



How to Sing Like the Great Singers

Robin Hendrix

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This book sets out the means by which the great singers of the operatic and concert stage cultivated and maintained their beautiful voices, and describes how a motivated singer can arrive at the same results. How to Sing Like the Great Singers was written by a singer with a passion for singing and a love for singers. It describes the ancient singing technique so simply and logically that even the most inexperienced of singers can make wonderful progress. It combines all of the relevant practices common across the published literature on singing from the turn of the last century, the “Golden Age of Singing,” synopsises the technique, and explains how and why the elements work. Elements of the technique are presented with numerous substantiating quotes from the great singers themselves, giving the highest level of credibility to what is being said. Readers will get a glimpse into their lives and their work. Included is an annotated bibliography so that readers who wish to can follow the path the author took to get to know more about the work of the great singers. Mezzo-soprano Robin Hendrix is a concert artist and voice teacher living in the south of France. Although she sings in many genres including legitimate musical theatre, she always uses the singing technique of the great singers. In the preface, she talks about her experience of “hitting the wall” in middle age, when it became increasingly difficult to rehearse her usual concert repertoire. Finding no help from gurus or experts, she set out on her own to find the secrets of a free and easy production of the lyric voice. By a lucky circumstance she stumbled upon a book that explained that most singers today are not being taught the technique of the great singers. After that, it became an obsession to find out as much as possible about the real technique of singing. She needed answers from the best possible sources, and so she went directly to the great singers and teachers from the late 1890s to the 1930s. In their books and recorded interviews, the great singers and teachers generously shared their ideas on singing, particularly on the technique they all used – one that used pure vowels and an extraordinary level of relaxation. This book is based on seven years of research into many dozens of books on voice culture as well as endless hours of recordings and video clips from live performances, studio recordings, master classes and interviews. The research involved extracting the elements common to all the books and recordings, and then testing them in practice, in concert, and in teaching. The results were remarkable. This book takes the mystery out of tried and true phrases whose meanings were lost with the passing of time. Concepts such as “singing on the breath,” “silent breathing,” “attack” and “clear vowels” are explained in terms a singer can immediately understand and replicate. Readers can have confidence in trying for themselves the simple but extremely effective ideas and exercises for liberating and beautifying the voice. The great singers’ technique is almost unknown in many of today’s voice studios, but 130 years ago, it was the standard technique for voice formation and voice culture. The ideas were all but lost after the turn of the 20th century when a scientific mechanical approach replaced tried and true singing practices. This book attempts to bring back the technique that served the great singers so well. When singers try the basic elements for the first time, they immediately experience the benefits, and with further effort they get lasting results – beauty and ease in singing. As the Great Singers and teachers of the golden age of singing often said, we can ALL sing well, if the desire and the right knowledge can come together. This book can provide the right knowledge.

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