

## My Teaching Philosophy

Inspiration is a key word in my voice studio. I believe that every phrase sung and every breath taken, stems from the notion of being inspired. Doctors speak of inspiration rather than inhalation. In my voice studio, I adopt the idea that the inaudible breath for a sung phrase is propelled by an idea, one of inspiration. In a cyclic flow, the breath turns into tone, tone into communication and communication into true music making. Indeed interpretation and musicality are the glue that holds the technique together. The coordination of mind, heart and body works together to establish vocal technique. They are inseparable, even in scales and vocal exercises.

I advocate the *bel canto* principles of the Italian method of singing along with fact-based information stemming from voice science, vocal health and medicine, and a functional approach that is in line with anatomy and physiology. Functional training is the focus of my technical approach in the studio so that someone is not limited to singing in only one style. Discovering vocal freedom is a lifelong process that is developed through body mapping, heightened awareness, and the free flow of air through a fully coordinated instrument that is free of entanglements. The aligned body is the instrument. Finding a balance of the proper muscles used in singing is a result of the continuous flow of air and elastic resistance. For classical singing, every tone must have beauty, core, and a balance of *chiaroscuro*, which is achieved when a singer is singing with a fully coordinated and systemic technique. Finding the physical sensations is paramount, rather than listening with ones own ear for feedback. Clarity of vowels, consistency in tone quality from top to bottom, musically executed phrases, *mesa di voce*, legato line, vocal agility and overall freedom of the larynx and body are the technical goals within my studio.

Music calls us for a reason. I believe that every singer who walks through my door has a special gift and has something unique to *sing*. I like teaching the person, the artist; working on a variety of repertoire that not only fulfills a technical purpose, but repertoire that the specific singer is able to sing from his or her soul. Vowels carry the emotion, for we sing on vowels, and we sing vowel through vowel. The consonants deliver the text and are part of the legato line. The way one moves from note to note is essential for it carries a hidden message, one of transcending power. I encourage and foster the idea that when you sing something, you should *say* something. Above all, I believe in an honest sound; one that is not manipulated but released from within, connected to breath and originating from a deep place of truth and inspiration.

Depending on the learning style and personality of the student, I can fluctuate between mechanistic or holistic methods of teaching. Having a strong intuition, understanding of voice science, and an arsenal of pedagogical knowledge, combined with years of colorful and wise voice teachers of my own, I feel confident as a teacher for all types of people and singers. Indeed, I know that I can teach a student *confidence*. Trusting oneself is one of the greatest lessons learned in learning how to sing. As a teacher, I believe in giving the student my all, and allowing them to soar and not *need* me anymore.

I encourage creativity and a spirit of experimentation to help the student discover more of themselves as artists in the world. Through a positive and comfortable atmosphere, it is my hope that the student leaves each lesson as a rejuvenated, challenged, excited, and authentic artist.

- Matthew Markham