

## THE TRANSITION PERIOD BETWEEN THE STUDENT YEARS AND PROFESSIONAL MATURITY

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that a great number of singers and teachers are becoming increasingly concerned about the transition period between the so-called study years of the private studio, school, college and/or conservatory, and professional maturity. This period for professionally inclined students is an especially difficult one. An aspiring singer is brought face to face almost immediately with various complex problems which should be realized and duly solved before attempting a career. The Academy believes it expedient to offer to advanced students, as well as to the teachers involved in their training, certain specific guide-lines. To this end this pronouncement is offered.

### Requirements

1. Continuing study in voice.  
(Unless there is a compelling reason, it is assumed that advanced training will be pursued with the same teacher who has been responsible for progress to this point.)
2. In the field of classical song and opera, advanced work in at least three languages (Italian, French, and German).
3. Acquiring a knowledge of the business side of the profession, and of the social graces and etiquette that contribute so much toward making a career successful.
4. Making sound decisions about vocal teachers and coaches (if and when there is reason to change) and business representatives; about what engagements and what policies should be adopted and pursued to assure ultimate success.

### Financial Considerations

If the decision is made to attempt a career in singing, financial resources constitute an important need. In the majority of instances this becomes a serious problem. For those who are fortunate enough to have adequate means, the burden of financing their career is considerably lessened. For others, help must be found elsewhere. Fortunately, today's singers have many sources of assistance available. These include the various foundations, schools of music, music clubs, philanthropic societies, individual donors, bank loans, some operatic establishments, and other sources.

Herewith is a partial list of some sources that are available to those who feel they are qualified to apply. As a rule, grants of funds or concert awards are won by auditions, which are for the purpose of determining the basic talent and the probable success of the candidate seeking assistance.

The Fulbright Scholarships (Institute of International Education)  
The Ford Foundation  
The Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation  
The Matheus Sullivan Foundation  
The Rosenwald Foundation of Chicago  
The Musicians Club of New York  
The Friday Morning Music Club, Washington, D.C.  
The Marian Anderson Awards  
The Rockefeller Foundation  
The WGN Opera Award of Chicago  
The Corbett Foundation of Cincinnati  
The Santa Fe Opera Company, New Mexico  
The Metropolitan Opera National Council Awards  
The National Association of Teachers of Singing  
The New York Singing Teachers' Association Town Hall Award  
The National Federation of Music Clubs  
The Liederkrantz Society of New York  
The Downtown Glee Club of New York  
The National Arts Club of New York

Many graduate schools of music give assistance to talented students, and of course teachers are privileged to grant scholarships, although these are never advertised by ethical teachers.

The amount of a grant varies from one hundred dollars to two thousand or more, and is given outright in the majority of cases. Most are awarded for a specific amount of time. Grantors sometimes insist on selecting the teacher with whom the grantee should study, but the singer is generally free to choose his teacher.

### **The Business Side**

When a singer reaches the point where he requires a manager or personal business representative or agent, it becomes necessary to find a person or organization that best suits his needs, and one that will accept him as a client. It is here that the singer must obtain advice from responsible sources, including his teacher and/or coach, to select the right representative. There are some managers who are well known for their integrity, and ability to build a career and these are the ones that the singer should try to find. Often it is necessary to pay a retaining fee to the manager. The scale of fees is fairly well established and protected by the various unions, which in turn require membership from the singer. Managerial fees are required for promotional services, although these do not include the cost of advertising, pictures, etc. These expenses must be borne by the artist.

Young artists must beware of the damage of signing contracts with unscrupulous managers or agents. It is quite possible that this type of representative might accept a retaining fee and then do nothing about getting engagements. Such a situation is very frustrating. On the other hand, the relationship between a singer and an honest manager is in every respect a healthy one, and necessarily a very close one. Therefore the selection of the manager is obviously important, and sound advice is essential before a decision is made.

### **Social Obligations**

There comes a point in the career of the young artist singer when he must become knowledgeable in the social amenities. His ability to handle these matters correctly might make the difference between success and failure. Social contacts must be honored, respected and nurtured between the singer and his manager, the public, club presidents and many others who engage artists. Invitations and communications should be answered with grace and promptness. The young artist must be careful not to offend or ignore those who assist and encourage him in the building of his career. At the same time he must be alert to avoid contacts with those who seek to capitalize upon or take unfair advantage of him.

### **Period of Sound Decisions**

Reaching mature understanding and making sound decisions is of vital importance to the young artist during the transition period. Probably most important of all will be the choice of his teacher and his coach. Eager singers are often tempted to change from one teacher to another or from one coach to another, only to find that in the vast majority of cases this practice leads to confusion and sometimes complete failure. The student-teacher relationship during this period is unlike any other. The teacher must be a counselor in practically every matter that has to do with the student's career. The artist-student should place his complete faith and reliance in the knowledge, the wisdom, the honesty and complete sincerity of his mentors.

### **Summary**

It is the hope that this pronouncement by the American Academy will be of assistance to the aspiring young artist-singer in realizing the possibilities as well as the dangers that confront him. Only those who have the talent, the ambition, the perseverance and the will to succeed can hope to achieve a solid and permanently successful career.