

A STUDY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
AND ITS EFFECTS ON VOCAL TECHNIQUE

By

Christie Massey

Liberty University

A MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

May 2023

APPROVED BY:

Wayne Kompelien, DMA, Professor of Music and Voice

Samantha Miller, DMA, Professor of Music and Voice

## **Abstract**

There is a widely accepted view by voice teachers at all levels that the English language poses significant challenges for the classical singer in both diction and technique. For the native speaker, this notion may be puzzling and frustrating. This study aims to research and provide pedagogical strategies to assist the teacher and aid the student in singing English successfully and with effective classical technique. The primary research question is: What are the main challenges of singing English diction with classical technique? Other sub-questions include 1) How do period and style affect how the language is sung? 2) To what extent do regionalism and dialect affect language delivery? 3) What pedagogical strategies aid the singer in conquering these technical challenges? The research will look at prominent diction and technical pedagogues in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries for insight. The peculiar qualities of the language, the vast array of musical literature throughout the eras, and the variety of forms the language takes on via differing countries, regions, and dialects provide a set of challenges that can easily confuse or overwhelm any singer, particularly the developing one. This research applies to singers seeking consistency and excellence in their English diction and any teacher pursuing effective pedagogical strategies in their students' vocal development.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this project to my music teachers over the years who have helped me learn, grow, and develop into the singer and teacher I am today. Dorothy French, Angela Knight, Alicia Rankin Brodt, Lynn Tupper, Linda Granger, and Wayne Kompelien – you have all uniquely influenced my education and love for singing and creating beautiful music. This work is for you. Thank you.

# Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Statement of Purpose.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	4
Research Questions and Sub Questions.....	4
Summary.....	5
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
Bel Canto as a Foundation.....	6
Madeleine Marshall: Enduring Pedagogue.....	8
Kathryn LaBouff: A Broader Scope.....	12
A Shift in Approach to Vocal Pedagogy.....	14
Richard Miller: The Marriage of Diction and Technique.....	15
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	21
Introduction.....	21
Design.....	21
Tools and Data Collection.....	21
Limitations of the Study.....	22
Questions and Hypotheses.....	22

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	23
The Singer’s Formant.....	23
The Language’s Effect on Sound and Technique.....	24
Economic Handling of Consonants.....	26
Dialect and Regionalisms.....	30
Repertoire Analysis.....	33
“The Mermaid’s Song” .....	33
“When Icicles Hang by the Wall” .....	35
“Love’s Philosophy” .....	37
“Early in the Morning” .....	38
“Things Change, Jo” .....	40
“Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man” .....	41
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	43
Summary of Study.....	43
Summary of Purpose.....	43
Summary of Problem.....	43
Summary of Procedure.....	44
Summary of Findings.....	44
Summary of Research Questions.....	45
Recommendations for Future Study.....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	49

## List of Figures

Figure 1.....	34
Figure 2.....	35
Figure 3.....	36
Figure 4.....	38
Figure 5.....	39
Figure 6.....	39
Figure 7.....	40
Figure 8.....	41
Figure 9.....	42

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The English language has taken on various forms throughout the years, extending across countries, cultures, regions, eras, and trends. The challenges within the English language immediately impact both the clarity and effectiveness of a singer's sound and delivery. When a teacher equips students with tools for classical technique and authentic English diction, they must consider several facets of the pedagogical process. Addressing the presence of dialects and regional accents, musical era and stylistic origins, and the dominant technical aspects of singing are all characteristics that govern a pedagogue's approach to teaching English diction.

### Background

The goal of lyric diction is *communication*. For a performance in the English vernacular to be profoundly moving to its audience, the text must be both heard and understood.<sup>1</sup> But in the classical tradition of singing, the idea is not always so simple. Helen Reikofski comments, "In all lyric diction, there is the challenge of sustained speech sounds over wide vocal ranges and varying rhythms."<sup>2</sup> Native English speakers often overlook or take for granted the elements of language formation and clarity of its deliverance. Adding to the list of challenges is that singers rarely deliver a sung word in the same manner it is spoken. The singer must make modifications to serve the resonance and beauty of the melodic line. Renowned teacher Kathryn Labouff acknowledges that technique, dialect, and consistent pronunciations are all crucial elements of a

---

<sup>1</sup> Kathryn Labouff, *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Helen Dewey Reikofski, "Singing in English in the 21st Century: A Study Comparing and Applying the Tenets of Madeleine Marshall and Kathryn Labouff" (Dissertation, 2015), <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/singing-english-21st-century-study-comparing/docview/1775396076/se-2>.

singer's expressive communication. Singers growing in their mastery of technique and delivery of melodic line must pay close attention to the effective delivery of the language as they communicate thought, emotion, and narrative. Teachers who wish to guide their students towards beautiful singing and expressive delivery of a moving story must closely focus on the English diction, its formation, execution, and service to the narrative.

In the world of classical singing, there has long been one technique that stands out as the predominant method of singing and teaching. *Bel canto* singing first appeared in late seventeenth-century Italy, and while the term was not coined until the 1860s, it drastically changed the classical singing world.<sup>3</sup> Literally meaning “beautiful singing,” the *bel canto* technique stemmed from a group of singers who stood out among their contemporaries as virtuosi rising above the amateur or average choral singer. The technique champions the beauty of tone, opulent resonance, and vocal freedom as key aspects of excellent and naturally beautiful singing. *Bel canto* singing provides teachers and students today with crucial elements of successful singing that allows for mastery of communicating the English language with ease and authenticity. This technique will serve as the foundational way of singing in the English language that will be researched and presented in this paper.

Like Kathryn LaBouff, prominent diction coach and teacher Madeleine Marshall also believed that music should be accessible to and understood by all listeners.<sup>4</sup> Marshall became one of her era's first leading diction coaches through her work with The Juilliard School, The

---

<sup>3</sup> Philip A Duey, *Bel Canto in Its Golden Age - a Study of Its Teaching Concepts* (1951; repr., New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1980).

<sup>4</sup> Sheri Cook-Cunningham, “The Many Facets of Madeleine Marshall: A Historical and Cultural Perspective of Madeleine ‘Graham Jones’ Marshall Simon (1899-1993), Author of the Singer’s Manual of English Diction,” [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com), 2013, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1470088499/fulltextPDF/87F2CF469BA042B8PQ/1?accountid=12085>, 57.

New York Metropolitan Opera stars, and the expanding reach of opera via radio broadcasts in the 1930s. Marshall helped singers neutralize southern accents, speak and sing English without foreign accents, and communicate the text and music wonderfully. Her book, *The Singer's Manual of English Diction*, became one of the first popular texts to outline a neutralized and widely accepted approach to singing in English.

The modern voice teacher may find additional challenges that Marshall never dealt with during the early- to mid-twentieth century. Diversified genres and compositions and the growing accessibility of publications, recordings, and broadcasted programs create additional challenges for authentic, intelligible diction and beautiful singing across genres. The contemporary choir teacher, music director, or private instructor must face these new challenges equipped with strategies and narratives that connect the modern student to foundational singing techniques found. If the beginner, intermediate, or advanced voice student is to deliver the English language with authenticity, artistry, and effectiveness, their singing and approach to diction must be rooted in a technique that will succeed across eras and genres.

### **Statement of the Problem**

While successfully singing with *bel canto* technique presents significant challenges to navigate, the English language presents no reprieve from these challenges. This study aims to analyze the effect of the linguistic challenges of the English language and its dialects on classical vocal technique. The research endeavors to outline a proposed technique for singing that will serve as an effective foundation for singing, regardless of genre, era, language, or dialect. The findings here will aid teachers and singers in their attempts to create music that is not only beautiful but authentic, accessible, and effective for every audience member.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The English language presents a wide array of challenges for the classical singer to produce a beautiful sound while providing an authentic and effective delivery of the language. This study aims to outline the specific challenges of singing English and collect successful pedagogical strategies to create beautiful singing with authentic English. The findings in this study will present strategic approaches for alleviating pronunciation problems that affect the consistency of technique and resonance, as well as an approach to making choices on dialect in performance.

### **Significance of the Study**

The research in this study is for singers and music teachers who embark on the artistically moving and musically beautiful delivery of the English language. School choir teachers, church music directors, and private voice instructors alike may benefit from the projected findings of this study as it aims to discover and outline predominant challenges, important considerations, and effective pedagogical strategies for teaching students about beautiful and effective English singing. Students of classical singing will also benefit as the discoveries in this study present helpful approaches for their deliverance of the language.

### **Research Questions and Sub Questions**

The primary research question of this study is: What are the main challenges of singing English diction with classical technique? Other sub-questions that will provide specificity and practicality will be:

1. To what extent do regionalism and dialect affect how the language is delivered?
2. What pedagogical strategies aid the singer in conquering these technical challenges?

### **Summary**

The research from this study applies to singers and teachers alike and teachers of all types, whether it be a public-school choir teacher, church music director, or private voice instructor at any level. Although English is the native language for many, it should not be approached with the casual attitude that it is often given. Unlike many other languages, English presents a wider variety of vowel and consonant sounds, dialects, and musical eras and genres. As a result, it can be challenging for many to deliver this language with authenticity and ease, but it is not impossible. With pedagogical strategies and supporting research, the singer and teacher can both approach the delivery of English with confidence and ease.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide an ample survey of the challenges of singing English diction successfully and good classical technique, it is important first to establish specific criteria for what it means to be “successful” in singing English and define “good technique.” This literature review will first explain the foundations of *bel canto* technique, which is at the heart of beautiful and healthy classical singing. Then, with an understanding of how to approach the wide variety of music in English, the literature review will turn to major English diction pedagogues, Madeleine Marshall, and Kathryn LaBouff. Finally, support for understanding basic technical singing elements will be drawn from prominent singer, music researcher, and author Richard Miller, and a few other noteworthy authors. From these sources, much will be discovered about their approaches to specific challenges of the language, including linguistical challenges, musical era and genre, and dialects and regionalisms.

### **Bel Canto as a Foundation**

When *bel canto* singing first appeared on the music scene in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was championed by a rising class of virtuoso singers and an emergence of new solo songs and opera repertoire.<sup>5</sup> As this new class of singers began changing the landscape for vocal music composition and performance, the details of their precise singing technique were vague and not clearly documented. Historians have now been able to “extrapolate backwards,” as James Stark explains, to develop a fuller understanding of the physiology, aerodynamics, and acoustics of this type of singing from the late 1600s and onward.<sup>6</sup> Overall, the technique is generally associated

---

<sup>5</sup> James A Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto*, xi.

with the classically trained voices of concert and opera singers. It requires “highly refined use of laryngeal, respiratory, and articulatory muscles in order to produce special qualities of timbre, evenness of scale and registration, breath control, flexibility, tremulousness, and expressiveness.”<sup>7</sup> *Bel canto* singers, who differed significantly from choral or amateur singers, were often identified to have natural talent and received thorough vocal training.

Philip Duey explains the technique as producing a natural, soulful, rich, forward-produced tone. He shares that the voice needs to be completely natural and free, with a muscular balance that eliminates all signs of tension.<sup>8</sup> This type of singing promotes complete vocal freedom. It lends itself to the flamboyant and acrobatic lines of prominent composers like Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, who are most associated with the movement. Duey also contrasts the brilliant virtuosity of *bel canto* singers to the dramatic expression and romantic emotion of other 18th-century styles or composers and the polarizing declamatory style of Wagner.<sup>9</sup> In *bel canto* style, singers were most often known for their sweetness, brilliance, and vigor.

What makes *bel canto* singing so effortless is, in part, its origin in the Italian language. The beauty and ease of the language are found in its purity of vowels, with only seven vowel sounds in total, as compared to sixteen in English.<sup>10</sup> Cornelius Reid comments, “without vowel purity, it is impossible to arrive at a sound basis for producing a beautiful tone.”<sup>11</sup> He suggests that power, range, flexibility, and beautiful tone may only be acquired after establishing the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, xx-xxi.

<sup>8</sup> Duey, *Bel Canto in its Golden Age*, 154.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>10</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Cornelius L Reid, *Bel Canto Principles and Practices* (1950; repr., New York: The Joseph Patelson Music House, 1978), 37.

technical foundations of vowel purity. A challenge almost immediately presents itself in the task of applying a foundational technique that was developed out of the Italian language with its seven pure vowel sounds to the English language of more than twice the number of vowels, multiple dialects, and a wide array of styles of repertoire for the classical singer. While the challenge may be apparent, it is not impossible for the singer (and teacher) to conquer.

Although *bel canto* singing originated from a vastly different language than English, its foundational ideas still provide key factors of healthy and beautiful singing. Reid provides a compelling argument supporting the technique when in pursuit of a beautiful tone:

When a tone is truly beautiful, it signifies that the vocal mechanism is functioning correctly and that a complete harmony exists between aesthetic principles and those laws of Nature by which the operation of the vocal mechanism is governed. Bel Canto singing is impossible without vocal freedom, and true vocal freedom finds its expression in vitally resonant tones covering a wide pitch range, in a complete control over extremes of dynamics, and in ease and flexibility of execution.<sup>12</sup>

Through this type of vocal freedom, the singer can sing any language accurately and authentically. Whether a language possesses seven vowel sounds or seventeen, it does not matter with a *bel canto* foundational technique. After establishing a natural vocal freedom and a free-flowing, legato vocal line with perfectly formed vowels, the singer's next task is to address articulation and pronunciation. The topic of consonants in English diction is one great challenge to tackle, which requires a look at two of its leading pedagogues: Madeleine Marshall and Kathryn LaBouff.

### **Madeleine Marshall: Enduring Pedagogue**

Madeleine Marshall was a concert pianist, and accompanist turned diction coach and pedagogue in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in 1899 in Syracuse, New York, to an affluent Jewish

---

<sup>12</sup> Reid, *Bel Canto Principles and Practices*, 19.

family, Marshall entered the New York City music scene in 1922.<sup>13</sup> The move proved advantageous for Marshall, personally and professionally, as she met her husband, Robert Simon, in the neighborhood where she lived. The two were engaged in 1924, and their romantic match also joined their two professional fields of work since Robert worked in radio, broadcast, and writing as a music critic. Then, in the 1930s, opera began to appear on the radio due to a difficult economic climate. As opera was reaching a greater audience, this forged the work of Simon and Marshall even more as the two often discussed the articulation and dialects they heard.

As Marshall's career progressed, her reputation as a sought-after accompanist naturally evolved into coaching diction for many prominent singers through the Metropolitan Opera, including Lily Pons, Leontyne Price, Lorenzo Fuller, and George Britton.<sup>14</sup> Her work with French singer Lily Pons was the propelling force for her work in diction, as she showed great interest in assisting non-native English speakers with delivering their text intelligibly. Helping Pons learn English while diminishing any noticeable accent shows Marshall's desire for a neutral form of English on stage. Marshall is most known for taking an audience-focused stance on diction. She was passionate about ensuring that all lyrics on stage could be clearly heard and comprehended by all audience members.

In 1935, she joined the faculty at The Juilliard School and taught the first English diction class offered there.<sup>15</sup> Through her work with students at Juilliard, Marshall developed her flagship text, *The Singer's Manual for English Diction*. In her "Conference" at the beginning of

---

<sup>13</sup> Cook-Cunningham, "The Many Facets of Madeleine Marshall," 57.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 64.

the book, Marshall states, “Our goal is to sing one English,” a neutral English pronunciation free of any dialect or regionalisms, as she proposed one standard stage pronunciation.<sup>16</sup> Marshall’s work only focused on how the language was to be articulated, with no comment on vocal production. Though many other English diction texts have been written since Marshall’s *Manual*, it remains among the top 5 sellers of English Diction books on Amazon seventy years later.<sup>17</sup>

At the book's onset, Marshall sets a foundation for her diction method rooted in *bel canto* technique. Marshall states that “clear singing is easy singing...there can hardly be disagreement on the fundamental truth that the most beautiful consonants and vowels are those that are produced with complete relaxation of the lips and the throat muscles.”<sup>18</sup> In the rest of the book, Marshall proposes how the singer should articulate the language so that it does not sound laborious or hindered but free and natural. Her belief that the singer should always sing legato in connecting words supports a key trait of true *bel canto* singing. Throughout the “Conference,” Marshall states that the five objective qualities of English diction are clarity, accuracy, ease, uniformity, and expressiveness.<sup>19</sup> When the singer remains true to these five objectives, their diction is so free and natural that the listener is unaware of any diction rules or devices being used.

An interesting aspect of the *Manual* is that Marshall starts the book's first half addressing consonants and then moves on to vowels later. Marshall proposes that singers often are told a great deal about how to treat the vowels, but it is the consonants that carry a great responsibility in the communication of the language. According to Marshall, consonants do many things,

---

<sup>16</sup> Madeleine Marshall, *The Singer's Manual of English Diction* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1953), 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Cook-Cunningham, “The Many Facets of Madeleine Marshall,” 75.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall, *The Singer's Manual of English Diction*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

including project the voice, focus its sound, enhance its volume, supply carrying power, and carry great weight in singing expressively.<sup>20</sup> Marshall was the first pedagogue to coin the terms “voiced” and “unvoiced consonants,” which are still used today.

Although Marshall’s pronunciation method is based on the foundations of vocal freedom and a natural sound, the prescriptions laid out in her *Manual* were indicative of her era and locale. While she believed that all audience members could understand her standard English pronunciation, characteristics of this dialect mirrored the Eurocentric, early- to mid-century elite New York City singers she worked with. Some examples of how she achieved the New York elite sound are her treatment of <R> and the “DaNieL SiTTeTH” rule. This rule states that whenever a <u> or <ew> follows any of the capitalized letters in “DaNieL SiTTeTH,” it is to be pronounced with a j-glide, for example, the words “due,” “knew,” “prelude,” “consume,” “tune,” and “enthuse.”<sup>21</sup> The sound singers achieved through Marshall’s *Manual* were sure to be understood by their audience, but at the mid-century mark in a growing nation, an expanded approach to English diction was needed.

Just one year after the publication of Marshall’s text, *The Singer’s Manual of English Diction*, in 1953, the opera world saw releases of new American compositions that required a more specific American sound. Aaron Copland’s *The Tenderland* (1954), Carlisle Floyd’s *Susanna* (1955), and Douglas Moore’s *The Ballad of Baby Doe* (1956) were all new compositions showing uniquely American characters. Marshall’s pronunciation methods seemed artificial for these stories, and a growing need developed for a new approach to English diction. Marshall continued to coach diction at the Metropolitan Opera and teach at Juilliard. But with the

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Marshall, *Singer’s Manual for English Diction*, 139.

arrival of a new English diction teacher upon her retirement from Juilliard in 1976 came a new wave of insight into the authentic and natural delivery of the English language.

### **Kathryn LaBouff: A Modern Take**

Kathryn LaBouff is a prominent diction coach and teacher living and working in New York City. Throughout her career, LaBouff has served as a faculty member of many prominent music schools, including Ithaca College, Yale University, Manhattan School of Music, Juilliard, The Curtis Institute of Music, Mannes College of Music, the Banff Centre for the Arts, and Cornell University. LaBouff has also been a diction coach for the Metropolitan Opera of New York and other companies, coaching over 300 English language operas. She has worked with renowned singers such as Renée Fleming, Patricia Racette, Nathan Gunn, and Susan Graham.<sup>22</sup> Her extensive work with opera companies throughout the United States has given her a highly respected presence and reputation for excellence in English diction.

Born in Iowa in 1951, LaBouff attended the University of Michigan starting in 1970. Since the university did not have diction classes at the time, LaBouff learned many of her diction skills, including the International Phonetic Alphabet, from her three years of study in Italy.<sup>23</sup> When she replaced Madeleine Marshall at Juilliard in 1976, it was assumed that LaBouff would continue using Marshall's materials. But with a quick transition into the new position, she proceeded using her own diction materials that she developed at the Manhattan School of Music. LaBouff recognized that the American Standard, Mid-Atlantic, and British Received

---

<sup>22</sup> Reikofski, "Singing in English in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," 21.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 18.

Pronunciation all needed to be included in English diction studies.<sup>24</sup> At this point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the growing reach of music and culture via television, radio, movies, and media into every American home proved that a wider range of language training was a necessity for singers.

LaBouff's book *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide* is a noteworthy resource for the modern singer, student, and teacher. The book focuses on three English dialects: Mid-Atlantic (the dialect which most resembles Marshall's), British Received Pronunciation (commonly referred to as RP), and American Standard. It also includes a variety of appendices that focus on several specific dialects found throughout North America and the British Isles. A trait that immediately sets the book apart from Marshall's is the inclusion of exercises and drills throughout, as well as online supplementary materials, including audio files and an Exercise Guide. LaBouff's text actively engages the reader, insisting on the regular practice of skills for mastery.

LaBouff uses the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) throughout the book, with chapter one giving special focus to the IPA symbols of English. Chapters 2-13 are dedicated to the dialect known as American Standard, which LaBouff claims are the most recognizable and understandable to most North Americans.<sup>25</sup> This dialect is to be used for all North American repertoire. The American Standard (AS) dialect serves as a foundation for the other two that are presented: Received Pronunciation (RP) and Mid-Atlantic. Chapter 14 focuses on RP, which is used in historical and modern forms for all repertoire by composers from the British Isles. The name "Received Pronunciation" is derived from the phrase "received in the best parts of society." This is the dialect spoken in the British Isles by the standard-upper class and

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>25</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 6.

historically was the dialect used by Oxford and Cambridge graduates, the aristocracy, and the upper class.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the Mid-Atlantic dialect is a hybrid of AS and RP and is frequently used in oratorio and European works that are not specifically British. Mid-Atlantic is the dialect that most resembles Madeleine Marshall's and is covered in chapter 15 of the book.

Kathryn LaBouff has presented a valuable and thorough resource for singers to have access to essential dialects of the English language. Her recognition of a need for more variety in English lyric diction has ushered classical singers into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an age of information, accessibility, and broader communication. Differentiating the English dialects into three main pronunciations offers singers the tools needed for making artistic choices in performance as they serve the composer, poet, or audience members. Like Marshall's *Manual*, LaBouff's *Guide* also does not focus on vocal technique or tone production. While the books offer crucial guidance on the pronunciation and articulation of the English language, they do not substantially help in handling the challenges of the language while maintaining a technique that aligns with *bel canto* ideals. Marshall and LaBouff's work certainly coincides with the great singing of the *bel canto* tradition, but further research is required to address the technical challenges of delivering the language.

### **A Shift in Approach to Vocal Pedagogy**

After the halfway mark in the twentieth century, the world of vocal pedagogy began to see a great shift in the way singers and teachers viewed their craft. From the onset of the *bel canto* tradition in the sixteenth century, vocal pedagogy had been an oral tradition passed down by master teachers and based upon personal experience and taste. But mid-twentieth century

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 207.

brought developments in the science of singing and how teachers approached vocal pedagogy. In 1967, two book releases from leading pedagogues in the field transitioned the art of singing out of the “historical” era and into the new “fact-based” era.<sup>27</sup> D. Ralph Appelman’s *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy* and William Vennard’s *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic* were the first two books of their kind that aimed to seek out reliable, scientific, and objective research into the study of the voice and singing. Appelman was noted for developing the “vowelmeter,” a device used to visually record sung vowels – a precursor to the spectrograph technology, which is now widely used in many voice studios and even available on mobile devices.<sup>28</sup> The innovative work of these two men set the stage for further research and developments by Richard Miller later in the twentieth century. Their work set the stage for a whole new expansion of knowledge in vocal pedagogy and a shift from imagery- and experiential-based teaching strategies to explanations based on scientific inquiry and research. Their research provides a great deal of useful information for the purposes of this study.

### **Richard Miller: The Marriage of Diction and Technique**

Richard Miller (1926-2009) was a renowned singer, teacher, writer, and researcher of vocal pedagogy. He worked for forty years at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, teaching voice students and founding the school’s Otto B. Schoepfle Vocal Arts Center, an acoustical laboratory that provided innovative technology and insight into the scientific and acoustical function of the human voice. Miller served an important role in bridging the gap between the two worlds of science and teaching. He faithfully challenged the way that teachers, students, and

---

<sup>27</sup> Matthew Hoch, “The Legacy of William Vennard and D. Ralph Appelman and Their Influence on Singing Voice Pedagogy: Reflections after 50 Years (1967–2017),” *Voice and Speech Review* 11, no. 3 (September 2, 2017): 308–13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23268263.2017.1395591>.

<sup>28</sup> Hoch, “The Legacy of William Vennard and D. Ralph Appelman.”

professionals approached singing. With the natural function of the voice at the forefront, Miller insisted that if a voice were functioning well, it would indeed make the best possible sound.<sup>29</sup> In the field of vocal pedagogy, oral tradition, experiential knowledge, and personal preference often dictates what is passed down from teacher to student. Miller challenges singers and teachers to consider the scientific function of the voice instead of subjective ideas and to train our intentions and practices around its natural design.

Although Miller did not focus solely on the topic of diction, he addressed it often throughout his numerous articles and books. A theme throughout his writings is the idea that diction and vocal technique are inseparable. Miller states, “Diction is not something that is added on as an overlay to vocal technique; it is one of its chief determinants.”<sup>30</sup> Miller believed that the flowing legato of a vocal line relies upon the free-functioning breath process in the vocal mechanism. Likewise, diction has an incredible impact on the fluidity of line and freedom of sound being produced. He shares, “Relationships among properly articulated vowels and consonants are the very substance of good vocalism.”<sup>31</sup> Miller was dedicated to the ideal of an unhindered sound, championing the fluidity of a legato vocal line. His foundational *bel canto* ideals translate to any language, as attributed to his dedication to the scientific and fundamental function of the vocal mechanism and its design.

---

<sup>29</sup> Paul Kiesgen, “How Richard Miller Changed the Way We Think about Singing,” *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 3 (January 2007): 261.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers: Tools for Performers and Teachers* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 111.

<sup>31</sup> Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 111.

A mantra that is seen throughout Miller's writings is the idea that the vowel is the real carrier of the tone, i.e., "vowelization equals vocalization."<sup>32</sup> Cornelius Reid makes a similar comment on assessing *bel canto* history, stating, "without vowel purity, it is impossible to arrive at a sound basis for producing a beautiful tone."<sup>33</sup> Miller's central idea was that a properly functioning vocal mechanism is sustained by an effective breath process. He taught that the vowel is the dominant carrier of the resonant tone. A battle often fought by many singers is maintaining the consistency and brilliance of that tone without any interruptions. Consonants are often seen as an enemy of the vowel, but Miller claims they are just as important. He uses the imagery that a consonant "need not interrupt the legato any more than a twig cast upon a flowing mountain stream impedes the current."<sup>34</sup> The consonant only creates issues when the singer allows them to cause unnecessary movements of the tongue or compromises the vocal space that impedes the freedom of sound. Percussive, over-exaggerated, or "sticky" consonants are cumbersome and a hindrance, so singers should focus on delivering crisp, clean consonants to preserve vocal legato and linguistic clarity.<sup>35</sup>

Miller's idea that diction and a free vocal tone exist in a marriage together is evidenced in his scientific research at Oberlin Conservatory's OBS Vocal Arts Center. Through studies done in these labs and others around the world, Miller saw that tone and vowel result from the

---

<sup>32</sup> Richard Miller, "Diction in Relation to the Vocal Legato," *The American Music Teacher* 15, no. 4 (February 1, 1966), 16.

<sup>33</sup> Cornelius L Reid, *Bel Canto Principles and Practices* (1950; repr., New York: The Joseph Patelson Music House, 1978), 37.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, *Solutions for Singers*, 119.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

matching configurations of the larynx and vocal tract.<sup>36</sup> Miller reflects on his motivation for starting the lab at Oberlin:

First of all, I felt that I had no right to say that certain things were better than other things unless I could support it with fact, not just because my good ear tells me one thing, because somebody else's good ear might tell them something else. So, the whole subjectivity idea behind vocal pedagogy is a very important one...that you should not allow your own assumption...to invent physiology and acoustic terms of the voice. I didn't want to tell a student anything that I didn't know to be true. And by that, I meant function. Don't tell them that it's coming through the bones of your face...tell them why they might feel like it's coming through the bones of the face. I wanted to be sure that everything I said was true. I wanted to be sure that we could see these differences.<sup>37</sup>

Miller's dedication to scientific inquiry in the field of acoustics, the human voice, and vocal pedagogy has provided singers and teachers with valuable information that is founded on research, as opposed to subjective preference or experience. His work through the OBS Vocal Arts Center and labs around the world have given substance and scientific evidence to support the long-accepted *bel canto* ideal.

In his book, *The Structure of Singing*, Miller provides an in-depth analysis of the vocal mechanism, the articulators, and their effects on sound. He explains that the vocal tract resonator tube (which is comprised of the pharynx, the mouth, and at times the nose) serves as a mechanical acoustic filter for laryngeally-produced sound (the result of airflow and vocal fold approximation).<sup>38</sup> As applied to lyric diction, Miller sites research which shows that “(1) movements of the articulators [tongue, teeth, lips] affect tube or cavity dimensions in the vocal tract; (2) these shapes affect the resonances (that is, the filter function) of the vocal tract; (3) this

---

<sup>36</sup> Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 26.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Ara McQuade, “Richard Miller: A Life of Contributions to Vocal Pedagogy” (Dissertation, 2006), 95.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Thomson Learning, 1996), 48.

change in the filter function affects what we hear.”<sup>39</sup> Simply put, the acoustics of the tube respond to the demands of articulation presented by vowels and consonants.

As the singer works to maintain the ideal resonator tract position while articulating the language, it is important to strive for consistency in what is known as the singer’s formant. Miller explains that complex tones created by the larynx are composed of frequencies that are integral multiples of the lowest frequency. The sound spectrum is made up of layers of resonant frequencies, which produce peaks called formants.<sup>40</sup> The “singer’s formant” is comprised of frequency peaks between 2500 to 3200 Hz and is usually present in “resonant singing” regardless of the vowel.<sup>41</sup> The “Singer’s Formant” is achieved through desirable formant balancing, producing a “ring” that suggests “good singing tone.” Miller shares that the singer should strive to always achieve this resonant ringing sound, despite vowel shape or consonant involvement. As shared in his other writings that are less scientific and more pedagogical in nature, Miller often harkens back to the importance of breath support and the breathing process in achieving a free-flowing legato line with this type of resonant tone.

Miller believed that diction was not something that was laid over top of vocal technique, but rather they are one and the same. As the mouth changes its shape to create different vowel and consonant sounds, there should be a complete spectrum in which the lower and upper formants of harmonic partials “are in balance, with the vowel-defining formants shifting between them.”<sup>42</sup> As singers navigate lyric diction and strive to achieve consistent resonant tone through

---

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Baer, Fredericka Bell-Berti, and Philip Rubin, “Articulation and Voice Quality,” in *Transcripts of the Seventh Symposium: Care of the Professional Voice, Part I*, ed. V. Lawrence (New York: The Voice Foundation, 1979), 48–53.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 27.

*bel canto* technical ideals, the shape of the vocal tract from the vocal folds and through the mouth must be free from any hindrances or tension for the tone to be free, natural, and resonant.

Richard Miller was a pedagogue who served a crucial role in the fields of vocal pedagogy and vocal science. He served as a mediator between two fields that would not ordinarily seek insight from the other. He challenged teachers and singers throughout his writings to consider the function of the voice first and pursue natural and effective singing by unifying the scientific laws of acoustics and the wisdom of vocal pedagogy. As the singer is making choices regarding English diction, Miller's research and guidance are essential in pursuing a language delivery that is authentic, intelligible, and unencumbered.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

### Introduction

This study is founded on the research and resources that have been comprised by prominent pedagogues and authors in the field of English diction and vocal pedagogy. The findings drawn from this study are founded upon the insight gleaned from the resources collected here.

### Design

The methods of this study are qualitative in nature and draw from investigations into major contributors to the fields of lyric diction and vocal pedagogy. The research begins with a look at major contributors to English diction, outlining the guidelines and rules to follow when selecting and performing specific dialects in the English language. Additionally, an overview of stylistic approaches across eras and genres will be given. Next, the research will turn to the challenges and impacts of the language on maintaining a foundational *bel canto* classical technique, drawing from the authors and pedagogues covered in the Literature Review section and other contributors. Special attention will be given to problems such as voiced and unvoiced consonants, <R>, and the schwa, the impacts all these linguistic aspects have on the technique, and helpful warnings and strategies for the singer. Finally, the research will discuss the rules of diction and technique within the context of six repertoire selections from varying eras, genres, origins, and dialects. Research findings will be applied to the study and performance of these six selections.

### Tools and Data Collection

Resources for this study were predominantly provided by the Jerry Falwell Library at Liberty University. Books and published articles from a variety of professional journals were the

main sources, as well as some books from the personal library of the Chair for this research study, Dr. Wayne Kompelien. Musical selections were drawn from a personal library.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While the research of this study includes accepted and renowned sources in the areas of lyric diction and vocal pedagogy, the limitations of this study include the lack of human field research. The authors of the sources documented here are or were prominent teachers in their fields and have taught innumerable students throughout their careers, so the information published within their writings is valid and based on real-life experience and methodology. However, for the purposes of this research, this study could benefit from human subject research on the analysis and application of found challenges and pedagogical strategies for the delivery of English lyric diction in the *bel canto* tradition of singing.

### **Questions and Hypotheses**

This study set out to provide a survey of the challenges in the English language for lyric diction performed in the classical style. Other questions addressed in this study include matters of how period and style affect the way the language is sung, the extent to which regionalism and dialect affect how the language is delivered, and what helpful pedagogical strategies would aid the singer in conquering these technical challenges. It is hypothesized that if the singer maintains a natural, supported *bel canto* classical technique, then there will be ample guidance on conquering linguistic, stylistic, and dialectic challenges.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### The Singer's Formant

Throughout the conquest for beautiful tone and legato line in English lyric diction, the principles of *bel canto* singing provide a foundation for a constant flow of sound uninterrupted by language articulation. It is necessary to dive more specifically into what makes a singer's sound truly excellent: the singer's formant. Richard Miller wrote extensively on topics of vocal technique, including breath support and effortless yet effective diction. But these aspects of singing fall in complete submission to a concept known as the singer's formant, a scientific and acoustical term that will now be discussed.

Barbara Doscher explains a formant of the vocal resonating system as "a specific concentration of energy within the vocal sound wave" and that "a vocal sound wave is composed of a series of simple harmonic waves with frequencies which are multiples of the fundamental frequency."<sup>43</sup> The singer's formant frequencies can be adjusted by the changing of shape and position of the vocal tract members: the lips and jaw opening, the tongue, the soft palate, and the larynx. Changing the position of these vocal tract members ultimately affects the sound wave energy or the singer's formant. Scientific studies have shown that the peak in energy, or the singer's formant, appears around 3,000 kHz.<sup>44</sup> Miller explains this simply as the "ringing quality" of a singer's sound results when the resonators of the vocal tract are in tune with the vibrator, and a desirable formant balancing is achieved.<sup>45</sup> The singer's formant in lyric diction is

---

<sup>43</sup> Barbara M Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 2nd ed. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 133.

<sup>44</sup> Johan Sundberg, ed., "Research Aspects of Singing" (Stockholm: The Royal Swedish Academy of Music, 1981), 13.

<sup>45</sup> Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 55-56.

the ultimate goal for a singer to pursue a consistent quality of sound, ringing with vibrancy, with the airflow and resonance quality uninterrupted by language.

As stated before, the singer's formant frequencies are modified and affected by changing the shape of the vocal resonating tract. Vennard argues that of all the members, the tongue is the most influential over the produced sound. Movements of the tongue are what mainly affect the changing shape of the resonator and the vowel sounds that are produced. As the tongue is responsible for shaping each vowel, it also changes the concentration of energy in the vowel's formant frequencies. Striving to create optimum resonant quality with a sparkling "ring" to each note, the singer must be aware of shaping the vowels so that their frequencies are consistent. Vennard, Appelman, and Doscher have all graphed their versions of the frequency ranges for commonly used English vowels as they appear in the formant frequencies.

Appelman argues for precision on the singer's part in aiming for a pure basic vowel sound to remain consistent in pronunciation and positioning of the vowels. He shares that the singer needs to pronounce each vowel accurately so the pure vowel is preserved and the sound, and as a result, the meaning of the word is not distorted.<sup>46</sup> The same truth applies to singing accurate diction with *bel canto* technique and pursuing continuity of line. However, a language consists of more than just vowels; the consonants surrounding the vowels have the potential to compromise the vowel quality.

### **The Language's Effect on Sound and Technique**

The resonance and opulent tone of *bel canto* technique are dependent upon the brilliance of the vowel. *Bel canto* ideals from its early days aimed for the absolute purity of the vowel to

---

<sup>46</sup> D. Ralph Appelman, *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 230.

carry such a rich and ringing tone. Today, with *bel canto* established as a foundational technique across languages, purity of the vowel might only sometimes be present as there are a variety of vowel sounds in other languages, especially in English. However, the consistent brilliance of sound is still achievable through formant balancing, regardless of language. Although the field of acoustics and vocal science did not exist in the seventeenth century, the singer's formant and balancing of energized frequencies go hand in hand with the type of sound these singers pursued.

While the beauty of the vowel sounds is imperative for the singer to master, it is often the surrounding consonants that hinder brilliant tone. LaBouff shares that, unlike the Romance languages of lyric repertoire, English has a much higher consonant-to-vowel ratio, so it is important to know how to handle them properly.<sup>47</sup> As the vocal tract modifies its shape to accommodate for the language's articulation, the tongue and lips can create issues that compromise the singer's formant and quality of the sound. Miller believed that though the vowel is the true carrier of the tone, continuity of the vowel sound cannot be realized if the vowel meets consonants with constant audible interruptions.<sup>48</sup> When a singer pursues a consistent resonance, they are working to serve the beauty of the vocal line. Dr. Wayne Kompelien of Liberty University teaches that a free-flowing vocal line requires the movement from one vowel sound to the next with the least amount of interruption in the resonant quality of sound. With this definition, the singer's formant frequencies are in a balanced, desirable range, the breath process is stable and supported throughout the line, and the diction of the language does not interrupt either of the former qualities in any way.

---

<sup>47</sup> Kathryn Labouff, *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Miller, "Diction in Relation to the Vocal Legato," *The American Music Teacher* 15, no. 4 (February 1, 1966), 16.

Appelman would have agreed with this definition, as he states, “Great care must be taken so that the formation of the consonants does not interfere with the proper resonance of each phoneme in a manner that would destroy the vocal line.”<sup>49</sup> Miller also agreed with this idea. Although LaBouff would also agree, she cautions against viewing consonants as the enemy of legato singing. LaBouff shares that “Consonants are the connective tissue that sustains the legato and propels it forward. When released and handled properly, the consonants help maintain the forward placement of the vowels and help the voice achieve its bloom.”<sup>50</sup> But there are innate challenges of a consonant-laden language that can compromise the flow of tone, so careful attention to the formation and production of consonants is needed to ensure the least amount of interruption to the vocal line possible.

### **Economic Handling of Consonants**

With the body of tone occurring on the vowel, the consonants need to be articulated clearly, without interfering with the quality of the vowel sound. Miller recommends a quickly occurring consonant that is not “sticky” or given too long a duration. He explains that just because some consonants have pitch does not permit them to linger any longer than is necessary for articulation. These prolonged consonants do nothing to project the language but rather hinder the forward motion of the line. Instead, he recommends that the singer imagine forming all consonants cleanly at the front of the mouth, at the tip of the tongue, or on the lips, even though the real formation of some consonants may occur elsewhere. This imagery helps create forward-moving consonants that are executed quickly without causing unnecessary movements of the

---

<sup>49</sup> Appelman, *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy*, 237.

<sup>50</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 114.

tongue, mouth, or throat.<sup>51</sup> He encourages articulation with the least involvement of unnecessary means and economical delivery of the language with precision and clarity, preserving the legato.

LaBouff proposes the same strategy of consonant handling to preserve the legato line but also offers a slightly different approach in the service of expression and communication. She points out that through the act of singing, the text, which is normally given inflection in speech patterns, has lost this element of emphasis that gives the words more meaning below the surface. To deliver a performance that is musically accurate and articulated cleanly, singers may often feel very involved emotionally, but their performance simply does not convey the same emotion outwardly through the words they sing. LaBouff recommends an intentional doubling of specific consonants to provide the extra layer of artistic expression that carries the text more poignantly. This strategy should not be applied liberally to all words but to words that are crucial in conveying the emotion behind each word in a vocal line. To perform doubled consonants effectively, LaBouff says that time must be stolen from the note value of the word that precedes it and that “any consonant that can be sustained can be doubled regardless of whether it is voiced or unvoiced.”<sup>52</sup> As singers are preparing a piece for performance, each phrase should be carefully analyzed regarding when expressive doubling of consonants will be necessary so as not to overuse the technique and thus inhibit the flow of the vocal legato.

Regardless of the choice to utilize expressive doubling or quickly occurring consonants, the singer should always preserve a non-diminishing vowel sound, even in the face of approaching consonants. The singer may be tempted to anticipate consonants that are coming and, consequently, decrease the vowel sound as it approaches final consonants. Miller states that

---

<sup>51</sup> Miller, “Diction in Relation to the Vocal Legato,” 17.

<sup>52</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 195.

the vowel should continue at the same degree of intensity without any influence from the surrounding consonants. He also states that English-speaking singers are especially susceptible to this mistake, perhaps because the language is so consonant-heavy. Similarly, vowels should be unmodified by approaching consonants so that the color or purity of the vowel is unaffected by the closing of the space or the impression of a diphthong.

As the singer works towards consistency in maintaining the vowel space, a knowledge of two types of consonants is necessary: voiced and voiceless. Madeleine Marshall defines a voiceless consonant as requiring “an audible blowing of air (which is also called aspiration) but no vocalized sound,” and a voiced consonant as requiring “a vocalized sound instead of the blowing of air.”<sup>53</sup> This vocalized sound could be described as a humming of pitch on the various consonant sounds. Marshall also explains that for every voiceless consonant, there is a voiced partner, except for *r*, *y*, *m*, *n*, *ng*, and *l*. A chart of the voiced and voiceless consonant pairs is found in Figure 5. The concept of voiced and voiceless (also commonly called unvoiced) consonants has endured since Marshall first coined the terms, and LaBouff has created a similar chart using IPA symbols.

Marshall warns against interchanging the use of voiced and voiceless consonants, as this changes both the sound and meaning of the word (Ex: *dime* for *time*, *fine* for *vine*, *bray* for *pray*, etc.). In singing, a bit of aspiration for the voiceless consonants is necessary so the language is clearly articulated and easily understood, especially in a larger hall or with no amplification. This light aspiration does not endanger the breath supply, so singers should not worry that clear enunciation of these consonants will compromise their support. Conversely, Marshall warns against the imploding of consonants or causing a slight stop without an explosion of air.

---

<sup>53</sup> Marshall, *The Singer's Manual of English Diction*, 29.

Imploding consonants can be especially tempting for voiced and voiceless partners such as these: *Stop barking. What danger threatens? A quick glance.* Marshall says that imploding the consonants creates an undesirable stop to the flow of sound and gives the impression of carelessness in articulation. Since singing is like speech over an extended time, the consonants should each have their own crisp and clear execution to ensure intelligibility.

When connecting consonants to the next word or syllable, both Marshall and LaBouff give some general guidelines that work for all consonants. As a rule, when connecting an unstressed consonant to a vowel, the consonant sound is placed at the beginning of the following syllable or word. This preserves the flow of the legato line and limits awkward interruptions between syllables and words. When connecting a consonant to another following consonant, both are pronounced quickly back-to-back, with no vowel sound between. The preceding vowel is elongated as much as possible before the double consonant to preserve the legato line. This practice is like Miller's idea of the quickly occurring consonant at the front of the mouth to preserve a non-diminishing vowel space and un-modified vowels from consonant influences.

For back-to-back consonants, Marshall argues that the implosion of the first of two consecutive consonants is not recommended except in cases of popular songs that are sung in a more colloquial manner. LaBouff takes a different approach, however, and recommends that for text that is musically set to fast or moderate tempi, "implosions are a very useful aid to cut down on the 'consonant spatter stream' and clean up the legato line."<sup>54</sup> Stop-plosive pairs like [p] and [b], [d] and [t], and [g] and [k] are especially susceptible to the consonant spatter effect, so the imploding of the first of the two consecutive plosive cognates is recommended. Similarly, LaBouff also recommends a merging of any combination of adjacent final and initial fricative

---

<sup>54</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 187.

and nasal consonants plus the lateral [l]. The practice of merging one consonant onto the next eliminates the unnecessary appearance of the neutral schwa [ə] but instead seamlessly melds the consonants together so that the articulatory position of the first consonant is maintained until the next consonant begins. Unlike LaBouff's recommendation for implosions to only occur at fast or moderate tempi, merges can occur in all musical settings of tempo.

Despite the slight differences in consonant delivery, the ideas of LaBouff still align with Marshall and Miller as she advocates for complete vocal freedom and precise delivery of the consonants with minimal interruption of the vowel sound and quality. Her "rule number 7" of consonants attests to this fact, as it states, "The objective should be to keep the base of the tongue from hardening. This is accomplished in part by striving to maintain flexibility and pliability of the jaw, lips, and tongue muscles."<sup>55</sup> From a diction standpoint, Marshall and LaBouff's ideas on consonant articulation agree with the technical guidance of writers like Miller, Appelman, Vennard, and Doscher. They all emphasize the need for looseness and freedom in the articulators to preserve the vocal freedom that comes with classical lyric singing. When facing a language that is as consonant-heavy as English is, the main idea for singers to keep in mind is to strive for a consistent and energized formant balancing across all words and phrases. This is particularly challenging for English lyric diction because the language holds a higher consonant-to-vowel ratio, but there is ample support for learning how to achieve a desirable, ringing sound with brilliant vowel tones.

### **Dialect and Regionalisms**

As the English language has evolved throughout the centuries, singers have had to adjust the way they approach the text and make intentional choices about its delivery. Early in the

---

<sup>55</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 114.

twentieth century, Madeleine Marshall was one of the first great teachers and writers of English diction, teaching students at the Juilliard School and coaching professional singers at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Her method of diction reflected the Eurocentric New York elite class that at the time was most widely represented throughout television and radio broadcasting programs. As time went on, American composers began releasing works that warranted greater attention to detail on the origin of the characters in the score and how their language was represented on stage. Kathryn LaBouff has proven to be an excellent source who saw the need for regionally specific dialects that more accurately represented the characters in modern compositions. LaBouff's work included outlining three major dialects that singers need to be well-versed in for all major English works, as well as additional dialects which were more regionally specific and required additional modifications of the leading English pronunciation. The three main dialects that will be discussed here include the American Standard, British Received, and Mid-Atlantic pronunciations.

American Standard, or AS, is the neutral English of North America that is most recognizable and understandable by the majority of North Americans. It is free from any regionalisms and is the standard pronunciation used by trained speakers and performers for public usage. The production of AS vowels and consonants are produced in the same way for British Received (RP) and Mid-Atlantic (MA) pronunciations; however, for the latter two dialects, there are some key differences in pronunciation. One of the major differences that British Received and Mid-Atlantic holds from American Standard is its "r" treatments. There is an overall lessening of burred r, or "American r," with the use of rolled or flipped r's in Historic representations of RP and MA. British Received also uses a lessened "r" coloration in

diphthongs, triphthongs, and single vowels.<sup>56</sup> LaBouff cautions that when using RP or MA pronunciations, each word should be carefully assessed regarding r treatments. Too liberal usage of rolled or flipped r's can give the effect of the Slavic languages, so the singer must choose carefully. Intervocalic r's are generally flipped, while initial consonant cluster r's are not.

Vowels and consonants in British Received are generally produced farther forward in the mouth and with the lips more rounded than in American Standard. Consequently, the lip vowels shift up to the next darkest vowel on the vowel chart. For example, the AM [ɑ] vowel shifts to the RP [ɒ], as in God changing from AS [gɑd] to RP [gɒd]. Additionally, the stressed o diphthong in “no” changes from the [oʊ] diphthong in AS to [əʊ] in RP. This shifting diphthong is characteristic of spoken Received Pronunciation but can easily spread wider when sung vocally. LaBouff encourages singers to only shift the diphthong to [əʊ] in the genres of musical theater, operetta, and spoken dialogue but to remain using the [oʊ] diphthong for all classical singing. A final vowel modification that is for both RP and MA is the use of what LaBouff calls the “liquid u” rule. Under this rule, a j-glide is to be used for u's that occur after the consonants d, n, l, s, t, and th. This distinct glide sound is predominantly used for the Historic version of RP and MA.

A rule regarding consonants for both RP and MA is “all t's must be aspirated crisply, regardless of their position within a word.”<sup>57</sup> One exception to this rule is that a final t should not be aspirated when followed by a word with an unstressed vowel sound. A rule to be used only for MA is to produce an aspirated [ʌ] sound for all words with “wh” spellings such as “what,” “where,” and “when.” In general, Mid-Atlantic uses the same vowel pronunciations as American Standard instead of the forward-produced vowels of British Received pronunciation. The biggest

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 214.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 236.

difference between AS and MA is that MA uses the same r colorations and treatments of RP. The r colorations are lessened in diphthongs and triphthongs, and the r is optionally rolled or flipped in Historic MA.

### **Repertoire Analysis**

In this following section, the research findings and guidance from technical and diction pedagogues like Miller, Vennard, Marshall, and LaBouff will be applied to a selection of English art songs and arias. By examining the challenges that different musical settings present for the language, various pedagogical strategies will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Before a singer begins work on an English song, research must be conducted regarding the origin of the composer and poet or librettist, if necessary, to make decisions regarding dialect. If the composer is European but not British, the Mid-Atlantic dialect should be used. However, if the composer is European, but the text was written by a British poet or librettist, the British Received Pronunciation should be used. Oratorio works are generally sung in the Mid-Atlantic dialect. All works by British composers should be sung in British Received Pronunciation, and all works by American composers should be sung in American Standard.

#### **“The Mermaid’s Song” by Franz Joseph Haydn**

This song is one of Haydn’s 12 English Canzonettas, written in 1794, and has a light, playful tone. The poetry was written by Anne Hunter (1742-1821) and talks of a mermaid beckoning her lover to come and see what treasures lie beneath the rolling waves of the sea. The piano accompaniment is beautifully simple and features running notes and arpeggiated chords to mimic the rolling waves of the ocean. The tempo is a quick *allegretto*, so the singer must carefully enunciate all consonants quickly without letting the tempo drag, or they risk singing behind the beat.



A final word of caution is to ensure Miller’s advice in maintaining consistent space in the vowel shapes, regardless of musical setting or approaching consonants. Such a case can be seen in the repeated phrase “Stormy winds are far away,” as the [ɪ] in “winds” repeatedly occurs on higher pitches and is followed by the [nds] consonants which can very easily prematurely close the vowel space. Especially since this word occurs multiple times on high pitches, the singer must be mindful not to diminish the vowel sound and for the consonants to occur quickly just before moving on to the next word and note.

Figure 2<sup>60</sup>

### **“When Icicles Hang by the Wall” by Ralph Vaughan Williams**

Sometimes called The Winter Song, “When Icicles Hang by the Wall” is the second of two songs in Vaughn Williams’ 32nd opus. The music is set to text taken from a comedic play by William Shakespeare called Love’s Labour’s Lost. The text paints oddly detailed pictures of various townspeople as they carry on with their daily tasks amidst the winter setting. The text music and text is set quickly at *allegro*, with harmonies that give the feel of an eerie setting in the frigid and dark winter days. The meter, an oscillating 6/8 to 9/8, combined with the consonant-heavy poetry, matches the rocking gusts of the winter wind or the trudging steps of the townsfolk through the icy cold nights as they go about their chores.

With both a British composer and poet, this piece should be performed in the British Received dialect. Firstly, this calls for flipped and rolled r’s in words like “merry,” “staring,” and

---

<sup>60</sup> Haydn, “The Mermaid Song,” 1794.

“Marian,” as well as r-colored vowels in “shepherd,” “bears,” and “parson.” The singer must again take care in flipped r decisions, as overdoing this will cause adverse effects on the British authenticity. Since this text contains several occurrences of back-to-back plosive consonants, LaBouff recommends merging such consonant sounds to avoid the “consonant spurtle” effect. The merging of plosive consonants will also preserve the legato line and keeps the momentum of the quick tempo moving forward without unnecessary interruptions.

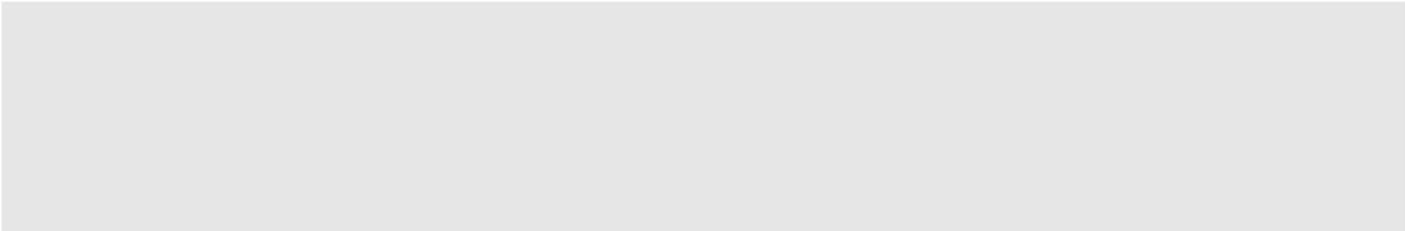


Figure 3<sup>61</sup> (*Removed to comply with copyright*)

The above phrase is a good example of choosing to merge the consonants of the words “And Dick,” “And Tom,” and “milk comes.” Joining these words together makes the phrase flow much more smoothly as the tempo pushes forward.

Madeleine Marshall advised towards the end of her *Singer’s Manual on English Diction* that when a British poet has written words with variation pronunciations for the purpose of fulfilling a rhyme, the singer should always choose to let them rhyme. The poetry follows an ABABC rhyme scheme in the verse, as it leads to the refrain, which ends its first phrase with completing the C partner rhyme. The lines are full of potentially rhyming phrases; however, some of the word choices are a bit far-reaching. For example, verse two is outlined below, and the first four lines complete the rhyme scheme quite nicely. But rhyming the word “bowl” with

---

<sup>61</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams, “When Icicles Hang by the Wall,” *Opus 32*, poetry by William Shakespeare, 1926.

“owl” in the following first line of the refrain is more awkward, and some singers choose not to rhyme them.

<i>When all aloud the wind doth blow,</i>	
<i>And coughing drowns the parson's saw,</i>	<i>Then nightly sings the staring owl,</i>
<i>And birds sit brooding in the snow,</i>	<i>Tu-who, Tu-whit, Tu-who,</i>
<i>And Marian's nose looks red and raw,</i>	<i>A merry note!</i>
<i>When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,</i>	<i>While greasy Joan doth keel the pot<sup>62</sup></i>

This practice is somewhat fluid, as many singers choose not to rhyme certain words, perhaps to appeal to their more modern audiences.

### **“Love’s Philosophy” by Roger Quilter**

From Roger Quilter’s 1905 third opus, the text of “Love’s Philosophy” was written by prominent English romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. It was written in the style of the Greek poet Anacreon, whose writings were known for their celebrations of love and life. The poem employs various poetic devices, including personification, metaphor, and rhetorical questions. As the poet outlines symbols of love and pairings throughout nature, he argues that if nature should reflect the workings of love, why should his lover not also do the same with him? With both a British poet and composer, the text should be delivered in the British Received Pronunciation. The piano accompaniment is lush and full of arpeggiated chordal harmonies with melodic themes outlined in the running sixteenth notes. The tempo marking reads *Molto allegro con moto* (112), which moves the text along at an urgent pace. The combination of a full-textured accompaniment and quickly moving text makes delivery and intelligibility challenging for the singer without compromising vocal freedom and the beauty of tone.

---

<sup>62</sup> William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, London, 1598.

With a quick tempo, it can be challenging for singers to deliver the text effectively while still maintaining the beauty of resonance and smoothness of vocal line. As Miller suggests, the consonants must occur quickly and cleanly at the front of the mouth, with light aspirations and shadow vowels when necessary so the text also carries over the accompaniment. An example of consonant clusters in the text is shown below, and it is important for the singer to limit excessive jaw movement or tension in phrases such as this.

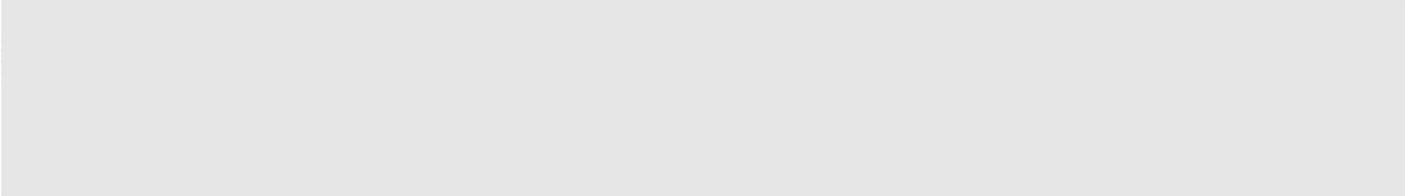


Figure 4<sup>63</sup> (*Removed to comply with copyright*)

### **“Early in the Morning” by Ned Rorem**

This art song by American composer Ned Rorem is filled with wistful nostalgia. The text, by the poet Robert Hillyer, offers a distant memory of a far-off summer morning, breakfasting outside a quaint French cafe. Both the words and the music are shrouded in a dreamlike haze with the interplay of lilting chromatic chords and simple melodies. The text presents the rich yet passing sights and smells of the morning as the piano’s gentle rocking rhythm vaguely suggests a lullaby. Both the American composer and poet warrant the text to be treated with the American Standard pronunciation, utilizing regular burred r’s and less of the r-colored vowels than in the British Received or Mid-Atlantic dialects.

Because this piece offers such a soft, dreamlike musical texture, the percussiveness of the English text must do nothing to interrupt the mesmerizing backdrop. The singer should take care in articulating the consonants with clarity while not being overly striking. What allows this piece

---

<sup>63</sup> Roger Quilter, “Love’s Philosophy,” *Opus no. 3*, poetry by Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1905.

to give a moving experience is the trance it can place over the audience as the singer emotes nostalgia and delivers the text in an unhurried reflection. The legato line carries the driving forward motion but varies based on the text. As the performer sings, “I was breakfasting on croissants and café au lait,” the momentum is about savoring the moments, but as the memory turns to the “dash of flashing spray,” “smell of summer showers,” and “the dust is drenched away,” the surroundings rush in and flood over their senses, creating a rich experience that the audience can experience, too. Jaw movement should be minimal, as well as the elimination of any tension while navigating the consonants at varying degrees in the singer’s range.

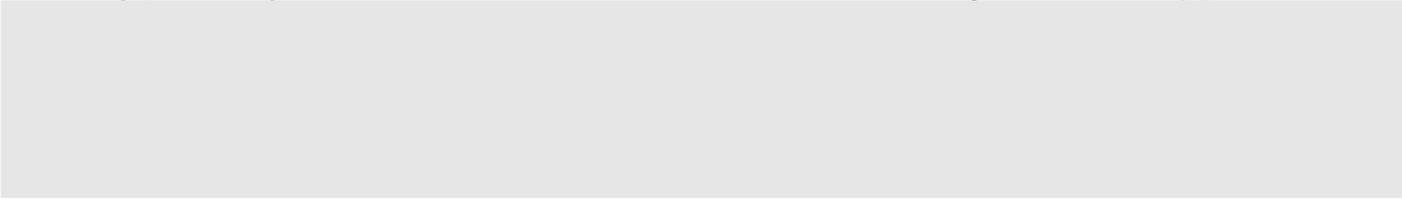


Figure 5<sup>64</sup> (*Removed to comply with copyright*)

Another caution for singers in this piece is to ensure that no tension enters the throat through glottal attacks on words that begin with vowels. LaBouff cautions against this specifically in her book *Singing and Communicating in English* and encourages singers to use a very light breath lift when it is necessary to create separation before the onset of beginning vowel sounds.<sup>65</sup> She marks these light breath lifts with an apostrophe.

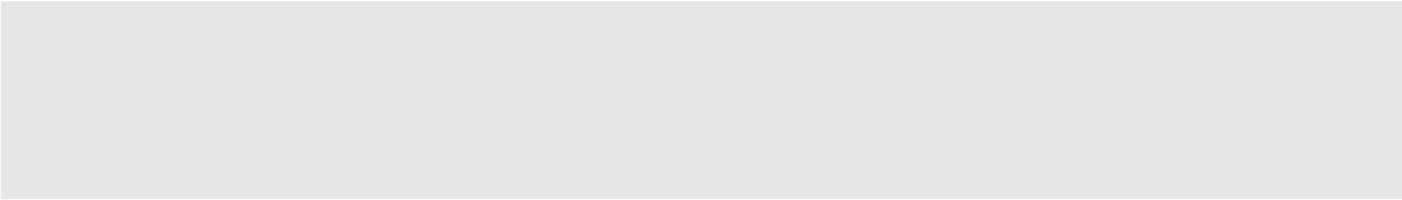


Figure 6<sup>66</sup> (*Removed to comply with copyright*)

---

<sup>64</sup> Ned Rorem, “Early in the Morning.”

<sup>65</sup> LaBouff, *Singing and Communicating in English*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> Ned Rorem, “Early in the Morning.”

LaBouff notes that this change might be challenging for many English native speakers at first because most of them always begin initial vowel-sound words with a slight glottal attack. However, eliminating this small amount of tension contributes to the luxurious legato line of Rorem's twentieth-century setting of this text.

### **“Things Change, Jo” by Mark Adamo**

Adapted from the beloved novel by Louisa May Alcott, Mark Adamo's aria comes from his twentieth-century opera *Little Women*, which follows a New England family during the Civil War era. In this aria, Meg March sings to her loyal yet stubborn sister, Jo. Meg, betrothed to her love, John, is trying to explain to her sister that this is not a betrayal but a change of season and heart. Adamo's modern musical setting presents chromatic and angular melodic lines paired with emotionally flooded lyrics. Using the American Standard pronunciation, this charged aria calls for LaBouff's strategy of expressive consonant doubling to add emotive qualities to the line. LaBouff explains that through singing, the usual speech patterns of inflection and stress are removed, so the singer should lean into consonants of stressed or important words in the vocal line. An example of when this can be used is shown below as Meg explains that her love for her family remains the same, although her heart has changed through her love for John.

Figure 7<sup>67</sup> (*Removed to comply with copyright*)

Another key strategy to be mindful of is to maintain consistent vowel space regardless of approaching consonants and avoid any tension, especially in the higher range. This aria

---

<sup>67</sup> Mark Adamo, “Things Change, Jo,” *Little Women*, 1998.

showcases some dynamic vocal moments, but the text chosen for the higher notes is challenging. One of the climactic moments is shown below. It is imperative for the singer to maintain a consistent tongue position throughout the line without allowing it to creep up and inhibit the tone on “rejoice.” A quickly occurring consonant is also important to guard against diminishing vowel space.

Figure 8<sup>68</sup> (*Removed to comply with copyright*)

### **“Can’t Help Lovin’ Dat Man” by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II**

One of the most famous songs from the 1927 musical *Showboat*, the music of this piece was written by Jerome Kern, with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. This song appears multiple times throughout the musical but is most associated with the character Julie Laverne, the lead star singer on the Mississippi River showboat, the *Cotton Blossom*. Julie sings this song, along with other ladies in the show, including Queenie and Magnolia, about the man she loves. With both an American composer and lyricist, this piece can be sung in the American Standard dialect, but due to the setting of the show, the roots of the characters are more authentically depicted in the General Southern dialect. LaBouff outlines this dialect in the appendix of her *Guide*, and it offers valuable guidance.

The character Julia plays the leading performer aboard the Mississippi River showboat, the *Cotton Blossom*. For Julie, the American Standard dialect should be used, which includes general vowel treatment. The same dialect should be used for the character Magnolia, the

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

daughter of the showboat's captain. The General Southern dialect should be used for the character Queenie, who is an African American cook aboard the Cotton Blossom. In the General Southern dialect, diphthongs on [ai] simply become [a] and can be noted on words like "why," "fly," and "die." Another notable difference in General Southern is the interchange of all "th" words with a "d" instead. This gives the text a noticeably casual and colloquial feel.

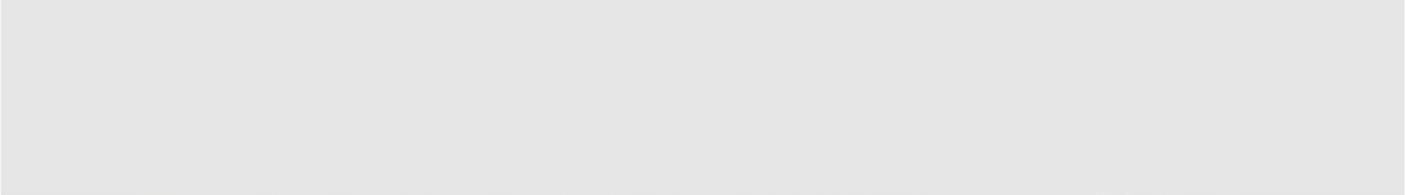


Figure 9<sup>69</sup> (*Removed to comply with copyright*)

---

<sup>69</sup> Jerome Kern, "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, 1927.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The innate qualities of the English language have proven to present many challenges for the classical singer at all levels to deliver the text authentically and with a beautiful, consistent tone. Foundational ideas outlined by the enduring *bel canto* technique provide singers with a strong foundation of exhibiting excellent singing regardless of the language that is being sung. Although diction studies did not grow into substantial programs of interest until the mid-to-late twentieth century, many enduring pedagogues and writers have provided a wealth of knowledge in dealing with the evolution of the language and presenting it authentically today. Teachers and singers must have a toolkit full of strategies that aid the singer in delivering English text with clarity and beauty. Findings in the fields of acoustics, vocal pedagogy, and diction all present valuable information for the singer and the teacher alike.

### Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to outline the specific challenges that make English a difficult language to deliver for the classical singer. With an understanding of each of the challenges, singers, and teachers can prepare themselves with pedagogical strategies that will make them successful in delivering the language effectively. As singers grow in their vocal technique and establish a strong foundation, they will be more successful in delivering a beautifully consistent tone that serves the language well.

### Summary of Problem

As the English language has evolved throughout the years, it has presented singers with challenges in both beautiful and authentic delivery. The *bel canto* ideal was born out of a tradition of singing in late sixteenth-century Italy and a language that is drastically different from

English. With its vowel variations, high consonant-to-vowel ratio, closed syllabification, and a diversity of regional dialects, English has proven to be a language that is difficult for many singers to deliver beautifully, with consistent technique, and authentically, with sensitivity to regional dialects. Singers are often left without the pedagogical strategies necessary to know how to address these issues properly.

### **Summary of Procedure**

This study consisted of collecting qualitative research in the fields of vocal pedagogy, acoustics, and lyric diction. First, resources on historical accounts and reflections on *bel canto* technique were gathered, and the dominant characteristics of this technique were outlined. Next, later developments in vocal pedagogy were researched, which ushered the field from the historical era into the scientific area and the study of acoustics. Through the findings in vocal pedagogy and acoustics, strategies were discovered that aid the singer in the effective delivery of the language. Then, research into writers and pedagogues of lyric diction was gathered to bring light to the dealings with vowels, consonants, articulation, and regional dialects. Finally, gatherings from the previous fields were synthesized in the repertoire analysis section, as English art songs and arias were studied and performed according to the findings from the fields of vocal pedagogy, acoustics, and lyric diction.

### **Summary of Research Questions**

The primary research question of this study was: What are the main challenges of singing English diction with classical technique? This question was addressed through the field of lyric diction and vocal pedagogy. Other sub-questions that this study addressed in pursuit of more specificity and practicality were:

1. To what extent do regionalism and dialect affect how the language is delivered?
2. What are helpful pedagogical strategies that aid the singer in conquering these technical challenges?

### **Summary of Research Findings**

This study set out to determine the specific challenges of the English language when sung with classical technique. Through historical and modern observations, the *bel canto* tradition of singing provides singers with a foundation built on the beauty of tone, purity of vowels, and an uninterrupted legato line. Vocal pedagogy during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries was largely subjective and was based on the oral traditions of teachers who passed down their personal preferences and wisdom from singing experiences to their students. Although the *bel canto* technique was born out of an Italian tradition, its core principles provide a foundation that can be executed in any language.

In the mid-twentieth century, the historical era of subjective vocal pedagogy gave way to the fact-based era involving the science of acoustics and research. Vocal pedagogues now had evidence for why *bel canto* singing was so successful in delivering a beautiful tone with an elegant legato line. Since the 1960s, writers like Richard Miller, William Vennard, Ralph Appelman, and Barbara Doscher provided valuable insight using scientific research from the field of acoustics and provided vocal pedagogy with the legitimacy it needed. Through scientific research on the singer's formant, these pedagogues discovered how and why the voice anatomically functions as it does and what a singer should do to focus on balancing their vocal energy and sound frequencies to deliver a resonant-rich tone. Their writings and work at the university level and beyond provided their students with effective strategies to overcome challenges such as lyric diction.

Lyric diction pedagogues Madeleine Marshall and Kathryn LaBouff laid the groundwork for a more robust approach to language pronunciation and articulation for the singer. From the era of Marshall's Euro-centric upper-class pronunciation in New York City to LaBouff's inclusion of regional dialects found across America, their writings provide singers with the resources needed for delivering the English language with authenticity, clarity, and expression. LaBouff's work outlined three main dialects and allowed singers the ability to make educated decisions on performance practices based on the origins of each composition. The Mid-Atlantic, British Received, and American Standard pronunciations are three main dialects every singer must know for effective performances. LaBouff also provides appendices of niche dialects found in various parts of the world that are less common but still necessary for specific pieces.

LaBouff, Miller, and other pedagogues mentioned outlined several aspects of the English language that make it particularly difficult for the classical singer and lyric diction. First, the English language has a high consonant-to-vowel ratio that presents a greater risk of interruptions in the beauty of the tone and the smoothness of the legato line. Similarly, English also follows the Germanic tendency of closed syllabification, which also closes the vowel space. Through the *bel canto* ideal, pedagogues and historians noted that the beauty of the tone occurs on the vowel, so with the frequent occurrence of consonants in English, this is particularly challenging to maintain consistently. Additionally, the English language presents a greater variation in precise vowel sounds, as it presents sixteen possible vowel sounds compared to the Italian seven. Lastly, as the language has evolved throughout the years, there are a variety of dialects to choose from, as the singer must be mindful of each composition's origin and the audience which they are performing for.

The rules and methods of major lyric diction and vocal technique pedagogues provide an array of strategies for the singer as they approach the many challenges of the language. Richard Miller discusses the importance of executing consonants quickly and cleanly, imagining them only occurring in the front of the mouth even though they sometimes occur elsewhere. This strategy allows singers to focus on quick and clean articulation without the unnecessary involvement of the tongue or compromising the resonant spaces in the mouth or throat. Related to this strategy is the maintenance of non-diminishing vowel space. Miller discusses how approaching consonants often compromise the singer's space and can make the resonance less full and energized. As consonants approach, singers must focus on maintaining a consistent vowel space without the consonant sound creeping in prematurely.

LaBouff discusses strategies from the lyric diction standpoint and urges singers to eliminate any tension by ridding the onset vowels of any glottal attacks. She shares that this can be difficult for native English singers since many people naturally initiate vowel onsets with glottal attacks in their speaking voices; however, this causes undesirable tension in the voice. Similar to Miller's guidance on the quickly occurring consonant and maintaining non-diminishing vowel space, singers must ensure a consistent tongue position amidst surrounding consonants and variation in the range or pitch at which the words are sung. Stability in the tongue and throat, regardless of consonant,s is important for formant balancing and consistent vocal resonance. Finally, LaBouff offers three major English dialects that singers should choose from when performing a piece. Singers should always be well-informed regarding the origin of the composer and librettist and choose the performance dialect accordingly.

### **Areas for Further Research**

Vocal and lyric diction pedagogues discussed in this study have provided a plethora of effective pedagogical strategies that have aided singers for decades when approaching the many challenges of the English language. Recommendations for further study in helpful pedagogical strategies could include observations with human subjects at the collegiate level. Observing vocal professors with their students would provide a wider variety of pedagogical strategies that may not be listed in this research.

## Bibliography

- Appelman, D. Ralph. *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Baer, Thomas, Fredericka Bell-Berti, and Philip Rubin. "Articulation and Voice Quality." In *Transcripts of the Seventh Symposium: Care of the Professional Voice, Part I*, edited by V. Lawrence, 48–53. New York: The Voice Foundation, 1979.
- Carnegie Hall. "Joyce DiDonato Master Class October 2016: Mark Adamo's 'Things Change, Jo' from Little Women." [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), 2016.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSP0nXwN0Eg&list=PLMR1rC9bBUMp\\_iWA0Fo7oL1WJexO9zBIL&index=9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSP0nXwN0Eg&list=PLMR1rC9bBUMp_iWA0Fo7oL1WJexO9zBIL&index=9).
- Cook-Cunningham, Sheri. "The Many Facets of Madeleine Marshall: A Historical and Cultural Perspective of Madeleine 'Graham Jones' Marshall Simon (1899-1993), Author of the Singer's Manual of English Diction." [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com), 2013.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1470088499/fulltextPDF/87F2CF469BA042B8PQ/1?accountid=12085>.
- Doscher, Barbara M. *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*. 2nd ed. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994.
- Duey, Philip A. *Bel Canto in Its Golden Age - a Study of Its Teaching Concepts*. 1951. Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1980.
- Hoch, Matthew. "The Legacy of William Vennard and D. Ralph Appelman and Their Influence on Singing Voice Pedagogy: Reflections after 50 Years (1967–2017)." *Voice and Speech Review* 11, no. 3 (September 2, 2017): 308–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23268263.2017.1395591>.
- Kiesgen, Paul. "How Richard Miller Changed the Way We Think about Singing." *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 3 (January 2007): 261–64.
- Labouff, Kathryn. *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Marshall, Madeleine. *The Singer's Manual of English Diction*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1953.
- McQuade, Mark Ara. "Richard Miller: A Life of Contributions to Vocal Pedagogy." Dissertation, 2006.
- Miller, Richard. "Diction in Relation to the Vocal Legato." *The American Music Teacher* 15, no. 4 (February 1, 1966).

- . “Legato in Singing.” *The American Music Teacher* 14, no. 5 (May 1, 1965).
- . *On the Art of Singing*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- . *Solutions for Singers: Tools for Performers and Teachers*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- . *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique*. Belmont, CA: Schirmer Thomson Learning, 1996.
- . “What about the ‘Pure Vowel’ and ‘Vowel Modification?’” *Journal of Singing - the Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* 52, no. 1 (September 1995): 37, 39–40.  
<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1400917/432F37BE79E9429DPQ/2?accountid=12085>.
- Reid, Cornelius L. *Bel Canto Principles and Practices*. 1950. Reprint, New York: The Joseph Patelson Music House, 1978.
- Reikofski, Helen Dewey. “Singing in English in the 21st Century: A Study Comparing and Applying the Tenets of Madeleine Marshall and Kathryn Labouff.” Dissertation, 2015.  
<https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/singing-english-21st-century-study-comparing/docview/1775396076/se-2>.
- Stark, James A. *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- Sundberg, Johan, ed. “Research Aspects of Singing.” Stockholm: The Royal Swedish Academy of Music, 1981.
- Vennard, William. *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic*. 5th ed. 1949. Reprint, New York: Carl Fischer, 1967.