginning, this will add up for the future. Talk to an accountant or investment broker about options.

PIECING JOBS TOGETHER

Artists typically need to combine a number of different jobs in order to have an adequate salary while on their career path, particularly when starting out. It can be difficult to pursue singing while having the distraction of another job, so it is important to find one that is conducive to a successful career.

Many singers turn to waiting tables while starting their careers. The flexibility, late hours, and steady pay can provide an ideal situation for a singer. Be cautious if you are in a loud environment to not push your voice unnecessarily while you are working, and be sure not to strain your neck muscles when lifting heavy objects.

Temp jobs can be ideal situations, when they offer steady income, flexible time off, and possibly creative work. Certain cities lend better to temp work, primarily big cities such as New York and Chicago. If you want something more stable, some temporary jobs can be offered as
permanent positions if the company is interested in you. If they are still willing to be flexible and you are enjoying the work, this may be an ideal situation that may also offer benefits.

Teaching jobs can be good options for singers if properly balanced or done on a substitute level. It can be rewarding to teach in the field you studied, to use your degree while pursuing your long term career goals. However, although teaching days may typically end by mid-afternoon, you must be very careful of how much you use your voice during the day. Teachers typically have the highest number of voice complaints in voice clinics. Never shout or raise your voice over your students, and use a microphone if you feel you are straining to be heard. Find creative ways to speak less, such as having student-led opportunities.

Creating a private studio can be a lucrative and flexible career for a singer. It gives you an opportunity to use your skills, expand your knowledge, and work with music. Be aware that you need to claim your business on your taxes.

Church jobs are another way to use music in your career. Not only does it provide additional income, but offers a way to build upon your repertoire and experience. Not all churches pay soloists. Make sure your involvement is a good fit for both you and the community.

Young Artist Programs are wonderful jobs for singers starting a career. The types of programs vary, and many companies have some type of outreach or small role opportunity for singers. Some programs are designed for further development of their artists, and the singers may be
hired to sing roles with the opera company. Other programs may be geared more towards outreach, where the primary job for the singers is to perform programs in schools to promote the company and the arts in general. Usually the singers will do fund-raisers and patron gigs, as well as community events. Depending upon the company, singers may be housed and given travel stipends in addition to their weekly pay. These programs are a great way to make connections, get hands-on experience, and be paid to sing.

BUDGETING AND DISCIPLINE

Singers typically do not have a stable income. You may be paid a huge fee one month and have no income at all for the next three. You need to learn how to pace your income and stretch the money until the next payment comes in. Do not put yourself in a situation where you have to live from gig to gig, especially in this economy where gigs are being cancelled or performance numbers are being reduced. It can be a drastic monetary change to lose a gig. The better you save for the future the better prepared you will be to absorb such a problem if it arises.

Save as much as you can. Try not to go into debt, either for credit cards or for major purchases. At times this may be unavoidable, but think long and hard before living outside of your means. When you do get paid, try to save as much as you can for the future. Put money towards retirement and savings. There are free websites, such as Mint\(^\text{35}\), that can help you assess your spending habits and adjust accordingly.

\(^{35}\text{www.mint.com}\)
Try to live frugally. This career can cost lots of money if you let it. Travel, audition fees, lessons, coachings, scores, audition attire, recording equipment, etc. can add up to hundreds of dollars each month, in addition to your usual costs for living. Know what you can do without and prepare as much as you can on your own. Never show up to a coaching unprepared. Come with your notes, phrasing, and characterization already perfected so that you are coaching a final product. You will get your money’s worth and need less time to be taught. Do your research ahead of time before singing any audition. Many programs require audition fees, as do accompanists. If you feel that a certain audition or competition is not within your reach at this point, think twice before spending a costly fee to sing for it. However, you need to sing some auditions in order to be heard. Look first for the companies who do not charge for their time, and budget the rest with what you deem appropriate.

Look for opportunities to save money. Collect airline miles and use a credit card that will help accrue them. Ask if you can attend dress rehearsals instead of paying for performances if you have a relationship with a company. Rely on yourself to learn music and roles without needing extra time with teachers and accompanists in the early stages of learning music. Never go unprepared to a lesson. Use options such as turbo tax for doing your own taxes. When traveling to auditions, stay with friends instead of paying for hotels.

Make attainable goals for yourself, and expect to succeed. A singing career is challenging as a career and as a lifestyle. The better prepared you are to deal with all the aspects demanded of
you, the greater your chances of success. Be realistic, be daring, but be smart. Above all, be true
to yourself.

This career is not for everyone. It is not simply a job, and there is never a point where you can
expect past successes to ensure a stable career for the future. A constant drive is necessary, as is
a balanced personal life and knowledge of self worth. Honestly assess your abilities and your
desires. There is no shame in enjoying your music as a hobby. But if you have the will to make
this happen as a career, arm yourself with what will lead you to success.

Now go live your dreams.
APPENDIX A – COMPLETE VITA

1976.................................................................Born Dayton, Ohio

1994.................................................................Acting Scholarship, Neighborhood Playhouse, New York, NY

1995.................................................................ZERLINA, Don Giovanni, Notre Dame Orchestra, Maestro John Apeitos

1996.................................................................DESPINA, Cosi fan tutte, Notre Dame Orchestra, Maestro John Apeitos

1997.................................................................SERPINA, La Serva Padrona, Notre Dame Orchestra, Maestro John Apeitos

1997.................................................................YOUNG ARTIST, Opera Theatre of Lucca (University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music), Lucca, Italy

1997.................................................................LAURETTA, La Vita e la Morte di Gesualdo, Opera Theatre of Lucca, Lucca, Italy

1997.................................................................SOLOIST, Prophets of Joy Recording, Notre Dame Folk Choir, Ave Maria Press, South Bend, IN


1998. B.A. Music Performance (Voice) cum laude, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN


1999. RECIPIENT, *Margaret Speaks Distinguished Singer Award*, The Ohio State University

1999. YOUNG ARTIST, American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS), Graz, Austria

1999. SOLOIST, Severoceska Filharmonie, Maestro John Apeitos, Teplice, Czech Republic

1999. SOPHIE, *Der Rosenkavalier*, Graz AIMS Orchestra, Austria


2000. M.M. Vocal Performance, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
2000.........................................................VALENCIENNE, The Merry Widow, San Diego Comic Opera

2000.........................................................YOUNG ARTIST, Des Moines Metro Opera

2000-2001 ..................................................SOPRANO YOUNG ARTIST, San Diego Opera

2001.........................................................SISTER MOUSE, Animal Opera Recording, Myron Fink, San Diego Opera

2001.........................................................GIANETTA, The Gondoliers, San Diego Comic Opera

2001.........................................................ROSINA, Il barbiere di Siviglia, San Diego Opera Ensemble

2001.........................................................PAGE, Christopher Sly (Argento), Des Moines Metro Opera

2001.........................................................LAURETTA (matinee), Gianni Schicchi, Des Moines Metro Opera

2001.........................................................VIOLETTA (cover), La Traviata, Des Moines Metro Opera

2001.........................................................YOUNG ARTIST, Des Moines Metro Opera

2001-2002 ..................................................SOPRANO YOUNG ARTIST, San Diego Opera

2002.........................................................District Finalist, Metropolitan Opera National Council Awards, San Diego, CA

2002.........................................................JULIETTE, Romeo and Juliette, San Diego Opera Ensemble
2002..........................................................ROSINA, Il barbiere di Siviglia, San Diego Opera
Ensemble

2002..........................................................MABEL, The Pirates of Penzance, Opera
Columbus

2002..........................................................ROSINA, The Barber of Seville, Lyric Opera San
Diego

2002..........................................................LOCAA Finalist, Lyric Opera Center, Chicago
Lyric

2002..........................................................PAMINA (cover), Die Zauberflöte, Opera
Columbus

2002..........................................................BILLIE JO CASTA (cover), Oedipus Tex
(Schickele), Schickele Players, Dayton, OH

2002..........................................................SOLO RECITALIST, Chicago Chamber Orchestra,
Maestro Edward Benyas

2003..........................................................KATE PINKERTON, Madama Butterfly, San
Diego Opera

2003..........................................................BERTA, Il barbiere di Siviglia, Opera Columbus

2003..........................................................SOPRANO SOLOIST, Sing to Love, Lake George
Opera

2003..........................................................GILDA (staged concert), Rigoletto, Lake George
Opera
2003..........................................................MABEL, *The Pirates of Penzance*, Lyric Opera San Diego

2003..........................................................Certificate of Language and Culture, L’Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Perugia, Italy

2003..........................................................SOLOIST, Maestro Renato Sabatini, Perugia, Italy

2003..........................................................Young Artist, Lake George Opera

2004..........................................................MUSSETTA, *La Bohème*, Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra

2004..........................................................TEBALDO, *Don Carlo*, San Diego Opera

2004..........................................................VOCE DAL CIELO, *Don Carlo*, San Diego Opera

2004..........................................................PHYLLIS, *Iolanthe*, Opera Columbus

2004..........................................................PRINCESS STEPHANIE, *The Student Prince*, Opera Columbus

2004..........................................................Assistant Director, *Children of Eden*, Youth Sing Praise, Belleville, IL

2005..........................................................Visiting Professor, University of Notre Dame

2005..........................................................Director, *Mainly Mozart*, University of Notre Dame

2005..........................................................SOLO RECITALIST, Maestro John Apeitos, Castellina in Chianti, Italy

2005..........................................................JOHNSY, *The Last Leaf* (Gary Papach), World Premiere, Severoceska Filharmonie, Teplice, Czech Republic

121
2005.....................................................SUSANNA (staged concert), Le Nozze di Figaro,
Southern Illinois Music Festival
2005.....................................................GRETEL (matinee), Hansel and Gretel, Opera
Columbus
2005.....................................................SANDMAN/DEW FAIRY, Hansel and Gretel,
Opera Columbus
2006.....................................................CLORINDA, La Cenerentola, Dayton Opera
2006.....................................................ZERLINA, Don Giovanni, Southern Illinois Music
Festival
2006.....................................................VALENCIENNE, The Merry Widow, Lyric Opera
San Diego
2006.....................................................GILDA(concert), Rigoletto, STC Opera, New York,
New York
2006.....................................................SOLOIST, Opera Gala, Maestro Leon Natker,
Lyric Opera San Diego
2006.....................................................Director, Don Giovanni, Southern Illinois Music
Festival
2006.....................................................SOLO RECITAL, A Night at the Opera, hosted by
the Glynn Family Honor’s Program, University of Notre Dame
2007.....................................................VALENCIENNE, The Merry Widow, Opera
Columbus
2007.................................................................FRASQUITA, Carmen, Des Moines Metro Opera
2007.................................................................ZERLINA, Don Giovanni, Dayton Opera
2007.................................................................SOLO RECITAL, A Night at the Opera, hosted by
the Glynn Family Honor’s Program, University of
Notre Dame
2007.................................................................Master Class, University of Notre Dame
2007.................................................................Master Class, St. Mary’s University
2008.................................................................JÜNGE HIRT, Tannhäuser, San Diego Opera
2008.................................................................ADINA, L’Elisir d’Amore, STC Opera, New York,
NY
2008.................................................................CUNEGONDE, Candide, Lyric Opera San Diego
2008.................................................................Assistant Director, Lost and Found, Youth Sing
Praise
2008.................................................................SOPRANO SOLOIST, Mass of the Children
(Rutter), PACEM, Maestro John Rutter, San Diego,
CA
2008.................................................................SOPRANO SOLOIST, Requiem (Rutter), PACEM,
Maestro John Rutter, San Diego, CA
2008.................................................................Music Director, When the Lights all Shine,
Education Through Music, New York, NY
2008.................................................................SOPRANO SOLOIST, Opera Goes Wild, Opera
Columbus

123
2008...............................SOLO RECITAL, *A Night at the Opera*, hosted by the Glynn Family Honor’s Program, University of Notre Dame

2008...............................Adjudicator, Dayton Opera Association, Vocal Competition

2008...............................Master Class, The Ohio State University

2008...............................Opera Business Lecture, The Ohio State University

2008...............................SOLO RECITAL, *A Night at the Opera*, hosted by the Glynn Family Honor’s Program, University of Notre Dame

2009...............................IL PASTORE, *Tosca*, San Diego Opera

2009...............................PEDRO, *Don Quichotte* (Massenet), San Diego Opera

2009...............................VALENCIENNE, *The Merry Widow*, Dayton Opera


2009...............................SOPRANO SOLOIST, *Creation*, Maestro Edward Benyas, Southern Illinois Symphony Orchestra,

2009...............................SOLOIST, Greek Orchestra, Maestro John Apeitos, Athens, Greece

2009...............................Assistant Director, *Faramondo*, The Ohio State University

124
2009.................................................Director, Moses, Youth Sing Praise, Belleville, IL

2009..................................................SOLO RECITAL, A Night at the Opera, hosted by

the Glynn Family Honor’s Program, University of Notre Dame

2009..................................................GUEST SOLOIST, New Year’s Eve Gala, Dayton Philharmonic, Maestro Neal Gittleman

2009-2010 .........................................Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of

Music, The Ohio State University

2010..................................................YUM YUM, The Mikado, Indianapolis Opera

2010..................................................SOPRANO SOLOIST, Messiah, Dayton Philharmonic, Maestro Neal Gittleman, Dayton, OH

2010..................................................Director, Night of European Opera, The Ohio State University

2010..................................................SOPRANO SOLOIST, Opera’s Greatest Hits,

Indianapolis Opera, Maestro James Caraher

2010..................................................SOLO RECITAL, A Night at the Opera, hosted by

the Glynn Family Honor’s Program, University of Notre Dame

2010..................................................SOLOIST, Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Michael Lester, Columbus, OH

2010..................................................Singing Health Specialist Certification, The Ohio State University
2010-2011 .......................................................... Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of Music, The Ohio State University

2011 .............................................................. SOLOIST, *Go Wild*, Maestro William Boggs, Opera Columbus

2012 .............................................................. ADELE, *Die Fledermaus*, Lyric Opera San Diego

2012 .............................................................. ADINA, *L’elisir d’amore*, Rogue Opera

2012 .............................................................. SOLO RECITAL, *A Night at the Opera*, hosted by the Glynn Family Honor’s Program, University of Notre Dame
APPENDIX B - HELPFUL RESOURCES

WEBSITES

• Aria-Database: translations, aria information, resources
  o www.aria-database.com

• Chicago Center for Professional Voice: guide to voice rehabilitation
  o www.singershealth.com

• International Music Score Library Project/Petrucci Music Library (IMSLP): online
  journal, links to scores, composers, and recordings
  o imslp.org

• Opera Base: information, performers, managers, companies worldwide
  o www.operabase.com

• Opera Glass: background information, performance history, libretti
  o www.opera.stanford.edu

• Opera Stuff: singers, links, companies, resources, competitions
  o www.operastuff.com

• The Savvy Musician: links to resources
  o savvymusician.com
TRADE MAGAZINES

- Classical Singer
  - www.classicalsinger.com

- Culturekiosque: online magazine of reviews, interviews, performances worldwide
  - www.culturkiosque.com

- Musical America: companies, artists, contacts, news, research; subscribe ($135/year\textsuperscript{36})
  - www.musicalamerica.com

- Opera: news, interviews, reviews worldwide; can subscribe or read online
  - www.opera.co.uk

- Opera America:
  - www.operaamerica.org

- Opera Critic, The: links, casting information, data-base on companies; need online subscription ($4.95)
  - www.theoperacritic.com

- Opera News: some online access; subscription ($22.95 introductory rate): reviews, articles, interviews
  - www.operanews.com

- Opera Opera: online articles, opera plots
  - www.opera-opera.com.au

- Opera Today: news, reviews, commentary worldwide
  - www.operatoday.com

\textsuperscript{36} Prices current to 2011
• US Opera Web: interviews, opera news
  o www.usoperaweb.com

BOOKS

• Alchemist, The, Paolo Coelho

• Art of the Song Recital, The, Shirlee Emmons & Stanley Sonnatag

• Basics of Pedagogy, Clifton Ware

• Beyond Talent: Creating a Successful Career in Music, Angela Myles Beeching

• Cold Calling for Cowards: How to Turn the Fear of Rejection into Opportunities, Sales, and Money, Jerry Hocutt

• Guide to operatic roles and arias, Richard Boldrey

• How to Win Friends & Influence People, Dale Carnegie


• Never Eat Alone: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time, Keith Ferrazzi

• Power Performance for Singers, Shirlee Emmons & Alma Thomas

• Savvy Musician, The, David Cutler

• Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us, Seth Godin

• Voice Book, The, Kate DeVore & Starr Cookman

• You, Inc: The Art of Selling Yourself, Harry Beckwith & Christine Clifford Beckwith

• Zen in the Art of Archery, Eugen Herrigel
APPENDIX C - CHARACTER ANALYSIS MODEL

Writing a character analysis gives you an opportunity to create and familiarize yourself with the character you are becoming in a piece of music. It is essential to know everything about this person, what moves him and what goals he has. The questions below help to direct this in-depth study, but a character analysis is in no means limited to these questions alone. Use this as a starting point, and develop your own additions as you see fit.

Some characters, particularly ones from history or novels, come with lots of informational background while others have practically none. They may be derived from mythology or fantasy and seem to make little realistic sense. In all cases, start with the research you can do using known information. Create the rest while drawing upon the character’s relationship to the others in the show and how you relate to the character. There is no wrong way to do this, but it must make sense to you and to the musical drama.

Keep a description of your character and note that this description may alter as you begin rehearsals and get to know the character better. By relating to others onstage, you may have to re-evaluate your character’s intentions or personality to better fit with others in the production. You may also realize that a character you sang in one production may be different in a later
production. Be open to change, focusing on the realness of your character and how she would also be changed by the people around her.

CHARACTER’S PERSONALITY

- How old are you? What ethnicity/culture? What language do you speak?
- Are you healthy, active, lazy, sick?
- Where is your family? Do you have siblings? Oldest, youngest?
- What is your background? From where did you come? Why are you here?
- What are your personality traits? Flighty, clever, kind, weak, scared, daring, romantic, naïve, adventurous, strong-willed, fearless, intelligent…?
- How do you carry yourself? Fast, slow, nervous, poised?
- What is your favorite color? Activity, hobby? Passions?
- What are your fears? Weaknesses?
- What are your goals? Strengths? What motivates you?
- Are you guarded or an open book?
- Beliefs, religion, spirituality?

RELATING TO OTHERS

- How do you feel towards people around you?
- What do others think of you?
- Are you comfortable around others? Fearful? Dominant?
- What do you want from others? How do you obtain it?
• Are you honest about your relationships? Do you know yourself well?
• How do your relationships change throughout the performance?
• How do you fit into the performance story?

RELATING TO YOURSELF
• How are you similar to your character?
• How are you different?
• Do you like your character? Why/why not?
• How does the character change throughout the piece?
• To what can you relate from your own life to better understand your character?
• How does the music reflect the character traits?
• Work through the transitions between scenes so that there is no “dead space” within the action. You need to know what is happening to your character while he is offstage.
APPENDIX D – REFLUX

COPE WITH HEARTBURN & REFLUX

If you are one of the millions of people who suffer from heartburn, the most common symptom of reflux, there are things you can do to improve your health and enhance the quality of your life.

1. Avoid spicy, acidic, tomato-based, or fatty foods like chocolate, citrus fruits, and fruit juices.

2. Limit your intake of coffee, tea, alcohol, and colas.

3. Watch your weight. (Being overweight increases intra-abdominal pressure, which can aggravate reflux.)

4. Don’t gorge yourself at mealtime.

5. Don’t exercise too soon after eating.

6. Avoid bedtime snacks and eat meals at least 3 to 4 hours before lying down.

7. Stop (or at least cut down on) smoking.

8. Elevate the head of your bed with blocks.

9. See your physician if you are taking antacids three or more times a week.

DIGESTIVE SPECIALISTS INC.
HAOLF FISHMAN MD
DAVID NOVICK MD
J. DEWAYNE TOOBIN MD
RAMESH K. GANDHI MD
MARIO C. POUAGARE MD
NIAZ LISMAN MD
937-293-2169 FAX 937-293-8772
APPENDIX E - SAMPLE RESUME

NAME
Voice Type

cell phone number  email address  website

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS:
ROLE  Opera  Company  Month/Year*
SOLOIST  Symphonic Work  Orchestra  Month/Year

OPERAS:
ROLE  Opera  Company/School  Year
ROLE (cover)  Opera  Company  Year

OPERETTA/MUSICAL THEATRE:
ROLE  Show  Company/School  Year

CONCERTS:
SOLOIST  Symphonic Work  Orchestra, Maestro  Year
SOLOIST  Solo Recital  Concert Hall, Accompanist  Year
SOLOIST  Chamber Work  Concert Hall, Musicians  Year

PARTIAL ROLES:
ROLE (partial)  Opera  Company  Year

APPRENTICESHIPS:
YOUNG ARTIST  Company  Year

PREPARED ROLES:
ROLE  Opera  Original Language, Translation

ENSEMBLE:
CHORUS  Opera  Company  Year
CHORUS  Concert  Orchestra, Maestro  Year
**COMPETITIONS/AWARDS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**CONDUCTORS/DIRECTORS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (alphabetical order), Company</th>
<th>Where worked together</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**TEACHERS/COACHES:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (alphabetical), Company/School</th>
<th>Where worked together</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**MASTER CLASSES:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (alphabetical), Company/School</th>
<th>Where worked together</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**RELATED SKILLS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**EDUCATION:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Updated month/year

*All years should be chronological per category, with the most recent year at the top.*

**Partial Roles** refers to opera scenes you have performed. Although also appropriate, listing this category as **Opera Scenes** sounds more academic than professional.

Be creative but honest. Make yourself stand out. As you gain more information for your resume, eliminate unnecessary categories (such as Related Skills, Master Classes, Conductors, etc.). You may not use all categories, and you may want to alter your resume depending on the
audition, moving certain categories to the top if they are more important for a certain company or symphony. Always limit your resume to one page.
APPENDIX F - REPERTOIRE LIST

NAME
Voice Type

cell phone number  email address  website

**ROLES PERFORMED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>Opera Company</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROLE</td>
<td>Opera School</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTIAL ROLES PERFORMED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>Opera Company/School</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROLE</td>
<td>Opera Company</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ROLES PREPARED**

| ROLE | Opera | Language/Translation |

**ROLES IN PREPARATION:**

| ROLE | Opera | Language/Translation |

Updated month/year
Follow the same format as given in your resume and include with your resume.

**Partial Roles Performed** includes roles in opera scenes. If you prepared an entire role but only performed part of it, you can include it in both Partial Roles Performed and Roles Prepared.

**Roles in Preparation** refer to roles that you can currently sing but may not yet be fully memorized or ready for performance. This should not include roles that you expect to grow into, rather roles that are appropriate now and will take minimal preparation for an upcoming performance.
APPENDIX G - TAX DEDUCTIONS

Even if you are using an accountant, it is helpful to keep an on-going, clear account of your expenses for tax deductions at the end of the year. The breakdown below provides a list which corresponds to the tax deductions in Schedule C (as according to 2011). For the most up to date information, refer to www.irs.gov.

8 ADVERTISING (including materials for head shots, business cards, websites)

10 CAR EXPENSES (tracking car expenses for business use)
  • Better to track mileage than gas

11 COMMISSIONS/FEES (agent dues, audition fees)

17 LEGAL/PROFESSIONAL (coachings, lessons, accountant)

18 OFFICE EXPENSES (PO expenses, sending resumes, copies)

22 SUPPLIES (recording equipment, scores, books, batteries)

24 TRAVEL (car rentals, hotels, air fare, tolls, parking)
  • Keep a list of the dates of when you were working or auditioning while traveling to determine per diem/day (will vary by state)
  • Can choose per diem or actual expenses
  • Meals are listed separately in 24b Meals/Entertainment
24b MEALS/ENTERTAINMENT (with colleagues or employers while discussing potential upcoming job opportunities, while traveling during work)

- The following are required on every meal or entertainment receipt for adequate documentation:
  - 1) date of receipt
  - 2) amount of expenditure
  - 3) business purpose of meal or entertainment
  - 4) those who participated with you.

27d DUES (union fees)

27g GIFTS (thank you cards, cast gifts, host gifts, thank you gifts)

- Limited to $25 per person

27p TRADE PUBLICATIONS (membership fees, publication annual fees, magazines)

27r BUSINESS RESEARCH (performances, movies, museums)

- This does not include expenses for spouses or other family members

Be aware that not all of the above expenses are deducted 100%-- some will only be a portion (such as cell phones and computer service, which are partly used for business and partly used for personal reasons). As the regulations change frequently, it is good to check the IRS website or consult an accountant when figuring deductions for tax documents.
The above information is as per discussion with William Forsthoefer, CPA, of Kincaid & Forsthoefer, CPAs’ Inc. For further information or to work with him, Mr. Forsthoefer can be reached at his office email: bill@kcpas.com.
REFERENCES

American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA): www.musicalartists.org


Birnbaum, Deborah, *Breathing Coach*: www.breathsupport.com


Digestive Specialists INC. handout, *Coping with Heartburn & Reflux*, Dayton, OH.


Forsthoefel, William, CPA Kincaid & Forsthoefel, CPAs’ Inc.: www.bill@kfcpas.com.

IRS Website: www.irs.gov

Marvel, James, *Acting Coach*: www.jamesmarvel.com


Verzatt, Marc, *Acting Coach:* www.music.yale.edu

Vista Print, *Business Cards:* www.vistaprint.com