

## Tom Schilling Vocalway Newsletter Issues

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"It is easy to sing well and very difficult to sing badly! How many students of singing are really prepared to accept that statement? Few, if any. They smile and say, "It may be easy for you, but it's not for me. And they seem to consider that there the matter ends.

If they only know it, on their understanding and acceptance of that axiom depends half of their success. Let me say that same thing in other words: "In order to sing well, it is necessary to sing easily."

From "THE MELBA METHOD"

This seemed to be a great introduction to the first newsletter from Vocalway. The whole purpose of singing is to be joyful and entertaining, not only to your audience, but first for yourself. If the body is working hard the listener may admire how much effort it takes to sing, but they are not really listening. They are admiring the amount of energy you are expending for their gratification. Some people actually think if you are not turning red and look as though you are bursting a blood vessel to produce a high note that you are not really giving enough for their entertainment. And if you do overwork they are thrilled and can't stop saying how wonderful it all was.

The body was built for singing easily. It is only our misunderstanding of how it functions that has led us to manipulate the voice to produce sounds. There are many "techniques" that teach you to manipulate your voice. How tantalizing it is to hear the words, "You have a young sapling for a voice, and now we are going to make it a mighty oak!" The thought that you can build your voice into something other than its natural state begins to lead us away from our own unique, organic sound.

Singers are usually very adept imitators. What is so confusing to the singer is that he cannot perceive his own sound by himself. A sound properly produced is effortless. It is a surprise when it happens. The conscious mind is confused because there is no manipulation involved. What we do best is what we do unconsciously. But since our whole life has been based around "doing" something, a new mind-set must come into play before we let go of our need "to do." Eastern philosophy is based on expansion. Our Western philosophy is based on contraction. Therefore, to ask someone to "allow" the voice to happen is a very strange request indeed. There is very little faith in the fact that the body already knows how to sing. The quest is to return the voice to its true sound. The sound that the singer has consciously identified as his/hers may indeed appear to be effortless, and

yet upon closer examination there are blocks that can be let go of to allow an even freer sound to happen. As your awareness grows, so does the voice.

If a singer is using his own ear to create a sound that pleases him, it is an imitation of the real, organic sound that takes time to reveal itself. Listening to records and copying the sound of a great singer is very inviting. The singer thinks he's making the greatest sound in the world—it sounds big and sonorous to him—but great skill is required to unlock the vibrations that will project that sound in a concert hall or opera house. What sounds like a large, dark voice in a small space will usually not carry in a big hall. The sound must carry like a rifle bullet, not like a spray of pellets from a shotgun blast. The sound disperses and loses clarity by the time it reaches the back wall of the auditorium.

Therefore, too much energy is defeating the efficiency of the true voice. Much movement, but very little effort is required, for the body loves to be efficient. When the alignment of the body is corrected, and the breath is allowed to enter in its own way, coordination of the body begins to happen, and the true voice appears.

In these Newsletters there will be many discussions of things we do not think have anything to do with the "voice." Our lives have become very complicated in the last 40 years. There is so much information available to us that we have become more or less mired down in our intellect, and have neglected the mind, body, and soul connection. There is very little information needed to sing easily, and yet it involves allowing this information to become an experience. With perseverance and determination to rid ourselves of old habits, it "suddenly" dawns on us what we have been striving for. When the experience of singing breaks free of the impediments we have put in its way, a New World opens. We can now understand how the body works, the mind works, and finally how our emotions can break free to communicate.

Communication is the ultimate goal of any artist. If the body, mind or emotions are in the way, the voice may indeed be very good, but the singer is not saying anything to his audience. Unless the sound is authentically grounded in our energy, our emotional body, the physical body begins to work too hard, and stops true communication. Therefore, singing is not really about the voice—it is about the freedom of the body, mind, and emotions to freely express what the music is trying to say. Our conscious mind wants to take the voice to the music, and yet it is the music that should dictate to us what road the voice should take. All our efforts to "make the music happen" is our conscious mind, or intellectual mind, taking control. We must delve deeper into ourselves to rid this intellectual mind of neglecting the freedom of the body and the emotions.

The ease of singing then means that we have balanced the intellectual, the physical, and the emotional bodies. The experience is one of true integration with ourselves and with the music we are performing. We are at peace with ourselves. The quiet power of our energy flows through us, and we can experience this feeling of true freedom. The voice is a result of this coordination.

The new millennium is an exciting time! We are now on the threshold of a new way of doing things. But is anything really new? It is a time of renewing our relationship with our authentic selves. Clearing away false concepts and perceptions is always a wrenching experience, and yet to remain in the old way of doing things is a worse experience—or more to the point, no experience at all. It is a repetition of old ideas that do not work. Once we understand that the body is the authority, and we must nurture it and get in touch with it, the New Order steps in and changes our lives. We begin to breathe with ease, live with ease, and sing with ease. It's all there for us to discover if we simply allow ourselves to go through the process. Always remember, it's a journey, not a destination. Enjoy the ride!