

## ALISON MARY SUTTON

### 'YOU CAN'T COMMUNICATE WITH JUST A FEELING' AOTOS SUMMER CONFERENCE JULY 2011

Music only truly communicates when it is expressive. Inspirational performances involve risk-taking – pushing one's technique to the limit, and maybe beyond, in order to extract the most from a particular composition.

*Richard Crozier - Director, ABRSM Professional Development*

The voice comes directly from the soul as breath and has been brought to the surface through the medium of the mind and the vocal organs of the body. When the soul desires to express itself in voice, it first causes an activity in the mind, and the mind, by means of thought, projects finer vibrations in the mental plane. These in due course develop and run as breath through the regions of the abdomen, lungs, mouth, throat and nasal organs, causing air to vibrate all through, until they manifest on the surface as voice. The voice therefore, naturally expresses the attitude of mind, whether true or false, sincere or insincere. *The Sufi teaching of Hazrat Khan*

Singing is a direct expression of the ego living simultaneously in its emotional life, its mental life, and in its physical vocal apparatus. Singing is one of the most integrated and, at the same time, one of the most intimate and telling of our expressive acts.

*Nordoff & Robbins*

Singers need to 'inhabit' the emotions of their character. Definition of acting – 'living truthfully under imaginary circumstances, and reacting as a real person would in an imagined world.' *Stuart Barr on Music Theatre Singing*

Staying Calm before an exam/performance! *ABRSM Libretto magazine*

1) Search for a link between the words of the song and a personal memory or feeling. 2) Help singers to feel a need to tell someone, through song, about this feeling. 3) Discover ways to see the audience/examiner as someone to share this feeling with. 4) Explore awareness of building self-worth in singing by concentrating on enjoying the moment rather than by criticising.

Vocal colour is a reflection of the psychology of the moment. It is the vocal response to the play of feeling within a song.

Treat each performance as if hearing the words for the first time! Discover them anew. *Thomas Hemsley - Singer*

Putting the voice and its quality above everything else can inhibit vital artistic commitment that should culminate in the transmission of expression.

'Wall to wall' sound is only 50% of a successful performance, the other 50% being the words. *Dame Janet Baker*

The uncomplicated, direct communication of thought and meaning is what moves people when they hear singing. *Roger Vignoles - Accompanist*

There are only ever a handful of artists who really compel one to listen to them. It is always because they actually have something they want to say, and they've established their own relationship with the material through which they are saying it.  
*Roger Vignoles*

A great deal of interpretative effect can be made with the proper use of consonants. Dynamic stress and the duration of consonants are powerful exercise tools.  
*Oren Brown – Professor of Singing*

The audience love to be a part of what a singer is doing.  
*Horst Gunter – Professor of Singing*

I like to laugh with the audience; to communicate – tell a story; sing a song. I communicate however I can. I don't like to take the posture of 'artist' – I want to be with the audience. *Faraco – Brazilian singer.*

Draw the audience into the poem, and not the singing. *Thomas Hampson - Singer*

The music always has you in it, even if you are not singing at the time.

Live in the moment, lost in the message – the eyes must be truly present for the sound to be in the present. *Meribeth Dayme – Consultant in Voice*

Take the breath in the energy of the next phrase! Don't let the voice get louder than your words! *Malcolm Martineau - Accompanist*

The way you pronounce the last consonant in a word is most important dramatically.  
*Valerie Masterson – Singer*

Think of a song as a one-act play – a way of getting from A to B!  
*Oscar Hammerstein to a young Stephen Sondheim*

The best vowels come from good consonants. Keep the integrity of vowel shapes – don't lose interest in them through the duration of notes. *Emma Kirkby*

Though the personality of the performer is crucial and ultimately what distinguishes great performances, that personality has to be used as a means to an end, an end envisioned fundamentally by the composer. Performers need to balance expressing their ego with using their ego to express another's. Fortunately it's not a contradiction to have a strong personality that is nevertheless directed towards the curiosity of expressing someone else's, and the best results are of course when the personalities of both the piece and its performer lie in perfect harmony.  
*Mark Wigglesworth – Conductor*

In the end, traditional vocalism is based on efficient vocal production. Artistry cannot be realised without the technical means for its presentation. Systematic vocal technique and artistic expression are inseparable; they comprise the structure of singing. *The Structure of Singing – Richard Miller*