

in 'The Singer's Handbook, A Guide for Aspiring Singers'.

Anyone who has been at a presentation given by either of the authors will know how thought-provoking and lively they are. The style of the book reflects this – words are in bold, in italics, in inverted commas, underlined and there are lots of exclamation marks! And with four sections of 'Mary and Tony's Handy Hints...' the overall aim seems to be to produce a modern, friendly, accessible book. Faber has reflected this modern feel by publishing it with a glossy cover, in A4 format, rather like a Vocal Selections album.

On the back cover, under the headline 'Singing is a wonderful thing!' you get an indication of the huge range of topics covered when you read that it is 'packed full of practical information, technical advice and exclusive tips to provide guidance for every stage of a singer's development'. Although there is some information on musical theatre, the majority of the book is geared towards the classical end of the market.

The six chapters have headings which equate the journey of a singer to a race: On your starting blocks; Off you go!; Halfway round the course!; The going gets tough – being tested; The last lap and finally The home straight. Each chapter has many subdivisions, the subjects of which are given both in the index and at the chapter head. The pages have a wide left hand margin where there is yet more information – useful advice/hint; take note; glossary/dictionary term; anecdote; idea. Each of these is identified by a symbol – for example, if it is an idea, there is a light bulb beside it. The main text flags up exercises to try with a dumbbell.

The book mixes instruction with straightforward, practical information. There are sections on how the voice works, musicianship, languages, auditions, exams, CVs and much more. There is humour in some of the excellent advice – I particularly enjoyed the instruction not to overdo the airbrushing in your photograph and that in stage kissing, one of the etiquettes to be observed is 'unless you have permission, do not stick your tongue down your colleague's throat!' How I wish some of the singers I worked with had observed that rule.

Committing thoughts to paper in a way that is clear and not open to misinterpretation is a tricky business. For example, in the basic anatomy section 'The larynx is.....situated just **behind** (my bold) your Adam's apple'. 'If you trace the roof of your mouth from the front to the back with the tip of your tongue you will feel... the alveolar ridge... the hard palate... the soft palate...the uvula'. I have to admit that my tongue can only just make my soft palate (if I suck it forward) and it certainly gets nowhere near touching my uvula. Further on in this section, it explains that one can feel the soft palate rising with 'a sharp intake of breath', 'by yawning' and 'by breathing in intensely.... through the

nose'. The first two examples are absolutely fine. However, the last one is tricky. If the palate is up, how does the breath get it? Patients in voice clinics are always instructed to breathe through the mouth, and not the nose, when being examined with a rigid laryngoscope. This is important so that the soft palate rises and stays up.

In the section dealing with foreign languages I was disappointed that the common misuse of the word elision is perpetrated. To elide is to miss out, or omit. When we elide, we lose a vowel or consonant. When we voice a final consonant that is usually silent before the vowel of the next word, it is a liaison.

I have no doubt that this book will sell. The authors are well known and there is plenty of information and good sense in it. But despite claiming to be 'Indispensable to amateur enthusiasts and those with professional aspirations' I find it hard to know exactly who it is really aimed at.

But before going into a second run, may I suggest a little more careful editing and proof reading (pages 45,53,79,81,89)? **LH**

LINDA HUTCHISON works both privately and at the *Cit Lit* with a wide range of singers, from amateur beginners to busy professionals, in the classical and musical theatre world. She is the singing advisor in two hospital voice clinic teams, Barts, London and Medway, Gillingham, having previously been a member of the Sidcup Voice Clinic for five years.



As a performer, she sang as principal soprano with D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, after being heard in the finals of the Kathleen Ferrier Competition. Her freelance career has embraced opera, oratorio and recitals. She has been on the staff of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and the London School of Music and Media. She is course organiser of *The Fundamentals of the Singing Voice*, a new course to be run jointly by the British Voice Association and City Lit. Linda has served on the Council of AOTOS and is currently the President of the British Voice Association.

Ultimate Vocal Voyage

Daniel Zangger Borch, 2007, Notafabriken Music Publishing AB, pp 168 plus CD, paperback, £16.95, available in the UK from Faber Music Limited from end of November.

I bought a copy of "The Ultimate Vocal Voyage" at the recent BVA Rock and Pop day at the Royal Academy of Music in London where the author, Daniel Zangger Borch, and I were both presenters. Being already an avid supporter of Daniel's general approach to contemporary

vocal pedagogy and as a fellow specialist in the same field, I pored over his book with relish and it turned out to be a thoroughly engaging read.

Books in contemporary voice have gained in popularity since the 90's, growing steadily in number to the present day where the products of the relatively few leading, reputable coaches are somewhat difficult to discern amongst the array of vastly variable fare on offer in the marketplace. In an area where there is currently, regrettably, no regulation, it is difficult for people interested in this field to know which resources on offer deserve purchasing and which ones don't. In my opinion, this particular book will not disappoint.

It is a comprehensive journey through industry-relevant contemporary vocal exercises, many of them variations on vocal 'hooks' from classic hit songs, covering style-generic technical areas, e.g. warming up, cooling down, breathing, range, registers, vibrato, resonance, articulation etc. In addition there are exercises specific to the musical needs of the rock, pop and soul singers that the book is written for, e.g. rhythmic exercises, vocal 'riffing' and discussion of vocal distortion etc.

Further into the book the author allows the reader to benefit from his years of performing experience by giving credible, 'real world' advice about the interpretation of different styles and the realities of the gigging life, including useful information about microphones and mic technique, sound systems etc. He also uses terminology and concepts that contemporary singers relate to, e.g. comparing the larynx and vocal tract to a stereo's graphic equaliser. His years as a top-level performer are nowhere more apparent than in the quality of the delivery of the male vocal parts on the accompanying CD and the exercises being backed by his very competent, groove-based keyboard playing. The female parts are sung by his wife, Sara, who is also a tasteful singer in her own right.

His time spent absorbing the latest vocal research is evident throughout the book, but is most obvious in his provision of accurate vocal health advice combined with accessible vocal anatomy and practical information

concerning voice disorders which singers would benefit from knowing about, although some other conditions such as vocal fold cysts and granuloma curiously are not covered. The diagrams are generally well designed and relatively easy to interpret; my only concern being that some of those illustrating the vocal folds are not adequately labelled thereby relying on the assumed physiological knowledge of the reader.

As a result of being translated from Swedish, the text is beset with grammatical and spelling errors (which he assures me will be fixed in the next print run). However this book is user-friendly for an English-speaking readership and very relevant to the intended audience. It is a suitable size, attractively presented, professionally written, logically structured, and it is clear that he has a passion for the subject matter.

Having invested in many of the books available in this particular field over the years, it is a pleasure to be able to unreservedly recommend this book to singers of these styles, to private teachers who teach these styles, and to institutions where these styles are covered.

A 'must have' core text for the contemporary vocalist. KC

KIM CHANDLER is a leading pop vocal instructor with many years of experience at the cutting edge of university-level coursework and industry-relevant private coaching. She is a sought-after vocal coach for prime-time TV shows (BBC, ITV & MTV), on radio, in magazines and regularly presents at international vocal conferences. She holds a Masters degree in Performance from the London College of Music & Media.

*As a performer of note, Kim maintains a busy session singing career with two decades of high-end experience in the UK and abroad. She has worked with a diverse array of international artists such as Natalie Cole, Michael McDonald, Bjork, Michael Bolton, Westlife, Rick Astley, Puff Daddy, Jocelyn Brown, Neil Diamond, Barry Manilow, Thelma Houston and Uriah Heep.
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