Educating Theatrically Proficient Singers:

The Necessity of Acting Training in Undergraduate Voice Performance Programs

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ABSTRACT

This study will have three sections: 1) outlining the imperative need to include in-depth character study in the preparation of art-song performance; 2) addressing the insufficient theatrical equipping of young collegiate singers in leading undergraduate applied voice programs and its causes, and 3) suggesting methods to advance acting training in classical voice programs. The primary goal will be to improve art song performance pedagogy and the performer's ability to emotionally communicate with the audience. The first section will demonstrate why character study is necessary in the preparation of a sound art song performance. The musical works used in this study will be *Songs of Travel* (1904) by Ralph Vaughan Williams and *A Young Man's Exhortation* (1929) by Gerald Finzi. These works provide examples of the cycle type in which a single character moves forward through time during the course of the song cycle. The second section will investigate the inadequate instruction received by students in undergraduate voice programs, concerning character analysis, by gathering course requirements from a variety of public and private universities. It will also examine the accrediting bodies that dictate much of the standardized curriculum across the majority of music schools in the U. S. such as the National Association of Schools of Music and the Higher Learning Commission. In the final section, a number of improvements will be suggested and examined according to their viability in training singers to convey both the musical and dramatic context found in the art song repertoire. The sources used in the course of this study include the scores (Boosey and Hawkes) of the aforementioned works, as well as published research on those works. Syllabi and curriculum checksheets

from various university voice programs are also used to determine the required course requirements in contemporary applied voice degrees. The accrediting processes from bodies such as the National Association of Schools of Music and the Higher Learning Commission are used in my assessment of obstacles that those processes may inadvertently present.

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Introduction

In any profession, it can be tempting for a student or novice of the craft to focus on the quantifiable aspects of his or her education in an attempt to be "correct" as frequently as possible. This presents a conflict for students in artistic fields. A student studying vocal performance can demonstrate good technique, correct diction, and strict adherence to pitches and rhythms, yet despite all these efforts, give an excruciatingly dull performance. In an educational setting, where grades must be administered, the attempt to quantify everything can be taken to extremes as students and parents look for good grades to ensure positive transcripts for future employment prospects, or to retain grade-dependent scholarships. When dealing with artistic professions however, not all aspects of a performance can be quantified.

Vocal music nearly always involves text that the singer must interpret. These texts can be derived from poetry, plays, letters, or religious texts. A singer's first step is to have a fluent knowledge of the text and vocabulary, whether or not it is in a different language, or contains outdated vocabulary in their own tongue. Then singers must ask themselves many of the same questions that actors would, when assessing each of these texts. Some of these questions should concern the background and history of the character. Who is the character? Where are they from? What significant events have defined them? What happened just before the beginning of the song that inspired this expression? The singer should also examine how the character's situation and perspective change through the course of the song. What is the character's conflict? How can that conflict be resolved? What actions does the character take to resolve that conflict? What is his or her subtext and environment? What will the character do immediately following

the conclusion of the song? If these answers have not been considered, the singer may be left without appropriate context with which to frame the song they are performing. They may express inappropriate emotions, or ascribe one generic emotion to an entire verse or song. They could be left not knowing the motivation behind dynamic changes, formal choices, or harmonic structures.

Every piece that is performed contains a perspective to be presented. One of the reasons that music performance is an art form is because of the opinions that are expressed. Given that each of our collective experiences and viewpoints is at the heart of our individuality, it stands to reason that with each artistic expression, there is a character presenting that expression for audience's consumption and evaluation. In the field of art song, this is mostly clearly visible in song cycles that feature a single character who moves chronologically through time. These characters are made more recognizable by the presence of common life events such as love, having children, war, and death. Common themes like the innocence of youth, the preservation of one's legacy, and the inevitability of death, also abound. Some examples of these include Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* (1904), Schubert's *Die Schöne Mullerin* (1823), Finzi's *A Young Man's Exhortation* (1929), or Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* (1840).

In addition to characters who move chronologically through an entire cycle, many other characters are featured in a single song, and yet, have been formed with great definition. This can be done by stating events in the character's life, the character's emotional state, and other characters with whom they have interacted. Some examples would include "Der Rattenfänger," (Hugo Wolf, 1888) "Loreley ," (Clara Schumann, 1843) or "Gretchen am Spinrade" (Franz Schubert, 1814), and any number settings

featuring characters from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*.[1] Some pieces include multiple characters that interact with one another as in Schubert's famous "Erlkönig" (1815), There are also pieces written in the third person, in which a character either serves as a narrator or establishes the unique qualities of a person, place, or event, as well as their own opinions on that subject. Regardless of the nature of the character, the singer has to know to collect, to interpret, and act appropriately on a massive amount of information. Emmons and Sonntag sum up the issue succinctly in *The Art of the Song Recital*.

> Frequently a recital accepted as "good" is – though accomplished and professional in a musical sense – aimless, conventional, and inexpressive dramatically. Recitalists' attitudes toward the art of acting in no way match their musical and vocal standards, which have kept pace with the latest research. Having no real acting tools, but determined to act, inexperienced singers substitute conventional planned gestures and facial expressions for true spontaneous feeling or, the singer may truly experience real feelings, but his lack of acting training has given him no channels of his own for its expression.[2]

One of the first challenges in a song cycle performance is determining how the individual pieces are connected. Do all of the songs share a common theme such as nature, love, or a historical event or is the cycle simply a composer's collection of favorite poems set to music? Do all the songs share a similar type of source material, such as the more modern musical theatre song cycle, *Myths and Hymns* (Adam Guette1 1964-)? Does the cycle follow the life and events of one particular character? Are there thematic elements or key relationships than transcend multiple songs in the work? This paper will examine two cycles that provide excellent models for study. Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* (1904) has long been a cycle assigned by teachers to

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[1] Johann von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung* (Berlin, Germany: Akademie - Verlag, 1957); Johann von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Berlin, Germany; J. F. Unger, 1795); Johann von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Stuttgart, Germany; Cotta'sche Buchandlung, 1821).
[2] Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2002), 87.

undergraduate singers due to the work's quality and its appropriate level of technical difficulty. Another cycle that is slightly less known is Gerald Finzi's *A Young Man's Exhortation* (1929), with texts by Thomas Hardy. This cycle is also an excellent showcase for character definition and growth. The length and vocal range of the cycle may deter some from programming it, but it is still attainable for many tenors nearing the end of their undergraduate studies.

A Young Man's Exhortation is divided into two parts. The first section begins with Hardy and Finzi encouraging the listener to take joy in the here and now. The theme of nostalgia is immediately presented and remains prevalent throughout the cycle. By the time the central character gets to the song "Budmouth Dears" he has already begun the trend of looking back on fonder times. The end of the first section explores the intense love that the character has in his young life, and that love's painful end. The second section of the cycle concerns reminiscences of better times, and friends that have passed away. The cycle has a fitting conclusion as the character nears his own death and urges the reader to live on joyfully and not spare concern for the dead, as he had previously done. The cycle's contents appear in Table 1.

A Young Man's Exhortation (1929) Gerald Finzi	
1.	A Young Man's Exhortation
2.	Ditty
3.	Budmouth Dears
4.	Her Temple
5.	The Comet at Yell'ham
6.	Shortening Days
7.	The Sigh
8.	Former Beauties
9.	Transformations
10.	The Dance Continued

Table 1: *A Young Man's Exhortation*

Songs of Travel follows a young man who fancies life on the open road, and dreams of living in concert with nature, without any attachments; he neither seeks "hope, nor love, nor a friend to know me." As the cycle continues, the character makes some attempt to embrace more normalcy. He falls in love, and attempts to show his beloved that the life he leads can be wonderful for her as well. Eventually he can't abide this lifestyle, and leaves her. While he is riddled with guilt in the short term, he does find his way back to a familiar communion with nature. The cycle concludes with the character content with the course of his life and his legacy because his words and songs will live on. Individual songs are frequently performed out of context as there is obvious difficulty in only performing the whole cycle rather than just a part. As with any cycle, there is a danger in only looking at one of the pieces. If a singer looks only at the most often

performed song “Vagabond,” they may see only a brutish loner. The song that immediately follows, “Let Beauty Awake” shows a much gentler side of the character and provides a context for the character’s reasoning to eternally commune with nature.

Songs of Travel (1904) Ralph Vaughan Williams	
1.	The Vagabond
2.	Let Beauty Awake
3.	The Roadside Fire
4.	Youth and Love
5.	In Dreams
6.	The Infinite Shining Heavens
7.	Whither Shall I Wander
8.	Bright is The Ring of Words
9.	I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope

Table 2: *Songs of Travel*

The themes of nostalgia and reminiscence permeate this cycle. It is the duty of performer to recognize the single character nature of the cycle, and to have a knowledge of all the documented events in the character’s life in order to understand the context of those themes. For instance, if a singer performs “Her Temple” without studying “The Sigh” he is completely unaware that despite a true and intense love, the character always had doubts about his relationship. Both of these cycles demonstrate great depth of character, as well as considerable growth throughout the course of the work, having experienced being in love, seeing different parts of the world, and approaching his inevitable death. It is of vital importance for the singer to be able to recognize the single

character that spans the work and to study and portray that character's emotional and spiritual growth. Students in undergraduate voice programs often find themselves ill equipped to handle challenges such as these. When studying repertoire in the private studio, it is almost always the primary goal of the vocal student and teacher to ensure that the words, pitches, rhythms, and diction are correct. It is frequently only after that has been accomplished that matters of character are addressed (if at all). While opera and oratorio characters are usually studied, the theatrical component of art song repertoire is rarely the primary focus of a lesson that the student receives.

Due to the number of courses prescribed for vocal performance majors to meet National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) standards, a number of universities around the country do not require any theatrical training from their undergraduate voice majors. These include, but are not limited to, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Curtis Institute of Music, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Indiana University, University of North Texas, and Arizona State University.[3] It is rarely the case that an entire institution disregards theatrical training as unnecessary, and omits it from their program. There does seem to be a bias that theatrical training is less important than other

[3] Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, "CCM Program Outlines," http://ccm.uc.edu/content/dam/ccm/docs/CCMprogramoutlines.pdf.; Curtis Institute of Music, "Degree and Diploma Programs," http://www.curtis.edu/academics/degree-programs/bachelor-of-music2/. ; San Francisco Conservatory of Music, "Curriculum: Voice Undergrads," https://sfcm.edu/departments/voice/curriculum-voice-undergraduates.; Indiana University, "Bachelor of Music , Voice," http://www.music.indiana.edu/degrees/undergraduate/requirements/BMVoice.2014%20reqs.pdf.; University of North Texas, "Performance (Specialization: Voice), BM," http://music.unt.edu/sites/all/uploads/advising/2014/2014-PERF-VOCAL.pdf.; Arizona State University, "2016-2017 Major Map Performance (Voice) (B MUS)," https://webapp4.asu.edu/programs/t5/roadmaps/ASU00/FAMUSPVBM/null/ALL/2016?init=false&nopassive=true.

components of the education such as history, theory, technique, and diction. Given the vast amount of information that a young singer must consume during their degree program, subjects that seem less important may not make the cut. There is also the matter of accrediting bodies that limit the amount of credit hours a university can require, so as to avoid saddling students with massive debt accrued over a five or six-year program. In a field as competitive as the arts, it is equally irresponsible to draw out degree programs for longer and longer periods of time, when it is unrealistic that an entire graduating class will go on to find financially lucrative careers in their field. It is imperative for the collegiate community to find ways to incorporate theatrical training into their programs without sacrificing other valuable topics, sharply increasing the required credit hours a student must complete to graduate, and remaining in compliance with the two major accrediting bodies: the Higher Learning Commission and National Associations of Schools of Music.

Chapter 1:

The Necessity of Teaching Character Analysis in Art Song Pedagogy:

Two Song Cycle Characters as Cases in Point

Realistic Expectations of Undergraduate Voice Students

It is not realistic for a student in the infancy of their musical education to be expected to write a dissertation on the characters in each piece of music they study. It is also unrealistic to expect a studio instructor to provide all of this information to a student for each piece assigned. There should be an expectation that students include a basic level of character analysis in their repertoire study. A combination of good instruction and precise research from the student can enable the student to have a satisfactory understanding of the characters in their pieces. Below are some examples of questions that are appropriate to ask about each character that a student portrays:

1. Who am I?
2. What are my physical characteristics?
3. What are my relationships to the other characters?
4. What is my character's main objective and what obstacles get in my way?
5. How does the music define my character?

Once those questions have been answered, it is important to ascertain information specific to each song being performed as that character:

1. What is my main objective in this song?
2. What musical elements can be found in the song that might help define my interpretation of the song and my character?
3. How do the other characters or the environment affect how I am feeling?
4. What happened to my character just prior to the song?
5. What is my emotional/physical state as the song begins?
6. If there is an introduction to the song, what happens during that music which allows the first word I sing to grow out of it? How do I feel at this point?

7. Do my emotions change during the course of the song? If so, how and why?
8. If there are interludes or a postlude in the song, how do I feel during those sections?
9. Where is your character going or what is he planning to do at the conclusion of the song?
10. What is the actual physical environment that your character sees and/or feels during the song? [4]

In cases where selections from a song cycle are performed, it is necessary for the student to review all of the pieces from that cycle, as the events from those songs will impact the characterization in other pieces. At the least, it can inform the singer of generic information, for example, the number of characters portrayed in a given song cycle. Similarly, analysis of the entire song cycle can inform specific emotional changes. For example, if a performer sings "Former Beauties" from Finzi's *A Young Man's Exhortation*, without paying any attention to the contents of "Budmouth Dears," they may miss the significance of the 6/8 time signature, or how descriptions of the same people change between the two songs. Investigating the events in the composer's (or poet's) life at the time of composition may also prove valuable to a performer, as well as any significant historical context. The more detail that a performer can inject into his character, the more clear and purposeful their performance can be. As Stanislavski puts it "The clearer all these circumstances are the richer will be your imagination concerning them and, consequently, your way of rendering this song will be altered."[5]

[4] Dale Dreyfoos, "Character Analysis and Emotional Imagery Plan" (Advanced Techniques for the Singing Actor, Arizona State University, 2017).
[5] Constantin Stanislavski and Pavel Rumyantsev, *Stanislavski on Opera* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1975), 16.

A Young Man's Exhortation

The literary source material is an excellent place to begin one's research into an art song, or song cycle. In the case of *A Young Man's Exhortation*, composer Gerald Finzi (1901-1956) chose to use poetry from a variety of collections, though all by the same poet (Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928). The ordering of these pieces was intentional, unlike many of Finzi's later cycles that were grouped together by colleagues after his untimely death in 1956. The division of the cycle into two sections is also by the intention of the composer. Finzi includes clues to the themes of each part with a Latin epigraph preceding the first song of each section in the original publication. In the beginning of the first section, he wrote the Latin phrases "Mane floreat et transeat." This translates roughly to "in the morning he may pass." The second section was marked with "Vespere decidat, induret, et arescat" or "By evening, withered and dry." These are taken from the biblical book of Psalms 89:6.[6] Before looking at any of the piece's text, Finzi has chosen to set the two parts in two different times in the character's life. Some scholars, however, do not believe that this work should be considered a song-cycle. Trevor Hold's argues "these sequences are not song-cycles in the accepted sense. Though assembled with great care, there is no story line and no overall structural device, such as recurrent motives or motto themes, or musical cross-references."[7] Hold is correct that an overall structural device or repeated musical motives are absent; however, the connection in meter from the end of the first section to the beginning of the second section would

[6] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 405.

[7] Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), 404.

suggest chronology. An in-depth readying of the texts also details a series of events that strongly suggest chronology. To support his claims, Hold notes a quote from Finzi "Although designed as a cycle the two parts or any of the numbers can be sung separately." The fact that Finzi permits the performance of sections of the overall work is hardly grounds to say that the songs have no connection to one another. To provide another example, in Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* there are a number of musical and rhythmic motives that connect the work together, yet in the final song the score says that it should only be performed when the entire cycle is to be performed. This would seem to suggest that Vaughan Williams approved of any of the other songs being performed out of context.

The first song acts as a prelude to the rest of the cycle. By placing this poem of Hardy's at the very beginning of his cycle, Finzi introduces one of the primary textual themes in the very first phrase, "Call off your eyes from care. By some determined deftness; put forth joys." Hardy's poetry does not shy away from the trials of life, nor the temporary nature of joy, "For what do we know best? That a fresh love-leaf crumpled soon will dry, And that men moment after moment die."[8] The text "exhorts" the audience to take joy in the moment rather than dwell on trials of the past, or on pain to come in the future. This poem does not seem to refer to a specific event or recollection, which the majority of the poems contain furthering its place as a prologue. Instead there is a command for the listener find the joy in the moment rather than dwell in the pain of the past. This comes full circle in the final piece, "The Dance Continued," when the

[8] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Songs of Travel*, London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1905.

central character directs those he is speaking to not to mourn his death, but rather dance and sing, enjoying the remaining company.

The second song deals with a specific event. "Ditty" details the character's first encounter with love. The poem was written in 1870 and concerns Emma Gifford whom Hardy had just met in Cornwall. Her initials appeared on the original publication.[9] Gifford was Hardy's first wife and greatest love. The poem expresses Hardy's fear and concern that he was so close to never meeting his great love or meeting another instead. Hardy writes "What bond servants of Chance we are all. I but found her in that, going On my errant path unknowing, I did not outskirt the spot That no spot on earth excels." While biographies of Thomas Hardy tell us that he re-married after Gifford's death, the character in Finzi's cycle only expresses one true love. She appears again in "Her Temple" and in "The Sigh." The other key character trait that the audience finds here is paranoia. From the outset of the cycle, the character is asking himself "what if?" The preoccupation of what might have been, taints the joy of falling in love, one of the greatest parts of the human experience. He is unable to focus on the joys of life despite the exhortation of the first song.

"Budmouth Dears" finds the character in his most carefree state. Hardy's text documents a time when young soldiers were stationed in Budmouth and enjoyed being distracted by the beautiful women who walked up and down the beach.[10] The music is boisterous and there is a great deal of unison between the left and right hands in the

[9] Richard Little Purdy, *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study* (Newcastle: Ok Knoll Press 2002) 98-99.
[10] Sarah Bird Wright, *Thomas Hardy A to Z: the Essential Reference to his Life and Work* (New York, Checkmark Books, 2002), 154.

piano. The conflict that is present in the other songs in the cycle is largely absent here. Finzi's character is reminiscing about good times with friends. In this song, the musical composition does not seem to indicate that this recollection was precluding the character from living in the present.

Finzi's ordering of the poems causes the character to take a sharp turn from his brief, carefree moments and thrusts him into tragedy. In "Her Temple," the singer has to portray an intense love, and the sorrow that comes with the loss of one's beloved. Hardy's poem is not dated, but it is thought that this poem was written some time after Emma's death. Theatrically, it presents some interesting choices for the singer. The writing style of the text leaves open the possibility that the singer could either speak directly to the object of the song, or portray her already deceased. From this point forward, all of the poems express primarily negative emotions until the last two pieces when the character begins to find some dramatic resolution. The final song in the first part of the cycle is "The Comet at Yell'ham." This piece has the shortest text in the cycle, yet expresses some of the most heart-wrenching grief. The poem documents the appearance of Emcke's Comet in England's night sky in the late 1850's. Hardy was quite young when the poem was written, and had not met Emma Gifford. It is believed that the "sweet form" referenced at the end of the poem may actually be Hardy's sister. In the song cycle, the placement of the poem just after "Her Temple" makes it clear that Finzi meant this to reference the same romantic love of the second and fourth pieces. In many ways, Finzi's chronology makes the poem even more potent. In Hardy's context the poem is about the comet, and the sorrow of having to wait to see its "strange swift shine" again. In Finzi's song the focus is clearly on the character's lover who would not be alive

for the comet to shine upon at its next return. The lack of meter adds to the character's confusion and mental disarray. This is matched with a glacial tempo, suggesting that the protagonist cannot continue on without his love. The death of the his lover is also notable in its timing. This event is included in the first portion of the cycle. Finzi's Latin motto (translated: "in the morning he may pass") for this section would seem to suggest that the character lost his love in the early part of his life, rather than old age.

Even a cursory glance at these first five songs give the performer a wealth of vital information about the character he is to portray. Here are a number of basic character development questions that any performer should answer before trying to perform this work:

1. Who am I? Finzi's Latin inscription implies that the character is a young man. While it does not say specifically where the character is from, we have learned that the central event in this section is the character meeting his wife. For Hardy, this took place in Cornwall, a rural part of the United Kingdom that forms the southwestern most peninsula of the island. It is also just west of the referenced "Yell'ham" of the fifth song. We can presume due to the language "Far away From the files of formal houses" in the second song or "None now knows his name" in the fourth song, that it is likely that the character was of modest means. We also know that he served in the military for a time from the contents of "Budmouth Dears."
2. What are my physical characteristics? The songs/poems offer less information on this front. Still, some safe assumptions can be made. The character is likely at least average looking, as there is mutual flirtation with the beautiful young

women from “Budmouth Dears.” His life as a soldier would also suggest that he was healthy enough to serve in the military, and absent any obvious physical disabilities.

3. What are my relationships to the other characters? Clearly there is a deep love for the woman that he speaks of in the cycle. His language in “Budmouth Dears” also suggests that he had friends from his time in military service.
4. What is the character’s main objective and what obstacles get in his way? The opening song gives the answer away immediately. This character is simple and just wishes to enjoy his life and love, yet he struggles mightily to live in the moment and not become consumed by regret or melancholy.
5. How does the music define my character? This changes throughout the cycle, but Finzi does maintain a folk-like quality that adds to the rural feeling of the character and the plot. More specific characteristics include the lively, march-like quality of “Budmouth Dears” that match the structure of military life with the fun-natured events of the song. In “The Comet at Yell’ham,” the slow, meterless tempo illustrates the way grief debilitates the character and leaves him without direction or motivation. Finzi’s use of 6/8 meter also indicates the character’s most carefree and content moments.[11]

The latter half of the cycle begins with Finzi’s Latin marking (translated: By evening, withered and dry) that implies that the character is now an old man. The slow

[11] Dale Dreyfoos, “Character Analysis and Emotional Imagery Plan” (Advanced Techniques for the Singing Actor, Arizona State University, 2017).

and metrically ambiguous texture from "The Comet at Yell'ham" remains in the cycle's sixth piece, "Shortening Days." Despite the passing of time, the character is unmotivated and his thoughts are clouded with grief. The plant life that Hardy mentions also furthers the notion that the cycle takes place in a bucolic locale. A new meter and tempo are introduced when the character hears someone approaching. It seems to snap him out of his dreary thoughts of an approaching autumn and eventual winter. The approaching figure is a cider maker preparing to make his brew. The steadily increasing pitch of the vocal line, and bright A Major ending signals that the character is able to find some joy in the little things, even something as simple as cider.

"The Sigh" is perhaps the character's most vulnerable moment in the entire cycle. He divulges a secret fear that the woman to whom he was so devoted, had reservations about their relationship, or perhaps pined for another. The context for Hardy's composition of the poem is difficult to determine, since the poem is not dated. The poem was published in 1909. Presuming he didn't wait long to publish the poem after its composition, the events of Hardy's life at this time could provide some guidance. Hardy and his first wife were estranged at the time and Emma would perish three years later. There were a number of trials that could have led to this estrangement. They were never able to have children and Emma was quite critical of Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure* because she believed readers would equate the main characters' relationship with her own.[12] Perhaps Hardy still had strong feelings for Emma but was unsure they were (or ever had been) truly reciprocated due to the tension in the relationship. In the character's context, we learn that at least in his mind, their love was true, but his lover's secret is

[12] Claire Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy*, (London, The Penguin Press, 2007).

never divulged ("she loved me staunchly, truly, Till she died; But she never made confession Why, at that first sweet concession, She has sighed"). The feelings of regret are compounded by his limited time left on the earth. He uses the seasons to illustrate their young love, and his impending death (It was in our May, remember; And though now I near November And abide Till my appointed change). The brightness of the key change to E-Major draws particular attention to the text at this point. This song has a vast array of emotions including love, regret, paranoia, anger, yearning, and even fear. Yet to perform it like an emotionally unstable verismo aria contradicts the British style where what is proper is imperative, and keeping a "stiff upper lip" is expected. The music draws attention to the text, with an absence of harmonic interest, save the epilogue's new key. To present it with one blanket emotion or absent any at all deprives the audience of the intended wealth of human emotions encapsulated in the piece.

In "Former Beauties," Hardy comments on the young women he knew in his youth, and how they now "near their November." There is a clear connection to "Budmouth Dears" when looking at the cycle as a whole and the song's locale is even mentioned by name. In a pointed assessment, Hardy remarks on the fading appearance of young women that he and his friends had courted long ago "In nooks on summer Sundays, by the Froom, Or Budmouth shore?" He points out the aging women's "lips thin-drawn and tissues sere." At the beginning of the song the character expresses a depression or even disgust with the present. By the end, he finally claws his way towards some kind of contentment. Here the character realizes that it is better to have enjoyed youthful courtships and now see that earthly beauty dwindles, than never to have enjoyed

that beauty and flirtation. The dance-like *leggiero*, 6/8 section reinforces the fondness with which the character remembers the time he had in his youth.

As the cycle nears its close, the character appears to have turned a more optimistic corner. In "Transformations" the character stands in a cemetery looking at the vegetation growing up around him. He views it as a metaphor of reincarnation of those he knew, now buried beneath his feet. The piece begins marked *con moto* and a significant portion of the accompaniment utilizes sixteenth-note runs which gives the piece a very lively feeling, also aided by the key (G-major and eventually D-major). For a character who so often becomes discouraged by the ailments of old age, the idea that death could bring about new life is very attractive. There is an excitement particularly in the end of the song as the pace speeds up and the pitch rises. The text reads, "So they are not underground, But as nerves and veins abound In the growths of upper air, And they feel the sun and rain, And the energy again That made them what they were."

The cycle ends with "The Dance Continued," in which the character espouses some last wishes for those he has left behind. The image of his life that is portrayed here is slightly less troubled than what the listener might expect ("Swift as the light I flew my faery flight; Ecstatically I moved, and feared no night). He exhorts his friends and family to "gaily sing those songs we sang when we went gipsying" and to "mourn not me." His last wish is for those who are still living to go on finding as much joy as they can, and to not worry about those who have passed away. It is an appropriate ending that recalls and reiterates the theme from the first song. The audience hears that exhortation more clearly now that they have heard and (hopefully) been moved by the character's story and struggles.

Songs of Travel

The protagonist in Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* is one of the more familiar characters in art song due to the work's popularity. Individual songs in this particular cycle are linked together by a number of recurring musical motives, which appear throughout the cycle. The extent of the cycle's fluidity was not clear until after Vaughan Williams's death (1958), because it was not published in the intended order until 1960. In a 1951 letter to Hubert Foss, Vaughan Williams explained his intent for it to be sung as one cycle, and his distress at Boosey's refusal to publish the cycle in its entirety.[13] He sounded somewhat helpless in the matter, writing, "I don't know whether it is worth while doing anything about that." His only action was to write the final song in the cycle, which was not discovered until after his death. Once the cycle was published in Vaughan Williams's intended order, the character was made obvious, and his journey is quite moving.

All of the poetry that is used was sourced from Robert Louis Stevenson's collection of poetry of the same name. The collection is ostensibly a collection of commentaries about the life of a vagabond, and the first poem in the cycle is so named. Vaughan Williams selects a number of poems, united by a common theme, and re-orders them, establishing chronology in the process to produce a definable protagonist/narrator. Stevenson and Vaughan Williams' respective orders follow (Table 2).

[13] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams: 1895-1958* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 474.

Poems (RLS)		Songs (RVW)	
I.	The Vagabond	1.	The Vagabond
III.	Youth and Love	2.	Let Beauty Awake.
IV.	In Dreams, Unhappy	3.	The Roadside Fire
VI.	The Infinite Shining Heavens	4.	Youth and Love
IX.	Let Beauty Awake	5.	In dreams
XI.	I Will Make You Brooches and Toys (RVW. re-titled "The Roadside Fire")	6.	The Infinite Shining Heavens
XIV.	Bright is the Ring of Words	7.	Whither Must I Wander
XVI.	Home, no more Home (RVW. re-titled "Whither must I Wander")	8.	Bright is the Ring of Words
XXII.	I have Trode the Upward and the Downward Slope	9.	I have Trode the Upward and the Downward Slope

Table 2. Poems from Stevenson's Songs of Travel set by Vaughan Williams and the Latter's Re-ordering. Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Vaughan Williams Essays*, ed. Byron Adams and Robin Wells. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003) 132.

Vaughan Williams's reordering of the poems creates a story line and suggests a depth of character that is supported in his musical motives (particularly in the final song). The cycle ends with the same melodic walking motion in the pianist's left hand that initiates the cycle (though here more slowly, to indicate age). In the first song, whole steps alternating between C and D begin the work of signifying the determined stride of "The Vagabond" as he makes his way through the world. At the song's opening, Vaughan Williams marks *sempre pesante* and *sempre marcato* in the left hand. This gives the song and, more importantly, the character, a robust nature. The character cares only for the "heaven above and the road below" him. He renounces any need for friendship, love, or wealth. Stevenson's subtle changes to the words, and Vaughan Williams shifting dynamics, suggest the character may be a bit naïve, and less steadfast in his proclamations as the song goes on. At the end of the second verse, the character exclaims "Wealth I seek not, hope nor love, Nor a friend to know me." Vaughan Williams writes in a crescendo to forte here. In the third verse, the character uses a weaker verb, saying

"Wealth I *ask* not hope nor love, Nor a friend to know me." Vaughan Williams marks this line *sempre pianissimo*, perhaps acknowledging a waning conviction on the character's part.

The second song, "Let Beauty Awake," illustrates a contrasting aspect of the character's personality. Stevenson's text describes the character's great love for nature, as he personifies beauty as a presence that awakes with the birds in the morning, casts shadows by the falling sun. Vaughan Williams marries this thought with repeated arpeggios in the piano that span both clefs. This texture returns in "The Infinite Shining Heavens" (song six) but is notated as rolled chords instead of the glissandos written in "Let Beauty Awake." Stevenson's language here demonstrates more than a casual appreciation of nature. "In the day's dusk end When the shades ascend, Let her wake to the kiss of a tender friend" describes a deeper connection, or partnership with nature.

The first two pieces of this cycle provide the exposition to Vaughan Williams' story. This allows the student singer to begin analysis of the character:

1. Who am I? The character is a virile young man who values his communion with nature and the open road, more so than that with his fellow man.
2. What are my physical characteristics? The hearty dynamics and steady pace of the left hand suggest that the character is young and healthy. It is likely that his constant traveling has left him in good physical condition.
3. What are my relationships to the other characters? Initially the only characters besides the Vagabond are the earth and the open road as

personified by Stevenson's text. This changes in the third song, when he feels an attraction for someone and tries to convince her that she will enjoy his lifestyle just as much as they would a traditional life and occupation. Still, it is not by accident that "The Vagabond" and "Let Beauty Awake" are the first songs in the cycle. His connection to nature and to the open road, are fixed aspects of his personality. His desire to make his love of a human coexist with these two aspects introduces a central theme for the middle of the cycle.

4. What is the character's main objective and what obstacles get in his way? The character's main objective is to live his life on the open road, daily basking in nature's beauty. The primary obstacle that gets in his way is convention. This simply is not the way that most people wish to live, so when he falls in love he is conflicted between the person he loves and the lifestyle he is called to.

5. How does the music define my character? The first two pieces present a clear duality in the character. The first song piece uses full dynamics and a steady, *pesante* base line to show the character as a confident, steady and self-sufficient wanderer. The soft-spoken touch of Vaughan Williams' arpeggios in the second song appear to illustrate the character's reverence and spiritual connection to the natural world around him.

One obvious question still remains concerning this character, in addition to those above. Why does this character wish to remain isolated? It is generally considered to be against human nature for mankind to shun all relationships. Was there a significant event in his life that caused him to fear contact with others? Questions like these can be particularly fun for performers because the answer is unclear and allows a degree of creativity and a variety of subtexts. With a basic understanding of the character to be played, the performer can more aptly assess appropriate emotional responses to different events that transpire in the character's life. The first major event comes in the third song when the Vagabond has clearly fallen in love. He tries to convince his new love that all the things that she desires in a traditional life can also be present in his unorthodox lifestyle. Vaughan Williams's two accompaniment textures tell of the character's feelings. At the outset, the fast-paced, alternating eighth notes depict the character's energy and likely indicate his quickening pulse. At measure 39 this texture changes. The phrases are more drawn out and louder dynamics are reached as the Vagabond tells his love of the song that he will sing.

The whirlwind of new love seems to be short-lived, as "Youth and Love" sees the character immediately yearning to be back on the open road. The piece is emotionally difficult to portray, due in part to the static beauty of the accompaniment in the "a" section, which disguises the central conflict in the song. At this point, the character is forced to choose whether or not the common life and the delights of young love are worth abandoning for the open road. Due to the complicated emotional journey in this song, a phrase-by-phrase analysis is necessary for the performer to be emotionally specific in their performance. This approach can be especially helpful with pieces in a foreign or

unfamiliar language as well. In “Youth and Love” this approach might ensure that the character’s inner turmoil is adequately understood and expressed.

Figure 1. Partial Phrase Analysis of "Youth and Love."

1. To the heart of youth the world is a highwayside.
    a. The character recalls his love of wandering and seeing the world.
2. Passing forever he fares.
    a. He refers to his passing youth indicating that he fears it is all passing him by as he stays with his lover.[14]
3. and on either hand, Deep in the gardens golden pavilions hide, Nestle in orchard bloom,
    a. Here, Stevenson’s text is symbolic of the physical attraction the character has for his lover.[15]
4. and far on the level land Call him with lighted lamp in the eventide.
    a. The open road has left a light for him and calls him to return.
5. Thick as stars at night when the moon is down Pleasures assail him.
    a. The pleasures of nature vigorously beckon him, and he is unable to focus on anything else.
6. He to his nobler fate Fares; and but waves a hand as he passes on,

[14] Matthew Allen Larson “Text/Music Relations in Ralph Vaughan Williams’ “Songs of Travel” An Interpretive Guide." DMA diss. Arizona State University. 2001 ProQuest (AAT 3004121) 53.

[15] Ibid.

a. He has made his decision. He leaves to pursue his old lifestyle believing it to be the more noble choice.

7. Cries but a wayside word to her at the garden gate, Sings but a boyish stave and his face is gone.

    a. The character has made this decision without much regard for the beloved, leaving her with naught but a wave and a reminiscence of the song he once sang to her in “The Roadside Fire.”

In the fourth song, the “a” section details the intense conflict the character feels while the “b” section describes his decision and the hastiness of his departure. He only seems to offer his love one last iteration of the song they shared, as the piano echoes the tune from “The Roadside Fire” in m. 45 and mm. 52-53. The song is an excellent example of why a student should give attention to each song in a cycle even if they only to plan to perform a few selections. Without doing so, the following song in the cycle “In Dreams” makes little sense.

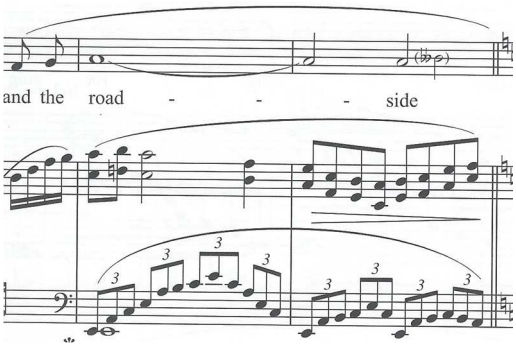

Figure 2: "The Roadside Fire" mm. 56-57. Songs of Travel by Ralph Vaughan Williams

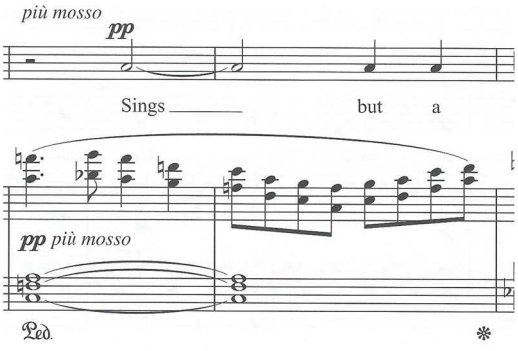

Figure 3: "Youth and Love" mm. 52-53. . Songs of Travel by Ralph Vaughan Williams

In the cycle's fifth piece, "In Dreams," the character is racked with guilt for abruptly abandoning his lover. No longer a beauty, the frigid British winter combines with tears to eliminate the "morning glow" and the "grace" that were once there. Not only does the beloved continue to weep for him, she is also a shadow of what she once was, severely diminishing the likelihood of future courtship. Vaughan Williams offsets the piano and the voice by half of a beat to create his otherworldly, dreamlike backdrop. There is also far more chromaticism in this piece than has been used up to this point in the cycle. The chromaticism accentuates the pain, tension, and guilt the character feels for abandoning his beloved. It is feasible to evaluate the ease with which he left his lover and the guilt that he later feels for his actions, and wonder if his feelings of abandonment had been the cause of his preference towards seclusion early in the cycle. The ease with which he leaves her could be explained by his continuation of a cycle of abandonment, and the subsequent guilt explained by the recollection of how this felt.

"The Infinite Shining Heavens" begins with his feelings remaining so crippled by guilt that even nature has become "dull" and the stars are "showering sorrow" in addition to light. Vaughan Williams' brightly rolled chords shimmer throughout, assuring the listener that it is only the character's perception of the stars that has become clouded. His actions have robbed him of the joy of his first love. He sees the stars that were "dearer than bread" night after night. Yet, in his sorrow, they appear idle and seemingly more distant. Still, the song ends optimistically as the sky gives the Vagabond a sign with a shooting star. The piano closes with a poignant major triad on the submediant; a possible sign of brighter days ahead.

"Whither Shall I Wander" was the first song in the cycle that Vaughan Williams wrote; he completed it two years prior to entertaining the idea of a song cycle. Despite this, the song fits the timeline that Vaughan Williams has created for his character. Here the character approaches his childhood home, now many years later. The text recalls both difficult and fond memories that took place there. Vaughan Williams accentuates this reminiscence with the alternating use of minor and relative major keys. More is learned about the character's departure from his family life. Apparently, hunger was his motivation.[16] This could again suggest that he was in fact orphaned in his youth (by the death or abandonment of a parent), determined not to become close to another individual again. He does list happy memories such as kindly faces in the firelight, the sight of the glittering windows on the moorland, and the songs that made the house a home. The house stands cold and abandoned now, but there is a bright thought of spring coming, which seems to soften the final statement in which the character says he shall never return.

The main theme, of the cycle is presented in the eighth song, "Bright is the ring of words." This is not surprising, given that the final song was written many years after the bulk of the cycle leaving "Bright is the ring of words" as the conclusion. The opening of the song is loud and abrupt, demanding the listener's attention. The song deals with the issue of the character's legacy. He has no known children or family, and while there is an allusion to the woman from "The Roadside Fire" ("The lover lingers and sings, And the maid remembers") who still thinks of him, he has no one to keep his memory alive. The only thing to be remembered is the music that he shared. This would have been

[16] Ibid.

particularly representative of Robert Louis Stevenson whose life ended without having any children. Despite the death of a poet, an author, a composer, or a musician, their art remains long after they perish. The allusion to the woman from "The Roadside Fire" in the final stanza ("The lover lingers and sings, And the maid remembers") is also important for the performer to remember because the character is still thinking of the woman he once loved, even though he is now near death.

The brief twenty-five-measure epilogue that concludes the cycle elegantly incorporates lines from many of the songs in the cycle. It begins with the opening right-hand motive from "The Vagabond" and concludes with the left hand motive. Boosey and Hawkes note in their publications of this score that this song is only to be sung in conjunction with the rest of the cycle.[17] The musical connections and this performance request intensify the fact that this work is an epic story. Beginning and ending with thematic material from "The Vagabond" informs us who the character was. The allusion to "Whither Shall I Wander" starting in measure 12 reminds the audience of what started his journey. This blends into the piano postlude at measure 17 which is comprised of material from "Bright is the ring of words," telling us what the character learned. Reading only the epilogue to a story is hardly satisfying because the motives taken from the rest of the cycle offer a final message for the performer and the listener. Those musical motives are far less poignant if the listener has not heard the events connected with them earlier in the cycle.

[17] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Songs of Travel*, London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1905.

1. What my main objective in this song?
2. What musical elements can be found in the song that might help define my interpretation of the song and my character?
3. How do the other characters or the environment affect how I am feeling?
4. What happened to my character just prior to the song?
5. What is my emotional/physical state as the song begins?
6. If there is an introduction to the song, what happens during that music which allows the first word I sing to grow out of it? How do I feel at this point?
7. Do my emotions change during the course of the song? If so, how and why?
8. If there are interludes or a postlude in the song, how do I feel during those sections?
9. Where is your character going or what is he planning to do at the conclusion of the song?
10. What is the actual physical environment that your character sees and/or feels during the song? [18]

Reviewing the questions (above) posed for the previous cycle, on a song-by-song basis, the observant student can see that the interconnected nature of all the songs in this cycle, requires study of the entire cycle, regardless of the number of songs performed. Being familiar with all the material presented in the cycle greatly increases the likelihood that the student will recognize the protagonist who traverses the cycle, and to recognize how early events affect the emotional timbre of later songs. An obvious example might be for a student to ask, "What happened to my character just prior to the song?" (#4 above), when studying "In Dreams." Recognizing the relationship that the character had with the woman in his dreams and the careless way in which he left her, gives us an indication of why he is racked with guilt. There are also a number of musical motives that recur throughout the cycle. The opening right hand motive from "The Vagabond" appears in a number of places. In terms of character study, the most important of these is in m.39 of "Youth and Love."

[18] Dale Dreyfoos, "Character Analysis and Emotional Imagery Plan" (Advanced Techniques for the Singing Actor, Arizona State University, 2017).

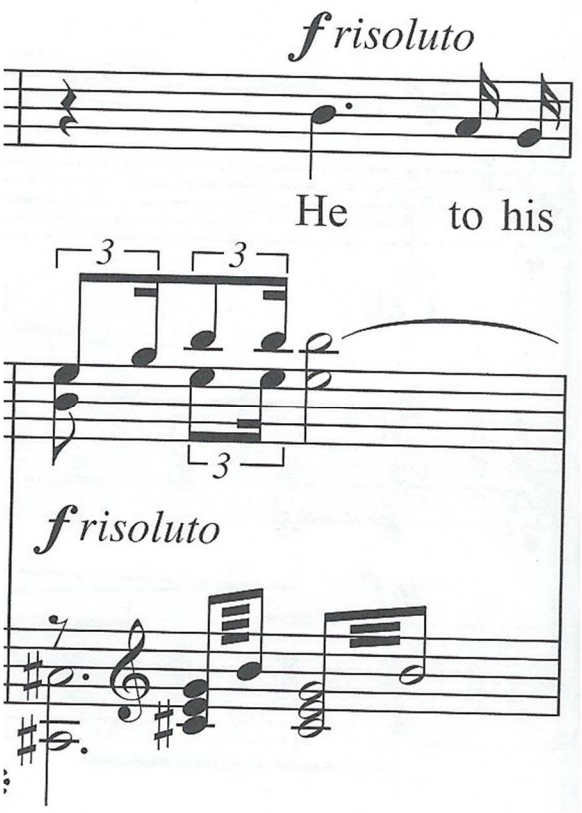

Figure 4: Hunting call in "Youth and Love" m. 39.
Songs of Travel by Ralph Vaughan Williams

The placement of the motive and its similarity to a hunting call symbolize the nature and the open road calling the Vagabond to return. The left hand motive from “The Vagabond” also makes a number of appearances that always occur when the character is most determined and resolved to his fate. Lastly, in this cycle there are events that are described prior to the period in time in which the first song takes place. In “Whither shall I wander” the character describes his home and his reasons for leaving it. He also describes a number of happy times in his childhood home. This explains why in the final verse of “The Vagabond,” the character uses the weaker verb “ask” instead of “seek.”

The simple line “hunger my driver, I go where I must” has great bearing on the cycle and its character, yet it does not appear until the seventh song.

Scholars have published studies of these two cycles in much greater detail than is done here, and even this level of study and examination would be asking a bit much of a beginning vocal performance student. It is still evident that the depth of character that these composers and poets have built into these works requires a theatrically analytical approach, and a lengthy period of study on the part of the performer. Not doing so would dull the performance, as the audience would no be privileged to see the magnificent journey that these characters take, and the lessons that they teach. Only requiring musicians to supply audiences with musical, technically sound performances results in momentarily enjoyable, but ultimately forgettable performances.

Expressing a Character

To this point, much of the discussion has been devoted to recognizing the cues to character analysis that are embedded in these two song cycles. Ascertaining what makes a character “tick” and which emotions the character journeys through is essential for a performer, yet only comprises half of the journey toward sound theatrical and interpretive performance. The performer must then know how to express those emotions. Even people who have gone through extreme life events cannot simply access the emotions that were inspired by those events and replicate them on command. This is another instance where formal theatrical training becomes vital. Students must have the experience of preparing a

character and portraying it in front of an audience to see which approaches play well, and which does not.

As music and vocal technique have changed over time, so has acting technique. There are a number of well-known teachers and techniques that have left their stamp on the theatrical world. These include Konstantin Stanislavski, Lee Strasburg, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner, and many others. All of these innovators of the theatrical world have led countless actors to great success, but no single approach has been universally accepted in the community. Human beings are far too unique for a "one size fits all" approach to acting technique. Similarly, many vocal students and professors feel it necessary for a student to study with a different professor if the teaching/learning styles in the initial relationship do not mesh. What is certain is that students must have time and opportunity to experiment, in order to find a technique that works for them. Thus, it is imperative for institutions to offer that opportunity to vocal students. Otherwise, even the most prepared, well-researched students could find themselves unable to communicate the joys and struggles of their characters to the audience.

Chapter Two:

The Present State of Undergraduate Vocal Performance Programs

The relevance of theatrical training in vocal performance is clear and yet, in some of the most prestigious conservatories in the United States, students complete their entire degree programs without ever taking a class devoted to this artistic component. Schools such as Cincinnati Conservatory of Music or San Francisco Conservatory number among those that require no training in this field.[19] Manhattan School of Music and Curtis Institute of Music each require only two semesters.[20] The Juilliard School leads the institutions surveyed, with four required semesters of acting training.[21] The conservatory structure allows these institutions a significant advantage over Schools, Colleges, or Departments of Music in larger institutions. Conservatory students are not usually required to enroll in general education courses such as English, math and science and can instead fill their schedules more courses that are more directly applicable to their field of study. Four-year degrees at public institutions such as Arizona State University, Florida

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[19] Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, "CCM Program Outlines," http://ccm.uc.edu/content/dam/ccm/docs/CCMprogramoutlines.pdf; San Francisco Conservatory of Music, "Curriculum: Voice Undergrads," https://sfcm.edu/departments/voice/curriculum-voice-undergraduates.

[20] Manhattan School of Music, "MSM Course Catalogue," https://www.msmnyc.edu/about/offices-staff/registrar/course-catalog/; Curtis Institute of Music, "Vocal Studies," http://www.curtis.edu/admissions/curtis-curriculum/performance-courses/vocal-studies-1/.

[21] The Juilliard School, "College Catalogue 2016-2017: Bachelor of Music," http://catalog.juilliard.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=25&poid=2688&returnto=2695.

State University, Indiana University, University of Maryland, and University of North Texas require no theatrical training in their undergraduate vocal performance programs.[22] These institutions may have such training available, and even encourage it, however there are no requirements of theatrical training. The University of Houston is one of very few that does require their vocal performance students to take two semesters of acting.[23]

[22] Arizona State University, "2016 - 2017 Major Map Performance (Voice) (BMUS)," https://webapp4.asu.edu/programs/t5/roadmaps/ASU00/FAMUSPVBM/null/ALL/2016?init=false&nopassive=true; Florida State University, "Program of Study Bachelor of Music in Performance – Voice Track," http://www.music.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/imported/storage/original/application/ce95872d3111cf4bf36b5df86cd60ade.pdf; Indiana University, "Bachelor of Music, Voice," http://www.music.indiana.edu/degrees/undergraduate/requirements/BMVoice.2014%20reqs.pdf; University of Maryland, "University of Maryland Bachelor of Music Voice performance Degree," http://www.music.umd.edu/sites/music.umd.edu/files/UGBook%202015-2016%208-28-15.pdf; University of North Texas, "Performance (specialization: Voice), BM," http://music.unt.edu/sites/all/uploads/advising/2014/2014-PERF-VOCAL.pdf.

[23] University of Houston, "Bachelor of Music in Applied Voice, Vocal Performance Suggested Four-Year Plan," http://www.uh.edu/kgmca/music/_docs/BMBA/2015/BM%20Applied%20Music-%20Vocal%20Performance.pdf.

Institution	Required Acting Training (semesters)
Private/Conservatory	
Cincinnati Conservatory of Music	0
Curtis Institute of Music	2
Julliard School	4
Manhattan School of Music	2
San Francisco Conservatory	0
Public	
Arizona State University	0
Florida State University	0
Indiana University	0
University of Houston	2
University of Maryland	0
University of North Texas	0

Table 3: Acting Requirements for Undergraduate Vocal Performance Programs

Universities participate in accrediting bodies whose responsibilities are to improve standardization and quality in their respective fields. Participation also opens up funding from government sources to improve university programs and offerings.[24] Accrediting bodies like the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) have done a great deal to improve the standard for collegiate music education, streamline the transfer process for students switching universities, and guide young universities in their efforts to offer new programs to their students. These bodies are helpful and necessary, but far from perfect. Any criticism of these bodies should not be viewed as a desire to abandon them, but as suggestions for future improvements.

[24] Information for Financial Aid Professionals, "Chapter 1: Institutional Eligibility" In *2017-2018 Federal Student Aid Handbook*, https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1617FSAHbkVol2Ch1.pdf.

In the NASM handbook, the treatment of Vocal Performance majors is at times not specific enough to the vocal instrument, unless the a particular focus is mentioned (such as Pre-Professional Studies in Opera), but the specificity in the curricular structure of those subsections may discourage institutions from offering those programs. The handbook lists the following requirements for the curricular structure for a Bachelors of Music in Performance

> (1) Standard. Curricular structure, content, and time requirements shall enable students to develop the range of knowledge, skills, and competencies expected of those holding a professional baccalaureate degree in performance …
> (2) Guidelines. Curricula to accomplish this purpose that meet the standards just indicated normally adhere to the following structural guidelines: study in the major area of performance, including ensemble participation, pedagogy courses, independent study, and recitals, should comprise 25-35% of the total program; supportive courses in music, 25-35%; general studies, 25-35%. Studies in the major area and supportive courses in music normally total at least 65% of the curriculum.[25]

In most cases the NASM handbook does not provide specific instructions for each instrument. Institutions may have interpretive leeway in their program construction but the language is still concerning. It is plausible that a vocal department could fail to include theatrical training in its programs due to language that is not inclusive of such courses. The guidelines state that "study in the major area of performance, including ensemble participation, pedagogy courses, independent study, and recitals, should comprise 25-35% of the total program; supportive courses in music, 25-35%; general studies, 25-35%. In standard interpretation, the final two categories only include music classes and general studies, respectively.

Some specificity is provided in a subsection that lists related programs. The three programs listed are Musical Theatre, Voice with Pre-Professional Studies in Opera, and

[25] National Association of Music Schools., *Handbook 2016-2017,* https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/11/NASM_HANDBOOK_2016-17.pdf

Pre-Professional Studies in Conducting.[26] Further instructions concerning those programs are provided in appendices. In the appendix that outlines the unique competencies for musical theater students "thorough development of skills in acting" is listed.[27] In the appendix that concerns the undergraduate focus in Pre-Professional Studies in Opera, the NASM handbook sets some challenging guidelines for universities to follow regarding the make-up of students' course work.

Pre-Professional Studies in Opera		Credit hours assuming a 120-hour program
Opera Workshops and Recitals	25-35%	30-42
Supportive Courses in Music	20-30%	24-36
Studies in Acting and Movement	15-20%	18-24
General Studies	20-30%	24-36
Electives	5%	6

Table 4: NASM course allotment for the Bachelors of Music degree with a focus in Pre-Professional Studies in Opera [28]

This structure creates a number of difficulties, which may prevent university programs from offering undergraduate vocal degrees that focus on students with operatic aspirations. To specify that 25-35% of the student's time should be spent in workshops

[26] National Association of Music Schools., *Handbook 2016-2017,* https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/11/NASM_HANDBOOK_2016-17.pdf
[27] Ibid. 113.
[28] Ibid. 160.

and performances is very demanding. This is especially true when program designers have to put numerous classes such as theory, history, diction, piano training, foreign language training, and private voice study all within the "Supportive Courses" Category. Universities also frequently count on voice performance majors to help fill the ranks of their choral ensembles. To suggest that all of those necessary courses and ensembles comprise only 20-30% of a student's program would seem an insurmountable task. Thus very few universities offer a vocal performance degree with this concentration.

If the pre-professional operatic concentration is excluded, most universities will have built their vocal performance degrees in a manner closely mirroring the specifications of instrumental performance majors, with the notable addition of diction courses. That addition happens to be the only clarification as it pertains to music performance majors who study voice as their primary instrument. The NASM handbook states, "for performance majors in voice, the study and use of foreign languages and diction are essential,"[29] but other than these specifications in the appendices, there are no other alterations deemed necessary to music performance programs when voice is the chosen instrument.

The relevance of acting training to the course of study for voice was addressed in Chapter 1. There are also many other courses that could prove useful to the undergraduate voice student. The study of literature and poetry could also aid singers in the understanding of their source material. Classes in movement or dance could be helpful, as well. Increasing the required student course-load would leave institutions and

[29] National Association of Music Schools., *Handbook 2016-2017,* https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/11/NASM_HANDBOOK_2016-17.pdf

students some difficult choices. The student could take a higher number of courses per semester, possibly decreasing their effectiveness in each course that they take. The second option would be to extend the typical four-year duration of the degree. This would obviously have severe financial implications.

In the Higher Education Act of 1965 (most recently re-authorized in 2008), the federal government set up standards for collegiate programs that would make them eligible for federal funding. One of the first things it established was appropriate workloads for collegiate students. This resulted in collegiate courses being assigned a number of credit hours, a unit of measure to determine a course's workload. The *Federal Student Aid Handbook* defines a credit hour as:

> 1. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately 15 weeks for a semester or trimester hour, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit (or the equivalent amount of work leading to the award of credit-hours.
> 2. At least the equivalent amount of work as required in #1 for other academic activities such as laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, or other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. [30]

Therefore each credit hour taken per semester would equate to about three hours of weekly work. Some courses may be on the high end of this number and others may require less time commitment, but it still the most prevalent tool to determine student workload. A student is required to be enrolled in at least twelve credit hours to be considered a full-time student (and thus eligible for many types of financial aid, available

[30] Information for Financial Aid Professionals, "2017-2018 Federal Student Aid Handbook," https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1718FSAHbkActiveIndex.pdf, pg. 3-8.

only to those students).[31] The Higher Learning Commission maintains that to be accredited, a Bachelor's of Music degree program must have a minimum of 120 credit hours.[32] Over an eight-semester period, that averages to a student taking 15 credit hours per semester. This is equal to around 45 hours per week of student instruction and outside work.

The standard of 120 hours is considered the minimum overall workload for a bachelor's degree, but many universities go beyond this. The vocal performance programs at Florida State University and the University of North Texas both require 134 credit hours for graduation.[33] At an average of almost 17 credit hours per semester, this would be the equivalent of over 50 real-work hours per week for the student. This kind of workload is extremely heavy if a student's only occupation is schooling, yet many students have obligations in addition to their studies. The reality is that many students choose or have to work while in school in order to avoid the accrual of debt. Many institutions have recognized this fact, evidenced by the numerous work-study positions that are mutually beneficial to the two parties. In a 2015, the National Center for

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[31] Information for Financial Aid Professionals, "2017-2018 Federal Student Aid Handbook," https://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1718FSAHbkActiveIndex.pdf, pg. 3-8.

[32] "Policy Title: Eligibility Requirements," Higher Learning Commission, https://www.hlcommission.org/Policies/eligibility-requirements.html.

[33] Florida State University, "Program of Study Bachelor of Music in Performance – Voice Track," http://www.music.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/imported/storage/original/application/ce95872d3111cf4bf36b5df86cd60ade.pdf; University of North Texas, "Performance (specialization: Voice), BM," http://music.unt.edu/sites/all/uploads/advising/2014/2014-PERF-VOCAL.pdf

Education Statistics found that 43% of all full-time students also work part-time jobs, and 10% of students work more than 35 hours per week.[34] It would be practically impossible for a student to perform admirably if they are required to work 50+ hours a week on their school work and perform well at their place of employment. For all of these reasons, adding additional credit hours to existing four-year programs is likely not the best solution to including theatrical courses in vocal performance programs.

Institutions could also lengthen the standard time-of-completion for vocal performance programs so that other beneficial courses in the program could be included without increasing the weekly workload for students to a point that would be unsustainable. An obvious reason this has not become a prominent solution is the financial implication that additional semesters of study would have. At a school like Arizona State University, which touts itself as one of the "Best College Values," an extra year of study (in 2017-2018) would cost an estimated $12,092 in tuition, books, and fees.[35] Note that this does not include any cost of living expenses such as housing, or food. The number for tuition, books and fees skyrockets to an astronomical $46,610 at

[34] National Center for Education Statistics, "College Student Employment," https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_ssa.pdf.

[35] ASU Now, "ASU Named a Best College Value for 2016," https://asunow.asu.edu/20151218-asu-news-asu-named-best-college-value-2016, Accessed 01/06/2018; ASU Financial Aid and Scholarship Services, "Standard Cost of Attendance," https://students.asu.edu/standard-cost-attendance, Accessed 01/08/2018.

the Julliard School, an institution located in Manhattan where the cost of living exceeds that of the majority of the country.[36]

In a country where student loan debt is being regularly described as an epidemic, adding time and tuition cost on to the traditional four-year degree would be irresponsible and financially crippling for young musicians. Students fresh out of high school are already being pressured to succeed in a 50+ hour academic workweek when more than 40% of them are also working part time jobs. It is unreasonable to add on to those already demanding obligations. In my own institution there is not an explicit maximum. The university Vice-Provost writes "there is no maximum number of credit hours that might be required but given the general marketplace of degrees available, it would be extraordinary to offer undergraduate degrees much beyond 126 or so credit hours."[37] For all of these reasons that simply adding acting classes on top of degree programs that already exist is not a viable option.

[36] The Juilliard School, "Student Budget (Tuition, Residence Hall, and Misc. Expenses) for 2017-2018," https://www.juilliard.edu/campus-life/student-accounts/tuition-fees-and-expenses.

[37] Mark S. Searle PhD. Email message to author, March 28, 2018.

Chapter Three: Viable Methods for Theatrical Training Incorporation

1. Ensuring Productions Count for Ensemble Credit

A new format for ensemble participation could lessen the coursework burden on students and have the added benefit of less wear and tear on young, untrained voices. Most collegiate voice programs require students to participate in choral ensembles of some kind. These ensembles usually come with around three to five hours of weekly rehearsals; in addition to the time students are expected to practice their choir music independently. Ensemble responsibilities can be very problematic when one factors in the one to two hours of daily practice most primary instructors require of their students on technique and jury/recital repertoire. It also does not factor in any extracurricular musical endeavors that students take part in, such as school musicals/operas, church jobs or seasonal caroling employment. All these vocal activities can easily cause young, barely trained voices to become overexerted.

All of the public institutions listed in Table 3 (pg. 36) require students to be involved in ensembles each semester that they are enrolled. Ensembles provide opportunities for students to explore a different musical aesthetic than their soloist-dominant, private study. Students also learn to work in a group setting and strive for a common goal. These institutions also frequently require ensembles to be the most public face of performance-based schools. However, many of these students may wish to pursue performance opportunities in school musicals or operas. Were choral ensemble requirements reduced, opportunities for theatrical training would open up in curricula. If institutions allowed those productions to qualify for ensemble credit, the student might

participate in self-chosen educational endeavors that are more desired and focused on their field, without being overburdened.

Another solution to the tension between needs of collegiate ensembles and adding hours to a vocal curriculum is splitting semesters between productions and ensembles. Rehearsal periods for most productions do not exceed half of a semester. It would be appropriate to require a student to be in the choir in whichever part of the semester the production is not taking place. This would require keen communication between departments to ensure that this makes the best use of the student's time, and makes them available for vital rehearsal in either arena. Scheduling opera/musical productions mid-semester and choral performances at the end of the semester could be one possibility. This would allow students to have more input into their educational choices without forcing them to take more credits and sing more than is healthy in a given day. Students with scholarships are often required to audition for all productions. This would assist in maintaining realistic performance expectations of them as well.

2. Assessing Ensemble Requirements as a Whole

All of the public universities listed in Table 3 (pg. 36) require either that students be enrolled in performance ensembles for eight semesters, or for as long as they are enrolled.[38] The choral ensemble experience is valuable to students of all varieties of vocal music study, but there is no other course that is required for all eight semesters in the voice undergraduate degree, excepting private voice study. Are eight full semesters of choral ensemble participation vital to the collegiate voice student's education, or would a portion of those credit hours be better allocated to other studies, such as theatrical training? Students pursuing degrees in music education may have a smaller requirement for ensemble participation, since their last semester or two is full of observation hours and student teaching. Therefore a student specializing in choral music education might only participate in six or seven semesters of ensembles while students specializing in solo

[38] Indiana University, "Bachelor of Music , Voice," http://www.music.indiana.edu/degrees/undergraduate/requirements/BMVoice.2014%20reqs.pdf.; University of North Texas, "Performance (Specialization: Voice), BM," http://music.unt.edu/sites/all/uploads/advising/2014/2014-PERF-VOCAL.pdf.; Arizona State University, "2016-2017 Major Map Performance (Voice) (B MUS)," https://webapp4.asu.edu/programs/t5/roadmaps/ASU00/FAMUSPVBM/null/ALL/2016?init=false&nopassive=true.; Florida State University, "Program of Study Bachelor of Music in Performance – Voice Study," http://www.music.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/imported/storage/original/application/ce95872d3111cf4bf36b5df86cd60ade.pdf.; University of Houston, "Bachelor of Music in Applied Music, Vocal Performance Suggested Four-Year Plan," http://www.music.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/imported/storage/original/application/ce95872d3111cf4bf36b5df86cd60ade.pdf.; University of Maryland, "Bachelor of Music Voice Performance Degree," http://www.music.umd.edu/sites/music.umd.edu/files/UGBook%202015-2016%208-28-15.pdf.

voice performance would be required to take eight semesters. Continuing to require vocal performance students to participate in ensembles for eight semesters requires answering two questions. Is there vital material that vocal performance students are unable to absorb in just six semesters, and if so, why are music education students able to do so? If the motivation behind the lengthy requirement is simply to bolster ensemble numbers, is it ethical for an institution to prevent vocal performance majors from taking important courses in order to improve the university's public perception?

Choral participation is certainly valuable to the solo voice student. Those experiences are necessary and important. I suggest only that assessment of the quantity of participation is merited to ensure that students receive instruction in all necessary topics. Given that ensemble participation is one of only two courses that is universally required for all semesters of the undergraduate degree, it is a logical point to review.

3. Specialization of Collegiate Vocal Programs

The equal application of priority, funding, and attention to all programs within a music school is a seemingly necessary, yet virtually insurmountable task that deans and administrations have struggled with for years. Despite well-meaning efforts, many collegiate music programs grow disproportionately, exhibiting more aptitude and prominence in certain areas while other areas remain average. In the realm of vocal music this could manifest itself in such a way that an institution's ensembles excel, but students do not show the same elite quality as soloists, or a program could produce captivating operatic performances, but the majority of student recitals are merely satisfactory. There are many different arenas of vocal music; perhaps programs should not shy away from specialization in particular fields. For instance, the St. Olaf College's music department has long been known to produce some of the country's finest choral ensembles. Their website would suggest that they are aware of this and have marketed themselves as such. The Music Department's main website included three videos of choral performances but no media of solo voice performances, operas, or musicals when accessed on December 30th, 2017.[39]

If some colleges chose to prioritize solo vocal study, those administrations could be more lenient with their ensemble requirements. The choral programs within these schools may feel less pressured to produce large concert choirs and thus not require vocal performance students to enroll for eight semesters. Conversely, if an institution bills itself as an institution primarily focused on choral music education and performance, then

[39] St. Olaf College, "Music," https://wp.stolaf.edu/music/.

students could go knowing that they would rarely, if ever need to fill the ranks of a large opera chorus or take multiple classes that are more suited to vocal performance majors. It is also feasible that room could be created in those courses of study to include additional applicable classes, such as liturgy, choral program budgeting, or instrumental conducting.

The goal of every institution is to excel in as many arenas as possible, but in reality it is a tall order. Again, it is not my intention to rob vocal performance students of a valuable choral experience, nor to suggest that choral education majors should not give recitals. These are both vital and necessary components of any vocal music major, but the deliberate specialization of vocal music departments could be a solution that allows students in each major to enroll in additional courses specifically suited to their course of study.

4. Revision of NASM Policy As It Relates to Collegiate Vocal Performance Programs

Collegiate institutions are not required to obtain or seek accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Music. Going to a university that is not accredited does not by default prohibit a musician from working in his or her field the way that going to an unaccredited nursing school would prevent a nurse from finding employment. Still, a vast number of music schools seek the NASM accreditation to establish institutional validity. It also helps to ensure that students moving on to graduate school will have their undergraduate degrees viewed as legitimate by a NASM accredited graduate program. This affords the NASM a very prominent voice in the ways schools of music are built and structured. Encouraging the NASM to amend the language in its accreditation standards for vocal performance degrees could be an effective and expedient method to urge the incorporation of theatrical training into those degrees.

The NASM handbook does indicate that vocal programs which are deliberately geared towards Pre-Opera Studies should include acting and movement training.[40] The first chapter of this paper discusses the idea that characters requiring theatrical expression exist in vocal music outside the opera canon, and to ignore training vital to its performance represents a lost opportunity for education. In addition to foreign language diction, theatrical training should be an additional requirement for vocal performance majors, and the idea that opera is the only field in which classical vocalists need to act

[40] National Association of Music Schools., *Handbook 2016-2017,* https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/11/NASM_HANDBOOK_2016-17.pdf. Pg.160.

must be eradicated. The current structure in the NASM handbook may inadvertently encourage this way of thinking.

Bachelor of Music in Performance	
Study In the Major Area of Performance, (including ensemble participation, pedagogy courses, independent study, and recitals.)	25-35%
Supportive Courses in Music	25-35%
General Studies	25-35%

Table 5: NASM Requirements for course allotment in a Bachelors of Music in Performance[41]

The structure suggested in Table 5 by the NASM does not provide an obvious category in which to include acting training. The way it is worded could imply that with the exception of diction study, which is given in the handbook, everything should fall into one of these categories.[42] Even the NASM's structure for a vocal degree in Pre-Opera studies allows for elective study (5%).[43] This represents another area in which the NASM can adjust its guidelines to encourage theatrical training. Even if not going so far as so far as to require acting courses, the presence of an elective category (with major-related suggestions) could allow a student to choose to take courses develop proficiencies that are lacking in his or her current skillset. A competent primary instructor could also assess

[41] National Association of Music Schools., *Handbook 2016-2017,* https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/11/NASM_HANDBOOK_2016-17.pdf, pg.100.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 160.

a student's most pressing needs and suggest appropriate elective courses based on that assessment.

Conclusion

The first task of a composer who desires to write art song is to find source material. At that point of the artistic process, the composer has to determine the quality of the literature or poetry as a stand-alone piece of work. There is no music already written, or ideas suggested for settings. The source of their inspiration had to come from elsewhere. The composer has to look at the characters in the writing, the visualizations that the words inspired, and the conflicts created and resolved by the author. For vocalists to focus entirely on the musical aspects of a work projects apathy on the composer's decision to choose specific literature for his or her piece. It also neglects the characters and imagery of the author's original material. Consider Vaughan Williams and his choice to use poems from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Songs of Travel.* Not only did Vaughan Williams carefully choose his material, he also changed the original order to more clearly define the character and his growth through time. This is a carefully calculated and completely non-musical decision that any performer must consider.

If a student has no training in the theatrical field, they cannot be expected to be fluent in the art of recognizing these characters and their struggles. Furthermore, being able to express those elements in a manner that is engaging and organic will prove elusive. As technology continues to thoroughly permeate society, it becomes more and more difficult to maintain grasp of the public's attention. It is not enough for musicians to

stimulate a single sense. The current generation requires more. A performance must be stimulating audibly, visually, intellectually, and emotionally. This has always been true, but in a world of decreasing attention spans, there is no margin for dramatic apathy.

To ensure that vocal performers are well rounded musically and theatrically, it is vital to prioritize the theatrical education of young singers. Chapter 1 of this paper details how performers have to look for the characters in their pieces, establish connections between related songs (such as in a cycle), and inquire about the conflicts, desires, and methods of resolution in those characters. The sting of "In Dreams" is not felt nearly so keenly without awareness of the events in "The Roadside Fire." The melancholy and reflection of "Former Beauties" appears to just be a rude depiction of elderly women's features without knowing the vibrancy of the same characters in "Budmouth Dears." Students should not be expected to write a dissertation on every piece they perform, but it is both reasonable and vital to expect them to have a working knowledge of the piece's source material, the history behind its composition, the characters within those pieces, and how the music defines them. Likewise, the students must have the tools to put that information to its most persuasive use.

Acting courses currently are rarely required in many of the country's leading public and private collegiate vocal programs. The absence of such training is not a matter of blame; the actions that have formed the present state of vocal performance curriculum were well intentioned. In legislating the Higher Education Act of 1965, Congress sought to improve the state of higher education in this country. It made federal funding available to colleges that adhered to a set of standards such as appropriate workloads for students. It also helped to establish the standard length of a bachelors degree. In conjunction with

the Higher Learning Commission, this set an accepted limit on the amount of material students could be expected to absorb during their undergraduate studies. Adding classes and material would have the effect of demanding unreasonable workloads during a four-year period, or extending the four-year period at great financial cost.

The other key piece to this puzzle is the National Association of Schools of Music. The structure and language that is outlined in the NASM handbook features very few differences among instruments. Institutional interpretation of this language may see the inclusion of instrument-specific courses in a few selected programs (such as acting classes for voice majors), but language that requires theatrical training, or at least encourages it, may relieve schools from having to make that determination on their own. That specificity could see acting classes included in each accredited undergraduate voice program. The inclusion of an elective category for Performance majors may also help to encourage courses that are specific to the demands of each individual instrument.

An obvious or simple solution to this issue does not exist, nor are there working solutions that come without significant change. The first and clearest course of action should come from the NASM and their suggested structure of vocal performance degrees. The inclusion of a category for non-musical related courses could result in the inclusion of acting training. At the very least, an elective category such as is found in the Pre-Professional Studies in Opera concentration, could allow for students and their primary instructor to address needs specific to each student. This kind of shift would be the most efficient method of change, but could still require an overhaul of many collegiate programs across the country at a great expense of time and money.

If and when the NASM were to change the desired structure of accredited music programs, there would still have to be other changes within those programs to make room for acting courses. Ensemble participation is usually the only class that a vocal student participates in every semester of their collegiate career (with the exception of private voice study). This might be an area to address. At the very least, schools that require vocal students participating in school productions to perform in ensembles concurrently, should readdress that requirement. If productions counted for ensemble credit, students would not have an additional workload when they opt to perform in a musical or opera. Institutions could maintain ensemble requirements for those not participating in productions. This would give the student a voice in the productions they take part in and have the added benefit of preventing excess use of the voice in young, scarcely trained singers.

The size of the requirement for ensemble participation may also be an area to address. The longer a singer participates in a choral ensemble, the more aptitude they gain for that type of singing. Many voice majors go on to have jobs leading church choirs, or participating in other professional and volunteer choirs after they graduate making choral education an asset to every student. However, I have suggested in this paper that nothing imperative is gained in eight semesters that cannot be gained in six. It is true that if ensemble requirements were to be lessened, it might hinder music programs looking to build large choral departments that often are a public face of music schools, but encouraging schools to be more direct about specialization in one field versus another could provide a solution for this problem.

The music industry as a whole must recognize that singularly focused vocal performances are a disservice to the material we perform and the audiences we perform for. The collegiate music education field needs to more adequately prepare young vocalists to give multidimensional recitals and concerts. To do so, the industry as a whole needs to recognize the issues addressed here as barriers to that end. The implementation of acting training in vocal music is not going to just happen. Change needs to occur in the environment that constructs vocal performance curricula, and in some institutions that change is beginning to occur. My own undergraduate institution now grants leave from ensemble participation when a student is cast in an opera or musical. They are also working to include required theatrical training courses in future vocal performance curricula. This would suggest that at least some institutions are beginning to see theatrical training as a necessary part of an undergraduate voice degree, and searching for methods of implementation. The remedies suggested here are limited in scope and not without negative aspects. The goal in presenting them is to inspire further conversation on the matter and encourage accrediting bodies and collegiate music programs to continually review their programs so that students receive the most complete education possible for the money and time they invest.

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