

„ Singing like Callas & Caruso! “

Voice & Body Balance for
Singers –

Secrets of Belcanto Voices since 1600
& Highlights for Voice & Body Training



Dr. Karin Wettig

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Introduction about the Purpose of Singing and the Intention of this Book

Did you ever think about the fact that children and many adults like to sing or to hum? Do you feel the flow of happiness running through your body when you sing alone or in a choir, perhaps only in the bathtub or in your car? Did you notice how infants use song like sounds when they feel good and how penetrating their wails are in times of hunger or lacking comfort? At a hospital station with new born babies, I noticed one day with surprise that there was an opera choir crying.

Nature and the nature of human beings have always been the most amazing miracles to me. Decades of voice and body training gave me the insight that every Body can be a perfect instrument like a Steinway or Boesendorfer grand piano is for the pianist. There is only one difference: body, voice and instrument are not separate, they are one and the same. In times, when the body or the voice is not in tune, out of balance, singing is hardly possible. During years of voice practice I got aware that voices can tell

whole stories about the owners' childhood, stress, health, body conditions and deep emotional crises as well.

My divorce left me not only speechless but with a broken voice instead of a broken heart and at this point, my journey to the land of opera started with the decision to learn singing. It took me years to arrive where I am now, but during this journey, my singing voice became my best friend and taught me how a speaking voice can be repaired through healthy singing although, at the very beginning, I thought I would never ever repair my voice not to mention end up with a fine coloratura soprano.

The path was long and stony with many deviations because I was often misguided by wrong teachings. In the end it was not only a recovery, recreation and leisure during my nocturnal trainings in unheated churches, but a way of intense connection with my soul through the body. I wonder until today, what crazy passion drove me so far to never give up?

Between body trainings, opera schools and personal voice experiments, I met Ann Reynolds

in a master class at the castle of Henfenfeld. Her inspired teaching style for Italian Belcanto and the loving kindness and respectful treatment she had for every pupil with every personal voice problem impressed me and I understood in this moment that her classical Italian voice training was exactly what I had been looking for years. She was able to change a voice sound within ten minutes of practicing exercises with the singer. She seemed to have an eagle's eye for the smallest deviation in body and voice.

After her master class I wrote down immediately all my insights and this collection was published as a nice handy reference book for singing in German under the title "Singers' ABC of Italian Belcanto". Although I got positive feedback from readers and in spite of all my knowledge about singing, I felt that the expected Belcanto quantum jump still did not happen for me.

Again I felt moments of desperation because there was something missing. Contradictory teachings of so called experts, some opera soloists and the nonconformity of singing methods and schools in the vast literature of

singing convinced me that I still had to find the key. When I was near to giving up, because I had invested so much money, time and dedication without the desired result I sat down to think about a different approach. The experience of having taught piano to an autistic boy for over 10 years came to my mind. I had used only intuition and observation to analyse stress in body postures and lack of flexibility in muscles and joints together with the underlying emotions. That made me work with yoga, slow movement, kinesiology and little theatre sketches. With this practical training my student got ready to go on stage as a pianist and accompanists. He overcame extreme shyness and autistic tendencies. The musical cooperation helped him break through all of his limitations. It still is a constant joy to me to see him grow artistically and personally.

Then I felt the desire to find the way to freedom for my voice too. I suddenly decided to give up all teachers, all methods and use self-awareness and self-observation for my trainings. From experiences with body work therapies like Alexander-Technique, Rolfing, Feldenkrais and

my personal education in Neurolinguistic Programming and Hypnosis, I knew that diligent introspection helps to find out mechanisms of body functions. With the help of thorough observation it would be possible to model voice functions of great opera stars. "Why not take classes with the best of the best for no money and trust my own power of observation and analytical skill?" I remembered how often I was scolded by professionals when I sang along with famous singers on famous CDs to train, because that seemed to be an unprofessional way to learn. Then I thought that most of our childhood we just imitate our parents and teachers and that's the way we learn.

I started to research arias of Adelina Patti, Enrico Caruso, Luisa Tetrazzini, Rosa Ponselle, Lily Pons, Maria Callas, Lilli Lehmann, Lisa della Casa, Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Mirella Freni, Grace Bumbry. I also began listening with critical ears to artists like Edith Piaf and Mireille Mathieu, or winners of talent shows around the world, like Paul Potts, Susan Boyle, Greg Pritchard, all from Britain, then singing children without any singing education like the 13 year

old Holly Steel from Britain, and Chung Song Boi, the homeless 16 year old from Korea who learnt singing by watching an Italian tenor sing songs in a Korean nightclub – and many others more. Their voices awakened my interest for their voice stories and biographies. I saw opera films, videos, DVDs and my collection of famous opera presentations from around the world me to get deeply in touch with singing. Opera films gave me close-up photos where I could “see and nearly touch” the tone-production by watching face, mouth and even the tongue of the singers.

The most striking aspect has always been to me the moment when the audience became so captivated by the music that their hearts seemed to fly on the wings of the song into the sky. Then a flow of happiness ran from the mouth of the singer to all listeners and this “emotional communion” made many of them cry or break into sudden applause. Little Holly Steel is the best example, because she became nervous on stage, forgot her text and broke in tears from the shame she felt – a bad situation that nobody would ever want to happen to any adult, not to mention to a 10 year old girl. The

next day, with a second chance, she won all the hearts of judges and public with the song 'Wishing you were somehow here again' from Phantom of the Opera. This time on stage she forgot about herself and just went for it.

When the ego gives up all consideration, worry and desires, presence just does it naturally and that is the moment, listeners get into awareness too. When I saw so many singers in fascinating moments on stage, I noticed that most of the natural talents have a healthy body approach for singing and can do it easily. With my broken voice, I asked myself, would I be able to reach that peak? As I had to overcome all kinds of hindrances in body and breathing, it was partly like a journey back to my childhood when my voice sounded like that of an angel, when I sang once – holy night – at age 12 in front of an audience, because Santa Claus on stage asked me first if I could sing and then what I was going to sing! Having no time to think about saying no, I just started singing together with the sweet sound of the solo violin and the chamber orchestra. I didn't even notice that there were many people sitting in the public and noticed

with scariness that I had just sung solo when the applause broke out.

During my personal voice repair moments of truth came. Listening with a critical ear to my own recordings I started to use yoga positions and slight changes of mouth or tongue position to improve resonance and sound. I learnt how to release muscles and stress. I noticed a clear improvement when voice, tongue and jaw went into balance and cooperated as a harmonious team. It was just such a beautiful feeling of freedom. The experiment became thrilling when I noticed a constant progress in my voice. After that, I researched breathing and found by using the “Chee Foo” Breathing Exercise that long exhalation is healing and makes body and lungs work better. Then I discovered the teachings of the Russian medical professor, Konstantin Buteyko who brought up a breathing technique to cure asthma, high blood pressure and other severe chronic illnesses. Using this simple way of calming the breath down, brought my breathing back to normal and helped to free nose and sinus. When I did the exercise singing coloraturas and long phrases became easier.

“One step more back to nature,” I thought, because we have the nose for inhaling and exhaling and not our mouth. So the question how to breathe for singing is answered once forever. Exceptions just prove the rule in highly dramatic situations.

To check how the resonance can be brought to the best place, I started to use the plow position from yoga to hold the voice box in place. Then I used special sounds to isolate functions of tongue, chin, jaw and pallet so that the resonance cavities could be filled with vibrations. That felt intuitively good and useful.

The enthralling journey to my own authentic opera voice then turned out to be a healthy, pleasant, even funny experience with daily practice after so many confusing lessons with “experts”. After 6 months, the difference was so striking that even people in my surrounding noticed the difference in my speaking voice.

Finally I had the proof that my own voice and body have been my best teachers together with my beloved role model, Maria Callas. The opportunity to teach workshops in Munich gave

me another chance to test my insights with over 200 persons who applied for the Groupon class. In a short session I could analyse hindering mechanisms of voice, isolate them and give the person a tip or trick how to change a stressful body and voice pattern. The body is easy to bring into better function, when you know its anatomy and how the voice works naturally.

It was gratifying for me to see how shy singers found more self-security just by using an upright body posture and how rough and hoarse voices suddenly worked smoother when the effort or pressure of the tongue was taken away from the voice box and vocal chords. As soon as pelvis, belly and rib cage started functioning better, the diaphragm would support the voice better and the resonance would get stronger as a result. Most of these voice and body changes to improve the natural function cause not only positive emotional effects but also social surprises: A person whose speech is clear, whose voice sounds comfortable is more attracting to others. Body balance brings about a feeling of lightness and energy. It makes the person smile from the heart.

On this journey home to my very own nature, I found that being in balance and tune with voice and body is the best healing for every person. The success and attraction factor increases with ease. I think this body education should be taught to young children at primary schools because the results were better than I ever expected. When I was asked for a written version, the German manuscript of this guide book was born. After the publication, positive feedbacks from readers came. Many readers reported me their own sad broken voice stories and I got aware that voice disturbances are much more common than I knew, although I had read in biographies of famous singers that most of them had had voice troubles at least once in life. The English version is destined to help singers around the world improve voice skills with a simple do-it-yourself voice and body training. My basic goal was to empower persons to find their own way back home to their very nature with a healthy use of voice and body. Natural talents and senses work effortlessly and that is the most important goal by using self-awareness. It is not necessary to work endless hours every day to accomplish the goal,

although repetition is useful and basic in every artistic endeavour.

Self-awareness helps to identify disturbing muscle blocks, lack of correct function, interfering thoughts and even exaggerated criticism. When you connect directly with your inner self in stillness while you sing from your deepest heart, there is no ego sense. Then the critical ego mind which likes to make bad comments with the inner voice of self-criticism and enjoys to make you feel bad or beats you up, keeps quiet while you observe and record your exercises. There is no reason to try to produce a pleasant voice or vocal effects which are not your nature. Be aware that you will meet stress and strain patterns inside of your muscles, especially in the tongue and around neck, head and shoulders or around the pelvis. Perhaps you will notice short breath, noisy inhalation or pressure on the vocal chords. When you get aware about some of these malfunctions, be happy that you discovered them, because then you can start your repair program by using one or two of the described exercises just for 5-10 minutes a day. Your awareness helps you to

focus with deep concentration on these physical and emotional patterns that form together the so called “pain body”, as described by Eckhard Tolle.

Singing awakens the emotional pain body and cleans out old patterns. It needs intention and dedication to relax all the tensions and emotions stored in a body from childhood to adulthood over the years. Nevertheless constant training of only 15-30 minutes per day brings enormous releasing of body pains and the hidden emotions behind them. Singing can interrupt worry and fear and calm down the body and mind. By bringing chin, mouth, tongue, neck and body back into natural balance and harmony with the gravity centre of the earth, you will feel much lighter when you stand, sit, move and breathe. Steady singing and breath training every day can bring about a healing from old muscle tensions and pains, and even from chronic illnesses.

As soon as singing is inspired only from the soul, the body seems to work perfectly and all tones seem to run on a wave of life energy instead of on stressful emotions. Then all vibration is set

into the tone which resonates outside of the voice box, even outside of body and face, filling the space with a big heart-felt sound. Singing energy can feel like an embrace full of love. It touches the heart by bringing singer, song and audience into a feeling of oneness. That is the healing passion of singing.

A similar trance of delight often threw me out of time and space giving me a feeling of divine presence when I sang alone in large, spooky and dimly lit churches at night. In such moments I realized that my voice didn't come only from my body or voice box, but from my soul's purpose to sing just like angels sing. In those moments body, mind and soul work together effortlessly.

Every born singer goes through life with the fascination to have this experience again and again. Pavarotti didn't bring his intended farewell concert at the MET because he couldn't say "Good Bye" to the public, to singing and to himself. If he would have stopped singing, he would have died earlier. A life task sometimes puts a person into a state of addiction like overeating, smoking or taking drugs. Only when

the soul sings to express herself without any purpose of being honoured or admired, it is true love.

The voice training which is described here works best, when the person drops all personal expectations about outcomes and results and puts herself into a pure observation mode. Give yourself time for a change and don't become impatient. Changes often happen all of a sudden when you gave up on it because you then let go of the desire to change it. Wanting to change, holds most body patterns in place, because you focus on the existing problem instead of allowing a new pattern to slide in place of the old one. Don't forget that changing body and voice also means to allow subconsciously hidden habits of behaviour perhaps inherited or imitated from parents or teachers, traditions, schools and so on to leave. These patterns hold most people back from living their innate freedom and potential.

Self-awareness means to free the inner master and the master-voice you were born with to express your true desires and ideas on this

planet. After a while of natural training, singing will just happen naturally and a colourful firework of exploding joy will occur. Such moments of delightful singing made me understand that the only purpose to live on this planet is to express one's soul and share this pleasure with others.

As I am not an Opera star and not an artist of fame, but a musicologist; I like to share my magic experience back to my natural voice with singers and speakers who intend to find their original but hidden voice treasure. In case you feel that there is more you would like to express, this book might help you. I hope that by practicing joyfully more human voices will join blissfully the angels' choir on earth.

My book was neither intended for singers who desire to climb the career ladder, nor for persons who want to win voice competitions and talent shows. If this happens by the practical use of the present exercises, I congratulate you. My intention was to prove that singing is a natural way of expression and that every person is able to sing from his or her heart. All exercises in this

book are simple, easy to understand and funny to try. Every normal person between 8 and 180 should be able to do them. Please take care and use them in a correct and diligent way by observing the directions, reading them several times before you start practising.

In general you cannot do anything wrong and you will feel an improvement of your voice and body within three weeks to three months. I recommend choosing three exercises every week and to change the program from week to week. This gives your body memory a break to react to a new fine-tuning. You can also use the same exercises for all your arias and songs to bring your voice into balance and your voice sound into the correct front position. Don't allow other persons or yourself to limit yourself working on all songs you love, but observe if it feels good.

When you work on the part of your voice where the break or register change may be located, read the instructions about the subject and become aware to introduce the tones around

the register change from the correct start position.

In case you are not so interested to learn more about the belcanto ideal and the singing art of former role models in the historical part of this book, just skip it and start immediately with the practical section. Later, when your voice improves, you might still become curious to know more about true BELCANTO.

My personal musicological “singing bone” and my historical curiosity drove me into the exploration of the tradition of opera singing from its renaissance origins until today. I really intended to understand why a young man or boy should work like a circus acrobat on his body and voice to sound like a wind instrument in an orchestra and train his male voice in the highest range to rival trumpets with soprano tones. Moreover, I found it even stranger that a boy had to lose the reproductive function of his male parts to keep the soprano voice alive so that he could appear on opera stages as a coloratura soprano. Even today this strange tradition still exists in tenors with a high soprano

voice. Fortunately, the physical and emotional damage of castration is not needed any longer to create a male soprano register.

I couldn't find out a special reason why we adore extreme pitches in voices like the dark male sound of female voices in the lower pitch like Adelina Patti, Maria Callas or Grace Bumbry or why we adore the extremely high soprano range of a few outstanding men who sound neither male nor female like the Greek Sopranist, Aris Christofellis and the astounding British Soprano from the Talentshow in 2010, Greg Pritchard, who appeared to me like the reincarnation of Farinelli.

The historical part of this book will touch the ground of this Belcanto ideal, which, in spite of its antiquity, still fascinates listeners 400 years after its birth. Belcanto is still reaching new horizons in singing today. The fact that, in former times, women were not allowed to act on stage seems to be only one side of the story. The other side seems to be an aesthetic ideal of Renaissance made by Ancient Gods in heaven, not by humans on earth. This idea must have

inspired artists to compose songs for castrato voices!

Since 1600 professional singers seem to have been constantly driven to upgrade their virtuoso skills by a restless desire to overcome all human voice limits creating a style free of any physical limits like a divine display of fireworks. Perhaps it is the innate tendency of a soul to overcome all limits of this physical world on the way to heaven back home.

Karin Wettig

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Roots & History of Opera Singing

Singing was always natural to all cultures no matter how developed or savage they were. Countries in West and East evolved into a classical voice tradition and the Arabian and Indian classical music also uses voices like solo instruments as music ethnologists found out. Primitive societies tended to use singing in a declamatory way with the breast register like dramatic speaking in ancient amphitheatres or to communicate over far distances like primitive tribes in Africa do until today.

Singing is already natural to small babies in the first months, whereas the opera as a social activity came up in Italy after 1500 with sung street theatre as an open air festival for entertainment.

This is the reason why “Belcanto”, bel canto i.e. beautiful singing and opera singing - is an Italian heritage from the transition period between Renaissance and Baroque. Monteverdi, around 1600, Chanter ‘cantor’ and church composer at San Marco Cathedral in Venice was seemingly the first famous opera composer. Hundreds of

operas came down to his followers, but few are preserved for us today because many were lost over the centuries. The typical comedy of that time “*commedia dell’ arte*”, which existed since the middle ages, had been a godparent of the first operas with humorous sketches and folkloristic gags often shown by a kind of knight errantry in open air theatres.

The Italian language with its broad vowels and song like speaking predestined Italy to be the cradle of opera. Italy had always flowed over with naturally resonant, strong voices, full of warmth and affiliated with a histrionic temper. The Renaissance brought back a deep passion and understanding for artistic products and ideas of the antique Greece and Rome, so that subjects of Greek tragedies reappeared and flourished on stage for over 200 years.

Monteverdi had clear rhetoric idols and characters. The ancient Gods and Goddesses were presented in an ornamental style with trills and vibrato and highly artistic vocal effects. Orpheus, a simple shepherd, however, had to sing in naïve and simple style to his Lyre, while

he conjured the Gods to allow him to bring back his beloved wife, Eurydike, from the Orchus. On the way to the underworld Orpheus didn't stop accompanying his singing on the lyre. The only condition he was given from the Gods, was to never look back to Eurydike on the way back home. Eurydike in her female way of thinking couldn't understand her husbands' strange behaviour not to look into her eyes and therefore doubted his love. The lamento of Orpheus about her final loss is later composed by Gluck again and often sung until today.

Monteverdi's famous love Duet between Nero and Poppea survived as well as the famous lamento di Arianna. Both influenced the later oratorio and opera style of composers like Haendel, Stradella, Cesti, Cavalli and other contemporaries.

Women were mostly not allowed on stage for religious reasons, especially married women had to stay at home. The Catholic Church considered singing women in public as indecent. That is why the Papal chapel accepted only boys in their famous vocal choir. At that time, there was

much poverty in the larger towns of Italy and the chance to bring a boy into the famous papal chapel for education and upbringing prodded many poor family fathers to save their boys' beautiful soprano voices by castration to be able to sell their singing service for money to the Papal Chapel. As the Pope always had the best singers from the country, these young men received a good education and the parents were paid for the deal in secret.

This shocking tradition lasted for over 200 years and brought on stage famous Castrato singers like Carlo Broschi alias Farinelli, whose soprano voice had female brilliance in the high range and male power with a trumpet like sound at the same time. The Castratos were famous for their agility in the flourishing coloratura style, the typical Renaissance voice ideal with light and brilliantly shimmering tones without gender.

The taste of that time made the darker and deeper male voices like baritones and basses appear on stage often for vulgar buffoonery roles. Another source for the vocal taste of the time came from the famous Palestrina style

used in churches with choirs between 4 and 8 or more voices singing in traditional polyphonic counterpoint style observing strong composition rules. The polyphonic style remained unchanged over the 17th century even after the tonality changed from church modes to our modern dual harmonic system just around 1600.

Polyphonic music in choirs was sung in a linear natural line and without vibrato because the complicated texture of many voices. The individual timbre of a highly developed opera voice would have disturbed the homogeneous choir sound. Therefore the Renaissance voice ideal was light and straight in general.

With the upcoming operas and the castratos on stage, the polyphonic Palestrina style became reserved for the church music more and more while dramatic expression came into fashion more and more allowing powerful voices on open air stages to rival wind instruments. Instrumental ornaments slipped into the arias like cream and chocolate decorations on sweet cakes. The Baroque tendency for contorted decoration, colourful church windows,

expressive statues and figures became fashion and melody finally won over the good old polyphony where all voices had the same importance. In fabulous stories from ancient Greece and Rome, entertainment with love stories was reborn, where soloists acted alternatively with instruments and choirs, human beings with Gods, angels and spirits.

The idea to use one unique voice register throughout the whole range of the voice must have been under construction since this epoch of the first solo-singers at the beginning of the Baroque era. Shortly after the opera fever came into fashion in Italy spreading all over Europe, women appeared on stage and had to play roles in trousers at the beginning. Even Mozart still wrote arias for women playing boys' roles like the servant, Cherubino, in the marriage of Figaro.

Full of romance and fantasy Baroque Operas resurrected ancient characters from fairy tales and famous castrato singers with their diva allures seemed to be perfect actors for this travesty-stricken scenery.

150 years later the opera composer Gaetano Donizetti produced Romantic melodramas at Bologna like his rival Vincenzo Bellini did at Catania. For the upcoming highly ornamental coloratura style they brought a new female type of opera stars on the stage with women who had enormous ornamental skills and an astonishing voice range. Like most composers of the epoch Donizetti had grown up in the traditional church composition tradition like Bellini, who became the absolute darling of the public at Paris and in Italy. Although both were trained in traditional composition, they invented the typical Belcanto style for the opera which should last for several hundred years.

Never-ending love-stories and tragic separations were born: Lovers had to conquer endless obstacles and fight battles for their love, always presented by an outstanding tenor and a coloratura soprano. Bellini was so ingenious to create even tragic operas with an unexpected happy end like in "I Puritani", where Elvino returns to Elvira and finally corrects all of his mistakes. This opera became later revived by

Joan Sutherland and her husband, Richard Bonynge.

Some decades earlier Mozart had opened a new field of presentation for female opera voices with challenging coloratura arias for high soprano with an incredibly large range. The typical coloratura soprano style was moulded by Mozart in his opera buffa - Abduction from the Serail. The protagonist, Constanze, sings her lovesickness all over a range of 2.5 octaves. Today it seems rather implausible that Mozart declared at that time, he didn't like the overloaded ornamental style of the famous castrato singers and singing teachers, like Antonio Bernacchi, a main agent of Belcanto who died in the same year when Mozart was born – 1756.

With his ample sense of humour, Mozart presented the harem guard as a fat basso wearing the typical harem pants and has him sing ridiculous coloraturas like a clown. The solo part of Constanze uses an extreme pitch range with many virtuoso runs, scales, trills and dramatic expression. This aria belongs to the

most difficult pieces for coloratura soprano and is still a proof that Mozart didn't differentiate between Soprano and Mezzo Soprano voices. In general, opera composers formed their arias for special talents and preferred voices of certain divas like Mozart did for Aloysia Weber, the sister of his wife Konstanze. Opera composers competed in highlighting thrilling female Belcanto voices with unusual voice power and volubleness. The female soprano finally won the territory of the traditional castratos.

At Mozart's time and even later the difference between soprano and mezzo soprano was not defined. Aloysia Weber displays in the role of Constanze a voice range between highest soprano and low mezzo pitch and a stream of bubbling coloratura fountains which is overwhelmingly beautiful. It is hard to understand why he negates the influence of Bernacchi whose cadences Mozart strictly disclaims.

Around 1820, Gioacchino Rossini belonged to the protectionists of the original Belcanto Ideal of the castrato singers as if was often feared

that this skill would get lost after the death of the last castratos. The use of castration was not any more in fashion and the knowledge to install the countertenor voice for a normal male voice was still not detected. Rossini was not only Opera composer, but also singer. One of the most important aesthetic rules of his epoch was never to violate the beauty of the tone even if the scene is cruel or dramatic. As Rossini lived this idea to its fullest, he started to write down his personal adornments for the final cadenzas of his arias meticulously to make sure that they would fit to his intention and style.

Normally the embellishment of the end of an aria was done by singers in improvisation according to their personal taste and skill. Rossini liked to use the "colourful singing style" in his opera "An Italian in Algier" like the buffoons of the traditional *commedia dell'arte*, whereas his dramatic opera "Semiramis" reports an old Greek legend with singing acrobatic elements. A touch of Rossini's beauty ideal for the human voice is still living in the Verismo Operas of Verdi, Wagner, Puccini and Meyerbeer. Although, the subjects present

more realism because of social intentions with the presentation of murder and strokes of fate on stage, like the suicide of Madame Butterfly on stage and the dramatic scenes of Wagner's enraged gods and knights in the "hoard of the Nibelungen" are not intended to bring realism on the stage but to move the heart. From the view of humanism it was expected that even horror scenes were expressed with beautiful music. Although injustice, crime and torture could and should be denounced on opera stages they had to be expressed in a heart touching not disgusting form. Voices, too, should move the audience to tears but not shock them or make them feel disgusted.

From the middle of the 18th century onwards, Italian literature opened the so called "Verismo" with outstanding operas like "La Traviata" - 1853 - from Giuseppe Verdi and later "Carmen" - 1875 - from George Bizet. Famous composers like Mascagni, Leoncavallo and Puccini followed over the next decades. With Puccini's Operas "Tosca" and "Madame Butterfly" the Verismo with historical and social subjects of this time reached its peak. At the beginning of the 20th

century Enrico Caruso, the famous tenor from Naples, entered the field and brought this tradition together with some other prominent voices to the new world and the Metropolitan Opera of New York.

Belcanto voice education from the castrato tradition had the highest goal to train equality of voice all over the range. When nobody notices where the “break” or change of voice occurs, the singer was and is called a talent. All singers during the time from the Verismo Opera and the Romantic Wagner opera started working on this ideal; especially heroic tenors who walked in the footsteps of Enrico Caruso and his stage-partner Luisa Tetrazzini used an intentional glottis closure to establish the sound between breast and head register. Later Maria Callas followed in their footsteps when she studied singing and developed her extraordinary voice talent to perfection. The voice ideal of that time stayed valid until today. Although, the subjects present more realism because of social intentions with the presentation of murder and strokes of fate on stage, like the suicide of Madame Butterfly on stage and the dramatic scenes of Wagner’s

enraged gods and knights in the “hoard of the Nibelungen” are not intended to bring realism on the stage but to move the heart. From the view of humanism it was expected that even horror scenes were expressed with beautiful music. Although injustice, crime and torture could and should be denounced on opera stages they had to be expressed in a heart touching not disgusting form. Voices, too, should move the audience to tears but not shock them or make them feel disgusted. Maria Callas, 50 years later still defended this traditional musical beauty ideal not only in her singing style but also by her stage appearance.

She lost 30 kg of weight and trained the elegant gestic and movements of the “shy doe”, Audrey Hepburn by imitation. Then she developed her face and body expression meticulously for hours in front of a mirror to appear maiden-like on stage for her coloratura roles. She took the ideal of beautiful singing and beautiful acting which was born around 1600 in the vogue of Renaissance and early Baroque to the Romantic Opera of the 19th century and made herself the first Hollywood star on opera stage as she

always appeared on stage perfectly dressed up to the role presenting herself with the most beautiful expression like in a film. Maria Callas' beauty ideal was later taken into the production of Hollywood films. Her ornamental style of coloratura and her dramatic talent still strike listeners with awe when she is heard on old recordings or seen on DVDs.

Farinelli - a male Soprano & true Belcanto

Castrato singers stayed on stage until around 1920, but there are only two rare recordings on the first musical gramophone cylinders with the so called last castrato, Alessandro Moreschi around 1902 and 1904. During the 19th century, famous castratos like Tosi, Mancini and Farinelli formed the tradition of the "blooming oratorical style". All of them grew up in singing schools where they had 3 to 4 hours of voice training and 4 hours of musical education every day with subjects like music theory, counterpoint, composition and organ or cembalo. -.....

In case you are looking for a teacher, I recommend that you find a person without method, school, ideology and arrogance, able to show you what he or she talks about. Be cautious with teachers who tell you that they don't show you anything because their voice is not in tune or because they pretend not to want to influence you. That's a silly excuse for not having found the way to repair one's own voice.

To teach what you didn't master yourself is misleading. Would you take classes with a blind person to learn how to see? When a voice is not in tune, body, mind and soul are also not tuned.

So you better look for a person in tune because balanced persons are less complicated and a qualified soloist would never play his instrument out of tune. I hope you enjoyed all the practical proposals here and will try them out in the future. Fun is the key for your exercises. Enjoy singing! If you have questions or think that some part of this book is not clear enough, don't hesitate to contact me.



www.personalitystyling.com

Dr. Karin Wettig

Soprano on Skype in Munich

If you have questions, don't hesitate to write or contact me.

Karin.wettig@gmx.de