

**Dr. Christopher Arneson
Spring Meeting 2014**

- Rule "First do no harm".
- What do they do best (range, etc)? What do they like?
- What do they need to be able to do? (Legato, resonance, etc)

Questions to ask when choosing repertoire:

- Why is this piece appropriate?
- What about this piece will help my student achieve his/her goals?
- How will this piece get my student to the next level in his/her vocal development?

What are we looking for in a song?

- Range, tessitura, key, rhythm, phrase length, accompaniment and harmony, language/diction, tempo, melody, registration

Interpretive Guidelines:

- Expressive considerations, character, text and poetry, other

Tessitura

- Vocal fatigue is encouraged if the tessitura sits around the passaggio, or sits very high or low

-Key/mode

- Is this major or minor?
- Is it bright or dark? How can key affect tone?
- High sopranos like F/G/A (not E or Eb)
- Does the piece stay in one key or change?
- Does the student read sharps or flats better?
- Does one affect their intonation more than another?

Rhythm

- How difficult are the rhythms/meters?
- How difficult do they look?
- Is there a variety of rhythms?

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Phrase length and breath pacing

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Melody

- What is the movement? Step-wise, leaps?
- Is the melody more lyric or more speech like?
- Are there melismas?
- Is it diatonic or chromatic movements?
- Example: Quella fiamma – very difficult melody

-Intervals/Vocalises/Repertoire connection

Registration

-Which voice type?

-Does the melody approach passage or skip them

-In general, start in the middle of the singers range and work in a limited pitch range, then expand the range outward

Vowels opening as you go down, closing as you go up (men), pick repertoire that works with you and not against you

Accompaniment and Harmony

-How simple is it?

-Does it double the singer? If not, does it support the singer?

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Language and Diction

-Significant amount of text?

-Would the diction be a challenge?

-Would the language help to achieve any pedagogical goals?

Expressive Considerations

-Are there difficult expressive markings, such as accents?

-Extreme dynamics?

-In what part of the range are they required? (very soft high notes)

-Do the dynamics support the registration?

(Donaudy, Puccini have many markings), (Schubert doesn't)

Character

-Gender, younger/mature, narrator/multiple characters

-Find a character that can help with resonance issues, etc.

Text and poetry

-Is the text difficult to understand? Is it particularly flowery or antiquated? Is the text appropriate for the singer? Does the text engage the singer?

Other considerations

-Genre, how might this affect the way it is sung? Is there one that will help them achieve a certain goal?

-Mood

-Editions, can they find it in many keys? Is it easy to read or does it look difficult?

-Pedagogical applications

Rubrics: to help determine Elementary, Intermediate or Advance levels
(Referenced book: From Studio to Stage)

Choosing Repertoire for a Pedagogical Goal

-What do you want to achieve with this piece? (Breath, etc.)

He finds it helpful if multiple songs deal with 1 or 2 technical goals at a time. If you choose your rep wisely, you will be able to refine your teaching skills/pedagogical goals.

Songs for Improving Registration

-Limited range, melodies that skip over passaggi, chances to reset the breath regularly, descending stepwise lines (bringing head resonance down and less fatiguing), which vowels are most common and where do they fall in the singers range? Dotted rhythms and staccato encourage lightening of the voice, a piece that requires a more speech like approach in the lower range could be helpful for allowing the chest voice to help the middle range

-Examples: Caro mio ben

Songs for Improving breath/support

-phrases where it is easy to add breaths and then take them out gradually, structure where the phrase lengths build, pieces with enough time for the singer to reset the breath in between phrases, triplet rhythms to help move the breath (e.g. caro mio ben)

Improving Phonation/Resonance

-held notes, good vowel sequencing, opportunities for singer onsets. Use language as a tool to encourage resonance you want

Improving Articulation

-lots of text or a piece that allows the student to enjoy/explore the way the language works, consider how certain consonants help the voice (k raises the soft palate and g lowers the larynx)

Songs for Encouraging Expression

Songs that are Melodically/Harmonically Accessible

The "Hook" Song

-any song that will get the student interested in what you are trying to teach them, a song that sounds harder than it actually is, etc.

-more examples listed

"Dedication" – (song example)

-What is good about the song?

-What is negative about the song?

"Après un Reve", the first phrase is problematic, no melodic support, rhythm, breath that is added at the end

"In My Own little corner", how does it teach registration?

-Musical theatre songs can help the young singer learn to mix more chest and middle range, sometimes they are preferable to traditional repertoire

Transitioning Singer

Alto to sop, baritone to tenor

Re balance the middle range/passaggi, bring head voice down, dispel fear of high notes, encourage lighter tone, address confidence issues

B to t

Transition to brighter color and similar list to above

The Young Bass Voice

-young basses want to make their sound darker than necessary

The Older Singer

Composers to consider/Take a look at-

Ben Moore, Ricky Ian Gordon, William Finn, Maury Yeston, Jake Heggie, Richard Hundley, Lori Laitman, Libby Larsen, Lee Hoiby

Sequencing Songs

-Choose two or three songs at once that build toward your goal. Assign the first piece, then assign the next piece when the student has mastered the first one. This will allow the student to build skill sets as he/she goes along and will foster confidence (which is integral to learning). The songs could be related by key, subject matter/poetry, common melodic, rhythmic, or metrical patterns, etc.

-Lower larynx, look for rep with ah's or oo, g's

-to stay open: boldness/presence, excitement

-songs for onsets/offsets

-vowels and their sequencing to balance resonance

-language: French (nasals), if the larynx is high don't give nasal language

-teach the balance of resonance using the Italian vowels and transfer that into English

-identify the problem and why it happens (maybe it's rooted in their own speaking or desire to listen to themselves, etc). Look for contrast of what they tend to do. If back of tongue is stuck, we have to pick an active articulation song

-Issues:

-Shaking head as "vibrato"

-Close vowels, laryngeal position low, what is going to help keep the larynx low, con amore la madre,

-nasality in the young male voice (confusing resonance/nasality), soft palate up, larynx down repertoire

List of vocalizes, what is it trying to achieve?, use vocalizes for specific issue so that the vocalize supports the repertoire, take it from the repertoire

-Righini, register shifts, variety of keys,

-Pathways of Songs, Royal Conservatory of Music Editions (?)

-Alan Ord has a volume for bass (Songs for Bass in a comfortable range), they might need songs with motions and dotted rhythms (for a bass with a limited range), 16th century renaissance madrigals, Monteverdi

-unusual rep that no one knows (high tenor with non low range), french rep, arias for cambiata, or that were meant for alto but for men, contralto ranges but men role