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The Utilization of Non-Classical Approaches in Teaching Musical Theater Repertoire for the Undergraduate Soprano Voice Major

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

THE UTILIZATION OF NON-CLASSICAL APPROACHES IN
TEACHING MUSICAL THEATER REPERTOIRE FOR THE
UNDERGRADUATE SOPRANO VOICE MAJOR

By

Jenna Lee Moore

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2016

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(May 2016)

The Utilization of Non-Classical Approaches in Teaching
Musical Theater Repertoire for the Undergraduate Soprano
Voice Major

Abstract of a doctoral essay at the University of Miami.

Doctoral essay supervised by Professor Robynne Redmon and Dr. Rachel Lebon.

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The Broadway Musical can arguably be considered one of the most popular art forms in America today and new musicals are constantly being written, produced, and performed. As a result, many voice students become interested in singing musical theater repertoire, suggesting that the study of musical theater singing and performance of musical theater literature be included in the vocal education of an undergraduate voice major.

Teaching musical theater provides a unique challenge, because vocalists are required to sing in every style historically within musical theater. Today's Broadway shows require vocal styles ranging from classical to rock. Other styles of singing found in the modern American musical are legit, jazz, pop, rock, gospel, rhythm and blues, and country.¹ Therefore, teacher knowledge and pedagogical techniques, enhanced through actual performance experience within these various styles of singing become increasingly important, especially when teaching the undergraduate voice student.

¹ Hall, "Musical Theater and Classical Singing," 570-571.

When auditioning for a musical, the auditioner's book of songs becomes essential. The song repertoire should generally cover five categories that span the history of musical theater. The categories are operetta, contemporary pop, contemporary classical, golden age, and jazz influenced. In addition to these five categories, an audition book should contain an up-tempo piece, a ballad, a dramatic song, and a comic song or character piece. This study defines the five categories and outlines significant composers and musicals in each category. This study also examined and analyzed five songs in each category that would be considered appropriate for the undergraduate soprano voice major. The analysis of each song focuses on elements of vocal pedagogy, specifically on belting and female issues with registration, as well as stylistic elements appropriate for each song category. It also outlines specific vocal and stylistic elements within each song that contribute to an authentic performance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Broadway Musical can arguably be considered one of the most popular art forms in America today, and new musicals are constantly being written, produced, and performed. As a result, many voice students become interested in singing musical theater repertoire, suggesting that the study of musical theater singing and performance of musical theater literature be included in the vocal education of an undergraduate voice major.

Musical theater is a vastly broad genre encompassing a variety of singing and vocal approaches, which includes “belt” and “legit.” Legit or legitimate is most closely associated with classical music. Belt, especially in musicals after 1960, is more associated with rock or popular music.² When referencing musical theater, legitimate vocal quality comes from the classical tradition and is often used in operetta. The use of belting arose in the early twentieth century when musical theater vocalists sang in a style that parodied African American women.³ The traditional belt sound is often associated with Ethel Merman in the 1930s production of Gershwin’s *Girl Crazy*. Merman sustained a C5 during singing the song I’ve Got Rhythm, establishing the Broadway belt sound.⁴ In the 1940s and 50s, composers were inspired to write songs which were lower in pitch. This was due to the growing importance of the plot in the American musical and the necessity of understanding the words.⁵ The belt voice became increasingly more popular in the 1960s and 70s with the emergence of the rock musical, which incorporated

² Robert Edwin, “Popular Song and Musical Theatre: Belt is Legit,” *Journal of Singing*, 64 no. 2 (November 2007): 213.

³ Tracy Bourne, Maeva Garnier, and Diana Kenny, “Musical Theater Voice: Production, Physiology, and Pedagogy,” *Journal of Singing*, 67 no. 4 (March/April 2011): 437.

⁴ Christianne Roll, “The Evolution of the Female Broadway Belt Voice: Implications for Teachers and Singers,” *Journal of Singing* (Article in Press 2015): 1.

⁵ Bourne, Garnier, and Kenny, “Musical Theater Voice,” 437.

electronically enhanced instruments. This instrumental accompaniment introduced additional challenges for being heard over the instruments, with vocal projection becoming a more serious consideration. This required an extended female belt and incredibly strong stamina with more vocal facility and colors in the female singer.⁶ The musicals of today are written in various styles and require multiple vocal abilities and colors. As a result, the voice teacher must have knowledge of the historical demands of musical theater vocal technique in order to appropriately teach the contemporary undergraduate voice student.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Musical theater repertoire is regularly performed by classical singers and is often programmed in recitals. Major opera houses in America, such as the Lyric Opera of Chicago, regularly perform musical theater repertoire as a part of their season.⁷ However, most pedagogy programs focus on teaching classical literature within classical voice departments, which results in voice teachers experiencing little training in non-classical styles, such as musical theater.⁸ It can be argued that a large majority of vocal pedagogy comes from experimental research and not practitioners in the field, especially when addressing singing of non-classical literature.⁹ Teaching musical theater provides a unique challenge, because vocalists are required to sing in many of the styles historically within the musical theater canon. Today's Broadway shows require vocal styles ranging

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Corrine Ness, "Teaching Music Theatre: An Integrative Dialectical Approach," *Opera Journal* 47, no. 1 (March 2014): 3.

⁸ Karen Hall, "Music Theater and Classical Singing: at Odds Personally and Professionally," *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 5 (May/June 2007): 570.

⁹ Rachel L. Lebon. *The Versatile Vocalist: Singing Authentically in Contrasting Styles and Idioms*. 2006. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, ix.

from classical to rock. Other styles of singing found on Broadway and in the modern American musical are legit, jazz, pop, rock, gospel, rhythm and blues, and country.¹⁰ Therefore, teacher knowledge and pedagogical techniques for these various styles of singing become increasingly important, especially when teaching the undergraduate voice student.

Teaching musical theater can become even more problematic for the female singer. The debate over belting for the female singer lies mostly in registration.¹¹ The two primary muscles that are responsible for vocal fold activity are the *thyroarytenoid* muscles and the *cricothyroid* muscles. According to Edwin, the *thyroarytenoid* muscles are responsible for shortening and thickening the vocal folds, producing a sound that is commonly known as chest voice. The *cricothyroid* muscles are responsible for stretching and thinning the vocal folds, which produces a sound known as head voice.¹² The most prevalent and traditional assumption is that belting is a completely *thyroarytenoid* function, where the chest voice is taken higher in the range than in classical singing, usually beyond an E4 or F4.¹³ There is some debate among pedagogues as whether or not the chest voice is responsible for a deeper or darker resonance. “Research has suggested that all register balance is a combination of *cricothyroid* and *thyroarytenoid* activity, coupled with laryngeal height, vocal tract configuration, subglottic pressure, and transglottal airflow.”¹⁴ Therefore, belting is a label given to a specific type of chest register function. It becomes important in musical theater styles that a singer be able to

¹⁰ Hall, “Musical Theater and Classical Singing,” 570-571.

¹¹ Roll, “The Evolution of the Female Broadway Belt Voice,” 1.

¹² Edwin, “Popular Song and Musical Theatre,” 214.

¹³ Roll, “The Evolution of the Female Broadway Belt Voice,” 1.

¹⁴ Jeannette LoVetri, “Voice Pedagogy: Female Chest Voice,” *Journal of Singing* 60, no. 2 (November 2003): 162.

belt or sing softly in chest register. It is also important to be able to bring that chest register into high notes above the speaking register. For an opera singer, chest register behaves in an entirely different manner than the chest register as utilized by a musical theater singer. For the opera singer, chest register is reserved for only the lower portion of the range. In belting, the chest register is taken higher in range in a manner similar to speech. The natural chest register is driven by the speaking voice with the larynx relatively high.¹⁵ Due to antagonistic muscle functions, it could become difficult for female singers to train both in classical singing and belting.

However, many voice teachers believe that belting is a chest voice dominant function, which also uses the cricothyroid muscle, or head voice.¹⁶ It can be argued that all types of singing require a blend of vocal registers. Therefore, the definition of belting becomes undefined and unclear. The connection to speech in musical theater singing then becomes imperative. In belting, the phrasing of the lyrical line and innate prosody of the language outweigh the spin of the beautiful line or phrase.¹⁷

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The topic of belting and musical theater singing is vital with the emerging trend of American musical theater in the classical music world. However, there appears to be lack of training and understanding in musical theater and belt singing.¹⁸ Hall (2007) discusses a 2003 survey by LoVetri and Weekly which shows a “lack of teacher training, confusion

¹⁵ Ibid, 163.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Rachel L. Lebon. *The Versatile Vocalist: Singing Authentically in Contrasting Styles and Idioms*. 2006. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 72

¹⁸ Hall, “Musical Theater and Classical Singing,” 570.

over the use and application of musical theater terms, and deficiencies in auditory output, that is, the ability to recognize and hear the music theater sounds.”¹⁹ There has been much confusion from classical singers about belting, if belting can be vocally healthy, and how to teach a student to belt in a healthy manner. Hall (2007) has also discussed that one-third of the teachers surveyed expressed no major difference in their teaching of musical theater and classical music. Seventy-five percent of the teachers reported that the major difference between musical theater singing and classical singing was the repertoire itself.²⁰ It is imperative that voice teachers understand the stylistic differences in musical theater singing and apply that to their teaching. Currently, many voice teachers do not have an understanding of the differences in musical theater styles and how to teach belting or the *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound appropriately. There is a new emerging trend in colleges and universities of musical theater specialists, who only teach musical theater literature. However, it is critical for a contemporary undergraduate voice student to receive a well-rounded vocal education. Therefore, it is helpful for colleges and university voice faculties to include voice teachers who have an idiomatic understanding and appreciation of both the classical and musical theater styles.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Because the popularity of musical theater is on the rise, especially in American opera houses,²¹ it is becoming increasingly relevant that classical singing teachers be capable of teaching musical theater styles to the undergraduate student. Teachers who

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ness, “Teaching Musical Theatre,” 3.

teach technique through classical literature only must be able to hear and understand the stylistic elements of musical theater singing in order to teach it. This is an essential element if the undergraduate voice student is interested in supplementing their education with musical theater repertoire. Currently, musical theater is being approached from the classical perspective, which implies that classical singing is the healthiest or most correct way to sing.²² Musical theater singing itself is not necessarily unhealthy, but requires a pedagogy of its own. In order to educate teachers about teaching musical theater, the history of the American musical theater and its vocal requirements must be studied. Contemporary musical theater is a broad genre incorporating multiple styles including rock, pop, legit, blues, country, and many more.²³ Often singers are required to belt, sing legit, and mix within the same song.²⁴ These stylistic differences must be understood and mastered by the singing teacher in order to teach musical theater repertoire effectively.

Currently, there is a great deal of research on the history of musical theater. However, this research does not include the pedagogical aspects of teaching and singing musical theater repertoire. This is particularly important for female singers because of the muscular difference between belting, a *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound, and legit, a *cricothyroid* dominant sound.²⁵ An undergraduate female voice student should have an understanding of how to use both voices effectively and healthily. A study that examines common styles of musical theater singing from a pedagogical perspective would provide voice teachers with the information necessary to teach musical theater to undergraduate female students.

²² Ibid, 5.

²³ Hall, "Musical Theater and Classical Singing," 570-571.

²⁴ LoVetri, "Voice Pedagogy," 163.

²⁵ Edwin, "Popular Song and Musical Theatre," 214.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the various vocal styles and techniques demanded within American musical theater to supplement the vocal education of undergraduate female classical voice majors.

In order to develop and structure this study, the following questions will be used:

1. What are the stylistic differences between the various genres of American musical theater, focusing specifically on the differences between belt and legit and the styles in between?
2. What musical theater repertoire is appropriate for a soprano undergraduate voice student?
3. How can this chosen repertoire be taught from a non-classical perspective?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Musical theater history is diverse and features a wide variety of musical styles and characteristics. The vocal quality of musical theater can generally be classified in two ways, belt or legit. Legit is more closely related to classical music, while belting is most closely related to rock and popular music.²⁶ Currently, fifty-eight percent of current musicals, including nonunion, regional, touring, and Broadway productions, are rock or pop based.²⁷ The musicals of today pull from each of the genres of musical theater history and feature a wide variety of vocal demands and characteristics. This includes belting, legit singing, and mixing, a combination of legit and belt. Therefore, it is important for voice pedagogues to have an understanding of the physicality of belting and how that relates to teaching musical theater to the female singer.

PHYSIOLOGY OF BELTING

Defining Belting

There are many conflicting thoughts on belting and its definition. According to Miles and Hollien (1990), belting is “a specific singing (voice) quality, presumably produced by specialized manipulation of the larynx and vocal tract.”²⁸ They go on to argue that the majority of voice teachers, and even the public, can recognize belting when they hear it. However, there is no definition or general understanding of the physiology of

²⁶ Robert Edwin, “Popular Song and Musical Theatre: Belt is Legit,” *Journal of Singing*, 64 no. 2 (November 2007): 213.

²⁷ Neal Tracy, “Musical Theater Rocks! Organic Rock Singing 101 and Beyond,” *Journal of Singing*, 70 no. (November/December 2013): 214.

²⁸ Beth Miles and Harry Hollien, “Whither Belting?” *Journal of Voice*, 4 no. 1 (1990): 64.

this specific type of singing.²⁹ In order to define belting and its physiology, Miles and Hollien (1990) reviewed all of the current literature on this subject as well as conducting a survey of voice teachers, laryngologists, and other physicians who were considered knowledgeable in this area. Through the literature review, Miles and Hollien (1990) found a wide variety of opinions on the definition of belting. However, it was agreed that belting requires the singer to extend the frequency of the chest register upward.³⁰ A noted opinion of the definition of belt is that it is an exaggerated use of the speaking voice. It can be argued then, that speech is the basis for musical theater singing.³¹ The speaking voice is then extended to a higher register and frequency.³² In describing belt, it was suggested that the dynamic range or volume of belting is extremely limited. Soft singing becomes nearly impossible to achieve while belting. Also, vocal breaks or transitions between registers of the voice are still apparent in belting.³³

The discussion of the physiology of belting led to many varied opinions about the position of the larynx and the overall vocal health of belting. Much of the literature suggested that the larynx is in a relatively high position when belting. Often the pharyngeal space is small and the epiglottis is tilted over the larynx, which causes an elevated tongue position. When discussing belting and vocal health, it is necessary to be aware of closed and open phases in singing. Closed phase is the ratio of time glottis is closed during each cycle of vibration, while open phase is the ratio of time the glottis is open during each cycle of vibration. Belting causes a long closed phase, with the ratio of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, 65.

³¹ Norman Spivey, "Music Theater Singing...Let's Talk. Part 1: On the Relationship of Speech and Singing." *Journal of Singing*, 64 no. 4 (March/April 2008): 483.

³² Miles and Hollien, "Whiter Belting" 65.

³³ Ibid.

closure for each vibration estimated to be approximately 70%.³⁴ Most of the literature agreed that singers who belt frequently do experience vocal pathology. However, this could be due to a lack of training on belting properly.³⁵

Throughout the surveys conducted by Miles and Hollien (1990), belting was defined in many different ways. Many respondents described it as singing at the extreme upper limit of a vocal register. Others described it as extending the frequency range of the low pitches to its upper limit. It was also described as using a heavy registration above the pitch F4.³⁶ When describing belting, many respondents characterized it as a singing technique used in pop, rock, gospel, or jazz music. Others described it as a sound often found in American musical theater.³⁷ Most respondents described belting as a loud sound and associated it with yelling or shouting. They also felt that belting can have an open or forward quality to the sound.³⁸ From a physiological perspective, respondents suggested that belting had “firm vocal fold adduction, thick cords, and a very short open phase.”³⁹ They also suggested that belting required a high laryngeal position, high tongue, small pharyngeal space, and low soft palate. It was also noted that the extra energy required for belting could cause excessive laryngeal tension.⁴⁰ Throughout this survey, Miles and Holden (1990) concluded that belting is still largely undefined. Although it is a style of singing which is recognized, opinions regarding the definition, description, and physiological attributes of belting are varied.⁴¹

³⁴ Ibid, 66.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, 66-67.

³⁹ Ibid, 68.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 68.

⁴¹ Ibid, 69.

Vocal Registers and Belting

There is a debate among voice teachers about whether belting constitutes chest voice taken higher in the range or another style of singing all together. There appear to be two main philosophies on belting among voice teachers. The first is that it is an abusive behavior in singing that should be avoided. The second is that it is a viable vocal production, which is created through energized speech.⁴² Therefore, understanding the female chest voice is imperative when discussing belting.

In 2003, LoVetri discusses the various views and functions of the female chest voice. LoVetri (2003) argues that the chest voice is a quality which needs to be used by all singers to have viable careers.⁴³ When working with younger singers, it is important to develop the head voice first. After the head voice has been developed, a spoken quality should be added to the lower tones, which will strengthen the chest voice up to pitch E4. Eventually the two parts of the range should be blended between pitches E4 and G4 to create fluidity in the range.⁴⁴

When discussing chest register and belting, LoVetri (2003) argues that

*all register balance is a combination of cricothyroid and thyroarytenoid activity coupled with laryngeal height, vocal tract configuration, subglottic pressure, and transglottal airflow. Therefore, belting is just a label given to a certain aspect of chest register function.*⁴⁵

⁴² Norman Spivey, "Music Theater Singing...Let's Talk. Part 2: Examining the Debate on Belting." *Journal of Singing*, 64 no. 5 (May/June 2008): 607.

⁴³ Jeannette LoVetri, "Voice Pedagogy: Female Chest Voice." *Journal of Singing*, 60 no. 2 (November 2003): 161.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 162.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

However, it is possible to sing in a chest register that is soft and light. It is also possible to bring that soft, light chest register up in the higher range. In singing operatic literature, the chest register is heavy and does not go up in the range easily. Chest register used while singing pop music behaves differently. It becomes easier to take the chest register up in the range if the singer is well trained. This includes good breath management, posture, and elimination of unnecessary tension in the voice.⁴⁶ In musical theater, sometimes it is necessary to sing in chest voice, mixed (chest with head), and head voice within the same song. Therefore, it is possible to train the vocal mechanism to produce many types of vocal qualities. The key to this is the singer understanding the weight in their voice and to sing with a spoken quality without adding any extra pressure to the throat.⁴⁷

In a 2011 research study, Bourne, Garnier, and Kenny (2011) discuss the history of belting and how it began with the growing importance of the plot of the American musical of the 1940s and 50s. Melodies were written in a lower vocal range to allow for understanding of text. However, the emergence of the rock musical in the 1960s and 70s called for an extension of the female belt and contemporary singer sound.⁴⁸ An interview with twelve expert teachers in musical theater was conducted. Bourne, Garnier, and Kenny (2011) found that belt singing was a chest or *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound which incorporated forward or twangy vowels. Respondents also described a wide range of belting styles. Legit singing is described as a *cricothyroid* or head register dominant sound with the bright twangy vowels. Mixing was described as a combination between

⁴⁶ Ibid, 162-163.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 163.

⁴⁸ Tracy Bourne, Maeva Garnier, and Diana Kenny, "Musical Theatre Voice: Production, Physiology, and Pedagogy." *Journal of Singing* 67 no. 4 (March/April 2011): 437.

the two registers. However, teachers expressed confusion with the term and it was not clearly defined.⁴⁹

Many teachers expressed concern about the vocal health of the musical theater singer. Most research concludes that belting is not any more or less damaging than other forms of singing. The misconception of the lack of vocal health in belting could be due to other factors such as poor vocal training or susceptibility to vocal damage.⁵⁰ Belting is often produced with a high larynx and tongue, narrow pharyngeal space, and high lung pressure. Bourne, Garnier, and Kenny (2011) argue that belting can be produced with a relatively low larynx and wide pharyngeal space. This is achieved through *thyroarytenoid* dominant activity and strong glottal adduction. The low larynx and wide pharyngeal space will improve the overall vocal health of the singer.⁵¹

Sundberg, Thalén, and Popeil (2012) describe belting as “speechlike, yell-like, or shouting voice production heard in such commercial vocal styles as pop, rock, R&B, jazz, country, and world music as well as in musical theater.”⁵² They argue that belting is a widely different sound than the classical voice tradition. However, belting can still be classified into five distinct sub-styles, which are defined as “ringy”, brassy, nasal, speech-like, and heavy. It is essential that a musical theater singer be able to change the color of their voice in order to portray the specific characterization of the song.⁵³ In order to determine the physical characteristics of each of these sub-styles, a study was completed where one subject was examined singing a musical theater phrase in each of these sub-

⁴⁹ Ibid, 438-439.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 439.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Johann Sundberg, Margareta Thalén, and Lisa Popeil, “Subtles of Belting: Phonatory and Resonatory Characteristics.” *Journal of Voice*, 26 no. 1 (2012): 44.

⁵³ Ibid.

styles as well as classically. The versatility in the musical theater singer becomes imperative here due to audition requirements. It can be argued that musical theater singers should be able to sing in all genres throughout musical theater history, especially when auditioning for musical theater productions. This causes the physical characteristics of each sub-style and the ability to alternate between them to become increasingly important.

Sundberg, Thalén, and Popeil (2012) found that heavy belting produced the highest closed-quotient, or ratio of time glottis is closed during each cycle of vibration. Classical singing had the opposite effect. It had a substantially lower closed quotient than any of the belting sub-styles.⁵⁴ When discussing frequency, classical singing had clearly the lowest levels. All other belting styles had substantially higher peaks of frequency with nasal belting reaching the lowest peak.⁵⁵ Therefore, the various styles of belting produced similar results, while classical singing produced results which were drastically different.

It is clear that there are many different viewpoints on the definition and physiological characteristics of belting. The general conclusion is that belting is a *thyroarytenoid* or chest voice dominant sound taken higher in the range with more speech-like vowels. Most research also concludes that belting has a higher closed quotient, or ratio of time the glottis is closed during vocal production, than classical singing. There is also a great deal of concern about the vocal health of belters and musical theater singers as a whole. This could be due to the classical biases voice pedagogues may demonstrate when approaching musical theater singing.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 47.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 48.

CLASSICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MUSICAL THEATER SINGING

Schutte and Miller (1993) argue that variations of singing are endless, which causes classifications of types of singing to become problematic. It is predominately the Western operatic and concert traditions that have been the subject of research on singing and vocal pedagogy.⁵⁶ Therefore, many voice teachers come from voice study within the classical tradition. This becomes problematic when many voice students are not interested in classical singing, but want to sound like pop or musical theater singers. Classical voice teachers will agree to take these students, hoping their general knowledge of singing will make it possible to help the student. It is important to note, however, that musical theater singing is directly related to the personality of the character the singer is portraying. Therefore, the sound becomes much less “objectified” than in classical singing. Schutte and Miller (1993) argue, “For such a teacher, two questions of high priority are: What are the distinguishing characteristics of these sounds and their production? Are they compatible with vocal hygiene?”⁵⁷

Schutte and Miller (1993) go on to address the general features of singing non-classical repertoire. These include the importance of the text and the necessity that it is understood clearly. The text carries the nuances of the emotion. Vowel modification, which is often used by classical singers, is not as prevalent. There is a high value on the naturalness of the sound, even at the expense of beauty. Individual features of voices and unevenness of sound is more accepted when singing non-classical repertoire. Classical repertoire should not be attempted unless the singer has the technical skill to meet the

⁵⁶ Harm K. Schutte and Donald G. Miller, “Belting and Pop, Nonclassical Approaches to the Female Middle Voice: Some Preliminary Considerations,” *Journal of Voice*, 7 no. 2 (1993): 142.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

demands of the song. Non-classical repertoire can be adapted to fit the technical abilities of the singer. Also, non-classical repertoire is often amplified, while classical repertoire is usually not. This must be taken into consideration when comparing genres.⁵⁸

The goal of Schutte and Miller (1993) is to “describe in objective, measurable terms some of the acoustic and physiological features characteristic of this style of singing (non-classical).”⁵⁹ In discussing basic vocal fold function, the closed quotient, or ratio of time the glottis is closed during each cycle of vibration, is generally long, or above 50% in chest voice and short or below 40% in falsetto or head voice.⁶⁰ The vocal tract, or air space between the vocal folds and mouth opening, has a series of resonances called formants. Movement, shape, and position of the lips, jaw, tongue, velum, and larynx change the configuration of the vocal tract and the formants. Generally, the larger the vocal tract, the lower the formant values.⁶¹ The instrument used for the study was the spectrum analyzer, which produces spectrograms. These spectrograms provide analysis of the frequency components of a given moment in time.

Using the spectrum analyzer, Schutte and Miller (1993) took preliminary acoustic and physiological data on a number of subjects and chose measurements that were characteristic of the different styles of singing. This included recordings of well-known singers, including a mezzo-soprano who sings both classical and non-classical literature. The following conclusions were found. In a classically trained soprano, the chest register had a longer closed phase of above 50%. The middle register had a shorter closed phase of less than 40%. In the middle register the first two formant frequencies were lower.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 142-143.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 143.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 144.

Higher formant frequencies of the chest register are similar to the formant frequencies of average speech values.⁶² In general, relatively low first formants are characteristic of the classical approach to singing. This results from a low laryngeal position, which is advocated by most classical voice teachers. The non-classical singing contains higher formants, which are closer to speech. In legit musical theater singing, the vocal fold function changes to falsetto or head voice in the middle range and produces a somewhat high laryngeal position. The chest register in the middle range produces a long glottal closed phase. This causes the singer to have increased lung pressure and an extremely high laryngeal position.⁶³

In regards to vocal health, Schutte and Miller (1993) identify three potential sources of vocal abuse. They are a high larynx, chest voice with closed quotient above 50%, and high breath pressure.⁶⁴ Belting includes all three risk factors. It is best for singers to avoid using the extremely high laryngeal position to improve overall vocal health. Also, voice training will cause great improvement in vocal health when belting.⁶⁵

Popeil (1999) argues that “belting is, historically, the dominant form of sung vocal expression (from the first yells of the caveman to the musical theater singers of today), the ascent of the European Bel Canto tradition has brought into question the artistic validity, healthfulness, and even aesthetic value of this powerful use of the voice.”⁶⁶ To argue the validity and healthfulness of belting, Popeil (1999) compared belt and classical vocal techniques using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), video-

⁶² Ibid, 144-145.

⁶³ Ibid, 147.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 149.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Lisa Popeil, “Comparing Belt and Classical Techniques Using MRI and Video Fluoroscopy,” *Journal of Singing*, 56 no. 2 (1999): 27.

fluoroscopy, and video-laryngoscopy on one-subject, herself. The study focused on the relationship of the *thyroid* and *cricoid* cartilages and their tilt or angle in classical singing and belting. Through the use of side view video-fluoroscopy, Popeil (1999) found in classical singing style that the larynx is low with space between the back of the tongue and the rear of the pharyngeal wall. Also, the head position is tipped down slightly, causing wideness of the pharynx. In belting, the larynx is higher, the soft palate is lower, and there is more narrow space between the back of the tongue and the rear pharyngeal wall.⁶⁷ The front view video fluoroscopy found that the true and false vocal folds were clearly visible in both belting and classical singing. There was no pressing of the true or false vocal folds. This is a sign of healthy singing technique.⁶⁸ When singing higher in belt, there was some stretching of the *thyroarytenoid* muscles, which may increase vocal fold tension. Also, the *thyroid* cartilage is tilting forward in belting.⁶⁹

Popeil (1999) came to the conclusion that correct belting should have spaciousness in the pharyngeal area. Also, there is a difference in spinal angling between belting and classical. This causes a change in the resonating shape of the vocal tract. In classical singing, the soft palate is high and in a more closed position than belting. Finally, “safe, yet powerful belting seems to benefit from a system which encourages laryngeal lowering, a sense of pharyngeal widening, the sensation of the laryngeal lean which results in a speech-like sound to the top of the range, lack of constriction in true and false cords, balanced and ever-shifting register changes using laryngeal sensations of

⁶⁷ Ibid, 28.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

thyroarytenoid and cricothyroid muscle activity, and extremely strong abdominal breath support.⁷⁰

McCoy (2007) addresses potential misconceptions of belting from the perspective of a classical voice teacher. Common questions about belting include: Can belting really be taught? Does belting damage the voice? Is belting the same as chest voice? Does belting require the larynx to be held in an elevated position? Is classical vocal training the best way to learn to belt?⁷¹

Twelve female singers participated in the study, all 17 to 38 years old. They had been studying singing from 1.5 to 14 years. Each participant was asked to sing a; B-flat major ascending scale in full belt, ending on B-flat4; F major ascending scale in full belt, ending on F5, F major ascending scale in belt/mix, ending on F5; F major ascending scale in head voice ending on F5; and ascending/descending intervals, A-flat4 to E-flat4, all belt and belt/head combinations.⁷²

Closed quotients were measured with an electroglotograph. Closed quotient is the ratio of time the glottis is closed versus open during each cycle of oscillations. Previous studies have determined that registration is related to closed quotient. Generally, heavy mechanism or chest voice is produced with a closed quotient of over 50%. Light mechanism or head voice is produced with a closed quotient of below 40%. High closed quotient requires increased glottal adduction, which could cause increased medial compression from activity of the *thyroarytenoid* muscles. Overall, closed quotient of the test group was relatively high, demonstrating the likely use of heavy mechanism through

⁷⁰ Ibid, 29.

⁷¹ Scott McCoy, "A Classical Pedagogue Explores Belting," *Journal of Singing*, 63 no. 5 (May/June 2007): 545.

⁷² Ibid, 546.

the pitch F5. However, the results were varied when examining individuals. Therefore, belting can be accomplished through different technical strategies.⁷³

EKG transducers were placed on the neck to determine laryngeal height. In this study, a relatively stable laryngeal position was maintained with little to no elevation above the resting point, suggesting that belting does not require laryngeal elevation.⁷⁴

The acoustic spectrum of classical singing is based on clear formant zones. Generally, little energy is found above 4 kHz. The acoustic spectrum for belting is less clearly defined. When belting, strong harmonics are found through 10 kHz. The timbre of belting is often described as bright, twangy, or brassy due to horizontal vowel sounds modeled after speech. The acoustics show brightness through increased energy in high frequency harmonics. This could be due to three possible reasons. The first is a narrowing of the pharynx through gentle contraction of the constrictor muscles. The second is a shortened vocal tract through spreading the lips in the horizontal vowel position. The final is the high closed quotients, which produce a glottal buzz with increased amplitude in high harmonics.⁷⁵

Some general observations were that singers produce a scale that was light and slender on the bottom, increasing in energy and more speech-like in the middle, and ending in a clear, strong, open top. The voices had a uniform timbre. Belters do not need to project their voices like a classical singer, due to amplification and the singer's formant. Physical manifestations or vocal distress are found only in incorrect belting, just as they are only found in incorrect classical singing.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 547.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 547-548.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 548.

When teaching at Boston Conservatory, Hall (2007) was required to teach students studying musical theater. She observed that the sound these students were making were healthy sounds, but not classical in style. This prompted Hall (2007) to change her teaching methods, since classical voice teaching would not be appropriate for these musical theater students. However, she observed that there are very few instructional materials to assist in musical theater teaching. She also observed that most of her students learned how to sing in the belt or mix style by experimenting on their own.⁷⁷

Hall (2007) discovered from a 2003 survey by LoVetri and Weekly that “singing teachers’ understanding of music theater pedagogy and styles is sketchy at best.”⁷⁸ The LoVetri and Weekly survey found that only 45% of the respondents had training in teaching musical theater. This is due mostly to the fact that the majority of vocal pedagogy programs are focused on classical singing and within classical music departments. This causes musical theater teaching to be based on classical singing techniques, which is not necessarily appropriate for real-world musical theater singing. There is also a great deal of confusion about belting and what is a healthy belt or mixed sound.⁷⁹

Another major challenge Hall (2007) found was the diversity of musical theater history. Teachers are expected to teach every style in musical theater, which includes

⁷⁷ Karen Hall, “Music Theater and Classical Singing: at Odds Personally and Professionally,” *Journal of Singing*, 63 no. 5 (May/June 2007): 569.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 570.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

legit, jazz, rock, pop, gospel, rhythm and blues, and country. Each of these styles require a unique pedagogical perspective that must be studied.⁸⁰

Hall (2007) came to the conclusion that musical theater is becoming an increasingly popular genre. For this reason, voice teachers must be trained with the unique needs of musical theater and its wide variety of genres in order to become versatile teachers.⁸¹

Edwin (2007) argues that belt and legit are opposite types of singing. The common perception is that legit is more closely related to classical singing and is considered high brow. Belt, on the other hand, is more closely related to popular music and is considered low brow. It is only within the past few years that Jeannette LoVetri gave non-classical singing, including belting, a more legitimate name by creating the term *Contemporary Commercial Music* or CCM.⁸²

Edwin (2007) argues that although singers have been belting for thousands of years, it is only recently that research begins to understand the physicality of the belt verses classical singing. The two primary muscles responsible for vocal fold activity are the *thyroarytenoid* muscles and the *cricothyroid* muscles. The *thyroarytenoid* muscles are responsible for shortening and thickening the vocal folds. This produces a sound that considered chest voice in both men and women. The *cricothyroid* muscles are responsible for stretching and thinning the vocal folds. This produced a sound which is considered to be head voice in women and falsetto in men.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid, 570-571.

⁸¹ Ibid, 571.

⁸² Edwin, "Popular Song and Musical Theater" 213.

⁸³ Ibid, 214.

Edwin (2007) argues that belting in both men and women is produced by a *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound. Therefore, it is more difficult for a female singer to belt, since the *cricothyroid* muscle is prominently used when singing in head voice. Many classical voice teachers attempt to teach healthy belting with a *cricothyroid* dominant sound. This is known in the musical theater industry as a faux belt or fake belt. Edwin (2007) argues that this is an option for a singer if the high notes are outside of their normal belt range. However, the *cricothyroid* dominant sound does not have the same power or presence as the *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound.⁸⁴

Edwin (2007) goes on to argue that the vocal fold activity is also linked to phonation. Belting has a speech-like quality, which is created by a narrow pharynx and horizontal mouth position for vowels and consonants. It also requires a bright resonance in the sound for both male and female singers. Edwin (2007) also argues that classical singing technique, with tall round vowels and a *cricothyroid* dominant sound, is only appropriate for more legit musical theater singing.⁸⁵

Male singers and female singers require different pedagogy when approaching belting. Male singers, both classical and musical theater, sing with a *thyroarytenoid* dominant vocal fold source. They are not required to change vocal registers when belting. Therefore, male musical theater pedagogy should focus on using “bright, speech-like sounds, a non-continuous vibrato, and a more text-driven approach to the repertoire.”⁸⁶ Female singers, however, often use a *cricothyroid* dominant sound, especially classically trained singers. A female singer then must learn how to bring the *thyroarytenoid*

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 215.

dominant sound higher in her range to create the belt. Therefore, it is imperative that vocal pedagogues work to develop both a comfortable *thyroarytenoid* and *cricothyroid* dominant sound in female singers.⁸⁷

It is clear that there are many different approaches and thoughts on teaching belting and musical theater pedagogy. Many voice teachers approach teaching musical theater from a classical perspective, because of the lack of teacher training in music theater pedagogy. Due to the large range of musical theater styles performed throughout musical theater history, it is imperative that voice teachers have an understanding of these styles in order to teach them effectively.

TEACHING MUSICAL THEATER

Many opera houses are now performing musical theater shows, which require classical singers to have some understanding of musical theater technique.⁸⁸ It is a common perception that musical theater singing, or belting, is harmful to the voice. However, studies have shown that in terms of vocal impairment, there is no significant difference between classical singers and musical theater singers. Poor technique, not style, cause vocal problems or damage.⁸⁹ Many university voice teachers use the bel canto technique when teaching musical theater, which comes from the classical voice tradition. Although elements of bel canto can be used in musical theater teaching, it

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Corinne Ness, "Teaching Musical Theatre: An Integrative Dialectical Approach." *Opera Journal*, 47 no. 1 (March 2014): 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 4.

should not be the primary method when approaching musical theater repertoire with a student.⁹⁰

Most voice pedagogues agree that belting contains three characteristics. These are a thicker, *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound; a shorter vocal tract, due to a mid to high larynx and a narrowed pharyngeal space; and a divergent resonator shape, resembling a megaphone. These characteristics together create a brighter and more speech-like tone. In musical theater, there is no common definition for a healthy and preferred musical theater sound. In classical music, the correct vocal quality of a Bach singer, Mozart singer, French art song singer, and Wagnerian singer are consistent. We are aware of these consistencies mostly because of the Fach system, which assigns opera roles based on vocal characteristics. Conversely, musical theater, roles assignments are largely based on character types and physical characteristics, causing more variety in the singing voice of who performs each role.⁹¹ Also, classical vocalism presents a variety of possible vocal colors, while musical theater singing is seen as either belt or legit (legitimate). Voice teachers must be able to teach and discuss the nuances in musical theater sound as well as those found in classical teaching and singing.

The dialectic system offers a continuum with poles of opposites that students and teachers can explore. Beginning with breath, which powers the voice. Breath may hold back the air or stand still, it might flow where the folds are firmly adducted to resist breathiness, or have a breath-infused tone. Musical theater vocal training should incorporate the breath in each of the three ways. The continuum is breath standing still

⁹⁰ Ibid, 4-5.

⁹¹ Ibid, 6-7.

and breathy tone. Experimenting with each of these poles, the student will find the appropriate breath support for their own sound.⁹²

The vocal fold closure is integral to musical theater singing. The vocal folds are thicker with a more *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound. However, musical theater also requires a thinner vocal fold source or *cricothyroid* dominant sound. Therefore, a singer must be comfortable with the continuum of thicker, *thyroarytenoid* dominant sound, and thinner, *cricothyroid* dominant sound. They must use these specific colors on the continuum and apply that to the specific repertoire they are singing.⁹³

Musical theater singing often includes a shortened vocal tract. This can be accomplished with a higher larynx or with more open vowels, rather than the deep-set vowels of classical singing. Therefore, the continuum is between a divergent sound (lateral lips, narrow pharynx, and mid larynx) or a convergent sound (rounded lips, wide pharynx, low larynx).⁹⁴

Finally, musical theater has a dramatic quality, which must be discussed in the vocal studio. The singer must use the drama to make both acting and vocal choices. Therefore, each phrase of music must be assigned a tactic, which allows the performers to get what they need. The continuum of the tactic is failure and success.⁹⁵

Teachers and student should use these continuums to determine the appropriate nuanced vocal technique for each musical theater song and role. Therefore, musical theater becomes a contemporary American version of *Gesamtkuntswerk* or “total work of

⁹² Ibid, 10-11.

⁹³ Ibid, 11-13.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 13-15.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 21-25.

art.”⁹⁶ It is imperative that teachers understand the stylistic elements of the musical theater pieces they are teaching to achieve this affect.

In addition to the various singing styles, the introduction of the head microphone in musical theater singing changes the technique of the musical theater singer.⁹⁷ The microphone allows singers to be less concerned with projection, such as in opera or classical singing, and more concerned with vocal color and nuance. However, with the emergence of the microphone, the amplified or recorded pit orchestra began to emerge.⁹⁸ Therefore, musical theater singing in rock based musicals must include a powerful and aggressive vocal delivery to portray the character of the song, as well as sing over the amplified pit orchestra.⁹⁹ When singing with the microphone, especially in a ballad, the vocal folds must be more relaxed and connected to speech. With the microphone, phrasing and lyrics become much more important than strict rhythms or beautiful line, such as in classical singing.¹⁰⁰

Because of the emerging rock and popular musicals being written today, an understanding of teaching rock singing within musical theater is a necessity for any musical theater voice teacher. Tracy (2013) argues that “good rock singing, like good classical singing, is natural (organic), stylistically and emotionally integrated (authentic), and transformative (artistic).¹⁰¹ To create this authentic rock style, Tracy (2013) maintains that rock singing should have a more natural and conversational vocal

⁹⁶ Ibid, 26.

⁹⁷ Rachel L. Lebon. *The Versatile Vocalist: Singing Authentically in Contrasting Styles and Idioms*. 2006. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 72.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 73.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 12-13.

¹⁰¹ Neal Tracy, “Musical Theater Rocks! Organic Rock Singing: 101 and Beyond.” *Journal of Singing*, 70 no. 2 (2013): 209.

production, deemphasize classical virtuosity and formality, use ornamentation in a rock style, and experiment with breathing patterns.¹⁰²

Tracy (2013) introduces nine elements which are essential for authentic rock singing and organic delivery. These elements are mostly musical and not physiological, focusing mainly on making the singing speech-based rather than tone based, as in classical music. These techniques include, using an unstressed syllable on the beat to emphasize the lyrics and deemphasize the beat, tossing off the final words in a straightforward sentence, placing the anacrusis on the beat to obscure the beat, deliver lyrical thoughts in one phrase, explore the “chew rate” or duration of vowel sound to non-vowel sound in vocal delivery, perform three note riffs with the second note on the beat, singing four eighth notes unequally to express the rhythm of the language, and finally delivering phrases using back and forward phrasing.¹⁰³ These techniques mostly give specific instances of how to emphasis the conversational nature of the text and deemphasize the beat.

The chew rate in musical theater rock singing should also be explored. The three phonetic elements in a word are the vowel, consonant, and diphthong. In classical singing, the vowel sound should be long and pure, with the consonant and diphthong being short and late. In rock singing, the chew rate should be more natural and closer to speech. The chew rate can change based on the song style and the singer’s choices. It is something that should be experimented when singing rock based musical theater.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 209-212.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 211.

In addition to the emphasis on conversational singing and de-emphasis on the beat, Tracy (2013) encourages using “the growl” on emotive lyrics to establish psychological pressure.¹⁰⁵ The growl represents the importance of communication above beautiful singing in musical theater. However, if not done properly or in excess, it can be argued that the growl can cause vocal damage. To teach the growl, the student begins in glottal fry and attempts to sustain the fry while singing a three-note scale. Eventually, the glottal fry should be extended into a nine-note scale.¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that the growl should be used for emotional emphasis and should not be a regular element in the student’s singing.

Each of these elements requires a stylistic understanding of rock-based musical theater by both the performer and the voice teacher. This stylistic understanding can best be achieved through listening to performances and recordings of rock and popular based musical theater.

It is clear that many stylistic elements need to be addressed when teaching and performing within the musical theater genre, which features a variety of styles of singing and vocal colors beyond the generalizations of belt and legit. It is imperative that collegiate voice teachers to recognize and understand these nuances and stylistic differences when teaching musical theater repertoire to their students.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 210.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Performing musical theater requires various styles of singing. These styles can generally be classified in two ways; belt and legit. Legit or legitimate singing is more closely related to classical music, while belting is more associated with rock or popular music.¹⁰⁷ Legit singing in musical theater generally comes from the tradition of operetta and was used often during the Golden Age of the 1930s and 40s. The belt voice arose in the 1940s and 50s through character songs which were prose driven. Belting became more popular in the 1960s and 70s with the emergence of the rock musical.¹⁰⁸ However, musicals today are written in various styles and require multiple vocal abilities and colors. Often a musical theater performer is required to sing in various styles within one musical or song.

Musical theater is becoming increasingly important in the classical singing world. Often classical singers will program musical theater on their recitals. Major opera houses in America are regularly performing musical theater repertoire as a part of their season.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it is imperative for singers in classical voice departments to have an understanding of musical theater singing and styles to be successful in the singing profession. However, most voice pedagogy programs are within the classical voice departments and therefore, focus on teaching classical singing. This causes voice teachers

¹⁰⁷ Robert Edwin, "Popular Song and Musical Theatre: Belt is Legit," *Journal of Singing*, 64 no. 2 (November 2007): 213.

¹⁰⁸ Tracy Bourne, Maeva Garnier, and Diana Kenny, "Musical Theater Voice: Production, Physiology, and Pedagogy," *Journal of Singing*, 67 no. 4 (March/April 2011): 437.

¹⁰⁹ Corrine Ness, "Teaching Music Theatre: An Integrative Dialectical Approach," *Opera Journal* 47, no. 1 (March 2014): 3.

to have very little training in non-classical styles and literature, such as musical theater.¹¹⁰ Teaching musical theater is particularly challenging because it requires teacher understanding of every style from musical theater history. This includes microphone singing technique, which emerged in the 1930s and 40s with the movie musical and developed throughout the rock and roll era to contemporary musicals today.¹¹¹ Broadway shows performed today require styles of singing ranging from classical to rock. Other styles of singing found in the modern American musical include legit, jazz, pop, rock, gospel, rhythm and blues, and country.¹¹² Therefore, teacher knowledge and pedagogical techniques of these various styles of singing become increasingly important, especially when teaching the undergraduate voice student. The purpose of this study is to examine the various styles of American musical theater to supplement the vocal education of undergraduate soprano voice major.

In order to develop and structure this study, the following questions will be used:

1. What are the stylistic differences between the various genres of American musical theater, focusing specifically on the differences between belt and legit and the styles in between?
2. What musical theater repertoire is appropriate for a soprano undergraduate voice student?
3. How can this chosen repertoire be taught from a non-classical perspective?

¹¹⁰ Karen Hall, "Music Theater and Classical Singing: at Odds Personally and Professionally," *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 5 (May/June 2007): 570.

¹¹¹ Rachel L. Lebon. *The Versatile Vocalist: Singing Authentically in Contrasting Styles and Idioms*. 2006. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 72.

¹¹² Hall, "Musical Theater and Classical Singing," 570-571.

When auditioning for a musical, the auditioner's songbook, that is, collection of song repertoire, becomes incredibly important. Jones identifies ten types of songs; English operetta, jazz age standard, golden age standard, post-golden age standard, Sondheim song, musical theater pop song, musical theater rock song, pop-opera song, jukebox/radio song, and Walt Disney song, which should be included in the musical theater audition book.¹¹³ For the purpose of this study, those ten categories will be narrowed to five which span the entire canon of musical theater history defined as operetta, jazz influenced, golden age, contemporary pop, and contemporary classical. In addition to these five categories, an audition book should contain an up-tempo piece, a ballad, a dramatic song, and a comic song or character piece. This study defines the five categories and outlines significant composers and musicals in each category. This study also examined and analyzed five songs in each category which would be appropriate for the undergraduate soprano voice major. The analysis of each song focuses on elements of vocal pedagogy, specifically on belting and female issues with registration, as well as stylistic elements that are appropriate for each song category. The analysis will begin with a suggested singer and recording of each song, followed by the song's title, composer, musical it first appeared, range, tessitura, tempo, and characterization, and stylistic elements and considerations to make the performance appropriate and authentic.

The songs chosen for the musical theater audition book of an undergraduate soprano represent a range of vocal, dramatic, and musical styles. It is important to be

¹¹³ Kevin Michael Jones, "Ten Styles of Musical Theater Songs for Your Audition Book." *Musical Theater Resources: For Singers, Actors, Teachers, Directors, and Other Professionals*, June 11, 2014, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://musicaltheatresources.com/2014/06/11/10-styles-of-musical-theatre-songs-for-your-audition-book/>.

aware of the stylistic elements of each period and type of song. Musical theater is such a diverse art form that it is imperative that a young student be able to display both their vocal and dramatic range when performing an audition.

CHAPTER 4

VOCAL APPROACHES TO MUSICAL THEATER GENRES AND STYLES

The Musical Theater genre features multiple musical styles including; classical, jazz, pop, rock, gospel, rhythm and blues, country, and many more.¹¹⁴ However, these styles can generally be described in two ways, “belt” and “legit.” “Legit” or legitimate singing comes from classical singing and the bel canto tradition, while belting is more rock or pop based.¹¹⁵ It becomes necessary to understand the stylistic elements of each genre of musical theater in order to incorporate it into the voice studio. Jones identifies ten types of songs; English operetta, jazz age standard, golden age standard, post-golden age standard, Sondheim song, musical theater pop song, musical theater rock song, pop-opera song, jukebox/radio song, and Walt Disney song, which should be included in the musical theater audition book.¹¹⁶ When examining the canon of musical theater, the ten categories can be narrowed to five: Operetta, Jazz Influenced, Golden Age, Contemporary Pop, and Contemporary Classical. Five songs appropriate for the undergraduate soprano in each historical category were examined and analyzed, focusing specifically on the stylistic elements and musical influences. Elements for analysis included belting and legit singing, phrasing, tessitura, characterization, use of vibrato, front and back phrasing, and connection to speech. Through information derived from such analytical approaches, a teacher of singing can acquire insight into authentic musical

¹¹⁴ Karen Hall, “Music Theater and Classical Singing: at Odds Personally and Professionally,” *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 5 (May/June 2007): 570-571.

¹¹⁵ Robert Edwin, “Popular Song and Musical Theatre: Belt is Legit,” *Journal of Singing*, 64 no. 2 (November 2007): 213.

¹¹⁶ Kevin Michael Jones, “Ten Styles of Musical Theater Songs for Your Audition Book.” *Musical Theater Resources: For Singers, Actors, Teachers, Directors, and Other Professionals*, June 11, 2014, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://musicaltheatresources.com/2014/06/11/10-styles-of-musical-theatre-songs-for-your-audition-book/>.

theater singing and thus have a solid foundation to begin incorporating musical theater repertoire into their voice studio.

OPERETTA

Operetta comes predominantly from the tradition of comic opera by Arthur Sullivan and W.S. Gilbert.¹¹⁷ This can also include light operatic works, specifically Viennese, such as works by Franz Lehár, Johann Strauss II, Kurt Weill, Sigmund Romberg, and Victor Herbert.¹¹⁸ It is important to note that songs from operettas not originally written in English should be performed with the standard English translation for musical theater auditions. The traditional operettas come from the late 19th and early 20th century. However, there are examples of operetta in later in musical theater history, such as Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* (1956) or George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1934). Songs in this category are generally comic, but require strong vocal technique. This is the category most closely related to classical singing. It requires long lyric lines, excellent breath support, tall vowels, and the use of vibrato throughout. Generally, the vocal quality should be more forward than in operatic arias. Patter songs, or songs with a great deal of text, are also typical of this genre. Therefore, clear diction and understandable text is highly important.

Suggested Recording: Elsie Morrison¹¹⁹

Song: "A Simple Sailor Lowly Born"

Composer: Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

¹¹⁷ Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*. 4th ed., ed. Richard Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). 49-50.

¹¹⁸ Bordman, *American Musical Theater*. 271.

¹¹⁹ *HMS Pinafore and Trial by Jury*. 2011. 2 CD-ROMs. EMI Records, Ltd.

Musical: *HMS Pinafore* (1878)

Range: D4-B-flat5, Optional C6

Tessitura: Upper passaggio

Tempo: Allegro con spirito

Characterization: Josephine is the young daughter of the Captain of the HMS Pinafore.

She struggles throughout the musical between her social position, pleasing her father, and her love for a young sailor. This struggle is most prevalent in “A Simple Sailor Lowly Born.” She has agreed to run away with the young sailor, but does not want to give up her life of luxury. Josephine’s movements and behavior, like all of the characters in Gilbert and Sullivan’s works, is over exaggerated. Although her problems seem frivolous to the listener, they are quite serious and profound to her. This piece is a great opportunity for a young singer to experiment with comic acting.

Stylistic Elements: This song features an extended recitative section followed by two verses. Musically, the song is rather straightforward. However, it can be very challenging vocally. It sits in the upper passaggio throughout almost the entire piece. The text is extremely important and must be understood. This is an ideal piece to work on clarity and diction for a young soprano who is comfortable in her upper passaggio. It is similar in style to an operatic aria, but does not contain the long lyric lines typical of bel canto singing. True bel canto singing would obscure the clarity of the diction because the beauty of the voice and lyric singing becomes the most important element of the performance. In musical theater, understanding the text is of the utmost importance. The challenge for the singer is to keep the breath moving through the upper passaggio, while still keeping the text clear and understandable. The recitative section is a great

opportunity for a young singer to address text delivery and comic timing. The piece features terraced dynamics, that is the dynamics shift abruptly from loud to soft, which should be used to elevate the comic nature of the song.

Suggested Recording: Kitty Carlisle¹²⁰

Song: “Sabre Song”

Composer: Sigmund Romberg (1887-1951)

Musical: *Desert Song* (1926)

Range: D4-B-flat5

Tessitura: Upper passaggio

Tempo: Poco allegretto

Characterization: Margot is a young French girl and the daughter of General Birabeau.

General Birabeau is the leader of a troop in Morocco, sent to destroy a band of Arab rebels who threaten a French outpost. Margot is captured by the Red Shadow, the leader of the Arab rebels, who is actually Pierre, a French soldier. Margot falls in love with the Red Shadow and struggles with her feelings in “Sabre Song.” Margot does have characteristics of an ingénue, however, she shows a great deal of strength and often stands up for herself. She is forced to challenge her belief in good and evil when she begins to have feelings for the Red Shadow.

Stylistic Elements: This song has three distinct sections, all which sit in the upper part of the soprano’s range. The first section is the most chromatic and musically complicated. It portrays the struggle of Margot, who has fallen in love with her own captor. The majority of the first section sits in the upper passaggio, requiring a soprano who is comfortable in

¹²⁰ *Desert Song/New Moon Remastered*. 2002. CD-ROM. Universal Classics Group.

that range. The continuous sixteenth notes in the orchestra encourage free flowing of breath and lyric lines, which are required in this section. The second section is more recitative-like and sits lower in the voice. It is slower and gives the singer an opportunity to experiment with the rhythm of text and prosody of language. The final section returns to the high lyric singing. It is less chromatic and more sing-able than the first section. Each phrase features fast staccato sixteenth notes followed by high lyric singing, which can be used for teaching buoyancy in the voice. The ending of the song is quite dramatic and requires strong breath support and free flowing air in the upper passaggio. The song does require the same approach and technique as an operatic aria. Vibrato should be consistent throughout. The singer should alter the rhythm slightly to model the prosody of natural speech.

Suggested Recording: Anna Moffo¹²¹

Song: “Italian Street Song”

Composer: Victor Herbert (1859-1924)

Musical: *Naughty Marietta* (1910)

Range: G4-C6

Tessitura: Upper passaggio

Tempo: Allegro

Characterization: Marietta is a countess who escapes from an unhappy marriage by disguising herself as a casquette girl, women who are brought from France to Louisiana to marry. She escapes from the other girls and comes to New Orleans on her own. She then disguises herself as the son of a puppeteer and works at the marionette theater.

¹²¹ *Operetta Hits, Vol 2*. 2013. CD-ROM. Reader’s Digest Music.

Marietta is young and beautiful, but clearly full of spark and strength. She is witty, yet stays truthful to her morality throughout the operetta. She provides a great opportunity for an undergraduate student to portray a lively and well-rounded character with a great deal of depth.

Stylistic Elements: “Italian Street Song” is a great choice for a young coloratura soprano. The song sits entirely in the upper part of the soprano’s range. It features a great deal of coloratura, which is both manageable and sing-able. Marietta sings the song because she is trying to entertain the townsfolk. However, the song also provides insight into Marietta’s character and how much she misses her home. This balance serves as a great teaching tool for an undergraduate soprano. *Naughty Marietta* is the most operatic of Herbert’s operettas and should be approached in a similar manner to a bel canto aria.¹²² “Italian Street Song” serves as an excellent introduction to coloratura and could be used before approaching a Bellini or Donizetti aria. It is especially approachable for an undergraduate singer because it is sung in English.

Suggested Recording: Cree Carrico¹²³

Song: “Jenny’s Lied”

Composer: Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

Musical: *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (1930)

Range: D-sharp4-A5

Tessitura: Mid-voice and Upper Passaggio

Tempo: Blues Tempo

¹²² Bordman, *American Musical Theatre*. 49-50.

¹²³ Carrico, Cree. “Jenny’s Lied” (video). Posted October 15, 2013. Accessed February 2, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Xd0YG1KYpE>.

Characterization: Jenny is a prostitute who has left her home to travel to Mahagonny to pursue whisky, money, and pretty boys. Jenny's character can be sympathetic even as she regularly uses her sex appeal to get what she wants. She begins a prostitute/john relationship with Jimmy, which does evolve into a somewhat romantic relationship. However, Jenny refuses to help Jimmy when he is arrested and eventually executed for not paying his bills. In "Jenny's Lied," she describes the philosophy Jimmy lived by early in the work: That a man only worries about himself and does whatever he likes. It is important to note that *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* uses Verfremdungseffekt or the alienation effect¹²⁴. Weill intentionally causes the audience to be emotionally distant from the action on stage in order to think about the meaning of what is happening. This effect renders Jenny's selfishness in unwilling to save Jimmy's life as appropriate in the context of the show.

Stylistic Elements: Like many of Kurt Weill's works "Jenny's Lied" has a distinct jazz and blues feel with swing rhythms and chromatic harmonies. The verse is slower and has a more spoken quality. However, it does sit in the middle to upper part of the soprano's range. Therefore, the singer needs to bring that spoken quality higher in the voice. A strong bel canto technique is necessary here. This is especially true for the A5 at the end of the verse, which should be accented and then followed by a decrescendo, requiring excellent technique and breath support. The chorus is much more lyrical with substantially less text. Although the piece requires classical technique, the singer does not need a beautiful tone throughout. The song should contain some grittiness at moments to portray the circumstances and demeanor of the character. Depending on the actress cast

¹²⁴ Shiloh Harrison. 2006. "The Foundations of a City: The Musical and Textural Interrelation in Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*." Master's thesis, University of Waterloo. 9.

as Jenny, this song is often sung down the octave in a speech-singing manner, similar to sprechstimme. This optional way of portraying the piece would not be appropriate for an undergraduate soprano.

Suggested Recording: Judy Kaye¹²⁵

Song: “Dream with Me”

Composer: Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Musical: *Peter Pan* (1950)

Range: A-flat3-F-sharp5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Flowing

Characterization: “Dream with Me” is sung by the iconic character of Wendy Darling from *Peter Pan*. She is a young girl who is taken to Neverland by Peter Pan with her two brothers. In “Dream with Me,” Wendy sings about her imagination and eludes to her attraction to Peter.

Stylistic Elements: “Dream with Me” is often sung by opera singers and can be quite operatic. However, in a musical theater context, the sound should generally be more forward with more attention given to the diction. This is a great piece for an undergraduate lyric soprano, as opposed to the light coloratura soprano who would be more suited to “Italian Street Song” from *Naughty Marietta*. The song is chromatic and features some jazz elements. The chromaticism is particularly evident in the middle section. The song does feature a number of leaps. The singer is required to sing from the high/middle to lower part of the range in one phrase. This is a great piece for teaching the

¹²⁵ Bernstein: Arias and Barcarolles. 1990. CD-ROM. Koch International Classics.

transition between the middle and lower passaggio. “Dream with Me” does requires long lyric lines and the use of vibrato throughout.

JAZZ INFLUENCED

Songs in this category were written during the 1920s through the 1940s.¹²⁶ These songs require an understanding of jazz genre, swing feel and rhythms, and tend to be contain more speech-like phrasing. The jazz rhythms and speech-like character of the song becomes more important than beauty of tone or lyric lines. Also, it is highly important for the singer to have clear diction and understandable text. Composers in this category include Cole Porter, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Kurt Weill, Noel Coward, Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern.

Suggested Recording: Kristen Chenoweth¹²⁷

Song: “I’m a Stranger Here Myself”

Composer: Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

Musical: *One Touch of Venus* (1943)

Range: C-sharp4-E-flat5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Moderato

Characterization: The character singing this piece is a statue of Venus that comes to life and immediately falls in love. The character itself is quite farcical. The most important characterization elements are the clarity of text and intention.

¹²⁶ John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2003). 55.

¹²⁷ *Let Yourself Go*. 2001. CD-ROM. Sony Classical

Stylistic Elements: Swing feel is necessary for a successful performance of this piece. Although belting is not necessary, it is important for the singer to keep the song in a speech-like quality throughout. The purpose of the piece is not beautiful singing, but rather expression of the text. The singer can choose to speak some sections of the song for characterization purposes. The rhythms should not follow the music, but rather the prosody of language. Vibrato would be appropriate here.

Suggested Recording: Bernadette Peters¹²⁸

Song: "I Got the Sun in the Morning"

Composer: Irving Berlin (1888-1989)

Musical: *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946)

Range: C4-C5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Allegro moderato

Characterization: This song is sung by the famous sharp-shooter, Annie Oakley. The story revolves around Annie's rough exterior and her love affair with competing Wild West star, Frank Butler. Annie is very strong-willed and unrefined. Her main struggle in the show is how her unrefined character and success as a sharp-shooter interfere with her romantic life with Frank Butler. It is a great opportunity for a young singer to portray a comedic character.

Stylistic Elements: Although this role was originated by Ethel Merman,¹²⁹ the original key of F major is appropriate for an undergraduate soprano. The range is small and in entirely speaking range. This piece should be approached with the text first, allowing the

¹²⁸ *Annie Get Your Gun: 1999 Broadway Revival Cast*. 1999. CD-ROM. Angel.

¹²⁹ Bordman, *American Musical Theatre*. 613.

singer to understand the prosody of language and swing feel. The pitches should only be added after the singer has a strong understanding of the text and rhythm. Although belting is not necessary here, the song must include speech-like phrasing throughout. This is also a great teaching tool for swing feel and rhythms.

Suggested Recording: Jane Froman¹³⁰

Song: “The Man I Love”

Composer: George Gershwin (1898-1937)

Musical: *Strike Up the Band* (1927)

Range: C4-C5

Tessitura: Upper passaggio

Tempo: Andante/Adagio

Characterization: “The Man I Love” is originally from the 1924 musical *Lady, Be Good* and was titled “The Girl I Love”.¹³¹ It was deleted from the show and added to *Strike Up the Band* in its current version in 1927. However, the 1930 revision of *Strike Up the Band* removed the song.¹³² The song has become a Gershwin standard and has appeared in various other movies and musicals including the 1947 film *The Man I Love* and the 2015 musical *An American in Paris*.¹³³ In *Strike Up the Band*, “The Man I Love” is sung by Joan, the daughter of the President of the American Cheese Company. She is beautiful, but has been accused of being a snob by the tabloids. The song is unspecific and has

¹³⁰ Gems from Gershwin. 2013. CD-ROM. Vintage Music.

¹³¹ Bordman, *American Musical Theatre*. 449.

¹³² Ibid, 513.

¹³³ Broadway Musical Home. “An American in Paris.” Accessed February 15, 2016. <http://broadwaymusicalhome.com/shows/an-american-in-paris.htm>.

appeared in multiple musicals. It is not necessary for the singer to portray the character of Joan, but make their own artistic choices which fit with the text of the piece.

Stylistic Elements: Although “The Man I Love” features swing rhythms and jazz harmony, the style of singing is similar to operetta. The song sits in the upper passaggio for most of the piece. It is a great choice for a student who needs to improve the transition between the middle and high range of the voice. Vibrato should be used throughout. The traditional bel canto approach to singing, such as long and flowing lyric lines, should be incorporated in this piece. It is also quite slow, which will aid in teaching breath support. It features large leaps from A4 to F5. This can be used as a teaching tool for keeping the breath moving and transition from middle to high voice. The musical theater elements of the piece include the sung rhythms. The vowels should be American, but can be modified on the upper notes to keep the classical quality in the sound. The singer should experiment with the rhythm and match it to the natural prosody of the language. This is especially true for the repeated quarter notes which occur throughout the piece.

“The Man I Love” is also an ideal song to lower the key to the comfortable speaking range to teach singing it as a ballad effectively on microphone.

Suggested Recording: Megan Hilty¹³⁴

Song: “A Little Girl from Little Rock”

Composer: Jule Styne (1905-1994)

Musical: *A Little Girl from Little Rock* (1949)

Range: G3-B4

Tessitura: Low to middle voice

¹³⁴ *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: New York City Encores! Presents*. 2012. CD-ROM. Sony Masterworks.

Tempo: Moderately

Characterization: “A Little Girl from Little Rock” is sung by Lorelei Lee, a blonde who is going to Paris to become a show girl. She currently lives with her “sugar daddy” boyfriend in a penthouse on Park Avenue. She is somewhat superficial and is very concerned about appearances. She is also extremely attractive and has many admirers. In “A Little Girl from Little Rock”, she discusses her humble beginnings in Arkansas and all of the men who as helped her move up in life. She alludes to a man who has “done her wrong.” She is terrified that her boyfriend will find out her secret that she shot a man who tried to rape her.

Stylistic Elements: Like many of the songs of this era, the sheet music for this piece is usually available in G major. However, this is entirely too high to keep the speech-like quality of the piece. The song is usually performed in D major. It is very important to have a jazz feel when singing this piece. The text introduces Lorelei’s character and must be clear and understandable. A swing feel is appropriate here. There should be a distinct change from the introduction to the chorus of the song. The introduction can be sung with a much more legitimate quality. It is stylistically appropriate to shorten the lower notes in the piece and not sustain them. This is helpful in keeping the spoken quality, especially since the notes are quite low for a soprano. A breathy tone would be appropriate. Belting is not necessary in this piece. However, a belted B4 can be added at the end of the song.

Suggested Recording: Sutton Foster¹³⁵

Song: “I Get a Kick Out of You”

Composer: Cole Porter (1891-1964)

¹³⁵ *Anything Goes*. 2011. CD-ROM. Ghostlight.

Musical: *Anything Goes* (1934)

Range: G3-B4

Tessitura: Low to middle voice

Tempo: Moderately

Characterization: Reno Sweeney was a role originated by Ethel Merman, who highly influenced musical theater belting.¹³⁶ Reno is a former evangelist who is now a nightclub singer. She is older, but has a sex appeal about her. She should be a distinct contrast to the show's ingénue, Hope Harcourt. She is one of the more level headed characters in the musical and does not let her actions dictate her emotions. In "I Get a Kick Out of You," Reno sings about her feelings for Billy Crocker, who is in love with Hope and only sees Reno as a friend.

Stylistic Elements: The sheet music for this piece is usually available in E-flat Major. However, the main musical elements of the song are the swing feel, jazz rhythmic feel, and the speech-like diction. Therefore, the key of C Major would be recommended for a young soprano. A mezzo-soprano could choose to sing the song in B-flat Major.

Although the role of Reno was created by Ethel Merman, it is not necessary to belt in the song. Rather, the singer should focus on the speech-like quality and clear diction. This song is not a showstopper, but rather provides insight into the character of Reno and her relationship to the other characters. The precise rhythm does not need to be followed. Back and front phrasing would be appropriate here, as long as it connects to the text and keeps the diction clear.

¹³⁶ Christianne Roll, "The Evolution of the Female Broadway Belt Voice: Implications for Teachers and Singers," *Journal of Singing* (Article in Press 2015): 1.

GOLDEN AGE

This category is defined by musicals written during the 1940s through the 1960s.¹³⁷ Main composers in this category include Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, Leonard Bernstein, Frank Loesser, Jules Styne, Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick, Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, Burton Lane, Meredith Wilson, Harold Rome, Jerry Ross, Bob Merrill, Cole Porter, and Irving Berlin. Songs in this category tend to be more classically based and require classical singing. They usually are not as musically complicated or vocally demanding as the contemporary classical style.

Suggested Recording: Edith Adams¹³⁸

Song: “A Little Bit in Love”

Composer: Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)

Musical: *Wonderful Town* (1953)

Range: C4-C-sharp5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Moderato

Characterization: The character of Eileen is a typical ingénue, a character type very appropriate for an undergraduate soprano. She is the younger of two sisters who move to New York City. Her goal is to become an actress. The character is beautiful, innocent, wholesome, somewhat gullible, and very likeable.

Stylistic Elements: This piece is less musically complicated than many of Bernstein’s works. It does feature triplet rhythms, which could be challenging for the singer. The B

¹³⁷ Jones, *Our Musicals Ourselves*. 140.

¹³⁸ *Wonderful Town: Original 1953 Broadway Cast*. 2001. CD-ROM. Verve.

section of the piece is somewhat chromatic, but very manageable. There are a great deal of jazz elements in this song, which is typical of Bernstein, but not necessarily of the other composers in the Golden Age category. It is important to follow the written rhythm of the song. Although the singing of this piece should be classically based, it does not require the long lyric lines. Vibrato should be used throughout. The singer can experiment with mix on the high notes, but should not go into full belt.

Suggested Recording: Anna Marie Alberghetti¹³⁹

Song: “Mira”

Composer: Bob Merrill (1921-1998)

Musical: *Carnival* (1961)

Range: C4-F5

Tessitura: Mid-voice. Moves in and out of the upper passaggio

Tempo: Slow/Moderate

Characterization: Lili is a young orphan who joins a traveling carnival troupe in twentieth century Europe. Lili is from a small town, which she describes in this song. The character of Lili provides a great opportunity for a young singer to develop acting skills. Lili is a very complex character who is forced into a world of which she is unfamiliar. Her journey and vulnerability are great teaching tools for a young singer.

Stylistic Elements: This is an excellent piece for a young soprano. The rhythm and melody are rather straightforward. The piece requires a great deal of expression. The entire piece is rubato, relying on the singer to push and pull the tempo based on dramatic choices. It is mostly in mid-voice for a soprano, but does regularly move in and out of the

¹³⁹*Carnival: 1961 Original Broadway Cast*. 1989. CD-ROM. Verve.

upper passaggio in a single phrase. The song is very simple, but requires a compelling actress. The movement in and out of the upper passaggio must be sung with a strong connection to speech and the text. Classical techniques can be used in this piece, such as the use of vibrato. This piece should not be belted and should be sung at a quiet and subdued dynamic level throughout. The dramatic arc is of most importance here and influences the changes in dynamics, tempo, and color choices.

Suggested Recording: Shirley Jones¹⁴⁰

Song: “Many a New Day”

Composer: Richard Rodgers (1902-1979)

Musical: *Oklahoma* (1943)

Range: C4-C5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Moderately

Characterization: Laurey is a young farm girl who falls in love. She embodies the qualities of a typical ingénue, but is not nearly as refined. She has a toughness about her that most ingénue character types do not have. Even though she is tough, she is still young and somewhat naïve. In this song, she notices the boy she has feelings for flirting with another girl and pretends to not care.

Stylistic Elements: This piece features a somewhat recitative-like introduction, which sits lower in the soprano voice. It is followed by the main section of the song, which is not musically or rhythmically complicated. The melody line does feature triplets in the beginning of each phrase, which an excellent aid for keeping the voice free and buoyant.

¹⁴⁰ *Oklahoma!* 2001. CD-ROM. Angel.

The recitative-like section in the beginning of the song should be very connected to speech. The singer should experiment with staying in heavy mechanism on the higher notes in the beginning section. Keeping the voice in heavy mechanism here keeps the singer connected to speech. The singer should be encouraged to adjust the rhythm to match the prosody of the language. The main section of the song is much more lyrical. It requires buoyancy in the voice, lyric phrases, and the use of vibrato. The vibrato should not be unnatural or over used. The character is a country girl with an accent. An American dialect should be present, which includes broad American vowel sounds.

Suggested Recording: Ann Wakefield¹⁴¹

Song: “Safety in Numbers”

Composer: Sandy Wilson (1924-2014)

Musical: *The Boy Friend* (1954)

Range: B3-F5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Moderately

Characterization: *The Boy Friend* is a spoof of 1920s musical comedies. The character of Maizie is a comedic role and somewhat over the top. She is an older teenage girl who is attending Mme Doubonnet’s School for Young Ladies. She is very attractive and flirts with all of the boys. In “Safety in Numbers,” all of the boys want to dance with Maizie, where she replies that she likes having all of them around.

Stylistic Elements: The introduction to “Safety in Numbers” should be very speech-like. It is rubato at the beginning and should follow the prosody of the language. The higher

¹⁴¹ *The Boy Friend: 1954 Original Broadway Cast*. 1991. CD-ROM. RCA Victor Broadway.

notes should not be belted, but should be sung in a speech-like mix. The body of the song is more rhythmic but needs to stay connected to the text. The tessitura should be sung legitimately, because the range is too high to belt. However, the accompaniment can be transposed into a lower key to accommodate a singer who chooses to belt. The speech and character dominate the vocal quality. This piece is a great opportunity for a soprano to show their comic abilities as well as their ability to navigate the upper passaggio. It is common for phrases in the song to be spoken rather than sung. However, the singer should do this sparingly.

Suggested Recording: Marin Mazzie¹⁴²

Song: “I am Ashamed that Women are so Simple”

Composer: Cole Porter (1891-1964)

Musical: *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948)

Range: D4-G5

Tessitura: Middle to High

Tempo: Andantino

Characterization: *Kiss Me Kate* is a play within a play. It features a cast of actors performing Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*. The action in the play reflects the conflicts and emotion in the actor’s real lives.¹⁴³ “I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple” is sung by Lilli Vanessi, who is on stage portraying Katherine from *Taming of the Shrew*. Lilli is a famous movie star, who is coping with the divorce from her husband, Fred, who is playing her romantic counterpart in the play. The text of the song comes directly from the Shakespeare play. “I am Ashamed that Women are so Simple” is a great

¹⁴² *Kiss Me Kate*. 2000. CD-ROM. DRG Records.

¹⁴³ Bordman, *American Musical Theatre*. 626-627.

acting showcase, because it enables many different interpretations. It could be interpreted that Lilli has decided to submit and return to her husband. However, the 1999 version of the musical features a wink after the song, indicating that Lilli has no intention of following through on her promises in the song. Therefore, the singer could make the choice to sing this piece in a sarcastic or ironic manner.

Stylistic Elements: “I am Ashamed that Women are so Simple” is very slow and features a great deal of rubato. This song does not feature the jazz rhythms and syncopation like many other Cole Porter works. It is a vocal showcase for a musical theater soprano, featuring very specific expression markings. The singer could make the choice to exaggerate the expression markings to indicate the absurdity and insincerity of the song. The song should be sung lyrically with the use of vibrato throughout. Belting is not appropriate here. Although the sound is more classically based, it is important that the text be understandable.

CONTEMPORARY POP

This category includes musicals that were written after 1960¹⁴⁴. This can also include rock and country based musicals if the singer’s voice is suited to those styles. Composers in this style include Stephen Schwartz, Marvin Hamlisch, Henry Krieger, Alan Menken, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, William Finn, Frank Wildhorn, Jason Robert Brown, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Marc Shaiman, Robert Lopez, Jeanine Tesori, David Yazbek, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, and Kait Kerrigan and

¹⁴⁴ Bordman, “American Musical Theatre,” 731.

Brian Lowdermilk. These pieces should be up-tempo and speech-like. They usually require a high female belt.

Suggested Recording: Andrea Burns¹⁴⁵

Song: "I'm Not Afraid of Anything"

Composer: Jason Robert Brown (b. 1970)

Musical: *Songs for a New World* (1995)

Range: A3-E5

Tessitura: Sits in the low to middle part of the soprano range.

Tempo: Moderate Folk Rock

Characterization: This piece is part of a musical theater song cycle. The character appears only in this song, thus allowing the singer some latitude regarding interpretive choices.

The most common interpretation is that the singer is discussing her children and her failing marriage. This requires some sophistication from a young singer who has not necessarily experienced marriage or the loss of love. The song begins with two distinct verses that build to a climax during the bridge of the piece. It is important that the singer be able to understand and navigate this dramatic arc.

Stylistic Elements: Although the highest note in the piece is an E5, the singer only needs to belt a C-sharp5. The E5 is only sung briefly in one phrase, allowing mix to be appropriate. In many of the phrases, a mix on the notes B4 and C-sharp5 would be appropriate for color purposes, especially in the first two verses. However, the climax of the song does require belting on both B4 and C-sharp5. The notated rhythm of the piece is very complicated. However, the singer should not follow the rhythm precisely, but

¹⁴⁵ *Songs for a New World: 1996 Original New York Cast*. 1997. CD-ROM. RCA Victor Broadway.

rather follow the natural rhythm of the language. The beginning of the piece sits very low in the soprano's range. The singer should try to access a speech-like quality in her singing. Vowels should be American and not tall. Jason Robert Brown often notates accents at the end of phrases in the vocal line. This must be followed. Vibrato should generally not be used in this piece, except at the end of long notes for color purposes.

Suggested Recording: Deborah S. Craig¹⁴⁶

Song: "I Speak Six Languages"

Composer: William Finn (b. 1952)

Musical: *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (2004)

Range: B3-D5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Quick

Characterization: The character of Marcy is an overachieving girl who is very tired of winning. She lists her various accomplishments in this song. The contestants in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* are children who are usually played by adult actors. Marcy is a great character for an undergraduate student, who can relate to stress and pressure of overachieving.

Stylistic Elements: There are many different ways to portray the character in this song. It is a great opportunity for a student to work on their acting skills. The song is not musically or vocally challenging. Belting would be appropriate, but only if it is connected to the drama and the characterization. The most important stylistic element is to keep the vocal line speech-like and connected to the drama.

¹⁴⁶ *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee: 2005 Original Broadway Cast*. 2005. Ghostlight Records.

Suggested Recording: Sutton Foster¹⁴⁷

Song: “Bride’s Lament”

Composer: Lisa Lambert (b. 1962) and Greg Morrison (1965)

Musical: *The Drowsy Chaperone* (2006)

Range: A-flat3-E5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Various

Characterization: Janet Van de Graaff is the star of the Feldzieg’s Follies. She was engaged to marry oil tycoon Robert Martin, but has broken off the wedding because Robert kissed her when she was disguised as a French girl. This song is a great acting showcase, especially for a student interested in comedy. The character of Janet is over the top in her emotions and quite the diva. This song will not be successful unless a performer fully commits to the characterization. The piece follows a clear trajectory of emotions and features spoken sections, or miniature monologues. Although the lyrics of the song are quite silly and purposefully ridiculous, it is important for the actress portraying Janet to take her situation seriously in order to portray the comic intent.

Stylistic Elements: The opening section of the song should be performed rubato and with a legitimate vocal quality. The use of vibrato throughout each phrase is necessary here. The singer should let the prosody of language determine the rhythmic nuances. The emotion and dramatic arc should drive the rhythm in this section. The second section of the piece is much more rhythmic and typical of the classical contemporary style. The singer is required to belt a C-sharp5. The rhythm is much more syncopated and the text is

¹⁴⁷ *The Drowsy Chaperone: 2006 Original Broadway Cast*. CD-ROM. Ghostlight.

more speech-like in quality. Emotion becomes much more important than vocal quality or beauty of tone. The long notes should be belted without vibrato except at the very ends of phrases. The vocal quality in both sections of the piece represent Janet's state of mind. A connection to the character and emotional arc should drive the vocal choices throughout the entire song.

Suggested Recording: Julia Murney¹⁴⁸

Song: "Maybe I Like It This Way"

Composer: Andrew Lippa (b. 1964)

Musical: *The Wild Party* (1997)

Range: B-flat3-D-flat5

Tessitura: Low to middle voice, high belt

Tempo: Slow

Characterization: Queenie is a beautiful young girl in Manhattan during the roaring twenties. She cannot find a lover who she is passionate about until she meets Burrs, a vaudevillian clown. However, Burrs has a violent nature which is negatively affecting their relationship. Queenie and Burrs decide to throw an extravagant party to rekindle their passion. At the party, Queenie meets Mr. Black, to whom she is very attracted. Mr. Black asks her why she stays in an abusive relationship. She sings "Maybe I Like It This Way" about her relationship with Burrs. This song shows a softer and vulnerable side of Queenie for the first time in the show. It requires a great deal of honesty and expression from the singer.

¹⁴⁸ *The Wild Party: Original Off-Broadway Cast*. 2000. CD-ROM. RCA Victor Broadway.

Stylistic Elements: “Maybe I Like It This Way” requires a large build. The song should begin quietly and slowly. The vocalist may choose to experiment with soft singing and a breathy sound. The singer should be using a microphone and should not be concerned with projection in the beginning of the piece. The text and vocal character are more important than musical elements or beautiful tone. The beginning should not be belted, but kept subdued. After a small monologue, the song begins to build substantially. Full belt is appropriate here. The singer should not use vibrato, except for color at the end of phrases. It is important not to peak too early. The climax of the song should be on the phrase “But if I’m through why do it stay?” It is necessary for the singer to belt a sustained D-flat5. The last few lines of the song should reflect the subdued internal character of the beginning of the piece.

Suggested Recording: Anika Noni Rose¹⁴⁹

Song: “I Hate the Bus”

Composer: Jeanine Tesori (b. 1961)

Musical: *Caroline, or Change* (2004)

Range: G3-F-sharp5

Tessitura: Low to middle voice, high belt

Tempo: Slow

Characterization: Emmie Thibodeaux is the sixteen-year-old daughter of Caroline, an African American maid in Louisiana in 1963. She is very rebellious and often fights with her mother because she feels she is stifled. However, she is a teenager and deep down loves and respects her mother. She is ambitious and dreams of so much more than her

¹⁴⁹ *Caroline, or Change: 2004 Original Broadway Cast Recording*. 2004. 2 CD-ROMs. Hollywood Records, Inc.

current life in Louisiana. In *Caroline, or Change*, the character of Emmie represents hope, the future, and the changing America. In “I Hate the Bus,” Emmie has just had a fight and lashed out at her mother. She describes all the thing she dreams about having in her future.

Stylistic Elements: *Caroline, or Change* incorporates traditional Broadway, rock’n’roll, gospel, children’s songs, and rhythm and blues.¹⁵⁰ Many of these musical elements are present in “I Hate the Bus.” The song begins softly and slowly. The notated rhythms in the vocal line are written to imitate the patterns of speech. The singer should not use a full belt here, but rather speak on pitch. The accompaniment is chordal, allowing the singer to have freedom to push and pull the tempo according to the emotional arc. When the song picks up tempo, the singer should have a gospel style, while incorporating full belt. The middle section of the piece has the initial climax where belting and heavy mechanism is necessary. On the lyric “And I” there is a subito piano, where the singer should pull back and switch to head voice or light mechanism on the C-sharp⁵. The piece builds again to a gospel belt, requiring a belt or heavy mix on a F-sharp⁵. This piece is ideal for a young African American singer who is comfortable with gospel singing and has a comfortable high belt or mix.

CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL

This style should include works written only after 1960. This style emerged through the musicals of Stephen Sondheim. These musicals are often introspective and feature highly complicated plots.¹⁵¹ However, there are many other modern classical

¹⁵⁰ Bordman, “American Musical Theatre,” 849.

¹⁵¹ Jones, “Our Musical, Ourselves,” 290-291.

based musical theater composers which would be appropriate for this category. They include Adam Guettel, Michael John LaChiusa, Jeanine Tesori, Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, and Scott Frankel. Songs in this category tend to have wide ranges and require classical technique, such as legato line and use of vibrato throughout. These songs also tend to be incredibly complex musically and showcase a singer's virtuosity and musicality. The main difference between songs in this category and classical repertoire is the use of American vowels and longer vowel duration, or duration of vowel sound to non-vowel sound in vocal production.

Suggested Recording: Kelli O'Hara¹⁵²

Song: "The Light in the Piazza"

Composer: Adam Guettel (b. 1964)

Musical: *The Light in the Piazza* (2004)

Range: G3-E5

Tessitura: Mostly in mid-voice, but does have some moments in the upper and lower passaggio.

Tempo: With Motion

Characterization: The character of Clara is a great role for a young soprano. She is a very charming character who has developmental issues due to an accident as a child.

Although Clara is in her mid-twenties, the character's reactions are similar to a teenager's. Clara is torn between the love of her mother and her need to grow up and find romantic love. In this song, Clara expresses her great love for the character of Fabrizio

¹⁵² *The Light in the Piazza: Original Broadway Cast Recording*. 2005. CD-ROM. Nonesuch Records, Inc.

for the first time. This song is also the first time Clara stands up to her mother and begins to find herself.

Stylistic Elements: The musical *The Light in the Piazza* is incredibly complex musically. It features many unexpected harmonic shifts and melodic lines, as well as incredibly complicated rhythms. The song “The Light in the Piazza” is no exception. Like many of the contemporary pop songs, the opening phrase is very low for a soprano. It is important that the singer does not push her voice and connects to speech when singing this opening. This piece is very similar to operatic singing through the use of legato line and phrases throughout. However, the important distinction that makes this song musical theater is the use of American vowels.

Suggested Recording: Laura Michelle Kelly¹⁵³

Song: “Practically Perfect”

Composer: George Stilles (b. 1961)

Musical: *Mary Poppins* (2006)

Range: A3-G-sharp5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Moderate

Characterization: Mary Poppins is an iconic character who is familiar to most students. Students should be encouraged to find their own interpretation of this character. Mary Poppins is a young nanny who has come to take care of misbehaving children. She is very strict but also quirky, whimsical, and according to her song, practically perfect. The

¹⁵³ *Mary Poppins: Original London Cast Recording*. 2007. CD-ROM. Walt Disney.

danger of this character is making her so perfect that she is almost unhuman. It is important for interpretations of this character to humanize her.

Stylistic Elements: This piece is a great learning tool for a young soprano because it features many different elements found in musical theater repertoire. It starts out with a free, recitative-like section. This section is in mid-voice and serves as a great tool for a student to connect speech to their singing. The tempo is free and should follow the prosody of the language. The main part of the song is very measured and steady, but sits in mostly mid-voice for the young soprano. It contains fast passages on words as well as long sustained notes. This piece should not be belted, but should still have a strong connection to speech. This is a great song to help develop the musical theater mix. The singer is required to regularly move in and out of chest voice in this section. Stylistically, the long notes should be sung without vibrato until the very end of the note. However, that is not necessary if a singer is not comfortable singing straight-tone. The ending of the song features a key change and ends with a lyrical section in the higher part of the soprano range. The ending section features the singer's lyric lines, range, and overall classical technique. The singer should use vibrato throughout this section. The piece overall is a great audition song because it showcases both understanding of musical theater style and solid vocal technique.

Suggested Recording: Lisa O'Hare¹⁵⁴

Song: "I Don't Know What I'd Do Without You"

Composer: Steven Lutvak (b. 1961)

¹⁵⁴ *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder: Original Broadway Cast Recording*. 2014. CD-ROM. Ghostlight.

Musical: *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (2013)

Range: F-sharp3-E5

Tessitura: Low and middle voice

Tempo: Valse capriccioso

Characterization: Sibella is a young British woman who is quite materialistic. Although she is in love with Monty, she will not marry him due to poverty. In “I Don’t Know What I’d Do Without You,” she discusses many material things she enjoys and how much she loves Monty because he compliments her. The character is a parody on a typical ingénue and a great comic piece for a young soprano.

Stylistic Elements: “I Don’t Know What I’d Do Without You” has many of the features you would find in an aria such as vibrato throughout and tall vowels. However, it can be considered a patter song due to the fast moving text. It also sits entirely in speaking voice range. The singer should have a classical sound, due to the uptight and materialistic nature of the character. However, it is highly important for the text and diction to be clear. The rhythms do not need to be followed strictly, but should match the prosody of the language. The song is also quite challenging musically, due to the complicated fast rhythm and chromaticism. The singer must have buoyancy in the voice for the melismatic turns which occur throughout the vocal line. It is appropriate for the singer to decide to speak portions of the song rather than sing, especially when the range becomes too low.

Suggested Recording: Sally Murphy¹⁵⁵

Song: “Princess”

Composer: Stephen Flaherty (b. 1960)

¹⁵⁵ *A Man of No Importance: 2002 Off-Broadway Cast*. 2003. CD-ROM. Jay Records.

Musical: *A Man of No Importance* (2002)

Range: C4-E5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Moderately fast folk

Characterization: *A Man of No Importance* takes place in Dublin, Ireland, where the director of an amateur theater company is trying to produce Oscar Wilde's *Salome*. Adele has been asked by the director of the company to play the role of Salome. In "Princess," she discusses how she is a simple shop girl from a simple town, who could not possibly portray a princess. She takes a journey throughout the song where she begins to believe in herself. The character of Adele is very accessible for a young singer. The song has moments of humor, but is overall very touching. It can be performed with an Irish accent, but it is not necessary.

Stylistic Elements: The most important stylistic element of this piece is to keep a spoken quality throughout the entire song. The song does sit in middle voice and should not be belted. However, the understandability of the text and journey of the singer is of utmost importance here. The rhythms are sometimes syncopated. The important words of each phrase are set on longer notes, usually on the off-beat. It is very important for a singer to emphasize this and not get caught up in lyric lines. However, the air must still be free-flowing throughout. The music is rather simple and repetitive, so the challenge of the singer is to make each phrase both dramatically and vocally different. The simplicity of the line represents the character's own thoughts about her simple life and limitations. Vibrato should be used sparingly in order to understand the words. As the character begins to gain confidence, the vocal quality changes, especially at the end of the song.

The A4 on the word recall could be belted, but it is not necessary. There is a distinct change in character at the end of the song when singing the word “princess.” Here the singer sings an E5 with a few melismatic notes. Vibrato should be used here. This represents the character’s realization that her life could be more than she is making it out to be.

Suggested Recording: Judy Butterfield¹⁵⁶

Song: “I Remember”

Composer: Stephen Sondheim (b. 1930)

Musical: *Evening Primrose* (1966)

Range: C4-D5

Tessitura: Mid-voice

Tempo: Slow

Characterization: *Evening Primrose* was originally a TV production.¹⁵⁷ It is the story of a community of night people who live inside a department store. Ella, now age nineteen, has been living in the store since she was abandoned by her mother at age six. When asked if she has ever seen the sunlight, she responds with the song, “I Remember.” Ella has lived a very simple and sheltered life. It is clear that she longs for more. When performing “I Remember”, the most important element is keeping Ella genuine in both singing and acting choices.

Stylistic Elements: “I Remember” is not a vocal showcase, but rather requires restraint though the use of vocal colors. The piece should not be belted and should have a

¹⁵⁶ Butterfield, Judy. “I Remember” (music video). Posted January 9, 2007. Accessed February 9, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tL8C0yNg7Pg>.

¹⁵⁷ Piepenburg, Erik. “60s Sondheim TV Show Is Now on (Legal) DVD,” “The New York Times”, Monday, October 25, 2010. Nytimes.com. 2010-10-25. Retrieved 2012-08-20.

continuous vibrato throughout. The text is extremely important and quite beautiful. It is important for the words to be understood. The rhythm should follow the prosody of the language and not adhere to the notated rhythm exactly. The song is very subtle and in middle voice throughout, allowing the singer many opportunities to play with vocal colors and expression. This is a great song for a young soprano to show vulnerability.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that each historical period in musical theater history has its own unique stylistic elements, especially with regard to the vocal styles of Belt and Legit. However, there are some common themes which can be used when singing musical theater repertoire as a whole.

The most important theme is the speech-like quality of the sound and clear diction. Unlike opera, the diction and text become more important than legato line and phrases. The vowels should generally be American, that is, featuring broad vowels and longer chew rate, and the prosody of the language must be taken into consideration. In most pieces, it is appropriate to speak, rather than sing, certain sections of a musical theater song for characterization purposes.

The characterization in musical theater repertoire is also particularly important. Beautiful tone can be compromised in musical theater repertoire to portray the character, mood, or emotion in a piece. It is important for both the teacher and the student to know when rhythms in musical theater repertoire must be followed exactly or can be adjusted to match the prosody of the text. Usually eighth notes should not be equal in length and stress, but follow the natural pattern of speech. Often extremely complicated rhythms are

written to reflect the prosody of the language and do not need to be exact. This is especially true for more modern musical theater repertoire.

Finally, the use of vibrato is very important when discussing musical theater style. Often in more classical based musical theater, the vibrato should be even throughout. However, more modern musical theater requires vibrato only to be added at the ends of phrases, particularly when belting.

By taking into consideration each of these elements, an undergraduate soprano will have a much more stylistically appropriate and successful performance when approaching musical theater repertoire.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that musical theater is a vastly broad genre of music, which requires pedagogical approaches of its own. Musical theater repertoire spans from the operettas brought to American by Gilbert and Sullivan in the late 19th century to pop based musicals being written today. Musical theater repertoire has evolved rapidly, largely being influenced by and influencing popular music of the time. Musical theater songs from many different genres are being performed both on the Broadway stage and regularly at opera houses today.¹⁵⁸ Musical theater has been influenced by many different genres of music including; classical, jazz, pop, rock, gospel, rhythm and blues, country, and many more.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, it is important to understand the style of each of these specific genres in order to create and define a specific musical theater pedagogy. Musical theater pedagogy should not be rooted in the bel canto style, but rather represent an extension of the style of music which has influenced each individual musical theater song.

TEACHING MUSICAL THEATER

When approaching musical theater repertoire in the voice studio, it is important to always begin with speech. Musical theater singing is directly related to American vowel sounds and American speech. The overall goal of singing a musical theater song is not to have a beautiful line or phrase as in the bel canto style, but to express the text and

¹⁵⁸ Corrine Ness, "Teaching Music Theatre: An Integrative Dialectical Approach," *Opera Journal* 47, no. 1 (March 2014): 3.

¹⁵⁹ Karen Hall, "Music Theater and Classical Singing: at Odds Personally and Professionally," *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 5 (May/June 2007): 570-571.

emotion of the character singing the song. The text and emotion drive the phrases, causing the prosody of the language to have the utmost importance. The chew rate, or ratio of vowel sound to non-vowel sound, in musical theater singing is higher than classical singing. When singing classical repertoire, it is important to keep vowels tall and not let the consonant or diphthong enter the sound until the very end. When singing musical theater repertoire, the consonant and diphthong have a much higher role and can have a large influence upon the sound. The vowels are directly connected to American speech and should be somewhat spread. The use of the chew rate varies throughout all genres in musical theater, with more classical based musical theater, such as operetta, having a lower chew rate and more pop or rock based musical theater having the highest chew rate. However, the chew rate in all musical theater repertoire is higher than in classical repertoire due to the connection between musical theater and American speech. When approaching a new song with a voice student, it is important for the student to be able to speak the text with their own understanding of the natural prosody before attempting to sing the musical line or phrase. The musical phrasing should not influence the natural prosody of the text.

It is also important to note that in many styles of musical theater the notated rhythm on the page does not need to be followed exactly. Rather, the notated rhythm is a guide with the sung rhythm matching the prosody of the language. Some of the more modern musical theater composers, such as Stephen Sondheim and Adam Guettel, were very specific about the notated rhythm and paid close attention to the prosody of the language when setting the music. In those situations, the rhythm should be followed

exactly. It is important for a voice teacher to have an understanding of when the notated rhythm must be followed exactly and when it can vary.

Musical theater is a vehicle for story-telling. Although beautiful sung sounds are important, one of the primary differences between musical theater singing and classical singing is the importance of the story. Songs within musicals come at moments of high emotion. Characters sing because they are so emotional they cannot speak. Therefore, the emotion of the character and their story arc drives the phrases and vocal choices. It is appropriate in musical theater singing to make sounds that are not beautiful if they are connected to the emotion of the song. Vocal virtuosity does not exist in musical theater repertoire. Moments of virtuosity must be justified dramatically, focusing specifically on the emotion of the character with the overall goal of furthering the plot.

Singing teachers who teach musical theater repertoire should be encouraged to work with their students dramatically on their songs. This includes character, plot, and scene analysis. The singer should be aware of what the character wants, how they are going to get what they want, and what is in their way. Student should be encouraged to speak their songs as monologues both in the studio and individually as a part of their practice sessions. Students will find that isolating the text from the music will inform their character choices and improve their overall performance of musical theater repertoire.

There is appropriate repertoire for a soprano undergraduate voice major throughout the entire cannon of musical theater. When choosing repertoire for a young student, character type becomes as important as vocal type. An undergraduate soprano would not be cast in as a 50-year-old woman and should not be given a song where they

would be portraying someone that age. The young ingénue is an iconic musical theater character type and would be highly appropriate for a young soprano.

It is important to have a range when auditioning for a musical theater show, which requires a variety of repertoire. This includes songs from all genres of musical theater as well as an up-tempo, ballad, dramatic, and comedic song.

Undergraduate voice students should not be singing heavy rock or metal songs, but should be encouraged to develop a high belt. There is a misconception in musical theater that beltters are altos and sopranos sing legit. Sopranos are often more capable of managing the high belt, up to possibly an E5 or even F5.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, the more contemporary musical theater pieces featuring a high belt would be appropriate for an advanced undergraduate soprano voice major. It is important to note that belting is a somewhat advanced form of singing and should not necessarily be approached with beginning singers. Singers should be able to sing throughout their entire range with smooth register changes and even tone before attempting belting. However, moderate to advanced singers should be encouraged to learn how to belt. This can be done effectively and healthily. When monitored by a trained teacher, belting should not negatively affect a student's ability to sing classical repertoire or legit musical theater songs. Rather, belting widens a student's choice of vocal colors when approaching all repertoire.

Finally, due to the large amount of musical styles found in musical theater, both the teacher and the student must have an understanding of an incredibly wide range of music. However, the ear is the best teacher in musical theater. Students and teachers who are interested in musical theater repertoire should be encouraged to listen to many

¹⁶⁰ Christianne Roll, "The Evolution of the Female Broadway Belt Voice: Implications for Teachers and Singers," *Journal of Singing* (Article in Press 2015): 7

different musicals and many different singers. It is through listening that the style of this repertoire can be the most readily understood. There are many different approaches to musical theater songs and many songs can have multiple and drastically different interpretations. It is through listening that teachers of singing will begin to discern these styles and be able to effectively communicate the differences to their voice student.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This study portrays only a small slice of musical theater history and repertoire. Each generally category can be analyzed in great detail, determining sub-categories and the styles of each. This is particularly true for the contemporary pop category. This study focused only on the undergraduate soprano. A similar study could be completed on repertoire for the undergraduate mezzo-soprano, tenor, and baritone as well as for the adult professional in all voice types.

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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Back phrasing: A stylistic element found in musical theater singing, where a singer intentionally begins a phrase behind the music for dramatic effect.

Ballad: A musical theater song with a slow tempo. Usually features long notes and extended lines or phrases.

Bel canto: A style of singing exemplified by works of Donizetti, Rossini, and Bellini. The style features long lyric lines, connected phrases, and pure vowel sounds. Bel canto singing comes from the Italian school of singing and is often used when teaching classical repertoire.

Belt: A type of vocal production found in musical theater. It is often related to popular and rock music and consists of bring a thyroarytenoid dominant sound higher in the female vocal range, usually above a E4 or F4. The quality of sound is similar to speech and has a brassy or bright quality.

Chest voice: A vocal register in a female singer determined by a thyroarytenoid dominant sound. Also described as heavy mechanism.

Chew rate: Duration of vowel sound to non-vowel sound in vocal production.

Closed quotient (phase): Ratio of time glottis is closed during each cycle of vibration.

Contemporary Commercial Music or CCM: A term created by Jeannette LoVetri, which refers to all types of singing except classical. This includes musical theater.

Cricothyroid muscles: Muscles responsible for stretching and thinning the vocal folds, producing a sound known as “head voice” in female singers.

Fach system: A method of categorizing singers, specifically opera singers, based on the quality of their voice. This determines which operatic roles are appropriate for each individual singer.

Falsetto: Cricothyroid dominant vocal production in male singers.

Formant: The acoustic resonance of the vocal tract.

Front phrasing: A stylistic element found in musical theater singing, where a singer intentional begins a phrase before the music for dramatic effect.

Growl: A vocal quality found in rock based musical theater. Its characterized by the excessive use of glottal fry. Usually used in moments of high emotion or intensity.

Head voice: A vocal register in a female singer determined by a cricothyroid dominant sound. Also described as light mechanism.

Heavy mechanism: A vocal register defined by a thyroarytenoid dominant sound. Also known as chest voice in female singers.

Ingénue: Character type found in musical theater and opera. Usually a soprano who is young, beautiful, innocent, and naïve.

Legit: A type of vocal production found in musical theater. Used to describe musical theater singing related to classical music or operetta. Is also used to describe female musical theater vocal production which is not belted. Usually characterized as a cricothyroid dominant sound above the pitch E4 or F4.

Light mechanism: A vocal register defined by a cricothyroid dominant sound. Also known as head voice in female singers and falsetto in male singers.

Mix: A vocal register found in musical theater singing which blends both the thyroarytenoid dominant sound (chest voice) and cricothyroid dominant sound (head voice). Can also be described as a combination of both belt and legit vocal quality.

Open phase: Ratio of time glottis is open during each cycle of vibration.

Registration: A distinction between thyroarytenoid dominant vocal production and cricothyroid dominant vocal production.

Subglottic pressure: The pressure that builds up beneath the vocal folds during phonation, determined by airflow.

Thyroarytenoid muscles: Muscles responsible for shortening and thickening the vocal folds, producing a sound known as “chest voice” in female singers.

Transglottal airflow: The amount of air moving through the vocal folds during phonation.

Up-tempo: A musical theater song with a fast tempo.