

# AMERICAN ACADEMY *of* TEACHERS of SINGING

## MEMBERS

PAUL ALTHOUSE  
CLIFFORD EDWIN BAIR  
MARSHALL BARTHOLOMEW  
WALTER L. BOGERT  
GEORGE OSCAR BOWEN  
WILLIAM S. BRADY  
LEON CARSON  
EDGAR MILTON COOKE  
RICHARD DEYOUNG  
BERNARD FERGUSON  
ARTHUR GERRY  
CARL GUTEKUNST  
EDWARD HARRIS  
FREDERICK H. HAYWOOD  
ALLAN ROGERS LINDQUEST  
HAROLD C. LUCKSTONE



## MEMBERS

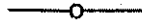
WALTER MATTERN  
J. OSCAR MILLER  
HOMER G. MOWE  
GRAHAM REED  
E. LLEWELLYN ROBERTS  
FRANCIS ROGERS  
EDGAR SCHOFIELD  
ERNEST L. SCHOFIELD  
ALFRED SPOUSE  
CESARE STURANI  
EDWIN ORLANDO SWAIN  
BERNARD U. TAYLOR  
HENRY VELD  
WILLIAM WHEELER  
MYRON W. WHITNEY  
JUSTIN WILLIAMS

ETHICS IN THE FIELD OF THE TEACHING OF SINGING



1950

# A PRONOUNCEMENT RELATING TO THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN THE FIELD OF THE TEACHING OF SINGING



## PREAMBLE

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing, since its inception, has striven to set an example of ethical procedure in the practice of the teaching of singing, through the adherence by its members to the Academy's prescribed code of ethics. In so doing, the hope has been and is entertained that it has contributed in as large a measure as possible to the establishing and maintaining of high standards, dignity and honor in the vocal teaching profession.

The purpose of the American Academy in issuing at the present time a pronouncement stating its position in the matter of ethical procedures is four-fold, namely:

To recommend and clarify where necessary, certain principles governing the employment of sound professional ethics for the benefit of the vocal teacher, students of singing and singers, as well as for the general information of the public.

To review in a spirit of understanding and respect the duties, obligations and responsibilities of vocal coaches, accompanists, language, diction and other collaborating teachers of related subjects, in their professional relationships with the teacher of singing and his students, and with singing artists.

To advocate appropriate professional relations between the vocal teacher, student, manager and/or agent.

To state the proper professional relationship between the vocal teacher and the general public.



## PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN VOCAL TEACHER AND STUDENT

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that

(1) A teacher should not only be an instructor but, as far as possible should also act as a mentor, advisor and friend of the student. It is important to both teacher and student, in order to obtain the most satisfying results, that throughout their relationship there should prevail a spirit of mutual respect and confidence.

(2) It is unfair, and therefore unethical for a teacher to assume a domineering and possessive attitude toward the student.

(3) It is unethical for a student to study with two vocal teachers at the same time. It is obvious that with a two-way approach, confusion and uncertainty in the mind and work of the student must result, and that no properly integrated objective can possibly be achieved. The pupil should not allow himself to commit so grave an error, and no self-respecting teacher should become involved in such an unethical procedure.

(4) 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 the teacher should give to the student the benefit of his best judgment, advice and experience. It is unethical for a teacher to advise a student on professional matters in a manner detrimental to the best interests of the latter.

(5) It is unethical for the vocal teacher to deduct any portion of the regular lesson fee of a student who may be responsible for the introduction of new pupils to the studio, since such reduction would constitute the equivalent of a commission paid for services rendered. Further, it is unethical for the teacher to extend financial credit to the student who may bring new students to the former.

(6) It is unethical for the vocal teacher to engage in any form of proselyting, or to make an attempt of any nature to attract to himself in any way, the student of a colleague. Unfortunately proselyting can be, and is employed in numerous, varied and subtle forms. In all social and professional contacts the teacher should be constantly on the alert, in order to avoid any gesture or action that approaches a breach of professional ethics.

It is likewise unethical for the student of one vocal teacher with or without the latter's knowledge to proselytize students of another teacher by means of direct request, insinuation or any other device.

(7) In the event of a student's decision to change from one teacher to another, accepted ethical principles of procedure should be strictly observed by all parties concerned, especially those relating to personal and professional courtesy and financial obligations on the part of the student towards the former teacher.

---

## PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TEACHER OF SINGING AND COLLABORATING ASSOCIATES

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 voice problems. All such matters should be referred directly and specifically to the vocal 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 vocal teacher or the designated coach.

(3) All financial arrangements between the student and assisting teachers should be understood thoroughly and arranged for prior to the first lesson, thus fixing the responsibility for payment, and avoiding the possibility of future misunderstanding and complications.

(4) Mutual respect for work being performed by any associated colleague is incumbent on the part of all other teachers concerned.

(5) It is unethical on the part of one teacher to criticize either by suggestion, innuendo, or in any other fashion, the work of any other associated teacher.

## PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TEACHER, STUDENT, AND MANAGER AND/OR AGENT

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that

(1) Where teachers have singers under contract with managers and/or agents, all should work together in close cooperation in solving the varied and complex problems involved in the promotion of a professional singing career.

(2) Managers and/or agents, who represent the direct contact between artist and public, if and when they have criticism to offer regarding a singer's work, should discuss such criticism directly with the vocal teacher. This courtesy and 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 vocal teacher should then 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 vocal 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 vocal 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 contracts.

---

## PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VOCAL TEACHER AND THE PUBLIC

The American Academy of Teachers of Singing believes that

(1) There is a definite obligation on the part of the vocal teacher to instruct and guide the student in the latter's professional, personal and business relationships with the public.

(2) The vocal teacher should be honest and frank in all contacts with those connected with the careers of his students, such as sponsors and prospective employers. These include, among others, an honest opinion of the student's ability and of his fitness for a particular engagement, and a careful estimate of the scope of and expenditure for publicity and other details of public performance.

(3) Although a vocal teacher does not function in the capacity of manager for his students, the obligation rests with him to do everything in his power to bring in legitimate fashion to the attention of managers, agents and the general public, the potentialities and artistic assets of any student recommended by the teacher as being ready for public appearance. At the same time it is detrimental to both singer and teacher for the latter to promote or exploit any student obviously not yet ready and equipped for public appearance.

(4) Should a vocal teacher desire to advertise himself as a teacher of a singer who in turn may have, from time to time, studied in various studios, he should make a specific statement covering the exact period during which the singer in question received from the teacher his or her vocal training. For example—"John Doe studied with Richard Roe from March 1940 to May 1943 inclusive."