

A PRONOUNCEMENT OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF TEACHERS OF SINGING

ADELE ADDISON
D. RALPH APPELMAN
HERMANUS BAER
CLIFFORD E. BAIR
TODD DUNCAN
SHIRLEE EMMONS
WILLIAM GEPHART
ROBERT GROOTERS
KATHARINE HANSEL
HELEN HODAM
JOHN MCCOLLUM
RICHARD MILLER
MAC MORGAN
ELIZABETH MANNION
DALE MOORE

MEMBER, NATIONAL MUSIC COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN, DONALD READ, 2109 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10023
VICE-CHAIRMAN, SHIRLEE EMMONS, 12 WEST 96TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10025
SECRETARY, WILLIAM GEPHART, 75 BANK STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10014
TREASURER, ROBERT C. WHITE, JR., 600 WEST 116TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10027
PUBLICATIONS OFFICER, ROBERT GROOTERS, 245 OGDEN AVENUE, SWARTHMORE, PA 19081

GORDON MYERS
LOUIS NICHOLAS
RUSSELL OBERLIN
CHLOE OWEN
HENRY PFOHL
JOHN B. POWELL
DONALD READ
HARVEY RINGEL
GEORGE SHIRLEY
HERALD STARK
DOLF SWING
CRAIG TIMBERLAKE
ROBERT C. WHITE, JR.
WILLARD YOUNG

THE PROFESSIONAL CRITICISM OF SINGING

Music criticism is a specialized and relatively unremunerative field with a limited number of practitioners, none of whom is required to complete a standardized curriculum or program of professional preparation.

In this respect, critics are like voice teachers whose training is haphazard in the absence of mandated requirements of voice study, vocal pedagogy, performance experience, musicianship, language study, and repertory—all leading to some system of examination and licensing.

Some safeguards against abuse and charlatanism exist, at least theoretically. Professional organizations, wherein qualifications and ethics may be considered and possibly improved, do provide safeguards against abuse and charlatanism.

Interdisciplinary exchanges between critics and teachers of singing were undertaken earlier in this century, when the music scene was relatively simple and unencumbered by new directions in popular music or by technological advances with their profound impact on performance, communication, and reception. It should be understood that

both professions serve a broad clientele. An effort should be made through professional organizations to promote effective dialogue between teachers of singing and vocal performance critics, whose commentary appears in newspapers, popular magazines, and professional journals, or is heard on radio and television.

The absence of relevant criteria in the criticism of performance can and should arouse deep resentment. The work of critics makes a serious impact upon the lives and careers of performing artists. Sensitivity to that fact should be a constant element in the critic's consciousness. Problems of deadlines, space allocation, or other constraints and limitations should not restrict critics' attention to the facts nor the hows and whys of performance.

A critic should meet the obligations of any thoughtful journalist. First, there must be attention to factual detail—the standard “who, what, where, and when.” Then it is the province of the critic to discuss the musical material, its significance and demands, along with subjective analysis of its performance. (The latter should be understood to be mere opinion, for that is all, indeed, that it is.) A fundamental awareness of the rigors of performance should surely equip the critic with a measure

of humility, which always will act as governor of personal flare in descriptive writing. The ability to “turn a clever phrase,” though acceptable in a well-executed critique, should always be of secondary or tertiary import. Creative writing is a noble art, but it is not important in serious criticism.

Voice teachers, singers, and other musicians should be grateful if a critic displays supposed musicological erudition, while exhibiting thorough understanding of performance, its complications, and its demands. The result should be informationally sound and interpretively authentic for the reading or listening public. It should not bristle with idiosyncratic bias.

Among the relevant criteria which should be represented by any critic of classical vocal music performance are the following:

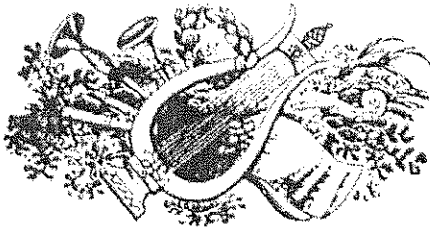
1. Familiarity with representative repertory spanning major periods of Western vocal music
2. A practical knowledge of the technical and theoretical aspects of the art of singing
3. An understanding of music history and sufficient musicological study to deal with factual and theoretical questions of style and performance

4. A broad educational background with some emphasis on music esthetics, languages, literature, and poetry
5. Specialized knowledge of acting skills and techniques, and imaginative insight for characterization and interpretation
6. A fundamental understanding of proper journalistic practices and obligations.

"Criticism" is, of course, opinion; but, if the language is abusive and confrontational, rather than factual and informative, it is easily and rightly dismissed. Many conditions militate against enlightened daily criticism. Deadlines, haste, and heavy schedules contribute to

snip or superficial judgments. Acoustical environments, personal indispositions, weather, transportation problems, or even intoxication can affect opinion. Space limitations may result in editorial emendations or cuts which distort reviews or render them nonsensical. (Understanding a journalistic technique as simple as the "reverse pyramid" can help prevent "nonsense.") Critics who also function as teachers, coaches, conductors, composers, or adjudicators must be on guard against conflicts of interest and challenges of ethical propriety.

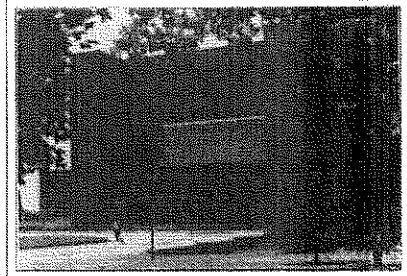
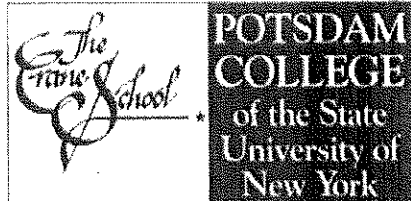
Members of the American Academy of Teachers of Singing believe that a critic has a multiple responsibility extending to the composer, the performer, the audience, the reader, and the exhibitor, without whom there may not have been a performance.



BUTLER UNIVERSITY

Music Faculty (Voice) Butler University

Assistant Professor level. Nine month, tenure track position beginning Fall, 1992 for Jordan College of Fine Arts. Teaching includes private voice and freshman voice major/principal class, plus other areas such as diction, song literature and opera, dependent upon expertise and interest. Master's degree required as well as demonstrated collegiate voice teaching and significant performance experience. Ability in a wide range of vocal repertoire required. Regional or national reputation desired, tenor or contralto voice preferred. Send letter of application, vita, college credentials, and three letters of recommendation by December 15 to: Dr. Michael Shasberger, Chair, Vocal Search Committee, Jordan College of Fine Arts, Butler University, 4600 Sunset Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46208. EOE/AA Women and minorities encouraged to apply.



DEGREE PROGRAMS:
 Music Education (B.M., M.M.)
 Performance (B.M., M.M.)
 Musical Studies (B.M.)
 Music (B.A.)
 History and Literature (M.M.)
 Music Theory (M.M.)
 Composition (M.M.)

For information, contact:
 James Stoltie, Dean
 The Crane School of Music
 Potsdam College of the
 State University of New York
 Potsdam, New York 13676
 1-800-458-1142



Scarecrow Press

**HISTORICAL VOCAL PEDAGOGY
CLASSICS**
Berton Coffin

319 pp. illus. 1989 89-6258
 ISBN 0-8108-2199-0 \$35.00

**THE FUNCTIONAL UNITY OF THE
SINGING VOICE**
Barbara M. Doscher

234 pp. illus. 1988 88-3535
 ISBN 0-8108-2110-9 \$25.00

**BRINGING SOPRANO ARIAS
TO LIFE**

Boris Goldovsky & Arthur Schoep

330 pp. illus. 1973, repr. 1980
 ISBN 0-8108-2364-0 \$29.50

**SOUND, SELF, AND SONG: Essays on
the Teaching of Singing**
Earl William Jones

231 pp. 1989 89-6419
 ISBN 0-8108-2221-0 \$20.00

Scarecrow Press

P.O. Box 4167

Metuchen, N.J. 08840

1-800-537-7107 908-548-8600