

The Development, Composition, and Implementation of Vocalises as a Method of Technical Training for the Adult Musical Theatre Singer

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Abstract : Classical voice training for the novice singer has long relied on the guidance and instruction of vocalise collections, such as those written and compiled by Marchesi, Lütgen, Vaccai, and Lamperti. These vocalise collections purport to encourage healthy vocal habits and instill technical longevity in both aspiring and established singers, though their scope has long been somewhat confined to the classical idiom. For pedagogues and students specializing in other vocal genres, such as musical theatre and CCM (contemporary commercial music,) low-impact and pertinent vocal training aids are in short supply, and much of the suggested literature derives from classical methodology. While the tenants of healthy vocal production remain ubiquitous, specific stylistic needs and technical emphases differ from genre to genre and may require a specified extension of vocal acuity. As musical theatre continues to grow in popularity at both the professional and collegiate levels, the need for specialized training grows as well. Pedagogical literature geared specifically towards musical theatre (MT) singing and vocal production, while relatively uncommon, is readily accessible to the contemporary educator. Practitioners such as Norman Spivey, Mary Saunders Barton, Claudia Friedlander, Wendy Leborgne, and Marci Rosenberg continue to publish relevant research in the field of musical theatre voice pedagogy and have successfully identified many common MT vocal faults, their subsequent diagnoses, and their eventual corrections. Where classical methodology would suggest specific vocalises or training exercises to maintain corrected vocal posture following successful fault diagnosis, musical theatre finds itself without a relevant body of work towards which to transition. By analyzing the existing vocalise literature by means of a specialized set of parameters, including but not limited to melodic variation, rhythmic complexity, vowel utilization, and technical targeting, we have composed a set of vocalises meant specifically to address the training and conditioning of adult musical theatre voices. These vocalises target many pedagogical tenants in the musical theatre genre, including but not limited to thyroarytenoid-dominant production, twang resonance, lateral vowel formation, and "belt-mix." By implementing these vocalises in the musical theatre voice studio, pedagogues can efficiently communicate proper musical theatre vocal posture and kinesthetic connection to their students, regardless of age or level of experience. The composition of these vocalises serves MT pedagogues on both a technical level as well as a sociological one. MT is a relative newcomer on the collegiate stage and the academization of musical theatre methodologies has been a slow and arduous process. The conflation of classical and MT techniques and training methods has long plagued the world of voice pedagogy and teachers often find themselves in positions of "cross-training," that is, teaching students of both genres in one combined voice studio. As MT continues to establish itself on academic platforms worldwide, genre-specific literature and focused studies are both rare and invaluable. To ensure that modern students receive exacting and definitive training in their chosen fields, it becomes increasingly necessary for genres such as musical theatre to boast specified literature and a collection of musical theatre-specific vocalises only aids in this effort. This collection of musical theatre vocalises is the first of its kind and provides genre-specific studios with a basis upon which to grow healthy, balanced voices built for the harsh conditions of the modern theatre stage.

Keywords : voice pedagogy, targeted methodology, musical theatre, singing

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