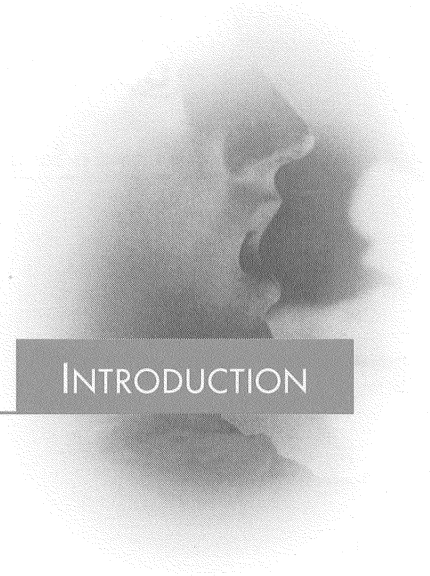

INTRODUCTION

BECOMING AN ARTIST

All over the earth, from the beginning of time, composers have put words to music and performers have sung those words to other people—but why? What might have inspired a priest, in some ancient ritual, to *chant* his message rather than speak it? What meaningful difference do we humans find between the spoken word and words that rise and fall in melodies, pulsate in rhythms, and swirl with musical tones?

Exploring these questions is not simply a philosophical exercise. Our answers clarify our goals for teaching music. The goals we choose must be in tune with the universal urges that prompt us to sing and make music—urges that lie deep within our humanity.

So what is the meaningful difference between singing and speaking, between making music and not? For our pragmatic goals of teaching music, one useful answer is that singing *engages us more*. It causes us to see more, hear more, feel more. An ancient priest probably chanted his words to ignite the emotions of his tribe. To deepen the impression of a ritual, he might also have beat on a drum; to inspire his tribe to hunt better, he might have added well-timed clicks, whistles, and scrapes; to purge his tribe of pent-up fears, he might have added chanters to wail key words.

Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Debussy, Strauss, Berio, Stockhausen, Gershwin—all have refined this process into an art. They tell us how to chant elaborate visions to heighten the experience of our audience.

Teaching and Learning a Song

For teaching music, our main goal is to help each student take the composers' instructions (the score) and heighten the experience of her listeners—just as an ancient priest might have done for his tribe.

This goal—to heighten the experience of the audience—guides us like a beacon through teaching myriad styles of music. Without that goal, we can easily drift off-track, and our students—caught up in style or in singing "correctly"—can end up singing sterile, meaningless music.

The Composer

A composer dreams up a vision. He toils all day, fidgeting with the details and garnishing the words, to work out the most compelling vision possible. By piecing together his basic materials—pitch, timbre, dynamic levels, rhythm, and words—he constructs a world he believes will prod his listeners toward a heightened experience.

The composer wants to seize his listeners and force them to transcend their everyday experiences. He is concerned with holding the listeners' attention, with leading his audience to feel a sense of motion or rest, tension or relaxation, instability or security, surprise or expectation.

To meet these goals, he designs patterns of pitches, timbres, dynamics, rhythms, and words from which he creates distinctive melodies, harmonies, and phrases. He uses all these to create larger musical gestures and dramatic beats, which he combines to create still larger patterns—musical forms and plots.

By repeating and varying the patterns, he builds a cohesive world. His audience anchors its emotions to those patterns, recognizing

and remembering them as they reappear and disappear—all of which gives the audience a sense of having been somewhere and of going somewhere else. As the composer flips, modulates, lengthens, shortens, or distorts those patterns, he nudges his listeners' emotions this way and that, ultimately leading them through a heightened experience.

Like an architect who dreams up a space in which people can live and work, the composer dreams up a musical space in which people can think and feel, experiencing many new emotions and sensations. And like an architect, the composer can create a vision that is simple or elaborate. He can design the vision predominantly around the melody or the harmony or other musical components, just as an architect can design a building predominantly around wood or concrete or other material components.

However, each composer has his own way of creating a musical space or a signature style. And in the same way we would recognize a building by Frank Lloyd Wright, we can recognize music from different composers. Perhaps one composes fragmented melodies and another composes long and sinuous melodies. Perhaps another composes with tonal harmonies and still another composes with dissonant harmonies. Whatever the musical component, composers leave on their work a recognizable "soundprint"—the many details that hang together in recognizable ways.

The variety is endless—and the details add up to create a distinctive whole. One set of melodies, harmonies, and characters adds up to create Mozart's *Figaro,*[1] and another set creates Debussy's "C'est l'extase,"[2] just as one set of stones, wood, glass, and paint forms Saint Peter's Basilica, whereas another set creates Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water.

The composer might design a work to lead an audience through pathos, excitement, or angst; he does not create it to allow listeners to drift through their own everyday humdrum experiences.

The Score

A composer can scribble his instructions for his vision only with arcane marks on staff paper. Like an architect who draws a simple rectangle to represent an elegant Italian stained-glass window, a composer draws a few simple dots on a staff to represent the beautiful, emotion-stirring moment he has in mind. Much can be lost in the translation.

Today, some composers write lengthy commentaries that explain their score; some record a "definitive" performance of their work. These composers want tight control over how their work is performed. Others want the performer to co-create the work, using improvisation or an assortment of aleatoric devices.

❄ Throughout this text, we use the term "score" to refer to the text, the music, the instructions—everything that comes between the front cover and the last page.

Anyone can sing the pitches, rhythms, and words from a master composer's score, just as anyone can build a model from the plans for Saint Peter's Basilica with scissors and cardboard. However, with the outlines alone, the vocal tones only approximate the stirring phrases, just as the cutout holes in the cardboard only approximate the stained-glass windows of Saint Peter's.

You want your student to realize the disparity between the score and the performed work—the same disparity that exists between the paper plans and the real Saint Peter's. The finished work has no approximations, but it does have many refined distinctions—derived from details that need to be discovered in the score or from reading about the score, the composer, or the style. Michelangelo did not choose just any stained glass for Saint Peter's. He chose particular colors, distinct contours, and precise patterns to focus the colored shafts of light through our eyes to the bottom of our souls. Bach, Schubert, and Debussy carefully created the

details of a song so that the sound flowed into the eyes and ears of the listeners, stirring them toward a heightened experience.

Translation of the arcane, dry marks on the page into something that ultimately becomes a heightened experience for an audience is quite an art, requiring many skills. We discuss those skills throughout this section. But before delving into those skills, we find it helpful for students to realize that the score is always more than the score. As a means of getting her more involved in a score's robust intent, we might ask a student to pretend that she has written a letter to the composer—Puccini, for instance. In this letter, she asks him for his personal advice about how to sing with the qualities dearest to her heart, the qualities that led her to study voice in the first place. She explains that she wants to sing with spine-chilling beauty and to move her audience. She has reached a plateau and now wants to do a better job.

In answer to her request, Puccini sends her a letter, written out as a score, which, among all the markings, explains how she can use the full range of her vocal tones, sense the music more deeply, and tell a fascinating story. He promises that if she follows these instructions, she will sing with the qualities dearest to her heart and naturally connect more deeply with her audience.

Sometimes we ask a student to play the role of a composer. We have her create a compelling rendition of a nursery rhyme (using the exercises in this chapter) and then have her try to write it down on a score. She tries to capture the richness she has in mind with standard musical symbols. Then, without any coaching, she gives the score to another singer to learn. We then discuss the disparity between what our student wanted and the other singer's version.

You always want your student to become curious about why the composer marked the score the way he did. What was he trying to

communicate to her? What did he assume she knew? What was he explicit about? What are the details about the melodies, harmonies, and text that instruct the singer how to lead an audience to a heightened experience? (See ch. 15, "Teaching and learning the score," on page 43.)

The Singer

The singer is the link between the score and the heightened experience of the audience. A great singer is a more-powerful link than a poor singer, but what makes the difference? What does the singer actually do with these markings, details, and instructions to bring the score into being and to reach the audience?

Let us consider the audience for a moment. We should assume that an audience can reach a heightened experience only through what its members see and hear. At one extreme, with nothing to see or hear, the audience certainly will not reach a grand experience, nor will it reach one by having a score explained. The audience reaches a heightened experience by watching and listening to the singer and the other musicians.

While some may describe the audience's experience of music as extrasensory, the following simple description gives us a practical way to think about the singer's goal: to make the details in the score visible and audible for an audience.

This definition helps us simplify the complex issues of teaching and learning music. It means that all the intangible qualities we prize as singers and teachers—rich emotions, the loveliness of a beautifully sung phrase, a heightened experience—come into being through details an audience can actually see and hear. With this common denominator underlying all our work of teaching and learning a song, we can learn to see and hear the details,

which allows us to form viable goals. (See the heading "The Details," on page 17.)

In this sense, the singer serves as a conduit from the score to the audience, a system of channels to bring alive the distinctions in the score. Just as telephone lines can carry all kinds of messages in the electrical pulses, the singer can carry all kinds of messages in her visible and audible expressions—from a simple hello to a heart-wrenching story.

As teachers, we are sometimes like telephone repair people working on the mechanics of the connection between the singer and the audience. Just as a repair person might boost a signal so that the message can get through, we might help a student "turn up" her expressiveness enough to be seen and heard. Just as the repair person might design a sophisticated circuit board to handle many simultaneous messages, we might help a student develop channels to express herself on multiple levels (for instance, intonation, tone qualities, dynamic levels, phrasing, diction, and dramatic involvement). And just as the repair person might check for loose connections in a circuit board, we might help a student cleanly connect to the audience, a topic that we explore in ch. 18, "Teaching and learning performance with excellence," on page 231.

You want your student to express the messages of the score as clearly for a simple love song as for a tragic aria. Think of it this way: Sprint,[3] the long-distance phone service, improved its system's capacity. When it upgraded its steel-wire network to fiber-optic cable, all the messages on the network became more robust, more complete, and more receivable. When Sprint further upgraded its switching systems, the messages stepped up to full CD-quality. When Sprint upgraded the bandwidth in its cables, the messages became full-resolution video streams, images, and sounds—all with the quality of DVD. You want your student to

upgrade her system of expressing herself, so the distinctions in the score flow through her at full resolution, with no muting, no clipping, and no static.

The Audience

The audience contributes greatly to how much the music comes alive. As with teaching and learning, the audience experiences the song through a stochastic process. As its members watch and listen to the singer, they experience the song through their expectations, their cultural biases. The audience selects the parts of the performance to notice and respond to, just as Madelyn "selects" the blue Subaru station wagons from the cars rolling down the freeway after her son has bought a similar car. (See the heading "Stochastic Processes," in v. 1, ch. 1.) The audience for *Don Giovanni*[4] at the Metropolitan Opera expects to see and hear different visible and audible expressions than does the audience for *Cats*[5] on Broadway or the audience for Barbra Streisand at Madison Square Garden. Each audience experiences a song in its own way.

Along with biases and expectations, however, audience members also bring their humanity and the universal themes that music aims to heighten. When an audience recognizes its own humanity in the sights and sounds of a song, it always responds—regardless of biases and expectations. Each person in the audience looks and listens to the singer for clues about her humanity, clues that unfold moment by moment throughout the song, like the letter-by-letter unfolding in the television game show "Wheel of Fortune."[6] When the pattern is recognizable, the audience has a revelation, an involuntary experience of an emotion or an idea.

At the highest level, a student learns her music so that her visible and audible distinctions give an audience enough clues about the

song's potential for a worthy human experience. These clues reach through the audience's biases and tap into its humanity, transforming the song into a form the audience may have never experienced. By touching the audience members' inner experience, the singer opens pathways to parts of themselves they might not even know exist. Every year, audiences spend billions of dollars—a major portion of the world's economy—to receive such a gift.

So while teaching music, we are essentially teaching students to use a score as a map for exploring the nuances of their own lives—their creativity, emotions, and humanity. Like the builder sorting through his warehouse for rich stained glass to fill his blueprint's simple rectangle, you want your students to sort through their lives to find the rich emotional experiences to color the simple dots on the score. Some teachers touch on this important idea when they want their students to have "truthful" responses to a song. They want their students to involve themselves, to experience their own emotions, to awaken their own sense of beauty, heighten their imaginations—all as a way to make deeper sense of a score and wake up the students' visible and audible expressions.

This means you need to help your students search through their lives as a basic tenet of learning music. They have learned a song well when the current of their emotions and imagination flows through their singing, electrifying the channels between themselves and the audience. They have not learned it well when, for any reason, they disassociate from themselves. Studying a piece of music while laboring under disappointments, fear, or anything else that might lead your students to disassociate can become a nightmare rather than an exploration into their own humanity.

An audience needs to see and hear the work to complete the process begun by the composer. You, the teacher, may be the only audience, or your student may play the role of her own audience. But whether for herself alone or for a full concert hall, your student learns a composition in order to sing it—to make it and its distinctions almost tangible.

When your student performs for a larger audience, however, she must deal with more issues than just the score. She may have learned to express the score brilliantly but then fail in front of a formal audience. She must deal with reaching 100 percent commitment in the hour of performing. We discuss these issues in ch. 18, "Teaching and learning performance with excellence," on page 231.

You can make your studio a great place for your students to connect to their humanity as part of learning a song. Even with a beginning singer, you can smile, make her laugh, help her feel joy—and sing. She needs these experiences to learn to sing a joyful phrase just as much as she needs good breath management. Invite her to find the grief in a phrase by feeling grief in her life or find the desire in a melody by feeling desire in her life. Notice and encourage her when she explores an unknown region in her humanity and struggles to express it. With your positive responses, you teach your student that singing is about *life*. By teaching her that her life—her emotions, ideas, and imagination—is the stuff of learning a song, you teach her about becoming an artist.

Working as an Artist

We now have a working definition of learning a song: make the details of the score visible and audible for an audience so that they can reach a heightened experience. In essence, the singer moves the details of the score into inflections in her voice and body.

A definition this broad helps us keep away from the tyranny of "singing correctly" and stay focused on singing with excellence. We need this definition to differentiate the style of the music from the teaching and learning process. Whether we are singing an aria from Mozart's *Figaro*[7] or a number from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*,[8] we bring the details of the score into our voices and bodies. With this definition, we begin walking the road of being an artist, where, heading toward what we care about most, we bring our passion for singing to life—the first step in bringing a song to life.

So where do we begin? While there is no correct way to learn a song, a good first step is to orient our teaching and learning to a

stochastic process. A process is stochastic when it is neither sequential and predictable nor totally random and unpredictable, but somewhere in between. (For a full discussion of the stochastic process, see the heading ch. 1, "Stochastic Processes," in v. 1.)

As we have described it, a stochastic process has three parts: a *filter* that selects from *random elements* to produce a *result*. We used the everyday example of Madelyn, whose son had just purchased a blue Subaru station wagon, to describe this process. As Madelyn drove down the freeway, she began to notice blue Subaru station wagons, which, now that her son had one, seemed to "pop out" of the stream of cars rolling by. Her interest in her son filtered through the random cars to produce the results: blue Subaru station wagons.

For teaching and learning a song, the score is the filter through which the range of possible responses in the student's voice and body passes, producing the inflections in her voice and body that the audience sees and hears. Teaching and learning a song is one giant stochastic process.

To orient to a stochastic process in the big picture, we want a student to develop a high-quality filter and a wide range of random experiences. For a high-quality filter, she needs to distinguish many details about the score: nuances in the vocal line, patterns in the harmony, innuendoes in the dramatic beats, and so on. For a wide range of random experiences, she needs to distinguish many different sensations of singing—for example, many distinctions in the tone qualities of her voice, facial expressions, postures—which are all stimulated by a wide range of emotions, ways to imagine the song, ways to relate to the music, and so on.

We correlate excellence with the number of distinctions a singer makes in the sensations of singing. If a singer produces many fine audible and visible distinctions with her voice and body, she can produce a more resolved song for an audience to see and hear—and she is more likely to sing with excellence than a singer who can produce only a limited number of distinctions in her voice and body. The singer produces these distinctions through a stochastic process.

The promise in this idea is that, if we teach a student to distinguish a large number of details about the composer's instructions in the score and then teach the student to stimulate a wide range of sensations, she can produce a large variety of distinctive visible and audible results—and the audience will see and hear a finer resolution of the song. We suggest this idea as an alternative to defining the "correct" way to sing a song and then demanding that the student "get it right." As we mentioned previously, whereas there might be some merit in this "pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey" approach, it is inefficient and it places the care and nurturing of the ideals for the song outside of the singer rather than within the singer. This reduces her to a parrotlike role, a role that can rarely produce singing with excellence. If nothing else, it discourages a true artist from emerging. (See ch. 3, "Flexibility at multiple levels," in v. 1.)

Throughout this section, we explore teaching and learning the music through a stochastic process, offering ways to develop and refine the filter and increase the range of random elements—always keeping our eyes and ears on the results.

Let's begin by looking at the results—the visible and audible details—to get an insight on how those details point to what we need to teach and learn.

The Results: The Visible and Audible Details

Unless we try to explain a great performance of a song as the result of extrasensory communication, we can assume that our experience of a song can come only through the changing visible and audible expressions of the singer. Whether or not we are conscious of them, these details must be observable.

Imagine a great singer during one short moment in her song—the tail end of a phrase that finishes with the word "gone." If the singer sings it with sophistication, we might see or hear the following observable details:

- The final [n] consonant lengthening, clearly ending the word
- The phrase tapering off in a rallentando
- A slight droop in the singer's shoulders (the character finishing a sigh)
- The tone quality becoming darker and the dynamic level fading out in a pianissimo
- The singer's eyelids sliding downward at the same rate that the tone quality darkens and the dynamic level fades
- The singer's hands falling limply to her sides, her body swaying slightly, and her balance apparently faltering
- The singer finishing the overall physical gesture in silence, moving through and beyond the end of the phrase, beyond phonation
- The singer's intonation "centered" on the pitch all the way through the rallentando, the darkening of the tone, and the fading of the dynamic level
- The tone quality of flow phonation, a spinning tone that easily fills the audience's ears

Each of these details is visible and audible. When we see and hear them all at once, they merge into one natural expression and pack a big wallop.

Notice, however, that we feel the spell break if the singer loses any one of these details. Consider, for example, her rendering of the song if we miss the following:

- The final "n" consonant. We don't hear the final [n] (maybe the student muffles it or ends it too quickly). We might even wonder what the word is. Did she sing "gone" or "God" or "good"?
- The easy rallentando. We don't hear the phrase taper off, and instead we hear an abrupt ending. We might wonder what happened to the singer's voice. Did it catch?
- The singer's hands falling limply to her sides. Instead of her hands falling to her sides, her gesture jerks to a stop. We might wonder whether something new in the story is occurring. Or perhaps something on stage has startled her. Is the gesture part of the story or part of the reality?
- The intonation "centered" on the pitch. Instead of a "centered" intonation, we hear the intonation slide off center, becoming flat. We might wonder how the melody is supposed to end. Is it the start of a portamento? Or is she indeed singing flat?

With details such as these missing, the song can never be as powerful as it was when they were present. Our list of details could go on and on, and they naturally change for each phrase, each composition.

But the *idea* of the song being made of visible and audible details gives us a way to look at how well a song is learned. We sense the collective presence or absence of these details through the student's level of expression, energy, involvement, emotion, presence, and charisma.

By breaking down the whole into specific details that an audience can see and hear, you can become precise about what to teach when your student doesn't have enough emotion or energy. You can teach particular details until you can see and hear them—one at a time if necessary.

Let's look at the preceding list of missing details:

- The final "n" consonant. When you don't hear a long enough [n], take the time to teach the singer to produce one. Direct her to do the following:
    - feel her tongue tip gently behind her front teeth, a little further back on her hard palate, under her front teeth
    - explore how many places around her teethridge she can produce a "buzzy" sensation with energy and length
    - lengthen the [n] too much, then too little and then make incremental changes from one extreme to the next, closing in on the "right" length
    - enjoy the sound of [n], luxuriate in the nasal vibrations, sing the entire phrase with [n]
    - substitute [n] artificially with other consonants to draw attention to the ending of the word—[gɔb] (gawb), [gɔm] (gawm), [gɔt] (gawt).
- The easy rallentando. When you hear the phrase continue in tempo, without easing to a close with a rallentando, show the singer how to do the following:
    - play with the tempo using a metronome, gradually turning the dial to slow the ticks
    - gradually stretch the subdivisions of the beats, so they become further and further apart
    - conduct

- sing while walking at one speed, gradually slowing the walk to a stop
- speed up the ending or slow it down too much
- feel different emotions while she sings at each tempo

- The natural gesture. When you see the singer abruptly end the gesture, take the time to teach her how to make natural-looking gestures. Show her how to do the following:
  - pump up an emotion until it gathers enough momentum to prompt an unconscious gesture
  - direct her attention to the emotion, not the gesture
  - cycle through several emotions and several gestures while singing that phrase
  - make power gestures, sad gestures, weak gestures, funny gestures, and then have her try each one
  - use different types of gestures: movement of an eyebrow, head, shoulder, or arm, for instance
  - discover her own natural gestures and how to access them through improvising

When you sense something missing in the song, immediately aim your attention at the specific details you want to actually see and hear. Then, orienting to stochastic processes, help the singer produce those visible and audible distinctions. (See the heading "Orienting Your Teaching To Stochastic Processes," in v. 1, ch. 1.) You'll get much better results than if you ask vaguely for an action, such as singing with more energy, better diction, or more believability.

The point is that you *can* teach and learn observable details, one after another, as one level of teaching and learning a song. This explains why a student can be advanced in some areas but not in

others. It also explains why students progress in unique ways. Some students flood a song with many simultaneous details without any instruction; however, most of us need help developing them.

This notion also gives us a clear concept of the difference between a beginner and an advanced singer. A beginner hasn't yet learned to produce as many simultaneous details—distinctions—as a more-advanced student. A beginner hasn't yet learned to produce the richness of the music and—by inference—the richness within herself.

The Details

How does a singer know to lengthen the final consonant [n]? How much should she lengthen it? How little? How does she know to allow her hands to drop at the end of the phrase? How does she know which style, diction, gestures, and rallentandos to get from the printed score?

She must derive these details from the score in the same way a builder derives the details of a building from the architect's plans. She must translate the available instructions in the score into a rich expression. As we've mentioned, there is a great difference between the score and the finished performance—the same sort of difference between the paper plans of Saint Peter's and the actual building. Your student must search for clues in the score for how to make that translation.

❄ We discuss many of these skills in the next chapter, ch. 15, "Teaching and learning the score," on page 43.

Relating the details to the score

Just as the final building should have a direct connection to the architect's blueprints, the student's final expression of a song should have a direct connection to the composer's score. The final details we see and hear in the performance must come from, relate to, or make sense of the score.

Some details are obvious: the pitch, rhythm, and words are unambiguous, and your student needs to sing them accurately. Timbre and dynamics are more ambiguous, and the dramatic, emotional, and musical expressions are perhaps even more ambiguous. However, one choice over another should make sense of the score and the final gestalt of the song.

- Whereas the final overall expression—the gestalt—should relate to the score, learning to produce these expressions may not relate to the score at all. (See the heading "The Details, the Gestalt, and Visible and Audible Results," on page 25, later in this introduction.)

Keep in mind that your student might introduce details unrelated to the score, for any number of reasons. For instance, she might stand rigidly, even though her character might be as vibrant and seductive as Carmen, because she thinks she is maintaining a correct singing posture. Or she might tap her foot to the beat of the music. She might furrow her brow or contort her lips when she makes the effort to sing the phrase. Such extraneous details are not derived from the score, and they weaken the effect of the song.

Usually, you see and hear these odd details because of some inflexibility or habit in the student. Like a train that can follow only the pathway laid out by the tracks, the student's expressions can follow only the pathways of her habits rather than the pathways of the

score. Until you "derail" her habits and help her develop choices in how she expresses herself, she may repeat the same physical expressions in every song and for every performance.

Sometimes a student deliberately contorts her body and voice into odd expressions. She might think she has to "make the music interesting" by widening her eyes or gesturing like Ethel Merman. While the singer may have good intentions, adding unrelated details such as these can make unrecognizable the musical story the composer has so carefully worked out. We lose the sensation of being transported out of our ordinary selves and into a heightened experience.

Filter out extraneous expressions, leaving only the ones that work together. For example, is it possible that the character in the song widens her eyes? Does this expression make sense with the story? If so, the score should allow it to come through as part of the expression of the song; if not, it should be kept out of the final performance.

In this text, we assume that the composer is competent, that he has composed the score in such a way that your student can find a whole, integrated, multilevel expression—whether the piece is a simple folk melody or an elaborate aria. We can always assume that a competent composer constructs a whole out of details that your student can discover and make tangible. When your student sings with enough of these details—when she is not simply singing the outlines—and when these details fit together without extraneous expressions, she can learn a score well enough to lead an audience through a heightened experience. A competent composer deliberately writes a score that way.

But not all composers are competent. Like an architect who does not indicate enough details to a builder, a composer might scribble awkward passages that don't make musical sense and could not

lead an audience through a rich experience no matter how well they were sung.

When we must sing such music, we might cut a passage, add embellishments, or simplify the accompaniment to make it a better score. But then we take on the role of a composer, and to do a good job, we must think, dream, and write like a composer, too.

Describing how to compose a well-written piece of music is beyond the scope of this text, but, in general, we must aim at creating unity and variety, theme and variation. We must compose details that maintain the whole while differentiating the parts—the same qualities you want your student to express from the score.

Pursuing elegance

To express the most powerful emotions with the least effort is to pursue elegance. There are many ways to follow the instructions in the score: some are elegant, others are bloated.

Pursuing elegance helps us place the details in the proper relation to the whole. Suppose we see a slow pulsing pedal tone as a detail in the score. Perhaps we relate the pulse to a sense of foreboding, like a chime on a clock when time is running out. Suppose we infer this ominous view through other details in the score.

You might lead your student through several ways to rehearse this detail: by choreographing motions to the pulse, by conducting the pulse, or by feeling an emotion shooting through her on each pulse. You might have her squeeze her eyes, clench her fists, pull her imaginary dying child to her chest on each pulse. You might have her speed up the pulse or slow it down. Work with this distinction in the score every which way until it is alive inside her. After you do this work, your student sees, feels, and hears the distinction of the pulse pop out of the music, just as Madelyn's blue

Subaru station wagons seem to pop out on the freeway. (See ch. 1, "Flexibility in teaching and learning," in v. 1.)

Now, guided by a sense of elegance, your student allows this pulsing sensation to merge into the other distinctions, so the final sense of foreboding comes through with an economy of means.

Creating the details

Your student in her rehearsal space is like a builder on a building site. She must follow the instructions in the score for what to build, but she must use her own rehearsal techniques and her raw materials—the range of her possible experiences—to actually build the finished work.

To create the necessary distinctions, she toils with her intelligence, imagination, emotions, sensations, memory, and body with the same attitude that a builder toils with glass or stone. Like a carpenter who smoothes a cypress stair rail with a router, sander, and polisher, your student might smooth her melodies with different vowels, scales, and registers. Or with the attitude of a bricklayer smoothing the rough edge of a brick with a sand blaster to get it to fit, she might smooth an awkward interval with various yodels or emotions to get it to fit.

Your student works the details of the whole until they become apparent. Then—one at a time if necessary—she connects the moment-by-moment expressions from the song's beginning to its end. In other words, she works the details into her *self*—ultimately, her physical self. Some might say that, after all the thoughts, emotions, and imagination, she ultimately boils down the distinctions in the score into the physical differences in her voice and body that bring to light the observable details of the learned song.

Sometimes your student's progress takes her some distance from the actual score. For instance, she might start with the exact text in the score but then head off into her imagination, where she can explore different ways of looking at the individual words. She might locate within these words a story, with characters and conflicts, and with actions the characters could take to resolve the conflicts. She might then paraphrase the exact words, adding to them or creating additional words to begin to construct a richer representation of a character—one who walks, talks, sits, stands, wants, feels, and thinks in individual ways. Within her imagination, away from the score, your student might search among these words and her own internal reactions, choosing words that have an emotional charge for her character.

She does take her work back to the score, however. She applies her subtext, her well-chosen imaginary words, to influence her character at a particular place in the story, a particular place in the score. As she sings through that place in the score, her distant work with her imagination stimulates an inflection in her body, producing a distinctive tone and expression that the audience can see and hear.

This concept helps us think of a breathing technique, a dramatic technique, a vocal technique—any rehearsal technique—in the same way a builder thinks of a router, a sander, or a polisher: they are only a means to an end, tools to shape and finish the materials of the completed work. In this case, the materials are the inner sensations of the singer. The more rehearsal tools your student has, the more distinctions she can process and the more resolved the song will become.

We in the audience experience the effect of the song—the pathos, joy, desire, beauty—not from any particular detail or even from the sum of the details. We experience the song through the relationships of the details, the pattern of their arrangement, and the emphasis among them—that is, through the *gestalt* of the learned song.

The difference between the observable details and the gestalt are both aspects of our overall experience of the music. You can teach the details or you can teach the gestalt: the two levels of teaching and learning a song.

A gestalt is a psychological, physical, or symbolic pattern or configuration of elements so fully integrated as a whole that its properties cannot be derived from a mere summation of its parts. (Webster's New World College Dictionary.)

The distinction is pragmatic. For instance, suppose you want to hear qualities such as great technique, musicality, energy, drama, or believability. These qualities are hard to teach and learn simply by asking your student to sing with them. If you ask your student to sing with more energy, she might try to project more energy, but she might end up singing with all sorts of exaggerated and extraneous expressions, clearly missing the gestalt.

Assuming that she has internalized enough of the details of the song, you can teach the gestalt itself, prodding your student to rearrange the way those details—the melody, story, and music—move through her to create the visible and audible details. While she is singing, you might ask your student to do any of the following:

- Focus on different physical objects in the room
- Move differently, like a lion, a dog, or a snake
- Gesture differently, shake her fists or her legs, or point her toes
- Focus her gaze differently at different phrases

- Change the scenario of the song
- Cycle through a range of emotions

Exercises such as these loosen and stir up your student's imagination, emotions, and ideas—the material of the learned song—thereby allowing the details of the song to be fleshed out and settle into a new arrangement, a new expression. You see and hear your student become more expressive, more vibrant. You see the resolution of the whole improve, and you sense the gestalt more powerfully.

We offer many exercises for this work in ch. 17, "Teaching and learning the gestalt," on page 139. We offer a few guidelines here.

Tapping a student's innate abilities

By working the gestalt, you can set your student's innate abilities in motion in ways that can surprise you. Like a driver in a Formula One racecar, your student may only need to release the clutch and engage her already powerful interior life to get going.

One student might need only your permission to explore her musical feelings and vocal technique, to play with the elements of the score, to feel free from the restriction of having to sing "correctly." You can make the whole experience of play—a profound behavior for teaching and learning—a foundation for developing flexibility while working the gestalt.

Another student might simply need the proper perspective. For instance, if your student thinks of the score in relation to her mind, body, and soul the way a builder thinks of a blueprint in relation to a site full of raw materials, it might help your student think about her work with the details of a song in a new way. She might then be able to systematically work out one detail after another.

Another student might need a very simple trigger. In this section, for instance, we offer an exercise called "Soft Eyes," through which, merely by softening the focus of her eyes, a student can engage deep physiological processes that pour through her body, affecting her tone of voice, her intonation, and her facial expressions. (See the exercise "To Explore Eye Movements," on page 181.) Another exercise, "Choo-choo," is a movement exercise that can liberate so many powerful resources within some students that they can suddenly begin to sound like mature artists, galvanizing the details into a powerful expression. (See "To Explore Rhythm, Movement, and Whispered Sounds," on page 199.)

Generating many approaches

The more approaches you lead your students through, the more chances you have of finding the ones that tap each individual's innate abilities. One approach may work well for one student but not for another. A rehearsal exercise is valuable only when it leads to telltale differences that can be seen and heard. When you cannot see or hear better expressions in a particular student's voice and body, try another approach.

You want to help your student build her own sophisticated "rehearsal workshop." You want your student to acquire many rehearsal tools to construct her songs from the raw materials of her inner life. We offer a good beginning set of such tools to help you get started.

The Details, the Gestalt, and Visible and Audible Results

With the details and the gestalt, you have two levels of teaching and learning a song. You can train yourself to notice missing visible and audible details and to lead your student through a sto-

chastic process to produce them. You can notice whether the interior life of your student is too limited to bring a song to life, and you can shake it up, stimulate it, reorient it, and crank it up to tilt the gestalt, thereby allowing the details to form into a powerful expression.

By dividing the tasks between these two levels, you can become more precise and more flexible. You can learn when to stop and render a detail and when to expand your student's interior life.

Without the big picture in mind, it's easy to believe that vocal technique is really separate from musical expression or that musical expression is really separate from the drama. If so, a teacher might never use musical expression to teach a student how to overcome a limitation in technique, and might never use the drama to teach a student how to sing with musical expression—although either of these approaches might be the best one for a particular student. A teacher might also tend to believe that a singer can sing a song with technique and add drama later, as if a voice is impervious to drama, or that expression can be added later, as if musicality can be stamped on a perfect technique.

When you aim for the final flow of visible and audible details of the learned song, you can dispense with categories and work directly with the resources available in your student. By mobilizing these resources, an acting technique becomes a vocal technique, which then becomes a musical technique. In the end, they all stimulate your student, leading her to the final expression of the learned song—the visible and audible details the audience must see and hear before they can respond.

Bringing a Song to Life

Alone in the practice room, your student can learn to bring a song to life, but delivering that song to an audience can pose problems unrelated to how well she has learned it. Here we discuss issues that can inhibit a performance from reaching its full potential.

Throughout *Excellence in Singing*, we have described singing as a process of learning many distinctions at multiple levels, suggesting that when a singer lines up all of those levels, she awakens our aesthetic sense.

But as she learns, she senses new challenges, and she wants to conquer new territory and develop new aspects of her artistry. In this sense, she needs to embrace these new ideas. How well she learns to respond to these ideas and integrate them into her multilevel learning affects how she evolves as an artist. In this section, we discuss the issues that can interfere with evolving naturally as a singer.

We break down learning a song into four chapters. In ch. 14, "Teaching and learning the vocal line," on page 29, we discuss the process of bringing the vocal line into your student's voice, drawing upon the exercises in vol. 1, *Mastering the Fundamentals*, and vol. 2, *Advancing the Technique*. In ch. 15, "Teaching and learning the score," on page 43, we discuss different ways to see patterns in the score, particularly through the elements of style. In ch. 16, "Teaching and learning the story," on page 77, we look at the text and the dramatic aspects of a song. Finally, in ch. 17, "Teaching and learning the gestalt," on page 139, we look at ways to integrate the various aspects of a song into a balanced whole.

ENDNOTES

1. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Le nozze di Figaro (The Marriage of Figaro), (New York: G. Schirmer, 1951).
2. Claude Debussy, "C'est l'extase," 43 Songs for Voice and Piano, (New York: International Music Co., 1951 and 1961).
3. The Sprint Brand and the Sprint name are registered trademarks of Sprint Communications Company L.P.
4. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Don Giovanni* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1961).
5. Andrew Lloyd Webber, *Cats* (New York: Faber Music, 1981).
6. Wheel of Fortune is produced by Columbia TriStar Television, a Sony Pictures Entertainment Company, and is distributed worldwide by King World Productions, Inc. Merv Griffin is the creator and executive producer.
7. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro) (New York: G. Schirmer, 1951).
8. Andrew Lloyd Webber, *The Phantom of the Opera* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1987).