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## Ethics Revisited

This article is from a presentation before the National Convention of the National Association of Teachers of Singing Boston, 2 July 1992 and revised June 1996.

### Ethical Behavior Within the Voice Teaching Profession

#### I. Ethical Behavior Between Teacher and Student


The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes the following:

1. During an initial audition, it is ethical for a teacher:
  - a. to be candid and forthcoming about what needs to be done to help a student achieve better vocal skills;
  - b. to draw out a prospective student in order to determine his or her vocal self-perception
  - c. to explain the approach the teacher will take to correct student deficiencies;
  - d. to outline a plan for study;
  - e. to answer completely student questions about procedures.
2. It is unethical for a teacher to criticize work done with a student's former teacher(s); or to insist that the teacher's method is the only way to make progress in vocal skills.
3. It is unethical to promise financial success or to offer extravagant hopes which are not justified by the student's demonstrated talent.
4. With respect to fees, it is ethical to consider the ratio between a student's resources and the necessity for consistent study, and further to spell out clearly all details of financial arrangements. It is unethical for a teacher to charge reduced fees or offer free instruction in exchange for the recruitment of new students.
5. It is unethical for the teacher to waste a student's allotted time in lengthy or numerous phone calls, in eating, in telling self-aggrandizing stories.
6. It is unethical for a teacher to accept a student who is studying with another voice teacher.
7. It is unethical for a professionally active teacher, or one who has artist pupils, to compromise in any way the commitment made to other students. When accepting new students, the teacher should inform them of the likelihood and extent of such professional engagements or activities.
8. A proprietary attitude or one of secrecy on the part of the teacher is ethically questionable. Under normal conditions, it is in the best interest of students to permit audio-visual taping of lessons and to allow visitors (including former teachers), if students so request. It is not unethical, however, to restrict visitations at a time when

- a student is undergoing vocal or psychological rehabilitation.
9. Ethical teachers will allow students who wish to leave the studio to do so without recrimination or bad feelings. Moreover, when interaction between teacher and student no longer achieves results, a recommendation for such action should come from the teacher.
  10. It is unethical for teachers to be possessive or manipulative in their relations with students, nor should they seek to exact loyalty through personal favors or other questionable practices.
  11. Although the marketplace, whether popular or classical, currently tends to favor "loud" singing, it is unethical to push lyric voices into heavier repertory in pursuit of questionable artistic or commercial goals. This is especially true when teachers are dealing with immature voices, where physical development, musical growth, and the potential for artistic expression vary greatly.
  12. If, after a short period of study, it is determined that a student lacks sufficient vocal, musical, or dramatic potential, it is unethical for the teacher to encourage that student's continued intensive vocal study in pursuit of a professional career.
  13. Students have the right to expect that teachers will accept graciously their decision to go to another studio, but ideally they should announce their decision to the teacher face-to-face. Students have an ethical responsibility to complete all financial obligations before leaving.

14. 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.
15. Students have a right to expect seemingly behavior from teachers at all times. During instruction, any physical contact between teacher and student should be made only with the student's permission and

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full understanding of its instructional relevance. Physical intimacy or lewd behavior are abhorrent. Both teachers and students have an ethical responsibility to behave within the bounds of propriety.

16. Students have the right to expect from their teachers a consistent interest in their mental and physical well-being. The teacher, however, is neither parent nor parent, and to expect such a relationship is inappropriate and counterproductive. The teacher's

task is to provide professional training and support.

17. It is unethical on the part of either teacher or student to proselytize other studios.

*II. Ethical Behavior Between Teacher and Other Colleagues*

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that:

1. It is unethical for voice teachers to recruit students of other teachers

under any circumstances, either directly or indirectly.

2. In advertising one's studio, or otherwise asserting one's professional qualifications, it is unethical to claim a professional relationship with present or former students without their permission.

3. It is unethical to condemn the teaching of others. It is impossible to evaluate pedagogical results without first-hand knowledge over a substantial period of time.

4. Teachers and coaches should assume a joint ethical responsibility to assess continuously the progress of students they serve in common.

5. It is unethical for a coach to assume the role of voice teacher.

6. Derogatory remarks directed at the other by either coach or teacher are professionally unacceptable.

*III. Audition and Evaluation of Students in Educational Institutions*

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that:

1. In educational institutions, voice teachers are expected to adhere to the ethical behavior described above. It is self-evident that such scrupulous ethical behavior is essential in the interest of the student's development and the institution's reputation.

2. Members of a voice faculty who participate in live or taped auditions of would-be students for admission to an institution or



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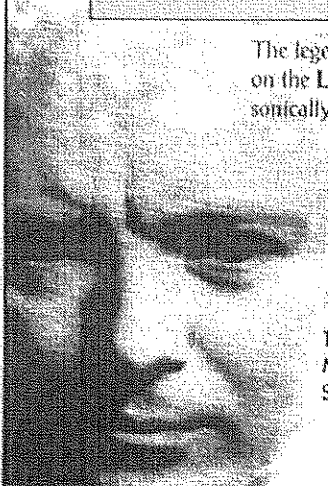
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program should ensure that relevant criteria and audition requirements are clearly stated and understood, and that applicants are treated with courtesy and sensitivity throughout this difficult and demanding process.

3. Written evaluations of students in faculty juries should be of a constructive nature. An evaluation form, developed and/or approved by faculty, can greatly assist the evaluation process.

#### IV. *The Qualifications of Teachers of Singing*

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believe that:

1. The voice teaching profession bears an ethical responsibility to provide a set of guidelines *in re* the credentials of persons who announce themselves to be voice teachers. Such guidelines should include: specific knowledge of the voice as a physical and acoustical instrument, training in musicianship, knowledge of vocal literature, and performance experience. Additional information on such guidelines may be found in the publications of the American Academy of Teachers of Singing, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, and the New York Singing Teachers' Association.
2. Institutions of higher learning involved in the teacher training process bear an ethical responsibility to provide proper courses and supervised hands-on experience for students expecting to be certified as teachers of voice.


#### V. *Ethical Concerns Related to Professional Management*

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believe 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. Cooperation between management and the teacher should benefit the artist's career. When a manager suggests a change of teachers, for whatever reason, full communication is imperative from both a practical and ethical point of view to resolve any controversy.
3. Any contract or agreement of a financial nature, written or otherwise, made between voice teacher and student shall be based upon remuneration solely 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. No commission should ever be paid to, nor fee split with, a manager in connection with student referral.
5. It is unethical for teachers to advertise either formally or informally that instruction in their studio will lead to a contract for representation by any

management, specific or nonspecific.

6. It is appropriate for teachers with good professional contacts to recommend qualified students for auditions or engagements.
7. Finally, from an ethical and practical point of view, it is imperative always to seek cooperation among the various disciplines which serve and benefit from the singer's art.

This pronouncement was generated under the Academy chairmanship of Donald Read. 

#### Voice Search Continues

Middle Tennessee State University. Tenure-track position contingent upon funding and final authorization. Tenor, baritone, or bass/baritone preferred. Teach studio voice to undergraduate and graduate students. Teach voice related and/or other courses as required by department and dependent upon candidate's expertise. Participate in recruitment. Doctorate preferred, masters required. Active performer who has demonstrated accomplishments in studio teaching and significant performance experience. Rank and salary commensurate with experience and qualifications. Letter of application referencing position #131180, complete vita, three letters of recommendation addressing position #131180, and all academic transcripts should be sent to: Ms. Marilyn Davis, Liberal Arts Faculty Recruitment, MTSU Box 546, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. Review of applications begins April 1, 1997 and continues until filled. AA/EOE employer.