

**SOME STACCATO
NOTES
FOR SINGERS**

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Some Staccato Notes for Singers by Marie Withrow

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MARIE WITHROW

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**BY
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ONE DOLLAR

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO MY MOTHER
K.VH.W.

FOREWORD

IN writing a book mainly filled with suggestions, it seems very important to place the Central Idea clearly before the reader.

The Central Idea here, is divided into three parts, and everything presented bears relation to one of these parts.

It will be granted that in all writings by practical singers, giving "Advice" to beginners, three things are mentioned and agreed upon by all, —*i. e.*, the singer must acquire:

PHYSICAL FITNESS

MENTAL FITNESS

VOCAL FITNESS

Is it not surprising then, — in the face of this advice, and advice based on experience and observation of the characteristics of great singers and artists, — is it not strange that in their articles and books, we read of Voice, and Voice, and Voice, and nothing concerning PHYSICAL FITNESS or MENTAL FITNESS! No exercises devoted to the development of the singer's Mind or the singer's Body!

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IF the *three* things are necessary,—in fact obligatory for the full success of *the business of a vocal career*,—why are *all* the exercises, and instruction concentrated on Vocalizing?

The young singer often feels that there is “something else” he should know, but does not know how to express it without seeming to comment on the lessons he is receiving, and finally comes to think that “this must be the way to learn to sing” although his instinct told him to expect something quite different.

It may be somewhat disconcerting to realize the fact that these pupils come to us fresh from school training,—where *exact and appropriate terms* were demanded. They were taught to expect a “reason why,”—and were accustomed to be asked to repeat definitely what had been explained. They have already mentally registered several “ways” of looking at things, and observed that many “side-issues” while seemingly only relative to the main Idea, were nevertheless inseparably connected with it. Their “requirements” for Latin, Mathematics,—a Literary or Scientific course, etc., covered a broad field, and habits of thought were acquired that differentiated them from others

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working on other lines with the same attention. Even during this time, while they were in school, they have taken up the study of some instrument perhaps, and they have been quite as definitely taught. They have been required to learn the meaning of exact *terms*, always used in the same way, such as *bowing, stopping, stroke, weight, body, muscle, pose, poise, position*, etc. That is, the pupil found in these studies a necessity for mental and physical agility on definite lines, corresponding in every way with his school training.

When this same pupil begins *vocal work*,—"Singing Lessons,"—does he go on in the same way? No! He finds the terms misleading. He finds them obscure. He finds the lessons on the relation of forces to be used, and their relative energy, very perplexing.

He finds himself turned from what was concrete and definite, to the study of what seems vague, vacuous and—valueless. He finds many terms *untrue*. He cannot refrain from showing surprise that he must "place" his voice,—that he must "send a column of air against the bridge of his nose, or his upper front teeth."

But a few weeks before, perhaps, he had mastered

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the fact in his "Elementary Physics" that "The voice, like steam or gas or air in any receptacle, seeks, by a law of nature, to liberate itself, and to *diffuse itself freely when liberated,*" and that "*Sound-waves expand in the form of a sphere.*" He thinks, "How can I 'place' out-streaming and spherically expanding air in my head?"

He is told that his "Voice is strained," or possibly that his "Voice is ruined!" When he had so recently been taught that "Voice is air driven from the lungs and thrown into vibration by striking against the vocal cords." He has absorbed the idea that the pitch of tone, and the various characteristics of the Tone-mass could be altered by changing the tension of the vocal cords, or by muscular movements altering the size of the resonating cavities; but it is foreign to his past instruction and habit of thought to fix his mind on the *product* instead of the *source* or causes of the changes, or to conceive the idea that a sphere of air, or an out-streaming jet of *air* could be "ruined" or "strained." The pupil is also confused with the explanations concerning "Breath."

When his "wind" was obtained by the pose of his body, the elasticity and endurance of his torso, and
