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True to My Own Voice:
Ethical Challenges in
Talent Development

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Part of the Maguire Ethics Center's mission is to "provide moral reflection on contemporary issues." Certainly, one of the more visible ways we do that is by providing a venue for customary scholarly discourse for select SMU professors, and occasionally, visiting scholars.

In ancient Athens, elders would provide an oral narration intended to pass along the values, customs and beliefs from one generation to the next one. By the Renaissance, the practice transformed into written form through public essays designed to be widely shared among community members. The Maguire Ethics Center combines these two rich traditions asking these notable scholars to present their research on ethics in a public forum and then transforming those ideas for publication in our Occasional Paper Series. We are delighted to publish this paper by Barbara Hill Moore titled "True to My Own Voice: Ethical Challenges in Talent Development" and hope that you will pass it along.



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Soprano, Barbara Hill Moore is the *Meadows Foundation Distinguished Professor of Voice* at Southern Methodist University and also serves as Director of the SMU Study Abroad Program in South Africa. A National Endowment of the Arts Grant recipient, she has sung with orchestras and opera companies throughout the United States and Europe, especially Germany, where she sang over fifty performances of the role of Jenny in Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper* in Berlin and Cologne. She served as Master Teacher for the National Association of Teachers of Singing Internship Program, served on the distinguished artist panel of the UNISA Foundation International Competition in Singing held in Pretoria, South Africa, presented Master Classes for teachers and singers at universities in England, Germany, Korea, South Africa, and North America, and she has also been a member of the Distinguished Artist Faculty of the *Amalfi Coast Music Festival* since 2004. Professor Hill Moore is National Vice President for the NATS Foundation Circle of Friends, and is TEXOMA (Texas Oklahoma and New Mexico) Regional Governor and National Competition Chair of the National Opera Association.

TRUE TO MY OWN VOICE: Ethical Challenges in Talent Development

Henry Purcell exclaims in his song, "If music be the food of love, sing on 'til I am fill'd with joy; for then, my list'ning soul you move to pleasures that can never cloy. Your eyes, your mien, your tongue declare that you are music ev'rywhere!"¹ When the Biblical prophetess, Miriam, and the other women went out with timbrels, she said, "Sing to the Lord!"² Similarly, the German-born English composer Georg Friedrich Händel celebrates the power of music in his oratorio *Joshua* (HWV 64): "Oh, had I Jubal's lyre or Miriam's tuneful voice, to songs like hers, I would aspire and rejoice. My humble strains but faintly show how much to heaven and Thee, I owe."³ Since the beginning of civilization, we have been singing. We have been making joyful sounds.

How glorious it is at the ballpark to hear the first words of our national anthem, "O, say can you see..." before the empire calls out "batter up" and "play ball!" How wonderful to hear a young Catholic girl sing Schubert's beautiful "Ave Maria": "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee..." How empowering to hear a Protestant boy sing "A Mighty Fortress is our God" or "Deep River, my home is over Jordan..." How moving to hear Maria Callas or Leontyne Price sing that pleading and haunting aria "Vissi D'arte" from *Tosca*!

It is the unique timbre and quality of the human voice — its capacity for expressing every image, sound, thought, and feeling — that makes us love the voice and its seemingly effortless and spontaneous painting of the human spirit. In fact, these beautiful sounds often lure us to join in and sing along. Because we do frequently join in, many of us believe that it is easy to sing. I am often asked if I believe singing is something anyone can do. My response is simple: "If you can speak you can

¹ The celebrated song z.379 (1692) by Henry Purcell (1659-1695) sets a text by Colonel Henry Heveningham (1651-1700). The first line is drawn from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

² Exodus 15:21

³ Georg Friedrich Händel, *Joshua*, Act III, scene 1.

sing.” Most of us can sing, or dance, or swim, or bike, or run, or play basketball, a little bit and with relative ease. Of course, being able to do a thing a little bit doesn’t mean one has the talent that could be developed to a professional level. The conviction that we have talent, combined with our knack for singing, is what motivates some of us to make singing our life’s work.

In my experience, most young artists know whether or not their talent, discipline, and interest, will sustain a career by the end of their undergraduate studies. At that stage, my colleagues and I agree that there must be clearly visible passion—a “fire in the belly”—and a complete conviction that the aspiring singer will not be fulfilled or happy doing anything else. As a teacher, I respect my student’s choice. The singer may want to begin a professional career or simply join those who are seriously considering professional careers in vocal performance. It is my responsibility and high honor to be a nurturer of the human voice, as well as a motivator of the human spirit.

I might well have added a subtitle to this paper about talent development: “My Story: Shepherding the Talented from Studio to Stage,” because my life, training, professional experience, and personal background, are the foundation for this discussion. The details of talent development vary with the voice, sensitivity, personality, attitudes, instincts, skills, and experiences of each singer. I would, however, like to share a bit of my personal background so that you understand my passion for music, for singing, and for teaching.

To begin with, I must say, I am a teacher who sings, rather than a singer who teaches. Unlike many of my colleagues in university teaching, and those here in the voice department at Southern Methodist University, my training was in music education, English, speech, and drama. My goal was to become a teacher, and not a performer. I, therefore, approach my career as a lover of pedagogy and learning.

Teaching has always been not just a passion, but also a priority in my personal development as a teacher/artist. I was raised to respect the ideal of offering service to others. My parents and grandparents taught me that service is a gift we are

privileged to share. It is an inevitable task for me. I have had a desire to teach since I was very young and during that time, teaching was believed to be among the noblest professions. My earliest childhood memories involve playing school with my siblings, especially on the many rainy and snowy days in St. Louis, Missouri. I played the role of teacher so frequently that my younger siblings probably felt that they had already been to kindergarten and the first grade by the time they started school. I recognize now, after years of getting the job done, that teaching also taps into the complexities of women’s roles as wives, mothers, nurturers, providers, and professionals.

My first solo experience was in a church as a six-year-old child. I will never forget overhearing my mother volunteer me to sing at a Youth Day Program in a neighborhood church. Our neighbor asked mother if she knew a child in the neighborhood who could bring greetings from a neighboring church and sing a song. I recall my mother saying, “Oh, Pat can do it” and me being shocked and filled with fear. I recall thinking: “Pat (my nickname) who? Surely, she doesn’t mean me!” I had never sung in public and had a great fear of public speaking. My close friends might tell you that I still have that fear today. Obviously, my mother had observed me playing the role of teacher, as I taught songs to my siblings and childhood friends. Perhaps she thought it was time I put some of that experience to practical use. I do recall surviving the Youth Day ordeal, and although I didn’t like public speaking, I loved the experience of performing and I looked forward to more. After my first performance, my joy in singing continued through learning and then teaching the youth choir spirituals and hymns at church. In fact, directing sacred choral music was one of the many jobs I held as an undergraduate.

My childhood experiences, my education, and my professional performance experiences are all woven into my approach and philosophies about how talent is developed. In my view, the preparation of serious, professional artists begins with identifying potential talents and building trust followed by meticulous pedagogical training. It is then necessary to develop

and nurture courage, character, and performance instincts. Once these basics are in place, the next stage is to develop the voice and the psyche for auditions and competitions. The final stage is to instill in young singers the ethical sense of responsibility required for a lifelong career, as well as a readiness to answer the call to service in our profession.

It is a monumental task to identify a career talent. In my view, talent is a unique or special natural ability that allows a person to perform a given task in a certain area on a very high level. Most generally, we say he or she is a talented athlete, painter, engineer, or musician, etc. As patrons and observers, we all recognize talent when we hear or see talent that has been fully developed. Yet, at the beginning stage of talent development, how can we, as teachers, know or discern whether or not someone has enough innate talent? I sometimes wonder if we are good enough at recognizing the truly unique, the diamond in the rough.

Ideally, at the university level, the process of identifying career potential begins with freshmen, as the faculty begins to provide them with opportunities for self-exploration. In the process, we must remember, and be inspired by the fact that each one of us is, in some way, a teacher of all who observe us. As children, we imitate our parents' speech, habits, energies, responses, and most everything else, until others enter our lives and influence us. I remember attending the first concert of my life in St. Louis, with my high school choir director, George Van-Hoy Collins. He had noticed my love for singing and took me to a recital by another St. Louis native, the celebrated mezzo-soprano, Grace Bumbry. Decades later, in 2006, I was on an adjudication panel alongside Ms. Bumbry at the UNISA⁴ Music Foundation International Competition for singers in Pretoria, South Africa. I told her how, as a high school student, I had been greatly inspired by the "Welcome Home" recital she

⁴ The Unisa Music Foundation was established in 1990 to promote and support music at the University of South Africa, and throughout South and Southern Africa. It organizes and presents annual national and international music competitions, as well as frequent concerts, master classes and music tuition projects in support of its mission.

presented in Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis. She and I had many subsequent conversations about singing, teaching, and serving as role models for our students. They were conversations I could not have imagined when I began my work more than forty-eight years ago.

Ms. Bumbry and I shared many ideas about the importance of auditions for young artists. Having been a performer and not a teacher most of her professional life provided important perspectives. From a pedagogical point of view, student auditions confirm the obvious, both positive and negative. Within a ten-minute audition, the adjudicators quickly determine whether or not that individual has the instrumental or the potential for outstanding performance. The SMU auditions begin with singing; then applicants take sight-reading tests followed by written examinations. The goal of this process is to offer an objective ranking of all applicants. However, I want to raise a few issues that carry ethical implications: first, the large number of applicants, in certain categories, creates much tougher competition for places or spaces in the study program. We hear as many as ten times the number of sopranos as that of mezzo-sopranos, tenors, baritones, and basses combined. Therefore, the number of sopranos eliminated in the initial rounds of auditions is disproportionately high. Second, male and female voices are difficult to compare at this stage, because at eighteen years old, male voices are highly unpredictable in character, depth, stamina, maturity, and, therefore, in potential. I always wonder how many potentially beautiful singers are eliminated and/or discouraged from careers in singing during the early audition processes because of disproportionate numbers and vocal immaturity, not to mention other factors, such as personal impressions, philosophies, and the individual tastes of each faculty adjudicator.

The audition introduces the issue of music background as well as exposure and experience. Several years ago, I attended a meeting with the music administration where a fellow voice teacher announced that he/she would not teach students who have not studied piano or who cannot read music. Of course, it might

be easier and perhaps more desirable to teach students who have had training, experience, and exposure to the arts. Yet, as my former colleague, mentor, and friend Bruce Foote frequently said, “Why do the students need us if they have to come here with everything?” If we entertain the notion that piano skills or prior lessons in piano is a prerequisite for undergraduate or graduate study in voice, we might very well eliminate great artists like our former colleague, Thomas Hayward, who sang sixteen seasons at the Metropolitan Opera without these skills.

The philosophy about music literacy, as a prerequisite for vocal training, might have prevented many of the vocal legends of our time from their singing careers. It has been written and reported by many that Luciano Pavarotti, for example, had difficulty reading music. It seems that he was at the very least a slow sight-reader. What does this skill of music reading say about Pavarotti (or anyone) as a singer or potential artist? After hearing hundreds of celebrated recordings and unforgettable performances, we now have no question about the innate musicality of Luciano Pavarotti. If, as educators, we adopt the position that we will only teach students who have studied piano or who sight read well at the audition, then we are in fact sending the following exclusionary messages to our prospective students:

- 1) The poor need not apply: People without access to pianos or keyboards would be eliminated.
- 2) The under-educated need not apply: Students whose high schools do not offer music theory, sight-reading, music history, and appreciation courses would be eliminated.
- 3) The under-experienced need not apply: Students lacking high school stage and performance experience would be eliminated.
- 4) Those who are different need not apply: Those who are socially underprivileged, ethnically, religiously, and racially in the minority, and/or those who want to study non-traditional music genres would be eliminated.

As the oldest of six children from an inner city family, I faced race, gender, and financial insecurity throughout my childhood. The above admission assumptions would have eliminated me, many of my classmates, and many talented students whom I have recruited from South Africa, China, Korea, and the Americas. My point here is that in the admissions audition, most especially in the early stages, we must try to identify talent, not achievement. We must understand that talent recognition and achievement recognition are two vastly different things for young artists. As ethical educators, we must use our process to identify potential talents, and not to eliminate the perceived under-exposed applicants. To do this, we must regularly examine our personal preferences and prejudices regarding talent development. We must continuously review our personal and institutional evaluations of applicants. We must ask ourselves whether or not the challenges facing prospective talents are those that we, as their potential mentors and teachers are equipped enough to help them overcome.

Establishing trust is the foundation of any successful student/teacher relationship. Most of our students have been the best in a school, community, or church music program. Their parents, teachers, and others, have identified special talent and potential in them. In the audition for college admission, faculty members determine which sounds demonstrate potential and which are problematic. In the interview and the first few lessons, teachers begin by exchanging performance philosophies with the students. I believe it is important at this stage to remember that some students have come to the university with their own ideas--informed or otherwise--of their best sounds, their preferred repertory, and their potential in various musical genres. They are frequently well informed enough to have the courage and faith in themselves to pursue their dreams of becoming working artists. Sometimes, they have little understanding of how to sing consistently with good working posture, supportive, healthy breathing, and/or optimum resonance. During the phase of trust development, it is crucial for teachers to maintain a healthy respect for what a student already knows while instilling what he

or she needs to learn in order to succeed and survive as singers. Hence, teachers and students build mutual respect and, hopefully, identify a passion for singing and a desire to learn.

What do we hope to teach our students after we identify their unique talents? I believe we must help students develop an early understanding that excellent physical and emotional health are the foundations of a sustained career in singing. Since the voice is a part of the body and dependent upon the stamina of the body, an ailing, chronically ill singer has little hope for professional success. Upon the foundation of health, we need to establish excellent vocal technique, which begins with correct posture, followed by consistent, reliable, expansive, deep breathing. Most singers never stop working to improve the breath expansion and support throughout their study and singing careers. Their study continues with an understanding of vowels and resonance and their correct uses, as well as correct diction, musical expression, communication and, finally, the development of audience engagement and rapport.

A student's previous study may place the applied teacher in the position of repairing, patching, or attempting to remove unhealthy technical habits. Eliminating well-rehearsed habits that impede progress can be challenging for the student and the teacher. Even among students who may happily accept and learn new technical ideas, many may find it boring, difficult, frightening, or completely unsettling, to focus on dropping bad habits. My former teacher, Bruce Foote, used to say he would prefer to teach a student who has never had voice lessons to one with years of private lessons, because muscle memory makes it challenging for students to unlearn old habits and for voice teachers to devise useful methods of facilitating it.

One of my most successful and talented singers was Otto Maudi, a South African baritone, who studied at SMU from 2003 to 2005. He was 30 years old when he began his studies. Otto came from a township north of Pretoria. When I met him he was a prison guard with a high school education who had no hope of studying at a university. His experience was patchy. He had taken a few lessons, sung on television and in several large oratorio and

opera performances, and he won a national competition for untrained musicians, but Otto had never studied singing systemically. He never had piano lessons and could not read music. Otto heard that I was teaching and auditioning singers in Pretoria, and he asked if I would give him an audition opportunity. He believed he could have a career if he could study voice, get some supervised stage experience, and build and develop his confidence in performance. When I first heard Otto sing, I was moved to tears. I admit that it was a long shot to get him accepted into our program at SMU, but I believed in his talent and commitment. I convinced my colleagues to take a chance on him and he has proven himself. After leaving SMU, Otto sang professionally in Sweden, Germany, England, Italy, and Spain and, of course, throughout South Africa. In March 2010, I heard him sing the role of Ramfis, the High Priest in Verdi's *Aida*, at the Johannesburg Civic Theater. He was outstanding both in performance and in stage presence. He is now booked through 2015, which is rare for beginning artists in our profession and unusual for any artist in our present economic times.

In addition to having talent, Otto was teachable and trusting. Without hesitation, he tried every suggestion I made for improving his performance. When initial suggestions failed to work, we tried other approaches. Otto came to SMU believing firmly that he was a bass and should only sing the roles written for the lowest vocal register. He had been convinced of this by a coach/accompanist in South Africa. After only a few lessons, I was absolutely certain that Otto is a spinto or a Verdi baritone. This voice type, similar to the helden tenor, sings the most challenging, dramatic baritone repertory. It involves singing for long periods of time in the upper range and then in the lowest range with great ease and dramatic fervor. I knew it would be a very long shot to have Otto hear his voice differently and trust this new interpretation of his voice. He tried immediately but was unsuccessful because he simply could not hear his voice in the higher repertory. I was patient, assigning repertory that challenged his musicianship instead of his range. Otto succeeded in learning three opera roles at SMU. He developed his courage

in performance and built upon his magnanimous ability to connect with the audience. After singing Blitch in the opera *Susannah* by Carlisle Floyd, Dr. Dulcamara in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, and Crown in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, Otto gained an enhanced determination, perseverance, and courage. He developed a love of practice and left SMU with a strengthened character. Are these not the qualities we seek to instill in all of our students?

Several years after Otto graduated and became a successful professional, he emailed to ask if I would critique his recent performance in *Aida*. I must admit I was again moved to tears, this time by Otto's humility. Today, Otto continues to seek critical evaluation of his performance and ways to improve it. In April 2014, he sang the title role of Porgy (a spinto baritone role) in *Porgy and Bess* in London! Artists may develop trust immediately but they develop personal confidence at different paces and at different times in their careers. As Otto's mentor, I mixed patience and respect with gentle persistence, which was the key to helping him realize his potential. Otto has demonstrated how well he had learned not only vocal technique, but also the lessons of hard work.

What do we say to the talented performers who wish to study, but at the beginning stages of study, do not belong to the traditional age group or ethnicity, or do not understand the language or culture? Do we encourage them to pursue their studies? Or, do we express enthusiasm only about those potential students who are of traditional college age with highly desirable preparation? I view my work as identifying, disciplining, molding, challenging, and nurturing the talent within each singer. I hope to motivate students to have enough courage and faith in themselves to pursue their dreams of becoming working artists. I am equally committed to helping those with desire to develop their talents, but question the magnitude and depth of their talent, lack courage or require encouragement. I hope to help each of them discover their special gifts — their own voice — in the process of study. In helping students uncover their unique vocal talent, I also hope to inspire them to fulfill their

vocal potential as they develop greater knowledge and passion for singing.

In addition to the voice, what are the qualities we hope to develop in young artists? I look for a joy of singing in students beginning their study. I hope to see someone who wants to sing every day and all the time. I look for passion, determination, flexibility, openness, and a willingness to accept new ideas and concepts. Artists have to define themselves without fearing socially constructed labels, restrictions, and descriptions. Above all, they have to feel a personal obligation to their work in order to persevere. They must practice and sacrifice all in order to become the best they can be. To address this set of issues, I once again look to my own life and career. I did not realize that I sang incessantly throughout my youth, long before I began studying singing. I sang daily, nightly, or whenever I was not talking. In my home, however, there were strict rules about behavior at the dinner table and respect for quiet time during homework hours. Nevertheless, if there was a lull in dinner conversation, I often couldn't contain myself. I still recall dad saying "not at the table, little girl!" And during homework time, hearing my brothers complain: "Mother, I can't concentrate, make Pat stop singing!" Even now my friends tell me that I am always humming even during the quietest moments. I suppose I am a bit like the writer who is constantly jotting down ideas in the notepad or the mathematician who is always toying with numbers and formulas. There is always a song on my mind and in my heart and, I am convinced that a deep and compelling desire to sing is necessary to sustain a career as an artist. I believe this desire cannot be taught but it can be nurtured. There must be some evidence of its existence for the training process to begin.

Successful performers learn discipline through carefully guided study. Each of my students receives a study-and-practice guide in the course syllabus. This guide includes suggestions for mental and emotional preparation, exercise and physical preparation, appropriate clothing, developing healthy practice habits, the best vocal exercises, and more. When singers come to their first lesson, they are given appropriate exercises that

address their voice types and technical issues. They are instructed to design their practice to follow the structure and format of their lessons. Expectations are outlined for each lesson. Students are given instructions about how to work on specific problem areas of the voice, how to avoid undesirable resonance and timbre, and how to react to problems with intonation or pain and discomfort in singing. They are given warning signs for unhealthy production and guidelines for the duration of practice. By the end of the first month of lessons, all singers have begun to develop a workable foundation for further development. These are the “not so glamorous” aspects of performance study. In order for this plan to have effect, it is necessary for singers to be teachable. They should be willing to try anything, including changing old habits that might bring comfort on stage.

We, as teachers, must remember that every person, and therefore every voice, is different in size, color, character, etc. Our ethical challenge is to help students discover their own voices through study and self-exploration. We should note that the development of talent is not the job of the voice teacher alone. A team including the vocal coach, the movement director, the opera director, the dance teacher, linguists, and a host of other players also contributes to the process. However, in my view, the voice teacher is the most important person in the professional life of a singer.

Many singers do very well in study and in performance, but have difficulty in auditions and competitions. The study process helps prepare the artist for performance, but there really is no substitute for the actual experience of competition. The first thing singers and all competitive performers learn is that they must have thick skin. They need to apply for auditions and enter competitions as long as they stay in the field. They must develop the capacity to hear, weigh, and sometimes, embrace criticism. Dealing with daily rejection and criticism with acceptance is a huge part of the profession. A singular focus on one’s career goals and perseverance are also crucial. When I say, “put on your blinders,” to my students, they know that it means they must be selfish enough to prioritize their careers and thus keep criticisms

in perspective.

My first competition experience occurred in my first year of university teaching. Although I excelled in performance in school and frequently performed in a variety of concerts, recitals, and operas with principal roles, I was focused on becoming a teacher. At that time, there was a huge divide between the kinds of opportunities offered to students majoring in performance and those in education. Since I majored in education and not performance, my teachers never encouraged me to enter competitions. Perhaps it never occurred to them that I might be interested and I had no idea that those opportunities existed.

In the fall of 1969, I prepared my students for a National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) regional vocal competition in Illinois. They were very excited. I read, studied, and basically did everything possible to understand how to channel their excitement productively. I wanted to make sure that the excitement helped rather than disturbed their singing. One of them asked me: “Why aren’t you singing? You are not yet 30 and you are within the age range for the competition.” I came up with some excuses and they did not accept them. After they countered my excuses, I decided to enter as well. That year we made history in the region because my students all either won or placed and I won the District Artist Award. It was beyond exciting! I learned first-hand what it took to maintain your singular focus under this kind of stress.

Speaking of singular focus, I try to impress upon my students at the beginning of our work relationship that understanding their own objectives is the beginning of their success. Each student and I work together to establish broad objectives of skills and experiences we hope to achieve at the beginning of each academic year. These objectives may include greater technical facility and agility, a better understanding of breathing and support, more accurate pitch, or more consistent control of vibrato. To work toward the personalized set of year-long goals, we develop more immediate objectives for each lesson. These might include improving the diction in singing a particular song, better facility in delivering the meaning of the

text, and perhaps, building up the ability to sing through repertory from memory. Ideally, every lesson bears results. For competitions, each student and I co-establish specific objectives and results for every event. It is my challenge to develop a pedagogical plan that addresses the individual needs of each of my students. All performing artists have to learn to perform their best in front of judges. For some singers, the mere act of getting up and singing without fear through the end is already an accomplishment. No matter what, the primary objective is to sing beautifully. Winning competitions, auditions and employment are derivative outcomes.

Many of my former students have discovered their voices in dual careers. Brad Raymond, who received a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Music in 2005 from SMU with majors in Business and Music, received a Masters of Music from Indiana University in 2007. After working with a local accounting firm for a year, he returned to Indiana to begin doctoral studies in voice performance and pedagogy. Robert King, who received a B.M. from SMU in 1988, was International Director Sales for Prada until 2005, is now in the same position with Loro Piana. Joseph Salah, who earned a B.M. and B.S. in Business, worked as a summer associate with the Paris Opera and in marketing for Yves Saint Laurent. Joey lives in Paris and he has a career in painting and set designs. Donna Doorenboos received a M.M. in vocal performance, and is now a medical doctor. Anna Litvinoff and John Fichtel received a M.M. in voice and are now attorneys; both have continued singing as a hobby. John works in arts administration as the manager of the Connecticut Opera. Other former students are high school and college administrators, and/or teachers. There are performers singing throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and South America who sang last season in the roles of Carmen at New York City Opera, Daughter of the Regiment at Houston Opera, and in San Francisco, Lima, Peru, and a host of other companies throughout the world.

In 1989, I established the Foote Scholarship Award in memory of my former teacher, mentor and friend, Bruce R. Foote. Since that year, with the help of the Bruce R. Foote

Memorial Scholarship Foundation⁵, need-based financial assistance has been given to singers of every ethnicity from all over the world. Our primary objective is to assist singers who, because of race, ethnicity, gender, and national origin, have been denied opportunities for careers in classical singing. The Foote Foundation does this work through a number of initiatives. The Schollmaier Foundation Awards recognize outstanding South African singers. The David M. Crowley Award is presented to students who excel in opera and give service to others. The Rosemary Haggar Vaughan Summer Scholars is a special award for summer study given annually to students who assist in the fund-raising efforts of the Foote Foundation.

I hold dear the teachings of my parents and grandparents that we are called to serve. Through my teaching, I seek to instill this belief in my students. I must say, not every student is convinced of it immediately. One of my most beloved and successful students once was reluctant to support the Foote Foundation. She said she would not give financial support to the Foundation, because its main goal is to support students with backgrounds that have been historically under-represented in the advanced pursuit of classical vocal study. She saw it as discrimination, but ultimately made a contribution. She also once said, "I don't think I will ever teach!" She went on a business trip with her fiancée to Congo, discovered two male voices with enormous potential, and began teaching these two young men during her stay. After returning to her home in Belgium, she was haunted by the memory of those "diamonds in the rough." She knew that their talents might remain forever undeveloped, so she brought them to Belgium, and provided housing, private study, and financial assistance. She established a foundation to assist them. This same former student of mine is the internationally acclaimed soprano, Laura Claycomb. Laura has brought singers to Europe, and provided stipends and transportation for them to study languages and opera. Laura established a website⁶ that helps young singers pursue their opera careers, and it is used by teachers and young

⁵ <http://www.footefoundation.org>

⁶ <http://www.lauraclaycomb.com/yac/advice.htm>

artists throughout the world. Laura is a native Texan from Dallas. She studied with me in the late 1980s, and afterwards became a talented performing artist and a very talented teacher.

Few can predict who or what will inspire our next generation of teachers. As teachers, we are proud and excited when we witness our students develop their talents and artistry. The song “Wouldn’t it be lovely” from the musical and movie, *My Fair Lady*, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, it would be lovely if we could reach each and every singer who comes our way and make diamonds of them all. The reality is that we cannot and we will not. Some are simply meant to become different sorts of gems. As a professional teacher, I believe that these different gems deserve attention, too, and it is important to me that I continually study and maintain open dialogue with colleagues who recognize and appreciate the significance of the profession of teaching. Teaching means that we must remain open to our students as individuals. Our students come to us with what they have, and it is our challenge to help them discover how best to develop their talents to achieve their artistic potential. Hopefully, the process of methodical teaching and careful mentoring will assist us in helping our students to find their voices.

In order to continue my own professional development, I believe it is necessary for me to converse with colleagues who have a passion for teaching. Engaging in conversations about challenges in talent development and nurturing uniqueness in students is of utmost importance to me. I have been fortunate to have dialogue with colleagues here at SMU and in various parts of the world, whose global perspective has been invigorating and educational to me.

My abilities as a teacher and developer of talent have been further honed through my involvement in the Internship Program sponsored by the National Association of Teachers of Singers (NATS).⁷ Experienced and knowledgeable NATS-member teachers are paired with beginning NATS teachers and their students for two weeks. The NATS National President and Regional Director serve as hosts of the Internship

⁷ The official website of the NATS intern program is <http://www.nats.org/nats-intern-program.html>.

Program. They work to create a workshop setting within a university campus, with the goal of improving the teaching skills and nurturing the confidence of beginning NATS teachers, in a comfortable environment. These professionals include Master Teachers of voice and experienced pedagogues with years of studio teaching experience (many with experience on the international stage). All have proven success in solving technical problems and preparing artists for careers in performance. They also work with the beginning teachers as the young teachers work with singers. What we all share is the belief that there is something morally profound about the profession of teaching. Conversations with colleagues such as these encouraged me to expand the scope of my local and regional work to the international level. When I leave these sorts of meetings and travel to South Africa to hear a performance of Verdi’s *Aida* with the 2005 Artist Certificate graduate Otto Maudi (the student who had no piano and music theory background and had never had voice lessons) in the principal role of Ramfis, High Priest, I am honored to declare that Otto is my student. When I hear *Carmen* at Fort Worth Opera or New York City Opera with the Arkansas-born mezzo Beth Clayton singing the title role, and Escamillo sung by Korean baritone Kyong Mook Yum, I can say, “These were my students!” When I hear *La Cenerentola* performed with Rachel Waiters (M.M. 2004) in the title role as Cinderella, I am thrilled because many of my colleagues did not believe it was possible for Rachel to have a career in opera performance. When I hear a Zarzuela performance with the Ft. Worth, Lima, Peru, and Chicago symphonies featuring mezzo-soprano Silvia Nuñez, I am proud to announce, “Silvia is my student.” When I need an excellent, like-minded accountant, I can call Brad Raymond (2005 B.A. in Music, B.S. in Business) who works with the DMA. He too, I am proud to say, is my student.

When I hear my own voice describing my students’ careers in science, medicine, engineering, business, and music throughout the world, I am reminded that discovering one’s own voice is a life-long process. I am reminded that without those wonderful teachers who have touched my own life and the lives

of my family members, I would not be where I am today. I am grateful to my parents for convincing me at an early age that I could decide my profession, my future, and believe in its fruition. I was convinced; I *deserved* success, if I worked hard. Therefore, I could hope. Today, I am reminded that, regardless of the opinions of others, there is no faith, without hope, and no joy without trials. As we discover our personal talents in differing ways throughout our lives, we see that the more we discover, learn, and know about ourselves, the clearer our personal picture becomes. As we grow, the picture comes closer, and yet we realize there is so much more to discover with greater knowledge and more experience.

With pitch, pronunciation, enunciation, timbre, phrasing, and dynamics, we learn to shape our thoughts with our voice. Each voice is a unique instrument in the world. Students start out learning how to listen and to truly hear and appreciate the unique sounds of their own voices. When they accomplish that, I help them use their ears, eyes, minds, bodies, and hearts to express their own joy in singing – to bring joy to others. “If music be the food of love, sing on...”

This essay originated in a lecture presented in April 2008, for the Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics & Public Responsibility. This lecture/recital was presented with the assistance of four of my students whose talent, life, education, and performance experiences were vivid visual and aural examples of the topic of talent development. I thank my SMU colleagues, Tara Emerson and Brian Bentley, who accompanied the singers on that occasion. I am deeply indebted to all of the following students and colleagues for their contribution to this presentation. It has been my great privilege to work with these singers as they developed their voices and their artistry, while studying at Southern Methodist University.

Amber Nicole Guest, Soprano (Waco, Texas)
B.M., 2010, SMU
Singer/Actor in New York City

Kwan Kyun Joo, Tenor (Seoul, Korea)
M.M., 2009, SMU
Professor of Opera at TWU and DMA Candidate 2013, UNT

Audra Scott, Soprano (Fort Worth, Texas)
Artist Certificate, 2009, SMU
International Opera Singer

Selby Hlangu, Baritone (Durban, South Africa)
Artist Certificate, 2009, SMU
M.M. Candidate 2013 University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
Director of Elementary & Middle School Music at J.G. Zuma School, Durban, South Africa

Accompanists
Tara Emerson, SMU Staff Accompanist
Brian Bentley, SMU Staff Accompanist

THE CARY M. MAGUIRE CENTER FOR ETHICS & PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

The leaders of Southern Methodist University believe that a university does not fully discharge its responsibility to its students and to the community at large if it hands out knowledge (and the power which that knowledge eventually yields) without posing questions about its responsible uses. Through the Cary M. Maguire Center for Ethics & Public Responsibility, SMU strives to foster the moral education and public responsibilities of those whom it empowers by:

- *Supporting faculty research, teaching, and writing in ethics that cross disciplinary, professional, racial/cultural, and gender lines;*
- *Strengthening the ethics component in SMU's undergraduate, graduate and professional curriculum; and*
- *Awarding grants to SMU students who wish to study issues in ethics or engage in community service.*

SMU also believes that a university and the professions cannot ignore the urban habitat they helped to create and on which they depend. Thus, while not an advocacy group, the Maguire Ethics Center seeks to be integrally a part of the Metroplex, attending to the moral quandaries and controversies that beset our common life. To that end, the Center:

- *Has created an Ethics Center Advisory Board of professional and community leaders;*
- *Organizes local seminars, colloquia, and workshops featuring SMU and visiting scholars; and*
- *Publishes occasional papers and books based on the Center's endeavors that will be of interest to both academics and the general public.*

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