

# **MODERN SINGING METHODS, THEIR USE AND ABUSE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649232833

Modern Singing Methods, Their Use and Abuse by J. Franklin Botume

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**J. FRANKLIN BOTUME**

**MODERN SINGING  
METHODS, THEIR  
USE AND ABUSE**



MODERN  
SINGING METHODS,

THEIR

USE AND ABUSE.

BY

J. FRANK BOTUME.

---

BOSTON:

Copyright, 1885, by

OLIVER DITSON & CO.

New York: C. H. DITSON & CO.

Phila.: J. E. DITSON & CO.

Chicago: LYON & HEALY.

## CONTENTS.

---

1. INTRODUCTORY, . . . . .	5
2. MEANING OF THE WORD "METHOD,"	7
3. THE OLD ITALIAN SCHOOL, . . . . .	8
4. SOME MODERN METHODS, . . . . .	11
(a.) RESPIRATION, . . . . .	12
(b.) USE OF THE VOCAL CHORDS, . . . . .	15
(c.) POWER AND RESONANCE, . . . . .	24
(d.) TIMBRE . . . . .	26
(e.) ARTICULATION, . . . . .	27
5. CONCLUSION, . . . . .	30



## I. INTRODUCTORY.

THE most important word in the vocabulary of Modern singing teachers is the word "Method." Every teacher now-a-days has his own peculiar method. Any pupil who has enjoyed six months, or even six hours, of instruction, can talk about his "Method" with as much mysterious self-satisfaction as if he had discovered the Key which was bound to unlock every enigma of vocal training. It is an interesting and, perhaps, amusing fact, that these methods are innumerable. It is also to be noticed that each one is different from every other. True:— All teachers agree, that, out of this crowd of ways for reaching vocal salvation, only one is the true and Catholic path, and all the rest are heresies. When, however, they come to the question of which path is the true one, they differ most emphatically, each teacher going his own way and regarding all others with righteous scorn.

The beginner in the art of singing finds a difficulty in picking out the true faith when all the prophets are equally noisy and equally vituperative; so he often spends years seeking for the right teacher, staying with each master only long enough to upset what the previous one had taught him, and, too often, coming at last to the conclusion that his own unaided good sense is the best teacher, and all singing masters are either theorists or humbugs. This conclusion is a lame and impotent one. The singing teach-



er's profession, like all others, contains a few charlatans, and also is responsible for many whose instruction, though honest and well meant, is more or less injurious to voice and pupil; but the majority of teachers (in this city, at any rate,) is made up of good and conscientious instructors of both sexes.

The tendency of teachers to decry one another is, however, a fruitful cause of confusion in the minds of young students. It is the object of the following pages to give a few guiding principles, that will assist the beginner in his effort to distinguish a good method or teacher from a bad one.

It may be said, to begin with, that no great and startling discovery is contained herein. No method or system has yet been found that will make all persons sing well and cure all vocal faults. The theory is sometimes advanced at the present time that all persons can sing well, if they receive proper instruction. Every one is familiar with the prevalent advertisements of patent medicines, which are therein held out to a despairing world as a sure cure for all the ills that flesh is heir to. It is difficult to see much difference between such advertisements and the claim that "Correct Method" is an unfailing specific for all vocal disorders. Such a method is, alas, a figment of the imagination.

The young student should disabuse himself, at the outset, of the idea that the best master in the world can make great artists out of all his pupils. It has been truly said (speaking of a kindred profession to that of the vocalist) "Only a few can hope to secure the great prizes of success;

many must be satisfied with second or even third rank; but work well done is interesting and important in any part, and steady perseverance with fair abilities must in the end lead to success and competency if not to fame." [*Circular of the Administration of the N. Y. Lyceum Theatre School. July 15, 1884.*]

No teacher can do wonders with all his pupils, nor can any amount of "Method" enable one to do in two years that which has taken the greatest teachers of the world from four to seven. No method can make good the absence of natural aptitude or of persistent practice.

The use of common sense seems to forsake even the brightest of young men or women when they approach a teacher. They apparently expect that the master is a wizard who will give them some occult and mysterious charm that will work a magic transformation in their voices at once. It cannot be too strongly insisted that the art of singing is not an occult thing. It is very much like the carpenter's trade: one must have some aptitude for it to begin with; next he must learn how to use the tools of his craft; finally, he must acquire mechanical dexterity by practice. Intelligent and persistent practice is the key to the problem.

## II. MEANING OF THE WORD "METHOD."

The question then arises: "What practice is intelligent and what is not intelligent?" "How shall we use our intelligence in developing the voice?" Here we come to the question of Method. There is no word more frequently used and less understood. "Method" means the way in which a thing is done. It is the means to an end;

it is not the end itself. A singer's method is not the tone he produces: it is the way in which he uses his vocal apparatus to produce that tone. If a teacher says "That tone is harsh, sing more sweetly," he has given no method to his pupil. He has asked the scholar to change his tone but has not shown him how to do it. If, on the other hand, he directs the pupil to keep back the pressure of the breath, or to change the location of the tone; if he instructs him in regard to the correct use of his vocal chords, or speaks of the position of his tongue, of his diaphragm, of his mouth etc., he gives him method; for these things are not an end in themselves, but are employed as means. They are the ways in which the teacher desires the pupil to use his or her vocal apparatus, in order that the end, artistic singing, may be reached.

People often say they like a singer's method, when they mean that they like his voice. They admire the result, while perfectly ignorant of the way in which it is produced.

We mean, then, by method, the way in which the voice is produced and controlled, as distinguished from the voice itself. The next step is to find out what is the true method among all these conflicting views regarding the voice. When doctors disagree, who shall decide?

### III. THE OLD ITALIAN SCHOOL.

To the wise seeker after truth the teachings of experience are always valuable. We shall be materially aided in our search for the true method by turning for a moment to the past history of the art of singing.