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## MUSICIANSHIP AND THE SINGER

IN 1931 THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF TEACHERS OF SINGING issued a pronouncement on an all-important subject entitled "Sight Singing and Musicianship." It urged that singers equip themselves with a good background in musicianship, including harmony, theory, keyboard technique, and above all the ability to read music at sight. Because of the increased importance of musicianship for singers and in view of the increased demands made upon them by contemporary music, the Academy believes that a more current and amplified pronouncement on the subject may be of service to the performer, student, and teacher.

The American Academy is keenly aware of the frequent failure of singers with excellent voices to make satisfactory progress in their professional careers because of inadequate musicianship.

Musicianship may be defined as "the mastery of music." It calls for the ability to read music and to realize its intent. The performer must possess the skills to meet the technical and interpretive demands of the composition. He should seek to develop these at as early an age as possible. Programs of music study both in breadth and depth have become an accepted part of the curriculum in some secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Such training should be universally adopted. However, these courses should include the ability to *perform* the musical phrase as well as to recognize it on paper.

With the benefit of broadened and

enriched musical background due to greater study opportunities, there are now many more singers seeking to enter the singing profession. Thus the competition is greater than ever before. The young aspirant, therefore, must be knowledgeable and dedicated. If he is not only endowed with excellent vocal ability but is thoroughly trained, he may find opportunity, encouragement, and financial aid. There are contests and auditions in greater number than before and more singers are entering these competitions. To make one's mark and gain recognition as a serious young talent, all-round musicianship is essential. Even the nature of competent critics' reviews is influenced by the singer's musicianship.

The winning of first place at an audition does not guarantee a successful career. This is only the first hurdle. At this point the would-be artist must be prepared to compete not only with a host of other audition winners but with experienced artists as well. While possessing talent and potential, the singer must fully realize that in competition musicianship is vitally important and ultimate success is rarely attained without it.

Today the singer who is engaged to appear with orchestras will find that, due to the tremendous expense involved, he is allowed a relatively short rehearsal time. A good musician will not waste the valuable time of a conductor and orchestra; a poor one will be too expensive and unacceptable. The artist is no longer afforded the luxury of learning slowly, he must be a "quick study." Musicianship is essential!

Television and radio commercials afford an exceedingly lucrative field for a limited number of singers. The ability to read music speedily and accurately is a prime requisite for this specialized area of the profession.

One cannot be expected to reach perfection before attempting professional activity, but the fact remains that a regrettable number of promising singers have met failure and disappointment by plunging ahead with inadequate musical and technical preparation. A singing career should not be launched without this preparation. Teachers and managers have the responsibility to counsel patience and diligence.

In earlier times it was said that the three essential ingredients for a singer were — "voice, voice, and more voice." Today in addition to voice, good musicianship is imperative! [May, 1974]

Change of address with zip-code must be sent to JAMES BROWNING, NATS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, 250 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019



Copies of this pronouncement may be had on application to Donald Read, Publications Officer, American Academy of Teachers of Singing, 2109 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.