

**THE ART OF VOICE-
PRODUCTION WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE METHODS
OF CORRECT BREATHING**

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The Art of Voice-Production with Special Reference to the Methods of Correct Breathing by A. A. Pattou

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BY

A. A. PATTOU

AUTHOR OF "THE VOICE AS AN INSTRUMENT"



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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1882

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MANY and valuable are the works on vocal culture published of late years; they unquestionably attest the growing interest in this important branch of art; and, although further efforts to elucidate and expound the correct theory of the voice might appear superfluous, I hope to be pardoned for begging the privilege of contributing my little mite to the rich store of valuable knowledge already acquired.

The discovery of the Laryngoscope has done much to solve the problem of the true mechanism of the human voice, which, for ages, was a subject of profound mystery. Science was not slow to take advantage of this new means for physiological and pathological research, and the important scientific discoveries recorded in almost countless works on the throat

and diseases affecting it, sufficiently demonstrate its glorious results.

But has the knowledge of vocal culture advanced with equal strides in the path of research and discovery? Why so many divergent opinions on the subject of singing? Do the vocal teachers of to-day devote the serious and earnest study to their profession which is required of all men wedded to scientific pursuits? If so, why has the wonderful art of Porpora well nigh departed from amongst us? Why so few perfectly cultivated voices? Or, is it, perchance, because the teacher does not thoroughly know how, and the pupil is not willing to master absolutely, the many difficulties which stand in the way of obtaining a perfect vocal technique?

These are some of the questions which have often occurred to me and to which I shall try to answer in the course of the following pages; and I shall endeavor to present the subject in a clear and practical form. Consequently I do not address myself to

scientists, but I write mainly for all those wishing to be guided by clear common sense rules and precepts, in the discovery of an easy, effective, and natural method of singing. Therefore this little book is especially offered to those of my own profession who will approve and sustain me in elucidating the many problems of vocal culture. It is my purpose to examine the voice in its cause, which is breath, and in its effect, which is tone.

GENERAL REMARKS CONCERNING BREATH.

The correct use of breath in singing is the very essence of vocal art, and as such it is the key-note to success or failure; it is therefore of the utmost importance to gather clear ideas concerning the mechanism of the respiratory process.

Starting out with the universally acknowledged law, that all the operations of our nature, when in a condition of perfect health, proceed normally and unconsci-

ously to us, breathing for singing should not deviate from nature's usual orderly and peaceful condition. Consequently the correct breath for singing should be the exaggerated but natural breath of perfect repose.

In order to satisfy yourself of the truth of this assertion, watch, if you please, the inspiration and expiration of your pet, sleeping, perched up in his cage; or observe, if you will, your favorite rover, slumbering on the rug, at your feet; examine the regular rising and falling of the chest-walls during the breathing process.

This simple illustration would seem to furnish almost a sufficient explanation for all practical purposes on the subject under consideration; but our ignorance or our over-anxiety in the pursuit of any study, causes us frequently, either to fall short in our appreciation, or to exaggerate and pervert the methods in striving to acquire knowledge.

So it is with reference to singing.

Often the all-important and essential question of correct breathing is wholly ignored in teaching, or, it is very imperfectly taught. Alas! it is too often taught and practiced to the detriment and serious injury of the pupil.

The foregoing remarks would seem to make it plain that the process of correct breathing in singing is by no means rightly understood nor uniformly practiced. Experience has taught me, that three distinct forms of breathing are in vogue: the clavicular, the costal, and lastly the correct abdominal breathing.

CLAVICULAR BREATHING.

The spasmodic process of inspiration termed clavicular, collar-bone, or scapular breathing, which consists in convulsively uplifting the shoulders, and in inhaling a partial breath, thus filling the upper air-cells of the lungs only, and in violently and unnaturally compressing inwardly the