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TEACHERS OF SINGING

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PROGRAM BUILDING FOR YOUNG SINGERS

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing offers the following recommendations for the purpose of assisting the serious young singer to present himself satisfactorily, through the means of a well-planned program.

FUNDAMENTALS OF PROGRAM BUILDING

1. A program should be designed to give the maximum pleasure to the audience.
2. Variety is an important element of a good program.
3. Variety may be achieved by change of mood, rhythm, tempo, key, style, color, atmosphere, composer, language, and possibly dialect.
4. A group within itself should maintain unity in its variety.
5. A vocal recital should not exceed an hour's actual singing time.
6. It is better to reserve possible encores until the end of the program. An occasional repetition of a number, when audience enthusiasm demands, is in good taste.
7. Modern operatic arias are, generally speaking, inappropriate in a song recital program. If included, an aria should be sung in a separate group.
8. Oratorio arias are acceptable, and usually in the first group.

The experienced singer may vary his programs in countless ways, in accordance with his special taste and aptitudes. An inexhaustible supply of valuable material is available to the fastidious seeker.

Since, generally speaking, only a small percentage of young singers have real skill in foreign languages, and a still smaller percentage of the average audience understands any foreign language, it is suggested that a program be made up of songs composed to English text or foreign language songs in acceptable English translation. It is entirely possible to sing a program which obtains all the major basic points of the above suggestions, without departing from our own mother tongue. Groups which obey the rules regarding variety and at the same time "unity in variety", can be arranged in an attractive and pleasing manner.

OUTLINE FOR PROGRAM

The young aspiring singer, until he arrives at a place of matured discretion might do well at first to follow this recital program form:

I

A group of songs of the early composers, such as Bach, Handel, Purcell, Haydn; or an entire group by early English composers.

II

A group of German Lieder by one composer or a number of composers, preferably of the Romantic school, such as Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Strauss, Wolf; or a group of French songs by one modern style composer or a variety of composers, such as Fauré, Duparc, Chausson, Debussy, and Ravel; or a combination of both. There is also excellent material to be found in the song literature of Russia, Scandinavia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, etc. Songs to be selected on the basis of available, acceptable English translations.

### III

A carefully chosen group of modern American and/or English songs, by composers of the present or recent past, of which there is a great variety of choice.

### IV

A group of traditional folk-songs, authentic in their origin and the arrangement of their accompaniment; or a second group of songs by American and/or English composers.

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The type of program suggested above provides a maximum of enjoyment for the audience and also provides ample scope for the abilities of the singer without adding the burden of singing in a language foreign both to the singer and the audience.

Where the young singer is proficient in a foreign language, a variation in the suggested program might be made, and a group of songs in such language be included as a substitute for the group suggested.

The standard program, which usually includes three foreign language groups and one or more groups in English, should be undertaken only by mature and experienced singers.

## SUPPLEMENTARY SUGGESTIONS

### 1. Attitude toward audience —

To give maximum pleasure and enjoyment, it is well to have in mind the type of audience for which the program is planned. A program should be within the grasp and understanding of the audience. While it should not be "over their heads", at the same time, the practice of "singing down" to an underlevel of average audience appreciation is unwise. The singer should demand "something" of the audience, but no more than they may be expected to supply.

### 2. Stage Deportment —

Every public appearance carries with it a definite responsibility in stage deportment. Simplicity and ease of manner are the prime objectives, for these will help to bring about the poise necessary for a successful performance.

a. Remember, the singer is seen before he is heard. Walk to the place on the stage where you are to perform. Avoid extremes, such as running, dawdling, too long steps, short mincing steps, over-vivaciousness, laziness, etc. Go directly and naturally to the place on the stage where you are to perform. Do not stop to bow on the way; do not bow while walking. Reach your destination and then bow.

b. A woman always precedes a man in going on the stage or leaving it. There is no exception to this rule.

c. When recalled to the stage for a bow after a performance, go nearly to the place you occupied on the stage when performing, then bow at least twice before leaving that place. It is insufficient to walk a few steps onto the stage, bow once, and leave.

d. What to do with the hands, is sometimes a problem. While no set rule is applicable to everyone, a few suggestions might be helpful.

Hands and arms should drop loosely from the shoulders. They should not be held behind the body.

Avoid making the hands conspicuous.

If the hands touch, avoid any form of abnormal tension.

A practice of casually holding a book of words or even a folded piece of paper loosely between the fingers is followed by some singers in order to add to their poise and self-control.

e. A thoroughly competent, experienced and sympathetic accompanist is absolutely necessary for the recitalist and should receive equal recognition.