

Mark Stingley - Teaching Philosophy

I have been very privileged to have had numerous wonderful teachers in my life and strive to incorporate their strong influences and concepts into my own teaching. Having a professional singing career in Europe and the United States, combined with over 20 years of teaching experience has enabled me to have a broad insight into the development of young **singing actors**. Major influences include:

- W. Stephen Smith, Edward Zambara, Jerold Siena - voice teachers
- John Wustman, Walter Moore (Vienna), Dr. Julie Gunn - vocal coaches
- Christian Thielemann, Claudio Scimone, Stephen Lord - conductors
- Colin Graham, Edward Berkley, Frank Corsaro - stage directors

The *most important goal of a singer* should be to express the text and to evoke an emotional empathy and understanding by the audience. A singer's vocal technique is of course a vital tool used to achieve that goal, but it is only a tool which allows the singer to express the music and text of the music most effectively.

I employ a holistic approach with my students, engaging them in a physiological and mental awareness of their unique voice with expectations and goals clearly defined. Students are taught vocal technique through a precise sequence of vocalises and then those objects are realized throughout a student's repertoire. Administering repertoire that is significantly beyond that student's capabilities may harm his or her development and confidence. Conversely, giving a student consistently overly simple repertoire most certainly will impede or delay their vocal progress. Suitable literature should be chosen in a series of steps that lead the student to more complex material gradually, methodically and with great discernment. Simultaneously, increasing their confidence and establishing an enthusiasm for knowledge and a love of music. Addressing proper posture, inhalation, exhalation, clarity and vibrancy of vowels without compression and tension are fundamental. A teacher must coalesce an expert and evolving understanding of vocal pedagogy with the ability to discern and direct a program of study that is ideally suited to the individual student. By fostering critical thinking and a continued study of these principles in the practice room and voice studio, students acquire a more instinctual approach to their vocal technique in performance. This leads to the singer being able to deliver the text and music with the utmost emotion, expressiveness, musicality and artistry using their "unique voice"; their voice without manipulations. A healthy instrument, vibrant with an ease of production is the culmination. Furthermore, it is my role as a teacher to help the singing actor find the artistry in the music, refine their language skills and motivate the student to pursue a scholarly approach to singing.

Before pursuing my DMA in vocal performance and being the administrative assistant at *Lyric Theatre @ Illinois/Opera Department*, I taught voice at the collegiate level for 14 years as well as classes in vocal diction, vocal pedagogy and vocal literature. At the same time, maintaining a thriving private voice studio with students pursuing careers in a wide variety of styles and genres. I have worked diligently to become a professional singer and vocal pedagogue in addition to having a strong passion to empower every young student to progress beyond that which is expected to that which is distinctive and exceptional.