

HERBERT'S SONGS: DESIGNED FOR CLASSICAL SINGERS

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Introduction

Victor Herbert has undoubtedly provided America some of its greatest, most tender, romantic, invigorating, and challenging songs for soprano. Today, Herbert's masterworks appear simultaneously in both Musical Theater Anthologies and Operatic Collections. Many students encounter questions as to performance practice: can these songs be sung as "musical theater," with young, immature voices, or should they be studied by classical singers? Despite the pool of speculation swirling around this issue, there has not been any significant research on this particular topic.

This study will detail the vocal abilities of Herbert's most prolific sopranos (Alice Nielsen, Fritzi Scheff, and Emma Trentini), and identify compositional elements of three of Herbert's most famous arias ("The Song of the Danube," "Kiss Me Again," and "Italian Street Song"), using historical data to demonstrate that each composition was tailored specifically for the versatility and profound vocal ability of each opera singer, and is poorly mishandled by those without proper classical training.

The writer will offer observations from three amateur online recordings of "Art Is Calling For Me." The writer will use the recordings to highlight specific pitfalls untrained singers may encounter while singing Herbert, such as maneuvering coloratura passages, breath control, singing large intervallic leaps, and the repeated use of the upper tessitura.

The writer will suggest classical voice training methods and exercises to correct issues common to young singers using Herbert's repertoire. The article will include recommendations for improving posture through physical warm-ups, breathing exercises, and other soprano songs which will prepare a young singer for Herbert's classically designed, challenging operatic works.

Historical Significance

Herbert's three most prolific sopranos (Alice Nielsen, Fritzi Scheff, and Emma Trentini) were famous opera singers. Herbert composed his operettas with the specific vocal abilities of each diva in mind. Alice Nielsen was the "best and most intelligent prima donna Herbert ever had," (Waters, 1955, p. 125). After starring in *The Serenade*, Nielsen successfully appeared as Greta in Herbert's *The Singing Girl*. Gould contends the role was "written to showcase the immense talent of Herbert's first great prima donna" (Gould, p.293). After the closing of the famous and highly-acclaimed *The Singing Girl* Nielsen cordially left Herbert's cast to begin her own Alice Nielsen Comic Opera Company.

Herbert met his next star soprano in 1902 while conducting the Pittsburg Orchestra. Fritzi Scheff was scheduled to sing on Herbert's program as a guest soloist. She sang two arias from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Her performances enthralled the crowd, and captured Herbert's interest, thus his alliance with Fritzi began. Scheff was known for her impetuous and flirtatious character, and was affectionately nicknamed the "Vienese firecracker." Scheff made her debut singing the role of Juliet in Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* at age eight, with the Frankfurt Opera Company (Gould, 2008). Before meeting Herbert she sang in several leading roles at the New York Metropolitan Opera including *Fidelio*, *La Bohème*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Carmen*, and *Faust* (Waters, 1955). After her collaboration with Herbert, Scheff continued to sing operetta, and became famous on the radio and television with her rendition of Herbert's "Kiss Me Again," in the post-war era.

In 1910, Herbert collaborated with the great Oscar Hammerstein I in the production of a new operetta titled *Naughty Marietta*. Hammerstein recommended Miss Emma Trentini as the star for Herbert's new work. Trentini had performed several roles at the Manhattan Opera Company with Hammerstein. Waters comments, "If she was not the best of the three (famous sopranos) she was certainly the most troublesome: a compact bundle of flaming temperament, she did as much to hinder *Naughty Marietta* as to make it an incredible success" (Waters, 1955, p.146). The talented singer was known for her temper tantrums, refusal to perform, and childish behavior, which eventually led to a terminal disagreement with Herbert himself. Trentini performed in a gala celebrating the 500th performance of *Naughty Marietta*, with Herbert conducting. The show was marvelous until after Trentini's solo the "Italian Street Song." The crowd erupted in applause after the song and demanded an encore. Herbert cued Trentini, but she poignantly rejected his cue and made a few more bows towards the audience. Herbert recued her and started the orchestral introduction. Trentini again ignored his request and simply walked off the stage. After the performance, the composer was so angry he refused to work with the diva again, or compose any songs for her future performance. Trentini later regretted her actions, but it was too late. She continued to perform in operettas, but never again with Herbert, or with the same success, compelling songs, or fame he afforded her (Waters, 1955).

The Composer's Personal History and How It Reflects His Use of Classically Trained Singers

In order to fully understand Herbert's musical essence and understanding, it is important to remember that he was first a cellist and orchestral composer. As a child and young man he became a cello virtuoso and acclaimed composer for cello concertos. In the 1880's Herbert played in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra as principal cellist. Herbert's likable and charitable personality attracted him to many other musicians and artists. Through these alliances, Herbert was asked to "fill in" when the original cellist cancelled at the last minute for a Lamb's club concert. Herbert performed one of his own compositions and brought enthusiastic acclaim from the critics. In a brief amount of time, Herbert became an important and celebrated musical figure in New York. He frequently appeared as a guest soloist with many famous orchestras and elite musical societies, sometimes playing dozens of concerts a week. Herbert, therefore, had much exposure to classical music, and wrote his pieces with virtuosic characteristics and requirements in mind.

Within his own stage works, Herbert has been criticized for choosing librettos with poor plots. Countless critics' comments suggest that the awful, dull, lackluster librettos, were "saved" only by Herbert's wonderful music. Critics slammed the books of many of his shows, but raved about his melodies, motives, and use of classical ideas.

In summary, Herbert's history as a classically trained cellist, menagerie of job assignments playing classical music, and critic reviews define Herbert as a classical musician. Herbert understood the skill, training, and professionalism needed to make beautiful music, thereby justifying his use of only classically trained sopranos.

Should Victor Herbert's Songs Be Considered Musical Theater?

Within the past 100 years, the concept of “Musical Theater” as a genre has so greatly changed from Herbert’s intention, that use of the term “Musical Theater” is poorly applied to describe his works. Herbert did indeed write music for the “theater” and therefore was understood in his day as “musical theater” or “music in the theater.” Historically, one must note that popular music of Herbert’s day revolved around classical singers and musicians. Therefore, Herbert was taking the popular music of his time (classical) and using it within the theater. Also, soprano prima donnas were very popular. Many of these women were nearly equivalent to modern-day movie stars. These ladies were very well paid (Fritzi Scheff: \$1,000 a week in 1902) (Gould, 2008, p.139), and widely known by the general public, considering the lack of modern technology, media, and publicizing.

Modern Broadway Songs in Comparison to Herbert’s Work

Modern Musical Theater songs are vastly different than Herbert’s work, although originally called “musical theater.” Herbert’s songs are much more difficult to sing for the following reasons: a much larger range, melismas, repeated high notes, extensive use of the upper tessitura, and melodic lines that center around the soprano “break” (Between E and F at the top of the treble staff).

In comparing the range, number of high notes, melismatic patterns, and tessitura, it is easy to identify the differences between Herbert’s works and those written later in the 20th century. *The Singer’s Musical Theater Anthology Soprano Volume 2* (Richard Walters, 2007) contains songs from thirty-two shows, including one from Victor Herbert’s *The Enchantress*. *The Enchantress* was staged in 1911, and was never given a

fair opportunity to succeed (Gould, 2008). It fell terribly flat after only a few performances. Gould believes, despite its premature closure, *The Enchantress* represents some of Herbert's most charming music and was simply "a piece before its time" (Gould, 2008, p. 419). In modern times, "Art Is Calling For Me," is categorized in both classical singing literature and musical theater anthologies. The aria itself is delightful, funny, and full of character. It is well-loved by many singers and has become one of Herbert's better-known pieces, despite the failure of *The Enchantress*.

The Singer's Musical Theater Anthology contains forty-five songs, none of which equals the vocal demands of "Art Is Calling For Me." (*Poor Wand'ring One*, which is also from an operetta, contains similar challenges that will be discussed later.) The anthology contains songs with characteristics of modern musical theater, very different than Herbert's style.

The author reviewed each piece contained in *The Singer's Musical Theater Anthology* and analyzed each song, rating them in the following categories:

1. Range—Determined by measuring the interval from the lowest note to the highest note
2. Highest Note—Identifying the highest note in the song
3. Occurrence of the Highest Note—Identifying the number of times the highest note occurred
4. Use of Melismas
5. Tessitura—For the purpose of this study, the researcher categorized tessitura in the following categories:

- A. High—A melody that generally centers around notes E (one octave and a third above middle C) or above. Please see Musical Example #1 for an example of high tessitura from “Italian Street Song.”

Example #1, High tessitura



Musical score for "Italian Street Song" (Example #1). The score is in 2/4 time and features a high tessitura melody. The lyrics are: "Na - po - li, Dear Na - po - li, dear Na - po - li,". The melody is written in a soprano clef and is characterized by a high range of notes, primarily E5 and above. The piano accompaniment is in the right and left hands, providing a rhythmic and harmonic foundation.

- B. Middle—A melody that generally centers around notes F (one fourth above middle C) to D# (one octave and a second above middle C). Please see Musical Example #2 for an excerpt of “When Did I Fall In Love” to observe the middle tessitura range.

Example #2-Middle Tessitura



Musical score for "When Did I Fall In Love" (Example #2). The score is in 4/4 time and features a middle tessitura melody. The lyrics are: "heart? When did I fall in love? What night?". The melody is written in a soprano clef and is characterized by a middle range of notes, primarily F4 to D#5. The piano accompaniment is in the right and left hands, providing a rhythmic and harmonic foundation. The tempo is marked "Slowly and tenderly".

- C. Mixed—A melody that centers around two tessiture ranges. Example #3 demonstrates the use of both high and middle tessiture.

Example #3-Mixed tessiture



Upon reviewing each song in the anthology, the author identified dramatic differences in range, the highest notes, the occurrences of the highest notes, and tessiture between “Art Is Calling For Me” and the other songs in contained in the anthology.

The average range for all songs was one octave and a second. Approximately half of the songs contained an octave range. Approximately twenty-five percent of the songs contained a range of one octave and one third. The other common interval range was one octave and a fourth. “Art Is Calling For Me” and “Poor Wand’ring One” contained the largest range of one octave and a fifth. “Art Is Calling For Me” is commonly printed with the optional ending note of either Bb or Eb, which would make a two octave range by far the largest in the anthology.

The two highest notes in the anthology were found exclusively in “Art Is Calling For Me” (high Bb or the Eb above) and “Poor Wand’ring One” (high C). The average highest note for each of the songs was F#. Therefore, the range of the songs from the operettas was significantly higher than the average range of the other songs contained in the anthology. “Poor Wand’ring One” is an augmented fourth higher than the average, and “Art Is Calling For Me” is either a major third or major sixth above the average, depending on the chosen ending note.

Three songs in the study used high A as their highest notes. Two of these songs only use the high A one time, as the final note. “And This Is My Beloved” from *Kismet*, contains three high A’s throughout. In contrast, “Poor Wand’ring One,” uses the high A twenty-three times.

“Art Is Calling For Me” contains one unique characteristic distinguishing it from every song in the collection: an “ad lib” section. Such sections were historically employed to show off the virtuosic talents of singers. Herbert’s performer would have added melismas, leaps, and trills, which would have likely included several high notes at the singer’s whim. Modern recordings of classical singers currently include all of the above, and demonstrate the virtuosic skill of the performer. No other songs in the anthology used or indicated use of melismas or ad lib sections.

Of the forty-five songs analyzed, four songs were categorized in the high tessitura range (including “Art Is Calling For Me” and “Poor Wand’ring One”). Two songs used mixed tessitura, and thirty-nine out of forty-five used only the middle tessitura.

The songs in the middle tessitura do not require nearly the same vocal stamina as those in the upper tessitura. These songs are very well suited for students who do not have classical vocal training. The “mixed” songs may also be appropriate for a student with a higher range, or a student wishing to approach more difficult repertoire.

Of the four songs in the high tessitura, “Art Is Calling For Me” and “Poor Wand’ring One,” are by far the most difficult. “And This Is My Beloved” is notably challenging. Triplet and syncopated figures revolve around F and E repeatedly. See Example #4 for an example of triplet figures through the passaggio.

Example #4



The melody from “I’ll Know” contains nine stepwise motions from F to E. “And This Is My Beloved” and “I’ll Know” are songs that may be helpful to more advanced students in helping smooth the problematic “break” areas, but are not likely beneficial to young students and or students without any vocal training.

To summarize, “Poor Wand’ring One” and “Art Is Calling For Me” do not fit the characteristics, style, or level of difficulty required to sing all of the other forty-five songs in the *The Singer’s Musical Theater Anthology*. “Art Is Calling For Me” contains a much larger range, suggests use of melismas, employs and repeats high notes more frequently, and uses a much higher tessitura than the other songs.

As a note: “Poor Wand’ring One” is from the operetta *Pirates of Penzance*, and although it is not a particular part of this study, is another glaring example of the imbalance between musical theater in the early 1900’s compared to the music of the Golden Age of musical theater (1940’s-1970’s). As the comparison between other songs may suggest to the reader, “Poor Wand’ring One” also requires advanced vocal technique and should be studied and performed by a classical singer.

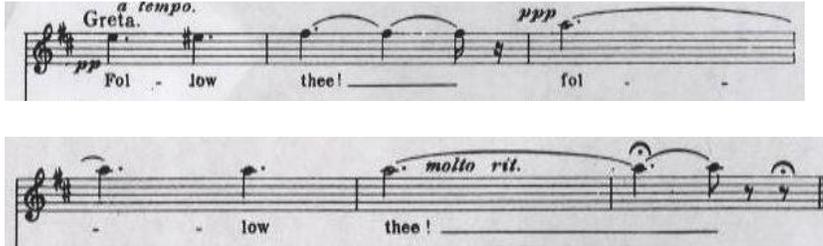
The Vocal Techniques Required to Sing Like a “Diva”

Alice Nielsen in *The Singing Girl*

Alice Nielsen first performed the role of Greta, and performed the famous “...Song of the Danube.” Herbert produced the role for Nielsen, with whom the critics “were in love.” (Gould 303). Greta sings about the calm stream in a midst of a storm. The melody generally moves in step-wise motion, and employs a high tessitura. The melodic line ranges from D (a major second above middle C) to A (above the staff), comprising a range of one octave and a fifth. The high A is repeated seven times, four times sustained for several counts. Perhaps the most challenging of these high notes is the final, sustained A marked with a *ppp*. Measures 10-23 demand a particularly challenging control of the soprano passaggio, moving step-wise through G, F#, E, and D in descending and ascending intervals twelve times. In contrast, measures 26-57 represent the smooth, gliding, and beautiful waves of a gentle stream. The melody is legato and lush, requiring a rich and warm tone. The soprano is challenged to adequately provide the warmth and richness required in this section as well as the light qualities and flexibility in measures 1-21 and 113-138.

Drama builds in measures 58-113 as the storm rages. The soprano is required to demonstrate the dramatic intensity in her vocal line, with dynamics ranging from *pp* to *ff* and the full octave-and- one-fifth range. After the storm clears, the song returns to the beginning section, and the soprano concludes her line with a *ppp* high A. See Example #5 for a demonstration of the high A and the step-wise ascent through the passaggio at a very soft dynamic.

Example #5



Alice Nielsen’s classical training was essential in successfully singing this role. Herbert’s critics commented saying “Nielsen was studiously and ambitiously supplied with songs fitting her voice and personality” (Water, 160). Clearly, Herbert designed this aria for a soprano like Nielsen, with her incredible vocal abilities in mind.

“If I Were On the Stage” with Fritzi Scheff

Fritzi Scheff was Herbert’s second sensational soprano. In the summer of 1905 Herbert wrote the score for *Mlle. Modiste*, while Scheff was vacationing in Europe. Herbert showed her the score for the show upon her return. Scheff heard “If I Were On the Stage” and complained that the melody in the “Kiss Me Again” section dropped too low for her voice. Herbert insisted on the score as written, reminding her that the B required was only one half step lower than the repertoire she already performed. He told her that she only need to “breathe its rapturous beginning...” (Waters, 1955, p. 295). Only after Herbert’s obstinate insistency did Scheff relent.

“If I Were On the Stage” illustrates how the character Fifi would perform multiple roles, if she were asked to play the part of a simple maid, a stately queen, or a girl in love. The aria reflects Fifi’s musical/vocal interpretations of each role. Herbert places three

different vocal styles within this one aria, representing the three “characters” Fifi wants to play. These three different styles require the skill of a versatile soprano.

The aria can be understood as three sections, with brief introductory material for each. As the aria opens, Fifi expresses her desire to be on stage and offers how she would play the role of a simple country girl. The melody of this section (mm.1-18) conveys a simplistic style, using step-wise motion, and placed in the middle tessitura. Measure 17 begins her “Tempo di Gavotte Moderne” and contains staccato step and leaping motions, generally in the high tessitura, with the highest note A occurring only once. The Gavotte material repeats, ending in measure 46.

The second introductory section begins, repeating the melody of the first (mm.1-18). Measure 64 begins the “Tempo di Polonaise” in which the melody contains several dramatic leaps, staccato, and melismas. The melody ascends three times to a staccato high Bb, and once to a staccato high C. The melody in this section ranges from the G above middle C to high C. Example # 6 contains an excerpt demonstrating the melismatic melody and the versatility required in the Polonaise.

Example #6



The last introductory phrase is an exact melodic repeat of mm. 1-18 and 50-64, in which Fifi expresses her wish to play the part of a romantic lead. The melody beginning

in m. 97 is one of Herbert's most famous. The "Kiss Me Again" melody created and galvanized the fame of *Mlle. Modiste*, forever linking Herbert and Scheff. This melody ranges from the B below middle C to G above the staff. It contains both step-wise motion and stunningly beautiful leaps. The leap of a 5th is very common throughout. Measure 121 contains the unique intervallic leap of an 11th from G to F#.

Despite her original dislike of the song, the "Kiss Me Again" melody made Scheff famous for years to come. Fritzi's performance in the role of Fifi helped make *Mlle. Modiste* a smashing success. Critics hailed Fritzi Scheff as a sheer sensation. "She gave evidence of her gifts in such parts as Zerlina and the gypsy in Pederewski's opera...bewitching the audience," (Waters, 1955, p. 293). Several critics referred to Scheff in her past opera roles, exalting Fifi as her ultimate masterpiece.

The role of Fifi was perfectly suited for Fritzi Scheff and her sparkling classical vocal techniques. The role required command of the largest vocal range identified in this study: two octaves and one half step. Despite her uncertainties, Herbert knew exactly how to coax and showcase Scheff's talents. Several years after the show, Scheff reportedly said about Herbert, "When we clashed there was a little excitement. We would have differences over the music. It sometimes came to the point where I would refuse to sing the song and he refuse to change it. But eventually I sang it...his way" (Gould, 2008, p.365). Herbert evidently knew what he was doing in designing the role of Fifi for her; it emblemized her forever.

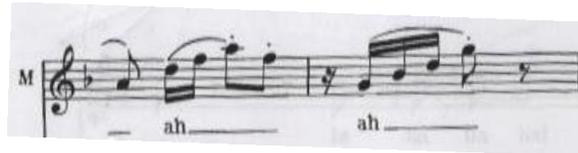
Emma Trentini in “The Italian Street Song”

The infamous Emma Trentini personified the role of *Naughty Marietta*. The aria uses a very high tessitura throughout. Its melody contains both stepping and leaping motion that pivots around the soprano passaggio. The soprano sings high A nineteen times throughout the piece. She sings high C five times, often sustaining for prolonged periods. Perhaps the most difficult high notes are in measures 103-111, in which the soprano is required to hold a high C, at a *pp* dynamic for fourteen and a half beats. The melody contains several scalar and staccato arpeggiated melismas. See Example #6 & #7 for examples of each. The notes range from the F above middle C to high C, constituting an interval of an octave and a fifth.

Example #6-Scalar Melisma



Example #7- Arpeggiated Melisma



The extremely high tessitura, flexibility, and versatility required for this song demand extremely advanced technique. At the time of its opening, the *New York Times* critic noted, “Mr. Herbert has written a part for her which would tire any prima donna to sing every night, and those who would hear all the high notes, roulades, and trills which are in the score now, had best hurry to an early representation of the piece...because sooner or later it will probably be found expedient to take some of them out” (Waters, 1955, p. 398). The colossal vocal challenges found in “Italian Street Song” were gracefully handled by Emma Trentini, but required the skill and refinement of a true opera singer.

Herbert Repertoire Today

The classically untrained vocalist who attempts to sing these difficult arias, designed specifically for opera stars of the early 1900's, will likely strain, stress, and mishandle the vocal instrument, the style, and interpretation Herbert intended. The young/untrained singer who wants to learn musical theater must intellectually understand the fundamental differences in the designs and styles of musical theater over the 20th century, or they may be tempted to sing songs that are far too advanced for their voices, and may cause vocal harm to themselves.

A brief look at online recordings demonstrates several young ladies performing Herbert's repertoire before they have the training to successfully do so. The three singers observed for this study demonstrate lack of vocal technique in three main areas: poor posture, insufficient breath, and raising the larynx. One young lady (Miss A) is seen physically tilting her head backwards and stretching her neck, until it is fully extended on the high Bb and chromatic descent in m. 41. Her extremely nasal tone is often sharp and "pushed," due in part to the over-exertion of her neck muscles.

Miss B is letting out excessive unvoiced air, making her tone her tone sharp, wobbly, and breathy. She is also clutching her stomach in hopes it will produce more air. Her words are unconnected, giving the vocal line a choppy and airy character.

Miss C's voice cracks with exertion when she tries to slide up with her belting nasally voice across the passaggio. Her breathing is very shallow, with her shoulders heaving with nearly every breath, her larynx rising steadily throughout. Miss C is also

acutely sharp when she sings the final Bb, due partially to unconnected breath and stressed vocal cords.

The three young ladies examined in this study demonstrate three pitfalls into which young/immature students may fall when approaching Herbert's repertoire: bad posture, poor breath control (resulting in several issues), and raising the larynx.

Vocal Technique Tips to Help Young Singers

Posture is essential to good vocal technique. Students should stand tall, chest/torso expanded with relaxed head and neck muscles. Wiest (1997) recommends teaching students to have a "proud" posture and concentrate on the expansion of the torso, removing the focus and tension from the laryngeal region. Students should keep their head and neck held in a constant and relaxed position, allowing only their torso to move. The head should never roll backwards or the neck outstretch. A student should look in the mirror to prevent this from happening. She may also lightly touch the bottom of her chin, reminding herself to keep the chin, jaw, and neck loose and stationary.

Singers should never lean forward, rather stand with their feet shoulder-width apart and with their head "floating" above their chest, ears above the shoulders. Students may find stretching helpful to remaining tension-free. Light massages on the head, temples, jaw, and neck may relax muscles and help keep posture aligned. Also, the "rag-doll" exercise can aid in relaxation and focus. Students stand upright and slowly "roll" or bend their torso's down until they can touch their feet, allowing arms to hang limply, as well as the head and neck. The teacher may remind students to relax all parts of their body and "hang" (thus the term "rag doll"), and allow students time to slowly "roll" up,

one vertebrate at a time. This exercise's benefits are two fold—it forces students to physically relax, and also gives them a chance to mentally balance and prepare for learning.

Students must learn to use breath properly. Breathing affects nearly all elements of singing: tone, attack, duration, and placement. Boardman (1992) states, “the quality of a singer's voice at any instant depends on the quality of the breath he or she has just taken.” Miss B has an extremely breathy tone, in which she is allowing unvoiced air to escape. Her tone is therefore very airy and sharp. Breath also greatly affects the ability of a singer to perform a legato line. Most untrained singers cannot sing “through” their melodic lines without a “choppy” effect, or a fizzle at the end of the phrase. The mastery of beautiful and effective singing lies within the breath. Joanna DeGroot (2008) presents two common breathing exercises she finds to be effective.

1. The Pant: Alternately exhale and inhale at a steady rate through the mouth while making a loud “panting” noise. During this exercise the abdomen is moved in and out from the spine, strengthening core muscles and helping expand the rib cage. There should be no shoulder movement.
2. The Long Hiss: Inhale silently through nose, and exhale slowly through the teeth, creating a “hissing” sound. Continue hissing until out of air. Keep the ribcage expanded, and do not allow it to collapse near the end of the breath.

The researcher also suggests that a young soprano, rather than straining her neck muscles to reach the high note, consciously concentrate on her lower abdomen during the high notes. The simple mental shift may resolve a majority of her problems. Also, to

help the student access the power of the abdomen muscles, have the student bend her knees as she approaches high notes.

An extended tessitura causes nearly all untrained students to raise their larynx. The larynx goes up when the throat muscles or swallowing muscles engage in an effort to help reach the higher notes. Frederick (2006) describes, “In your effort and determination to hit those high notes you force a lot of air through the larynx, increasing the volume, and essentially muscling your way through the range of the song” (p.32). The muscle tension caused by the stress on the vocal process is often debilitating, either temporarily or permanently. Webb (2007) indicated choosing appropriate tessiture is paramount to vocal health. Failure to do so may lead to a plethora of vocal risks.

There are a few main ways to lessen the likelihood of raising the larynx. 1. Practice good posture. 2. Practice good breathing techniques (deep, thoracic breathing as opposed to shallow breathing). 3. Choose songs that center around notes that are comfortable in the student’s range. If a young student has a “higher voice,” engage them in singing songs with occasional high notes, not a high tessitura. For this reason Boardman (1992) suggests, “The best choice is a song with a medium tessitura” (p.45). She suggests students approach higher notes by step-wise motion in fast ascending and descending phrases, rather than requiring a student to sustain high notes for long periods of time.

In summary, students should achieve a level of understanding and mastery of posture, breath control, and low-larynx singing before they attempt to sing the technically difficult songs composed by Herbert. The young ladies observed in this study each are performing a wonderful piece of music, but none is prepared for the inherent challenges.

One may ask, “Wouldn’t they have just as many problems if they were singing easier music?” The answer is yes! The singers studied must practice improving their posture, breathing, and keeping a low larynx in every song they sing. Victor Herbert’s pieces are far more difficult than others available. A voice teacher or choir teacher should guide students to music that is going to help them build the skills they already possess and challenge them, but not excessively overwhelm them. For example, if one was to teach a brand new sixteen-year-old driver to drive stick shift, would they begin teaching them in the driveway, on the highway, or in the middle of an Indianapolis 500 heat? Indeed, the skills needed are the same no matter the location. The driver will putter and stall until he eventually masters the clutch no matter where he is. Putting an unknowing driver the middle of a racing heat allows for unnecessary potential harm. Similarly, giving a Victor Herbert song to an immature singer, allows for much more potential vocal harm than if the student was able to build technique through the use of more appropriate literature until she was ready to handle the vocal challenges in Herbert’s repertoire.

There are many wonderful musical theater songs that will benefit an immature singer. Several songs have been mentioned by title earlier in the study. In addition to those already discussed, the researcher will recommend songs from *The Singer’s Musical Theater Anthology Volume 2* for improving breath support and retaining a low larynx, ranking them in three categories: very easy, easy, and medium.

Very Easy—“I Whistle a Happy Tune,” is a vocally simple song, appropriate for an early singer. It contains only an octave range, with D an octave and a second above middle C as its highest note. The melody, therefore, does not go through the soprano break and will not likely mix with a strong chest voice. The phrases are very short and repetitive in

nature. The melody is sequential, and therefore easy for a student to hear and understand. Breathing will come easy for a student, as the phrases are simple, short, and do not require extensive breath planning or control. The larynx will be easily leveled, due to the middle tessiture. The song is very good for child or person brand-new to singing.

Easy—"So Far," is another good song for a beginner. Its range is an octave and a second. The phrases are longer than in "I Whistle a Happy Tune." Breath support becomes more important as the singer must communicate longer thoughts. The text includes many commas, so the student may understand to rest at suggested commas, and continue through important phrases. The longest note sustained is middle C for seven beats. The C comes at the end of a phrase. This challenge is perfect for a beginning singer learning to sustain longer notes. A sustained middle C is an ideal note for keeping the larynx low while teaching breath support. The larynx is generally more stable in the lower range. Conveniently, connecting breathing is also easier for students in the lower range.

Medium—"Another Suitcase In Another Hall" provides a range of one octave and a fourth. The phrases are all different lengths, requiring the singer to plan appropriate breaths. There is a larger variety of note values, also requiring quick and clear diction. There are many melodic leaps, requiring strong breath support connecting each note. The tessitura is in the middle range, yet the melody ascends to E several times. The student will begin to mix head and chest voice, realizing they cannot "push" their way to the E. The melody also drops down to a B below middle C, and requires the use of chest voice. The student will experiment with the different colors in her voice, learning to mix them to create the desired effect. The larynx will remain low as breath is amply supplied during the melodic ascents and descents.

In addition to these three songs, there are countless wonderful pieces for amateur singers. There are dozens of musical theater anthologies containing songs from hundreds of shows. These collections are an invaluable resource for an immature singer. However, this study beseeches students and teachers show discretion when choosing repertoire. Understanding and building a foundation of solid vocal technique takes time, practice, and patience. Singing Victor Herbert's songs before mastering good posture, breath support, and a low larynx is not only historically misaligned; it is dangerous to the student's vocal health.

Conclusions

In studying the history of three of Herbert's sopranos and three of his arias, it is clear that each of his songs were written for experienced prima donnas with exquisitely trained voices. Untrained singers lack the essential qualities to perform Herbert's works the way they were intended. Immature singers who mistakenly sing Herbert as traditional musical theater, can carelessly and unknowingly harm their voices. Students should develop a mastery of solid vocal technique before attempting to sing Victor Herbert's works: works created specifically for highly virtuosic and gifted operatic artists.

For future study, the researcher recommends developing a vocal method book using all musical theater songs, with accompanying historical lessons. The method could begin with simplistic songs in each range from musical theater repertoire, teaching students about correct placement, breathing techniques, and posture. The repertoire

would advance, likely in reverse chronological order until reaching backwards into the deep operatic heritage of early 20th-century composers.

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