

THE DYNAMICS OF VOCAL CHAMBER MUSIC

International Congress of Voice Teachers VIII

Brisbane, Australia

July 10-14, 2013

Emily Romney

emilyromney1@verizon.net

emilyromney.com

Vocal Chamber Music

- What is this kind of music?
- What makes it different from solo and choral singing?
- What are its musical attractions and challenges?
- A vocal chamber music course for adult soloists and experienced choral singers.

What is Vocal Chamber Music?

- The key ingredient is one singer /one player on each part.



Fresh Repertoire in Many Forms

- Vocal duets, trios, quartets
- A cappella and with piano
- Music for one singer with solo instruments:
e.g. string quartet, oboe, guitar.

A Different Music Making Experience



- The solo singer becomes an ensemble singer.
- The choral singer becomes a solo singer.

- If you are a *Diva*...



- If you are only
free vocally
in a big chorus...



- Vocal chamber music is probably not for you.

A Social & Democratic Way of Making Music

- Ensembles of soloists are partnerships of equals.
- Generating musical momentum of performances without a conductor is an exercise in teamwork.

- Each performer, a good soloist & a good musical team member.



Just the Best!

- For many singing musicians, vocal chamber music is at or near the pinnacle of musical satisfaction.



Satisfying in Many Ways

- Interesting fresh repertoire
- The intimate scale
- Being a soloist among soloists
- The risk, the freedom, of shaping music & performing without a conductor

Musical Challenges

Singers must be able:

- to sing in tune
- to hold their part their parts in the ensemble
- to tune their voices harmonically to others
- to be aware and flexible

Chamber Music at almost Any Level

- for high school singers



- For conservatory students



Choosing Repertoire

- Is the music a good match to the singer?
- Are the singers in the ensemble a good match for each other?



Ensemble Skills: The Ideal

“Singing under one umbrella”

- Moving with the same rhythmic impulse
- Communicating non verbally
- Matching vowel color & articulation
- Breathing together & breathing to lead



Rehearsals & Coaching: The Reality



Working Together is the Key

- Secure in your part, but not isolated from your partners.
- Balance and staying together becomes a shared responsibility.

Vocal Chamber Music for Adult Singers



Adult Singers Are

- Old enough to know the rules, and still young enough vocally to want to play the game



Main Goals

- To delve into the repertoire
- To experience chamber ensemble singing
- To perform in public

Course Design

- A course meeting twice/week for four weeks
- Classical Repertoire for voice & piano
- Focus on good ensemble & interpretation
- Public concert after the last class

Repertoire & Rehearsals



Clear Structure

Before the first class
each singer receives:

- A list of all the repertoire
- Contact information for everyone in the course
- Copies of their own ensemble pieces
- A rehearsal schedule for first two weeks

Rep List for Concert 7/2/13		Rehearsals/dress			
Composer/Arranger	Song/Performers	6/25	6/27	6/30	7/2
Baska:	Thinking of how he loved me: S1/ Win S2 /Harriet A/ Clia	X			X
Beach:	Come unto these Yellow Sands: S1/Fabienne S2/Jane A1/Clia A2/Polly			X	X
Haydn:	Betrachtung des Todes : S /Harriet T/Paul Bar./Richard	X			X
Hensel:	Wiederkehrt ein Lichter Maie S /Fabienne A /Polly			X	X
James	Sweet Kate	X			X

Weeks One & Two

- Read through all the repertoire
- Coaching to facilitate further rehearsals and practice
- Translations of all non English texts
- Choose pieces for performance

Final Two Weeks: A Challenging Time

- A new rehearsal schedule for the last two weeks
- In class: intense and concentrated ensemble coaching
- And rehearsing piece for performance



Taking Initiative

Outside Class:

- Ensemble singers arrange extra rehearsals with the accompanist
- Ensembles practice together more frequently on their own
- It's concentrated, risky and fun!



July 2nd Concert

Vocal Chamber Music

for Voices & Piano by

Baska, Beach, Haydn, Lang, Lehmann, Mendelssohn,
Mozart, Quilter, Schubert & Vaughan Williams

Performed by

David Barlow * Harriet Bridges * Jane Fisher Carlson
Edward Crowley * Clia Goodwin * Winifred Hentschel
* Mary Lewis * Paul Lewis * Polly Scannell
Fabienne Schmit * Richard Scott * Evelyn Spalding
&
Caroline Harvey, piano

Experienced Adult Singers

- Musically attuned
- Challenged by solo ensemble singing
- Generally responsible & resilient
- Looking for musical companionship

Vocal Chamber Music Offers

- Fresh repertoire
- Interesting musical & social challenges
- Both ensemble training and solo experience
- Musical collaboration as equals

- Vocal chamber music has the power to extend and enrich the singing life of singers.



- What role could vocal chamber music play in your musical life?

Vocal Chamber Music Concert July 2, 2013