

American Academy of Teachers of Singing

Ethics Revisited

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National Association of Teachers of Singing  
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Ethical Behavior within the Voice Teaching Profession Itself

II I. Ethical Behavior Between Teacher and Student

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that:

1. it is ethical during the initial audition for teachers to be candid and forthcoming about what needs to be done to help students achieve better vocal skills; to draw out students to determine their own perception of improvement needs; to explain clearly the methods by which they intend to correct student deficiencies; to outline a plan for study and answer completely student questions about procedures.

2. it is unethical for teachers to criticize work done with students' former teachers, to insist that their own method is the "only" way to make good progress in vocal skills; to promise financial success or other extravagant hopes when not indicated by talent.

3. it is ethical with respect to fees that teachers should consider the ratio between students' resources and the necessity for consistent study; that teachers owe it to students to spell out clearly all details of financial arrangements so that students know what is expected of both parties; that teachers should not charge smaller lesson fees or offer free instruction in exchange for the recommendation of new students to the studio.

4. it is unethical for teachers to waste students' allotted time in lengthy or multitudinous telephone calls, in eating, in telling self-aggrandizing stories.

## Ethical Behavior within the Voice Teaching Profession Itself

### III. Ethical Behavior between Student and Teacher

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that:

1. students have the right to expect teachers to accept graciously their decision to go to another studio, but students should announce their decision to the teacher face to face and have an ethical responsibility to complete all financial obligations before leaving.
2. students have the right to expect a teacher not to focus critically upon former teachers, but students have an ethical responsibility not to contribute to this problem by becoming part of a cult that publicly praises one teacher to the detriment of others.
3. students have the right to expect their teachers to recommend them to professional contacts at the proper times, but teachers are not managers and should not be expected to behave as agents.
4. students have the right to expect proper behavior from teachers regarding sexual matters, but students have an ethical responsibility to behave within the bounds of propriety in that respect as well.
5. students have the right to expect from their teachers a consistent interest in their mental and physical well-being, but asking the teacher to behave like a pal or parent is unsuitable and counterproductive. The teacher's task is to provide professional training and support.
6. students should not be a party to a teacher's suggestion of proselytizing or pirating other studios.

#### IV. Ethical Behavior in Adjudication and Auditioning within Educational Institutions and Organizations

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that:

1. it is unethical on the part of one teacher to criticize the work of an associated teacher, either by suggestion, innuendo, or in any other fashion. Mutual respect for work being performed by any associated colleague is incumbent on the part of all teachers involved.
2. it is unethical for an adjudicator to make omniscient statements, for it is impossible to know all about a singer in one or two hearings.
3. adjudication statements should be constructive and never sarcastic.
4. adjudicators should not assume that they know the only correct way to interpret a song or aria.
5. whether or not an adjudicator knows the identity of a student's teacher, no allusion to methodological bias should be made.
6. knowledge on the part of an adjudicator that a student has changed from one teacher to another should be used only for constructive criticism (e.g., the technique is in transition, etc.) It is unethical for this knowledge to reflect negatively upon either teacher.

Ethical Behavior within the Voice Teaching Profession Itself

#### V. Ethical Considerations Regarding the Proper Preparation for the Teacher of Singing

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believe that:

1. any person declaring himself a voice teacher bears an ethical responsibility to possess the finest musical and pedagogical qualifications.
2. the voice teaching profession bears an ethical responsibility to

## Ethical Problems Which Voice Teachers Must Deal With in Regard to the Singing Profession

### VI I. Ethical Problems Associated with Professional Management

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing Believes that:

1. where teachers have singers who are under contract with managers and/or agents, all bear an ethical responsibility to work together in close cooperation in solving the varied and complex problems involved in the promotion of a singing career.

2. managers and/or agents, who represent direct contact between artist and public, if and when they have criticism to offer regarding a singer's work, have an ethical responsibility to discuss such criticism directly with the voice teacher. This consideration on the part of the manager and/or agent is due the teacher at all times. As a result of this joint cooperative effort, the voice teacher should be allowed a reasonable time in which to overcome the causes of the manager's criticism. If at the end of a given period, the vocal or artistic problem remains unsolved, then, and only then shall the manager assume the initiative of recommending a change of teacher.

3. it is unethical for voice teachers who advise their students in matters relative to their managers to accept any fee or commission for engagements obtained for the singer. Any contract or agreement of a financial nature, written or otherwise, made between voice teacher and student shall be based upon remuneration for lessons given, and shall in no way involve any form of reimbursement to the teacher out of the professional singing engagement contract. It is unethical for teachers to assume a managerial role in their students' professional associations.

4. any teacher receiving students on the referral of management should determine that the student is coming entirely of his own free will and is desirous of change.

5. no commission should ever be paid to, nor fee split with a manager in connection with student referral.

## Ethical Problems Which Voice Teachers Must Deal With in Regard to the Singing Profession

VIII

### II. Ethical Considerations in Dealing with Impresarios, Conductors, Coaches, Critics, and Stage Directors, including Opera Company Apprentice Programs

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that:

1. it is unethical for vocal coaches, accompanists, language and diction teachers and other assisting associates to offer advice or attempt to instruct the student in matters pertaining to vocal problems. All such matters should be referred directly and specifically to the voice teacher for proper and final solution.
2. it is unethical for language and diction teachers to advise the student on matters of style and interpretation. These phases of training should be directed by either the voice teacher or the designated coach.
3. a student should at all times feel free to bring to the teacher all problems, either professional or personal, pertaining to the former's studies or career. In turn, teachers should give to the student the benefit of their best judgment, advice and experience. It is unethical for teachers to advise a student on professional matters in a manner detrimental to the best interests of the student.
4. voice teachers bear an ethical responsibility to educate stage directors, conductors, choreographers, etc., to those conditions which are detrimental to vocal health, to work with these professionals to develop technical solutions when dramatic and vocal demands are at cross purposes, and above all to advise students whenever the situation or repertory is judged to have potentially dangerous consequence.