

“THE GIRL IN 14G:” ANALYZING SOLUTIONS FOR VOCAL ISSUES  
THROUGH VOCAL PEDAGOGY

by

CATHERINE C. PIRES-FERNANDES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Theatre  
in the College of Arts and Humanities at the  
University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term, 2014

Thesis Chair: Dr. Steven Chicurel, D.M.A.

## **ABSTRACT**

The intent of this thesis is to study a variety of vocal techniques and identify how to solve different vocal challenges in the musical theatre song, “The Girl in 14G.” In order to be successful in the entertainment business, it is imperative that a singer performs healthily and in a variety of music styles. Through an exploration of Lessac Kinesensic Training, Estill Voice Training Systems® and *Bel Canto* techniques, a singer can gain a holistic perspective about voice. I will study with three voice teachers, each of whom specializes in one of the aforementioned techniques. This thesis will reveal how each voice teacher brought her expertise to the lesson. It is a singer’s responsibility to ensure she is well rounded and knowledgeable about her voice, and the different approaches to teaching voice. Solutions that reflect different techniques will be analyzed. Observations and discoveries made in private voice lessons will also be described. Documentation of lessons with each teacher will provide insight about the distinctions and similarities in vocal techniques. This thesis is intended to serve as a starting point for students and teachers to satisfy their own vocal curiosity and exploration.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and grandparents, without whom I would not have the educational opportunities I've experienced.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my greatest thanks to my thesis committee, who have been the driving force throughout this process. First and foremost, my thesis chair Dr. Steve Chicurel for his interest and enthusiasm, as well as his diligence over the duration of my thesis development. To

Tara Snyder and Dr. Jeremy Hunt, thank you for your unwavering support and guidance, particularly with my analysis of Estill and *Bel Canto*. I would also like to thank Kate Ingram for the time she spent coaching me in Lessac Kinesensic technique, as well as Colleen Amaya with *Bel Canto*.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	2
PROTOCOL .....	4
CHAPTER 2: “THE GIRL IN 14G” .....	7
“THE GIRL IN 14G:” SONG LYRICS.....	8
CHAPTER 3: “THE GIRL IN 14G” VOICE LESSON NOTES .....	11
LESSONS WITH COLLEEN AMAYA: BEL CANTO.....	12
LESSONS WITH TARA SNYDER: ESTILL .....	13
LESSONS WITH KATE INGRAM: LESSAC.....	17
CHAPTER 4: “THE GIRL IN 14G:” ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND DISCOVERIES .....	22
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION .....	27
APPENDIX A: ESTILL VOICE RECIPES .....	29
APPENDIX B: “THE GIRL IN 14G” SHEET MUSIC.....	33
REFERENCES.....	45

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

In today's marketplace, vocal musicians must exhibit versatility if they want to succeed in the entertainment business. Musical theatre literature contains music of different styles that originate from distinct stylistic periods spanning over one hundred years. When musical theatre students listen to music, they become aware that there are a variety of vocal demands, and must therefore be trained to perform these styles healthily and efficiently. Many musical theatre auditions last only 1-2 minutes, during which time a singer must try to demonstrate her vocal strengths. For many auditionees, this means reverting to a "default" that reveals only one voice quality with which the singer is comfortable.

Many contemporary musical theatre composers write in a way that allows singers to transcend the boundaries of singing only one style per song. In so doing, they empower a well-rounded singer to showcase many aspects of her voice, and also give the audience an accurate depiction of the talent she possesses. On the other hand, it is still possible to deliver a compelling performance while singing in one specific style. For example, a singer can add nuances to any song by utilizing diction as a dramatic device. With any song, there are inherent vocal and interpretive challenges. Inevitably, it is the singer's responsibility to determine how she will execute the material, honor both the composer and lyricist, and also bring something new to the song. Subsequently, it is critical that a musical theatre practitioner be well versed in all genres of music, styles of performing, and voice qualities in order to be not only competitive in the marketplace, but also to have a comprehensive knowledge of musical theatre styles.

The demands on a musical theatre student are sometimes unreasonable. As a musical theatre student myself, I understand that in addition to managing the many stresses inherent in

this course of study, it is my responsibility to synthesize all of the information I learn. As a voice student who is exposed to many singing methods, I am attempting to synthesize these techniques in order to create my own approach, which will enable me to integrate this information so that I can sing healthily and efficiently. This will also create an ability to communicate universally with any students or teachers with whom I collaborate, regardless of their pedagogical background.

I contend that by studying a variety of vocal techniques and applying them to one challenging song, any singer will be able to adapt to any style of teaching, and also sing healthily in any musical style. To be the most well rounded musician possible, one must have a holistic perspective on the history and evolution of vocal pedagogy and technique.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In *Estill Voice Training Systems® (EVTS), Level One: Compulsory Figures for Voice Control* by Mary McDonald Klimek, et al, the authors expound the teachings of voice pedagogue, Josephine (Jo) Estill. They use anatomical figures, graphs and diagrams to illustrate the independence of multiple laryngeal structures. Estill also discusses the foundation of “speech science,” which includes respiration, phonation, and resonance/acoustics (Klimek 1). The term “Compulsory Figure,” derived from figure skating, refers in the Estill context to physical mastery. There are Compulsory Figures for the true vocal folds, false vocal folds, thyroid, cricoid, aryepiglottic sphincter, larynx, tongue, velum, jaw, lips, head and neck, and torso. Armed with an awareness of EVTS, a singer can become conversant with any voice teacher or peer because of the universality of the language of anatomy and physiology.

*Estill Voice Training Systems, Level Two: Figure Combinations for Six Voice Qualities* expands upon *Level One* by explaining how to create six archetypical vocal qualities (Speech, Falsetto, Sob, Twang, Opera and Belt) by combining different Compulsory Figures. The book also provides a history of Jo Estill's early studies of voice qualities and the evolution and addition of others since her earliest research in the 1970s (Klimek 2). Estill determined that these voice qualities apply to singing and speaking.

In Kristin Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice*, the study of the voice is divided into four parts – the freeing process, developing process or resonating ladder, sensitivity and power, and the link to text and acting. Linklater also provides visual sketches throughout her book to support the exercises found in each chapter. Overall, Linklater's approach addresses individual needs, and stresses that each singer must discover and tend to her vocal needs. By incorporating specific exercises into her book, Linklater aims to strengthen the voice by liberating the "natural voice," versus developing a formal vocal technique (1).

James McKinney's *The Diagnosis & Correction of Vocal Faults* reflects the author's voice technique that stems from *Bel Canto*. It focuses primarily on posture, breathing, support, and placement. According to McKinney, "the teacher's plan of action is to recognize symptoms, determine causes, and devise cures" (17). He sections his book into informational chapters and utilizes minimal visual aides. By providing the reader with an abundance of information, McKinney outlines specific habits every singer has.

Described as a "bio-dynamic approach to vocal life," Arthur Lessac's *The Use and Training of the Human Voice* focuses on Lessac's personal experiences to enhance voice training (1). His method is organic and experiential, which is different from more traditionally structured

voice techniques. In Part One, he discusses building a foundation for a singer's confidence, as well as learning how to balance breathing with posture. He then delves into structural, consonant and tonal energies in part two, which hones in on organically cultivating movement and sound from the body. By comparing the sounds a singer makes with his/her voice to movements in the body, as well as musical instruments, Lessac engages the entire body to create a holistic vocal experience.

Other primary source materials include *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach* by Karen Sell and *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application* by D. Ralph Appelman. In Sell's book, she outlines the history of vocal pedagogy, and then describes how science is involved in learning how to use the voice in studio and performance settings. She informs her reader about ethical concerns that face teachers, psychology's role in a student's development, and explains different types of voices and how to train each type. For example, a child's voice should be trained differently from an adolescent's.

Appelman's book is also rich with information, but it does not concentrate on a particular voice pedagogue's methodology. He is thorough in utilizing kinesiology to explain the different sounds singers make, and discusses the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and speech through styles, dialects, emotion and exercises. While both books are valuable in describing the scientific aspects of vocal pedagogy and learning how to maintain proper vocal health, these books are intended less for students and more for scholars.

## **PROTOCOL**

In the spring of 2012, I began working on the musical theatre song, "The Girl in 14G" by Dick Scanlan and Jeanine Tesori. Part of a song cycle as opposed to a fully staged

musical production, “The Girl in 14G” is a challenging song because of the vocal demands it makes. By first identifying the major vocal issues in the song, I separated the piece into sections to create a focused approach on how to solve them. This enabled me to bring specific challenges to different voice teachers in order to work effectively through them. The desired result is not only to gain a comprehensive knowledge about multiple vocal techniques, but also to feel confident in my ability to sing difficult pieces of music and provide detailed feedback to other singers.

I will be working on the same song (“The Girl in 14G”) with different voice teachers who espouse different techniques and will record my progress on the piece. By bringing the same song to different teachers, I will discover what aspects of each technique I find personally useful and effective. My primary Estill teacher is Musical Theatre Voice Specialist and Assistant Professor for Theatre UCF, Tara Snyder. She is a Certified Master Teacher and Certified Course Instructor Candidate in Estill Voice Training Systems® and holds an MFA in Musical Theatre from UCF and a BM in Vocal Performance from Capital University Conservatory of Music. The *Bel Canto* teacher with whom I will work is my high school voice teacher Colleen Amaya, who holds a BM in Vocal Performance from the University of Miami. Finally, my Lessac professor is Kate Ingram, an Associate Professor and Graduate Acting Coordinator for Theatre UCF, who holds a BS in Speech from Syracuse University, and an MFA in Acting from the University of Alabama – Alabama Shakespeare Festival. I plan to expand on concepts studied in my readings, as well as include information about my progress from previous lessons with Colleen Amaya and Tara Snyder. I have never worked with Kate Ingram on Arthur Lessac’s technique, and I am

excited to experience her style of teaching. I also look forward to learning about the way she communicates Lessac's method.

## CHAPTER 2: “THE GIRL IN 14G”

Jeanine Tesori has composed music for shows like *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Shrek The Musical*, as well as stand-alone cabaret songs. One such song, made famous by Broadway actor Kristen Chenoweth, “The Girl in 14G,” describes the life of a young woman who just moved to a city apartment by herself. She describes herself as being a reserved girl who enjoys “peace and quiet” (Scanlan and Tesori 2001). Soon after settling into her apartment, she is disturbed by an opera singer below her in apartment 13G and a jazz singer above in 15G. Unlike many comical contemporary songs that feature one voice quality, the song requires the character to imitate the sounds she hears around her and sing in multiple styles and vocal qualities, often switching rapidly from one quality to the next.

Due to the popularity of the song, there are many versions available for viewing on YouTube. These range from showcase recordings of students performing at their universities to videos taped in a less formal setting. Most singers mimic Kristen Chenoweth’s styling, wherein the most emphasis is placed on the opera, jazz, and belting sections. The narrative verses in the song, on the other hand, are sung through without paying attention to operative words. This seems the default for many women performing this song, and consequently the listener loses the perspective of the story. In order to create originality within the song, I will focus on both the text and vocal qualities.

I have identified and nicknamed different vocal sections in the song in order to distinguish one from another. As the song begins, an expository section is written conversationally (“Conversation”). When the character is disturbed by the opera singer in 13G, she responds by imitating what she hears (“Mozart” and “Wagnerian Battleship”). “Mozart”

refers to the “ah” arpeggio section that quotes Mozart’s famous “Queen of the Night” aria. I titled the contrasting operatic section “Wagnerian Battleship” to remind me that the sound is very different from “Mozart,” because of its intensity and richness. “Mozart” sounds more upbeat and light-hearted, compared to the Wagner-inspired measures of music. Once the character is disturbed by her upstairs neighbor, she launches into a section inspired by jazz artists that include Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughn (“Jazz section”). The last section of the song is nicknamed after a musical command when the tempo slows down and the song is reaching its climax (“Broad Swing”). In the final moments of the song (“Broad Swing”), the character has reached her breaking point and imitates both the “opera” and “jazz” neighbors in a schizophrenic manner.

By distinguishing the different sections in the song, I was able to practice efficiently and better understand the opera, jazz, and belting in their respective contexts. Below are the lyrics for “The Girl in 14G,” which will be further referenced in Chapter 3.

### **“THE GIRL IN 14G:” SONG LYRICS**

*(“Conversation”)*

Just moved in to Fourteen “G,”  
So cozy, calm and peaceful.  
Heaven for a mouse like me  
With quiet by the lease-ful.  
Pets are banned, parties too,  
And no solicitations.  
Window seat with garden view.  
A perfect nook to read a book.  
I’m lost in my Jane Austen when I hear:

*(“Wagnerian Battleship”)*

Ah, ah.

*(“Conversation”)*

Say it isn’t so.  
Not the flat below.  
From an opera wanna be

In Thirteen "G,"  
A matinee of some cantata,  
Wagner's Ring and Traviata.  
(*"Mozart"*)  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,  
Ah, ah, ah, ah.

(*"Conversation"*)  
My first night in Fourteen "G."  
I'll put up with Puccini.  
Brew myself a cup of tea.  
Crochet until she's *fini*.  
Half past eight,  
Not a peep except the clock tick tockin'.  
Now I lay me down to sleep.  
A comfy bed to rest my head.  
A stretch,  
A yawn;  
I'm almost gone, then

(*"Jazz"*)  
Doo-wee-zwah  
Doo-tah-dup-doo  
Spee-di-lee dee-floy-doy bee-blip,  
Naa-naa-naa-naa-naa  
Naa-naa-naa-naa-naa,  
Woo-weeee.

(*"Conversation"*)  
Now the girl upstairs  
Wakes me unawares.  
Blowing down from 15G  
Her reveille.  
She's scattin' like her name is Ella.  
Guess who answers a cappella.

(*"Jazz"*)  
"Zoot doo doot floy doy."  
"Ah."

“Zoot doo doot floy dee doy.”

“Ah.”

*(“Broad Swing”)*

I’m not one to raise my voice,  
Make a fuss or speak my mind,

But might I query...

Would you mind if...

Could you kindly...

Stop!

*(Spoken):*

“That felt good”

Stop!

Thirteen,

Fifteen,

Fourteen “G.”

A most unlikely trio.

Not quite three part harmony.

All day, all night we’re singin’:

“Zoot doo doot floy doy  
a zee bop boo doo boy ta boy.”

“Stop!”

“Ah. Ah.”

Had my fill of peace and quiet.

Shout out loud.

I’ve changed my diet,

All because of Fourteen “G!”

### **CHAPTER 3: “THE GIRL IN 14G” VOICE LESSON NOTES**

I began studying “The Girl in 14G” during my sophomore year, in the spring of 2012. It was not until a year later, however, that I decided to incorporate it into my thesis project. Given that I was already somewhat familiar with the song, the process of learning the melody and the words was simplified. The vocal issues addressed in this thesis, however, were the challenge. In addition to my weekly voice lessons with Tara Snyder as part of my BFA Musical Theatre degree, I arranged to have a minimum of two private lessons and coachings with Kate Ingram and Colleen Amaya to get hands-on experience with a variety of techniques. Below is a timeline that reflects significant observations and discoveries I made in the process of working on the song with these teachers.

The major challenges I discovered with the song were the high belting and opera sections, and the need to switch between the two qualities quickly. Because the Estill System provides singers with prescriptive recipes, I utilized this technique as the basis for navigating the vocal challenges in “The Girl in 14G.” While the Estill recipes for belt and opera are similar – both have the same velum, jaw and lips positions, and both require retraction of the false vocal folds (FVF), as well as head, neck and torso anchoring – there are distinctions between the two qualities that can pose a challenge to a singer who is unaccustomed to singing both opera and belting. I am primarily a belter; my default larynx position is like that of the Estill recipe for Belting – high and with thick folds. Estill’s archetypical Opera Quality calls for a low larynx and thinner true vocal folds. That quality lies outside my default (“attractor state” in Estill) and it feels much more effortful to me.

## **LESSONS WITH COLLEEN AMAYA: *BEL CANTO***

March 2013: We discuss *Bel Canto* and the role it will play in learning this song. The focus of this technique is on posture, breathing, support and placement. How do I create a sound that resonates strongly and clearly?

- Especially in the opera section, lower the jaw and keep the mouth placement (or position) round. Remember that placement is a term used often in *Bel Canto* technique.
- Raise the soft palate so that the sound can resonate clearly.
- Remember that posture serves as a way to keep the entire body aligned, all the way up through the neck into the head. Maintaining good posture will help me feel like an opera singer, which I hope will give me confidence in how I am singing.
- Practice lip trill and “S-ah” arpeggios to warm up the “head voice.”

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014: We focus on applying warm ups to both the “Wagnerian” and “Mozart” opera sections. Because I studied with Colleen Amaya for a couple of years, she discusses reinforcing the work I have been doing primarily with my regular voice teacher Tara Snyder in order to strengthen the operatic sounds. How will focusing on warm ups aide me in strengthening the sound?

- In warm ups, don’t breathe upwards. The more my chest collapses, the more likely I am to breathe upwards, which leads to tension in the body.
- A huge part of placement and resonance comes from allowing the support to take the airflow directly to the placement without anything (like the chest and shoulders) interfering.

- Don't spread the mouth when reaching for high notes because it tightens the head and jaw.
- You can, however, begin to lift the cheekbones slightly as you reach a high G (G5 on a piano), in order to hook the sound in the hard and soft palate. I want to get into the "ringing" place where the resonance vibrates in the face muscles.
- Our tension wants to work hard to get the high note out, even though it only adds breathiness and reduces the amount of sound produced.
- Get jaw space relaxed as you open it, as well as while you are singing. Work on relaxing the tongue as well.
- Keep pushing to stretch the roof of the soft palate as I sing higher and "drilling the sound" up through it.
- Relax the face through the cheeks and lips because it affects the ability for the jaw and tongue to relax.
- Settle the body and remain grounded, so that I am channeling my physical energy.
- Separate the "Mozart" arpeggio at measure 24 to ensure I am hitting each note.

### **LESSONS WITH TARA SNYDER: ESTILL**

September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013: We start at the beginning of the song and discuss its expository style. To develop the character and create a subtext, I ask questions that enable me to explore and discover aspects of my life. How do I feel about my recent move? What is my favorite part about my new apartment? Through my answers, I explore the traits of my character and her role as a storyteller.

- Keep the beginning conversational, so that it translates as an easy and relaxed style.
- Aim for Estill Speech Quality, but tighten the Aryepiglottic Sphincter (AES).

- I'm storytelling and reliving the moment, so use visualizations to affect the way I sing the narrative phrases: i.e., "Window seat with garden view." The consequence of the visualization improved my diction and I used more aspirate onset.
- By the end of the lesson, I've felt a lot of improvement and I'm no longer exerting more vocal effort than is needed at the beginning. I want to focus on building my stamina for the major belting and operatic sections toward the end.

October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013: We begin to tackle the first opera section, which we nickname the "Wagner Battleship," based on Opera Quality. How do I create that type of sound?

- No aspirate onsets, instead save that for the "Mozart," whereas in the "Wagner" sections remove the stiffness, and thicken the folds.
- As an exercise to help create the sound, try "belting" the "ahs," as if singing in Belting versus Opera quality. Lower the larynx and maintain true vocal fold (TVF) thickness without adding cricoid tilt. I'm taking a couple of aspects of "belting" without fully singing in Belting quality.
- The exercise is a success after I practice it a couple of times and become accustomed to the changes in my larynx with the opera recipe.
- Ignore the "ugly" sounds that occur when practicing. This includes missing a pitch, or the sounds a singer makes when she is utilizing an exercise to help her navigate a vocal issue. Today this included trying to "belt" the operatic "ahs," even though I had never tried doing this before. It sounded strange to me, but in order to experiment with finding the operatic tone, I had to ignore what my ears were hearing.

- Don't lower the back of the tongue. Hold the tongue out with the thumb and forefinger so that it stays forward.
- There's an issue of trying to tackle everything at once, so figure out what is most pressing first and focus on that.
- Smooth onset – “ah,” not an aspirate “h-ah” with the true vocal folds (TVF). Especially when moving through the notes quickly, it's important to avoid any aspirate onset.
- Practice the “Mozart” section slowly and an octave below the written melody to help with the accuracy of the notes.
- The last exercise is difficult and I miss a couple of the notes each time, but it helps me master the melody and hear each note. I'm focused on the individual pitches, instead of whether or not I'm hitting the high notes.

October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013: Today we focus on the jazz section, and first discuss what distinguishes a jazz song in the music world. What adjectives should come to an audience member's mind when she hears this section?

- This section is primarily in Sob quality.
- Keep the larynx in a low position.
- Although there is no twang in the sob recipe, add some in order to add focus to the sound.
- Pitch gliding is okay, but don't make it a habit. Decide where it seems appropriate based on the character.
- After the 1<sup>st</sup> time practicing the section – lower the larynx even more.

- After the 2<sup>nd</sup> time practicing it – closer to Sob quality, but I need to become more comfortable with the sounds. It’s different, but the more I practice, the more authentic it begins to feel.
- The jazz should sound sexy and a little “speechy.”
- Listen to Sarah Vaughn and Ella Fitzgerald for examples of this kind of sound – varying levels of brightness and imitating instruments, which aids in picking and choosing where to slide.
- In the lyric, “Woo-weeee,” maintain high larynx position. It should feel effortless after the verse of scatting and focusing on those sounds.

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013: Today we focused on the “Broad Swing” end section, where a lot of flipping back and forth between Opera and Belting is necessary. How do I maintain the vocal stamina, even as the song intensifies in volume?

- Add more twang to the musical theatre Belt at the end to make it easier to flip into Opera.
- To practice switching voice qualities rapidly, do larynx drops as an exercise. Sing “Stop!” utilizing high larynx, and then immediately sing the “ahs” with low larynx. Repeat this in order to become comfortable with the larynx shifting position quickly.
- The exercise assists in hearing the difference in sound, as well as training my body for what to expect as I switch voice qualities rapidly. It takes some time to get used to, however, and I spend a large part of the lesson becoming comfortable with this section.

November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013: We work on the “Mozart” opera section again, specifically on the arpeggios with the “ahs.” I’m having a difficult time hitting each note cleanly, so we try a couple

of exercises to focus on the notes. Can I find a character-driven meaning for each “ah” to help me focus on distinguishing each note?

- Practice preparing each note of the arpeggio by slowly pitch gliding in between notes.
- Moving slowly helps my ear discern the melody in a different way from hearing it in the original tempo.
- Practice imitating the way monkeys and chimpanzees screech.
- Research if they also use high tongue to access the twang and screechy sound that can aid me in the opera section.
- So far, I don’t find substantial research that specifies this, but watching videos indicates that primates do use tongue positions similar to humans. The visual aid is helpful and I become more mindful of the good habits I want to incorporate into my singing technique.
- Keep working on the trilling by switching slowly from one note to the next and gradually getting faster.
- After running through the trills a couple of times, I can’t tell whether or not I’m doing it correctly. Some cleaning still needs to be done, but starting to trill slowly and then picking up the tempo assists me significantly.

### **LESSONS WITH KATE INGRAM: LESSAC**

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014: We discuss Lessac and Linklater and she informs me that Lessac will be more applicable to “The Girl in 14G” than Linklater’s technique. What are ways I can color the text of the song through Lessac’s vocal energies?

- Lessac bridges the gap between singing and speaking.
- The objective is to get more ideas for adding meaning and depth to the text.

- There are three vocal energies – structural, consonant, focused tone/tonal.
- Structural energy includes big vowels like /ɔ/ (“AW” as in “all” or “law”), /ɑ/ (“AH” as in “father”), /ɑʊ/ (the diphthong “OW” as “ounce” or “down”) and /ɔɪ/ (the diphthong “OI” as in “oil” or “toys”) (Lessac 165-166). It also deals with space, air and time.
- Some vowels have structural opportunities utilizing Forward Facial Posture (FFP), but have a diphthong – for example, “OW” and “OI” (FFP will be described further in the next lesson).
- According to Lessac’s interpretation, neutral vowels are non-structural vowels. Kate Ingram favors IPA because it more clearly and easily differentiates the vowels, whereas Lessac groups them together.
- Consonant energy is exemplified by singers like Frank Sinatra, who plays with and sings on the consonants.
- Focused tone/Tonal discusses the yawn sensation, potency energy and aiming the focus at a certain place on the palate, as well as the “Call” and “Y-buzz.”
- When you whisper the lyrics of a song, you find structural vowels and a different approach to the sounds in the words. For example, in Alice in Wonderland, the White Rabbit exclaims, “*I*’m late, *I*’m late!”
- As an exercise, speak the song lyrics as a monologue. Isolate the vowels and consonants and ask, what if I lingered here longer? Obviously the note values cannot be changed in the song itself, but accentuating the sounds differently can provide new insight on what the text means.

February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014: We begin working on the song from the beginning with the expository section. First we focus on structural and consonant vowels before moving into focused tone.

What combination of the three Lessac energies will give me the best results for performing this song effectively?

- Structural vowels: good speech means more than memorization; it's about wanting to feel and utilize the muscles in the face.
- FFP is Forward Facial Posture, which babies have until they're about 3 or 4 years old. The face muscles they use to create noises and eventually speech are the same as the ones used for nourishment, like breastfeeding, and it is the reason they are so expressive. Due to social peer pressure around the middle school age, however, many humans become more neutral and go through a stage of "atrophy," where they mask their emotions and are significantly less expressive.
- Structural vowels can be good for tone if they are focused on the right place of the palate.
- Luxuriate in the words and see if there's an opportunity to express that my character is changing her life and what that means for her.
- We try to look pleasant when we sing, so don't feel pressure to smile because it affects the FFP. Really embrace the proper and expressive shapes my face can make as I talk through the lyrics.
- With consonant energy, use the consonants musically more than just for diction.
- Linger and let the words propel me— i.e., "I just moved in to Fourteen G." Stay focused on the "n" and allow it to fluidly take you to the next word.

- Although I won't be able to linger on the consonants when I'm singing the song at a set tempo, using it in an exercise can open up new possibilities and ways to explore and discover different ideas.
- Tonal energy is most applicable to singing.
- Don't make the use of focused tone arbitrary; give it a reason for why and when to accentuate different words and phrases.
- Practice experiencing the difference in sound and resonance between structural vowels and the "Y-buzz" associated with focused tone.

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014: Today we begin with tonal energy and playing with physicality. We focus on creating time and space, which can be difficult for students in the modern world who are often in a rush. Kate Ingram and I also explore the "Call" and modifying vowels. How do I fuse tonal energy and physicality to maintain "created time" while performing a song at a set tempo?

- As humans, we have a lot of strength in the lower back, but we should release it and go into the "C" curve. The sound comes out naturally, very loudly, and the body is unhampered by social conditioning to remain perfectly erect.
- Sound starts in the vocal folds, but support comes from width of the ribcage and depth of the diaphragm in the body – not the front using the chest. This stems slightly from the Fitzmaurice technique.
- Kate Ingram talks about Lessac's "smelling the rose" exercise, where I bend over in a hypothetical garden and inhale the scent of a rose. As soon as I do that, my body and breath are doing what they should naturally. As an actor and singer, I train myself to breathe from my mouth because I don't have the time to breathe in through the nose. The

goal is to discover how to connect my body and breath while breathing through my mouth.

- There is a difference between reaching with the body versus holding. Simply clenching my fist tightly and holding in my energy makes me feel strong, however, Kate Ingram is able to easily bend my arm. When I reach the second time utilizing inward energy and “yawning” forward, she has a much harder time breaking my reach.
- Words like “teen,” “trio,” and “harmony” trigger my desire to smile while singing the “e” vowels.
- With focused tone, I can smile on the other vowels, but not the “Y-buzz” or “Plus-Y.” Smiling loses the richness of the sounds I am capable of producing.
- Arthur’s work focused on circles of attention, where the body feeds the voice and allows us to fluidly “roll” from one energy into the next one. This way, the energies inform one another, so it doesn’t matter if my process begins with consonant, structural or tonal energy – as long as I don’t forget the other energies.
- On certain pitches, make the focus different based on the shapes and spaces of the vowels.
- With calling and singing, modify the vowels to maintain a focused sound.
- We briefly discuss Estill and its relation to Lessac. In order to achieve the focused tone, I should retract the vocal folds and raise the palate so I can maintain the FFP.

## CHAPTER 4: “THE GIRL IN 14G:” ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS AND DISCOVERIES

Chapter 3 highlights specific aspects in my process of developing “The Girl in 14G.” However, I made many more discoveries about my voice in general. By listening to audio recordings of my voice lessons, note taking and feedback, I have experienced an overall growth in my voice. This includes the strength and maturity in my vocal tone since 2012, as well as my attention to detail with lyrics and musicality. I understand that I still have time before I have reached my vocal peak. It is exciting, however, to hear noticeable growth so that I can continue to practice the exercises I’ve used throughout this process once I have completed my undergraduate studies.

Of contemporary musical theatre songs, “The Girl in 14G” is unique to study over a prolonged period of time because of the many layers within the music. In the operatic sections, there was a lot of crossover between the Wagnerian arpeggios and my study of “Mein Herr Marquis” from *Die Fledermaus* two years ago. Tara Snyder and I had worked diligently over two semesters to find the Opera recipe consistent with the Estill model. This had been difficult for me in large part due to the fact that I was not used to singing in thin folds per the recipe. Having spent a large part of my sophomore year (2011-2012) limiting my repertoire to soprano pieces, however, I had an advantage when I began studying “The Girl in 14G” on a more in-depth level. Now I am more comfortable with navigating the opera sections, switching back and forth between belt and opera, as well as tackling the high soprano notes in either quality.

Moreover, I learned it would take additional time to fully dissect each vocal technique and incorporate it into my personal routine. Particularly with the Lessac and *Bel Canto*

techniques, I experienced how different the vocabulary is. For example, Lessac discusses creating authenticity of expression by focusing on how to create sounds with the vocal folds and FFP together. In my experience with *Bel Canto*, however, there is more focus on finding the proper vocal placement first, which can then lead to structuring how the face is positioned. In this case, I learned that based on the style or genre of music I am learning, I can determine which technique will better suit a specific section of the piece. Moreover, it is possible to find a balance between the various methods, by determining what part of any given song takes the most precedence. If, for example, I am studying a patter song, I am more likely to access Lessac's three vocal energies first, so that I focus first on the text. However, if I am studying a ballad that requires a high level of vocal demand, I will access *Bel Canto* where the emphasis is on vocal tone. In my experience, utilizing Estill in conjunction with both of the aforementioned techniques is helpful because of its anatomical and physiological specificity. In particular, I enjoy using Estill during high belting phrases in a song because of the exercises that allow me to access the best vocal options in the voice recipe. For example, when I warm up my voice, I always sing octave leaps on the vowel /e/ ("AY" as in "rate" or "bay") and anchor, in order to practice sustaining the loud sound. Overall, I find that *Bel Canto* lends itself more to teacher demonstration and student imitation, whereas Estill does not.

Regardless of differences in vocabulary, I also identified crossover between the techniques that assisted me when I went to each voice teacher. When Kate Ingram said "support comes from width of the ribcage and depth of the diaphragm in the body – not the front using the chest," it reminded me of Colleen Amaya advising me to take low breaths to completely fill the lungs. I also found similarities between anchoring in the Estill context with Kate Ingram's

explanation of “utilizing inward energy and “yawning” forward.” When I did the “body reaching exercise” with Kate Ingram (described on p. 19), I found that using my inward strength allowed me to remain grounded and physically unwavering. I experienced the same thing in my voice lessons with Tara Snyder, when we would discuss emphasis on head/neck and torso anchoring. Especially during warm-ups, Colleen Amaya would remind me to keep my body aligned, head and shoulders relaxed, chest open, and knees slightly bent. This reinforced that, while there are distinctions between each vocal technique, one’s interpretation allows crossover to occur.

While some lesson notes had less bullet points than others, I learned from a student’s pedagogical perspective that this does not mean substantial work was not accomplished in each lesson. Particularly on the nicknamed sections of “The Girl in 14G,” I spent a lot of time analyzing and finessing the vocal issues, and then determining how to work through them effectively. Some lessons seemed to be filled with more information than others. I realized the specificity of Estill caused my lesson notes with Tara Snyder to be succinct. I was then able to consolidate the information from Tara Snyder into my lessons with Colleen Amaya and Kate Ingram. This enabled me to gain a new perspective about how Estill’s specificity can empower a singer to select parts of an instruction from a teacher and directly solve a vocal issue.

Since I had the least exposure with Lessac, I had the most new insights during my lessons with Kate Ingram. I found this especially true in exploring vowel and consonant sounds while analyzing the text. We treated phrases of the song as a monologue, and I found that speaking the lines allowed me to isolate specific words – which made some of them more potent. In one example, I focused on the words with /s/ sounds and accentuated them. Taking the phrases out of the rhythm of the song, I lingered on words like “peaceuful,” “mouseu,” and “leaseu-ful.” By

exploring the elongated sounds out of context, I was able to select which lyrics I felt were most significant in telling the story. In the first verse, the character in the song talks about loving solitude, so I justified emphasizing the word “mouse,” which she uses to describe herself. Having first studied *Bel Canto* in high school, and then Estill at the University of Central Florida over the past four years, I am still more accustomed to these techniques compared to Lessac. Still, I find Lessac to be a perfect complement to techniques like *Bel Canto* and Estill.

I enjoyed revisiting *Bel Canto* with Colleen Amaya because she was the first voice teacher with whom I had studied. I made new discoveries as I revisited the same warm ups, which were always a crucial part to every lesson I had with her, then as now. Terms like “breathing,” “posture,” “placement,” and “support” have not been in my vocabulary since high school and revisiting those terms initially threw me off. As I connected certain elements of Estill and Lessac, however, I found I could follow Colleen Amaya’s directions efficiently without feeling lost. For example, when Colleen Amaya would instruct me to relax my jaw and avoid spreading my mouth when reaching for my high notes, I thought about the FFP that Kate Ingram and I discussed during our Lessac lessons. By using FFP, I was able myself to create expressive shapes with my face and mouth, which in turn produces a richer sound. During the soprano warm ups, I thought about Opera quality in Estill, where the head and neck are anchored and lips and jaw are in mid position. I also recognized that while Colleen Amaya guided me in breathing “low and deep,” I didn’t feel a need to focus on it. Task-related breathing is an element of Estill I have grown to appreciate, and I found myself singing better when I wasn’t stressing about the kind of breaths I was taking. Considering the other techniques while singing with Colleen Amaya helped

me to fully engage my body and also challenge myself to consider the similarities and differences with Estill and Lessac.

Throughout my career, I am certain I will encounter a multitude of vocal barriers through which I will need to work. If my goal is to analyze solutions, however, and not strive to fully eradicate my vocal issues, this will enable me to keep an open mind if I return to the same problem. Currently, I feel comfortable singing in opera quality, but my career might lead me in a direction where I am singing predominantly pop music, and belting. Therefore, I might have to revisit certain aspects of all of the voice lessons in order to maintain a balance of the vocal qualities I use. For example, working on songs that contain opera sections will continue to pose a challenge for me, even though I had major breakthroughs while working on “The Girl in 14G.” I am encouraged to continue exploring new ways to progress in my vocal development, as opposed to reaching a formalized conclusion about how to solve any given vocal issue.

Overall, I have found that the specificity of Estill provides me with the strongest vocal skill set when considering my voice and other vocal techniques. The vocabulary of *Bel Canto* is more descriptive, whereas Estill is more prescriptive. The detail of Estill provides clarity when a teacher communicates what she wants from a student. For example, if I was asked to “brighten” the tone of my voice by any teacher using any technique, I know from Estill that options to brighten the tone include tightening the AES, raising the larynx or raising the tongue. A singer who applies Estill’s Compulsory Figures to voice qualities will be able to understand how her voice works from an anatomical and physiological standpoint. By combining a variety of voice methods like Estill, *Bel Canto*, and Lessac, a singer can create her own “toolbox” for a lifetime of successful and healthy singing.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

After documenting two voice lessons with Colleen Amaya (*Bel Canto*), five voice lessons with Tara Snyder (Estill), and three voice lessons with Kate Ingram (Lessac), I find that exposing myself to many singing methods has allowed me to synthesize these techniques into my own approach to singing. While I am still crafting an individualized technique, studying *Bel Canto*, Jo Estill's and Arthur Lessac's voice methods has enabled me to gain a comprehensive background about the different approaches there are to teaching voice. Not only has my study of "The Girl in 14G" improved my performance, but I have also learned that there a number of ways to approach a song. For example, with Lessac's three energies, a singer can begin studying from either energy, as long as she remembers that they are all connected and need equal attention.

Through learning how to communicate with different voice professors, I also learned how to become receptive to each technique, even if the other methods did not agree on a particular point. Although this posed minor frustration in the beginning, it challenged me inevitably to use all of the information I had learned and apply it to each voice lesson. I found a way to navigate differences of each vocal method and determine what I found applicable to me as a singer. This allowed me to explore how other students may learn and how I will be able to share my testimony of studying a variety of vocal techniques in order to create a holistic understanding of vocal pedagogy.

While my readings consisted initially of more than *Bel Canto*, Estill and Lessac, I found these three were the most applicable to "The Girl in 14G," as well as to my goals of understanding different techniques. Now I feel confident I can enter the workplace with an awareness of more than one formal voice method, and continue to work more efficiently with

teachers of varied pedagogical backgrounds. This is essential for any voice student, because while there are a multitude of vocal techniques taught worldwide, it is up to the student to determine which one(s) are best for her. By exploring and learning about a variety of vocal techniques, a singer is enabled to create her own toolbox of knowledge that she can access at any time throughout her career. It is my hope that other students will utilize this thesis to satisfy their curiosity for a deeper awareness of voice, and as a catalyst for their own vocal exploration.

## **APPENDIX A: ESTILL VOICE RECIPES**

# SPEECH

TVF On/Offs			FVF			TVF Body-Cover				THY		CRI		AES		LARYNX		
X				X			X			X		X		X			X	
Glottal	Aspirate	Smooth	Constrict	Mid	Retract	Slack	Thick	Thin	Stiff	Vertical	Tilt	Vertical	Tilt	Wide	Narrow	Low	Mid	High

TONGUE				VELUM			JAW				LIPS			H&N		TOR	
	X					X		X				X		X		X	
Low	Mid	High	Compress	Low	Mid	High	Forward	Mid	Back	Drop	Protrude	Mid	Spread	Relax	Anchor	Relax	Anchor

# SOB

TVF On/Offs			FVF			TVF Body-Cover				THY		CRI		AES		LARYNX		
		X			X			X			X	X		X		X		
Glottal	Aspirate	Smooth	Constrict	Mid	Retract	Slack	Thick	Thin	Stiff	Vertical	Tilt	Vertical	Tilt	Wide	Narrow	Low	Mid	High

TONGUE				VELUM			JAW				LIPS			H&N		TOR	
		X				X		X				X			X		X
Low	Mid	High	Compress	Low	Mid	High	Forward	Mid	Back	Drop	Protrude	Mid	Spread	Relax	Anchor	Relax	Anchor

# TWANG, Nasalized

TVF On/Offs			FVF			TVF Body-Cover				THY		CRI		AES		LARYNX		
		X			X			X			X	X			X			X
Glottal	Aspirate	Smooth	Constrict Mid Retract			Slack	Thick	Thin	Stiff	Vertical	Tilt	Vertical	Tilt	Wide	Narrow	Low	Mid	High

TONGUE				VELUM			JAW				LIPS			H&N		TOR	
		X			X			X				X		X		X	
Low	Mid	High	Compress	Low	Mid	High	Forward	Mid	Back	Drop	Protrude	Mid	Spread	Relax	Anchor	Relax	Anchor

# OPERA

TVF On/Offs			FVF			TVF Body-Cover				THY		CRI		AES		LARYNX		
		X			X	X	X				X	X			X	X		
Glottal	Aspirate	Smooth	Constrict Mid Retract			Slack	Thick	Thin	Stiff	Vertical	Tilt	Vertical	Tilt	Wide	Narrow	Low	Mid	High

TONGUE				VELUM			JAW				LIPS			H&N		TOR	
			X			X		X				X		X		X	
Low	Mid	High	Compress	Low	Mid	High	Forward	Mid	Back	Drop	Protrude	Mid	Spread	Relax	Anchor	Relax	Anchor

# BELTING

<b>TVF On/Offs</b>			<b>FVF</b>			<b>TVF Body-Cover</b>				<b>THY</b>		<b>CRI</b>		<b>AES</b>		<b>LARYNX</b>		
X		X			X		X			X			X		X			X
Glottal	Aspirate	Smooth	Constrict Mid			Slack	Thick	Thin	Stiff	Vertical Tilt	Vertical Tilt	Vertical Tilt	Vertical Tilt	Wide Narrow	Wide Narrow	Low	Mid	High
					Retract													
<b>TONGUE</b>				<b>VELUM</b>			<b>JAW</b>				<b>LIPS</b>			<b>H&amp;N</b>		<b>TOR</b>		
		X			X		X				X			X		X		
Low	Mid	High	Low	Mid	High	Forward	Mid	Back	Drop	Protrude	Mid	Spread	Relax	Anchor	Relax	Anchor		
		Compress																

Estill et al (2005) pages 13, 33, 43, 55, 67. *Estill Voice Training System, Level Two: Figure Combinations for Six Voice Qualities*. Reprinted with permission from Estill Voice International.

**APPENDIX B: “THE GIRL IN 14G” SHEET MUSIC**

# The Girl in 14G

Lyrics by Dick Scanlan

Music by Jeanine Tesori

Moderate Swing (♩ = ♪<sup>3</sup> ♪)

1  
Just moved in — to

5  
Four-teen "G," — so co - zy, calm and peace - ful.

10  
Heav-en for — a mouse like me with qui - et by the lease - ful.

*mp*  
*L.H.*  
*sim.*

8

Copyright © 2000 That's Music To My Ears Ltd. and Thoroughly Modern Music Publishing Co.  
International Copyright Secured All Rights Reserved

Authorized for use by *Catie Pires-Fernandes*

Pets are banned, par-ties too, and no so-li-ci-

15  
la-tions. Win-dow seat with gar-den view.

(♩ = ♪)

20  
A per-fect nook to read a book. I'm lost in my Jane Aus-ten when I

À la "Tristan" (♩ = ♪)

hear: "Ah, ah."



À la "Tristan"

Musical score for "À la Tristan". The vocal line consists of a series of eighth notes followed by a long note with a fermata. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Dynamics include *f* and *pp*. There are asterisks under the piano part at the end of the section.

ah. ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, \_\_\_\_\_

À la "Magic Flute"

Musical score for "À la Magic Flute". The vocal line features a series of eighth notes with trills. The piano accompaniment has a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. Dynamics include *mf*.

ah, ah,

Tempo I (♩ = ♩<sup>3</sup>)

Musical score for "Tempo I". The vocal line has a few notes with a fermata. The piano accompaniment is sparse, with chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *fff* and *sub. p*.

ah, ah, ah, ah."

My first night in Four-teen "G." I'll put up with Puc -

50

ci - ni. Brew my - self a cup of tea.

*sim.*

Cro - chet un - til she's fi - ni. Half past eight,

*mf*

55

not a peep ex - cept the clock tick tock - in'.

(♩ = ♪)

60

Now I lay — me down to sleep. A com - fy bed

to rest my head. A stretch, a yawn; I'm al - most gone, then

L.II.  
*mp*

to rest my head. A stretch, a yawn; I'm al - most gone, then

*rit. e dim.*

R.H.

## Fast Jazz, à la Ella Fitzgerald (♩ = ♪)

65

"Doo - wee - zwah - doo -

tah - dup - doo spee-di-lee dee - floy - doy bee - blip, -

tah - dup - doo spee-di-lee dee - floy - doy bee - blip, -

70 *optional*

naa - naa, woo - weccc.

**Tempo I**

75

Now the girl up - stairs wakes me un - a -

wares. Blow - in' down from Fif - teen "G" - her

80

rev - cil - le. — She's seat - tin' like her name is El - la. Guess who an - swers a cap - pel - la.

8 Fast Jazz ("Ella")

Operatic

85

"Zoot doo doot floy doy." "Ah."

*f* *mf molto legato*

Fast Jazz ("Ella")

Operatic

"Zoot doo doot floy dee doy." "Ah."

*f* *mf molto legato*

Somewhat freely

90

I'm not one to raise my voice, make a fuss or speak my mind, but

*sub. mp*

95

N.C.

might I quer - y... Would you mind if... Could you kind - ly... stop!

*poco accel.* *pp* *ppp colla voce*

Fast March

9

100

staccato cresc. poco a poco

This system contains the first two measures of the 'Fast March' section. It features a treble clef staff with a whole rest, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a complex rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo and dynamics are marked 'staccato' and 'cresc. poco a poco'.

"That felt good" Stop!

This system contains measures 3 and 4. The treble clef staff has a whole note with a fermata. The grand staff continues with the accompaniment. The lyrics "That felt good" are written above the treble staff, followed by "Stop!".

Broad Swing (♩ = ♩<sup>3</sup>)

105

Thir - teen, Fif - teen,

*molto rit.* *ff*

This system contains measures 5 and 6. The treble clef staff has a whole note with a fermata. The grand staff features triplet patterns in both hands. The lyrics "Thir - teen, Fif - teen," are written above the treble staff. The tempo is marked 'molto rit.' and the dynamics are 'ff'.

Four-teen "G." A most un - like - ly tri - o.

This system contains measures 7 and 8. The treble clef staff has a whole note with a fermata. The grand staff continues with the accompaniment. The lyrics "Four-teen 'G.' A most un - like - ly tri - o." are written below the treble staff.

8

Authorized for use by *Catie Pires-Fernandes*

10

Operatic

110

Not quite three-part har-mo-ny. — All day, all night, we're sing-in'!

Fast Jazz

115

"Zoot doo doot floy doy — a zee bop boo doo

boy ta boy." "Stop!"

120

"Ah."

Broad swing (♩ =  $\frac{1}{2}$  ♩) 11

125

Ah... Had my fill...

130

of peace and qui - et. Shout out loud. I've

changed my di - et, all be - cause of Four - teen "G!"

135

## REFERENCES

- Appelman, D. Ralph. *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory and Application*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1967. Print.
- Chenoweth, Kristen. "The Girl in 14G." By Dick Scanlan and Jeanine Tesori. *Let Yourself Go*. Sony Music. 2001. 2000. MP3.
- Lessac, Arthur. *The Use and Training of the Human Voice; A Practical Approach to Speech and Voice Dynamics*. New York: DBS Publications, 1967. Print.
- Linklater, Kristin. *Freeing the Natural Voice*. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1976. Print.
- McDonald Klimek, Mary, Kerrie Obert, and Kimberly Steinhauer. *Estill Voice Training System, Level One: Compulsory Figures for Voice Control*. Pittsburgh: Estill Voice Training System, 2005. Print.
- McDonald Klimek, Mary, Kerrie Obert, and Kimberly Steinhauer. *Estill Voice Training System, Level Two: Figure Combinations for Six Voice Qualities*. Pittsburgh: Estill Voice Training System, 2005. Print.
- McKinney, James C. *The Diagnosis & Correction of Vocal Faults*. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1982. Print.
- Sell, Karen. *The Disciplines of Vocal Pedagogy: Towards an Holistic Approach*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005. Print.