

Elizabeth Fleming, Inheritor of the Bel Canto Tradition

by

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Gratitude to Old Teachers

When we stride or stroll across the frozen lake,
We place our feet where they have never been.
We walk upon the unwalked. But we are uneasy.
Who is down there but our old teachers?

Water that could once hold no human weight --
We were students then -- holds up our feet,
and goes on ahead of us for a mile.
Beneath us the teachers,
and around us the stillness.

- Robert Bly

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This is a tribute to the technical ideas and the vibrant personality of Elizabeth Fleming, who taught in London from 1965-85. Individuals independent of institutions, like Betty Fleming, are increasingly rare in our time of historical transition. We are so used to the scholarly, scientifically informed teacher that many of us have forgotten that singing technique once was taught as an art, by artists. It wasn't that Betty Fleming was uninformed about physiology. Science was simply not the main item on her agenda. Music, especially operatic music, was. To her, this music had to be brought to life with a comprehensive vocal technique and temperament. Betty taught the most comprehensive vocal technique of any teacher with whom I studied.

My transition from years of study at universities with teachers who more or less resembled Protestant ministers to a teacher with an artistic, vivid personality was a radical one. Universities pretend to deal in certainties. Betty Fleming made no such pretense. She knew her technical ideas worked. What was less sure, though, was how each individual would receive those ideas and, therefore, what the final vocal "product" would be.

One of the books consulted in preparation for the writing of this article was *Bel Canto* by James Stark.¹ What I read there was surprising because the *bel canto* method of Manuel Garcia and Francesco and Giovanni Battista Lamperti described by Stark was exactly the same as that taught by Betty Fleming. Obviously, Betty's ideas were not new ones. In fact, they were ideas that were taught for several centuries and written about first in scientific, hence quantifiable, terms by Garcia and the Lampertis. Stark's physiological analysis has been extremely helpful in identifying the elements in the teaching of Gillis Bratt, Joseph Hislop and Fleming herself that have their origins in the Italian method as defined by Garcia and Lamperti.

For the last half-century, measurements have been taken, models constructed and explanations given for the phenomenon of the human voice as it was configured as an acoustical, operatic instrument. Whether or not it was their intent, the more that scientists have explained the vocal mechanism, the more the traditional methods have seemed suspect--to some. A great deal of the research was made about speech, not singing.

Aspects of *bel canto* produced without all the other criteria are actually quite dangerous. Take the case of “pressed phonation,” or the initiation of a tone by use of the glottal fry. Made with a high larynx as speech, this type of phonation (called “creaky voice” by laryngologists) might damage the tissues of the larynx because there is neither enough airflow or breath pressure to take the stress from the vocal folds. Made with a low larynx, however, “pressed phonation” initiated by the *coup de glotte* becomes the basis of *bel canto*: the firmly closed glottis.² For another example, William Vennard observed that operatic singers had arched soft palates when they sang. By getting students to arch their soft palates “manually,” so to speak, he believed that the operatic sound could be synthesized by “the beginning of a yawn.”³ Marilyn Horne, his most famous student, said she felt as though she had a pencil, sharpened at both ends, stuck between the back of her tongue and her soft palate. Vennard conceded that the effectively arched soft palate is dependent upon a low larynx and a relaxed pharynx. Even though he did mention the vocal fry as a benign attack, he believed that the imaginary ‘h’ achieved the same goals as the firmer onset written about by Garcia and Lamperti. Taken as the singular panacea for all ills of vocal production, as it has been by many a voice teacher and choir conductor since Vennard, the manipulated arched soft palate by itself results in a “stuck” sound, devoid of partials. It has become increasingly clear in the writing of this article that all aspects of the vocal production called *bel canto* have to be used together. One cannot pick various appealing aspects that fit a pet theory and jettison what seems aesthetically or scientifically displeasing.

Whatever becomes of the traditional vocal production now called “classical singing,” this version of the old technical model seems well worth preserving (as much as an aural tradition can be preserved on paper). The way these ideas were presented was uniquely, endearingly, Betty’s own.

Biography

Elizabeth Alice Fleming, soprano, was born June 23, 1926, in Burntisland, Fife, Scotland. She was christened Betty Fleming and as such was known to her students and colleagues. She died in 22 January 2015, in a nursing home in south London.

As a girl with a wonderful natural voice, Betty always sang in choirs, at home or when the occasion arose. She attended Kirkcaldy Grammar School. Her mother had trained as a pianist at the Royal College of Music, London, and gave piano lessons. Her father had been a pilot in WWI and worked as an engineer in a garage. They lived in a house on the

seafront. In order to pursue a career as a singer, Betty moved to London about 1953 and went to work as a barmaid to pay for her lessons, first at a hotel near Prince's Gate in London and later at the Adelphi Hotel, Brighton. It was at the latter hotel that she met the London financier Gordon Biggs (1905-88), who was to play such an important role in her life as well as the lives of her students. (This was why, she later told Graham Titus, she was so generous with tips to waiters in later life. Her tips had paid for lessons.) Gordon Biggs and Betty Fleming formed a liaison that lasted nearly thirty years, until they were able to marry in 1983. It was Gordon Biggs who paid for Betty's apartments and studios, the accompanists, and the occasional recital at Leighton House for her prized students. To maintain decorum, Gordon's London address was Arlington House overlooking Green Park, and Betty lived at 9 Ovington Square, Brompton, conveniently just behind Harrod's. This arrangement was no secret. Mrs. Biggs, Ida, was rumored to have lived in a sanatorium in Devon for most of her declining years, so she would not have been present at Stumblehole, the Elizabethan (and later) mansion in Surrey at which Gordon and Betty spent their weekends. Later, Stumblehole was sold, and Gordon and Betty lived at Dene Farm, nearby. All the children and grandchildren of Gordon Biggs knew Betty. Betty maintained that they liked her (as who could not?), and it is believed that one of Gordon's grandsons, Neil Bolton, was responsible for managing the payments to The Pines nursing home, SW15, at which Betty lived from 2003. It was because of this liaison with Gordon that Betty's operatic career was limited to a series of performances with Abbey Opera, London. Her voice was of international caliber.⁴

Indirectly, too, Gordon Biggs was the benefactor of a great many singers and pianists, for Betty never had to charge more than £5 per lesson, relying as she did on Gordon Biggs's subsidy. Thus, her great artistic knowledge of the human voice was available at bargain rates at a time when Vera Rosza, the teacher of Kiri Te Kanawa, was charging at least £50. Ida Biggs died in 1982 and Gordon and Betty were able then to marry, which they did in 1983. It was Gordon who insisted that Betty become "Elizabeth" because he thought the name "Betty Biggs" sounded like a fishwife, which she most decidedly was not. Gordon died in 1988. Betty stayed in London, teaching intermittently from her flat at 14F Pavely Drive, Morgan's Walk, Chelsea Reach, Battersea, until 1995, when she moved to a rented house in Perth, Scotland. She continued to teach. When she discovered that her housekeepers were stealing from her, she abandoned the rented house and moved to the Huntingtower Hotel, Crieff Road, Perth. In 2003 she returned to London, famously, in a chauffeur driven Rolls Royce, having been told by her financial advisor that renting a helicopter was not feasible. She stayed at the Conrad Hotel, Chelsea Harbor, until it became clear that an hotel was not able to provide the sort of care Betty required. She then went to The Pines.

She started teaching in a house in South Kensington/Earl's Court, moved to a studio on the Brompton Road, and in the late 1970s, to the studio in Loudon Road.

I met Betty Fleming in 1979 when the opportunity arose to stay in London for a year. Erik Levi, the British pianist and scholar, whom I met in 1978 at the Franz Schubert Institut Lied course in Austria, introduced me to her. Betty, during the period I was attached to her studio, roughly 1979-1988, stood about 5 feet 5 inches, had a broad face resembling the structure of Birgit Nilsson's, a large ribcage, and slim legs. She was always exquisitely coifed, groomed and dressed, having often just been to Harrod's, near her apartment, for a new dress or hair dressing before coming north in a taxi. She wore large glasses that toned in with her bouffant ash blond hair. She usually sat in a large, carved chair, with cushioned back and seat, which looked authentically Baroque. The studio was behind a pink stucco house at 22 Loudon Road, St. John's Wood, belonging to a Dr. Lewsen, who kept his collection of paintings and sculptures there. There was always a package of cookies (bickies) on the studio Bechstein in case of a sudden drop in a student's blood sugar. Sandra Gelson, the ever-friendly and patient pianist, usually played for my lessons.

I arrived with a muffled voice, held on the soft palate, a technique taught me by disciples of William Vennard, and emerged nine months later (three lessons a week) with something resembling an operatic sound. Although it took several more years to solidify Betty's concepts, the distance between Chicago and London not being easily traversed, the technical ideas have stood the test of time both in my voice studio and for my own professional singing. My artistic journey began the day I walked in her studio. It has not yet ended.

Pedagogy-Background

Betty Fleming's first teacher in London was a soprano named Maria Parea, who Betty always maintained had been a mistress of Mussolini (1883-1945). When Betty met her in the 1950s, she lived in Blackpool and taught Betty in a studio near Hanover Square, London. Apparently, Maria Parea was born in Lancashire, was red-headed and had married an Italian named Parea. She eventually married a Belgian tenor.⁵ Very little else has been discovered. It was Maria Parea who contributed the basic five vocalises mentioned and appended here and the concepts associated with 19th-century *bel canto* practice: pulsed diaphragmatic support, firm glottal closure (glottal fry) and subglottal pressure, portamento-legato, resonances directed to the center of the head (soft palate) rather than the "mask," *messa di voce* for the training of the upper voice and the thread of chest that held up "the top resonances" in cover, and coming at the initial pitch in a phrase from below (engagement of chest voice or, using Stark's term, "low pitch onset").⁶ According to Sandra Gelson, Betty's longtime studio pianist, Betty mentioned that she had been made to vocalize with a spoon holding down her tongue.⁷ This pedagogical device was mentioned in Garcia's *Hints on Singing*. Betty said that her studies with Maria Parea resulted in her best, freest sound.

It is suspected that Maria Perea learned her pedagogy from Gustave Garcia (1837-1925), son of Manuel II, who had taught at the Royal Academy of Music in London from 1848-1895. Gustave studied initially with Pauline Viardot Garcia, and later, after his 1854 move to London, with his father. (Kendall-Davies, Barbara, *Life and Works of Pauline Viardot*, v. 2, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2012, p 290.) Gustave taught in London from 1883-1925. It seems logical to assume that the similarities between the “Garcia Method” and the “Perea Method” are not coincidental. How Maria Perea met and bedded Benito Mussolini would seem to have more to do with the connections of her Italian husband than with her career as a singer in Italian opera houses during the early part of the 20th century. It seems clear that Maria Perea is not Maria Perea Labia, the soprano who sang in Toscanini’s La Scala during the 1920s. Betty supported Maria Perea in her declining years. Working backward, if Maria Perea’s declining years were in the 1970s, she was born around 1900, and would have studied voice in the late nineteen teens and early nineteen twenties, coinciding with the final chapter of Gustave Garcia’s teaching at The Royal College of Music.

Betty’s second teacher was Joseph Hislop (1884-1977), the Scots tenor who had had an extensive international career. Jos, as he was known to his students and colleagues, had returned from Stockholm, which had been the center of his personal and professional life, to London in 1947 in order to become a consultant at Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. It was not long after that he began teaching at the Guildhall School. Because of his fame, his knowledge of the human voice and his professional connections, he was a popular private teacher as well, teaching from his flat in Westbourne Terrace. Betty Fleming studied with Joseph Hislop in the 1960s and remained professionally connected to him until he died in 1977. Jos sent a great many students to Betty after he left London in 1969 to retire in Scotland with his second wife, Nancy, who had also been a gifted singer and teacher.

Joseph Hislop was taught his technique in Stockholm by Gillis Bratt (1870-1925), a voice teacher, medical doctor and voice specialist. Several important strands of pedagogy are brought together in him.

The vocal method used by Dr. Bratt was based on that of Francesco Lamperti (1811-92). It was the method of classical Italian *bel canto* in which the importance of the diaphragm took second place to the correct formation tone in the vocal cords and a “sweet” attack. This was a method diametrically opposed to the school of “forward placement” of the voice in the “mask” around the nose and one which abhorred any violent glottal attack on the note. Singing “on the breath” and ease of production were paramount. Because of his intimate medical knowledge of the larynx Dr. Bratt was a leading authority on vocal training. Inevitably his methods were considered by some to be controversial.⁸

Francesco Lamperti taught at the Milan Conservatory from 1850.⁹ Because of the chronology, Bratt, being just 22 at the time of Francesco Lamperti’s death, probably also studied with Giovanni Battista Lamperti (1830-1910), whose method followed that of his father. His maxims can still be read in a collection written by his amanuensis, William Earl Brown.¹⁰

Bratt purportedly studied with Manuel Garcia II (1805-1906),¹¹ presumably during the final years of Garcia's tenure at the Royal Academy of Music, London (1848-1895). Garcia, who wrote three important books about vocal pedagogy, was also one of the first voice teachers to explore the physiological function of the vocal folds. Being a physician, it is easy to see the interest Bratt would have had in Garcia's method, based as it was on physiology.

Bratt studied voice also with the conductor Vincenzo Lombardi (1856-1914, Caruso's teacher),¹² Agnar Strandberg and Algot Lange (in 1897-8).¹³

Interestingly, William Vennard (1909-1971), the American pedagogue and writer, studied in 1955 with Alan Rogers Lindquest (1891-1984), a pupil of Haldis Ingebjart-Isene (1871-1973), who, besides Joseph Hislop, inherited the mantle of Bratt's teaching. According to David Jones, who has written extensively about the so-called Italian-Swedish school of singing, Lindquest also studied with Hislop himself in Stockholm in 1938-39.¹⁴

Vennard spoke about one of the central tenets of Bratt's teaching, the glottal fry, in his book *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic*:

This gentle "popping," however, far from being a shock, is a beneficial exercise for the muscles of the valve. The single "pops," which must be very gentle and without apparent movement of any of the organs of speech, can be speeded into a "rattle" or "glottal scrape." According to Allan Rogers Lindquest, the "glottal scrape" or *scrasping* was a part of the method of Gillis Bratt, the great Swedish authority. [...] It is an ideal tension which adjusts the glottis without tightening the throat, and as such benefits students who are too tense. The voiceless rattle may rumble into a tone by adding phonation. This approach is the opposite of that mentioned in Par. 182 (the imaginary 'h').¹⁵

It is known that the Lampertis espoused neither the use of the glottal fry nor *coup de glotte*, nor indeed made any mention of physiology, and so it must be that Bratt did in fact study with Garcia and got this important information from him, or from Stockhausen or another disciple. It should be mentioned here that the Lampertis did talk about the holding back of the breath at the laryngeal level, achieved through "a slight back stroke of the glottis," *chiaroscuro* (the "dark-light" tone) and *voce chiusa*, or closed voice, meaning "covered."¹⁶

While the glottal fry onset was not *the* central tenet of Betty Fleming's teaching, contained within her pedagogy was the idea that the vocal folds were directly engaged in the production of sound, as opposed to being indirectly influenced by the surrounding musculature and the breath.

Both "schools," if so they can be called, advocated as an advanced exercise the use of the *messa di voce*. Garcia's version begins with deep falsetto, gradually adding "chest" voice and returning to falsetto. Francesco Lamperti stated that the soft and loud tones should be

similar in all respects except loudness, a concept first written about by Garaudé in 1830. Garaudé, in his *Méthode complet du chant* wrote that this way of performing *messa di voce* had been used by famous singers in Italian opera houses for decades previous to 1830. Lamperti's version is the one both Hislop and Fleming demanded.

The goals of the Lampertis and Garcia were identical, only the method, the “jargon” of teaching was perhaps opposed. The Lampertis did not discuss “flow” phonation but rather pressure under the vocal folds, the holding back of the breath, or *appoggio*.

Alan Rogers Lindquest told David Jones that Bratt had also studied psychology with Sigmund Freud.¹⁷ This will be an important factor in the teaching of Betty Fleming.

Hislop had these things to say about vocal technique:

[My methods] are developed from those of Dr. Bratt, who, as a throat specialist, placed primacy of importance on forming the sound first in the vocal cords.

My experience as a singer and teacher has convinced me that all vowels begin in the larynx and only the finer shades are formed in the mouth.

...the tone is carried on the breath into the head resonators, supported by the diaphragm, but without exaggerated muscular pressure. Resonance is of all importance, even when singing a dark coloured tone, be it forte or piano, and a silver thread of resonance in the middle of the tone should lead and govern.

There is no doubt that it is the brain that tells the vocal cords what to do. The singer must gradually develop his ear together with feeling and judgment for what is a really beautiful sound. To obtain this, the voice must be free from any kind of blockage or impediment in production.¹⁸

From Jos, Betty took the idea of the silver thread and turned it into one made of steel; the idea of the vowel formation in the larynx (the “root” of the sound being in the larynx); the concept of cover (head voice); the *messa di voce* and the use of the Lütgen exercises and Arie Antiche, the mind being in control and the release of physical, mental and emotional impedimenta. The other attribute of Jos was that he was plainspoken. He was not necessarily unkind, although the accusation of being a “caustic Scot” has been leveled at him. When he heard something that needed improvement, he would not hold back. It is said that Bratt had many of the same qualities.¹⁹

You always knew where you stood with Joseph in lessons. You either sang well or badly. He didn't mince his words.²⁰

This quality, although tempered by what is perceived as a more generous nature, was also present in the teaching of Betty Fleming.

Betty Fleming's technical ideas, then, had their roots in the teaching of Perea and Hislop, but the synthesis of those pedagogies was much more detailed and her own. While it would be thrilling to relate that Betty Fleming was a direct inheritor of *bel canto* from Garcia and Lamperti through Bratt and Hislop, it seems from the anecdotal and written

evidence that Hislop taught the pedagogy of Bratt selectively and did not teach all the elements of the method described in this article. Hislop's own method, written for an American student and appended here, scrupulously avoids any mention of specific attack other than a "sweet" attack or specific resonance other than "head" resonance, more along the lines of the Lamperti technique than the one taught by Garcia. There are naturally overlapping ideas, like the use of portamento to smooth registration, the insistence on legato, *messa di voce* and muscular poise in the vocal tract. The similarities in Betty's technical approach with the *bel canto* technique described in Garcia's *Hints on Singing* and in Stark's reiteration of Garcia's method in *Bel Canto* must therefore have been derived from Maria Parea and Betty's own sure sense of the function of the human voice.

Pedagogy-Method

In his Pedagogy of Singing class at the University of Southern California in the 1970s, William Vennard identified six pedagogical methods, all of which are used in some combination by most voice teachers: mechanistic, poetic, demonstrative, phonetic, progressive and psychological.²¹ Betty Fleming used two of these methods, mechanistic and psychological, opposite pedagogical poles, to great effect. She very rarely demonstrated, but when she did, the magnificent sound of her voice was an inspiration.

A subset of the phonetic pedagogical approach is called vowel and consonant pedagogy, in which vowels and consonants are used to remedy specific vocal ills. While the equalization of vowels through the concept of core was of primary importance, Betty did not use vowels as pedagogical devices in this particular context (/i/ for brilliance, /o/ for depth, etc.), but she did use the /i/ vowel to identify the thinness of the vocal tract into the top of the voice and to induce "cover," as in vocalise number two. In order to make a more perfect legato-portamento line, she often asked students to sing only the vowels in a song or aria, thus ensuring consistent core and support.

Betty's pedagogy, derived from Maria Parea and Joseph Hislop, revolved around the following concepts, elaborated upon below:

the jaw should hang open loosely unhinged or inward and the tongue should be uninvolved in the production of tone (Garcia, Parea);

the vowel sound was formed at vocal-fold level, Betty's **core** (the maximum efficiency of the vocal folds working with the vowel) (Garcia, Bratt, Hislop);

the **portamento** construction of the voice, uniting the registration (Lamperti, Garcia, Bratt, Hislop);

the conscious use of the vocal folds to initiate tone in various attacks (Garcia, Bratt, Parea [“fry”] and Lamperti, Hislop [“flow”]);

appoggio under the vocal folds (**subglottal pressure**) (Garcia, Lamperti, Bratt, Parea, Hislop);

the use of *messa di voce* to build up the top voice (cover) but also to create fluidity and a tone independent of registration (Garcia, Lamperti, Hislop);

the identification of the **thin emission** of vowel, sound and breath (Bratt, Parea, Hislop);

the resonance is directed upward rather than toward the mask (Lamperti, Garcia, Hislop, Parea);

the concept that the resonances (the complete overtone series) are all in the chest voice, but the head voice leads them around the compass of the voice (**blended registration**) (Bratt);

the setting of the entire mechanism on a firm diaphragmatic (abdominal) support structure (all).

Betty’s vocalises reinforced the acquisition of these skills. She did not use a spoon to hold down the tongues of her students, although she demonstrated it to students every once in awhile to get across her point about the lack of tension in the tongue.

Betty presumed the student’s knowledge of aspects of the vocal mechanism and the ability to feel the functioning of the anatomy. Like all voice teachers, she had her own jargon, and part of the process was learning the language Betty spoke.

In view of the intricate knowledge of the vocal mechanism now available, Betty’s knowledge of the workings of the voice was detailed but not scientific. She knew precisely the greater functions of the anatomy, the sort of sound she wanted, and she knew how to achieve it. The tiny functions of phonation and resonance were not her province. She dealt with what could be felt and what could be heard. Students had to “quit pussy-footing with the voice” and start making resonant, free sounds. No exceptions.

Vennard taught that, with mechanism, the singer’s faults are analyzed, and deficient skills are corrected so that the sum of those skills results in a complete technical singer. Mechanism is physically oriented. The singer objectifies the various parts of the instrument and through corrective vocalises sets about making substantive changes. In this way, mechanism is peripheral to the personality of the student since it does not necessarily involve the emotional or intellectual center of the student’s personality.

The psychological or inspirational approach, on the other hand, goes directly to the center of the personality of the student. Vennard related that in this approach, singing is viewed as a Gestalt, or total response of mind, body, emotion or spirit. The beautiful tone is evoked by inspiring the student, treating the student as a human being worthy of training, releasing mental blocks through a constant supply of honest praise for technical and musical gains. The organization of technique takes place at the surface of the student's personality, where the ego touches reality. The Id becomes more and more conscious. The student-teacher relationship is defined as the mutual investment of psychic energy, or libido.

It is clear from Vennard's description of the psychological method the origin of this idea: Freud. Whether or not Betty Fleming recognized this part of her method as Freudian is debatable, but, since Bratt had studied with Freud, it is a logical assumption that the idea of "building up the personality of the singer along with the voice," as she put it, might have been passed to her from Bratt through Hislop. Alan Lindquest, an inheritor of Bratt's technical ideas through Isene, maintained that the spirit of the voice student should be built along with the voice.²² Hislop's mention of the "brain being in control" and "the release of blockages of all types" is the kind of language indicative of the psychological method.²³ Interestingly, G.B. Lamperti talks about the role of the touch receptors in the mucous membrane giving "the mind control over the power of the breath."

A student in Betty's studio had to agree at the outset that the lessons were to be an experiment. Betty made it clear that what she had to offer may or may not work. The student would be required to make some sounds that he or she might consider ugly in order to "free the resonances." So, from the beginning the student knew that his or her participation would be required and that certain risks were to be taken. As Graham Titus, one of Betty's favorite students, said, "Betty had a way of creating the conditions for people to take risks, and when it worked (which it didn't always do), it enabled people to realize that they could be more than their own self-image probably would allow them to be."²⁴ Her initial analysis of one's talents was always honest. She said precisely where one was technically and where one had to go. Of me she said, "You're a natural-born singer, but you have to get a more international sound in the voice, more resonance, more brilliance. But, I know because you have talent that you can do that, and I can get it in for you."²⁵

Any process of true learning will involve personal upheavals. As the student releases mental and emotional blocks, the replacement of formerly held opinions and emotional patterns with new ones is bound to be something of a trial. With voice studies, the process is compounded because the very identity of the singer is bound up with his or her voice. From this insight was the psychological method born. Constant reassurance is necessary until the student has replaced the old habits with new ones.

The one problem with the psychological method, according to Vennard, was that it becomes too vague. The idea of “building up the personality of the singer at the same time as building the voice” sometimes backfired when a student suspected that the constant praise masked the fact that Betty had no master plan, that she had given little thought to the eventual practical application of her technical ideas with regard to viable musical literature for each individual student, that the praise was hyperbolic because response to one’s singing outside her studio had been negative. Of course, one had agreed to the experiment, so she was on fairly high moral ground, for the results of all experiments are not known. But even that understanding sometimes worked against her veracity because some students felt that it was an “out” if things didn’t quite go as projected. Nevertheless, all of Betty’s praise was genuinely meant, and if the student took the praise as encouragement rather than achievement, the energy that Betty generated, returned by the student, could be thrilling, a kind of Freudian, libidinous loop that involved the student’s entire being.

Still, the praise heaped upon students of lesser gifts for the smallest gains sometimes tended to dilute the believability of her praise for the really substantial gains of gifted students. I suspect she would have replied to this charge by saying that a small gain from a student without a great deal of talent was for that student exactly the same as a major development from a greatly gifted one. Exacerbating the suspicions, however, was the fact that lessons with Betty were semipublic affairs. Some of her students were either waiting—sometimes very patiently---for their lessons or cooling down after an intense session, preparing to leave.²⁶ Six or seven people, besides Betty herself, might be present. Some of these students, like me, stayed after their lessons for many hours just to absorb as much as possible. Like all performers, Betty was energized by an audience and sometimes went “over the top” in her praise in front of a small crowd. The prize compliment was, “That’s my technique at its finest.” If the praise offered each student had been a little less public, therefore not comparable, one student to the other, the aspersions cast upon Betty’s veracity may not have been quite such a prevalent, albeit *sub rosa*, feature of her studio. I hasten to add that not all of Betty’s students felt any of these suspicions, and in my case the disappointment I felt at not having achieved absolutely everything technical that I wanted in the relatively short time I had to study with her (1979-80 the first time) was my problem rather than hers. My rather outrageous expectations were fed by her praise, but no teacher can perform miracles.

A final element in her teaching was her great sense of humor. She often joked with students to get them to relax. If a vocalise didn’t have the desired effect, she would make a satirical comment about it, usually in Scots dialect, and get the student to try again. Students over the years made a long list of these comments, but this one will give the flavor: “Och, you canna sing it like that. You sound like burnt toast.” A list of similar phrases is appended.

The following categorical divisions are somewhat artificial. Betty saw the core of the voice (the vocal folds) and the resonances as a unit on the portamento curve; one did not ideally operate without the other. The muddy resonance was usually the result of a vowel without core, or vice versa. The aphorisms are distilled from the notes I took in Betty's studio, with ancillary comments from former pupils Alison Wells, Janet Bright, Donald Maxwell, Mary Hill (Abbey Opera) and especially Graham Titus, who compiled a magnificent book of remembrances by her former students upon the advent of her 75th birthday. Sandra Gelson, who must have listened to thousands of Betty's lessons from the keyboard, contributed significantly.

"I hate to tell you this, but your voice is in your throat," she often said.

BREATHING

The internal feeling of the breath used for singing is like that of throwing up or evacuating the bowels ("sitting on the loo"). It's that basic. If one has a brain on top of this very basic function, it makes for a marvelous singer. (There might then be a joke about the brain quite naturally sitting on top of everything.)

There is more pressure for higher pitches, a low and a high support.

The diaphragm is always firmly in control.

Breathing through the nose is not allowed.

On high pitches, pulse the voice from the diaphragm to keep it connected, to keep from spilling breath, to keep the tone interesting.

POSITION OF JAW AND TONGUE

The mouth must hang open like a skeleton, and the tongue has to lie still.

Consonants in the top of the voice are minimal so as not to disturb the vocal production.

ATTACK- ONSET AND INTERNAL LARYNGEAL MOVEMENT

Put the breath through, feel it at cord level.

You must catch the vocal cords from underneath to initiate the tone (glottal fry, low pitch onset).

Put some grit in the sound, right at the cords (glottal fry).

I hate to tell you this, but your voice is in your throat.

Crack into the sound (glottal fry or yodel movement).

The movements within the structure of the voice (larynx) are as follows: portamento, staccato, yodel movement, glottal fry. The movement inside the voice (larynx) is most important for a free sound.

Collect the resonances by coming to the pitch from underneath (“low pitch onset”)

When singing a string of top pitches, you must reattach chest voice to keep the sound free (low pitch onset).

In melismatic passages and intervals, you must rearticulate the vowel, right at the cord level, so it doesn’t come off the core.

REGISTRATION

Feel the voice at cord level, not in the resonance cavities. The voice is in the throat. The tone begins at the vocal cords.

Find the spot on the cords (for the pitch).

The vocal adjustments must be massaged in the upper voice since the musculature is delicate. Never slam in.

The top of the voice is fragile in some ways. Do not push. It is unnecessary for volume.

Even though one can make fantastically large sounds with the head voice, one must remember that the head voice adjustment is delicate and tiny and will not be pushed. The consonants in head voice must necessarily be small so that they do not disturb the delicate muscular adjustment.

Make a raucous sound; concentrate on getting core in the vowel sound.

Get down to the root of the sound.

Each pitch could be said to be in its own register and its own resonance.

PORTAMENTO

The voice is a portamento instrument. There is no pitch that is unrelated to another, since the cords glide to accommodate the change in pitch.

There is a steel thread of portamento that connects the entire voice with the support. There is a curve down and up, connecting the lower and upper voice.

Legato is just portamento speeded up.

The support is always present in the portamento curve, even on the small note values.

Practice on just the vowel sounds and portamento, keeping core on all the vowels.

RESONANCE

The core of the voice is the vocal cords working at maximum with the vowel.

Don't disturb the mixture of head and chest in the middle.

On the bottom of a phrase, don't dig for the bottom note; it disturbs the grace of the phrase.

You want beauty, but you can't manipulate for it. You must release for it.

The soft palate does raise, but you don't raise it manually, so to speak. It raises [the soft palate] because of the released resonances.

Thread the head voice right through the support, never letting up on either one. Otherwise, it becomes a bloody shriek that no one wants to hear.

The resonances form an arc inside you. [Here she would make an arc from an extended stationary left index finger with her right index finger, forming an inward arc in the air in front of her head, neck and chest.] The head resonances point up into the head but also point down, into the chest, to form a V-depth.

Resonances must be free to expand the way they want to.

When the resonance is released, you can't hear it. You must learn to sing by the way it feels, not what you hear.

Lead the voice up there on the point, then let the deep resonances develop around it as you crescendo. The tone does not stay in your throat [regarding the "hard ee/soft ah" *messa di voce* exercise].

The voice comes to a point inside you. [Here she made a “steeple” gesture with her index fingers, meaning the movement of the voice up, on the soft palate.] The voice is inside the body, it should never escape. It may resonate into the room, but never put the voice into the surrounding air.

The head resonances must always lead the voice around on the steel thread. But all the different parts of the voice must have their own colors, indeed each note has its own resonance. All the resonances derive from the chest.

Collect the resonances before an ascent in pitch.

The upper voice has the same looseness as deep falsetto. Compare this falsetto with full voice. Keep the falsetto feeling.

Take the voice up in front/in back. (More soft palate, more mouth [vowel].)

The plummy vowel is only good for making pies.

The vowels are thin.

Upper resonances will always feel thin to the singer. You cannot hear them; you must learn to feel them. Think thin thoughts.

COVER

Cover, don't smother.²⁷

Open the vowels in cover.

The voice will cover itself if you let it.

LÜTGEN VOCALISES

I refer the reader to Appendix II in which the Lütgen exercises are edited in the way Betty used them.²⁸

All of the Lütgen exercises were used to put the core of the voice on the steel portamento thread.

Number 1 was used as an exercise for steel-thread, portamento singing, alternating on each pitch 'e-o' or 'a-i.' The cover maneuver was achieved on the top pitches.

Number 2 was used the same way, especially for building in the “cover.”

Number 14 was used for the same: portamento steel thread, cover.

Number 19: first 8 bars on /i/; next 8 bars on /eh/; next 8 bars on /a/; next 4 bars on /o/ (open-ish); last 4 bars on /u/.

ANALYSIS

These comments seek to illuminate the physiological reasons for the success of Betty Fleming’s teaching. According to Alison Wells, mezzo soprano, a contemporary of mine in Betty’s studio who also accompanied a good many hours every week there, Betty mentioned the cover maneuver to men, not to women.²⁹ Cover mechanism created an amalgam of chest and head register for men, the resulting resonance of which approximated the head voice resonance of women. It had to be built into most male voices, though, because an isolated head register does not exist as it does in women. Chest register has to be spun up into the top of the voice, creating a “male head voice.” The mechanism described may well work in much the same way for female voices, but Betty didn’t mention it to them in quite the same way. On all other technical points, Betty taught male and female voices the same pedagogical ideas, which worked equally well on each. The confusion between registration and resonance is not very important to singers, who experience their voices as vibrations. Getting the correct resonance often had the same effect as getting the correct registration, and so the two really separate events were conflated in Betty’s studio. Explanations of vocal fold vibrations and resonance by mathematical means are best left to the experts, and for this I refer the reader to the writings of Ingo Titze.

If there is one word that describes the ideal results of Betty’s teaching, it is “freedom.”

Breathing

The diaphragm is always firmly in control.

Muscularly, the concepts of bowel evacuation, throwing up and breath support are exactly the same. In order to throw up, the diaphragm must descend to a very low level, displacing the viscera to create enormous pressure with the abdominal muscles.

The difference between the violent evacuative processes and the act of singing is a matter of degree. The slow expulsion of the pressurized breath is the key; that, and the fact that the anal sphincter must be firmly closed.

Physiologically, the diaphragm is not capable of supporting the voice as opera singers describe. It is the action of the abdominal and rib muscles that synergistically sets the diaphragm in motion. It does feel to singers as though the diaphragm is involved, though, because of the similarity of sensation with the other evacuative processes.

As I recall, breathing through the nose was not allowed, largely because Betty felt that the singer could not get enough breath into the lungs quickly. The breath was “athletic” in the sense that large amounts of it were needed to fuel the musculature that compacted the breath for singing. Also, the breathing should remain silent. Breaths taken through the nose often could be heard and were deemed inefficient because not enough breath could be taken in quickly. They were also displeasing aesthetically.

Position of Jaw and Tongue

Like Garcia, Betty wanted the mouth to be open but not distended. The *bel canto* teachers used a wooden peg to remind students not to open the mouth more than “the thickness of a finger,” leaving the lips alone and the tongue limp and motionless, “neither raised at the point nor swollen at the root.”³⁰ Parea had made Betty vocalize with the bowl of a spoon holding down her tongue, as mentioned above. If the mouth opened too wide, the proper resonance was hindered because, as Garcia said, “the real mouth of the singer ought to be considered the pharynx.” Conversely, Betty couldn’t bear to hear muffled vowels due to lack of mouth opening. She once said to me in that marvelous Scots accent, “That was lovely Myron. Now open your fucking mouth,” a phrase I abbreviated in all my scores as O.Y.F.M. Again, this meant loose jaw, not wide open, enough to make the vowels clear.

Vibrato (The Pulse in Singing)

Normal vibrato is a function of the human voice that results from the pressure of the breath against the larynx as well as the tension generated by opposing muscle groups in the *bel canto* “pose,” otherwise called muscular antagonism. It is viewed as a natural phenomenon as well as an aesthetic prerequisite for good singing going back centuries in the historical documentation. My mentor in Vienna, Josef Mertin (1904-1998), owned an early Baroque *positiv* organ that he called a “Zigeunerin” that had a *vox humana* stop that pulsed. (I believe it is the one made by Hencke in 1740, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.) When asked about the use of vibrato in early music, Joseph would simply take one by the hand, open the Zigeunerin, point to the stop and smile. The debate that rages for and against vibrato is not the province of this article. Betty Fleming believed that vibrato should be present on every pitch, no matter how small the note value.

Vennard reports:

According to Seashore: “A good vibrato is a pulsation of pitch, usually accompanied with synchronous pulsations of loudness and timbre, of such extent and rate as to give a pleasing *flexibility, tenderness and richness* to the tone.” [...] (Italics mine.)

The frequency of the vibrato is normally between six and seven times per second. The relation of this to innervation is emphasized by the fact that *stammering and other spasmodic movements are at the same frequency*. Vibrato is a perfectly normal phenomenon, however, which is the result of the intermittent supply of nerve energy to the mechanism. It may be caused by tremor in any of the muscles involved, breathing muscles, or muscles of the resonators. *It can be felt in the epigastrium, and various authorities have attributed it to the epigastrium*. Recently, though, two men (Osborn, Wade) working independently came up with fluoroscopic evidence that the diaphragm does not pulsate with the vibrato, but moves steadily upward as the tone is produced. Both of these men, by the way, happen to be flutists and their information about vocal vibrato was incidental to studies of flute vibrato. Sometimes it can be seen in the soft palate of the tongue or even the jaw. The latest electromyographic evidence is that vibrato is in the cricothyroids (Mason and Zemlin) which is not surprising since it is primary a pitch phenomenon, and the cricthyroids are the main determiners of pitch (Par.227). Mason and Zemlin also found some diadochocinesis between the cricothyroids and the mylohyoids under certain conditions, though if this leads to a trembling jaw it is usually considered a danger signal.³¹

Stark reports that Seashore’s rate of vibrato was between five and eight times per second.³²

The vocal maneuvers which result in heightened muscular effort include glottal closure, the “pose” of the vocal tract—namely, a lowered larynx and expanded pharynx—the building of subglottal pressure through the contraction of antagonistic respiratory muscles, and glottal resistance to that pressure. These manoeuvres have been identified by such labels as *coup de la glotte*, the glottal pinch, *voix sombrée ou voix couverte*, *lutte vocale*, *appoggio*, *Stauprinzip*, and the *messa di voce*. All of these require the skillful contraction of opposing muscle groups, and will likely result in vocal tremor unless such tremor is inhibited, either by design or by rigidity. There are no instructions in the historical treatises for a method of inhibiting tremor. As opera composers increased the size and strength of orchestras, and as opera houses grew in size, voices required more strength. The necessary strength was presumably gained through an increase in breath pressure, which also necessitated an increase in glottal resistance and a concomitant lowering of the larynx, putting the singing muscles under greater stress and leading to a more pronounced vibrato. It is no accident that arguments about vibrato increased in fervor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the operas of Verdi, Wagner and the *verismo* composers made greater demands on singers for vocal power. As power was gained, floridity was often sacrificed, and vibrato became more pronounced.³³

Betty’s “pulse in the voice” was a diaphragmatic impulse that mimicked vibrato. This device was used to keep the voice from locking on the notes in and above the *passaggio*.

The diaphragm and the vibrato are tied to the same rate of impulse from the central nervous system, which is related to stress placed upon any muscle.³⁴ Holding one’s bicep flexed for a long period of time creates the same rate of movement, between five and eight times per second. Therefore, probably without knowing the exact physical reason for the phenomenon, Fleming was tapping the correlation between the stress placed upon the diaphragm by the viscera and the stress placed upon the larynx by the pressurized breath and used that correlative movement to free the sound.

In the section of Stark’s book called “The Groningen Protocols,” Stark relates using himself as a guinea pig to measure the various *bel canto* vocal maneuvers. One of these

maneuvers was the pulsed diaphragmatic vibrato, which Stark calls “chest pumping” or “modulating the subglottal pressure slightly in synchrony with the vibrato.” This coordinates the respiratory, laryngeal and resonance systems.

The results of Stark’s measurements show that “chest pumping” created heightened sound pressure levels for each cycle of the vibrato, lessened air flow and gave a boost in the intensity of certain formants that may be attributable to the marked increase in the rate of vibrato. The increased intensity of formants and increased rate of vibrato are very useful against large orchestral forces.³⁵

The pulse also had an expressive end. Because the diaphragm is just below the solar plexus, where most humans feel a range of emotions, tying the breath to that area in a visceral way had the effect of engaging emotional content on the breath. Once the technical ideas were in place, the breath conveyed the emotional content through the technique. The heart sits on top of the diaphragm, for those who wish to believe that organ capable of emotion. It certainly responds to them.

Attack/Onset

The Coup de la Glotte

You must catch the vocal cords from underneath to initiate the tone.

When I took the pedagogy classes from William Vennard at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in the early '70s, he stated categorically that the larynx could not be directly involved in the production of sound because it was “below the level of consciousness.” The simple explanation given was that the larynx was attached to the brain via the vagus nerve, a branch of which supplied the heart with motor impulses. One could not regulate the beating of one’s heart; therefore, the functioning of the larynx was also not something one could manipulate.³⁶

For years, I tried to sing without involving the larynx, adjusting the resonators to get the sound I wanted, blowing more or less breath, making forward or backward sounds, all to little avail.

It was not until I met Betty Fleming in 1979 that the inklings I had from my own experiments became fully functional. Betty Fleming discussed the larynx as part of the sound production. “I hate to tell you this,” she said, “but your voice is in your throat.”

Contrary to Vennard and other voice scientists of the time, the larynx is not completely below the level of consciousness. The innervation of the larynx and pharynx from the vagus nerve supplies not only motor function but also allows for pain and touch sensations both above and below the larynx to be felt by the singer. Even the vocal folds

are supplied with pain and touch (pressure) sensory nerve fibers. The glottal fry allows direct access to sensations of the beginning of vocal fold vibration as well as the subglottal pressure generated from firm vocal fold adduction. The singer then knows kinesthetically precisely where the vocal folds are in the larynx.³⁷

There are pressure receptors, stretch receptors and joint receptors in the larynx that monitor mechanical action. The pressure receptors respond to variations in the breath pressure in the vicinity of the glottis, particularly during respiration [...]. The stretch receptors respond to increases in the length of the vocal fold [...] or to the length of the CT (cricothyroid) muscle. Joint receptors respond to rotation or dislocation of joints (facets) that connect the laryngeal cartilages.³⁸

The vibrations during the glottal fry are irregular; the glottis is very relaxed, with a longer closed phase of vocal fold vibration than normal, low-frequency vocal fold vibration, and tightly adducted vocal folds with the free edges apparently flaccid. The low-frequency vibration means that the thyroarytenoid muscles are active, and the tightly adducted vocal folds would be a prerequisite for the production of high partials. The longer closed-phase quotient and the tightly adducted vocal folds of glottal fry carry over into the sung tone. It is known that the longer closed-phase quotient is one of the hallmarks of the tone produced in the strong glottal closure consistent with *bel canto* concepts.³⁹

Once the singer tries for a pitch from glottal fry, it is easy to feel the engagement of the vocal folds, and the calibration of breath pressure needed for the pitch is automatic. The glottal fry also allows for the finding of vowels because the root of the vowel sound is generated by the vocal folds and shaped by the pharynx and mouth. Of course, these sensations of pressure and vowel are below and above the larynx respectively and can be monitored and adjusted by the singer because of both motor and sensory nerve fiber supplies.

The singer then can also learn, kinesthetically, how the pitches feel in the vocal tract, the resultant resonances and where the “root” of each vowel sits in relation to each pitch. The singer can, with practice, train the neurological system to get to that particular “prephonatory setting” every time. This is what Betty called “finding the spot on the cords.” This is sense memory, little to do with “intellect,” except that the singer must recognize what the sensations mean and how to reproduce them. Betty often said that the recognition of the kind of sensation with the brain in control produced a marvelous singer.

This is consistent with what Stark pointed out, that the most efficient prephonatory settings of the larynx can be learned. It was at this level of the sound production that Betty Fleming had an almost preternatural instinct for what was occurring and how to fix what was incorrect. There was “no pussy-footing” around with the voice. The students had to get into the sensations associated with making sound at the laryngeal level, take risks and make the maximum amount of sound with minimal amount of vocal stress. An analysis of the glottal fry follows below.

Further, the glottal fry allows for the constant presence of the “chest” voice in any tone, high or low, through the engagement of the thyroaryntenoid muscles. The presence of activity of the thyroaryntenoids through the use of “fry” also mitigates gross shifts of register. (Garcia recognized the presence of three registers but said that the use of the *coup de glotte* minimized the shifts.⁴⁰) And the use of the glottal fry coupled with a low larynx tends to keep the larynx from rising during the phonation of higher pitches, thus creating a consistent pharyngeal space in which tones can vibrate. “Coming to the pitch from underneath,” as Betty put it (“low pitch onset”), may create the same physiological scenario as “glottal fry” with respect to the engagement of the thyroaryntenoid muscles.

The prephonatory setting is under the voluntary control of the singer, since it is controlled by the motor system. The subsequent monitoring of the vocal folds during phonation is controlled by the reflexogenic system, as well as by the control loop of the auditory feedback.⁴¹

This is why Garcia’s *coup de la glotte* is so important and why a glottal plosive, which *does* dislodge the prephonatory posture, should be avoided. Once (normal) phonation begins, no neurological mechanisms exist to provide direct perceptual awareness of vocal fold status, and the singer cannot exercise any conscious control whatsoever—which is in marked contrast to the control of the prephonatory activity of the laryngeal musculature. Garcia recognized that the first step in vocal training is strong glottal closure. His *coup de glotte* was the key to achieving firm phonation and was arguably the single most important pedagogical concept in the history of singing.⁴²

Flow phonation is the opposite of glottal fry phonation, as Vennard noted above. The Bernoulli effect, the imaginary ‘h’ and the soft onset are all concepts associated with flow phonation and the teaching of the Lampertis (compressed breath),⁴³ Hislop (a zephyr of breath),⁴⁴ Vennard (imaginary ‘h’)⁴⁵ and Richard Miller (soft onset).⁴⁶ Flow phonation in its strictest sense is the blowing of breath past the vocal folds into the pharynx and mouth, which are then shaped to amplify the results. Garcia must have recognized through observation that flow was not sufficient to create the sort of freely operating and resonating sound that defined the operatic canon associated with *bel canto*. It must be noted here, however, that the Lampertis discussed the holding back of the breath, a balance between larynx and breath they called “the pose of the voice.”⁴⁷ On so many points, the Lampertis and Garcia agree. Loose phonation had absolutely no place in Betty Fleming’s technical approach. Her famous phrase regarding the hollow, lackluster sound of the British choral voice: “The plum is only good for making pies.” She shared this view with Joseph Hislop.

Stark had this to say about the imaginary ‘h’:

Of course, this is not what Garcia described at all. He said, “*The vowels should always be attacked by the coup de glotte, and with the degree of force that is appropriate to the phrase. One should scrupulously avoid having them preceded by the aspiration.*”⁴⁸

The idea of the Bernoulli effect may not be necessary in explaining the mechanism of vocal fold vibration because this concept of the Bernoulli effect was accepted at a time when the subglottal pressure was thought to remain unchanged during phonation.⁴⁹

The subglottal pressure is now known to vary considerably according to the level of volume and height of pitch.⁵⁰ In an experiment to measure subglottal pressure, Stark noted that in trained singers the subglottal pressure is the same in fry *or* flow phonation because the vocal processes of the arytenoid cartilages are firmly pressed together during all singing tasks.⁵¹

By directly addressing the sensations in the larynx and pharynx, the singer feels the source of the sound and the resultant vibrations. The teachers of the Garcia Method probably understood this without knowing the precise innervation. By insisting on the laryngeal beginning of the tone, as Stark has pointed out, one gets a firm glottal closure; more closed quotient in the vibration of the vocal folds; vibration in the anterior portion of the glottis, especially in high pitches; and thus a larger overtone series with a great many high partials. So, by “getting down to the root of the sound” one also gets “forward brilliance” or a resonance that the listener perceives as “forward” as a result, not as a goal in and of itself.

The point Betty made about more subglottal pressure for higher pitches was amply demonstrated to a soprano one day when she was trying to master the final top C in the last few measures in the aria, “I Go, I Go to Him,” from Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress*. The text is “an ever-loving heart” that cannot really be understood because of necessary vowel modifications in the top of the soprano voice. The student sang the phrase but kept running out of breath. Betty instructed her to keep the pressure up right at cord level, identifying the pressure by humming the phrase, but all was of little avail. Finally, Betty stood up in order to demonstrate. She said, “You cannot spill that much breath,” put a cake donut (from the pack atop the Bechstein) in her mouth, chewed it a little, and proceeded to sing the phrase without a crumb leaving her mouth. She handed the pack of donuts to the student, who selected one, chewed it a little and tried the phrase. There were crumbs all over the room. This justly became a famous incident, often repeated among Betty’s students.⁵² The similarity of this exercise with the one involving a lit candle held in front of a student’s mouth that Lamperti used is noted. Just as the flame should not flicker, the crumbs should not spew.

Low Pitch Onset

Collect the resonances before an ascent in pitch on the steel thread.

Caccini mentioned a form of low pitch onset in the early 17th century.⁵³ It involves starting a pitch a fourth or more below the target. This onset, both physiologically and stylistically important to *bel canto*, creates a “caressing” sensation for the singer, “lifting” the voice on the breath from the “chest” voice into the beginning of a phrase. In or above the *passaggio*, starting a pitch or phrase from a fourth or more below the target pitch, especially if that start is initiated with the glottal fry, had the effect of keeping the larynx low and engaging the chest voice mechanism in the top of the voice with the cover

maneuver. This was useful not only for singing loud top pitches, but for the production of *messe di voci*. Betty's vocalise number two addressed this onset specifically, for the singer had to begin the first pitch from underneath, taking the voice up to it by means of the low pitch onset and making a portamento downward. This vocalise allowed for the extension of "chest" voice throughout the compass. If practiced diligently, the quickly executed low pitch onset is barely noticeable to any but those who understand vocal technique.⁵⁴ This onset is mentioned again in the context of Portamento in this article and in the discussion of *Messa di Voce*.

The admonition to "collect the resonances" before an ascent could be likened to the low pitch onset as well as "leading with the head resonances" and "portamento thread."

The Yodel Movement

This singular feature of Betty Fleming's vocal technique capitalized on the quick movement of the vocal folds that is usually present in male voices between full voice and falsetto. This quick movement was used in two related ways. The first was getting male singers to compare full voice on a lower pitch to a high pitch outside the compass of full voice, sung as a falsetto note with a low larynx (in cover). The tone often mimicked the mezzo soprano voice. (A great deal of hilarity often ensued; comparisons to Kathleen Ferrier and Janet Baker abounded.) Then, when this was in place, the singer was asked to yodel to the top pitch in the same resonance space as the falsetto but in full voice cover. In this way, Betty got male singers to increase range without pushing chest voice up "in a block," as it were, but rather strictly as a function of registration, without laryngeal or pharyngeal tension. The yodel movement was also used the same way with women to move quickly to a top note in a dynamic way, often getting a balanced sound without the attendant tension that sometimes came with a poorly executed portamento slide. For all singers, the yodel movement increased the expressive possibilities as well as the technical dynamism that was so much a feature of her teaching.

As Ingo Titze reports, the movements of the internal laryngeal muscles are among the fastest in the human body, second only to the movements of the eye in degree of quickness. The yodel capitalized on this quick movement for register shifts.⁵⁵

A vocalise that was probably invented by Betty for this purpose is appended, number six.

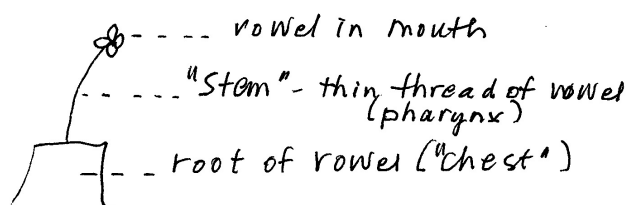
Staccato

Staccato was executed "in cover" when necessary in the range. If practiced diligently, the student could approximate "low voice onset" or "glottal fry" directly at the onset of the staccato attack. The staccato was described as a very small, pinpoint feeling, directly on the vocal folds. The ability to do this came after the student had understood Betty's instruction about feeling the place on the cords where each pitch originated, each pitch

having its own resonance, and the “thin thread of the voice.” This feeling had its use in fortissimo attacks on high pitches. One never “slammed chest” into the top, but rather on “the small part of the voice,” staccatoed in, then made an immediate crescendo. This saved wear and tear on the voice and was of great dramatic use to all the singers who stuck with Betty long enough to understand the instruction. This worked somewhat better for women than for men; since female voices have more independent registration, they are less dependent physiologically upon “chest voice.” It was still worth the effort for all voices to achieve this balance.

Rearticulation of Vowel and Reattachment of Chest Voice

Consistent with the teaching of Bratt and Hislop, the idea that the vowel is formed at the laryngeal level was expressed by Betty’s insistence that the core (the vowel and the voice working together at maximum efficiency) was present in every interval and in every note of a melismatic passage. The rearticulation or remaking of the vowel happened “right at the cord level” so that the components of vocal production did not become detached and the vowel had a “root” as well as a “stem” (pharynx) and a “flower” (mouth). This diagram was frequently drawn by Betty to illustrate her point:



Aiding in the concept of the vowel presence was the idea, expressed elsewhere in this document, that all the resonances are derived from chest voice. If this element is not present in every pitch, then the voice lacks high partials. This concept is consistent with the findings of Stark, who noted that the longer closed quotient of firm vocal fold closure led to a higher series of upper partials, which in turn results in clearer vowels. The low pitch onset and the glottal fry onset both contribute to this goal by anchoring the voice in the vocal fold configuration for lower pitches. Therefore, on a string of higher pitches, a long line of pitches in a melisma, or a large leap on a single vowel, Betty called for either “rearticulation of the vowel” or “reattachment of chest” through the means described above. Vocalises nine and ten addressed this element specifically.

Registration

Each pitch can be said to have its own resonance and register.

Betty spoke a good deal about head and chest resonances, and there were moments when I think she meant “register.” She said that the head and chest resonances blended together in the middle of the voice, but she neither advocated a middle resonance nor a middle register because she said they did not exist. (In this, anatomically, she was quite right.⁵⁶)

But, if the vocal folds were tightly adducted by the use of the glottal fry, as Garcia pointed out, the shifts of register were minimized because of the constant activity of the thyroarytenoid muscle (“chest voice”) throughout the compass. The “cover maneuver” allowed the thyropharyngeus muscles to draw the superior corni of the thyroid cartilage closer together and so allowed the free play of the agonist-antagonist relationship between the thyroarytenoid (vocalis) muscles and the cricothyroid muscles in a more blended, dynamic way. More about this in the Cover section below.

Voice scientists have confirmed that the entire overtone series is present in “chest voice,” and therefore a continual presence of chest voice in the registration is necessary for the vocal folds to produce the complete overtone series, the “singer’s formant,” as Betty said.⁵⁷

The amalgam of firm flexible breath support, firm vocal fold adduction and the resultant 2,000-3,000 Hz associated with the epilarynx (the area defined by the glottis at the closed end and the rim of the epiglottis at the open end containing the ventricles of Morgagni and the piriform sinuses), called “core,” is then resonated throughout the compass in the elongated pharynx associated with “head resonance” or “cover.” This is why the voice sounds brilliant, or “forward,” without being placed in a forward, “mask” position and why there would be a great deal of bone conduction and sympathetic vibration in sinuses and other impossible cavities where resonance cannot occur.

Vocalise one, “rah from G/B-flat,” which was the first vocalise Betty used in daily exercises, took the chest register up, but only to D in the case of lower voices or F in the case of higher ones. These limits set the boundaries of “pure” chest voice, and the cover came in at that point, or even a little below it for basses and contraltos. Eventually, the whole voice participated in cover, after it was built up, so that a smooth transition was achieved. “Head resonance” was synonymous with cover in Betty’s jargon, but because the chest register was present not only from the firm glottal closure but by the presence of chest register “beyond its normal limits,” head voice was not an isolated registration event. Rather it was viewed as a continuation of chest voice “on the thin thread” that “held up the top resonances.”

Betty’s *messa di voce* exercise grounded the voice in the chest register through glottal fry or low note onset and through use of the portamento stretched the chest register connection “on a thin thread” into cover/head register, where the crescendo-decrescendo occurred, “held up by the chest” (exercise number five, “hard ee/soft ah”). Pitches formed

in this manner did feel as though they each had their own particular vocal fold configuration or registration and subsequently their own resonance.

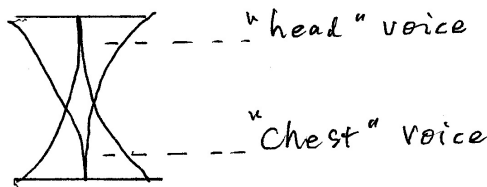
Her comment regarding each pitch having its own register found amplification in Ingo Titze's book:

First, the vocal processes can be spread apart to offset increased adduction by thyroarytenoid activity. This must be coordinated with lung pressure, however, according to the amplitude of vibration in the vocal folds. A *messa di voce* exercise, which is a gradual crescendo followed by a decrescendo, appears **register free** [my bold] when adduction changes systematically with lung pressure. As the amplitude of vibration increases in the crescendo segment, the vocal folds can be abducted slightly to keep quotient Q_a constant. Conversely, as the amplitude decreases in the decrescendo segment, the vocal folds can be adducted slightly. If this rule is not followed, the *messa di voce* is likely to sound pressed in the loud segment and breathy in the soft segment.⁵⁸

Would it not seem logical that a register-free tone is one in which one register does not dominate the other, and therefore the tone is in *both* registers at the same time, as Garcia said, when the tone is approached from the *coup de glotte*, glottal fry, or low pitch onset?⁵⁹ And, as Francesco Lamperti noted, neither *appoggio* nor the register shifted in the *messa di voce*, only the resonance became louder and softer.

This independence, the freedom, of the vocal folds was critical to Betty's pedagogy and one of the cornerstones upon which the edifice of *bel canto* was built. "Finding the spot on the vocal cords" or pitch kinesthesia was Betty's way of describing this phenomenon.

The following diagram, drawn by Betty for Graham Titus,⁶⁰ demonstrates how she viewed the resonances, or registration. This diagram amply demonstrates what she meant by the V-depth of head resonance and the thinness of the chest registration as it was taken up the scale by the use of the portamento thread. Hislop used the same terminology: "the V-depth of the arc."⁶¹



The core of the voice is the vocal cords working at maximum efficiency with the vowel.

Vennard and others postulated that 2,800 cycles per second, the “ring” in the voice, came from the ventricles of Morgagni, the space between the true and false vocal cords.⁶² Later research by Sundberg and Yanagisawa confirmed that the epilaryngeal region (the area defined by the glottis at the closed end and the rim of the epiglottis at the open end, containing the ventricles of Morgagni and the piriform sinuses) is the origin of the presence of the acoustic energy of 2,000-3,000 Hz in the human voice, the “ring” or the “ping.”⁶³ Since the tissues above and below the larynx have sensory nerve fibers, then it would be a relatively easy thing for a talented singer to find a way, through the relaxation of the bottom of the pharynx, to make the “ventricular” sound part of the sonic picture and to identify that as the “root of the vowel sound.” This is Betty Fleming’s core.

Vowels also influence the way the vocal folds behave. It is well known, for example, that the vowel /i/ gets a firmer vocal fold adduction than any other vowel sound. All the other vowel sounds similarly affect the function of the folds. This fact proves that the root of the vowel is clearly in the vocal folds and the resonances are adjusted accordingly, as Garcia, Bratt, Hislop and Betty all said, making sure to keep the factor of the epilarynx (the singer’s formant of 2,000-3,000 Hz) present in each tone and vowel sound.

Helmholz, one of the founders of modern acoustical theory, “noted that the vowels are determined by the two lowest formants” produced by the larynx.”⁶⁴ Thus, if the larynx is not low enough to elongate the pharynx in the manner consistent with the sonic qualities associated with *bel canto*, the differentiation between vowel sounds is not clear. The use of the cover maneuver throughout the compass of the voice, Betty’s “head voice,” would guarantee the mandated low larynx and elongated pharynx and so produce the clear vowel sounds she so vehemently advocated. (See Resonance below.)

Betty used the /i/ vowel, as in vocalise three, to get a good vocal cord adduction on ascents to top pitches. As indicated in the instructions, a low pitch onset and portamento up to the top pitch on the vowel /i/ achieved chest voice connection “on the thin thread” as well as lowered larynx (cover), breath pressure and firm support.

Portamento

The voice is a portamento instrument.

The portamento “construction” of the voice is similar in its physiological basis. The vocal folds work at maximum efficiency when they are tightly adducted and work in a smooth manner from pitch to pitch. “Coming into the pitch from underneath” and the glottal fry allow for the engagement of “chest voice” or the involvement of the thyroarytenoid muscles in a dynamic way, without residual tension in the mechanism. This is Betty’s

“core.” This core was extended throughout the compass through the use of portamento, “the steel curve” of the voice. The “arc” was a concept used by Hislop, which Betty used less and less frequently as time went on. The concepts “arc” and “curve” were similar. Hislop was noted for his use of portamento in performance.

[Hislop] knows the traditional Italian arts: the smooth, well-bound legato style and the art of portamento....⁶⁵

Any muscle, when jerked, will do what it’s supposed to do--for awhile. The issue is the duration the muscle can function. With the portamento, the gliding movement within the larynx allows the thyroarytenoid (TA) muscle to act and be acted upon in the balance called muscular antagonism. This was the underlying physiology of one of the principal tenets of *bel canto*. Joseph Hislop used to rail against jerking movements in singing:

Vocal exercises were of no use whatever if they consisted of “physical jerks” for the voice--running up and down scales and singing printed exercises. If these exercises were not directed by the mind and the ear, “always on the alert for even quality and beautiful color”, and not advised and directed by a real teacher of experience, then the student could go on singing them for years with anything but good results.⁶⁶

G.B.Lamperti...said that, as the voice curves upward and downward, “the *appoggio* remains unmoved,” thereby linking *appoggio* to *portamento*.⁶⁷

“Support is always present in the portamento curve, even on small note values,” she said.

If we take Betty’s point that “legato is just portamento speeded up,” then *appoggio* (well-controlled subglottal pressure of various strengths) is not the only one of the fundamental *bel canto* principles involved. Singing a line of unbroken tones requires blended registration (cover, stability of the vertical laryngeal position and the continuity of the singer’s formant throughout the phrase, “the diaphragm always firmly in control”). Betty often asked her pupils to sing only the vowel sounds on the portamento thread, then add just the smallest amount of consonant sound “under the line of vowels” to make the word comprehensible while maintaining the portamento character. The consonants were then viewed not as interruptions of the long line of portamento vowels. This was, at first, extremely difficult to do, especially if the registers had not been identified and united in some fashion. However, when the blended registration was resonated in a consistently relaxed pharynx, the gross register breaks tended to be lessened, and the singer got a feeling of “one resonance structure” with various lifts but no actual breaks. The practice of portamento actually helped unite the registers and create the feeling of one sonorous resonance.

[Portamento] is useful in exercises for blending the registers and removing inequalities of tone.⁶⁸

Tied to the portamento, in Betty’s pedagogy, is the low pitch onset, a feature of *bel canto* articulation, a practice noted by Tosi in the 18th century and mentioned above in the eponymous section.⁶⁹ Betty referred to it as “coming to the pitch from underneath, around the curve,” or “starting the pitch from underneath the vocal cords.”

In practical terms, starting a tone below the target pitch enables the singer to establish a low laryngeal position, and then to maintain that position as the pitch rises. This can be an effective way of ensuring that a high tone does not begin with a high larynx.⁷⁰

As it has already been pointed out, a low, vertical laryngeal position establishes the so-called “root” of the vowel in the epilarynx, thus making the sung vowel much clearer than when the tone is loosely phonated and the vowel conceived of in the mouth alone. In addition, placing the consonant a third or fourth lower than the target pitch gives expressive possibilities that do not exist when the pitch is sung dead on. Betty said repeatedly that the consonants on top pitches were minimal anyway, as a very “important” consonant tended to ruin the fluidity of the legato-portamento. Further, the rearticulation of a string of high pitches using the low pitch onset between the pitches tended to keep the laryngeal musculature fluid, rather than locking into a fixed position. Betty’s explanation was that chest voice had to be renewed continually on top pitches so that it could hold up the top resonances (vocalises nine and ten).

When Betty said, “That’s bloody boring,” or “It sounds like blancmange,” this is what she meant: not only were the vowel sounds unclear, but the expressive qualities provided by the “portamento [steel] thread” were absent. She also used the phrase “putting fur coats” on songs or arias that were either technically held or musically precious.

As John Potter has pointed out, the portamento also allowed the singer to inflect a vocal line as though it were speech. The vocal line sung without portamento degenerates into a series of words that have the same inflection. When portamento is used, the singer can make a choice about which words will or will not have emphasis. If one acknowledges that most sentences are said on one expulsion of breath, then it follows that the compacted breath and lowered vocal tract posture required to make the voice carry in an auditorium would respond to the same gesture.

By using portamento singers can incorporate elements of speech-like declamation while still exploiting the legato line, and it can become a very expressive device. Gliding from note to note has rhetorical implications for tempo: the singer can control the pace of the phrase by sliding, and has the possibility of introducing para-linguistic tropes such as sighing, sobbing and other effects designed to manage the rhetorical communication of emotion.⁷¹

Potter goes on to say that portamento was a traditional vocal gesture taught for 300 or more years as a way of uniting the registers, giving carrying power to the voice over an orchestra (seeing as the “bow never leaves the string,” the breath never stops informing the vocal folds and the resonance does not stop over the course of a sung line of music), and as an expressive device.

“Portamento helped give the illusion of language, re-creating the contour (as opposed to the sound) of speech in exaggerated form.”⁷² Coupled with the feeling of a relaxed pharynx, lowered larynx and tightly adducted vocal fold configuration, which produced

balanced, clear vowels, the text had a better chance of being understood in an auditorium when strung out over a long line of compacted, uninterrupted breath, or *appoggio*.

What Betty knew, and promoted, was that singers in previous generations, Hislop among them, sang Lieder and opera with the same vocal technique. There were not two or three vocal techniques for various literatures. There were various word-note-tone relationships that were exploited in various genres, opera vs. song for example, but the basic technique did not change radically from genre to genre.⁷³

Potter points out that portamento survives in the opera house now because opera singers consider this gesture of *bel canto* part of their heritage, and thus it validates their claims to operatic greatness. Whether or not this is part of a singer's vocal technique might be evaluated on an individual basis. It is quite possible to make the effect without the technical grounding.

The Lütgen exercises that Betty inherited from Hislop were used to teach “core” as articulated on “the steel thread” of portamento. The Arie Antiche were used to amplify the concepts.

The Hum and the Thin Vocal Tract

The internal feeling of the voice is thin.

The tight-lipped hum, initiated with the glottal fry or low pitch onset, was used in the exercise pattern marked number four. The pitches were sung with maximum portamento between them and a very firm support. The hum had to be on the tightly pursed lips, for Betty insisted that the tongue could not be involved in the production of the hum, or for that matter in any aspect of the vocal production.

This exercise did several things. First, it identified the intensity of the subglottal pressure that was needed for singing any phrase and therefore, second, the intensity of the abdominal support. Third, it demonstrated for the student the compact, thin quality of the vocal tract, larynx to lips, alpha to omega, required. Fourth, the pressure at the lips demonstrated where the secondary part of the vowel (the primary part having been formed already in the larynx) might reside.

Stark makes the comment regarding the thin quality of the vocal tract that in the low laryngeal position and glottal “pinch” necessary for *bel canto* vocal production, the laryngeal collar (epilarynx) actually narrows because of the downward pull on the hyoid bone and thyroid cartilage of the strap muscles and the action of the thyropharyngeus muscles on the thyroid cartilage drawing the “wings” or superior corni of the thyroid cartilage closer together, as noted above. The result of this action was the freer play of

the cricothyroid muscles and this, in turn, allows for maximum elongation of the vocalis muscles. Thus, higher pitches than might be possible without the cover maneuver were available and the sensations of singing them, for the singer, would be that of thinness.

Singers of the recent past, like Marilyn Horne, mentioned the “thin emission of breath” or “thin emission of sound.”⁷⁴ This description of the voice as feeling thin inside the singer was a feature of Betty’s teaching as well: “The vowels are thin” or “Think thin thoughts”; the steel thread, or Hislop’s silver thread. It’s also one of the great conundrums. The sound to the singer is thin, but to the audience it may be round, rich and enormous.

Resonance

I’m going to free your resonances.

The statement, “Resonance comes to a point inside you,” was misinterpreted for quite awhile by me to mean “forward,” “in the mask” and “brilliant.” While the resonance Betty had in mind had “brilliance” as its main ingredient, she by no means meant for the sound to “point out the front of the face,” but rather up on the soft palate. She continually made steeple gestures with her two forefingers to indicate where the resonance went, and it took me a long while to realize that this was not frontal. I was conditioned by years of references to either “forward brilliance” or “mellow depth” with the raised soft palate as the mitigating feature in both sounds.

The vocal method used by Dr. Bratt was based on that of Francesco Lamperti (1811-92) [...] a method diametrically opposed to the school of “forward placement” of the voice in the “mask” around the nose....⁷⁵

Betty meant that resonance in *bel canto* went up between the ears rather than out the face, like a steeple. “Forward brilliance” was and is taught by some teachers as a separate component of the vocal production, not as a result of those prephonatory conditions that result in a high overtone series: lowered larynx, firm glottal closure, subglottal pressure. Many voice students are still given exercises for “forward brilliance, twang, 2800 cps,” and so forth; given instructions to direct or place the tone behind the nose, in the nose, the forehead, maxillary sinuses (cheekbones), zygomatic arches, top of the head, and to sing through a smile in order to lift the tone into those cavities, without being given instruction to lower the larynx.

The word “resonator” is defined as an open-ended cavity through which sound passes and by which sound is modified. As William Vennard said in his *Pedagogy of Singing* class—repeatedly—the sinuses are not resonators because they are not open ended, thus they add or subtract nothing from a sung pitch. One would have to drill holes through the cheeks in order for the maxillary sinuses to function as resonators. Sympathetic vibrations may or may not occur there, but bone conduction would be, in every case, completely individual. Vennard famously packed his sinuses with cotton wool soaked in milk and recorded the results, then measured the sound scientifically and compared it to sound

made without the sinus packing. There was no sonic difference. There was, of course, a change in the way he felt the sound. “Placement,” he concluded, was therefore an illusion, since each individual will experience resonance in a different way. Forcing the student to “place” the tone in, for example, the maxillary sinuses would do a great deal of harm if the student did not already feel sympathetic vibrations there because the singer would alter the very foundation of the sound, the lowered larynx, in order to achieve “forward brilliance.”⁷⁶

So, by saying something general, like “the resonances come to a point inside you,” Betty allowed for individual physiognomy to guide the particulars of the resonation and, perhaps without knowing it, repeated the wisdom of the 19th-century teachers. She insisted that the resonances have to be free to go where they want, as long as they go “up.” In the same way, she meant that the pharynx was the main resonator, not the mouth, which was, in Betty’s pedagogy, responsible for consonant articulation and the upper end of the vowel sound, already formed in the larynx (Lamperti, Bratt, Hislop). As Manuel Garcia said, the pharynx should be regarded as the mouth of the voice, not the mouth itself.⁷⁷

Betty fully recognized the arch of the soft palate, but, as with everything else in her pedagogy, she deplored the manipulation of any physical part of the voice to achieve the sound. Instead, the lift of the soft palate was viewed as a function of getting the correct breath, a firm attack in the center of the sound, and getting the correct vowel at the laryngeal level. Once the larynx and support were engaged and the pharynx disengaged, the soft palate went up as a result of anatomical function rather than manipulation.

Whole generations of voice teachers and choral conductors have taught the lifted palate, following the pedagogical approach of Vennard, some as a panacea for all vocal ills and mostly without enough compensatory depth of the larynx and coupled with loose phonation. The sound that was created by its use fit neatly into the speech patterns of some speakers of English as well as the qualities of the English choir tradition. Used alone, it dampens high partials and is therefore useful for choral “blend.” The idea, still currently held by some voice instructors, that the soft palate lowers and is used as a reflector or sounding board for the resonances derived from vocal fold vibration should be disregarded—at best—as wishful thinking.

A note should be made here about the mention of the relaxed pharynx. Stark has noted that in the *bel canto* vocal tract posture, the pharynx has more tonus than in speech.⁷⁸ But, to the singer, the feeling of a relaxed, non-manipulated pharynx is crucial to the freedom of tone. Betty did not talk about tensing the pharynx, or indeed any other part of the vocal mechanism, save the breath. This conforms to the findings of Scripture, who discovered that a soft-sided resonator amplified more overtones than a hard-sided one.⁷⁹

Any tension of the underlying musculature of the pharynx could be identified as a hardening of the resonator walls, something that would dampen the “ring” in the voice and the clarity of the vowel. Since each vowel creates a distinct shape in the vocal tract, any tension would hamper the production of a clear vowel sound. The tension in the lower constrictor, thyropharyngeus, would not in this case count as “hardening” or tensing the pharyngeal walls, as its activity affects the thyroid cartilage and not the walls of the pharynx per se.

In Betty’s pedagogy, the resonances were never forced into the room. No matter how large the hall, the production of resonances ended where the singer did; in other words, there were no concepts such as “sing to the back of the hall” or “put your voice into the hall.” If the voice was produced well, the resonances would carry into the hall, but they could not be forced into it because that destroyed the acoustic balance of the instrument. This was one of Betty’s most useful concepts.

Cover

Cover, don’t smother.

Put very simply, the strap muscles (sternohyoid, sternothyroid) attached to the hyoid bone and thyroid cartilage, when active, contract to pull the hyoid bone and larynx closer to the sternum, lowering the larynx and increasing the pharyngeal space by elongating it.

The thyroid cartilage is tilted back and upward, thus leaving the cricothyroid muscle free to contract through its whole range. This reduces the length of the vocal folds, thereby delaying the register shift and permitting the chest register to function beyond its normal limits. The pitch can now be raised by an increase of the internal tension of the vocal folds, which reduced the effective vibrating mass while avoiding the maximal length and tension of the chest register.⁸⁰

The action of the thyropharyngeus muscle on the thyroid cartilage should also be mentioned. Thyropharyngeus is part of the lower constrictor muscle, and the constrictors, high, middle and low, form the muscular basis of the pharynx. When thyropharyngeus is engaged, it forces the horns of the thyroid cartilage closer together and pushes the cricoid cartilage back, helping to elongate the vocal folds farther than they might extend in a raised laryngeal position.⁸¹

This seems at first confusing, as the action of the strap muscles has the effect of shortening the vocal folds by pulling the larynx down into a more vertical position. By shortening the folds, this vertical position allows for more active engagement of the thyroarytenoid muscles, hence the possibility of a bigger presence of “chest voice” throughout the compass of the voice. It also allows for the cricothyroid muscles to act more freely upon the thyroid cartilage also, increasing the upward range of pitches. The foregoing would be a good general description of what all operatic voices must do in order to sing free top notes. The “squeezing” action of thyropharyngeus on the thyroid

cartilage further aids in the elongation of the thyroarytenoids well past what is “natural” and thus creates the muscular configuration necessary for top pitches sung “from the chest.”

It seems from Vennard’s description of cover that the thyropharyngeus muscles are active as part of the mechanism for singing extended pitches in all voices, not added to the muscular configuration for men only. A similar configuration undoubtedly exists for women because the operatic sound depends on blended registration in a low laryngeal position. One of the differences would be the relative independence of the head register in female voices. The heavier musculature of the male larynx, brought on by puberty, must be considered a factor in Betty’s discussion of cover. It would seem logical that, given the fact that top notes in male voices will not sound full without the engagement of the chest voice mechanism, the cover maneuver allows for maximum longitudinal tension of the folds in a chest-dominant, low-laryngeal configuration. From this amalgam of blended registration and cover, Betty fashioned a “male head voice” that eventually operated much like the female “head voice,” capable of “leading the chest resonances” around the entire compass of the voice. The cover maneuver, then, may be a matter of degree from females to males.

Taken together, the action of the strap muscles, allowing for the reduction of the length of the vocal folds and hence more activity of the thyroarytenoid muscles associated with lower register (“chest voice”); the action of thyropharyngeus, allowing the maximum extension of the vocal folds; and the firm closure associated with glottal fry, or low pitch onset, mitigating against gross shifts in registration are the three most important components of the *bel canto* technique at the laryngeal level and are altogether consistent with the approach used by Betty Fleming.

In my opinion, the resonance produced by the cover maneuver is what Betty referred to as “head resonance” (quite distinct from “head register”). The first step was to acquire the blended registration inherent in cover maneuver. The second step was to use the resonance produced in this configuration to inform the entire compass of the voice, bottom to top. Hence, when she said, “The entire voice is led around by the top resonances,” this is, I believe, what she meant by it.

And here is probably the single most controversial item in the teaching of vocal technique since Garcia, besides the glottal fry. The cover maneuver has to be learned by most singers. Pedagogical ideas like “singing as one speaks” or relying on “natural” concepts will not go very far in the attainment of solid top notes that can compete with large orchestral forces. The musculature of the larynx has to be engaged by the singer, and it is extremely important that the singer has an excellent teacher to guide him through the pitfalls of attaining cover. Betty taught cover principally through the *messa di voce* exercise “hard ee/soft ah” because the connection of the breath and muscles was fluid and initially quiet. “Open the vowels in cover,” she would say.⁸²

The musculature was never “jammed” by singing too loudly into the top. The *messa di voce* built up the use of the appropriate laryngeal musculature bit by bit. This is why she insisted that singers didn’t need force in order to achieve volume. Once the singer understood that caressing the voice into cover via portamento and low pitch onset got a more freely resonant and pliable sound, useful in all music in expressive terms, but especially useful for those effects required by Verdi, the so-called unnaturalness of the maneuver became second nature, and the entire voice began to respond to the configuration of the resonance produced by it.

The point in the range at which one initially covered was determined by voice category and also by weight. Heavier voices had lower *passaggi*, and therefore cover came in earlier than with lyric voices. For example, a heroic baritone might have to cover at B or C, traditional cover for bass voices.

Betty also used the vocalise example three to get into the covered position in a quick moving scale so that the tongue was not involved in the lowering of the larynx. Vocalises two and five were used as well. A quotation from Garcia that may as well have been written to explain the *messa di voce* exercise: “The student ought to start from a ringing note and carry the voice to a veiled one, keeping the slur brilliant and ringing.”⁸³ “Cover” will never feel as brilliant as the middle and lower portions of the voice, especially at the beginning of a student’s studies.

Betty probably invented exercise number six to develop the head voice cover mechanism. One had to use the yodel movement to flip in and out of cover.

“The voice will cover itself if you let it.”⁸⁴

Summary

One could say that Betty’s was a two-register, one-resonance approach to singing, with the independent registration on each pitch (a balance of “head” and “chest” **registration** learned from the *messa di voce*) led around the compass in cover (“head”) **resonance** on the portamento curve. The registers are blended together by the low pitch onset. The result was that the singer did not experience register shifts and therefore felt as though he/she were singing the entire range of possible pitches in one resonance. This is eminently desirable for the operatic stage. In performance, there is no time for the singer to worry about cover or register shifts; they must be automatic. Further, the ultimate technique gives the singer spontaneity, the ability to live vocally in the moment, and to create afresh the music each time it is sung. In this sense, the mechanism has the sensation of being free, even though, as Maria Callas pointed out, the process of acquiring a *bel canto* technique is like putting on a straightjacket.⁸⁵ But this

straightjacket, like all disciplines properly applied, creates musical and technical freedom, and this was the technical and musical goal of Betty Fleming's teaching. I freely admit that this is *my* explanation of the reason the technique she taught worked so marvelously well and that she might indeed have another explanation for it. The fascinating thing, to me, is that it is wholly consistent with the methods of both Lamperti and Garcia. She was capable of hearing the minutest changes in the voices of her students, and because of her heritage, her training and her sure sense of the function of the voice, she was that *rara avis*, a great voice teacher.

Repertory

Mention should be made here of Betty's thoughts about the assignment of vocal repertory. This was a choice that was not wholly made on the basis of vocal quality and range. She placed a good deal of emphasis on the temperament of the singer. Suitability of role, then, was not lightly made. Taking my own case, she assigned me Wotan's Farewell and "Per me giunto" (*Don Carlo*) and the Prologue from *Pagliacci*, not because they were suited to my innate vocal capabilities but because they would force me to sing correctly into the top of my voice. But when we neared the end of our first series of lessons in 1980, her response to the question about repertory was this: "You could sing as a Heldenbariton, but you lack the temperament. Sing as a bass." Similar advice was given to her other pupils.

Historical Perspective

At the time of my studies with Betty Fleming, 1979-80, there were a number of cultural elements at work against her method.

According to Stark, there were two basic pedagogical movements in the 19th century: the Lampertis, father and son, who taught "flow" phonation, and Garcia, who taught "glottal fry" phonation. Lamperti's mention of *appoggio* under the vocal folds may amount to much the same thing, however, so it may be an exaggeration to place them in two completely different pedagogical spheres. It would seem that the interpretation of the Lamperti method, "flow," has, at least for the moment, won the day, as the overtone series created is high enough to please those who consider themselves connoisseurs of opera, and it has none of the muscular engagement that might give pause to some voice scientists, doctors and voice teachers.

The authentic period music movement had come of age during Betty's teaching years, and the gurus associated with that movement declared that vibrato and portamento were stylistic elements to be added as decoration rather than physiological necessities that allowed the voice to operate freely. The vocal sound created by Betty's technique was not

appreciated by early music conductors, who wanted voices that blended with rebecs and shawms. The English choral tradition produced exactly that sort of sound.

According to Donald Maxwell, baritone and pupil of both Hislop and Betty Fleming, Joseph Hislop did not like the vocal production he heard around him when he moved back to England in the '40s.⁸⁶ It is as though Manuel Garcia II had not taught at the Royal School for nearly 50 years in the late 19th century. Part of the vocal model for the British was undoubtedly the choir school sound, vibratoless, with dampened high partials to create choral blend. This aesthetic model was carried over into solo singing, and one can point to a number of examples, Peter Pears among them.

Also at work against Betty's pedagogy was the rise of digital recording technology, which, with more sensitive microphones, could detect the slightest movement in the vocal tract. Recording engineers did not like to hear glottal fry or portamento because the digital process tracked the sound to its source, the vocal folds, and so any and all extraneous "noise" from the larynx and surrounding tissues was picked up. This was especially displeasing when heard on living-room sound systems. Furthermore, the fundamental of the sound was quite often purposely left out of the balance to create a sound that was "higher and brighter." Consequently, those singers who made "pure" sounds, with a lot of high partials more loosely phonated, were favored, especially in the early music field. Never mind that these singers were limited in range, color and hence expressivity because their voices were not constructed along a line of compacted breath.

Until 1946, it was harder to record singers with fully resonant voices. With the advent of a microphone capable of detecting frequencies of 80-15,000 Hz, Wagner and Verdi singers were finally heard with resonances intact. This microphone was developed by Arthur Charles Haddy (1906-1989) from the hydrophonic microphone he invented to detect the movements of Nazi submarines.⁸⁷

The treble was more brilliant and incisive, the bass fuller and more resonant, "with a heightened sense of presence and room tone never before encountered on a phonograph record to such stunning effect."⁸⁸

The Decca Recording Company used it in such great projects as the first full recording of Wagner's Ring Cycle in 1957 under Georg Solti.⁸⁹ This analog recording technique, however, captured the sound of the voice in a resonant space. Digital technology did not necessarily allow for the sound of the space in which the recording had been made.

We now consume most of our singing in the form of recordings by invisible conservatory-trained performers who all sound consistently good and reassuringly familiar; our tolerance of emotional intrusion is limited, especially if we listen to singing as background music.⁹⁰

The word "authentic" cropped up increasingly in reference especially to early music and Lied performances. "Historically informed performance" also reared its head. There was certainly nothing inauthentic or un-historic about what Betty Fleming taught. But the

sound generated by her technique could not be ignored. Potter, in his article about portamento, made an exhaustive study of the use of that device in recordings of Schubert's "Ständchen" (Leise flehen) during the 20th century. The diminishing use of portamento across the century was most telling.

Fed a steady diet of so many "sonogenic" singers from the middle 1970s on, the public's taste changed accordingly. Fewer people went out to public concerts and operas to hear singers in acoustic spaces, and they increasingly preferred those recordings in which the room was not present in the recording mix. So, it was not necessary to make use of singers who actually knew how to project their voices into a concert or operatic hall. The same singers, heard live, were often inaudible over an orchestra, or, if they were audible, it became clear that they had produced their voices differently for recordings. With digital recording there was no longer any need to spend the time to construct a vocal technique to do all the effects required by composers like Verdi, Bellini, Wagner and Mozart. These things could all be achieved in the recording studio. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau was rumored to have backed away from the microphone to create his famous decrescendi.

And speaking of Dieskau, as Potter has pointed out, the post-WW II generation idolized him and his emphasis on text alone as the motivating force in singing. (I was once told by a Viennese actress of the post-WW II generation that all a singer need do was sing the pitches Schubert wrote and understand the text and the technique would follow. No need to vocalize.) But even Fischer-Dieskau had started his career by singing portamenti. His early recordings attest to this. One has the feeling that once the recording companies realized that there was "something new" for the audience of classical singers to hear, they encouraged Fischer-Dieskau in his pose as artistic guru, his delving into the text, and later his barking of words unrelated to the melodic line. Walter Legge, the British impresario so important in the careers of Fischer-Dieskau, Schwarzkopf and many other singers, probably knew a good promotional tool when he saw one. Portamento could be, and was, denigrated as old-fashioned and sentimental. It could be used only as an expressive device in certain rare instances. As points of contrast, there was the singing of Maria Callas, Montserrat Caballé, Margaret Price and Joan Sutherland, all shining examples of the sort of technique Betty taught.

It has to be said that the composers in whom Fischer-Dieskau made his market, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Mahler, all had the sound of the human voice singing with portamento in their musical imaginations, for there was no other sound available to them. To insist that Fischer-Dieskau's version of Lieder, or any other music for that matter, represents a "pure" style is nonsense. Music of the 19th century was performed with precisely the technique that Betty Fleming (Garcia, Lamperti) taught, as it is heard in recordings of famous singers right up to World War II. Perhaps that is the reason Betty preferred teaching with operatic excerpts. Lieder tended to be sung with a specialist technique represented by Dieskau and a host of his imitators. This "purity" had become then, as now, so prevalent that it became nearly impossible for her to "free the

resonances” of those types of singers standing before her, acolytes of the cult of Dieskau. One could inquire (in another article, perhaps) about the ties between the cultural purity that was so central to the ideology of the Nazi party, of which Schwarzkopf and Dieskau had been members, the Puritanical American preoccupation with purity and hygiene, and how these things relate to Lieder singing in the late 20th century.

Hans Hotter, in his master classes in Baden, Austria, in 1978, railed against the coloration of every word in a line of text. Those of us in his class knew precisely to whom he was referring, and why. Instead, Hotter insisted that only *one* word in each line of text could be emphasized, like speech, so that the musical line would not be interrupted. In this, he was quoting Garcia:

The pupil must read the words of the piece again and again till each finest shadow of meaning has been mastered. He must next recite them with perfect simplicity and self-abandonment. The accent of truth apparent in the voice when speaking naturally is the basis of expression in singing. Light and shade, accent, sentiment, all become eloquent and persuasive. The imitation instinctive impulse must, therefore, be the object of this special preparation.⁹¹

Perhaps this represented the old way to doing things, but to those of us reared on the meticulous (some would say anal-retentive) preparation of Fischer-Dieskau as the gold standard, music flows more spontaneously and generously the way Hotter described. There was nothing unprepared about Hotter’s music making.

An old argument, dredged up from the middle of the 19th century, that singing with the technique described by Garcia made the voice less capable of *fioratura*, less flexible, was rearticulated. The operatic technique of Garcia was “too heavy,” “too ponderous,” and the older, more florid style was perceived as “light” and “focused.”

It is perfectly true that florid singing took on another dimension when trained in this method, but that is not to say that florid singing was impossible. The mechanism by which singers attained a cleanly articulated florid line involved a more dynamic muscular opposition, especially in cover. The *fioratura* could not become disengaged from the rest of the vocal production, but instead became akin to well-articulated *mezza voce*: all of the concepts of *bel canto* production remained in place, only the resonance was reduced by the use of less breath. The articulation at the laryngeal level originated in a diaphragmatic pulse on each pitch, thus tied to the speed of the vibrato, or, alternatively, a series of puffs of air (not unlike ha-ha-ha but much less audible as ‘h’) to change pitches quickly at the laryngeal level. These could be used interchangeably. The *bel canto* setup of the vocal tract remained unaltered.

Putting a final nail in the coffin was the rise of voice science, which focused increasingly on the hygiene of singing. Whether or not they intended it, the scientists who had begun their researches to explain the phenomenon of the operatic voice, by their explanations planted the seeds of doubt as to the validity of the old Garcia Method. They were almost

all in favor of “flow.” Some went so far as to posit a new paradigm for the production of the operatic voice, training singers from the isolated head voice or falsetto down rather than the chest voice up. Discussions of the larynx and its involvement in tone production were beyond the pale. Thus had it been spoken: the larynx is below the level of consciousness. The only healthy attack was the imaginary ‘h’. All the other attacks were deemed physically dangerous or aesthetically suspect. Systematically, the elements of *bel canto* were dissected and blamed for various vocal malfunctions: chest voice, portamento, glottal fry—all bad. These were replaced by supposedly more hygienic techniques, the results of which we now hear on a regular basis in major opera houses. The problem with much of this research is that it pertained to speech rather than singing. It is difficult to get the measuring devices down the throats of operatic singers in full cry.

Several great voices did not weather the change in 1966 from the old Metropolitan Opera house to the new one. This seemed to illustrate and amplify the red flags the voice scientists were sending up:

In my early years as a tyro accompanist, I saw how the high-profile vocal troubles of the 1960s affected the voice studios of the early 1970s.... The most successful [voice teachers] were imparting a philosophy of vocal safety and longevity. These were certainly normal components of instruction, but they were now transmitted in a new tonality from the past. Chest resonance was eschewed as “dangerous” and many voice teachers vocalized their students high into the falsetto range (for men) and the whistle register (for women), skittering way above high C and utilizing the very lightest production. There was a sense that full-voiced high notes were somewhat vulgar, and that floated pianissimos were a sign of class and control. Students were kept on the light side of their potential sound and generally funneled into lyric roles. When the more audacious, full-voiced singers did venture into the meatier repertoire for which they were naturally suited, they were often unprepared for its demands and ran into trouble. This only seemed to prove the tenet of the times: “The big stuff will kill you.”⁹²

Thus, someone like Betty, who taught “big voice technique” from the chest voice upward, was viewed as suspect, someone who “ruined voices.”

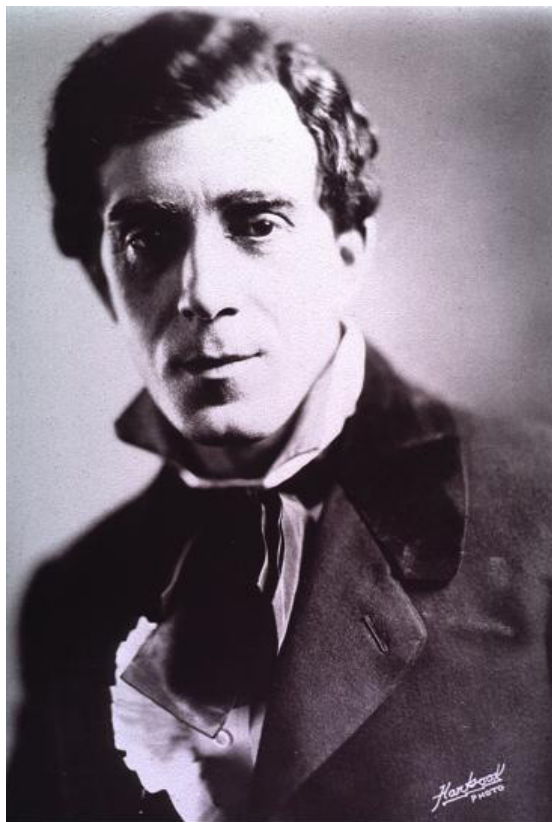
Since Betty’s heyday the pendulum has begun to swing again in her direction, with acknowledgement of the importance of grounding the voice in the chest register, the use of glottal fry and portamento coming from recent and perhaps less reactionary scientific research. Most everyone who has had to sing for extended periods of time over an orchestra knows the intrinsic value of these technical ideas.

Again, quoting James Stark,

...firm glottal closure, with its strong muscular contractions, has been interpreted by some observers as an example of hyperfunction that could lead to vocal damage. However, I have a perfectly healthy larynx, despite many years of singing with firm phonation. This raises the question of whether current clinical definitions of vocal hyperfunction are adequate to distinguish between the normal vigorous activity associated with operatic singing and the types of vocal behaviour that are demonstrably abusive to the larynx. It can be argued that firm glottal closure when skillfully executed does not constitute a form of vocal abuse, but is rather an extraordinary use of the vocal muscles that is necessary in some kinds of singing.⁹³

But, during the 1970s and '80s, Betty was up against a great deal of prejudice and she knew it. The time it took to master *messa di voce* and real portamento-legato was not generally a commitment many singers wanted to make, and, like Joseph Hislop, whose temper was tested frequently by students who did not want to take the time to master technical issues, Betty too lost her temper when students failed to understand the painstaking process. For me, on aesthetic principles alone, the sounds coming from those students who had stuck with Betty over the course of the years it took to master what she taught were much preferable to those I had heard in voice studios in Seattle, Los Angeles and New York. The remarkable thing was that each voice was individual, fully itself, not bearing the mark of a particular technique. Also, there was the fluidity of sound, the ability of each and every voice to create a palette of colors so necessary for the realization of a composer's musical markings. For my own technical ability, "getting down to the root of the sound" (that is, using the larynx) was exactly what I needed. As I write this, past 60, I can still sing thanks to the traditional concepts taught by Betty Fleming. This is a common thread among former pupils. She was the inheritor of several strands of pedagogy through Joseph Hislop and Maria Parea, whoever she may have been, that will continue, through me and many others who studied with her and loved her, to inform new generations of singers.

Appendix I



Introduction to the Hislops' method of teaching

Delivered by an American pupil at a convention of the U.S. Association of Singing Teachers

To become a professional singer the pupil must have, however untrained, what the teacher readily recognizes to be a good healthy voice. The Hislop method is to develop in the pupil the way a singer's brain should think and concentrate.

There is no doubt that it is the brain that tells the vocal cords what to do. The singer must gradually develop his ear together with feeling and judgment for what is a really beautiful sound.

To obtain this, the voice must be free from any kind of blockage or impediment in production. Then we come to the moment when sound begins, i.e., the "attack," which I will deal with later on in this talk.

BREATHING

Before the intake of breath the body and mind should be relaxed. Feel as if you were breathing from the diaphragm, where you should have good support but without strain. Do not take in more breath than you can comfortably control.

Breathing through the nose only will cause congestion. Do not snatch the breath through the mouth, because that will chill and dry the throat.

To practice quiet rhythmic breathing: Take two bars in three-four time, the first bar being a rest bar, count one, two, breathe in on the third beat, then you will ready to sing on the first beat of the second bar containing the vocal line.

PHONATION

The attack must be instantaneous, no scooping, but the tone should be directed up into the head resonators on the breath.

When singing a portamento to a higher note, as is often required by the composer, the voice production must be light and easy, and the instant before reaching the higher note, pressure should be reduced to a minimum but still carried on the breath, then the singer will secure a clean and truly supported top note.

The lower middle and low notes of some voices, particularly those of mezzo- and dramatic sopranos are often dull, lacking in resonance. This is caused by tightening, which in turn blocks the voice at the back of the throat.

The technique to cure this fault is to have the pupil sing scales through the low to the lowest notes by allowing the voice to drop freely down, directed well forward on the low notes.

In the beginning of these exercises, the voice may break on some notes, probably on a G or an F, but with clever practice the break will disappear and the voice becomes even through the whole scale, with no evidence of a change of register.

Resonance is of all importance.

Even when singing a dark coloured tone, be it forte or piano, a thread of resonance in the middle of the tone should lead and govern.

PRONUNCIATION

The singer must have the sensation that he is articulating all vowels with the cords, or course you cannot feel what is happening the cords approximate.

My experience as a singer and teacher has convinced me that all vowels begin in the larynx, and only the finer shades are formed in the mouth.

When pronouncing all “singing” consonants, one must train the tongue to be soft and flexible, so that without undue pressure the consonants can be lightly pronounced with the top of the tongue well forward on the hard palate, so that the tongue does not thicken toward the back, and thus will avoid a thick clumsy consonant, which by the way, is also a form of blockage.

EXERCISES

Hislop develops all voices by meticulous attention to exercises for the middle register, elimination strain and blockage. These exercises strengthen the tiny muscles that control the larynx and prepare the voice for an extension of range.

Without these preparatory exercises it is too often dangerous to keep on singing top notes.

I find the Italian Arie Antiche (Classical Arias) not only beautiful recital numbers but excellent for voice production, as they are nearly all in medium keys.

PRINTED EXERCISES

Lütgen/Concone: Please tell your audience the exact names and opus of the exercises.

REGISTER

Accomplished singers can sing two octaves from the lowest to the highest note without any change of register being noticed or heard by an audience.

This is done by applying the sweet attack which forms instantaneous phonation, the tone is carried on the breath into the head resonators, supported by the diaphragm, but without exaggerated muscular pressure.

STYLE

This is difficult to put into words, but one can say that a knowledge of classical and modern compositions is necessary, added to which the singer should have fine musical and artistic taste in order to give true interpretations.

(Thanks to Donald Maxwell for supplying this document, given to him by Joseph Hislop.)

Appendix II

Fleming Vocalises

Exercises 1-5 are to always be done in order

Betty Fleming



1. "Rah From G (low voices) or B-flat (high voices)"

Execution: trilled r; "rah' on each pitch; keep core in the sound; Baritones (basses) sing down the G major scale ("Rah from G") from G3 to G2 then transposed downward by half steps to the bottom of the voice. Starting at G3 again, transposed upward by half steps from G3 to D4. Tenors down the octave from B-flat3 ("Rah from B-flat"), transposing the scale to the bottom of the voice, then from B-flat3 to F4 by half steps. Mezzos (contraltos) from G4 to G3 transposed downward to lowest possible tones; then from G4 to D5 by half steps. Sopranos beginning B-flat4 to Bb3 then downward to the lowest possible tones; then the Bb4 scale transposed upward to F5.

Instructions: "Get down to the root of the sound" (vocal cords); "Do not take this vocalise past the top of the passaggio, which is the end of the chest voice"; "keep the jaw loose, like a skeleton"; "let the resonances go"; "no pussyfooting with the sound, get right into the sound"

Concepts: core, root of sound

Purpose: to free the resonances (tongue, jaw)

Origin: Maria Parea



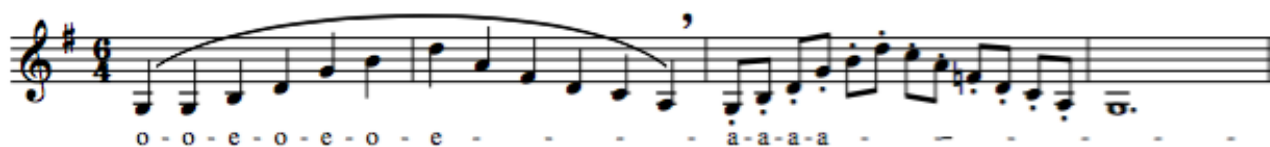
2. **Execution:** portamento into the first note from several pitches below (low note onset, glottal fry), then portamento between the following pitches; begin at D4 for low male voices, F4 for high male voices; D5 for low female voices; F5 for high female voices; progress by upward half steps to the top of the voice

Instructions: "'crack into the first pitch from below" (glottal fry); "come from underneath the cords"; "lift into the pitch from below, never slam in"; "never leave the steel thread"; "the thin thread of the vowel is on the diaphragm"; "consistent vibrato"; "Keep it on the arc."

Purpose: Connection of a thin thread of chest voice into the upper register (blended registration from the glottal fry, into cover). To encourage the connection of head voice right down into the chest voice.

Concepts: steel thread of the portamento, core, thinness of vowels,

Origin: Maria Parea



3. Arpeggios and staccatos

Execution: First, a tight-lipped hum on the portamento thread (no tongue activity); second, using o-e (or a-i) and the portamento thread, sing the thin vowels into the top of the voice; third, staccato on /a/ using the same laryngeal and pharyngeal adjustments identified in the hum and vowels; consistent vibrato, even on the hum. Lower voices being G3 and G4, higher Bb3 and Bb4.

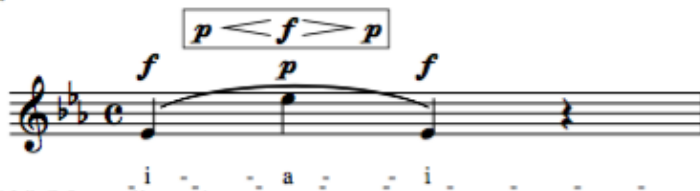
Instructions: "The movement of the vocal folds inside the larynx is extremely important for the freedom of the sound."

Purpose: to identify vocal cord closure and subglottal pressure for top voice; to correlate the root of the sound (laryngeal sensations, prephonatory settings (Stark) and subglottal pressure) with the vowel (lips) thus identifying the feeling of compactness of the complete tone in the vocal tract.

Concepts: the subglottal pressure initiated by the glottal fry or "starting the tone under the cords" (blended registration) tied to the compactness or thinness of the vocal tract and vowel is the set-up mentioned by

Garcia when he wrote about the "glottal pinch".

Origin: Maria Parea



4. "Strong Ee, Soft Ah" (Messa di voce)

Execution: Beginning at D3 (male) and D4 (female) for low voices and F3 (male) and F4 (female) for high voices, sing the low note loudly concentrating on keeping core in the sound. Then using the portamento steel curve, slide up the octave to an ah vowel, changing the vowel somewhere midway on the curve. The top note on "ah" should be executed in the piano dynamic, keeping the diaphragm firmly involved. After the student had mastered the piano dynamic, the crescendo was added on the top pitch to make a messa di voce, p-f-p, then back down the octave. The pulsation of the diaphragm on the portamento up the octave and the sustaining of the high pitch were used to keep the voice from locking. If the male singer was not able to sing the top voice as a connected voice, "deep" falsetto was used instead.

Instructions: "massage into the top"; "the large resonances develop from the small ones-not the other way around"

Purpose: To connect chest voice to the upper register (cover); to tie all the concepts (core, steel thread, cover, resonance, vowel, pulse) together.

Concepts: The "thin thread" of sound initiated by "coming at the tone from underneath the cords" is the "glottal pinch" of Garcia.

Origin: Maria Parea

4a. Yodel Movement into Deep Falsetto. (Male Voices)

Execution: resonant (loud) bottom note (C3, D3, E3 or F3 depending on the voice type and quality), then a yodel into falsetto with a low larynx and relaxed pharynx. After the student identifies this feeling, the yodel was tried into full voice (cover). If that did not work, portamento was used to get the pitch in 'cover' as in #5.

Purpose: The deep falsetto simulates the position of the larynx and pharynx in full voice, but without the longitudinal tension in the vocal folds. The strap muscles are engaged, pulling the larynx down, and the freedom of falsetto singing is carried over into the full voice sound. For the development of male cover or "head" voice.

Note: A similar exercise was used for female singers to quickly get into the upper pitch in a phrase, but falsetto was never mentioned, only "the quick movement of the voice."



5. "Fifths and Ninths"

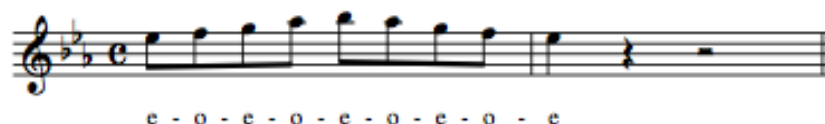
Execution: tip of tongue against inside lower front teeth, loosely, move the back of the tongue to make /e/ vowels, pushing tongue up into the middle of the mouth. Low voices from G3 and G4, high voices from Bb3 and Bb4, transposed by half-steps upward to topmost pitches. Variation: double fifths and double ninths; the diaphragm was pulsed if the voice became "stuck";

Instructions: Keep the core in the sound, diaphragm firmly in control; "Keep it light and agile. Not too heavy." "Keep it light and agile—not too ."

Purpose: to get into "cover" without using the tongue as an aid; to get single and double formant vowels in the same resonance; in the case of double fifths and ninths, to increase breath capacity

Concepts: "The jaw must hang open as if you were a skeleton."

Origin: Maria Parea



6. **Execution:** using the subglottal pressure and the thinness of vowel from the hum exercise (#4) and the equalized resonances identified in #3, squeel the highest pitches in the range, making a very bright sound. Low male voices start at D3, higher ones at F3; lower female voices D4, higher ones at F4.

Purpose: to help identify the sound of the connected upper register to those singers unused to making sounds of this nature; to identify the thinness of the vocal tract and subglottal pressure associated with free top pitches.

Origin: Betty Fleming



7. **Execution:** crescendo and decrescendo on a five note single-pitch pattern, the third note being the loudest, on 'la', or any other vowel, in the middle octave of any voice. Middle voice pitches in all voice categories.

Instructions: "Don't disturb the mixture of head and chest in the middle"

Purpose: Register blending.

Origin: Betty Fleming



8. **Execution:** used with yodel movement or portamento thread. Basses start C2, baritones D2, tenors start E3 or E4; contraltos C3, mezzos D3, sopranos F3.

Purpose: when used with yodel movement, provided quick registration adjustments especially into 'cover' or top voice. The same looseness and laryngeal adjustments were desired in the portamento movement.

Concepts: yodel movement, portamento, cover, steel thread (when used with portamento)

Origin: Betty Fleming



9. **Execution:** Reattach chest voice "from the vocal folds" before each group of four, getting into cover. Basses start at C3 or D3, baritones E-flat 3, tenors F3; contraltos C4 or D4, mezzos E-flat4, sopranos F#4.

Purpose: to break the tension of singing a group of high pitches by allowing the vocal folds to relax briefly.

This vocalise was used to strengthen the top tones without sacrificing vowel clarity.

Instructions: "Cover, don't smother, as old Jos (Hislop) used to say"

Origin: Betty Fleming

o - e - o - e - o - e - o
i - a - i - a - i - a - i

10. **Execution:** Reattach chest from "from under the vocal cords" thus breaking the tension that accrues singing a string of higher pitches without release. Starting pitches as in Number 9.

Purpose: Coordination of chest and head voices balanced on the breath pressure (sub-glottal pressure) in cover with a clear vowel.

Instructions: "Open the vowel in cover. Do not slam into the top."

Origin: Betty Fleming

a - - - - -

11. **Execution:** Portamento until the trill, then a yodel movement into cover. Basses begin C2 and rise by half steps; baritones start Eb2, tenors F2 or F#2; contraltos begin C3 or D3, mezzos D3 or Eb3; sopranos F#3.

Purpose: Freedom of vocal fold movement, freedom of registration in chest voice mix, freedom of resonances.

Origin: Betty Fleming

i - - - - a i - - - -

12. A variant of number 11.

Execution: portamento to fifth, then yodel movement into cover.

Purpose: as above.

Origin: Betty Fleming

o - - - - -

13. Another variant of number 11.

Execution: yodel movement from Bb to Eb, subglottal pressure, squeel.

Purpose: Adjust the larynx and the resulting resonances into 'covered' /a/.

Useful for male voices. See Garcia's comments regarding the modification of /a/ vowels to /o/ vowels in the top of the voice.

Origin: Betty Fleming

B. Lütgen

1.

The musical score consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves (treble and bass clef). The time signature is common time (C).

System 1: The vocal line features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and rests. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *p* and *legato*. Lyrics are: e o e o e o e o e o e o e o e o e o e.

System 2: The vocal line continues with similar rhythmic patterns. The piano accompaniment shows dynamic changes from *p* to *mf* and then *f*. The system concludes with a double bar line.

System 3: The vocal line features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and rests. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc.*, and *dim.*

Musical score for a piano piece, measures 1-4. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc.*, *mf*, and *f*.

Instructions:

Keep core in the sound

Portamento always present, even on small intervals. Tongue loose.

Go up into cover from chest resonances on top D and E.

Don't disturb mixture of head and chest in the middle

On the bottom of the phrase, don't dig for bottom pitch - it disturbs the grace of the phrase.

/i-a/ may be substituted for */o-e/*

14.

Musical score for a piano piece, measures 14-18. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *mezza voce*, *dim.*, and *pp*. The tempo is marked *Andante* and the articulation is *legato*.

Musical score for a piano piece, measures 19-24. The score is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *dim.*, *p*, and *mf*.

dolce *pp* *rinf.* *riten.* *a tempo* *p legatissimo*
dolce *pp* *rinf.* *riten.* *p*
Lento *cresc.* *f* *dim.* *p*
cresc. *f* *dim.* *p*

Instructions:

Keep the voice on the arc

Articulate the 16ths on the support, never letting up on the diaphragm

One vowel per phrase, or alternating vowels as in No. 1.

19.

mezza voce *lcl*
mezza voce

First system of a musical score. It consists of a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower two staves. The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by a melodic phrase with slurs and accents. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line with chords and single notes in the left hand.

Second system of the musical score. The vocal line starts with a *cresc.* marking and a long slur. It then transitions to a *p dolce* section with the lyrics "fil". The piano accompaniment also has a *cresc.* marking in the first part and a *p dolce* marking in the second part. The piano part continues with its characteristic eighth-note accompaniment.

Third system of the musical score. The vocal line features a *mf* dynamic followed by a *p* dynamic. The piano accompaniment includes a *dolce* marking in the first part and *mf* and *p* markings in the second part. The piano part continues with its characteristic eighth-note accompaniment.

First system of musical notation. The treble clef staff begins with a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic. A *cresc.* marking is placed above the staff, and a *legato* marking is placed below the staff. The bass clef staff begins with a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic, and a *cresc.* marking is placed above the staff.

Second system of musical notation. The treble clef staff begins with a *pp* dynamic and a *legato* marking. The bass clef staff begins with a *pp* dynamic and a *lal* marking.

Third system of musical notation. The treble clef staff begins with a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic. The bass clef staff begins with a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *p* dynamic.

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment.

- System 1:**
 - Vocal line: *riten. molto*, *dim.*, *p*. Includes a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures.
 - Piano accompaniment: *riten.*, *rinf.*, *dim.*, *p*. Includes a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures. Starts with *sfz*.
- System 2:**
 - Vocal line: *cresc. poco a poco*, *p*. Includes a slur over the last two measures.
 - Piano accompaniment: *cresc. poco a poco*. Includes a slur over the last two measures.
- System 3:**
 - Vocal line: *f*, *dim.*, *p*. Includes a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures.
 - Piano accompaniment: *f*, *dim.*, *p*. Includes a slur over the first two measures and a slur over the last two measures.

Instructions:

- Change vowels with every phrase, ad lib.
- Portamento thread.
- Firm support.

Appendix III THE BETTY BOOK

A collection of remembrances was compiled for Betty Fleming by Graham Titus in 2003. Betty had moved from her house in Perth to an hotel, and a little later in 2003, rented a Rolls-Royce and had herself driven back to London, where she stayed at the Conrad Hotel Chelsea Harbor. Because of her physical condition, the Biggs family thought it best that she be taken care of in a nursing home. She lived at The Pines in Putney, south London, thereafter, until her death in January of 2015.

Excerpt from an email from Graham 20 February 2015:

“As far as I remember, the idea came to me when I heard a Buddhist friend talking about a website he’d started called Gratitude Unlimited, where people could log on and write a few words about anyone they felt grateful to. Gratitude is a major feature of Buddhist practice and there is a ‘ritual’ called ‘Rejoicing in Merits’ where one pays tribute to someone, often in their presence. It can be a powerful practice. Debbie Miles-Johnson and I took it to Betty when we went to see her in the hotel in Dunkeld (I think). It may have been around her birthday time, but the real reason was because I thought she might appreciate it before her demise. As I said, I made a copy of the contributions, as I wasn’t sure how she’d receive it. (In another email, Graham was afraid she’d say “I’m not bloody dead yet” or words to that effect.) And I know there were quite a few more (tributes) that people (such as yourself and Mary Hill) sent direct to Betty, and which I haven’t seen. I do hope Neil (Bolton) might let you have the book at some point.”

And this excerpt is from Graham on 9 May 2003 after he visited Betty and presented the book:

“As I think I mentioned Betty is currently living in an hotel (the Huntingtower Hotel, Crieff Road, Perth). I must admit I was initially quite shocked by her physical appearance - she’s lost a lot of weight and is now very thin. And it took me a while to get used to her speech, which has been affected by her strokes. But her mind is as clear as a bell (remembering places, names and dates) and she is as hilarious as ever about people and situations, and still swearing like an old trouper! She was very moved by seeing photos of people she’s known throughout her life. She has a carer, Anne, for several days a week and two lovely sisters, Marlene and

Evelyn, help out a lot as well. I'm sure she would want to thank you sending your memories and good wishes. It means a lot to her.”

Betty's personal effects, following her death in 2015, including the complete original edition of The Betty Book, are in the possession of her step-grandson, Neil Bolton.

The tributes below are edited to exclude personal information about family members. Each has been allowed inclusion here by permission of the contributor except when the author has died.

SANDRA GELSON

April 2003

Dear Betty,

We go back many years—almost 40 in fact!

The link stretches from the Hislop's in Westbourne Grove, from Abbey Opera and through years of teaching and guidance to the present day.

There were long sessions at the studio in St John's Wood and then at the Omeagher's in Kensington.

- A first concert in the Swedish Church Hall
- Betty Fleming-Agony Aunt
- The Phlegmish Opera Group with Toby and Ron Lane, trips to Dartford by invitation of Roger Hills and dear Ninian and Pamela

We had so many laughs!

- Donuts and top Cs! Tales of an uncle with a pet shop!
- Whole tantrums of tenors from Lancashire to Mexico!
- Akiyo and Tanki-Ponki and the famous G and Ts!

But running through it all has been a stream of excellent teaching, kindness and generosity and a kaleidoscope of talented and interesting

people whom you have helped in the profession and whom I have been lucky enough to meet because of you.

What a legacy to the professional singing world!- I can still hear “keep the bxxxxxy (or even worse) CORE in the voice” ringing in my ears!

(Family information deleted.)

As Graham said to me, I perhaps have the longest ‘overview’ of all your teaching. There have been pupils at all stages and it was a pleasure to be associated with them.

I’m sure the contributions from so many will reflect the appreciation and fondness we all have for you.

With much love

Sandra

GRAHAM TITUS

dear Betty,

A few thoughts:

It must have been in 1972, I think, when I returned from a year’s study in Cologne, that I was trying to find a singing teacher. Teachers up till then had been reasonably OK, but looking back, I don’t think I’d really learnt very much. My friend Patrick Hamilton arranged for me to visit Joseph Hislop in Fife—their family had some connection with Jo’s brother, I seem to remember I think I sang some Schubert and Puccini—I certainly remember Jos (Joseph Hislop) once saying to me, “No, Puccini didn’t like it like that!” —not a lot one can say to that, is there? Well, he said if it was a good teacher I was looking for, I couldn’t do better than go to Betty Fleming and gave me your address.

When I first came to the studio in Brompton Rd. I must admit I was initially disappointed to be met by a rather reserved and plain woman, but when she said “Oh yes, Betty’s in the studio upstairs” all was revealed. I liked you immediately, and after my rendition of (I think) Bach “Et in spiritum sanctum,” you said, “Well,

that's very nice, but..." and proceeded to give me a vocal diagnosis of what could be done with my 22 year old voice, how to do it, and how long it would take (5 years with application and practice). I was convinced you were the teacher for me.

What I hadn't anticipated—or experienced in my teachers before—was your warmth, unceasing enthusiasm and encouragement, and legendary generosity. It wasn't long before I realized it wasn't just for me that you gave your time and energy or organized and paid for recitals at Leighton House! And I remember you frequently slipping my £5 fee back into my hand, as you knew I didn't have much money in those days.

Betty, you've taught me so much about singing and about what it is to be a singer, but also—and what may last longer I think (my voice will stop working one day)—the way you showed such enthusiasm and boundless generosity, coupled with a piercing clarity about voices as well as people's personalities, as been a valuable and enduring lesson. Looking back, I think your secret was that you were able to create an atmosphere of enjoyment, hard work, and abundance, in which people could take risks and discover things about themselves they didn't know were there. So I've an awful lot to be grateful to you for, and this album of people's gratitude and reminiscences is, I hope, a small way of showing that.

On a personal and career basis things have certainly not gone in a straight line for me (do they ever?). and after rather a successful start in my 20s (many thanks to you), I took a few different turns—which I continue to do today, including going back to singing Lieder and teaching again. It was very revealing playing for your lessons, and I learnt a lot from your explanation of why you taught someone in a particular way. I used to love it when there was a gap and you'd just whizz through "Vissi d'arte" or Lady Macbeth's aria. Another little memory—in my house in Stoke Newington, Sunday lunch when you sang—my mum, who was staying for a few days, was most impressed by your voice but even more, I seem to remember, by your wonderful laugh.

Dear Betty, I feel so blessed to have met you when I did, and I wish you well in present life in the hotel. I'm very much looking forward to seeing you again.

With lots of love and gratitude,

Graham

JEREMY WHITE

Well Betty. I tried to compose something polished and thought out for this compilation, but I'm not very good at that, so I'm just sitting down at the typewriter and seeing what comes out.

It was 1979 when I first met you. I'd been in the BBC Singers for three years by then, and fitting around it everything in the way of singing jobs I was offered - you had to earn whatever you could with a growing family - but what I knew about singing could have been written on the back of a postage stamp. I'd come from Cathedral choirs, early music, that sort of thing; and after three years of singing round the clock without a technique, I was getting a bit frayed (and worried.) It had culminated with my being asked to jump in at the last minute to replace a Zachariah (don't laugh!) in a concert perf of Nabucco in north Wales, and I came back feeling so inadequate I could have given it all up. I told myself it was because I was only 26 etc, but I knew that it was really because I didn't know how to sing (or what to sing).

One day I was pouring out these woes to Peter Long, who was a colleague at St Clement Danes, and he said "You need a bit of what Betty Fleming's got"; and there began an intensive three-year course in what the whole business of singing and being a singer was really about. How I remember the excitement of those afternoons (I usually came on after the BBC was finished for the day). I was reassured and flattered first of all to find that you at least thought there was something there to be bothered with, that you even thought I was potentially quite good; then I had to buckle down and get to grips with the immensity of my ignorance and lack of information. The Betty method, very importantly including sitting and listening to the lessons before and after one's own, was the revelation I badly needed. In the legendary studio at Loudoun Road you heard good and bad voices, well or badly used, and you gradually began to realize, when you heard what you had to say about them, what the point of the whole business of singing was, and of course how to do it effectively. "Singing is not a polite thing, it's like a f**t" is one of the hilarious but true Bettyisms that has stayed by me most.

Rah from G, Lütgen and a crash course in the operatic repertoire began bit by bit to eradicate the piffling choral tricks from my voice. One of the earlier events was finding my top. I seem to remember I came to you with an emergency - I had to sing Harlekin in Ariadne auf Naxos and hadn't the first clue about the passaggio. I was having enough trouble with E-flat and E, let alone beyond to the G. So one

afternoon you kept me back until the others had all gone, bar Sandra at the piano, you shut the window with the long pole and announced “We’ve got to get this voice open now” and proceeded through strong EE soft Ah, arpeggios, anything that would work, to teach me to stop worrying about it and getting in my own way. Eventually I sung so many G’s in so many different ways that I’d not only see the worst that could happen (not much really!) but popped out a few right ones by accident. Well, I never looked back, and soon was doing Otello’s Esultate as part of my warm-up, and amusing my BBC colleagues with my top C.

It was all like that. Your no nonsense, “Get on with it” (another frequent quote) approach was so refreshing to a poncey choral-tradition singer, and more seriously rescued more than just me from ways that were a road to nowhere but vocal collapse. Instead we got ground under our feet, and a muscularity and straightforwardness, even in the sotto voce, that would go on till the cows come home.

In all truth I wasn’t ready for all you had to say - I just didn’t understand quite a lot of it. But the extraordinary thing is that it was gone on unfolding, like one of those slow-release cold capsules, over 20-odd years. How many times have I thought “Oh, that’s what Betty meant” years and a bit more experience later. High support, leading with the head, the arc - all things I nodded to back then but didn’t really get, and have come to get only lately, just as if the lessons are still going on inside. I expect that’s what it is, because you taught us a lot of idiot-proof basic things about what to do with and expect from your body, which have gone on teaching us if we stick to them.

All that seems to have been more about me than about you. What a lot you have given me. When I first came to you I used to pay £3 (not much even in 1979) but you soon cut money out of the equation, for which the family and I could only be grateful, and indeed started to give me costly chances to move on. I found the program for that recital at Leighton House you paid for the other day (1982?) - I can see now why you didn’t really approve of the first half with its Caccini and English song. Oh dear! Still, you thought it had been worth it for the Brahms Serious Songs. You paid for me and Sandra to go to Paul Hamburger with those. And do you remember how you offered to pay me a year’s BBC salary to leave the Singers and begin to develop myself? I’ve no doubt you would have done if only I could have allowed myself to go along with the idea. I wonder how things would have been different. In the end I left in 1988 of course, and was working at Covent Garden by 1990, and at every turn have had cause to look back and thank you for equipping me with the things that brought me there. To be honest, singing has

always come second to my real life's work - my family - but it is a very important second, because you can't keep a family without a job, especially a big one by today's standards; and if I'm still here at nearly 50, still getting new enquiries and offers (did I tell you the Met enquired last year, Glyndebourne for the first time the other day?) it's not because of anything I learned from my choral experiences! From the ingenue baritone to the bloated old character bass (-baritone) I am now, there's never been any doubt who rescued me from a wrong turning and set my feet on the right and most productive track for me.

You also taught me how to teach, and there is a small body of us who continue to spread the word we received from you. Nice to think one is in the grand tradition stretching back to Mr Hislop and beyond. It is quite shocking how few teachers there are who seem to know anything at all about singing. I had one pupil go up to the Royal Northern. They fell on him at his audition, then spent the next two years taking his money off him just to mess him up again. He tried about six teachers there, all of whom seemed to be talking complete drivel, though of course I couldn't interfere while it was a going on.

I could wish I'd heard you sing more. Apart from the demonstrations in the lessons, you once sang Vissi d'arte at lunch at Graham's, and I heard a bit of your Fricka when Tony Shelley did Rheingold; but what sticks in my mind most is the Isolde (also with Shelley) you played me once at Chelsea. It was wonderful, Betty.

We've been missing you down here; not just the lessons, but your humour and conversation and telling observations on singers you've heard. It may be too much to hope for that we'd see you down here again (I hope not) but we so often think of you - every time we sing or teach in fact - with a smile, and with affection and gratitude for your generosity with your knowledge and resources; and we hope you are enjoying life up there and getting back what you deserve for all you give.

Hope to see you before too long,

Love,

Jeremy (and Julia) x

English bass Jeremy White made his Royal Opera debut in 1991 as Thoré (*Les Huguenots*) and has appeared in every Season since, his many roles including Hans Foltz (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Reinmar von Zweter (*Tannhäuser*), Old Servant (*Elektra*), Comte de Vaudemont (*Les Vêpres siciliennes*), First Apprentice (*Wozzeck*), One-Armed Brother (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), Marquis d'Obigny (*La traviata*), Sacristan (*Tosca*), Antonio (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Naval Captain (*Manon Lescaut*), Truffaldino (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Benoît (*La bohème*) and Daddy Hogan (*Anna Nicole*, world premiere).

White was born in Liverpool and sang as a choirboy in the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. He appeared on stage for the first time aged seven, as the second witch in *Dido and Aeneas*. He won a choral scholarship to Queen's College, Oxford, and upon graduating became a founding member of the Tallis Scholars and a member of The Sixteen, before spending several years as a BBC Singer. As an opera singer White has performed with such companies as La Scala, Milan, English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival, Dutch National Opera and the Metropolitan Opera, New York. He has also recorded extensively, his credits including *Israel in Egypt* with Andrew Parrott and *Paul Bunyan* with Richard Hickox. White is an instrumentalist and arranger of music. He is Chair of the Trustees for Spode Music Week.

JULIA WHITE

Dear Betty,

It was a wonderful surprise to have a long talk with you recently on the phone. You seem to have everybody organised up there! What a charming Scottish nurse you have - I had a chat with her too.

I have delightful memories of a few lessons in your studio in Loudoun Road - you said I had the tightest jaw you'd ever seen! Also, both Jeremy and I bit our nails and this was something singers shouldn't do! You usually slipped me a the ten pound note as I left (for the children) - how kind!

I haven't stopped singing, Betty, (seven children later...) I'm actually pretending to be an alto in October, an Elijah in the Abbey here in St. Albans. Graham's going to coach me I hope because Jeremy will be in Canada around that time - we usually end up having a row anyway when he teaches me (I can't bear his "Bossy" tone...). They say you shouldn't have driving lessons with your husband, don't they? Of course, he's a brilliant teacher!

I'd love to come and visit you sometime. Our youngest child is now twelve so it must be possible soon! Do please ring us anytime for a chat - I can tell you about my allotment!

We'd love to hear your voice.

Words to describe Betty:

Indomitable

Earthy (!)

Funny (sense of humour often linked to previous characteristic!)

Perceptive

Inspiring

and very generous - amongst many other things...

Thank you, Betty, for being you!

With love and gratitude,

Julia

PETER LONG

Dear Betty

I've just been looking through my old diaries and I believe we last met at a singing lesson in 1983! How time has flown. I am delighted that Graham asked me to contribute to the collection of memoirs for this weekend.

I remember the days at your studio with great fondness, whether it be having a singing lesson, playing the piano for other students' lessons, or merely listening to others whilst waiting my turn to sing. You always managed to create a related atmosphere where all these could be enjoyed.

Over the last twenty years I've sung for many professional groups in the UK and abroad, and for the last ten years have been Organist and Director of Music at St Clement Danes Church on the Strand, where I had previously sung tenor for eighteen years. Jeremy White and his son Laurence have both sung for me there as deputies, as have Richard Fallas and Richard Day-Lewis. I bump into Richard Fallas quite often, most recently on a London Voices trip to Berlin. On that occasion he and I had a great 'free day' out by taking a train to Leipzig, visiting Bach's church and museum. Allison Wells I also meet frequently on opera sessions. She also sang at my wedding.

(Family details deleted.)

Thank you Betty for all your help with my singing and for introducing me to many friends. You also introduced me to Lütgen! Those exercises are still a part of my life...I was using them the other day for pupils at Worth School.

I'll be thinking of you and Graham in Scotland this weekend.

Love and best wishes

Peter

JENNY ADAMS

24 April 03

Dear Betty,

Next year I celebrate 25 years as member of the BBC Singers. Can you believe that! It is thanks to you and some of the “attitude” that you imparted to me that I have been able to continue my career as a singer. “Just bloody do it” being one of my favourite self-motivating phrases! My first lessons were taken in St John’s Wood in that wonderful little studio where we all listened to each other’s lessons – that was a lesson in itself as you could see other people doing what you were said to be doing! There is a lot to be said for teaching as a group master class. Chelsea was something quite different and for me much much more intimate. I remember the secret cigarettes in the kitchen and the one glorious moment when you allowed me to try on one of your mink coats! I think you would even have given it to me if it had fitted!! Betty, your generous nature, vocal expertise and innate method of delivery will be enduring memories for me and I thank you for them. You will have no idea how I mourned your departing, I have not had a singing lesson since!!

(Here family information and information about a non-music BBC documentary is deleted.)

Take care.

Much love XXXXXXXXX

Jenny

IRIS DELL’ACQUA

22 April 2003

Dear Betty,

It has been a very long time since I last saw you, but you are often in my thoughts as I battle on with my pupils. I am lucky because I have quite a talented lot, but it still is a tiring and demanding job. I also do quite a bit of coaching, privately, and for Recording Companies, and I have been lucky to work with top singers at the height of their career.

I often think of you in that lovely room in Loudoun Road, where I greatly enjoyed singing. I vividly remember a performance of “Der Freischutz” with you as Agathe, and myself singing Ännchen, struggling to be heard when you and the tenor were going at it full pelt. And I have many more memories of you, your kindness and generosity, good humour and laughter. Those were happy times indeed.

(Personal and family information deleted.)

I wish you well, and I am delighted that Graham is coming to see you, bringing our thoughts and love.

I look forward to having news about you. Lots of love ad a big hug.

Iris

STEPHEN JACKSON

April 2003

Dearest Betty,

This is a brilliant idea of Graham and Debbie’s.

(Family information deleted.)

Betty, pretty well every BBC Symphony Chorus rehearsal since my first in 1989 has resounded to the strain of “ra from G (B-flat), “strong ee, soft ah,” “5ths and 9ths” and the rest. The few that haven’t have mostly been those presided over by Debbie (who I regard as God the Daughter). Unlike me, who remembers vividly what you did, Debbie actually *does* what you did (teach), so has moved on an inch or two. But it’s still the Old Time Religion for us all, and occasionally in private, to very special people, I will reveal where it all comes from. I remember too the

technical update you gave me in your Chelsea flat that time (Debbie was there too). “Make sure they open their mouths,” you said. Brilliant, because do you know, sometimes they don’t...

But my greatest inheritance from you was something you used to say, stolen since by a gym-shoe manufacturer and endlessly repeated by dear old Robin (God the Son) in broad cod-Fife: “JUST DO IT.” Betty, I’m trying. We all are. All of us who love you wish you happiness and long life and a well-earned rest after all your exertions that have left so many of us the better and the richer.

With all my love,

Stephen xx

PENELOPE WALMSLEY-CLARK

Hi Betty,

Well I think it’s great that Graham has had the idea of getting an album together from us all and my contribution comes with all the love in the world and I deeply regret the distance between us.

I thought that I would make you laugh by telling you that there are two strange things that always make me think of you. Do you remember one very cold winter’s day when we agreed that I would pick you up at Leigh and take you up to London for your teaching? The night before, we had a great snowstorm and some of the roads from my house in Sussex to you were blocked. You were snowed in at Leigh but we agreed that somehow or other we would meet in a motel on the Dorking Reigate Road.

I set out in my little red sporty two seater number (do you remember?) and got to the motel after battling with road blocks and goodness knows what but got there in good time nevertheless. You were not there. (This was before the ubiquitous mobile phone.) I sat patiently waiting expecting you to turn up in one of your posh cars, a Rolls or something. After some long time I stopped looking out and settled down to listen to the radio and didn’t take much notice of the large state-of-the-art tractor complete with glass cabin that turned up in the motel driveway. However, my jaw dropped when I saw the driver climb down and rush around to the passenger side to help down this gorgeous, immaculately dressed blonde complete with mink coat and, wait for it, THE HARROD’S BAG. Oh yes, you’ve

remembered, it was you and we had a good laugh about it all the way up to London. And so darling Betty I have to tell you that tractors and Harrod's bags always make me think of you.

(Family and other personal information deleted.)

...You are always in my thoughts and I have so many fond memories of the times we spent together, from the days when I used to come to Loudoun Road complete with baby in pram, to our time together in Marbella (do you remember the day we went to meet Frank (Cradoch) and got the wrong day? to say nothing of Mrs. Oliver and her son Bath? and remember when Alex (son) got sick at the Spanish hotel and I had to call the doctor?The next day I tried to reassure you that I was insured and you and your financial adviser John (Northcott) couldn't stop howling with ironic laughter.

Dear Betty I hope you enjoy this album and that it leaves you in no doubt as to how much you are loved.

All my love,

Penny

29 June 2015

I should be delighted to have my comments added to the book but I would like to add something more profound. Betty was entirely responsible for opening my voice and indeed for saving my singing career which, at the time I met her in around 1978 when I was in the BBC singers, was in danger of crumbling as I was very disillusioned with my voice. I remember at the time I first went to sing for her she listened most attentively to my singing and then said in her wonderfully flippant way, "Well there's good news and bad news.The good news is that you have a fine voice and the bad news is there is a lot of work to do."

So Betty gave me the fine basis for the bel canto and really I never looked back from the moment I met her. I remember her talking about the threads of the voice and how they should be even throughout the range, taking the voice with you throughout the full register which for a coloratura / spinto was particularly important as I had a big range from chest voice to head voice. But for the upper register for something like Queen of the night she taught how to drop the voice in favour of the hum which eventually I realised was what in Italian opera was the thread or fil di voce, which applied to the head voice of coloratura as well as lyric legato, and took one into that unearthly link of harmonics which was a wonderful discovery, and enabled a rock sure approach for legato and piano singing in the very high areas, putting the finishing touches to the bel canto.

I remember most vividly a highly personal experience at a time when life was rather bleak for me. We were working on Lucia di Lammermoor, the final mad scene, and just at the point when Lucia envisages taking her marriage vows, I think for the first time in my singing career I began to break down in tears, and was

about to stop when Betty bawled at me, "Don't you dare effing stop, sing through it, sing through it!" So I did and it was a revelation, all the emotion went into the voice and what more can I say.

Betty had a truly wonderful ability on the deepest imaginable spiritual level, and we had a wonderful relationship of great loving respect both as friends and as musical adventurers, but above all she was a teacher that had that ability to make you think, aha, now I've got it and then she would open the door on something even more profound. To this day I am sure there was still more she could have taught me.

PWC

PADDY HOOPER

24th May 2003

Dear Betty,

I came to you for singing lessons in my early forties (!) and it was the best thing I've ever done!!

It started me on a quest to dig deep and find my real voice and my true feelings about the Art of Singing. I was in the BBC Singers at the time, and you showed me how to become a soloist as well! I sang with the Monteverdi Choir, as a soloist and in the choir—lots of solo oratorio work with Richard Hickox—wonderful tours with the John Aldis Choir, etc. etc.

In the last ten years I have had a private teaching practice, and from this has developed a group of six singers, which I conduct in a variety of concerts, called The Queen's Singers. I enclose a photo which shows them and our pianist in the Greenwich Park, just before a concert in Blackheath Halls.

Hoping you will enjoy hearing about lots of your old friends, and you have a happy summer.

With love,

Paddy

BEVERLEA WILLS

7 April 2003

To dear Betty—

I was your first pupil, I believe. Thanks for setting me on the path!

Affectionately,

Beverlea

SIMON BUTTERISS

Dear Betty,

It was the glossary of your colourful descriptions of bad singing which William compiled on the inside cover of his *Arie Antiche* which persuaded me you were the teacher for me—singing lessons had never been that much fun before.

Thank you for not only for showing me how to explore technical solutions to opening up my recalcitrant top but also for keeping faith with me in the interim that I was a tenor and not the ‘b’ word that others whispered! Without that, I suspect I’d never have gone on to sing Ottavio, Ferrando, Lensky...Here’s a photo of William (Relton) as Tisbe and me as Clorinda in Rossini’s *CENERENTOLA* at the Vienna Festival. Much love, Betty and many thanks.

Simon now sings character tenor, baritone and bass roles. Operatic engagements have included La Scala, Milan, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, English National Opera, Oper Köln, Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Paris Chatelet, Barcelona Liceu, Aix-en-Provence, Muscat Royal Opera, Wiener Festwochen, Bregenzer Festspiele, Welsh National Opera, Aldeburgh Opera, Almeida Opera, Garsington Opera, Grange Park Opera, Opera Holland Park, London Contemporary Opera, BBC Proms.

RICHARD FALLAS

‘Richard,’ she cried. ‘You’re singing like an OLD BOOT!’

Well here I am with both boots full of water off the coast of Iceland supposedly looking at seabirds but you will understand that I was in fact practicing for the Flying Dutchman.

It's been 23 years since, thanks to you, I made my first effort in Leighton House, and, do you know, I'm still trying. Graham is the latest person to try to stop me sounding like an OLD BOOT, but there has been the odd person along the way that has wanted the O.B. to sing. I've even been employed at Covent Garden in the chorus and sung lots of Verdi and Wagner and heard wonderful people who didn't sing like O.B.s.

From time to time the O.B. gets to sing a solo and a couple of weeks ago I sang Dvorak's Stabat Mater with the wonderful Jenny Adams, and then I think her RA from C and my RA from G came in very useful.

(Family information deleted.)

Love and best wishes from us all,

Richard

CHRISTOPHER PAINTER

22 April 03

Hello Betty,

Graham very kindly let me know that he was getting in touch with you and that you would perhaps be interested in hearing from people like me who you influenced and helped so much as young singers. I'm sure a lot of water has flown under the bridge for both of us since we last saw each other, by my reckoning, 23 years ago. I would of course be delighted to hear from you.

I think when we last met I had just joined the chorus of Opera North. I left after two years and went back to London to teach English in a comprehensive school for three years which I loved before joining the Covent Garden chorus for six years which I also loved—although I know you're not supposed to admit things

like that. Although I was very happy my private life wasn't so successful at this time, I felt I needed a change so I thought I had better do something different. The Opera House were very supportive and gave me a scholarship to study at the National Opera Studio where I met a very good agent who introduced me to the German opera system. I guested in various houses in France, Italy and Germany and ended up as a house singer in a couple of houses here for several years before vocal problems made it necessary to stop singing.

This sound pretty dramatic but to be honest, I don't miss the business—I'm sure you know what I mean—the only thing I miss is not being able to sing well.

Needless to say, after all the encouragement you gave me, I really had to go ahead and give the singing a good chance. Such is life, I wasn't able to give it my undivided attention. But, on the other hand, maybe that's not such a bad thing. Like all really worthwhile things, it's given me immense joy, a lot of pain and remains something of an enigma. There have been times when I've loved it, times when I've hated it, times when it has been the centre of my existence and times when I've been extremely glad that it has never been the only thing in my life. Nevertheless, its importance and value has been undeniable. And following up the help you gave me is something I've never regretted—and it has been a hell of a lot of fun. Thank you and best wishes. Chris.

Born in London, Christopher Painter began his singing career under Jonathan Steele with the London Boy Singers, appearing at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, as a boy soprano, in 1968 in Frederick Ashton's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. He later joined the chorus of the Royal Opera House where he sang many small roles and covers including the Page in a recording of Menotti's 'Amahl and the Night Visitors'. He was awarded a scholarship by the Friends of Covent Garden to study at the National Opera Studio. This led to principle engagements in Montepulciano, Nancy, Ludwigshafen and house engagements as principle Bass in Kaiserslautern and Schwerin (Germany). Roles include: Sarastro, Oroveso, Crespel, Dulcamara, Bartolo, (Mozart) Bassilio, (Rossini) Mephistopheles, (Gounod) Ferrando (Verdi), Doktor (Wozzeck), Pogner and first Nazorene (Salome).

ELIZABETH LAURENCE

3rd April 2003

Very dear Betty,

(Personal information deleted.)

As for my career, I hope the curriculum vitae within may be explicit. From one recent audition at the Bastille Opera, I was fortunate enough to be offered five contracts. Robert Gilder (who believes me a “contralto” !!) is doing his best to keep me in work...I hope.

I am preparing a free recital for Graz, Austria where I had a terrible experience two years ago: I had been asked to replace another singer for “Bluebeard’s Castle” which I know, and “Erwartung” which I learned in three weeks. Inevitably, my voice lasted only three weeks (7 hours a day!!; no cover permitted). Anya Silya sailed in like a tall, white, smiling swan and sang all the “Erwartungs”. I suffered a lot from such aggressivity but am over that now. I did sing one concert version of English “Erwarung” later in Stuttgart and two American friends witnessed my efforts with amazement, I think!!! Anja Silja understood the task I was asked naively to face in Graz and knew that even she (with cords of steel: Mr Karl Böhm once described hers!) would never have envisaged such a feat; this must be the reason why Robert Gilder allows me now to sing mostly contralto roles. Of course there are millions of youngsters making their own ways, too. We try to keep fit and young and experienced!!

The photo enclosed was taken during rehearsals with Ulf Schirmer (who was at Graz during the “Erwartung Episode” and who told me my voice wasn’t poised enough in this difficult role) of “Frau ohne Schatten,” die Amme. Once again I was thrown in at the last moment for an ill colleague and then accused of being too ambitious (having worked very hard to memorize complicated, v. tiring moves; worked with my genius pianist Jay Gottlieb (American) practically daily, as all other pianists refused the music and never had time...) I went on with no help, even from a “souffleur”: prompt—I got through it and was told an older German colleague would be singing from the side of the stage while Ms (Jane) Henschel (who objected to my professionalism) mimed the role for the next two performances. Never mind! Better luck next time—in a smaller house or wherever!!. M. Hughes Gall was for me and M. Pål (Christian) Moe and Ulf Schimer were anti-me!! Thomas Moser was a kind, supportive colleague, who seemed to admire my work. Well we keep going just being ready for another opportunity and trying to keep small....!!

(Personal information deleted.)

I will never forget all the many many many kindnesses and the teaching you so generously gave me and your friendship.

I wish to continue singing (alimanted with some teaching of singing and English when necessary) God willing and to get to sing some fabulous Italian roles in the future. La Scala have given me cover roles of Mere Marie and Vielle Prieure Mme de Croissy (in *Dialogues des carmélites* by Poulenc) for 2004. Let's hope Maestro Muti may hear improvement since 2000 and encourage me forwards.

(Personal information deleted.)

I hope that you remind in the best of health and with the joy of spring in the Scottish countryside around you.

I send you blessings and graces galore for so many kindnesses and all your expressions of love—

Huge hugs and warmest love,

Elizabeth (Scott dite) Laurence

(b Harrogate, 22 Nov 1949). English mezzo-soprano. She studied at Trinity College, London. In 1986 she sang Mallika (*Lakmé*) at Monte Carlo, Jocasta (*Oedipus rex*) in Madrid and Nancy (*Albert Herring*) with Glyndebourne Touring Opera, for whom she created Anna Arild (Osborne's *Electrification of the Soviet Union*) in 1987. She also created Behemoth in Höller's *Der Meister und Margarita* at the Paris Opéra (1989).

DANNY ASSINATI

Dear Betty,

As you see, we've settled very happily here (Hemel Hempstead) and joined the local theatre group. The company has 5 productions every year playing to about 1,500 people per show—Lots of opportunities for me to sing.

I look back on those days in Loudoun Road as full of happy memories and with gratitude for your help at that time.

God bless you, Betty.

Love,

Danny Assinati

SIMON GAY

Hi Betty!

Greetings from your one and only countertenor...still warbling along at the Abbey—although I am getting type cast into singing more and more contemporary music—and how would the fifths and ninths help there! I hope you are flourishing—I remember fondly my treks to the studio in St John’s Wood—you were sufficiently rigorous to make me sort my technique out—for which a thousand thanks!

I trust that smoked salmon and the odd gin are still de rigeur in Scotland...

Love,

Simon

Simon Gay retired in 2013 after serving 30 years as countertenor lay vicar at Westminster Abbey. He recorded for Sony, Hyperion and Chandos records.

GARETH ROBERTS

(Photo)

Do you remember this face! A short update on what I am doing these days. I am still singing, but not as much—getting too old so they say. I am teaching a lot more. I have six students at the Royal Academy, on the music theatre course and I also teach at the City lit—adult education, plus twenty or so private students, which in all keep me off the streets. I am just about to start Lohengrin at the Garden, and I have a couple of proms in the summer as well as teaching on two summer schools. So there we are. I hope you are keeping well.

Fondest love—Gareth

CHARMIAN BLACKLER BOLLINGER

(Photo)

Dear Betty,

This is a photo taken at the Kirov Theater in Leningrad (as it then was) in 1990, that is, about half-way between now and when I last saw you in the 1970s. Since then, I have sung with various opera groups, on stage in various places including Holland Park and the lovely Minack Theatre in Cornwall, and in concert mainly with Chelsea Opera Group. I've joined the extra chorus for the Latvian and Moldovan national opera companies when they were performing in the Albert Hall (very memorable!) and always continued with singing lessons, so as to tackle things I would never get to perform publicly, like Strauss' Four Last Songs.

Now that I've retired as a psychologist, I'm kept busy by the Philharmonia Chorus, so far singing in the Festival Hall, the Albert Hall, the Barbican, in Cardiff, Birmingham and, next month, in Strasbourg. I was very amused when Debbie (Miles-Johnson) took a rehearsal and was giving us anecdotes about lessons with you!!!

With best wishes,

Charmian x

CELIA MARCHISIO

TO DEAR BETTY

Remembering all the good times so long ago, the laughter and all your kindness. We are now in Leatherhead. Good to be out of London.

We send you our love and prayers,

Celia and John

HILARY FINCH

Hello Betty,

I never pass through St John's Wood on the bus without thinking of those sun-filled Saturday morning (I'm convinced it was always sunny) when I'd set off for Boundary Road, walk through a beautiful courtyard and look forward to an hour or more of opening my lungs and stretching my larynx in the company of Betty!

In many ways, those Saturday morning moulded my life: I learned to breathe better, walk better, sit better and listen better! To say nothing of singing! I now miss that a great deal.

You always said I'd have to make up my mind if I was going to DO it, or WRITE about it! Well, I chose the latter, and it's probably no bad thing. And so much of what you taught me returns to my thinking as I listen to singers and write about them, as it enriches my understanding all the time.

I am thinking of you, dear Betty, in Perth, as I now listen to the birds sing on this beautiful spring morning in Barnes where I now live I send you much love, and remember our times together with much gratitude.

Hilary Finch

Hilary Finch was a music critic for The Times in London for thirty-five years. She also wrote articles for Opera News and many other publications.

TIM HARDY

Dear Betty,

I remember with such pleasure my classes with you. They were unique in my experience, for they were the only time I had to sing in front of all the other pupils. For an actor—as opposed to a proper singer—this was a first daunting, but I came to learn so much, gained so much from the companionship and mutual support you always engendered.

I've gone on to do much singing—musicals, of course, but best of all six operas with a company called Music Theater London, which employed actors who can sing and singers who can act. Magic Flute, Figaro, Don Giovanni, Cenerentola, La Traviata. I would never have been able even to consider such work without the knowledge and understanding which you set in motion.

(Personal information deleted.)

Betty, you introduced me to the discipline and demands of singing as no one else had done, and your classes were full of fun and shared achievement. Angela and I still remember that “Life should be lived on the core,” and look back on your classes with much affection and some pride at what you drew out of us.

I send you much love and many thanks.

Tim.

Tim Hardy trained at R.A.D.A and has been a member of the freelance faculty for 21 years. He performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company productions of *Marat/Sade* and *Henry V* directed by Peter Brook that transferred to Broadway. Other London work included roles at the Royal Court Theater, Old Vic and Peter Hall's production at Wyndham's Theater of *Lysistrada* that played the Herrod Atticus Theater, Athens. He played Perchick in *Fiddler on the Roof* at Her Majesty's Theater, Joe Makewitz in *Judy* at the Strand Theater. His operatic roles with Music Theater London included Sarastro (*Magic Flute*), Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) Bartolo (*Marriage of Figaro*) and Don Magnifico (*Cenerentola*). He has appeared in films, too, including *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, *The Duellist*, *Nothing But the Best*, and *The Marat/Sade*. He has directed *Rebecca* and *Liaisons Dangereuse* for the Vienna English Theater, *Gaslight* for the Frankfurt English Theater, *Romeo and Juliet* for Butler University, Indianapolis, *As You Like It* for the University of Notre Dame, and *The Merchant of Venice* for Illinois Wesleyan University.

ANGELA DOWN

Dear Betty,

A year or two ago, well, maybe rather more than that, I used to come with Tim Hardy to his singing lessons in St. John's Wood. They were huge fun, so much so you gave me a few lessons as well. I remember staggering through "Voi che sapete" and "Caro mio ben," not very well it has to be said. And being rather sorry that "Caro mio ben" didn't translate as "my dear Ben!"

Anyway, realising I probably didn't have much of a singing career ahead of me, I didn't pursue it. However, about five years ago, a marvelous singing teacher was recommended to me, Chris Littlewood, and I started having lessons again. He emigrated. I don't think teaching me and emigrating were connected. I don't think. But for the last year, I've been having lessons with Ian Adam and I love it.

Now, although I'm never going to be Cecilia Bartoli, I have discovered the joy of finding a voice and being able to sing a bit, and really that can all be traced back to St Jon's Wood, so thank you, Betty.

I wish you all the very best,

With love,

Angela Down

DONALD MAXWELL

Betty

‘Years have rolled on’—not that we’re exactly like Lochnagar, but it is hard to credit that my trips from Scotland to St John’s Wood were some 25 years ago. I look back with affection on these all too infrequent visits and on my attempts to develop with you the principles that Joss had taught us. Those principles must have worked! A bit to my surprise, I confess, I’m still paid to sing, and now have the pleasure (and it is a pleasure) if instilling the same ideas in the next generation of singers.

It is a quirk of geographical fate that now you are in Perth where I spent so much of my early life, while I of course, have followed the trail of many Scots to the south. I do ‘sigh for the landscapes of dark Lochnagar’ so hopefully we can meet ere long on our native heath and discuss Busoni’s Turandot—yes, I was there!

Love and all good wishes,

Donald

Donald Maxwell was born in Perth, Scotland in 1948 and graduated in geography from Edinburgh University. He studied singing with Joseph Hislop. Donald Maxwell has appeared with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera, Opera Holland Park, Opera London, Chelsea Opera Group New Sadler’s Wells Opera, the Glyndebourne, Edinburgh, Wexford, Buxton, Camden and Chester Festivals and the BBC Proms. Foreign engagements have included performances at the Metropolitan Opera New York, Teatro alla Scala Milan, the Vienna Staatsoper, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Houston, Buenos Aires, Macao, Japan, Cyprus and Athens in a repertoire including the title roles in *Falstaff*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Rigoletto*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Don Pasquale*, and *Wozzeck*.

SEBASTIAN LOEW

Dear Betty,

Reminiscing about the years I studied with you are many; they are amusing, interesting, stimulating and sometimes dramatic, of course, how could they not!

One image in particular stays with me: the studio in South Kensington on Saturday afternoon! I would arrive for a one-hour lesson at the appointed time. There were two, three or four other pupils already there either waiting for their lesson or

having had one, just listening to other pupils. The first time I went there I could not understand what was going on, I wasn't even sure I understood that Scottish accent! Then it became addictive. It was not just a singing lesson but a sort of event where we all learnt from Betty; from Sandra, from each other. And we heard about other singers, or gossiped. We made new acquaintances and friends. We sang in turns, depending on Betty's mood. Sometimes, though not often, there were fairly dramatic scenes, arguments, even tears. You never knew whether it was time to go or not. It was a great formative experience.

To my great surprise and eternal gratitude, you announced one day that you had decided to organise and pay for a concert at Leighton House for Veronica Grange—another of her (your) pupils—and myself, with faithful Sandra accompanying us. I had not been studying with you for that long and I was amazed at your confidence in us and your generosity. It was my first recital in London and the first time I worked with Veronica.

From then onwards we sang together many times through a group that Veronica led, Intermezzi Opera. We had great times, fun times and some disasters, all of them worthwhile, and all of them thanks to you!

Sebastian Loew
April 2003

JEAN AND WILLIAM MASON

23rd April 2003

Dear Betty,

Two more voices from the past for you, and if the technology works, two photos to flesh them out a little. When Graham told me about his labour of love for you, and that he was going to visit you in Scotland in May, we decided we must contribute something. My last memory of you is over a delightful lunch to which you invited me in Granada, having bumped into each other in the Alhambra about 1989.

Well, I am still in the same job—as a principal bass at the opera house in Linz—but I've added a few others over the years. I've been teaching singing at the

Bruckner Conservatory (which becomes the Bruckner University in September) since 1992, and in 1996 Jean and I founded a Baroque opera company which has brought out one production a year ever since, winning prizes and earning glowing reviews. Jean (who gave up singing to become Upper Austria's most sought-after English teacher) is in charge of the administration, I conduct, and Henry, our elder son who is now 28, is the stage director. This year we had difficulty finding a bass of the right type and age for the King in Handel's Ariodante, so for the first time I shall be singing as well as conducting! You can find out all about it by visiting our WEBSITE! www.operadacamera.at

(Family information deleted.)

Dear Betty, Jean and I both have many happy memories of you, and above all of your expert and stimulating teaching. I have been rediscovering many of your maxims in the last few years with my own pupils. One evening which you shared with us sticks in my memory (and not much does nowadays, unfortunately). Jean and I sang the Eva/Hans Sachs scene from the 2nd act of Meistersinger somewhere near Kensington High Street—God knows when it was—in the middle 70s I suppose—but I remember what an enormous pleasure it was to work with you on that wonderful music. Needless to say neither of us ever sang those roles, though I have managed a few Gurnemanzes and Dalands, not to mention endless Sarastros and Osmins. This season in Linz is my second Cosi, and another shot at Don Alfonso, so I'm still getting a few decent things to sing. We send you our love and wish you many happy years and man dear friends. Thank you for enriching our lives.

PHILIP O'REILLY

Dear Betty,

Thinking of something to write for you has conjured up all sorts of lovely memories.

I can remember catching the 7:05 train from Colchester often hung over to make it for a 10 am lesson with you! (Don't touch the stuff now of course!) Then I recall that wonderful studio where you taught; the comfy sofa, Robin's great playing, Alison's great legs, Graham twitching his eyebrows when singing Il Balen and you whispering to me "perhaps he's a bass baritone." Jerry and Donny Maxwell lifting the roof.

Above all I remember your skill, your kindness, your wonderful infectious laughter, and your encouragement.

For my sins I now enjoy teaching in Dublin, and I hope I have learned from your enthusiasm to encourage my students to believe that working to realize their talent, of whatever strength, will enrich their lives. You certainly have done that to mine.

In spite of the nuisance of nature trying to tell youth slow down, I wish you undiminished enjoyment of life all your days.

Love,

Philip O'Reilly

DEBORAH MILES-JOHNSON

Dear Betty,

I must have been one of your last pupils in London (1993 I think) and I so enjoyed coming to your flat in Chelsea. I had just left the BBC Singers and this was the beginning of my new solo career—I hoped!

All went well to begin with, you loved my head voice but after my rendition of “O Rest in the Lord” you told me it was “very nice but very boring!” This was a lesson I learnt well and a story I tell often to other aspiring soloists who have sung in choirs too long!! I learnt an enormous amount from you in only a few months and I subsequently continue with the help of my friend Graham (Titus) and Jeremy (White) who passed on the gospel.

I'd left it rather late to begin a solo career but I haven't done too badly, always managing to earn my career as a singer. I do mainly concerts and a lot of contemporary work together with various sessions. I teach from home quite a lot with all my pupils singing your exercises and studying Lütgen. I am also the Assistant Chorus master for the Philharmonia Chorus as well as helping out with the BBC Symphony Chorus. These large amateur choirs always need a warm-up and so I use your exercises which are invaluable! Can you imagine “Ra from G” or “Eeeee ah ee ah” as sung by 150 people....

Finally I have to say that I feel I'm singing as well as ever—the voice has stood up to regular singing over the past 10 years which is all thanks to you!

With all good wishes, much love,

Debbie

PAULINE WALDEN

Saturdays in Betty's studio in Brompton Road—in the good old days when parking was not the problem it is now. I'm sure that many contributors will have happy memories of times spent there. I will never forget my first visit, being slightly in awe, not only of Betty but also of the many fine voices that I had the privilege of hearing. I will always remember with gratitude the tireless effort and dedication that Betty brought to those sessions; the excitement, fun and constant amazement at finding one's voice. Betty had a way of drawing out abilities never before dreamed of.

One particular Saturday I shall never forget. Often, a group of us would adjourn to the local prior to sharing an evening meal. This Saturday was different—Betty had engineered a meeting between Ninian Walden and myself out of the conviction (well founded as it turned out) that we were made for each other. We all enjoyed an hilarious evening which, on reflection, was the beginning of the happiest years of my life. Ninian and I subsequently married, but sadly he died in October of 1998. I feel sure that he would want to contribute to these memoirs as much of his singing life in England was shared with Betty. I had the pleasure and privilege of hearing several of their performances together and quickly recognised the great talent they shared.

Over the years, Betty became a close and valued friend. Often, on my way home to Harpenden after a weekend with Ninian, I would have breakfast with Betty in her flat in Ovington Square, where the lift finished its upward journey in the sitting room. These were treasured moments as were many other times we spent together. When Ninian and I bought our house in Camden, Betty sometimes spent weekends with us, which were always enjoyable and above all, fun. Betty is a fun person, kind, generous and very, very gifted.

Thanks you, Betty, for all you have given to me and most of all thank you for that magical Saturday evening, in the local in Brompton Road.

With love and fond memories,

Pauline Walden

Ninian Walden was a dramatic tenor who often sang in Abbey Opera productions with Betty Fleming. When he wasn't singing, he was a dentist who practiced in Harley Street, London.

CAROL BARLOW-DAVIES

For Betty April 2003

I'm so happy to contribute to your book. I have very happy memories of our lessons together with Robin (alas too few). I am well and happy living in Wales after retiring from Netherlands Opera and still use some of your exercises! I'm sorry to hear you are not so well—I do hope you feel better soon.

With love,

Carol

Now Mrs Wyntoun Bailey, Carol started her singing career with the Welsh National Opera, and after nine years there, joined the chorus of the Netherlands Opera. She retired in 2002 after twenty-five years, working with such conductors as Boulez and Rattle. She still sings (2016) with the BBC National Chorus of Wales.

CLARE ALEXANDER

Dear Betty,

I am so pleased to have this opportunity of wishing you a very Happy Birthday! What a wonderful idea of Graham's to put this all together! I remember you with great fondness, and although I only studied with you for a short time, you were the most inspiring and dedicated teacher I have ever had. You said of me once "there's a good core in the voice—there's an Amneris in there," and although I wasn't quite sure who Amneris was at that stage, I really felt you believed in me! I joined the BBC Singers full time for three years, then went out to Australia and was in the Australian Opera for two years, where I had a wonderful time working with Richard Bonyngé and Dame Joan Sutherland and many other great stars.

I have never forgotten your great enthusiasm and encouragement, and feel very lucky to have been able to study with you.

I send you my fondest love and good wishes,

Clare x

RICHARD DAY-LEWIS

Dear Betty,

I am so happy that Graham managed to find me—in France!

Betty, you were the person who rescued my voice in my late 30's and enabled me to continue singing—for ever I hope!! I've had such fun as a singer, traveling, eating and working with talented and amusing colleagues, and I remember the fun we had in your studio, we seemed either to be laughing or you were being very cross with me, accepting no excuses for lazy singing!

(Personal information deleted.)

Now I am in touch with Graham, perhaps he'll let me know how you are and where you are, and perhaps later this year I could come and see you?

With lots of love, and many thanks for your patience

from

Richard

xx and a big hug

JANE EMMANUEL AND TIM FARRELL

Dear Betty,

A big hi from “the kids.”

We're both well and working stupidly hard, Jane with teaching and Tim with Synagogue, teaching and crematorium. We've now been together for over nine years and it's down to you! And of course Jane coming to see you at all was down to David Stratton who is now living in France. We're think of you and send lots of love from

Jane and Tim x

PS You can be sure that Jane doesn't sing like a sparrow now—you caught me out there.

ATHOLE STILL

12 April 2003

Dear Betty,

Here I am in our conservatory on a Saturday morning working as usual. No, not booking artists—phoning the bookie! (Note the racing colors under the phone.)

I hope you are keeping well and still able to produce some real Wagnerian notes off that impressive chest of yours!

My voice is in splendid shape and I am undoubtedly the first tenor in Dulwich Village—on a good day! They still rave about my last performance in Turandot. It is not often that the Emperor Altoum steals the show!

I hope to see you soon.

Love,

Athole

Athole Still is president of Athole Still International Ltd, a music agency.

BRINDLEY SHERRATT

Well, Betty,

I am so glad to have this chance to say something to you! You were the first real singing teacher I and Chris had despite the fact that we had just spent five years at music college!

I loved the way that you were so honest with me about the sounds I made, sometimes just passable, sometimes just “bloody boring.”

Do you remember inviting Christina and myself to the house in Leigh? You let me have a drive of your new BMW in thick fog. Thankfully we all survived and after that I was forever spoiled when it comes to driving cars.

I finally managed to escape from the Beeb a few years ago and although the learning curve is pretty steep it seems to be going quite well now (I have sung a couple of roles at the opera house and will be for the next three seasons and also the Coli and I’m off to the States next year for a couple of roles). If my voice has managed to survive well this far most of the credit should go to you for giving such a firm foundation. Thank you.

I used to love coming over to your apartment and making myself a cup of tea (with expensive biscuits of course) whilst you put Jenny or Jeremy through their paces, I learned so much. You also did more than teach me singing. You took a real interest in me/us and took great care of us, making us feel so much at home.

I really hope that you have a nice few days with Debbie and Graham and that this will not be the last time I write to you.

Thank you Betty.

Much love,

Brin and Christina

Highlights in Brindley Sherratt's 2016/17 season include Oroveso in a new production of *Norma* and Timur *Turandot* at Covent Garden; Claggart in a new production of *Billy Budd* for the Teatro Real in Madrid; Marke *Tristan und Isolde* for the Teatro Nacional de Sao Carlos in Lisbon; Geronte de Revoir *Manon Lescaut* for the Metropolitan Opera and his role debut as Ochs in a new production of *Der Rosenkavalier* for the Welsh National Opera.

Notable career highlights include Sarastro *Die Zauberflöte* at the Vienna State Opera, the Netherlands Opera and at Covent Garden; Claggart at the Glyndebourne Festival, the BBC Proms and in New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music; Arkel *Pelléas et Mélisande* for the Opernhaus Zurich; Sparafucile *Rigoletto* at Covent Garden, Rocco *Fidelio* at the Glyndebourne Festival; Bottom *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence; Doctor *Wozzeck* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago;

Balducci *Benvenuto Cellini* at the Salzburg Festival; Pogner *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg* for the Welsh National Opera and at the BBC Proms; Filippo *Don Carlo* for Opera North and Pimen *Boris Godunov* and Fiesco *Simon Boccanegra* at the English National Opera.

VERONICA GRANGE

Betty's Book.

This is a wonderful idea! So here is my house (a bit of it! and a bit of the garden in the spring.) I can teach here and rehearse some shows with the students...we can get about 60 people in to watch. They are always a great success. We have invited guests who come to do recitals also! "Une Edition Mangné" We did it when I lived in London also!

Here I am as the "sorceress" in Dido and Aeneas taking a curtain call. I did the production. It was very good I must say!

Ever grateful for Everything you taught me. So you can see I am keeping "Betty torch" alight in this part of the world. But I couldn't have done it without your wonderful guiding light!!

Veronica xxx

WILLIAM RELTON

My dear, dear, dear, Betty,

How can I possibly thank you for all the help and support you gave me all those years ago. You taught me so much and were so generous with your time and abilities. What I learnt from you has been invaluable for most of my working life, not just singing, but your approach to teaching, encouraging and giving information and guidance.

My life is fairly different from the days back in the studio in St. John's Wood. I carried on acting and singing until the early 90s. I finally got to do "Candide" at the Edinburgh Festival in 1981, six years after I first got the part and came to you. I did lots more musicals, West Side Story, Call Me Madam, etc. in London and elsewhere and also did HMS Pinafore and The Gondoliers. I did a lot of straight acting as well, including Hamlet. I even did some opera. I played the lead in a

terrible Haydn opera at Morley in 1990, and in 1991 I joined a company called Music Theatre London, a company that performed operas with actors who sang well, not regular opera singers. We went to the Vienna Festival that year and I sang Don Ottavio and Basilio in Figaro. It was thrilling and terrifying and wonderful and one of the best things I ever did.

We went back to Vienna the following year and Simon Butteriss and I sang the sisters in Rossini's Cenerentola! Of course we were absolutely marvelous! By that time I had taken over the running of the company and was producing tours of our work both in the UK and Europe. A marvelous time.

In 1993 we were doing *Così*. This was the first opera that I wasn't going to be in, and I settled down to what I thought would be a six month stint planning the future of the company behind my desk. However, our director became very ill after the first week of rehearsals and had to withdraw from the production. We spent a very worried four days thinking of who might take over. Everybody who we thought was suitable for the company was unavailable. I woke up the next day and realized that I had to do it. I had never directed in my life before, I had never wanted to, but somebody had to do it. I took over the next day and after half an hour I realised that this was what I really wanted to do. I loved it.

Since then I have been working exclusively as a director. I have done the usual assistant directing stints at Opera North, ENO, Wexford, and Orange. I have directed for l'Opera de Nice, revivals of Barber for ENO, plus many of the smaller companies in the UK. I work a lot with students in particular at RAM, RSAMD and the Opera Academy in Copenhagen. I'm at the RSAMD at the moment doing *Alcina*, in November I am doing *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the opera house in Copenhagen, and I have just been invited back to the Vadstena Festival in Sweden. Things are going very well and I love it.

One of the things I always use in my rehearsals is a great deal of humour. That was something you taught me about. God you made us laugh! You may remember I kept a list of your best epithets in my *Arie Antiche* book. I dug it out the other day and here is the list as written down during your lessons.

These are best appreciated when spoken out loud in a brisk Scottish accent preceded by the phrase "Och, you sound like..."

A bit of old washing
A screwed up nanny goat

A bent legged sparrow
 A poodle
 A fox terrier
 A constipated carrot
 A bowl of porridge
 A dry bone
 A drunken butcher
 Soggy like an old milk maid
 A resonant parrot
 An old boot
 A bit of cotton wool
 A duck dying
 A Japanese washing board
 A drunken sailor
 (and the all time favourite) like Frank Sinatra in a gondola

The list is preserved on the front page of my book for all to see.

Bless you Betty for what you did for me and for who are are.

I send you deep gratitude and lots and lots of love.

William Relton's recent engagements include directing new productions of *Rinaldo* for Estonian National Opera, Tallinn, and Verdi's *Otello* for Opera på Skäret in Sweden. He also returned to Frankfurt Opera for further performances as the **Haushofmeister** in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

On the operatic stage, his roles have included Mozart's **Don Ottavio** *Don Giovanni*, **Basilio** *Le nozze di Figaro* and **Ferrando** *Così fan tutte* as well as **Tisbe** in Rossini's *La cenerentola*. He has recently played the **Haushofmeister** in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Glyndebourne Festival and the Frankfurt Opera.

DAVID BARRELL

Dear Betty,

It's such a great pleasure to be able to contact you again after all these years! I'm sure it's no coincidence that for the past few months I've been driving past the old studio in St. Johns Wood twice a week on my way to visit someone. It wasn't until about the third time that I realized which road I was in, and then how the memories came flooding back!! I still remember that first lesson, when I arrived with a voice of about an octave, and left with one with three! no messing around- just get up there and sing!!

Well, it was largely due to you that I became know as “the baritone with the high notes,” and the work started coming in. But I always was greedy for more, so having had a career as a baritone that took me not only to all the British companies, but as far afield as Rio and Tokyo, I have now embarked on a NEW career as a tenor!! Well, the voice seemed to want to go there, so who am I to say no!! I made my debut in Bermuda of all places, two years ago, as Don Jose, and have not looked back since. Things are starting to take off again and I have appeared with Scottish Opera, WNO, ENO and last summer at Glyndebourne. It’s a bit like being 25 again (only with just a few more grey hairs...)!!! I don't think I’ve changed THAT much, have I?... I do quite a bit of private teaching myself now (when jobs permit) and really love it.

As I said, Betty, I owe so much to you - not only the top notes, but the skill and enthusiasm that you communicated so easily. You guided me along the path, and gave me the desire to sing professionally - something I shall be forever grateful for.

With fondest love,

Baz xx

p.s. I still have my book of Lütgen.

p.p.s. I think the memory that most sticks in my mind is sitting in the studio with you one day listening to a girl who had brought a very large dog with her. I seem to recall he lay under the grand piano with his paws over his ears for most of the lesson...Happy days!!

David Barrell sang as a baritone, later as a tenor, in principal roles with The Royal Opera House, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Scottish Opera, The Glydenbourne Festival, Maggio Musicale Florence, Edinburgh Festival BBC Proms, and the opera houses in Nice, Modena, Turin, Madrid, Tokyo and Rio De Janeiro. He has also appeared as a soloist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, The Philharmonia, The Royyal Philharmonic Orchestra, The Nash Ensemble, The London Sinfonietta.

JOHN FLOWER

Dear Betty,

Graham Titus telephoned me a while ago and asked me to contribute a piece on where and how I was. I have trying to get a suitable photo of us and I hope this, taken recently in the jungles of Northern Thailand, may amuse!

My last bit of serious singing was in October 1984 with Mary's Abbey Opera when she took 16 singers and 16 players to Brittany to perform Purcell's King Arthur. Great fun and great success. Then in late 1985 the 90-acre farm nearly adjacent to my Welsh cottage came on the market so I decided to swap my Islington life for the Welsh Farmer here. (I had been a farmers' boy (in the ...) when my brothers were 'farmed out' during school holidays from our boarding school in Crewkerne Somerset and the interest happily stuck). The farm was virtually derelict when I bought it and had not been openly farmed for some 30 years - so it was a real challenge to get the house, farm and buildings up and running while living in my cottage.

(An extensive very interesting travelogue is deleted.)

Now back in the lovely Welsh countryside... We send our very best wishes to you and I remember our lessons with gratitude.

John

MIKE PEARCE

(Family and other personal news deleted.)

Mike's singing is now focused on concerts and teaching rather than opera but he misses treading the boards! For the second year running he sang Handel's Messiah at the Royal Albert Hall on Good Friday, and sings Gerontius in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh very soon.

Memories of Betty and her lessons

1. Unique piano playing!
2. Lots of useful exercises - still being practised, but not as regularly as they should be!
3. Long chats over cups of coffee and biscuits on the balcony overlooking the river.
4. An Oxford concert sponsored by Betty, memorable mainly for a certain tenor's difficulty with his trousers - they were his son's, not his, and his son was a much slimmer man!
5. Lots of generous gestures, including some lovely restaurant meals.

6. Much kindness and encouragement.

Wish you every good wish - with much love from Ann and Mike.

MYRON MYERS

19 April 2003

Dear Betty,

How happy I am that Graham has provided an opportunity to thank you for your wonderful teaching. There is not a day that passes in my studio without a reference to you, either in the form of an anecdote (and what anecdotes!) or in the use of your vocalises.

For some unknown reason, college-age singers aren't supposed to sound mature, but when they do as I ask them - based on your ideas - the large luminous sounds spark controversies amongst colleagues at both universities. On one hand, the teachers who have sung in opera houses all over the world have no troubles at all with young spinto tenors trying Canio at the age of 24. The others, with only recital experiences, think that the voices must be forced because the sound is "too mature." I need not add that the students themselves love the sounds they make when their "resonances are liberated." On behalf of the hundreds of students who have progressed from your ideas, I thank you.

When I walked through the door of your studio in St. John's Wood in the autumn of 1979, I was thankful that your analysis of my problems was free from the bullshit I had been handed by The Best Teachers In Los Angeles. Even though the ensuing months were not without their struggles, and I left London not fully understanding - or not willing to fully understand - what you were saying, nevertheless, your prescription for vocal progress resulted in my being hired for hundreds of performances, however unimportant now.

The years of traveling around took a toll on my voice - years of irritatingly stupid conductors, stage directors and agents - and on my emotional well-being. There were too few satisfying musical experiences and the scene in New York and Chicago left me feeling beat up. Add to this the birth of Fiona when I was a 45

(Jane was 40) and fatigue enters the picture. I knew that I couldn't continue forever.

The end came sooner than I had really expected, and it came in spades.

The occasion was a Barber of Seville concert with Raymond Leppard and the Indianapolis Symphony in 1995. I had an inkling that things had deteriorated pretty badly when I made my entrance as Basilio, looked out at the audience and thought "I hate you all. You can fuck off!"

A pathetic, dry, lifeless wheeze assaulted my listeners, and, as you can readily imagine, they hated me right back. The applause was underwhelming, the administration snide, the conductor rude, and the reviews terrible.

When I got home, I realized I was emotionally burnt out and in deep vocal trouble. I broke out the notes I had taken in your studio in 1979-80, turned on my tape recorder and set to work. It took almost three years.

When my voice returned, it was darker and a little louder and higher, making some of the repertory with which I had previously struggled, Beethoven 9, Brahms Requiem, much easier. Because I was also calmer, my voice was more relaxed, but for the first time I really understood some of the things you had said. Too bad I hadn't sung that well in New York those years before! By then (1997) I had abandoned the agents and all but a handful of sympathetic conductors.

The strange thing was that those conductors still hired me, and still do. Life is not necessarily over at 55! I will sing a tour of Germany this summer in Brahms Requiem.

Over the last seven years, I have written a fictionalized account of my life call "Throat Culture." You, as the character Victoria Norman, have a central role in the London chapter. I will send you a copy of the manuscript when it is finished.

Fiona is ten, insists she hates music and singing, but still managed to sit all the way through Die Walküre without complaint. She says it is because during Brünhilde's To jo to ho, the dancers were jumping on trampolines (yes, one of *those* productions) and also because she was fascinated by the imposing physique of Jane Eaglen, especially when she turned sideways, but I wonder...

It all comes back to you, Betty, and the enormous debt I owe you for having saved my voice twice.

Love,

Myron

Appendix IV

Roles with Abbey Opera, London Recorded Examples

The following list was supplied by Mary Hill (Royal Academy of Music, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London) in an email to the author dated 9 November 2008. She said in it, “I have, as I said, known Betty for years and years and have kept in touch constantly. I was very close to her singing partner in Abbey opera, Ninian Waldon, and worked with the two of them on everything from Wagner downwards. (Ninian Waldon was a dentist and tenor from New Zealand who practiced in Harley Street, London, and studied with Betty. MM) I cast her in a multitude of operas, but must just say here that she did very few actual roles, mostly excerpts for concerts. She was not singing in Abbey Opera for long after we started doing the bigger pieces with my then husband, Antony Shelley, conducting. All the huge repertoire from around 1977 onwards was cast without either of them, so it is really on the early days of my opera company that relates to them. The link later was Betty’s teaching, which was prolific.”

- 1968 The whole of *Aida* for a concert in the British Council hall, with Ninian Walden as Radames.
- 1969 Senta from *The Flying Dutchman* (scene only).
- 1970 Isolde in the duet only from *Tristan und Isolde* with Ninian.
Lady Macbeth, the aria only from *Macbeth* by Verdi with orchestra.
- 1971 The whole of Rachel from *La Juive* by Halevy with orchestra. Two venues.
The final duet from *Die Walküre* again with Ninian.
- 1972 A finale from *Anna Bolena* with Betty as Anna.
- 1973 Duet from *Turandot* (Puccini) with Ninian.
- 1974 The whole of the role of Agathe from *Der Freischütz* with the London Youth Orchestra.
- 1975 Reiza in the quartet from Weber’s *Oberon*.
Selika in a scene from *L’Africaine* and Valentine in the duet from *Les Huguenots* both by Meyerbeer.
Gioconda in the duet for Laura and Gioconda by Ponchielli
- 1976 Wellgunde in the final scene of *Das Rheingold* with orchestra (Wagner Society).
The whole role of Lady Billows in a production of *Albert Herring*, Cockpit Theater

- with orchestra.
- 1977 The quartet from *La Forza del Destino* by Verdi.
The whole role of Second Prioress in a production of *Les Dialogues des Carmelites* by Poulenc, Cockpit Theater.
Elisabetta in the duet from *Maria Stuarda* by Donizetti.
- 1978 Kostelnicka from a scene from *Jenufa* by Janacek.
The role of Turandot in a production of *Turandot* by Busoni, director Steven Pimlott.
- 1979 The entire role of Fricka in a concert performance with orchestra of *Das Rheingold*.
- 1980 Brunnhilde in a scene from *Die Walküre*.

Two excerpts (mp3 files) to be inserted here. The Lady Macbeth aria mentioned above from 1970, and bits and pieces from a recording made in 1975 of a live performance with Pisa Opera Group, London, of Massenet's *La Mage*.

APPENDIX V

Gordon Biggs (1905 – 1988) by Alister Palmer

Gordon was born at 671 High Road, Tottenham, London, England on **8th November 1905**.

He was the fourth child of seven born to **Bertram Biggs** and **Winifred Jane Witham**. Gordon's birth certificate shows his father Bertram as a brewer's stock-taker and ganger but in later years became an accountant.

Gordon's grandfather, Bertram's father was **George Richard Biggs** (a warehouseman and stationer's assistant) who married **Amelia Noakes**. She was tragically run over and killed by a car in Peckham Road in 1906, a year after Gordon's birth.

Gordon's mother was the daughter of **Walter Witham and Winifred Caldwell** and granddaughter of **James Witham and Jane Rodgerson**. James developed the family butcher business in central London, and all three sons were employed in the trade. Two sons, James Alexander and William Witham emigrated to Australia in the mid 19th century and established butchers businesses there.

Winifred's father and youngest of the brothers, Walter Witham, remained in England and developed his business south of the River Thames. James Alexander Witham married Georgina Moorhead from Ireland and they had 5 children including **Jane Rodgerson Witham**, born in California Gully, Victoria in 1866 and who married **Robert Haldane Carson Graham**. They had two children **Ian** who lived in New York and **Grace** who

married **Robert Nelson**. Grace and Robert Nelson had 4 sons, one of whom was **Havelock Nelson**, who gained degrees in music and medical science and who pursued a scientific career until, in 1947, he joined the BBC in Belfast as resident accompanist, conductor and broadcaster.

Havelock and Gordon were third cousins and a strong friendship developed between them and their families. Gordon took a keen interest in Havelock's work as conductor, musician and composer. Havelock was to influence many a budding musician including the flautist James Gallway.

Gordon's sibling were:

Cecil Bertram Noakes Biggs (August 1899 – January 1918) served on the HMS Renown as a seaman in the Royal Navy and sadly died in 1918 in an accident during target practice.

Millicent Winifred Biggs (known as Millie, Oct 1900 – Apr 1984) married **Dr Ernest Archibald Lewis** and they had three sons – Peter, Ian and David, two of them doctors. David who emigrated to Canada. They lived near Portsmouth where Ernest had his medical practice.

Galdys May Biggs (Feb 1903 – May 1967) never married and trained as a nurse. She served as a nurse in the forces during the war and post war established and ran a private nursing home in Buckland, Portsmouth. She died in Portsmouth aged 64.

Marjory Adrienne Noakes Biggs (July 1907 – November 1998) was a legal secretary prior to marriage and worked in London for Barry Milne the brother of author AA Milne. Marjory married architect Reginald Thomas Palmer and had two sons John and Alister and a daughter Susan. They emigrated to Australia in 1948 and eventually settled in Hobart Tasmania.

Stanley Walter Biggs (July 1910 – Feb 1995) married **Hazel Margaret Atkinson** and had one daughter Rosemary. He served in WW2 reaching the rank of major and in civilian life worked as a farm manager for a good many years and later director/manager of Stirling Construction Company in Tenterden, Kent. He retired to Tisbury, Wiltshire and later moved to Gillingham Dorset where he died.

Muriel Elsie Biggs (known as Moo - May 1914 – Nov 1984) married William Henry Sayer (a building engineer) and have one son Paul Sayer (a renowned Kenyan veterinary scientist with expertise in wild animal diseases). The family emigrated to Kenya in 1946 and lived out their lives there.

Gordon married **Ida Rose Dawes** in **June 1929**.

In 1930, and for several years thereafter, they lived at 27 Herschell Road, Honor Oak Park.

They had 4 children:

Diana Muriel Biggs, born in December 1932 who married **John Welland** and have a son in Kenya and a daughter in England.

Keith Gordon Biggs, born in July 1935 who married **Jean Atherfold**, and has three sons and a daughter.

and twins **Elizabeth Ida (Bet) Biggs** and **Jennifer Rose Biggs**, born in May 1939.

Bet married architect and artist **Ian J Weatherhead** and they have three sons.

Jennifer married **James Bolton** and they had one son (Neil) but sadly Jennifer died of cancer in 1969, aged 30, a year after her son's birth. James remarried.

During the war years Gordon, Ida and family lived in rented accommodation in Burnham Beeches

Gordon began his working life in London as a post boy at L. Hammond and Co. Ltd who were accredited Lloyds insurance brokers. Gradually, he worked his way up through the ranks and developed a thoroughgoing knowledge of the insurance industry. Indeed, during the war, he was regarded as such an important resource, he was given reserved occupation status, due to his expertise in marine insurance.

By the end of the war, Gordon was well established as an insurance broker. He was a member of Lloyds of London and for many years worked on the broking side of the commercial insurance business.

In 1952, the family moved to Montreal Canada aboard the Cunard liner, the Mauritania via New York. Gordon established an office for L Hammond Insurance Co. Ltd. in Montreal. The family spent 6 years there. Gordon travelled often to England on business and members of the family travelled also between Montreal and London.

Gordon, Ida and family returned to England for good in 1958.

In that same year Gordon was appointed chairman of Hammonds Insurance Company following the death of the chairman and Gordon and Ida purchased Stumblehole Farm, near Leigh, Reigate, Surrey which became their out-of-London home.

His wife Ida died on **6th May 1982** and the following year Gordon married Elizabeth Alice (Betty) Fleming (1983) whom he had supported for many years. Gordon convinced Betty to use her birth name Elizabeth as Betty Biggs just didn't have the right ring to it !

Gordon sold Stumblehole and he and Elizabeth downsized into neighbouring Dene Farm. His health deteriorated over several years and he died on **11th November 1988** , three days after his 83rd birthday.

Gordon's nephew Alister Palmer says:

My first memory of Gordon and Ida goes back to the early 1960s when they visited us in Hobart, Tasmania not long before my father's death in 1963 at the age of 55. They stayed in Hadley's hotel in Hobart (nothing but the best!) and we had a memorable time with them.

I recall Gordon's generosity after my father's death. He wrote to my mother, his sister, asking what he could do to help. The outcome was that he paid off the mortgage on the family home in Bellerive. This made an enormous difference in terms of Marjory's financial security in ensuing years. The family will remain eternally grateful for his thoughtfulness and kindness at that difficult time.

My wife Sally and I were the recipients of Gordon's and Ida's hospitality and generosity when we came to England in 1975, holidaying a number of times at Stumblehole, near Leigh in Surrey, a 750 acre farm with many little cottages as well as the main house.

I never saw Gordon in action in the world of business in London, where he had a residence and office and spent most week days. But one thing that stood out for me from observing him at Stumblehole was his love of plants and gardens and his fondness of his family. My mother also commented on his love of Kenya (the home of his sister Muriel Sayer) and his enjoyment when there, especially the opportunity to safari among wild animals.

Gordon and Elizabeth (Betty) visited my mother in Canberra Australia in March 1985 and it was clear that his health was deteriorating. My mother said that she could see that Elizabeth had a 'big job on her hands looking after him'

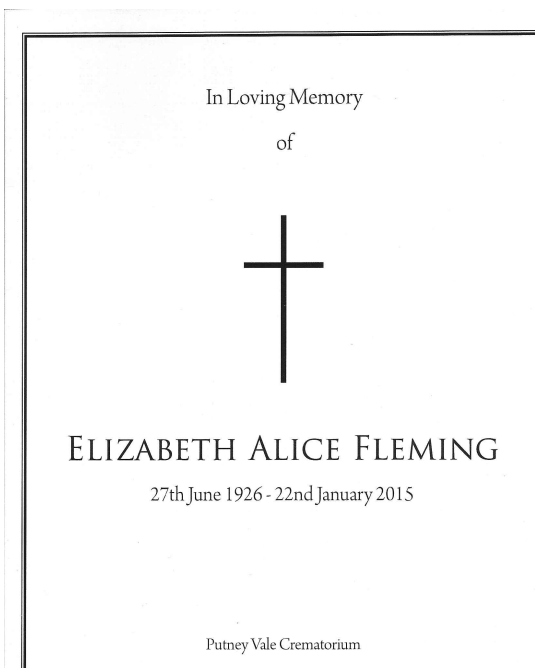
I will remember Gordon as a clever and successful businessman, with a sharp mind, quick wit and great sense of humour, wealthy yes, but also very generous. His wife Ida was kind and generous too and hosted many charitable events. She was a warm, hospitable and reassuring presence who contributed much to Gordon's well-being and to that of the wider family.

27 February 2015

The main house at Stumblehole, Leigh, Surrey



APPENDIX VI
Funeral Program



ENTRY MUSIC
'Vissi D'Arte'
Kiri Te Kanawa

WELCOME AND THANKSGIVING
by Reverend Len Moreton

POEM
'Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep'
by Mary Frye

EULOGY
read by Graham Titus

REFLECTION
Music: 'Afton Water'
Joseph Hislop

PRAYERS
including
THE LORD'S PRAYER
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

COMMENDATION AND FAREWELL

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

EXIT MUSIC
'Liebestod'
Birgit Nilsson

APPENDIX VII

Dates of lessons - Myron Myers 22, Loudon Road London £3/lesson

1979

8 September First Meeting (Jenny Adams was singing “Je suis Titania” when I walked in)

13 September (10.30 am)

15 September 10.30 am)

20 September (4 pm)

25 September (noon)

29 September (3.30)

4 October (4pm)

(went for lessons w Kim Borg, Copenhagen 10/8,9,10)

18 October (noon)

23 October (1 pm)

30 October (3.30)

1 November (1 pm)

6 November (10 am)

8 November (11 am-sat in on lesson with Peter Long and Marian Lewis)

10 November (4.30)

13 November (11 am)

17 November (1 pm)

20 November (10 am)

24 November (accompanied in studio 1-6; 4 lesson; Donald Maxwell lesson)

27 November (1 pm)

1 December (4.30 pm)

(Athens Messiah, 3-11 December with Marian Lewis and Peter Long)

13 December (2 pm)

18 December (9.45 am)

1980

5 January (9.45 am)
 10 January (2.45 pm)
 12 January (5.30 pm)
 15 January (3 pm)
 17 January (4.30 pm)
 19 January (sat in on Graham Titus's lesson)
 22 January (3-6.30 accompanied at studio)
 24 January (4 pm)
 26 January (10 am)
 29 January (12.45 pm lesson; accompanied 3-6.30)
 31 January (3.45)

2 February (3 pm)
 5 February (3.30)
 7 February (10 am)
 9 February (5 pm)
 16 February (10.45 am)
 19 February (accompanied 3.30-6)
 21 February (noon)
 23 February (9.30 am)
 28 February (2)
 (29 February-30 March German and Austrian auditions)

1 April (5 pm)
 (2 April Jane returned to LA)
 10 April (12.30)
 12 April (11.30)
 15 April (11 am)
 17 April (12.30)
 22 April (11.30)
 24 April (10.15)
 26 April (5 pm)
 29 April (11.30-last)
 30 April to NYC

(47 Lessons)

September lessons before Benson and Hedges Competition

1982

£5/lesson

13 May (noon)
 18 May (2)
 20 May (2)
 25 May (3)
 27 May (2)

4 August Betty took Jane and me to lunch at Fortnam's
 Pimm's cup to start
 Betty and me: roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, potatoes; Jane
 Dover sole with lemon, spinach; JM MM raspberries and cream;
 Betty: trifle

19-24 August trip to Sandra Gelson's parents and Edinburgh

1988

(14 F Pavely Drive, Morgan's Walk SW11)

11 October (Long lesson, starting at 12)
 12 October (11 am)

APPENDIX VII Diary Entry 2003

(Alison Wells and I met 30 June 2003 in Putney to visit Betty Fleming at The Pines Nursing Home. I had spent the morning in Hampstead, where I lived 1979-80, and I had bought a box of chocolates at Maison Blanc, which did not exist at the time I lived there. Outside The Pines, at a bus stop, was a huge poster for electric toasters that read "Burnt Toast?" See William Relton's letter of remembrance.)

"AND THEN I went to Putney where I met Alison for our meeting with Betty Fleming, recently installed in a rest home (posh). Skinny, old Betty sprawled out on the bed took a while to get herself up, but managed to stand to her walker and back herself into an easy chair, talking in the slurred voice of a stroke patient. The speech came in torrents as we kissed, and she used the same arm and hand gestures of old, as well as a plentiful use of the word "fuck," (which was quite often the only intelligible word in any given sentence).

It was Betty's (77th?) birthday, hence my purchase of the chocs. After I opened them, she wolfed down four of them (they were very good) and began to explain that she had come to London two weeks before from Scotland, arriving at the Chelsea Hilton in a hired Rolls Royce because she felt that the people who were her caretakers were stealing her money. Her grandson (who apparently looks a good deal like Gordon) (Neil Bolton) helped her to find The Pines and got her settled in. She showed me the book of remembrances which Graham had compiled ("he was my favorite boy," she slurred, but she said that about nearly everyone to whose picture and remembrance I turned. Jenny Adams came in for the same praise, as did Donald Maxwell.)

"I still vocalize every day," she said, "doing the ee-ah, the good old ee-ah." Then she laughed her girlish two-note laugh. Alison and I agreed that her vocalises were marvelous. "Got to keep the core in the sound," she slurred.

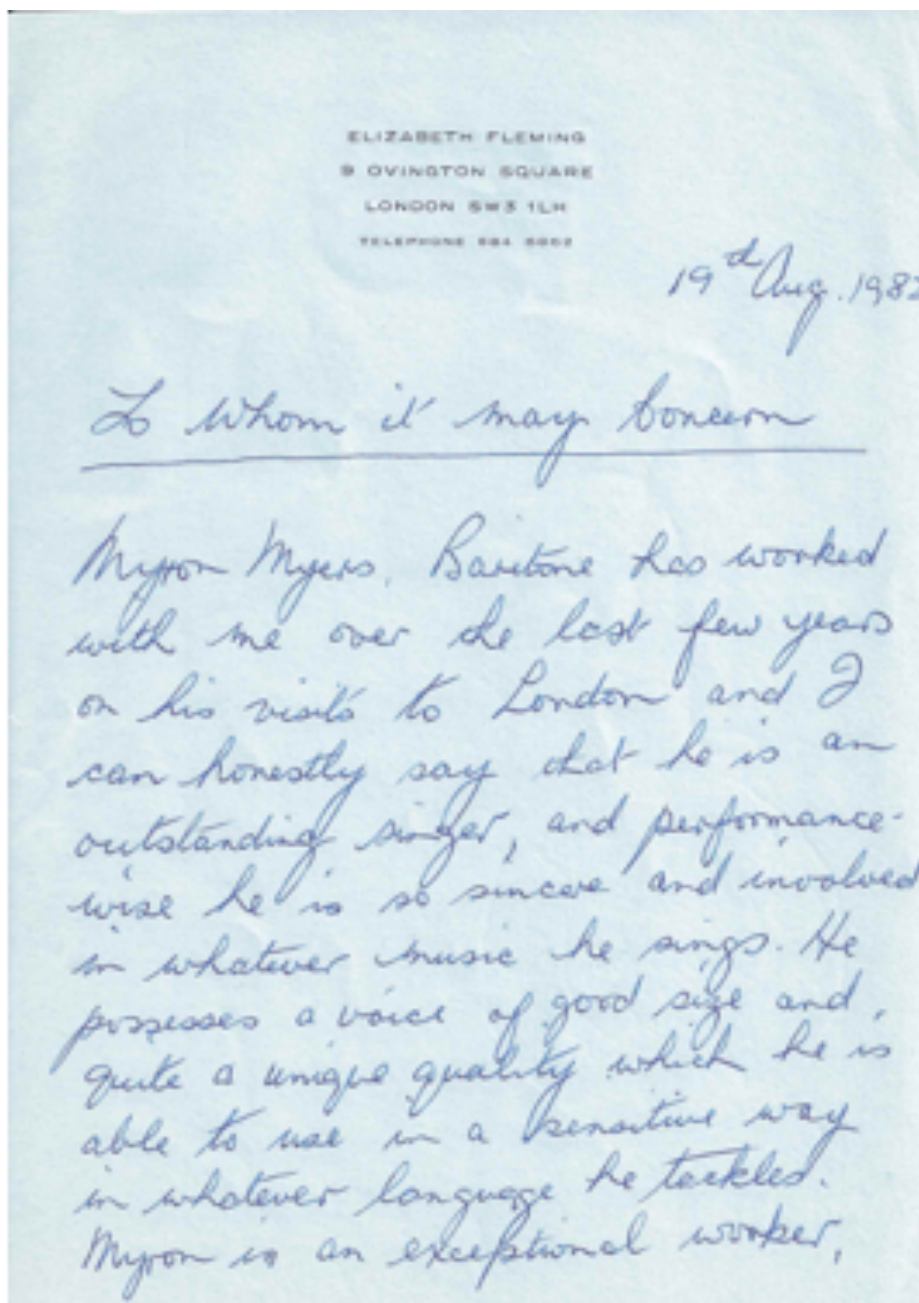
Then she launched into a story of her health problems, about fifty percent of which I understood. Alison appeared to be getting more of it. I was feeling exhausted and a little depressed, for she kept insisting she was "fighting to recover," it was quite obvious to me she never would. One interesting thing was that she had been teaching Sandy Garden (Alexander Garden, baritone, who was with me in the Franz Schubert Institute, Baden-bei-Wien, Austria, class in 1978), who is now singing Wagner—or she has him singing Wagner. Always a first-class voice. I told her he had worn a kilt in the Baden concerts. "Only gays wear kilts these days," she slurred. "Sad."

Graham has a recording of Betty singing the Lady MacBeth aria. Must get a copy. He said the orchestra was shit but "what a voice."

So, we left Betty after a lot of kisses—by the way she had received my packet and put it in the book (The Betty Book)—and we made our way to South Ken...."

The diary entry ends, but there is more to the story. In my haste, I had left behind some shopping in Betty's suite, so half-way back to the tube, I turned around, saying I'd meet Alison later in Kensington. It was a hot, muggy day. The front desk remembered me (as I had just left) and motioned me to Betty's room on the second floor. I knocked. I heard what sounded like "come in" but it could have been anything. So, I entered. There was Betty, fully clothed, sitting on the loo. I made a motion to leave, but she shook her head and motioned me in, laughing in that wonderful way. I explained why I had come, and she motioned for me to get what I came for, which I hurriedly did. I blew her several kisses, and she blew them back. That is my final image of Betty Fleming, sitting on the loo. Her students will remember her description of the feeling of proper support was "throwing up or sitting on the loo."

APPENDIX VIII
Letter of Recommendation
Correspondence



2

nothing is too much for him, and
his stamina has developed over the
years

I have found him to be a very
reliable person, of fine character who
possesses a great talent, musically
and artistically. He has always
been a delight to teach.

I wish him the very best
in the future.

Elizabeth Fleming.
Teacher of Singing.
Pupil and Associate of
the late Joseph Hislop.

ELIZABETH FLEMING
 9 OVINGTON SQUARE
 LONDON SW3 1LH
 TELEPHONE 884 6862

4/8/80.

Dear Myron,

Nice to hear of your coming to Europe - great!

I do hope your concert in Belgium will be a success, Graham Titus is over there now, singing some Handel. Also, Will Mason has sung there quite a lot - he and Jan are over here at the moment having a holiday plus lessons and Will sends his regards to you & Jane.

I had intended to go on holiday in the last two weeks of September until I received your letter, but have delayed this so you

can have your ² lessons before
I go. I have to go on 25th September
though, but Sandra will be able
to work thoroughly with you, don't
worry! So the 16th will be your
first lesson, we can work in
a concentrated fashion for these
periods before the B+H. O.K.?

Was interested to hear of William
Eddy's connection with Hislop - Joe.
You used to tell me of Dick Gilly,
also I have a record of them
singing together.

I do hope you + Jane are keeping
well - looking forward to seeing
you! Alison + Cate wonder if you'd
like to stay with them? Let them know!
much love. Betty xx

ELIZABETH FLEMING
8 OVINGTON SQUARE
LONDON SW3 1LW
TELEPHONE 584 0002

19/8/82

My dear Gene & Myron,

Have enclosed your letter
of recommendation / hope it's
O.K.?

I do hope you did well in Vienna
and at least felt you'd done a
good job, even if you don't win. I
feel a bit more relaxed now and
beginning to see a little further
into future. I've been feeling very
depressed for so long now that
it's taking time to rise up again.

I'm sure Derek Hammond-Stroud

2
would be good for you, also Peter
Locke!

I'm sure you'll get some
luck this year - I feel it in
my bones.

Must take you to tea at
the Ritz (not Harrods)!

much love,

Betty xx

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¹ James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999). Those wishing a thorough, intelligent, physiological and historical analysis of what is briefly touched on in this article should consult this book, surely one of the finest bits of writing about operatic singing ever encountered.

² Stark, *Bel Canto*, 26-27.

³ William Vennard, *Singing: The Mechanism and the Technic* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1967), 109.

⁴ Sandra Gelson, e-mail message to author, November 11, 2008. Gelson was Fleming's studio pianist.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Janet Coker Bright, telephone conversation with author, December 17, 2008.

⁶ Graham Titus, e-mail message to author, December 18, 2008. Titus was a pupil of Fleming.

⁷ Sandra Gelson, e-mail message to author, November 19, 2008.

⁸ Michael T.R.B. Turnbull, *Joseph Hislop, Gran Tenore* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1992), 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰ William Earl Brown, *Vocal Wisdom: The Maxims of Giovanni Battista Lamperti* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publications, 2007).

¹¹ David L. Jones, "William Vennard and Alan Lindquest," <http://www.voiceteacher.com/vennard.html>

¹² David L. Jones, "History of the Italian-Swedish School of Singing," <http://www.voiceteacher.com/history.html>

¹³ Turnbull, *Joseph Hislop, Gran Tenore*, 16.

¹⁴ David L. Jones, e-mail message to author, June 11, 2008.

¹⁵ Vennard, *Singing*, p. 164.

¹⁶ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 44.

¹⁷ Jones, "History."

¹⁸ Joseph Hislop and Nancy Hislop, "Introduction to the Hislops' Method of Teaching" (photocopied handout to students, London, ca. 1960), 2.

¹⁹ Jones, "History."

²⁰ Donald Pilley, quoted in Turnbull, *Joseph Hislop, Gran Tenore*, 195.

²¹ Myron Myers, class notes (Pedagogy of Singing, William Vennard, University of Southern California, 1970).

²² Jones, "William Vennard."

²³ Hislop and Hislop, "Introduction."

²⁴ Graham Titus, e-mail message to author, December 16, 2008.

²⁵ Myron Myers, lesson notes (Betty Fleming, London, 1979-80).

²⁶ Betty did not always keep to her schedule. If she became inspired, the lesson could extend well past the hour.

²⁷ Joseph Hislop, through Fleming.

²⁸ B. Lütgen, *Vocalises* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1909, 1936). Used by permission, G. Schirmer.

²⁹ Alison Wells, e-mail message to author, May 21, 2009.

³⁰ Manuel Garcia, *Hints on Singing* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publications, 2008), 12.

³¹ Vennard, *Singing*, 193.

³² Stark, *Bel Canto*, 140.

³³ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁴ The diaphragm is supplied by motor neurons to the phrenic nerve in C4 and C5, quite close to the larynx. Frank Netter, *Nervous System*, Vol. 1, *The CIBA Collection of Medical Illustrations* (Summit, NJ: CIBA, 1975), 61.

³⁵ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 151-2.

³⁶ Myers, class notes.

³⁷ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 30.

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- ³⁸ Ingo R. Titze, *Principles of Voice Production* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1994), 192.
- ³⁹ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 31.
- ⁴⁰ Manuel Garcia, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing, Part One*, Donald Paschke, editor (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), 24.
- ⁴¹ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 30.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 31.
- ⁴³ William Earl Brown, *Vocal Wisdom*, 64-68.
- ⁴⁴ Hislop and Hislop, "Introduction."
- ⁴⁵ Vennard, *Singing*, 44.
- ⁴⁶ Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 1-19. Miller lumps all other attack methods, including coup de glotte, under "The Hard Attack," 2
- ⁴⁷ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 100.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23
- ⁴⁹ Ikuichiro Hirohito, in Kenneth Stevens and Minoru Hirano, *Vocal Fold Physiology*, Proceedings of the Vocal Fold Physiology Conference, Kurume, Japan, January 15-19, 1980 (New York: University of Tokyo Press, 1981), 9.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁵¹ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 27.
- ⁵² Sandra Gelson, e-mail message to author, November 19, 2008.
- ⁵³ The nomenclature is Stark's, *Bel Canto*, 162-3.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.
- ⁵⁵ Titze, *Principles of Voice Production*, 248.
- ⁵⁶ Vennard, 66-67.
- ⁵⁷ Vennard, 66.
- ⁵⁸ Titze, *Principles of Voice Production*, 272.
- ⁵⁹ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 87.

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- ⁶⁰ Graham Titus, letter to author, February 15, 2009.
- ⁶¹ Titus, e-mail to author, December 18, 2008.
- ⁶² Vennard, *Singing*, 90.
- ⁶³ Titze, *Principles of Voice Production*, 239-40.
- ⁶⁴ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 46.
- ⁶⁵ Turnbull, *Joseph Hislop, Gran Tenore*, 67.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.
- ⁶⁷ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 166.
- ⁶⁸ Norris Crocker, *Handbook for Singers* (1895), quoted in John Potter, "Beggar at the Door: The Rise and Fall of Portamento in Singing," *Music and Letters* 87, no. 4 (2006): 534.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 524.
- ⁷⁰ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 164.
- ⁷¹ Potter, "Beggar at the Door," 549.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 550.
- ⁷³ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 101.
- ⁷⁴ Jerome Hines, *Great Singers on Great Singing* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 140-41.
- ⁷⁵ Turnbull, *Joseph Hislop, Gran Tenore*, 13.
- ⁷⁶ Myers, class notes.
- ⁷⁷ Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, 12.
- ⁷⁸ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 12.
- ⁷⁹ Vennard, *Singing*, 85.
- ⁸⁰ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 84.
- ⁸¹ Vennard, *Singing*, 103.
- ⁸² Wells, e-mail to author, May 21, 2009.
- ⁸³ Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, 17.

⁸⁴ Wells, e-mail to author, May 21, 2009.

⁸⁵ John Ardoin, *Callas at Juilliard: The Master Classes* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 3.

⁸⁶ Donald Maxwell, telephone conversation with author, November 11, 2008.

⁸⁷ Thom Holmes, editor, *The Routledge Guide to Music Technology* (New York: CRC Press, 2006), 70.

⁸⁸ Roland Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph*, quoted in Michael Chanan, *Repeated Takes* (London: Verso, 1995), 129.

⁸⁹ John Culshaw, *The Ring Resounding* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 167.

⁹⁰ Potter, "Beggar at the Door," 550.

⁹¹ Garcia, *Hints on Singing*, 59.

⁹² Steven Blier, "Power Shortage," *Opera News*, March 2003, 35.

⁹³ Stark, *Bel Canto*, 232.

