

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

The human voice originates inside us, it is personal and absolutely exclusive to a given individual. Singing is an art of coordination, and like every art form, it requires attention and patience. The 20th-century brought with itself big steps in the development of vocal pedagogy. Facts about the science of the singing voice are now more accessible, offering significant advantages to enhance traditional pedagogical methods. As a teacher, I strive to provide students with the tools necessary to achieve vocal freedom (regardless of the musical style) through the study of their *own* instrument, encouraging somatic awareness and avoiding manipulation or a manufactured vocal production.

I expect my students to experience a *hands-on* approach to voice training, so they are able to carry these tools into the practice room where, with the proper instruction, they are able to replicate what has been taught in the voice studio. My ultimate goal for the student of voice is to provide thorough guidance that will result in singers that are able to 1) research and troubleshoot technical challenges and, 2) that are able to teach others how to use their voices with freedom and artistic command. As part of this process, it is also my task to help the student to understand their instrument in terms of biological importance: our larynx after all, is the direct passage to our lungs and its primary function is to protect them. It is my believe that helping the students to get acquainted with their voice anatomy and physiology brings more awareness on how pertinent is a holistic approach to voice training.

My journey as a singer and teacher of voice has led me to learn from a variety of voice professionals in the fields of singing, theatre, speech pathology and most recently, vocology. During my doctoral studies at the University of Illinois I had the opportunity to work towards a minor in science of the singing voice, under the tutelage of Dr. Aaron Johnson, from the Speech and Hearing Science department. This resulted in my decision to attend the Summer Vocology Institute, at the National Center for Voice and Speech, at the University of Utah. This certification provided me with an invaluable array of tools that have improved my teaching in the voice studio. A multidisciplinary approach to voice habilitation is part of my teaching. Voice scientists, Dr. Ingo R. Titze and Dr. Katherine Verdolini Abbott write the following postulates for voice habilitation in *Vocology: The Science and Practice of Voice Habilitation* (2012),

Postulate 1: Every anatomical component of the voice production system has an equilibrium position that is speaker-specific and can often be *optimized* for phonation.

Postulate 2: The equilibrium posture should never be an *extreme position* from which there is only one-directional movement.

Postulate 3: Voice habilitation is the process of finding the combined *equilibrium positions* across the voice production mechanisms that facilitate the most efficient vocal output.

Postulate 4: During voice and speech production, there is a natural *oscillatory* movement around every equilibrium position. The well-habilitated voice makes use of many resonances of biomechanical and acoustic oscillators to minimize muscular effort.

Postulate 5: A *carrier-modulation* principle governs a hierarchy for voice training with oscillatory modulations; modulations that least degrade the carrier (phonation) should be mastered first. Thus the progression should be from prosody to voiced consonants to unvoiced consonants.

Postulate 6: The modulation progression is similar to what occurs in normal vocal development in children; it accommodates the autonomic reflect and regulatory systems.

Postulate 7: Perceptual-motor learning principles guide the practice regimens for voice habilitation.

I have adopted the postulates above as part of my teaching, and as part of my own learning as a singer and, student of singing. Effective voice training requires efficiency and optimization. I am committed to achieve these in ways that are student-oriented and that promote healthy, and artistically sound voice production.

Skill acquisition requires *practice*. Throughout my years as a teacher, I have witnessed how difficult *practicing* can become for a student. And I certainly experienced this myself. By understanding motor skills learning and skills acquisition processes I am able to help the students create an effective practice plan that is realistic, efficient, and that is replicable on their own. It is specially important for a young singer to have a well-structured practice plan, so that he is able to target the *what* and the *how* of voice training. Only then, can a student feel motivated and confident in their ability to practice. Since most of the work to be done in order to master the singing voice is done *outside* the voice studio, student assessment is challenging.

As mentioned above, evaluating a young artist work in the collegiate voice studio can be difficult. How do we objectively assess artistic growth? How do we properly assess work ethic with all its variables? Though I do not have the answers to all my questions, I do feel confident that, by encouraging an honest environment in the studio, both the student and myself can work *together* towards a common goal. When the student

feels that his opinion is being heard and considered, they feel more empowered to take “charge” of their vocal training. Journal keeping, voice lesson observations, studio classes, audio recordings, and other tools have proven to be effective in helping my students feel “part” of the work we do in the studio.

In summary, I am very committed to providing a learning environment that is student-oriented, and that is both rigorous, but encouraging. Given the personal nature of the voice, a teacher must work *together* with the student in an open and honest manner. It is part of my duty as a teacher to model what I would like to see in my students. In this spirit, I look forward to my continuous learning process, attending voice conferences, working on my own lessons with my teachers and coaches, and most exciting, I look forward to continue my performance career, as I wish to bring what I learned “out there” into the studio. I am dedicated to the *voice* and I will continue to share my passion for it as long as I breathe.