

EMPOWERING THE VOICE

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I

am honored to have been chosen to be this issue's cover artist, portraying one of my favorite characters in all of opera: Roméo, in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*.

The role of Roméo is on every tenor's "bucket list." I had my first opportunity to sing this role quite early on in my career at The Dallas Opera. It was a wonderful experience. A lot transpired to get me to that point and much has happened since. I am thrilled to be presenting my Vocal Master Class at this summer's Convention in Los Angeles. This is truly a full circle event, after having been recognized as a winner of the VOCE competition over a decade ago.

My very first voice teacher and great friend, Annette Smith, was my pianist for the VOCE Recital. It is on this occasion that I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to her for all the nurturing and support she has given me throughout my development as an artist. It was her initial belief in me and my instrument that empowered me to pursue this fantastic career in the arts.

Working with young singers has become a passion of mine. I believe

that they are incredible gifts to our art form and those gifts must be nurtured in very thoughtful ways. The natural instinct must be acknowledged. The curiosity must be awakened. And, we must guide them to build a firm foundation in self-confidence through positive reinforcement.

Languaging, that is, choosing carefully tailored words when we address these young artists, becomes paramount in the building of our relationships with them. Hearing the articulation of the voice and the individual personality become quintessential to informing our guiding hand. Every singer's voice and anatomical structure is unique and must be treated as such. Metaphorically, I would like to correlate singers and their voices to cars. There are many different manufacturers and models, from the Rolls Royce to the Fiat. Each of these vehicles has a unique design, color, and set of internal workings that give us a thrill when we drive

it down the road. If you're working on a Porsche, you use Porsche parts and tools to enhance its performance. Similarly, you use Jaguar tools if you have a Jaguar in your shop. We must be flexible, and interchange our toolboxes to work with each individual voice.

Body Care is one of the most important skills we can impart to the next generation. We must help our young singers understand not only that our bodies are our Instruments, but that our instruments actually dwell within our bodies. I believe now, more than ever, that in order to align with the demands of technology and the ever quickening pace of our world, we must live as cleanly and healthfully as possible. I like to think of the body as a sanctuary. When we visit a sanctuary, we feel its unique energy and we take extra special care to preserve its natural beauty. This wisdom allows us to address our sanctuary, the body, to include proper exercise and nourish it with clean and nutritious ingredients. Then only do

our voices have a peaceful and clear structure in which they can reside.

The self is something that must be embraced. We as teachers have the opportunity to recognize this individuality in our students and are instrumental in promoting its growth. We must always encourage the positive traits of their individuality and refrain from molding them into something we feel they should be. As an artist, one must seek his or her own artistic journey. As teachers, we have the great responsibility to empower and inspire our students so that they may indeed become great artists.

I will leave you with a defining moment in my early career. While I was studying at the Juilliard School, one of my great mentors, Corradina Caporello, and I were preparing for my first major International Vocal Competition. I had been practicing my arias for months and had thrown my entire person into my work. We were in her studio for our final

coaching, and I had just finished singing Alfredo's aria from *La Traviata*. The final chords of the piano faded and I heard the sound of a score slamming shut. Signora Caporello slowly approached me and draped her arms lovingly over my shoulders. She looked me sincerely in the eyes and said, in her Italian accent, "Caro, you are a star! I cannot imagine any young tenor who can sing this better than you. Know this, and go be a winner." I took her belief in me all the way through the competition and won First Prize. Empowerment of this kind, from a single teacher, ignites an artist. In turn, this empowerment makes us fearless ambassadors of Art.

I am touched deeply to share with and celebrate all young artists, for they are indeed our future. 🎵