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The Cross Empowerment of Singing and Acting

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THE CROSS EMPOWERMENT OF SINGING AND ACTING

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

THE CROSS EMPOWERMENT OF SINGING AND ACTING

By Stephanie C. Dean, MFA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2007

Major Director: Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates
Associate Professor, Department of Theatre

This thesis details my process in teaching a class I devised, entitled, “Singing for Actors and Acting for Singers,” in an attempt to develop a pedagogical bridge between singing and acting. In this thesis, I discuss the need for creating this course and evaluate how effectual it was. Additionally, I detail my research, curricular development and students’ responses to the material.
Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to develop a pedagogical bridge between singing and acting. Singers and actors are one and the same; they are storytellers. Yet, to the detriment of both groups they are often trained in completely different ways. Singers are expected to be pleasant to listen to; therefore, their education usually emphasizes vocal technique and quality. Actors, who do not necessarily need to be preoccupied with sounding pretty, are taught to use their voices to effectively portray characters in their storytelling. While this training includes a variety of vocal extremes, it seldom includes singing, something many actors are required to do at some point in their careers.

Vocal training for actors is often taught in groups, and usually incorporates a lot of physicality, helping actors to integrate their vocal and physical instruments. Unfortunately, many actors articulate frustration in never fully understanding their vocal apparatus. On the other hand, vocal training for singers is often taught on a one-on-one basis and frequently concentrates only on the parts of the body responsible for vocal production. This often leads to a beautiful sound that is physically unengaged and emotionally disconnected. I believe that in order for either group of storytellers to be truly successful, the two types of pedagogies must merge.

This issue is particularly relevant in theatre departments where there is musical theatre training. Musical theatre programs are usually housed in theatre departments (a
minority are housed in music departments); however, musical theatre and acting are presented as separate curriculums and degree specialties. Theatre tends to be compartmentalized into genres known as “straight” theatre (theatre with no singing and dancing) and “musical” theatre.

“I can’t sing” is a phrase commonly used by actors who consider themselves “non-musical.” The singing voice and the speaking voice are the same voice. However, traditional Western actor training does not support this assertion in its training of the actor. It offers musical theatre methodology and actor training and its methodological pursuits as parallel to one another rather than as interdisciplinary. Actors take voice for the stage – a class that has very little or no singing required. Musical theatre performers take “voice lessons” – a class that is all singing. Not realizing that indeed their singing and speaking voices are one voice, stage actors become terrified of using their so-called singing voice. Musical theatre is criticized for having “bad actors.” Therefore, there is a constant and continual divide.

My research and thesis project is based on addressing and transforming that divide by building a bridge between the two theoretical approaches and their respective practices. In fact, understanding the “singing” voice can empower actors, just as acting technique can empower singers. Ironically, singers and actors have the same problem. Actors cannot sing if they focus on the terrifying mechanics of singing in such a way that they forget to apply the techniques of acting for which they have trained. In contrast, singers cannot apply the techniques of acting in a genuine and believable manner if they focus on the familiar and exhilarating mechanics of singing so much that they forget the
purpose behind the song they sing.

My training has taken me from a musical theatre program to a theatre program that has no musical theatre department; however, musicals are performed and all students must audition for them. This has given me the opportunity to realize that the theatrical approaches that are treated as distinct are in fact two sides of the same coin. My undergraduate musical theatre training transformed my acting and singing as I learned to integrate and apply both singing and acting techniques. I have worked with many students who claim, “I can’t sing” and yet find themselves panicking as they are cast in a musical. Many of them have found empowerment in their acting studios from learning “how to sing.” Singing technique has led them to a whole new approach in vocal production giving them accessibility to a range they did not know they had.

To bridge the divides between singing and acting and musical theatre and straight theatre training, I designed a class entitled, “Singing for Actors and Acting for Singers.” This class was a culmination of my educational and professional training as well as my own experiences as a teacher. My goal was to create a pedagogical method that would teach actors to use singing and singers to use acting as a tool to better develop their craft.

Based on students’ responses to my class, I was successful. Actors went away from my class with more confidence in their singing and acting abilities. Singers left with a better understanding of connecting emotion to their songs.

It is my hope that this thesis will be of value not only to educators striving to train actors for the arts profession, but also to actors who, on a daily basis, struggle to find and work past vocal, physical and psychological blocks to sharpen their abilities.
CHAPTER 1 A Profound Epiphany

The class I created and taught in the fall of 2006, entitled “Singing for Acting and Acting for Singing” was the culmination of a long process. The process began at Emerson College, during my senior year, when I was introduced to Leonidas Nickole, now Professor Emeritus of musical theatre. By the time I entered my senior year, I had completed all of my general education requirements, studied abroad, and finished all prerequisite theatre courses required to begin my musical theatre training. I had also somehow managed to convince myself I was going to law school.

Our first assignment in Professor Nickole’s (the students fondly called him Leo) class was to bring in any song from a musical and sing it. This was a simple task. Our second assignment threw me off guard. We were each assigned a scene partner and a scene. Leo assigned me a scene from Picnic by William Inge. Specifically, it was the famous scene that begins Act Three in which Rosemary demands and then desperately pleads that Howard marry her. Our instructions were to go home and read the scene several times. When we returned to class two days later, we were expected to “perform” the scene as written. The next step was to sing the scene while the accompanist, Todd Gordon, improvised the rhythm of the dramatic scene on the piano. We were to sing the scene playing objectives and intention just as we had done when we “performed” the scene as written. There would be no preparation for this.
This very idea terrified each and every one of us. However, Leo reassured us by saying, “People, I don’t care about your singing. That’s why you have voice teachers. I don’t care about your dancing. That’s why you have dance teachers. I care about the story. That is what I am here to teach you.” He proceeded to explain to us that if we were really involved in the scene and telling the story, our singing and movement would just happen and we would not have to think about or plan anything.

Fully skeptical, I arrived in class not having any idea that I was about to experience a profound epiphany that would eradicate all thoughts of law school and start me on a path leading to where I am now. My scene partner and I got up and ran through our scene once in front of the class. We then gingerly approached the accompanist, who said, “I’m thinking a bluesy jazz feel.” That was all he told us. My scene partner and I went to the center of the room and Todd started playing a bluesy accompaniment on the piano.

I spent the first half of the scene panicking as I listened to my well-trained voice hit wrong pitches. I got flustered as I listened to Leo call out, “stop thinking about your singing! Concentrate on your objective!” When I finally came to the line, “Please marry me, Howard. Please . . .” I turned to Howard and was completely overwhelmed with the desperation that Rosemary felt. All I knew is that I had to get him to marry me or my life was over. I did not think about pitches, breath, or any other technicalities involved in singing, for the rest of scene. All of a sudden the term “objective” took on a new meaning. I understood the concept of “being in character” in a way I had never comprehended it before. Everything I had ever studied about acting was suddenly so
clear. Terms I had spent years intellectually digesting, trying to physically actualize, were suddenly tangible. Beautiful sound just came out of me. I did not wonder where to put my hands or when to walk over to Howard. Blocking and business just happened. Everything was instinctive and based on my motivation of convincing Howard to stay with me - Rosemary.

I spent the next year growing as an actor and artist in ways unimaginable as I practiced and refined my skills. Upon being elevated to a new level of learning, I was able to absorb and actualize more. I graduated from college, my acting abilities having been transformed by my training in musical theatre.

I believe that what helped my acting the most was realizing the amount of energy required to do justice to the heightened emotion of musical theatre. Musical theatre training methods teach that song is used in the musical when emotion is so forceful there is no other way to express it. I would think about the times in my life when I was so happy, upset or angry that words, physical action – nothing – was enough to express my feelings. In a musical, that is the emotional point at which a character sings. There is amazing energy behind that.

After I graduated I began teaching private voice and piano lessons. I quickly learned that while there were several method books available to help a teacher teach piano, there were not any out there for teaching students how to sing. Furthermore, it is quite possible to make it through life without ever sitting down at or knowing how to play the piano. Most of my piano students were starting from the beginning and had no knowledge of how to play the piano. However, since using one’s voice is something most
people do from birth, almost everyone is experienced in using their voice. All of my voice students came to me with a history. They each had varying knowledge, experiences, abilities, habits and blocks that had been learned at an early age.

While I immediately felt comfortable with my skills as a piano teacher, I often questioned my abilities as a voice teacher because I never knew what to expect. Teaching voice became an adventure in which every lesson I had to patiently figure out how to get through the next obstacle. After about a year of this, I began to find methodology and even sequence in what I was teaching. I gained confidence and saw my students make more progress.

A particular incident stands out in my mind. I was at the Utah State Fair in the fall of 2003 and I went to watch a hypnotist perform. One of the activities the hypnotist had the hypnotized do, was to sing like their favorite pop singer to a karaoke CD. Naturally, since these people were in a hypnotic state, they were deeply relaxed and free from their own inhibitions. Interestingly enough, almost every single one of them sang freely and clearly without obstructions. They were all dancing, physically free, and did not care how they sounded. All that mattered was that they were pretending to be their favorite pop star. They unabashedly tried to walk like them, talk like them, sing like them and feel glory and fame from the crowd. They were more concerned with their objective (imitating their favorite pop singer) than with how they sounded when they sang. Most of them sounded fantastic.

That was when I realized that singing is innate and something we as a society convince ourselves we cannot do well. If people were not raised with the idea that not
everyone can sing, reticence would not be so readily built. Fears and self-consciousness are what largely hinder the voice.

I also began to recognize the difference between vocal imitation and authenticity. Self-consciousness creates habits that enable us to imitate what we think we should sound like rather than allowing ourselves to nurture and develop our authentic voice. In training actors, it can be painfully difficult to help them find their own voice once they have become accustomed to imitation. Another problem that often arises in acting classes is that actors develop tension in their body and voice once they begin to perform. As soon as the actor begins to act, the voice goes from being grounded and authentic to being false and forced. This voice often gets dubbed “the acting voice.”

While I was teaching lessons I also taught theatre classes in a small equity theatre in Park City, Utah. I taught everything from Shakespeare to musical theatre to improvisation. Eventually I moved on to teach for six months at a junior high school when the drama teacher went on a leave of absence. Through all of this I discovered a passion for teaching; the puzzle in getting every student to understand, the strategy in encouraging them to keep learning, and most importantly, the pride and excitement felt every time a light bulb went off in a student’s head. Over time I noticed that I found the most joy in teaching my college-aged students. I decided to pursue teaching theatre at a college level and I found myself at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in the fall of 2004 enrolled in the Theatre Pedagogy program.

VCU did not have a Musical Theatre program. However, the fall of 2004 is when VCU started offering a musical theatre course as part of the offered curriculum for their
B.F.A. students. Broadway veteran, Patti D’Beck, was hired to teach the course. A musical was produced every year that I was at VCU. In the spring of 2005, VCU produced *The Civil War, A Musical*; in the spring of 2006, *A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum*; and in the spring of 2007, *Smokey Joe’s Café*.

Students in the M.F.A. program were required to do four teaching observations. For each observation, the student observed a class for around five weeks, and wrote a paper detailing their observations. The first class I chose to observe was Ms. D’Beck’s musical theatre course. I was allowed to observe the entire course to fulfill the requirements for two observation papers. Within the first two weeks of the musical theatre class I noticed major differences between teaching musical theatre in a school that had a Musical Theatre program (Emerson) and teaching a single musical theatre class in a school that did not (VCU).

One major difference was that the students at VCU were so afraid to sing. There was an audition to get into the class. So, the students had already been put in the course based on their potential to do well. However, for the most part the students did not trust their abilities. The sheer fear of getting over singing in front of each other was a major obstacle that needed to be handled before any progress could be made.

Ms. D’Beck emphasized acting above all. The students, for the most part, became comfortable singing in front of each other, largely because they were required to do it frequently. Ms. D’Beck taught no vocal technique, and yet for many of the students, vocal technique improved as they conquered their fear, which was directly responsible for causing tension in their bodies and voices.
The same semester I observed Ms. D’Beck’s class, I took my first voice class at VCU. It was a Shakespearean voice class. I had not taken a voice class that was not classified as a “singing lesson” since college. Within the first two weeks of the class I was amazed and excited to learn that many of the voice theories and applications we were being taught in class were the same theories and applications I had already learned and taught to others in “singing lessons.”

It was then that the importance of training “one voice” in a college setting began to formulate in my mind. The study of voice was being taught in two separate ways: (1) the voice as an instrument that speaks; (2) the voice as an instrument that sings. I was amazed to learn that some of the students in the class who were preparing to teach voice to actors claimed they could not sing. As I read more vocal literature I realized that there was a lot written about singing, and a lot written about speaking, and very little written about the integration of the two. What was written about the two was not among popular literature on the voice. I immediately became interested in studying the voice as one instrument that could speak and sing.

My second semester in graduate school I began working as a teacher’s assistant (TA) for Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates’ (known as “Dr. T” by all of her students) junior B.F.A. acting studio. Dr. T created a form of pedagogy that enables the actor to access their intuitive content by means of a process she calls “emotional mapping” and “rite of passage journey.” Emotional mapping teaches the actor where in his/her body emotions are housed. Much of Dr. T’s work has its roots in the African Continuum where theatre includes and integrates acting, singing and dance as one. There is no distinction between
When Dr. T teaches students to map their emotions, she uses a drum. The drum symbolizes the heartbeat; we hear our mother’s heartbeat in the womb starting the moment we are conceived. Through use of ritual work, Dr. T has her students recall “rite of passage” moments in their life. These are profound moments (often forgotten or mistakenly discarded as unimportant moments) where emotions were at their strongest. The actors allow the emotions to manifest in the body physically and then vocally. Students are able to discover where in the body different emotions live. Acting then becomes about these organic manifestations. The first semester of her studio is spent doing emotional mapping and applying it to narrative monologues. The second semester is spent applying the work to contemporary and then Shakespearian monologues and scenes.

The third semester I was a teaching assistant for Dr. T’s acting studio, I also became the vocal coach for the main stage musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. This show was cast largely based on whether or not students had the look the director wanted in his show. Therefore, several of the lead actors were weak singers and/or had vocal problems hindering free vocal production. One particular student, who played Philia, was terrified of singing. Philia’s solo song, “That’ll Show Him” was eliminated from the show. However, Philia still had to sing the song “I’m Lovely” which starts out as a solo and becomes a duet.

We began voice lessons and I worked with her on using her “speaking voice” to find her “singing voice,” a technique I developed when I first began working with voice
students. In order to clarify this procedure several terms must first be defined. There is continual debate regarding the exact terminologies of the vocal registers. According to *The Science of the Singing Voice*, by Johan Sundberg, the most common definition of a vocal register is “a phonation frequency range in which all tones are perceived as being produced in a similar way and which possess a similar voice timbre (Sundberg 49).” The unscientific definition of phonation is vocalization. Vocalization is any sound that uses the vocal cords. Timbre is the characteristic qualities of a sound that differentiates it from other sounds of the same pitch and volume.

There are several theories regarding how many vocal registers exist, including the theory that there are no vocal registers. The science behind these ideas is broad and complicated and therefore, I am unable to discuss them in this thesis. The theory I have primarily studied and currently teach to my students is that there are two main registers for the male voice: the chest voice and falsetto. For the female voice, I teach three registers known as: the chest voice, the head voice and the mix (or middle voice). Occasionally, when I am teaching a high soprano, I will also include a fourth register known as the whistle register.

Since the process of creating sound cannot be shown or visually demonstrated, students must come to identify this inner process in a non-visual way. The idea of vocal registers generates strong imagery. There are cavities throughout the chest, face and head where sound resonates. When a person sings in their chest voice, he/she will feel the sensation of vibrations in the chest. When a person sings in head voice or falsetto, he/she will feel the sensation of vibrations in the head.
A break in the register occurs when there is a shift in phonation frequency and/or voice timbre (Sundberg 50). In classical singing, register breaks are called passagio. Singers typically train to and work toward blending the sound from various registers so that no single register is identifiable. Children often instinctively access their entire vocal range during play on a daily basis. However, as physical tension develops with age, people begin having trouble moving between registers with ease.

Typically I find that women have a hard time accessing their head voice and men their falsetto. This is because in Western culture head voice tends to be the part of the voice used the least in daily expression. Essentially, I help students find their chest, mix and head voice by having them first speak in the various registers and then apply the same mechanics to singing.

I call the head voice, “The Mighty Mouse Voice.” I help the student to find this voice until it is freely accessible. Then, we have a conversation in the “Mighty Mouse Voice.” The student tells me about his/her day and begins to feel the ease in which the head voice or falsetto is produced. Then we begin to move the conversation to pitches in various registers staying on the same pitch for several sentences. The next step is to try to move the pitch up and down through various resonances on every word.

Once the student can do that without a problem, the student speaks the lyrics of the song in the tone pattern in which it is written. For example, if one line of a song jumps from a lower pitch to a higher pitch, the student will simply work on the ability to jump from one resonance to the other freely and easily. In this way, the student does not have to be concerned with pitch or how he/she sounds. The main concern is
understanding and becoming comfortable with the mechanics of switching registers.

After speaking the lyric of the song several times in the resonance in which it is to be sung, we attempt to chant the lyric on a specific pitch. The student is not really speaking or singing. Sometimes, chanting immediately bridges speech and singing and the student finds he/she is able to sing freely. Sometimes, the student struggles as his/her mind decides he/she is singing and we go back and forth between “speaking” and “singing” until a connection is made. Once a connection is made, the study becomes more about consistency in application. Needless to say, consistency for some students is easy and for others, it takes years.

During the time this student was playing the role of Philia, she was also enrolled in Dr. T’s Acting Studio. She was working on a Shakespearean monologue. No matter what acting exercises she did could not seem to access her authentic voice and instead fell back on her “acting voice.” One day in class, her voice dropped into its center and she connected with the monologue in a way she had never before. At the end of the class when we were discussing the work we had done that day, Dr. T asked the student what had happened and how she had been able to connect to her monologue. The student replied, “I think it is my voice lessons with Stephanie.”

This is when I realized just how much singing allows a person to understand the entire range of his/her voice. Our vocal expression is not naturally limited to one section of the voice and therefore it should not be while we are acting. This was the first time I fully understood that not only could acting empower singing, singing could also empower acting.
CHAPTER 2 Research

Before designing my class, I did extensive research to see what had already been explored in the subject of singing and acting. I was surprised that a lot of work in this area had already been done and yet, most of it did not appear to be a part of acting or even musical theatre curriculum. I specifically found the work of David Craig, Kevin Robison, Joe Deer, Rocco Dal Vera, Sally Morgan, Laurie Harrop-Purser, Tim Threlfall, Seth Riggs, Thomas de Mallet Burgess and Nicholas Skilbeck to be helpful in my work. I used many of these practitioners’ ideas in collaboration with my own ideas to derive and create exercises that helped me teach this class.

David Craig

David Craig was the first to pioneer an actual method to train musical theatre performers. His book entitled *On Singing Onstage* “offers a methodology to make less discomforting the terror the actor and the dancer endure when they are asked to sing what they have been previously wont to say” (Craig xiii). Craig’s book begins by broadly discussing how to use and analyze music and lyrics as a script. It then specifically breaks down the song for audition purposes, thoroughly going over the entrance and vamp, the musical space between lyrics (in which actors often finds themselves stuck), where the focus of the actor should be directed and how to insert subtext into the performance.
This book, originally published in 1978, is beginning to show its age. The methods offered are very calculated. Whereas a lot of actor training has begun to move toward a more organic approach, everything that Craig teaches is very planned, deliberate and uniform.

That being said, Craig’s work lays an exceptional foundation from which to start. Craig teaches that the lyric is the most important part of the song. Therefore, the song must be treated like a monologue. Craig consults the lyrics to find the given circumstances of the song - the who, what, when, where and why. His approach is Stanislavski based. While I find some of Craig’s work too calculating, his foundation in approaching the song from an acting standpoint became the core of my teaching.

Kevin Robison

One of the books I found when doing research, was a book by Kevin Robison entitled, The Actor Sings: Discovering a Musical Voice for the Stage. In his book, Robison states, “… singing is a form of acting” (Robison 6). He goes on to point out that in musical theatre, a song well acted is always more moving, effective, and entertaining than a song well sung. Furthermore, “Singing is like Shakespeare: it’s possible to deliver the material, sound good, and have no idea what you’re saying” (Robison 91).

I liked the idea of comparing singing to heightened text, like Shakespeare. I began to compare teaching Shakespeare to teaching musical theatre. Many people are afraid of the beautiful and poetic language in which Shakespeare writes because it is
different from how they speak on a daily basis. Likewise, people with no training fear singing because it, too, feels unfamiliar. To effectively act Shakespeare, one must rely on the text and let it play itself. To effectively sing in musical theatre, one must make the lyrics the priority and focus on the objective and reason for singing. Shakespeare uses the sound of the consonants and vowels, and the rhythm of the spoken word to augment dramatic and comic moments. This poetic use of language must be understood, and pronounced when acting his work. Likewise, songs use rhythm, pitch, patterns and different instruments in the accompaniment to create increased levels of drama or comedy and to lead to the climax of the song. All of this must be properly understood and used when singing a song.

I decided I wanted all of my students to view singing as another form of acting. A form that was buried somewhere inside of them; a form they were all capable of learning, understanding and doing if they let go of their fears. Largely, I wanted to focus on the innate nature of singing and making the unfamiliar familiar.

“Since most of us don’t experience spontaneous singing in everyday life, we are left with little in the way of personal experience from which to draw while on stage” (Robison 7). How many times a day do you walk outside, see what a beautiful day it is and wish you could run up and down the street singing about it? However, you do not do this because you know that people will think you are crazy. When I pose this scenario to my students almost all of them can relate. People might not experience spontaneous singing on a daily basis, but it is because they suppress the urge to sing. If people put
aside what society believes to be acceptable, perhaps we would have a lot more personal
experience from which to write musicals!

Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera

In August 2006, I attended the Association for Theatre in Higher Education
(ATHE) conference in Chicago, Illinois. There I met numerous people who influenced
my work; among them Joe Deer, the head of the musical theatre program at Wright State
University in Dayton, Ohio, and Rocco Dal Vera, the head of voice and speech at the
Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The two of them were writing a book called, *Acting in Musical Theatre: A
Comprehensive Course*. When I told them about my idea for a class geared on
integrating acting and singing they offered to let me use exercises from draft copies of
sections from their book. In return, I would give them feedback from my class as we
used their exercises. Deer and Dal Vera explained that this book was written with the
intention of creating a method to teach acting in musical theatre. It was largely geared
toward musical theatre students. They expressed interest in seeing if the exercises were
helpful to non-musical actors. The chapters Deer and Dal Vera gave me to use were
g geared completely toward uniting singing and acting. I used some of their material
throughout the semester and the actors really enjoyed the work. Actual exercises and
ideas I used from them will be explained in Chapter 3.
Sally Morgan

Sally Morgan was another influential person I met at ATHE. She presented a workshop on a new method she had developed to teach singing called the “Morganix Method.” According to her book, *The Morganix Method*, it “is a new paradigm of vocal technique that uses the ‘classical’ structures of diaphragmatic breathing, posture and forward release of breath, pitch and lyric. Layered on top of this solid assemble are the skills vital to non-classical vocalists” (Morgan 1).

Essentially Morgan helps her students to speak on pitch and convert that to singing. Her exercises begin by having students speak sounds matching pitches and later translate that to singing. She has a series of phrase exercises that are meant to serve as warm-ups. These phrases emphasize the different components of singing so that students are singing about technique while actually practicing it. For example, the lyrics to one of her phrase exercises is, “Raise my sternum all through this phrase” (Morgan 4A).

As a teacher, I had already been teaching many of these same concepts in variation. However, I had no real order to it. Her workshop gave me some ideas and exercises that I began using; though, the most important thing it gave me was structure. By combining some of my ideas and exercises with variations of hers I was able to better find a sequence in teaching students how to sing.

Laurie Harrop-Purser and Tim Threlfall

Laurie Harrop-Purser and Tim Threlfall are professors who team-teach in the B.F.A. musical theatre program at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. They led a
workshop at ATHE called “Move it! Say it! Sing it! Success in Sixteen Measures.” Their work was primarily based in improvisation. The objective of their work was to use word and/or image association to generate physical and emotional movement. The movement was supposed to express unusual or unexpected truth that made the performance surprising and in the moment. The workshop itself was geared toward helping the musical theatre performer discover ways to keep audition material fresh. However, I found the work to be useful not only in keeping material fresh, but also in making discoveries within the body and marrying movement and singing together.

Harrio-Purser and Threlfall brought a student with them to demonstrate their exercises. They also used audience participation. They set up three rules for their exercises: (1) Focus on your scene partner; (2) move first and then speak (or sing); (3) The movement should not make sense. The two exercises they did that most inspired me, taken directly from the handout they gave us at the workshop, were:

**Physical Association:** The leader gives an image to the group. Each member of the group moves with an emotional connection to the word. In Word Association [a game in which someone says a word and the next person says any word that pops into their mind after the previous word is said; it continues around the circle with no rhyme or reason], you don’t say the same word said to you. In Physical Association you don’t “act out” the word given to you. You move what the word gives you emotionally. The movement isn’t literal, but - inspired by the image.

**Image Baseball:** Two people stand in front of and on either side of the
person doing the monologue or song. They begin [abstract movement to] an image given to them. To make their movement different, [one person standing in front] adds in “angry wounded” energy and [the other person] adds a “sensual” energy. Whenever the person performing desires to move or gesture, they immediately do whatever they see one of their helpers doing. It should make sense to them only after they have done it – not before.

While the work presented in this workshop was too advanced to incorporate into my class, the essence of linking abstract movement to the song stayed with me. I depended on imagery and abstract movement throughout the semester, to help the students in my class connect their bodies with their voices.

Seth Riggs

Seth Riggs founded Speech-Level Singing (SLS). He sought to create a method of singing in which a singer’s voice would always be able to function easily and without strain.

Speech Level Singing provides a technique, which trains the proper vocal cord muscles and relaxes the outer, unnecessary swallowing muscles so the vocal cords can be allowed to make their proper adjustments in balance with the air. The larynx remains stable and the resonance shifts smoothly through all the bridges. The vocal cords remain closed and vibrating throughout
all their adjustments. This produces what we call a "connected sound" from our lowest note to our highest note. A free, clear and flexible voice, which can be enjoyed for any style we [singers] desire, is then available to all of us. ("Speech Level Singing")

Riggs wrote a book called *Singing for the Stars*. I first heard of this book right after I had graduated from college. I purchased his book and CD but did not completely understand the concepts in the way he presented them. However, I did appreciate his idea that singing should not be any more difficult than speaking. His work is what originally helped me formulate the words to holistically express my ideas about the voice.

**Thomas de Mallet Burgess and Nicholas Skilbeck**

Thomas de Mallet Bugess and Nicholas Skilbeck wrote the book, *The Singing and Acting Handbook: Games and Exercises for the Performer*. This book offers exercises to help performers develop the skills necessary to act and sing at the same time. Their theory states that whenever music and drama exist together in performance, their expressive properties directly affect each other. “The dramatic action, in which the events on stage unfold, and the text, which offers support and definition to the action, are transformed by the music which interprets, on its own terms, both action and text” (Burgess and Skilbeck 4). Hence, when a performer changes the way the music is sung, they also change the drama and vice versa. I used several exercises from this book throughout the semester (noted in Chapter 3).
Research Conclusion

All of the previously mentioned people influenced the development of my class in some way. David Craig was the basis of my undergraduate training in musical theatre. We were assigned *On Singing Onstage* as our textbook for Leo’s class. Leo explicitly taught that the lyrics of the song and the stories they told were the most important thing in performing a musical. In most cases, Craig is the foundation for any attempt at musical theatre training.

Kevin Robison’s book helped me articulate singing as a natural human expression. The parallel he draws between singing and acting is well articulated. The voice is meant to relay emotion. Therefore, vocal technique is truly only served when it is connected emotionally. When singers are connected emotionally to what they are saying, they are acting. Therefore, there is no difference between acting and singing. Singing is not complete without emotional connection.

Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera developed exercises that I relied on heavily throughout the course. Their book, which after Craig, is only the second attempt I have found to put methodology to musical theatre pedagogy, has well thought out exercises that can be useful to students at all levels of study. While I only used some exercises in their entirety, I modified numerous others.

I did not take anything directly from Seth Riggs. However, it is important to mention him because he is the founder of the method called “Speech Level Singing.” I first began drawing comparisons between singing and speech when I stumbled upon this term years ago. As his work is very specific and methodical, it must be studied with
someone who knows it well. Since I have not had the opportunity to study Speech Level Singing, I can only say that the title of the method alone greatly inspired me and entangled me in a web of thought.

Sally Morgan managed to articulate what Riggs made me grapple with. Her book is very simple and her ideas are geared to the amateur singer and teacher alike. Since I already had my own way of articulating many of the same things that she teaches, her work was very helpful in supplementing my own methods. I use many of her catchy warm-up tunes regularly with students. Her imagery of “blowing out the birthday candle” (detailed in Chapter 3) has been more helpful in teaching students about breath support than any exercise or book I have ever come across.

Due to the advance nature of Laurie Harrop-Purser and Tim Threlfall’s work, I was unable to directly use any of their material in my class. However, their work largely influenced my ideas of improvising and connecting to the song physically. Taking a song completely out of physical, verbal and mental context helps to find numerous new emotional, physical and verbal connections. When I have the opportunity to teach musical theatre performance at a more advance level I will look forward to implementing more of their work into my classes.

Thomas de Mallet Burgess and Nicholas Skilbeck provided me with a number of warm-up exercises that I used throughout the semester. Their work was inspirational in that it combined many variations of music and acting. Sometimes the exercises focused on rhythm. Sometimes the exercises were sung, but not with words. Their exercises created a bridge between the everyday speaking voice and the mystical singing voice.
Each of these people impacted the creation of this class. Consequently, my class was eclectic and interdisciplinary. It attempted to integrate what students inadvertently learn to compartmentalize.
CHAPTER 3 Singing for the Actor and Acting for the Singer

Course Content

The class met on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1-2:50pm for 15 weeks. The class consisted of three main sections: theory, vocal technique, and applied acting and singing. Since students would be coming from a wide range of backgrounds, it was imperative that I first establish and teach a common vocabulary to talk about rhythm, basic vocal technique and basic acting terms.

Theory

It is my belief that any actor who may come in contact with musical theatre auditions should have basic knowledge of some music theory including the ability to:

- Read notes on the bass and treble clefs and identify where those notes fall on the keyboard
- Understand simple time signatures
- Read basic rhythm
- Recognize essential music symbols and terms that help a singer musically read a song - for example, the repeat symbol, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> endings, dynamic markings, etc.

Since there are many different ways of notating and verbally counting rhythm, many students who had taken music lessons in the past had slightly varying vocabularies. I
immediately established a common vocabulary with my students in which to discuss rhythm. Throughout the course of the semester, I specifically taught them how to verbally count and clap rhythm.

_Vocal Technique_

All students needed to understand basic vocal technique since this was in part a singing class. I wanted them to begin to hear and feel the difference between proper and improper technique in their own voices and potentially recognize improper technique in their peers. The focus of the technique included:

* Proper alignment
* Correct breath support
* Understanding and accessing a wide range of resonances
* Recognizing the speaking and singing voice as one voice

I knew I was dealing with a range of students. I figured most of my students would come from one of three categories:

1. Students who regularly said, “I can’t sing,” and had no confidence in their ability or potential to do so
2. Students who felt like they “could sort of sing,” but lacked confidence in their abilities
3. Students who could sing well, had plenty of confidence but were not adept at acting the song

Some students from at least the first two categories would have harmful vocal habits that needed to be corrected and replaced with healthy ones. Examples of common
harmful vocal habits that I regularly found myself addressing included: inadequate breath support, physical tension in shoulders, arm, neck, forehead, jaw and tongue, and the inability to access various resonators and in some cases entire registers. Some students would have excellent technique but would need help with consistency. Fear of judgment, taking risks and/or being vulnerable (conscious or subconscious) would be a large issue in all three categories. These are all things that actors deal with continually throughout their training in every area of the discipline.

*Cross-Empowering Acting and Singing*

I wanted the amalgamation of cross-disciplines to be the bulk of the course; the integration of acting and singing. There would be minimal singing without acting, and minimal acting without singing or music of some sort. To ensure a common vocabulary of both acting and musical terms, we discussed past acting and music classes. We came to an agreement of which terms we would use throughout the course and what each term meant.

**The Class Makeup**

There were eight students in the class. All of them were sophomores; two were male, six were female. Of those eight students, two were completely comfortable with their ability to sing. They were mostly in the class to work on acting the song. One student I feared had vocal nodules\(^1\).  

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\(^1\) When she was tested a couple of months later, she was diagnosed with vocal nodules. The doctor believed they had been present her entire life. However, two months later she saw three specialists who re-examined her, and found that she did not have vocal nodules; rather she suffered from acid reflex and severe allergies. These problems were causing hoarseness and inflammation of the vocal cords.
This, of course, led me to believe that she had problems with her singing technique that she was either unaware of, or did not know how to fix. Another student was comfortable with her voice; however, she complained of often going hoarse when she sang. Again, this led me to believe that she was singing incorrectly. Three of the students said they were fairly comfortable with their singing voice but fear overcame them in auditions. They desperately wanted to gain confidence.

Two of them said they had no confidence in their singing voice, but really wanted to be able to sing. Of the eight students, two of them had briefly studied voice with a private teacher. Almost all of the students agreed that they were uncomfortable in the musical audition and their largest goal for this class was to be able to go to a musical audition and feel confident.

Class Progression

Week 1

I gave the class some background information about me and the previous experiences that led me to this thesis exploration. I told them I believe that people are born able to sing. Studies show that people tend to use the term “tone-deaf” to mean “can’t sing” (Sloboda, Wise and Peretz 257). The term “tone-deaf” is used very casually leading to its overuse and most people do not actually know what it really means. In fact, the medical term for actual tone-deafness is amusia and it is estimated that only about 4% of the population is tone-deaf (Hyde and Peretz 356). In his book The Actor Sings, Kevin Robison simplifies the term for the average person:
When we hear a pitch, the auditory nerve inside our ear sends an electronic message to our brain, which forwards it to our vocal mechanism, enabling us to replicate the sound. Unless there is some sort of physical problem with the auditory nerve, the proper message is always sent, making it impossible for anyone with normal hearing to be “tone deaf.” How our body responds to this message can vary, however. It’s possible for information being transmitted to the brain to be misinterpreted (just as we misunderstand communication from others), causing a singer to produce a different pitch. Here’s why: Not only does the auditory nerve hear a primary pitch that is played or sung, it hears overtones of that pitch as well. Overtones are other pitches that are related to the primary pitch but are less prominent to the ear. For most of us, the brain naturally filters out overtones and focuses on the primary sound. If our brain has not been trained to do this, we are likely to sing the wrong note. (Robison 22)

As a class we tried to come up with the definition of “good singing” according to Western terms. We decided that the general public regards “good singing” as in tune (on pitch) and loud. Babies can scream for hours on end and never run out of energy or become hoarse. That is because our voices should be able to freely work in extremes as a natural means of expression. As we age we are told that we should not sound one way, laugh in another, or talk to loud, etc. In order to conform to what we are told we should
be, our bodies and minds develop physical and psychological blocks. Rather than explore and relish our authentic voices, we feel the need to imitate what we think we should like - in tune and loud.

When we are committed to what we are saying (for instance a baby screaming because he/she is hungry), then our diaphragm and abdominal muscles work to support us and send our sound forward. However, as we grow up we begin to question our thoughts, behaviors, and sounds; the diaphragm and abdominal muscles stop supporting us when we are uncertain we want to be supported. This is largely because we begin breathing shallowly and do not engage our diaphragm. When this happens, other parts of the body jump in to try and support the sounds we are being told we should be making. Hence, the body tries to produce and support sound using excess tension in the throat, jaw, arms, neck, forehead and numerous other places. Other body parts, however, are not meant to produce vocal sound. Therefore, sounds we are afraid to make, such as singing, are resonated through excess muscular tension. Since the sound is being produced, a person may experience hoarseness and/or the inability to project or sing in tune. Singing is really the study of finding those tensions, allowing them to relax and engaging the diaphragm and abdominal muscles instead. Once these muscles are engaged, tension is often released, and the sound can be free. Sound that is free is by nature usually projected (loud) and on pitch.

Due to the vulnerability people feel when they sing, particularly if they are uncomfortable singing to begin with, it was imperative that the classroom maintain an air of exploration. All sounds were allowed and encouraged. A secure classroom
environment was immediately established with the understanding that learning to use the voice properly was a process and not a product.

The key concepts explored in week one were: relaxation, breath support and resonance. Before explaining my exercises, it is necessary to first look at how sound is supported. Two major muscle groups control respiration by expanding and compressing the lungs. The inspiratory and expiratory intercostals make up the first group. Intercostal muscles join the ribs together. The second group of muscles that control respiration consists of the diaphragm and muscles in the abdominal wall (Sundberg 27).

The diaphragm and the muscles in the abdomen are the muscles typically addressed in any voice class, singing or speaking. A common misconception is that the diaphragm is an expiratory muscle that can be pushed to send more air forward (for projection or hitting high notes). In fact, the diaphragm is an inspiratory muscle. It only contributes to exhalation in two ways: (1) by releasing its contraction, which allows air out faster; (2) by sustaining its contraction to work antagonistically with the expiratory muscles, which keeps air at a controlled flow (Stewart 246).

The diaphragm attaches to the lower rib cage, and sits like an upside down bowl. When we breathe deeply, it contracts and flattens. This causes the abdominal muscles to be pushed down and the abdominal wall presses outward. This gives the illusion that the stomach is filling with air. In order to have maximum control of exhalation (as needed when singing), the abdominal muscles must engage and the diaphragm must remain contracted for a longer period of time (Sundberg 28-29).
To begin with, I had the students lie on their backs and relax. Once they were relaxed they began to breathe deeply engaging their diaphragms. They placed a large book on their stomachs and observed the book moving up and down. Then they repeated the exercise sitting and standing. A couple of students had trouble keeping their sternums raised and therefore their breaths were shallow. Once I showed them how to properly raise their sternums they were able to feel their breath sink down into their diaphragm.

I introduced resonance by using speech. I had the students say things in their head, mix and chest voice until every student had accomplished sounds in each of those vocal registers without any tension. We talked about how resonance causes the sensation of vibration, and pinpointed where they felt vibrations in each of the resonant areas. In order to help them combine knowledge of resonance and breath support, I had the students do vocal sirens. We worked on using our diaphragms and abdominal muscles to send vibrations forward as we went up and down the various resonators. If the vibrations ever disappeared from the front of the head, face or chest, it was an indicator that our breath was not properly supporting the sound.

The next exercise they were introduced to was called the Candle Exercise. This exercise came from Sally Morgan’s Morganix Method (Morgan 83-85). While I did not use this exercise in its entirety, I relied on the imagery found in the exercise throughout the entire semester. The essence of the exercise is that the student holds up a finger, about 6 inches away from the mouth. This finger acts as a “birthday candle.” The student then pretends to “blow out the birthday candle.” By blowing out the candle the
student automatically engages the diaphragm and abdominal muscles, which enables him/her to associate proper breath support with a concrete image.

The first few days of class we used the birthday candle image and “blew out the candle” using variations of consonant/vowel combinations. The combinations consisted of the consonants B, C, CH, D, F, FL, G, H, J, L, M, N, P, R, S, ST, SH, T, TH (voiced), V, W, WH, Y, and Z. These consonants were matched up with the following five vowel sounds: “ay” as in “day,” “ee” as in “bee,” “ah” as in “father,” “oh” as in “mode,” and “oo” as in “zoo.” The idea was to use these sound combinations to “blow out our candles.” Some of the sounds were easier than others. My ultimate goal, was for the students to feel their breath consistently moving forward as much as possible on all of these sounds.

I began the acting/singing section of the course with some of Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera’s work found in their book entitled *Acting in Musical Theatre: A Comprehensive Course*. I wanted my students to understand the importance of “objective” in song as quickly as possible. Deer and Dal Vera offered some effective material in this area. Of particular use was the imagery of the song moving a musical forward.

While we may sometimes be tempted to think of a song in a musical as a snapshot of the character at a given time, it can be much more useful to see that song as a *motion* picture of an

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2 This book will on the market in 2008. Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera were gracious enough to give me advance drafts of a couple of chapters from their book so I could use some of their work in my class. Therefore, I am unable to cite exact page numbers for the material I am using.
experience. Rather than a static and unmoving two-dimensional image of a character having just one feeling for three or four minutes, a song in a musical is a living and breathing experience that a character goes through and that we go through with him.

(Deer and Dal Vera)

The image of movement rather than simply standing and singing proved exceedingly useful. Movement forces focus to be taken from the technical (and often feared) aspects of singing. This makes it particularly useful to a group of people who are already afraid to sing. Deer and Dal Vera discuss four types of journeys that a song can take: (1) winning: the journey in which a character sets out to accomplish something and is successful in reaching or obtaining his/her goal; (2) losing: the journey in which a character sets out to accomplish something and fails to reach or obtain his/her goal; (3) serendipity: a character begins with a goal in mind and ends up somewhere completely unexpected; (4) circular: a journey in which a character sets out to fix a problem, explores all areas of the problem, and concludes the problem can not yet be solved. The character has still moved forward in the attempt to make progress (Deer and Dal Vera).

We did segments of one of Deer and Dal Vera’s exercises entitled “Mapping the Trip.” The instructions were to as a class, listen to songs from unfamiliar cast recordings. For each sung performance, the students decided which type of journey they thought the characters went on and what the given circumstances of the song were in context to the show. Then they compared what they said to a summary of the musical I provided. On
the last song, the students did the above exercise individually and then compared their answers with each other.

We used the following songs: “As We Stumble Along” (*The Drowsy Chaperone*), “Gun Song” (*Assassins*), “A Quiet Thing” (*Flora, the Red Menace*), and “I’ve Never Said I Love You (*Dear World*). The song they individually evaluated was “The Story Goes On” (*Baby*). No student could identify any of these songs or musicals. Although I, too, had limited knowledge of some of them, I had found a summary for all of them and determined where the song fit into the summary. I chose the songs at random. Upon analyzing all of these songs the students came very close to accurately identifying what was going on in the story of the song and in some cases, the entire musical. On several songs they came up with varying ideas. Depending on which idea was actually played out in the musical, they were able to find the song falling into various journeys. After we discussed their ideas I read them a brief synopsis of the musical and explained where the particular song they listened to presented itself in the story. Students were amazed to find out how close their guesses had been, both on the type of journey the song took the character on, as well as the story of the song and where it fit into the musical. It was also informative for them to understand how important the song was in moving the story forward.
Week 2

The key concepts for this week were: consistency in breath support, and recognizing the speaking and singing voice as one voice. We continued working on sirens and “blowing out candles” with consonant/vowel combinations. Focus was on moving the breath forward, thereby keeping the sound forward. However, this time I added something to the exercise. I called out different registers for them to “send” the sound to. Some of the sound combinations were done in head voice, some in chest voice and some in mix. Then I played pitches on the piano and they chanted the sound combinations on pitch, being careful to keep the breath moving forward.

Sometimes they spoke these sounds as a group and sometimes they did them individually. They were all able to feel in themselves and hear in each other when the sounds were not moving forward freely. Students started making great discoveries. One student said she felt like her voice was approaching notes in different ways and she did not understand it\(^3\). This led to a discussion of head, and chest voice, and mix. She said that she never knew she had a head register or that her voice had the ability to go so high.

I have found this to be true to many actors who “don’t sing.” The discovery of a high register is something students should make in their voice and speech classes; but I have found that to many students, the concept does not completely make sense until they try to sing. Students were excited as they began to realize that they could use their voice in ways they never imagined. They also realized that if they made simple adjustments in

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\(^3\) This is a prime example of how the imagery of head, chest and mix voice can be effective in helping a student understand the entire range of the his/her voice.
posture, and/or imagery and understood little modifications going on inside their body they could more holistically access their voice.

In week two, we began talking about objectives, actions, tactics, and verbs in context to both acting and singing. We had an interesting conversation about playing emotion versus playing objective. We talked about how in life, objectives motivate our actions and emotions inform them. If we get too caught-up in playing emotion on stage, rather than letting emotion inform our objectives, acting is much harder and often comes across as “fake.”

We talked about making objectives concise and using colorful verbs when choosing our actions. I gave students a Stanislavski based character analysis that Dr. T originally created, and I had previously typed up and simplified as her teaching assistant. I was most interested in them looking at the following list of nouns and verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Relief</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Respect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nourishment</td>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>Vindication</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Enlightenment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redemption</td>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>Invigoration</td>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Tranquility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>Fulfillment</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance</td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction</td>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacification</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Sympathy</td>
<td>Sanity</td>
<td>Fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Honor</td>
<td>Revolution</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphany</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Serenity</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation</td>
<td>Realization</td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Silence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Justice Integrity Cleanliness Obedience Submission
Order Cooperation Loyalty Compliance Rest
Exhilaration Escape Closure Protection Dignity
Truth

*Of course any noun will fit under objective: a dog, life, food, water, etc.
*You can make these objectives more specific if necessary.
Example: I want Anne’s loyalty.

The following are a list of action of verbs that could be used as tactics to get your objective. The list is only a starting point. There are an infinite number of verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To urge</th>
<th>To prevail</th>
<th>To incite</th>
<th>To nail</th>
<th>To write off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To push</td>
<td>To snatch</td>
<td>To adhere to</td>
<td>To induce</td>
<td>To impale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To save</td>
<td>To nullify</td>
<td>To find</td>
<td>To quash</td>
<td>To maintain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To awaken</td>
<td>To Avoid</td>
<td>To provoke</td>
<td>To stab</td>
<td>To hide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To hurt</td>
<td>To stir</td>
<td>To lead</td>
<td>To embolden</td>
<td>To stun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To change</td>
<td>To rouse</td>
<td>To quiet</td>
<td>To resist</td>
<td>To supplicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To put on ice</td>
<td>To pick up</td>
<td>To assail</td>
<td>To marshal</td>
<td>To shut out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To hold up</td>
<td>To get in bed</td>
<td>To assault</td>
<td>To scar</td>
<td>To smash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To inflame</td>
<td>To seek</td>
<td>To bruise</td>
<td>To oblige</td>
<td>To capture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To solve</td>
<td>To subdue</td>
<td>To feign</td>
<td>To keep going</td>
<td>To surmount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pry</td>
<td>To please</td>
<td>To confound</td>
<td>To blast</td>
<td>To derail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To realize</td>
<td>To shape</td>
<td>To probe</td>
<td>To get rid of</td>
<td>To face up to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To free</td>
<td>To heal</td>
<td>To have fun</td>
<td>To wound</td>
<td>To rebel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To follow</td>
<td>To do</td>
<td>To sustain</td>
<td>To bait</td>
<td>To respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To invite</td>
<td>To give</td>
<td>To refuse</td>
<td>To flirt</td>
<td>To connect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To study</td>
<td>To win</td>
<td>To bolster</td>
<td>To play</td>
<td>To keep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To beat down</td>
<td>To level</td>
<td>To set on fire</td>
<td>To incite</td>
<td>To rationalize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To face</td>
<td>To cling</td>
<td>To please</td>
<td>To bluff</td>
<td>To discover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To seize</td>
<td>To force</td>
<td>To make</td>
<td>To avoid</td>
<td>To draw the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get away</td>
<td>To oblige</td>
<td>To mock</td>
<td>To tease</td>
<td>To tease</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Words can be added to the verb to make it more specific.
- Examples: To save myself, To get rid of Todd, To pull myself together, To feign interest, to find protection, to lead into a trap, to seek love, etc.

I then proceeded to read the “Active Verb List” from Deer and Dal Vera’s book.

Many of the verbs were the same, however, they were organized differently offering an
alternative approach for students to comprehend the information. We then did a variation of Deer and Dal Vera’s exercise entitled “Playing Verbs/Action.” The instructions for this exercise are as follows:

For this exercise use a song that everyone knows or can learn easily, but that exists outside the context of a show.

1. On full sheets of paper, have everyone in class write down three active verbs – one to a page so that they can be read across the room.

2. One at a time, have a student stand before the class and begin the song.

3. At the beginning each musical section (A, B, C, etc) have the teacher or leader hold up a verb. The singer will then play that verb/action fully through that phrase.

4. At the beginning of the next phrase, the leader holds up a new verb/action. (Deer and Dal Vera)

I did a variation on this. We used the first four lines of the song “Getting to Know You.” First, everyone scattered around the room and sang the song with the action “to squander,” which was the first randomly chosen verb. Then we came together in a circle and students volunteered to sing one at a time while focusing on the action “to squander” rather than concentrating on their singing. The students were a little nervous, but they all said that as soon as they started to focus on “to squander” they hardly noticed
they were singing. With the exception of one student, voices were completely free; no one’s voice was breathy or unsupported. The students laughed and enjoyed the exercise.

Week 3

During week three, the key concepts introduced were: basic theory, rhythm and playing the objective of the song when singing. To introduce basic theory, I created two handouts. One illustrated how to read notes on the bass and treble clefs and where those notes fall on the keyboard. The other explained time signatures, how to read note values, and several of the basic music symbols. Most of the students in the room had at least small introductions to music theory at some point in their life. A couple of students played an instrument and were already proficient in the information on the handouts. I found the book *Winning Rhythms* by Edward Ayola. This book contained lines of rhythm to clap. We began working on these exercises, clapping very slowly and counting the rhythm lines out loud. We progressively got quicker as the students picked up the skills.

We continued with our consonant/vowel sounds and worked on sirens. By this point the students were becoming consistent in sending the sound forward. We learned the songs “Getting to Know You” (*The King and I*), “I Enjoy Being a Girl” (*Flower Drum Song*), “Do Re Mi,” and “My Favorite Things” (*The Sound of Music*). This was to establish some common songs that we all knew so we could use them in exercises that came up. Most of the students were at least partially familiar with all of these songs.

We again did the Deer and Dal Vera exercise called “Playing Verbs/Action.” This time we did the exercise exactly as it was written. The students were permitted to
use any of the songs we had familiarized ourselves with; however, they all chose “Do Re Mi.”

Students commented that it was much easier to sing when verbs were being called out to them and they were focused on playing their action than it was when they focused on vocal technique. They also voiced that they were ready to sing a solo song.

*Week Four*

In week four, we spent time reviewing theory and I introduced different ways of analyzing the lyric of the song. We started off the week revisiting the music theory handouts and clapped and counted more advanced rhythm lines. We started slowly and sped up the tempo, as students got better. By the end of the week, we divided the class in half and each half took a separate line of rhythm. They clapped the two lines simultaneously.

We spent the rest of our time talking about different ways of analyzing text. We compared the song to a monologue and talked about the similarities in analyzing both. I used two key methods with which to analyze songs. One method came from Deer and Dal Vera’s book in the section entitled, “Beat Breakdown.” In this section Deer and Dal Vera analyze the song “I Dreamed a Dream” from *Les Miserable*. They musically break down the song by analyzing musical modulation, tempo change and changes in accompaniment. They use the “clues” found in the lyric to divide the song into acting beats. After analyzing the lyric and music they break the song down three times using different action verbs to approach the character’s journey in three different ways. Hence,
the actor is left with three completely different ways of singing the song depending on which actions they use.

We looked at the character analysis that Dr. T uses to analyze text. I wanted my students to find the similarities between breaking down a monologue and breaking down a song. Dr. T has the students break the monologue down into 3-4 beats. Then, for each beat, she has them find:

The Objective: I want **noun**.
The Action: To get **noun**, I am going to **verb**.
The Emotional Location: What is the primary emotion being experienced by this character in this beat?

I printed the lyrics of “I Dreamed a Dream” for my students. First we listened to the song and broke it down musically, looking at musical modulations, dynamics, accompaniment changes, etc. Then, we looked at the way Deer and Dal Vera had broken the song down with action verbs in three different ways. Finally, we tried to analyze the text based on Dr. T’s method shown above. We ran into some problems with this because songs are often more repetitive than monologues. So, we talked about the reason for repetition. In general if a person repeats something in everyday conversation, it is because they are trying to emphasize the importance of what they are saying. Therefore, repeating the same thing over and over again in the same way would not be effective. However, by saying things in different ways with new tactics, emphasis is heightened.

*Week 5*

Students started working on their first performance songs this week. They were permitted to choose their own songs (within reason) so they felt comfortable and liked
what they were singing. The songs chosen were: “Lost in the Wilderness” (*Children of Eden*), “People Will Say We’re In Love” (*Oklahoma*), “Stay With Me” (*Into the Woods*), “I Know Things Now” (*Into the Woods*), “Mira” (*Carnival*), “If My Friends Could See Me Now” (*Sweet Charity*), “Soon It’s Going to Rain” (*The Fantasticks*), and “Being Alive” (*Company*). Students brought three copies of the song lyric with them. One copy went to me. One copy was used to analyze the song with Deer and Dal Vera’s method as a model, and the third copy was used to analyze the song with Dr. T’s method as a model.

They experienced some difficulty with this exercise. I had to explain to them several times that there were no right or wrong answers and that understanding “objective” and “action” gets easier with practice; as does choosing strong and interesting actions. Also, that nothing was permanent, and if when they began working on their monologues the objectives and actions were not working, they could change them. Students feared making choices. This is the same problem that occurs when students are working on monologues in acting class. The struggle that students experienced exposed a parallel that demonstrated they were applying acting concepts to their songs.

They were assigned over the weekend to read the musical (or a very good summary of the musical) to get a clear idea of the main story, who the character was and where the song he/she sang appeared in the musical. They were also asked to write out a character analysis for their character.
**Week 6**

In week six, we worked on some more advanced rhythm lines. I also introduced them to Michael Chekhov’s psychological gesture and some of the ritual work that Dr. T uses. It was key that the students begin to understand how the physical body and voice are one.

The students were able to clap their own rhythm lines simultaneously. After working on rhythm, we listened to cast album recordings of the songs they had chosen. As a class we analyzed the accompaniment of the songs and talked about how the accompaniment helps actors act the song.

Sally Morgan has a series of vocal warm-up exercises that we began. Her warm-ups are simple melody lines with phrases that reinforce good technique. Her first warm-up is entitled, “No Doubt, No Fear” (Morgan 1A). First we went around the class speaking the words and ensuring that the breath was always moving forward. Then, we sang the line. In this exercise the phrase repeats three times before it modulates. So, we played with dynamics. The students began by singing piano (softly), then mezzo forte (medium volume) and then forte (loudly). When the students were comfortable with the exercise we added intent to each phrase. This reinforced the idea that when things are repeated they are repeated for a reason.

This presented a wonderful opportunity to discuss how to support singing at all dynamic levels. We talked about the difference between breathy, unsupported “soft singing,” and pure, supported “soft singing,” as well as the difference between painful,
unsupported, yelled “loud singing” versus easy, effortless, free and supported “loud singing.”

We spent time on work that combined principles of Michael Chekhov and Dr. T. Students were instructed to try to find three different emotional locations that occurred within their song. Then they were to come up with a gesture and a sound that made them feel that emotion. When they began to feel the emotion via the gesture and sound they would say some of the lyrics from their song. They would cycle through the gestures until they could easily go from one emotion to the next.

One student was confused by this exercise. She was playing Little Red Riding Hood from *Into the Woods*. She thought she was supposed to be coming up with a gesture and sound that would put a 10 year-old girl into a certain emotion rather then she, herself, the actor. This is again a situation that occurs often in an acting class. Students use the character to shield themselves from feeling actual emotions and vulnerability.

The next step to this process was to work on the songs as monologues. Students were to use the work they had just done with emotion to inform their objectives. We sat in a circle. Each student spoke the lyrics of their song to someone else in the circle as if they were telling their best friend a story. This was effective in helping the actors connect to their centered, authentic voices, rather then their “acting voices.” It took most of them several tries before they were able to have glimpses of complete sincerity and authenticity.
Week 7

This week was spent primarily reinforcing music theory and teaching the students vocal technique. I invented a game to help motivate the students to learn music theory. The class was divided into two teams. I drew a music staff on the board with the treble and bass clefs. One student from each team came forward and they competed against each other for one minute. I tried to evenly match the students against each other. I pointed to a line or space on the staff and then the first student who said the name of the note I was pointing to, earned a point for his/her team.

We repeated this competition with keys on the piano. Using only white keys, I would play a key and the first one to call out the correct note name earned a point for his/her team. Again they competed in one-minute increments. Everyone in the class got to play at least once in both of these games. This was effective in motivating them to learn theory. We continued with this game throughout the rest of the semester. In an effort to mix ability levels, each time we played, I changed the team members.

I continued with the Morganix Method warm-ups. The three exercises learned in week seven were entitled, “No Matter How Low,” “Raise My Sternum,” and “Spit My Consonants” (Morgan 2A, 4A, 5A). The lyric to the first exercise was, “No matter how low the pitch may go, my breath stays high and wide.” The lyric for the next exercise was, “Raise my sternum all through this phrase.” The lyric for the last exercise was, “Spit my consonants, Spit! Spit! Spit!” I added physical movement to these exercises and eventually had the students skip around the room while singing, forcing them to engage their entire bodies. They had to breathe deeply since their body was working
harder to circulate oxygen. Physical movement also increased the energy level. Several students had epiphanies finding they could sing much higher and louder when they added physical movement to their singing.

**Week 8**

This week was dedicated to working with students individually on their songs. Since we had been working the songs as monologues and focusing on just the acting, I helped them solely with the melody line, understanding the music, and singing the notes. I was able to help them identify some of their own specific vocal problems.

One student had the habit of singing (and speaking) like a young child. She talked about how she uses her child like voice as a defense mechanism. We worked on getting her to sing with her authentic voice in small phrases. By the end of our session she was pleased to find that she had sung the entire song through without her “baby voice.”

Another student sang through her nose. While the ability to use nasal resonances can be helpful when doing character voices, I want my students to have control over when they use these resonances and when they do not. So, she and I worked on relieving her nasal resonators by plugging her nose with her fingers while she sang. This forced the sound to go forward through her mouth. We then worked on talking and singing the lyric as clearly as possible until the only sounds she felt in her nose were the nasal tones “m,” “n,” and “ng.”

One student was particularly shy. She had the most pitch problems out of everyone in the class. I found that most of her pitch problems stemmed from fear of
committing fully to letting the sound out. This fear prevented her from fully engaging her diaphragm and abdominal muscles. This student made the most improvement by the end of the semester. When she unleashed her fears and allowed herself to sing out, she was on pitch almost all of the time. I worked with her by having her speak in pitches and then having her sing with the goal of using the same support to sing that she used to speak.

The student with vocal problems, at this point diagnosed as vocal nodules, had a lot of trouble with glottal attacks. She spoke and sang with glottal attacks on a regular basis. I worked on helping her realize that her acting would tell the story and she did not need to add forced drama to her voice. I also showed her how to open the glottis and begin the airflow before sound came out so there was not a chance for a glottal stop when she began speaking or singing.

The two male students in the class had stronger musical backgrounds and vocal technique. Both of them had trouble trusting their technique so they could focus on their acting. I did several exercises with both of them that involved moving their body constantly at all different levels so their brains could not easily focus on the vocal technique. When they realized that their technique was solid enough to remain even if they did not focus on it, they gained confidence.

The other three students had a combination of the issues already discussed. It was astounding to me that only a couple of females in the class knew how to access their high register when they sang. I believe this is a combined result of two things: (1) women try to avoid sounding shrill and too high pitched and therefore avoid their high register as
much as possible; (2) the high register is usually associated with opera, and the current popular singing sound tends to sit in the chest register. While pop singers often use a mixture of registers, including head voice, it does not sound high if the singer moves between registers smoothly and is vocally sound. In an effort to imitate the pop sound, women try to push their chest voice beyond where it should go. This results in hoarseness and a limited range.

*Week 9-11*

We spent both of these weeks performing songs first as monologues and then as songs. The key concepts presented were: playing objectives while singing, and connecting the body with the voice. It was a struggle for all of the students to be as genuine in performing the song as they had been in performing the monologue.

In week nine they presented their song for a critique. In week ten and eleven they staged their songs for a grade. Both times they sang their song twice. The first time was for them to release their nerves. They were told to exaggerate physical movement, allow strange vocal sounds to come out, and not to worry about pitch or how they sounded. Essentially it was their chance to warm-up with the song in anyway that helped them to feel comfortable. Students said this opportunity helped them overcome their initial fear of singing in front of the class. The second time they performed either for a critique or a grade.

During their critique sessions I spent time helping them play their objectives. We broke physical habits such as shifting weight between feet or singing with too many arm
gestures. Sometimes students used each other as scene partners. This gave them someone to whom they could physically direct their objectives.

When I evaluated them, I had them talk about what they worked the most on to improve. That helped me gage where their effort had been spent. Then the class told each other what their impressions were and finally, I gave them my critical analysis.

Week 12-13

During these two weeks, the key concepts included: implementing rhythm and music into the body, and allowing the body to feel its own natural music. We also reviewed some of the concepts already learned in application to new songs. We began with rhythm exercises from *The Singing and Acting Handbook* by Thomas de Mallet Burgess and Nicholas Skilbeck. In the first exercise we used a couple of nursery rhyme songs that everyone knew, “Mary had a Little Lamb” and “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” We went around the group and each person sang one word of the song. We worked on this until we could sing the song as a group one word at a time with flawless rhythm and blended voices. Then, we repeated the exercise in a round. When the first round made it to the second line, a round was sent around the circle (Burgess and Skilbeck 84). The exercise was great fun and required high levels of concentration.

Next we did an exercise in which the group clapped a steady beat. While the class continuously clapped, we went around the circle and every person improvised four beats of a rhythm. Then, everyone clapped clapped a steady rhythm while people took turns improvising four beats of rhythm (Burgess and Skilbeck 90). We later repeated this exercise elongating the number of beats in which students improvised.
The students chose new songs to work on. The songs were, “Show Me” (*My Fair Lady*), “September Song” (*Knickerbocker Holiday*), “I Don’t Remember Christmas” (*Starting Here, Starting Now*), “Popular” (*Wicked*), “My New Philosophy” (*You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown*), “Moonfall” (*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*), “Someone Else’s Story” (*Chess*), and “You Don’t Know This Man” (*Parade*). We worked the songs as monologues using the same techniques as before. This time we progressed at a faster pace.

*Week 14*

Since the students had requested some help in becoming comfortable with musical auditions, we worked on the students’ mainstage audition pieces for *Smokey Joe’s Café*. We talked about choosing music, working with the accompanist, and combining all of the elements of the audition. Students then practiced their entire auditions several times and, as a class, we gave each student feedback.

*Week 15*

The last week was spent expanding on the acting concepts we had already learned. We moved back into some of the Deer and Dal Vera’s work, which is based in David Craig’s work. Students rewrote their song lyrics in paragraph form placing punctuation where they thought it would go in normal conversation. They worked on being able to speak the lyric free from the rhythm of the song. This exercise drove them crazy. I was met with a lot of resistance at the mere idea of taking the lyrics out of the rhythm from which they were originally written. Students wondered what the point was when they had to put them back into the song anyway.
I explained to them that taking the song out of rhythm allows the song to become more real, makes it easier to study from an acting viewpoint, and breaks old patterns and habits that become engrained by following the same pattern over and over. I could tell they were being challenged and though they met me with resistance, they had revelations during which they were able to speak the lyric genuinely and free from the original rhythm of the song. They found new meaning in the lyrics.

It most profoundly impacted the students to watch each other. Since what they were doing felt so unfamiliar, some of them got caught up in feeling uncomfortable and not liking the exercises. However, when they saw improvement in each other, the exercises were validated. Some of the improvements students said they saw in each other included: a greater emotional and physical connection to the lyric, improved singing technique, and greater authenticity. All the performances became more interesting to watch.

The next step in this process was to add the accompaniment under the text. Since I had to play the piano underneath their performances, they were instructed to critique each other. I was able to watch them to an extent, but relied heavily on the feedback from the students.

The Final Class

On the last day, the students performed their songs. They had a chance to first sing them however they wanted - with nonsense physical movement, no care about pitches, etc. Again, the purpose of this was to allow them to get their nerves out, and to make them feel more comfortable with singing and “performing a song.” Then they
performed their songs for a grade. I required them to turn in a self-evaluation answering the following questions:

1) What are the main things you learned from this class?

2) What did you not learn that you wish you had learned?

3) In which skill(s) did you improve the most?

4) In which skill(s) do you still need to work?

5) What specific exercise that we did in class helped you the most? Which one helped you the least?

6) How has singing helped your acting? How has acting helped your singing?

7) What do you think your grade should be?

Then we talked about what they had learned throughout the semester. All of them had been required to audition for the main stage musical *Smokey Joe’s Café* the week before classes ended. They were all pleased that they had made it through the audition knowing what to expect. They had increased confidence with the entire process. Getting through a musical audition in itself had been a goal at the beginning of the semester that all of them had set. Every student voiced an increased confidence level in their singing, their acting ability and their ability to handle a musical audition.
CHAPTER 4 Reflections

I was very pleased with the results of this class. There was a demand among the students who took the class to have an advanced section offered the following semester. There was also a request that the same class be taught again for the students who did not have the opportunity to take it that semester. Given the opportunity to teach this class again, there are some things I would do differently.

I would have the students start singing earlier in the semester. All of the students were very eager to sing. For the first few weeks of class the focus on working their songs as monologues was so strong that there was very little or no singing at all. I think the class would be more effective if the acting and singing are tied together throughout the entire class as often as possible. If, on the days when I taught acting concepts, they worked for 15-20 minutes on singing with intention, or did more exercises that involved song and rhythm, the class perhaps would have been even more effective.

Lack of accompaniment was definitely a problem. I play the piano well. However, with the exception of only a couple of songs, I was not able to sight-read Sondheim or Jason Robert Brown accompaniments or the extremely fast accompaniments such as “Show Me” from My Fair Lady. It is also problematic to accompany and analyze or critique their work at the same time. In teaching this class again, I think I would have
the students choose songs from books that have accompaniment CDs that can be used for educational purposes, or I would try to hire an accompanist for part of the class.

I did record the first set of songs on my piano at home with my IPod. However, that took an unreasonable amount of time and work in relation to the bad quality of and the amount of usage we got from the recordings. Ideally, having an accompanist would be the best thing. However, for a beginning class like this one, an accompanist is not imperative if the teacher knows how to play the piano well enough to help the student realize the rhythm and melody of the piece.

One thing that worked well was relying on my students at the end of the class to critically analyze one another. I could watch them well enough while I was playing the piano to determine my own comments and assist the other students in critiquing each other. It was beneficial for them to have the critical eye at the end of the class. They began to see their own problems in others and it helped to illuminate what needed to be fixed. Being able to recognize physical and vocal habits in each other also gave them confidence.

There was so much information that ended up being presented in the class that some things, such as music theory, got dropped halfway through the class. The next time I teach this class I will assess their music theory abilities throughout the semester and break them into teams that will continue playing through the entire course. We will play these games throughout and keep a running score. At the end of the semester there will be some sort of prize for the team with the highest score. There also needs to be some theory quizzes in order to motivate the students to study the theory beyond this game.
Perhaps if I set up a routine at the beginning of the class in which the class begins doing their own rhythm and theory work while students wander into the class it would offer them more time to progress. Often the first ten or fifteen minutes of class was taken up by students needing to talk to me, or needing special help on a song, etc. Ideally, it would be wonderful to have a small keyboard in my office so I could address some of these issues outside the classroom.

Student Responses

Students were required to write a self-evaluation at the end of this class.

Responses to this class in general were positive as proven by the demand for the course to be taught again. Student responses indicated that the key outcomes of this class were:

- A deeper awareness of the vocal apparatus, breath support, body tension and proper alignment
- Increased confidence in vocal abilities and in auditioning skills.
- Identification of the many similarities that exist between analyzing and performing a monologue and a ballad
- An understanding of the difference between a forced performance and an organic one

In a class that integrated so many disciplines (singing, acting and movement), there were a wide variety of reactions to the exercises introduced throughout the semester. There was no common critical thread except almost all of the students stated that they would have liked to sing more frequently than the class allowed. Many of the
answers to the question asking which exercises were the most and least helpful directly conflicted. Some students wrote that they wanted more time spent on auditioning; some wanted more time spent on vocal technique; some wanted more time spent on acting the song. Overall, I would rely on my instinct and the makeup of my class to decide which of the exercises I would use again and which I would discard.
CHAPTER 5 The Pedagogical Relevance of Integrating Singing and Acting

The goal of this thesis was to narrow the pedagogical gap between singing and acting. I wanted actors and singers to see singing and acting as tools that helped increase skillfulness in their given areas. According to my syllabus (Appendix), my course objectives were:

- To explore the “singing voice” and the “speaking voice” as one voice
- To develop an understanding of how singing can be empowering to acting just as acting can be empowering to singing
- To come to an appreciation of singing as something innate rather than something that paralyzes the actor with fear
- To conquer some of the fear associated with singing by moving toward the goal of being able to complete a music theatre audition should the need arise

According to student responses, a bridge was created between speaking and singing. Students developed a greater awareness of their vocal apparatus. They also gained confidence in their abilities to sing and audition. All of the students reported that at least some of their fear of singing had been conquered.

In addition to getting responses from my class I also asked the students who took private voice lessons from me to assess whether or not what they learned in their singing lessons affected them in their acting classes. Some students said that it did not. But,
most of the students stated that singing had given them a deeper awareness of their voice in acting class and allowed them to be more grounded in their work.

Through my experiences, I have concluded that singing is a tool that helps actors discover and become comfortable with their voice as a whole, whether or not they intend to have careers that involve singing. Acting is the tool that completes singing by connecting it to emotion and allowing an authentic process to occur. People are born with the ability to use their voice in extremes. Depending on the school of thought to which you subscribe, singing may or may not be viewed as an extreme; but, regardless, it is an innate form of expression. When viewed as a normal expression of emotion rather than a mystical talent that only some people possess, vocal mechanics often begin to automatically fall into place.

Many actors have a superficial grasp of what their voice can actually do – even after studying several semesters of stage voice. Most commonly students have trouble accessing their higher vocal register. Students tend to purposefully avoid their higher register because it is a “funny sounding” and “abnormal” place.

By incorporating singing into voice education, students are led to a heightened awareness of their complete vocal instrument. They are unable to continue through the lessons without a complete mental and physical awareness that often escapes them in non-singing vocal classes. When learning correct singing technique, it becomes easier for students to recognize when their voice is free and when it is not. Students are often surprised to learn what the voice can do, and they take this knowledge with them to their acting class.
Likewise, singing is not complete unless it is connected to the body. As a form of expression that we are born with, singing is not something that we must think about, but rather something that we must express. Technique falls into place when we are emotionally connected to what we are signing. The objective of a song must be found and played. Singing is a form of expression. Without story, emotion or need behind it, it is meaningless.
Works Cited
Works Cited


APPENDIX

Singing as Empowerment
Tuesday and Thursday 1-2:50pm
in PAC 72
COURSE SYLLABUS
Fall 2006

Instructor: Stephanie Dean
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: stephaniecd@uva.com
Phone: 804-828-1514

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will explore the speaking voice and singing voice as one voice. Singing is innate – just like speaking. Unfortunately, it often acts as a block. The freedom that comes with physically understanding the voice in its entirety allows physical and vocal freedom that transfers to all aspects of acting and performance.

REQUIRED Materials
A note book for journaling
A writing utensil
A digital recorder or tape recorder
A small binder for handouts

COURSE OBJECTIVES
• To explore the “singing voice” and the “speaking voice” as one voice
• To develop an understanding of how singing can be empowering to acting just as acting can be empowering to singing
• To come to an appreciation of singing as something innate rather than something that paralyzes the actor with fear.
• To conquer some of the fear associated with singing moving toward the goal of being able to complete a music theatre audition should the need arise
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. In keeping with university policy, you are allowed one absence. Every absence beyond one will lower your final grade one full letter grade. You must be on time. Two late arrivals will result in one absence. You must inform the instructor of an absence for a religious holiday by the second week of class. It is not possible to make-up class work. If you are absent it is your responsibility to meet with the instructor or other class members to find out what occurred in class and to get handouts and assignments before the next class meets.

Disabilities: If you have any disabilities, please inform me so that I can make reasonable accommodations for your needs as per VCU policy.

Honor Code: Plagiarism is illegal, dishonest and will not be permitted. It is your responsibility to know and abide by the VCU honor code.

GRADING
Journal 25%
In class Exercises/homework: 25%
Performances: 25%
Participation, discussion, energy and attitude: 25%

Journal:
Journals are powerful tools when taken seriously. You will keep a journal in which you can write what we did in class, what is working/not working for you, discoveries about yourself made in class, and/or anything else you choose to write about pertaining to this class or how the work in this class is directly relating to other classes, etc. You must bring this journal to every class as we will sometimes write in it in class. On top of what we do in class, you are expected to write at least one entry a week. The journal will be collected several times throughout the semester unannounced. Please keep up with the entries. Often, writing about an event right after it occurs allows us to remember much better than if we wait.

In-class exercises and homework:
We will do in-class exercises everyday; it is expected that you participate. There will no more than 4 writing assignments (1-3 page) throughout the semester assigned throughout the semester as homework. Those might include character analysis, script analysis, reactions to a short handout, etc. You will also be expected to record your work in class and practice it outside the classroom. Practicing what we work on is equivalent to rehearsing your monologues and scene work for acting class. I ask you to put in 10-20 minutes a day of focused, concentrated practice on what we are doing in class. I will be able to tell if you are not practicing much the same as an acting teacher can tell if a scene is not rehearsed.
Performances:
There will be at least two performances in this class – probably toward the end of the semester. What they are will depend upon the progress of the class as a whole. You will be given plenty of notice as to what these assignments will be.

Participation/Discussion, energy and attitude: 350 pts.
You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in the work as fully as possible. The only way I can fully evaluate you is through your present, active, dedication and passionate participation in class. It is an actor’s job to be present and energetic in class, rehearsals and performances. I will expect nothing less.

A note on format:
Any papers you are asked to turn in should be double spaced and typed in size 12 font. You must staple all papers together or the will not be accepted!

LATE OR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS:
If the student is absent on the day they are scheduled to perform, they will receive 0 points for that assignment. The student may or may not be able to make up the missed assignment at the instructor’s discretion. A late written assignment may be turned into my box until 5pm the day it is assigned. After that it will not be accepted.

GUIDELINES FOR CLASS BEHAVIOR
Classmates will respect each other at all times and under all circumstances. Failure to do so will result in a lowered final grade. Disagreements in class are to be restricted to the issue level. Personal attacks are never appropriate and are prohibited under all circumstances. Any student who personally attacks another student will be ejected from the class. This ejection will be counted as an absence. Cell phones and pagers are prohibited in this class.

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR
I am available to schedule appointments for individual meetings as needed.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS SYLLABUS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CHANGE ASSIGNMENTS OR DUE DATES BASED ON UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES.
VITA

Stephanie Dean was born in Los Angeles, California on January 25, 1979. She grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah. During her college years, she had the opportunity to study in England and France. She earned her Bachelor of Arts, graduating Magna Cum Laude, from Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts. At Emerson she studied musical theatre. She also completed a minor in legal studies and French.

Upon graduating she moved back to Salt Lake City where she pursued work as a professional actress and teacher. She worked at a small equity theatre in Park City, Utah. She also opened her own studio and taught voice and piano. In 2003 she was invited to sing for the United States Ambassador of Singapore.

Stephanie earned her Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. In addition to her graduate work, she taught musical theatre history and performance, singing for actors, stage performance and speech. She also directed and was the vocal coach for several shows.

In August 2007, Stephanie will be an Assistant Professor of Musical Theatre at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island.