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2. Oft hat ein Seuf - zer,

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Diction (Still) Belongs in the Music Department

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OFFERING DICTION COURSES in the music department is a recent innovation. Historically, singers studied diction with a coach, in a language class, or through immersion by traveling to the country. This was before stabilization of the International Phonetic Alphabet and the publication of texts by Berton Coffin (1964), Madeleine Marshall (1946), Evelina Colorni (1970), Thomas Grubb (1979), and William Odom (1981). Our authorities, armed with the IPA and an understanding of singer's diction, brought the course into the music department beginning in the mid 1960s. They meticulously described the formation of each sound within the respective language, which is important when we consider that the IPA serves as a rough guide. Precise pronunciation of the symbols must be defined for each language, then further defined for singing. This article was written to acknowledge the scholarship of standard textbook authorities and preserve the study of lyric diction as a course that belongs in the music department.

My father, Archie Kliewer, taught voice and pedagogy during those transitional years. As a young professor and native German speaker, he was thrilled to discover "new" resources for lyric diction. His enthusiasm for languages and singers' diction led him to introduce the concept of a diction course for singers at a regional NATS meeting. At that time, singers generally were not familiar with the IPA, and the IPA system was still undergoing revisions, so this was a controversial topic. In fact, a colleague interrupted his speech and escorted him off stage saying, "We do not need to have this discussion. Diction belongs in the language department." I believe the audience would have wanted to hear more about the International Phonetic Alphabet, how it helps singers discover accurate pronunciation for lyric diction, and how it provides tools for exploring the function of the voice.

I imagine my father would have started his talk with a comparison, perhaps something like this: There are two forms of diction, lyric diction and spoken diction. Acknowledging these two forms gives us the freedom to compare the differences between speaking and singing. For example, use your "singer's voice" to speak with someone who is five feet away. Release your jaw, raise your soft palate, and enunciate the words "Hello, how are you." Repeat the phrase again adding projection of the tone. Next, enunciate the phrase with vibrato. If this isn't strange enough, add what singers do to the diction by elongating the vowel and rapidly articulating the consonant. Does this feel unnatural? Of course, it

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does! We assume that singing should feel “natural,” but our concept of “natural” is based on speech patterns. It is easy to assume that the “natural” form of a language is its spoken form. The study of lyric diction offers a dialect-free pronunciation that is ideal for discovering the articulatory formations needed for singing. The International Phonetic Alphabet simplifies the communication of these sounds.

Lest we forget the obvious, here are the reasons why diction (still) belongs in the music department.

1. The sustained nature of singing affects pronunciation. Diction is taught from a speaker’s perspective in a language course. This approach obscures the pronunciation and transcription of vowels for singing.
2. The space required for singing affects the formation of vowels and consonants. Accommodating pharyngeal space is not a concern in a language class.
3. Singers’ pronunciation should be authentic to the time period in which the lyrics were set. Modern language departments do not offer a pronunciation that is suitable for singers’ repertoire.
4. Pronunciation of art song and operatic repertoire should not reflect regional dialects. The spoken example of pronunciation in a language class is restricted to the dialect of the professor.
5. Different IPA symbols are used for lyric diction. Certain symbols that represent spoken pronunciation must be dropped. Symbols that indicate specified sounds are needed.
6. Standard lyric diction textbook authorities do not recognize a close-mid or open-mid vowel category. As a result, vowels are classified in a different way for lyric diction and transcription purposes.
7. Listening to recordings of performances by native classically trained singers is a vital part of the lyric diction course. Listening in a language course is centered around speech.
8. Singing is an important activity in the lyric diction classroom. Language professors should not be expected to critique singing sounds or formations.
9. Lyric diction and language study are separate topics that engage different skill sets. Merging transcription, listening, and singing, with grammar and translation prohibits an organized teaching approach.
10. Lyric diction is an activity driven topic. Placing the course in the language departments strips it of its

most enjoyable activities: singing, transcription of repertoire, and vocal exploration.

Point 1. The sustained nature of singing affects pronunciation. Speech patterns abbreviate or drop the vowel. Diction is taught from a speaker’s perspective in a language course. This approach obscures the pronunciation and transcription of vowels for singing. The following examples demonstrate how vowel length affects transcription.

- *English.* The schwa is sustained for singing. Pronunciation of the schwa is affected by the composer’s setting. For example, the *en* of *heaven* is pronounced with an [ɪ] vowel in speech. Pronunciation shifts to [ɛ] when set on a sustained tone. Observe the two pronunciations of the word *fortunate*. Spoken pronunciation (or when not sustained) is [ˈfɔʊtʃənət]. The sustained pronunciation is approximately [ˈfɔʊtʃunæt]. Note the value of the singing diction classroom! A language course would not address the sustained pronunciation of schwa.
- *Italian.* The vowel of the stressed syllable is long in Italian. Most dictionaries do not indicate vowel length. A spoken example of length is provided in a language class, but length would not be indicated in transcription. Non-native singers frequently mispronounce words like *mio*, *tuo*, and *sia* for this reason. These words are transcribed as two syllable words in the dictionary: [ˈmio], [ˈtuo], [ˈsia]. However, composers often set them as monosyllabic words: [mi:o], [tu:o], [sia:]. Vowel length indications in vowel clusters are vital for the non-native singer. Vowel clusters within the phrase also require the selection of a syllabic (or long) vowel.¹ The musical setting of vowel clusters would not be addressed in a language course.
- *German.* The schwa + vocalic *r* combination is merged in speech. Dictionaries reflect spoken practice by using the [ɐ] symbol. This symbol indicates an abbreviated sound that combines the schwa with an *r*-colored vowel. Sustaining a vocalic *r* is undesirable for singing. We do well to retain Odom’s (Siebs 1969) transcription of vocalic *r*: [ɐ̯].² The [ɐ̯] symbol allows the singer to separate a sustained schwa from the *r*-colored vowel. For example, the spoken form of *Lieder* is [ˈli:ɔ̯]. The sung form is [ˈli:ɔ̯ɐ̯].
- *French.* The pronunciation of the schwa is not clearly defined in spoken French due to speech patterns that

abbreviate or drop the schwa. For this reason, the schwa (when pronounced) is colored by surrounding vowel sounds. French composers (Debussy, Fauré, and others) routinely set the schwa on a sustained note. When set to music, the schwa is equally unstressed among other unstressed syllables and maintains a consistent [œ] pronunciation.³ This pronunciation is dictated by the composer's setting. The musical setting of the schwa is not a concern in a language course.

Point 2. The space required for singing affects the formation of vowels and consonants. Formation for singing is not intuitive. It requires planning and intentional work. Accommodating pharyngeal space is not considered in speech. Speech formation is acclimated to the consonant (more time is spent on consonant articulation in speech). Sung formation is acclimated to the vowel (the vowel is sustained for singing). Consonants constrict the space; vowels accentuate the space. In a lyric diction class, singers learn to accommodate vowel space by streamlining the articulatory process. For example, dental and alveolar consonants may be articulated with the tongue arch in order to maintain vowel space. To illustrate, the *n* of *nuit* [nuʔi] may be more easily articulated with the tongue tip down in preparation for the following glide. The *th* of *thine* may be articulated with the tongue arch (tongue tip down), particularly if the word is set on a high note. With this formation, the tongue tip remains in its home position and the articulators are prepared for the following vowel. These recommendations simplify the articulatory process while augmenting vowel space.

The speaker articulates words one sound at a time. The singer must plan consonant formation according to the vowel that follows. For example, the lips should be rounded in advance for words with lip rounding vowels. The initial *bl* of *blue* is formed with lip rounding. This avoids an on-glide of the [u] vowel. Early preparation of the vowel is not a consideration in speech.

Point 3. Singers' pronunciation must be authentic to the time period in which the lyrics were set. Modern language departments do not offer a pronunciation that is suitable for singers' repertoire. Why apply modern pronunciation to eighteenth and nineteenth century texts?

Point 4. Pronunciation of art song and operatic repertoire should not reflect regional dialects. The spoken

example of pronunciation in a language class is restricted to the dialect of the professor. Classically trained singers are expected to present the highest form of a language. The formal pronunciation of a language is dialect free. Fine singing is dialect free.

Lyric diction textbook authorities provide authentic pronunciation that is ideal for singing. Madeleine Marshall hailed a "dialect free" pronunciation of the English language.⁴ Her innovation standardized English transcription and preserved a lyric form of the language.

Master teacher, Pierre Bernac, helped students discover proper pronunciation of the French language as it applies to singing. Bernac lived in Paris during a time in which the last remnant of classical spoken French still existed. An example of his pronunciation is preserved through his work with the composer Francis Poulenc. "Poulenc composed almost ninety of his approximately 145 songs for Bernac's voice that they premiered in their joint recitals around the globe."⁵ Proper pronunciation as taught and modeled by Bernac provides our closest link to nineteenth and twentieth century French art song composers' intentions.⁶ Thomas Grubb meticulously described Bernac's formal pronunciation (otherwise known as *style soutenu*) in *Singing in French*. *Style soutenu* is the elevated form of the French language. It is free from regionalisms and ideal for singing. It is the dialect free form of the French language.

Evelina Colorni gave us a glimpse into the formal pronunciation of the Italian language through her publication of *Singers' Italian*. While there may be some confusion regarding the transcription of *e* and *o* in unstressed syllables (due to various schools of thought), her instructions remind us that the pronunciation of Italian [e] and [o] is simply not as tightly closed as the German and French pronunciation of the same symbols.

William Odom preserved a formal pronunciation of the German language that is ideal for singing through his publication of *German for Singers*. Languages change with time. The further we move from these early and groundbreaking publications, the further we move from authenticity and the time period we endeavor to replicate.

There are approximately 160 English dialects,⁷ 34 Italian dialects, 28 French dialects, and 10 German dialects. It is not in the singer's best interest to get caught up in arguments over dialect.

Point 5. Different IPA symbols are used for lyric diction. Symbols that represent spoken pronunciation are dropped: uvular [ʀ] and the *r*-colored [ə], [ɜ], and [ɐ] vowels. Sustaining an *r*-colored vowel in an unstressed syllable is undesirable for singing.

Many sounds have not been identified by the International Phonetic Association. Symbols that indicate specified sounds are needed. For example, the *les*, *ses*, *mes* words in French are not transcribed with consistency in the dictionary. Some dictionaries transcribe them with a closed [e] while others indicate an open [ɛ]. They are neither. They are pronounced with a sound that is between [e] and [ɛ]. The pronunciation shifts toward a more closed [e] (although not tightly closed) when followed by a word with an [e], [i], or [y] in the first syllable. The pronunciation shifts toward a more open [ɛ] (although not wide open) in all other cases: *Et ces étoiles sont tes yeux* [e s(e)z etwalə sō tɛz jø]. Thomas Grubb recommends placing the transformed vowel of words with vocalic harmonization in parentheses.⁸ The vowel in parentheses indicates a sound that is between [e] and [ɛ] but closer to [e]. This author uses an [ɛ̞] symbol to indicate a sound that is between [e] and [ɛ] but closer to [ɛ]. The order from closed to open is: [e] [(e)] [ɛ̞] [ɛ]. These distinctions would be helpful for students who struggle to replicate the Italian closed [e] vowel. The Italian [e] is quite open compared to the German and French pronunciation of the same symbol. The Italian [e] is closer in sound to the French [ɛ] described above.

A symbol that represents a sound between [i] and [ɪ] is needed for German and English. German words that are unstressed within the phrase are pronounced with an open [ɪ]: *bin*, *in*, *bis*, *hin*, *im*, *mit*. The pronunciation shifts toward a more closed [i] (although not tightly closed) for words that are stressed within the phrase: *nicht* [nɪçt], *ich* [ɪç], *singen* [ˈzɪŋən]. An [ɪ̞] symbol is used here to indicate a sound that is between [i] and [ɪ]. English words with an [i] sound in unstressed syllables are pronounced with a sound that is between [i] and [ɪ] for lyric diction. Reasoning: a tightly closed [i] sound calls undue attention to unstressed syllables. Examples: *lilies* [ˈlɪlɪz], *honey* [ˈhʌnɪ], *pitied* [ˈpɪtɪd].

Symbols that indicate specified German consonant sounds are needed. For example, apocopated words with final *b*, *d*, *g*, are neither fully voiced nor fully aspirate when followed by an initial vowel word. The pronuncia-

tion shifts toward a more voiced articulation (although not fully voiced) when an apocopated word is followed by a word that begins with a vowel: *hab' ich* [ha:p(b) ɪç], *send' es* [zɛnt(d) ɛs], *Mein Aug' ist blau* [maen ʔaok(g) ɪst blaʊ]. New indications are needed to define the degree of voicing for final *b*, *d*, and *g* of apocopated words.

Point 6. Standard lyric diction textbook authorities do not recognize a close-mid or open-mid vowel category. As a result, vowels are classified in a different way for lyric diction and transcription purposes. The IPA was created by linguists and intended for speech. Singers adopted the IPA for lyric diction. In speech, the lips are spread for front vowels and the tongue does not remain in contact with the lower front teeth for back vowels. Retracting the tongue and spreading the lips are not recommended for singing. These differences affect how vowels are classified for lyric diction. Adjustments to the vowel chart are needed.

Phoneticians classify vowels according to speech formation. The articulators are in close proximity for speech (tongue slope is imperceptible). When slope of the tongue is not apparent, tongue height becomes the most obvious landmark feature. As a result, the official vowel chart indicates numerous tongue heights: close, close-mid, open-mid, and open (Figure 1).⁹ Companion vowels are not distinguished: [i] and [ɪ] are both classified as close front vowels, [u] and [ʊ] are both classified as close back vowels, and [y] and [ʏ] are both classified as close mixed vowels. Standard lyric diction textbook authorities make a distinction between the vowel pairs by classifying [i], [u], and [y] as closed; and [ɪ], [ʊ], and [ʏ] as open. Bernac, Grubb, Odom, and Colorni do not acknowledge a close-mid or open-mid category. Marshall does not address tongue height.

The Figure 2 chart is designed for lyric diction. Two tongue heights are indicated: open and closed. A new category is added to describe slope of the tongue. Tongue slope is more apparent in the released jaw position required for singing. The slope or angle of the tongue may be compared to the pitch of a roof. A roof can be steep, moderately steep, mildly sloping, or flat. The tongue creates front and back slopes of varying degrees when forming vowels. The varying degrees of sloping change the shape of the vocal tract (resonating chamber). These formations distinguish one vowel from

another. The slope (or angle) of the tongue gives vowels their unique color.

Steep vowels have a sharply sloped tongue position. The [i] and [ɪ] vowels have a steep slope, the [e] and [ɛ] vowels have a *moderate* slope, and the [æ] and [a] vowels have a *mild* sloping of the tongue toward the front of the mouth. The [u] and [ʊ] vowels have a *steep* slope, the [o] and [ɔ] vowels have a *moderate* slope, and the [ɒ] and [ɑ] vowels have a *mild* sloping of the tongue toward the back of the mouth. The [ʌ] vowel has no perceivable arch of the tongue. The tongue at rest and the [ʌ] formation are identical (Figure 3).

The *central* vowel category refers to the mild and non-sloped vowels: [ʌ], [a], [ɑ], and [æ]. *Central* vowel is used in favor of *low* vowel. Wording that might suggest a low pitch or placement should be avoided for lyric diction. The International Phonetic Association classifies [ʌ] and [ɑ] as back vowels and [a] and [æ] as front vowels. The tongue arch for central vowels is indistinguishable in the space required for singing. Central vowels are clarified by means of focus rather than formation for singing.¹⁰ A central classification also agrees with transcription rules. Take the German *ich-Laut* rules, for example. The transcription of *ch* is dictated by the tongue position of the preceding vowel or consonant. If [a] were truly a front vowel, we would articulate *ach* as [aç] instead of [aχ]. Standard lyric diction textbook authorities are reluctant to assign a front or back designation to the [a] and [ɑ] vowels. These vowels are typically referred to as bright [a] and dark [ɑ].

The Whisper Test. The tongue slope category may be tested by whispering the closed and open vowel pairs. Note that the tongue, as a group of eight muscles, is capable of maintaining a precise slope while the oral space is altered. The oral space may be increased by lifting the palate, lowering the jaw, or by forming a plateau in the middle of the tongue. Here is the process for testing the veracity of the tongue slope category.

1. Whisper an [i] vowel using the singer's formation. The [i] for singing is formed with a forward arch of the tongue (*not* by spreading the lips). The sides of the tongue contact the length of the upper molars.
2. Carefully maintain the [i] tongue formation while lowering the jaw.
3. Produce a whispered sound with this formation. An [ɪ] result would prove that closed and open vowel

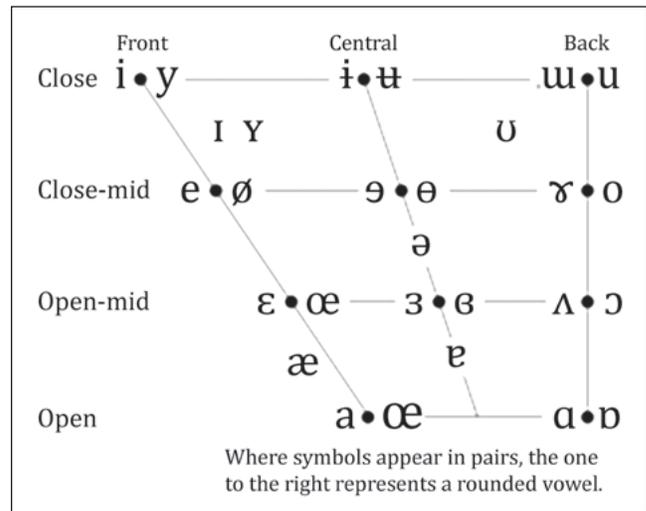
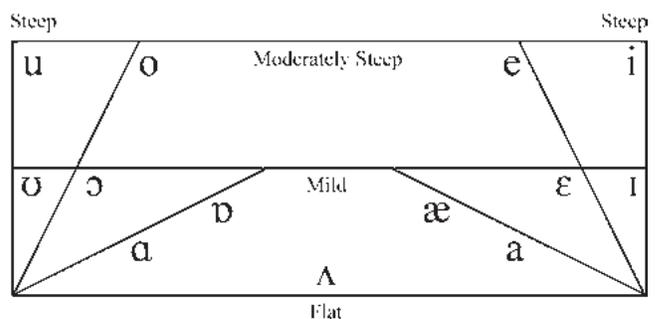


Figure 1.

Peak of Arch	Front	Rounded Front	Back
Slope			
Steep			
Closed	i	y	u
Open	ɪ	ʏ	ʊ
Moderate			
Closed	e	ø	o
Open	ɛ	œ	ɔ
Mild	Central		
Open	æ		ɒ
Open	a		ɑ
Flat			
Open	ʌ		

Figure 2.



Back vowels are to the left of the chart, front vowels are to the right, central vowels are in the center, closed vowels are in the upper section, open vowels are in the lower section.

Figure 3.

pairs share the same tongue slope. *Space* is the distinguishing factor.

4. Replicate the exercise with the remaining vowel pairs: closed [e] < open [ɛ], closed [u] < open [ʊ], closed [o] < open [ɔ], closed [y] < open [ʏ], closed [ø] < open [œ].

Did the International Phonetic Association attempt to classify the schwa? Yes, it did! The schwa represents an undefined sound in an unstressed syllable. It should not be classified since it does not indicate a specific vowel sound. The International Phonetic Association classifies the schwa as a mid-central vowel. Their classification implies that the schwa has the same pronunciation in all languages. This does not leave room for the various pronunciations of schwa. English has seven pronunciations, German has two, and the French pronunciation of schwa varies in speech (it is consistently pronounced as an [œ] vowel for singing).¹¹ This is a concern for singers since the schwa must be sustained.

Finally, the International Phonetic Association organizes vowels on a side view of the tongue. The tongue is a group of eight muscles capable of an infinite number of formations. The side view would have to accommodate at least seven angles for lyric diction (Figures 3 and 4). If the official vowel chart were an effective model for charting symbols, then consonants would be charted in the same manner. Consonants are organized by category on a graph. If vowels were organized on a graph, additional details could be included.

Point 7. Listening to recordings of performances by native classically trained singers is a vital part of the lyric diction course. This is necessary when discussing performance practice and trends. Listening in a language course is centered around speech. The following examples demonstrate the need for informed critical listening as offered in a lyric diction course.

- *English.* Dialect is imperceptible in fine singing. Discussions in a language class are based on speech patterns. Dialect is the source of much confusion in the English lyric diction classroom. Students often state, “But I don’t say it that way.” This observation suggests that singers expect lyric diction to feel “natural.” Singing formations may not feel “natural” especially when spoken practice provides the standard for what is considered “normal.” English lyric diction rules offer

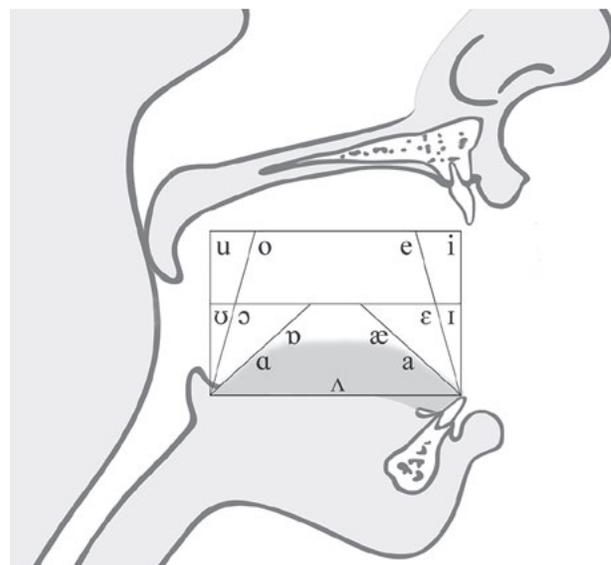


Figure 4.

a pronunciation that is best for singing. Lyric diction should not reflect speech formation or regional dialects. These points are successfully addressed through the informed critique of performances by classically trained singers. A diction course with listening helps the instructor persuade students to adopt a pronunciation that is dialect free and favorable for singing.

- *Italian.* Recordings from the mid to late 1900s reflect an era in which unstressed *e* and *o* were considered open. This trend was reinforced in *Singer's Italian* by Evelina Colorni. She had solid arguments for endorsing the performance practice of her day. Her open vowel rules accommodated the singer's need for increased space. She pointed out that her recommendations were not in agreement with dictionary transcription.¹² While Colorni continues to be the authority for Italian diction, her rules for unstressed *e* and *o* are not observed in today's Italian and American opera houses. A closed transcription of unstressed *e* and *o* is a return to authenticity. Recordings from the early 1900s reflect the practice of closing unstressed *e* and *o*. The lyric diction course addresses trends in sung pronunciation. These discussions must include listening examples in order to observe and substantiate performance practice.
- *German.* Lengthening a double consonant is nonexistent in speech. Double consonants of specified words

are lengthened for singing. The decision to lengthen a double consonant is based on stress of the word within the phrase and the musical setting. Listening to performances by native classically trained singers helps students make an informed decision regarding consonant length.

The use of vocalic *r* is authentic in both the spoken and sung forms of German; although it is much more prevalent in speech. Performance practice before the 1980s favored an exclusive use of flipped or rolled *r*. William Odom's text, *German for Singers*, introduces rules for vocalic *r*.¹³ Performance practice shifted in agreement with his publication. While the addition of vocalic *r* for lyric diction is a recent change, there is no reason to question its use. The vocalic *r* sound is a quality of the German language. Singers have good reasons to gravitate toward this change. For example, the former practice of flipping every *r* calls undue attention to words and syllables that are unstressed within the phrase. A limited use of vocalic *r*, as recommended by Odom, allows the singer to shape the phrase. Observing performance practice through listening assignments helps students make an informed decision regarding the use of vocalic *r*.

- *French*. Thomas Grubb assisted Pierre Bernac in his master classes throughout the United States, Canada, and France as both pianist and coach from 1970 until 1977.¹⁴ As a master voice teacher and lyric diction coach, Bernac modeled and taught proper pronunciation of the French language, and Grubb recorded his recommendations. Thomas Grubb's scholarly work resulted in the creation of *Singing in French*, the standard textbook for French lyric diction. Without awareness of proper pronunciation (as recommended by Bernac and recorded by Grubb), we would not realize that many French singers depart from Bernac's recommendations. It is not safe to assume that a native French singer produces authentic pronunciation. Informed critical listening helps students identify and replicate accurate pronunciation as recommended by standard textbook authorities.

Point 8. Singing is an important activity in the lyric diction classroom. Singers intuitively know the differences between speaking and singing, but they need to *sing* the words in order to experience the differences.

These differences become more apparent when we consider context.

The speaker's voice is typically used to communicate in a close setting.

- Projection of the tone is not a factor.
- Beauty of tone is not crucial. Vocal fry is even acceptable.
- The facial expression is often smiling. This formation is too spread for singing.
- Posture is not a factor. An upright expansive posture could communicate arrogance. For this reason, correct posture is often avoided.
- Breathing is not a conscious act in speech.

The singer's voice communicates with the audience from a distance.

- The sound must be projected.
- The vowel line is sustained.
- Consonants are quick and crisp.
- Beauty of tone is more important.

Language professors should not be expected to critique singing sounds or formations. Singers may immerse themselves in the language through years of travel and language study. These experiences are meaningless without the practical application and targeted instruction that lyric diction studies provide.

Point 9. Lyric diction and language study are separate topics that engage different skill sets. Merging transcription, listening, and singing, with grammar and translation prohibits an organized teaching approach. Language study and lyric diction are equally important, but these topics are rather involved and too diverse for a combined study. Singer's diction produces artificial speech sounds. Speech sounds (as found in dictionary transcription and in a language class) are not suitable for singing. Publishers do not provide textbooks with a combined study of these subjects for good reason—the topics do not mix. Translation and diction skills are merged in performance; this does not automatically imply that they function sensibly in a combined study. Singing is a multidisciplinary art form. Education provides an organized plan for optimal learning. Education is the means to an end. If we value the end goal, then we will do what is best for the student by working step by step through each topic in a reasonable order.

Standard lyric diction textbook authorities maintained a shared purpose. Their common goal of creating textbook resources for lyric diction courses unified the selection of IPA symbols and standardized the verbiage used to describe the intricacies of each sound within the respective language. Diction for speech lacks this unifying purpose. Phonetics courses in the language departments utilize a broader selection of IPA symbols without a consensus between the languages. There is no reason to provide a comparative approach when English, Italian, German, and French are offered in separate departments. This is a critical concern since the IPA does not communicate identical sounds across all languages.

Point 10. Lyric diction is an activity driven topic. Placing the course in the language departments strips it of its most enjoyable activities: singing, transcription of repertoire, and vocal exploration. A diction instructor's job is to help singers fall in love with their words. Students must love their vowels, consonants, and even the breaths in order to sing with beauty and clarity. A lyric diction course breaks down the complexities of languages by focusing on the basic elements of vocal sound—vowels and consonants. Vowels and consonants are tools; they help singers explore the function of the voice. The lyric diction classroom provides an ideal nurturing ground for vocal discovery.

CONCLUSION

An informed artist acknowledges the differences between the spoken and sung forms of languages. For the novice, it might seem plausible that diction should be taught by native speakers in the language departments. This mindset need not intimidate us—there is no such thing as an *ideal* diction instructor. The most effective candidate would be many people in one: a coach, a singer, an accompanist, a voice pedagogue, and a native of Italy, Germany, France, and England. This person does not exist! There is, however, an ideal approach: acknowledge the differences between the spoken and sung forms of diction and organize the study according to the skill sets involved.

We want the best education for our students. We want them to be language scholars. We hope to hear them combine translation with eloquent pronunciation to create a beautiful and authentic interpretation of the

text. But there are no short cuts. Classical singing is a multidisciplinary art form that requires years of study. Focusing on lyric diction is a manageable first step. It jump-starts voice *and* language study and enables the student to sing lyrics with beauty and accuracy. The student is then prepared to experience languages from a grammatical and interpretive perspective. When diction is offered first, interest in the language is awakened and the student is armed with the ability to recall lyric diction rules while learning to translate and interpret texts.

It may seem unlikely that we would return to former times by merging the topics of language and diction; however, it is wise to be aware of weaknesses in the academic system. Music departments are often forced to limit the number of hours available for lyric diction (due to state controlled credit regulations),¹⁵ while foreign language departments are incentivized to create new course offerings. According to the Modern Language Association of America, enrollment numbers in foreign language courses are in sharp decline nation-wide.¹⁶ Foreign language departments would welcome a move to offer a combined language/diction course in their respective areas to boost enrollment numbers. These weaknesses in the system jeopardize the existence of the lyric diction course and threaten the quality of students' education. Implementation would create a watered down approach to both topics. Students need language *and* diction. Combining the courses prohibits an in-depth study of both subjects and produces students who do not know the difference between the spoken and sung forms of diction.

It is my hope that voice teachers and coaches will remind each other of the value of the lyric diction course by acknowledging a sung form of the languages as established by standard lyric diction textbook authorities. Voice departments can effectively support students' education by organizing course offerings according to the skill sets involved. Lyric diction courses provide an excellent introduction to the languages; grammar courses are crucial to the singer's understanding of the text; and vocal literature courses bring multiple disciplines together by uniting repertoire with performance practice, diction, and interpretation of the text.

NOTES

1. Evelina Colorni, *Singers' Italian* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1970), 128.

2. William Odom, *German for Singers* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1997), 26.
3. Thomas Grubb, *Singing in French* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1979), 43.
4. Madeleine Marshall, *The Singer's Manual of English Diction* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc. 1953), 2–3.
5. Thomas Grubb, "Portrait of an Artist: My Time with Pierre Bernac," *Journal of Singing* 70, no. 2 (November/December 2013): 235.
6. *Ibid.*, 236.
7. IDEA International Dialects of English Archive, 2019; <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/dialects-accent> (accessed May 7, 2019).
8. Grubb, *Singing in French*, 29.
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Cheri Montgomery is a member of the voice faculty at the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University. She provides postgraduate instruction to voice teachers, diction instructors, and vocal coaches in her Lyric Diction Workshop held each summer at Vanderbilt University. She was a featured presenter and mentor voice teacher at the NATS 2019 Summer Workshop at St. Olaf College.

Her published works include 12 texts on the topics of voice, English, Italian, Latin, German, and French diction. She is co-author of *Exploring*

Art Song Lyrics published by Oxford University Press. In her work with Oxford she provided pronunciation and IPA for more than 750 Italian, German, and French art songs. Her method of transcription is published in the appendix. Recent publications include *Singer's Diction* and two volumes of *The Singer's Daily Practice Journal*. An abbreviated version of the pedagogy within is published in her article, "The Voice and Diction Connection, A Diction Instructor's Approach to Voice Pedagogy," *Journal of Singing* 74, no. 3 (January/February 2018). Book reviews of her texts are available at www.stmpublishers.com.

Performance credits include solo engagements with the Nashville and Knoxville Symphonies and operatic roles with the Nashville Opera. She was awarded full scholarships for graduate study at the University of Tennessee–Knoxville through the Grace Moore Graduate Scholarship and the Phi Mu Alpha Scholarship; and was a first-place winner of regional NATS auditions.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

(concluded on p. 332)