

what not to do—after receiving a contract. Preparation tactics for day one, sing-throughs, music rehearsals, production concept meetings, staging rehearsals, room runs, *Sitzprobes*, *Wandelprobes*, tech rehearsals, and dress rehearsals are all carefully addressed. Furthermore, the art of “covering” a role is carefully examined, as it is often an experience for which few are prepared. This one may have hit just a *bit* close to home, having debuted as Cassio in Verdi’s *Otello* with less than ten minutes notice (Utah Festival Opera, 2013). Let me just say how much I would have appreciated access to this chapter *prior* to that experience.

Overall, the book is extremely effective, cohesive, and impeccably organized. Each chapter concludes with a summary of key principles to help the reader understand the important strategies and development goals presented. Furthermore, a series of application questions allows readers to personalize each strategy for their unique career path. Many chapters also feature activities that are intended to assist readers in building a business. Supplemental resources for further exploration are cited at the end of each discussion.

The strength of this contribution is unparalleled within the current literature. Harrington skillfully debunks the mysteries of our evolving operatic landscape through his comprehensive examination of each piece of the operatic puzzle. Undoubtedly, this book will become a foundational element and required reading for training programs nationwide.

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**Benson, Elizabeth.** *Training Contemporary Commercial Singers*. Oxford: Compton Publishing,

2020. Paper, 300 pp., \$40.00. ISBN 9781909082625

In recent years, contemporary commercial music (CCM) has found a more welcome home in the world of voice teaching. Pedagogues that include Mary Saunders Barton, Matthew Edwards, Jeannette LoVetri, Robert Edwin, and Kevin Wilson have achieved great records of success with approaches built upon fact-based voice pedagogy heavily influenced by voice science. As these CCM styles have grown to become more widely embraced, many voice teachers have begun to reexamine their own pedagogic practices.

Elizabeth Ann Benson’s new book, *Training Contemporary Commercial Singers*, examines myriad diverse approaches that have been employed with great success. Benson’s own experiences derive from an early childhood of Mozart and The Beatles. Following formal academic training and earning a Doctor of Musical Arts degree, Benson discovered a significant demand from students who wanted to learn to belt. She approached Lisa Popeil and studied Voiceworks®, followed by Somatic Voicework™ The LoVetri Method, and Estill Voice Training®. Benson later studied with LoVetri through the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Intern Program. Deeply influenced by her passion for and experiences in the world of contemporary voice pedagogy, Benson’s book highlights perspectives from twenty-six contributing authors, and at a hefty 300 pages, is the first CCM “encyclopedia” of its kind.

The first section of the book focuses on approaches, more specifically, methods and philosophies. The reader is presented with an overview of meth-

odologies and a carefully organized list of pedagogic practices. Benson discusses the importance of identifying methods and methodologies, and highlights key differences between an “organized process” and a “particular set of procedures.” Especially noteworthy is the list of commonalities present within the philosophies represented by such a diverse pool of pedagogues. As expected, one of the most frequently occurring themes is that of functional pedagogy and vocal health. Student empowerment is also discussed, widely prioritized, and successfully implemented through a flexible and uniquely tailored pedagogic approach.

The second section presents a critical analysis of the fundamental elements of voice training—specifically, one of the more controversial topics among CCM pedagogues: breath. Nearly 65% of the book’s contributing authors identified “breathing” in two stages and utilized an approach that most closely represents that of breathing for classical singing. Due to the noted differences in air volume, air pressure, and range of volume and registrational options present in CCM, 25% of pedagogues advocate for a breathing method that allows singers to customize their breath for each unique circumstance and style of singing. Throughout the breathing chapter, it is widely understood that teachers should advocate for an approach that is flexible enough to implement in physical situations such as dancing or playing a musical instrument. Flexibility quickly emerges as a pillar to long term efficiency and sustainability.

Special demands from the industry are outlined in the third section of the book, including important discussions on the topics of audio technology,

improvisation, and voice science. The application of voice science within the studio has been deemed controversial. As Benson concludes, some pedagogues utilize voice science in the studio only if the student requests it, while others implement their knowledge of fact-based anatomic practice on a more regular basis. It is reassuring to know that while not all teachers choose to acknowledge voice science within the studio itself, most of the contributors identify the benefits of establishing a common scientific vocabulary. While most would agree that knowledge of voice science is advantageous (and in many cases, necessary) for the teacher, it is widely understood that it need not be explained to a student to achieve success.

One of the defining characteristics of the book is its careful construction and organization. Readers can examine a specific topic in isolation or read the volume from cover to cover. Posture and alignment, tension, breath support, registration, (in-) consistency, belt, vowels, and expression are each discussed and critically considered. Given that the author is an established and effective pedagogue, readers may wish that the author had shared her perspective. Overall, Benson presents a careful analysis of recurring technical trends across various methodologies that equip readers with a concise summation of both the data and emergence of key themes.

As Benson acknowledges, “classical music has been the predominant genre of study in music departments for a century, while popular music has been

marginalized” (17). With the significant emergence of music theater and contemporary voice degree programs across the United States, CCM pedagogy is no longer optional, but a fundamental necessity. Edrie Means Weekly and Jeannette LoVetri, in a survey published in 2009 in *Journal of Voice*, found that only 19% of those teaching music theater have had any formal training in CCM pedagogy. Perhaps it is an appropriate time for the 81% to give a careful look at Benson’s contribution. *Training Contemporary Commercial Singers* is a remarkable and long awaited contribution to the world of voice pedagogy.

**Dr. Justin John Moniz** currently serves as Associate Director of Vocal Pedagogy and Music Assistant Professor of Vocal Performance at New York University’s (NYU) Steinhardt School, where he teaches courses in pedagogic theory and practice, applied voice, and supervises the graduate voice pedagogy program. During his first year on faculty, Moniz was awarded Steinhardt’s prestigious Faculty Development and Diversity Innovation Grant for his project, *Paving New Paths: Understanding Trans Identities On-Stage and Off*. Prior to joining the NYU community, he served as Chair of Vocal Studies at Millikin University and Visiting Instructor at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

Moniz has been recognized as one of the pre-eminent voice teachers of classical, commercial, and music theater voice in the United States. His current and former students have performed on Broadway, off-Broadway, on national and international tours, in regional theaters and opera houses, on national television (including *The Voice: Season 15*), and in bands touring throughout the United States. In great demand for his presentations and master classes on classical, commercial, and music theater voice,

he has presented at both national and regional conferences for the National Opera Association (NOA), National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC), and at institutions including The Boston Conservatory at Berklee, New England Conservatory, Oklahoma City University, University of Miami, Boston University, Baldwin Wallace Conservatory, Auburn University, Duke University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Universidad La Salle Laguna. Dr. Moniz was recently honored as the 2020 Featured Educator for the Boston Sings (BOSS) Festival.

A three-time winner of the American Prize in Vocal Performance, Moniz has sung over 90 roles to date, having recently appeared with Opera Grand Rapids, Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theatre, Sarasota Opera, Florida Grand Opera, The Columbus Philharmonic, Opera Company of Middlebury, Opera New Jersey, DreamCatcher Theatre/Adrienne Arsht Center, Orchestra Miami, Gulfshore Opera, Palm Beach Dramaworks, the Orchestra of Northern New York, and Chicago Symphony Center. His unique style and versatility have afforded him an active career in opera, concert, and music theater.

Moniz also serves as Executive Director of Hawaii Performing Arts Festival (HPAF), a training and performance program on The Big Island of Hawai‘i. Moniz’s diverse and innovative programming—which focuses on using art as a vehicle for social impact—has earned HPAF global recognition, the festival emerging as an international cultural destination in recent years. Throughout his administrative tenure, Moniz has earned the organization over a half million dollars in public and private grant funding, increased the annual operating budget by nearly 40%, and yielded the highest student enrollment in the festival’s 16-year history. He also serves as Hawaii Governor and Chair of the Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Access (I.D.E.A) Initiative for the National Opera Association. Moniz is a proud member of the American Guild of Musical Artists and the Actors’ Equity Association.