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## LIFELONG LEARNING – THE UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE FOR PRACTICAL MUSICIANS

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### ABSTRACT

Universities that teach practical music subjects in Australia are excellent at providing academic and solo instrumental lessons, but can suffer in the area of pedagogical frameworks that encourage lifelong-learning skills in personal and professional development. This paper addresses a tertiary course that enables vocal students to graduate with information to self-skill and develop practical lifelong-learning strategies.

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### INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the conservatorium of music has been the institution that provided the training necessary to enter the workforce as a performer, while music departments in universities offered courses in subjects that were academic in nature and did not usually offer specialised instrumental or vocal disciplines.

Until recently there were many performing bodies that offered employment to graduates from conservatoria. The conservatoria churned out performers whose focuses were their instruments. Since the economic rationalism that started in the 1980s, funding for professional performing bodies has diminished, and with that fewer performing positions are available. The same music institutions that produced performers are now faced with the problems of producing graduates who need to be entrepreneurial and armed with business and self-learning skills.

The role of the conservatorium of music in Australia has changed rapidly. From a performance-based focus, the institutions have found it necessary to develop academic regimes that reflect the need of the graduating performer to gain employment in a rapidly shrinking pool of work opportunities. Prudence Neidorf (2003) states that “conservatoriums have strengthened the academic requirements of their courses, perhaps because of the increasing pressure to

provide courses leading to some prospect of employment” (p. 186).

### CAREERS IN MUSIC

The paucity of performing opportunities in Australia is depressing for the young performer who wishes to have a professional, performance-based career. At the present time in Australia there are eight symphony orchestras and four opera companies that provide the majority of performance opportunities for the classically trained performer (Atherton, 2003, p. 109). This situation is not unique to Australia; as Janet Poklemba (1995) writes of difficulties in the work market in the USA, “an example of the competitiveness for orchestra positions comes from the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, which announced openings for principal second violin and assistant principal bass and received 348 resumes for the violin position, and 220 for the bass opening” (p. 2).

The majority of performers combine their performing career with teaching, and many of those who do not find regular performance employment also end up as teachers. Few conservatoria in the past have offered “studio teaching” as a subject. Today the benefits of studying at a tertiary music institution include opportunities for courses not only in studio teaching, but also in professional development. There are also subjects that will aid the graduating student to develop business skills and

a continuing lifelong-learning process that focuses on his or her instrument.

Today's universities approximate those of the eleventh and twelfth centuries when dealing with music degrees. Those early universities, although divided into disciplines of law, medicine, and music, included a wider understanding of humanity; their purpose being to give the student an all-round knowledge of life. They gave the student "a grounding in elementary grammar, literature, music and arithmetic, and which prepared the way for the advanced study of mathematics and finally philosophy, whose object was wisdom, the supreme end of knowledge." (Leff, 1992, p. 307).

Almost twenty years ago the understanding that university music courses must embrace more than just the teaching of practical subjects was beginning to be accepted worldwide. According to Randolph Nichols, mature decisions had to be taken by all music departments in the United States when addressing the problems of career opportunities for graduating students (Nichols, 1986).

A quick search through music courses reveals examples such as James Cook University's (2003) *Managing Music – MU2431*, The University of Melbourne's (2003) 740-221 *Careers in Music*, and The University of New England's (2003) *Graduates and Careers*. These courses offer extensive education on "entrepreneurial, management, administration and marketing skills." (James Cook University, 2003); and "Law, accountancy, the commercial world, medicine, psychiatry, librarianship, sound recording and production, arts administration, entrepreneurial activities, music criticism and instrument making." (University of Melbourne, 2003).

The University of Melbourne addresses topics of great relevance for the freelance performer or teacher, who make up the majority of the graduates of our music courses. Knowledge of book-keeping, the tax laws, and entrepreneurial activities are vital for the self-employed performer who must have this basic knowledge to enter the competitive field of performance which is quite different to the environments of major orchestras or opera companies. These topics, if studied at university, allow the student to participate in the world with a greater knowledge base than a similar performer who trains at a performance-only institution.

Chris Duke (1997) argues that by gaining lifelong learning skills in music "the implication is to foster attitudes and skills conducive to continuous critical inquiry rather than just the obvious knowledge and skill acquisitions: process rather than only content" (p. 66).

The traditional conservatorium's practical focus could be described as the "content" while the newer university graduates are given the information to become "process" learners. Duke goes on further to say "The lifelong curriculum implies closer integration of the university with the community" (p. 66). By this he means that the student is able to become a member of the community, but still continue to use lifelong learning skills developed at university to self-educate.

## THE VOICE STUDENT

Since this paper is intended to address the particular needs of the student who graduates with voice as their performing instrument, it is necessary to point out the differences between the vocal student and a student of another instrument.

The lifelong learning component of life after university for the musician can be described as management. Management of teaching and performance is best described as three-fold: managing the instrument, managing others, and managing money.

### Managing the instrument

Compared to the instrumentalist, the vocal performer differs in that his or her instrument is housed within the body. While it is true that the pianist, or oboist, for example, may be affected by illness, minor maladies may not necessarily reflect on performance. The singer, however, will usually be unable to perform if he or she has a common illness, such as a cold. Even physical conditions brought on by, for example, menstruation, can limit performance capabilities. Hormonal, emotional, and physical afflictions will show in the instrument (the voice) to a far greater degree than with the pianist or the oboist.

Caldwell's (2001) book *Excellence in Singing* lists 57 common medications that can affect the voice: from a drying effect to complete loss of voice (pp. 14-19). One of the most common medications that affect women's voices is the birth-control pill. Sataloff, Hawkshaw, & Rosen

(1998) state that “Hormone medications may cause changes in voice quality due to alterations in fluid content, or structural changes” (p. 145).

The singer uses the instrument that the human population uses for communication, the voice. It is with this instrument that we as a species primarily convey our emotions. The journey to free the instrument from these attachments is well documented in the literature and the study of this specialist branch of voice analysis is known as psychogenic voice disorder. According to Aronson (1990) “the voice disorder is a manifestation of one or more types of psychological disequilibrium, such as anxiety, depression, conversion reaction, or personality disorder, that interfere with normal volitional control over phonation” (p. 117). These are but a few examples of problems that may cause a minor inconvenience to the instrumentalist, but may have a profound affect on the singer.

If the university course can provide the vocalist with the basic knowledge of anatomy, the effects of the endocrinal system on the voice, medications and general vocal health, then the vocalist can use this knowledge for an on-going lifelong learning journey for themselves and/or their students.

### **Managing others**

Vocalists and instrumentalists as performers and teachers both need to have skills to manage people as resources and as students. The major difference between the two is that the vocalist nearly always needs an agent to find professional work. The problem of finding a suitable agent cannot be overestimated as often the only contact the singer will be able to make with a professional company will be through an agent. This is particularly the case with the classical singer who wishes to make a career in opera. General auditions are held by both music theatre companies and opera companies. The general audition is held for ensemble members, not soloists. An agent is almost always needed to secure an audition for a solo role.

As a teacher, the vocalist has a number of problems specific to singing that the instrumental teacher does not have. First of all there are a great number of singing styles, each of which may be based on the same basic technique, but which require a completely different application. The vocal quality and technique required for a jazz singer is totally

different from that required for singing opera, or music theatre for example. On top of this, male and female voices have different technical requirements; further complicating the strategies for successful teaching. The whole of these considerations are overlaid by the physiology of the student. This physiology is intrinsically linked to the management of the instrument, as knowledge of anatomy and voice types is fundamental to good voice teaching.

### **Managing money**

Both vocalists and instrumentalists share equally in this management strategy, and if taught at a tertiary level, the correct management of finances and the ability to juggle freelance performance and studio-teaching incomes will prepare the performer for the realities of self-employment. The only exception in this general rule of parity for vocalists and instrumentalists is the music theatre performer. Due to the nature of the triple-threat of music theatre (voice, dance, and acting), the specialist in this field must juggle finances to not only cope with problems that are similar to those of the other performers, but the need to engage in regular tuition in voice, dancing, and acting.

### **VOCAL STUDIES AT CENTRAL QUEENSLAND CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC**

While many Australian tertiary institutions offer career studies as electives in their music courses, none have devised courses specifically for singers. In my own institution, the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music, I have addressed the problems of the voice student in a three-year course specifically designed to provide the basis of lifelong learning in the three management areas discussed above. There are two work books. The first, *Vocal Tech Workbook* (Jones, 2003), is for first- and second-year students. For third-year students there is, *Advanced Concepts* (Jones, 2003). The course is provided for all voice students in the three degrees that our institution offers, Bachelor of Music Theatre, Bachelor of Jazz Studies, and Bachelor of Music. Lectures are held on a weekly basis for each level of the degrees, starting with basic anatomy and finishing at the end of the third year with business studies and professional development. A research assignment is given each semester so that the student may read, understand, and then

synthesise information from medical and scientific texts on singing.

### **Managing the instrument**

Rachael L. Lebon opens her book *The Professional Vocalist* with a short statement that expresses simply the most important need of the singer. “Since our bodies are our instrument, acquiring some understanding of the anatomy and physiology of them can facilitate in acquiring a vocal technique that uses the body most efficiently” (Lebon, 1999, p. 3).

Singing has traditionally been taught by word of mouth – the teacher imparts information to the student. Texts have been available in the past, but have had no scientific basis or common language to describe the physical act of singing. Today, much information can be gained by reading scientific and clinical texts. To be able to keep abreast of new developments in voice studies, students must have a grounding of terminology specific to vocalism and to the academic study of the voice. Norman Punt, an eminent English surgical specialist in the voice laments the problem of earlier literature and its imprecision. “Shakespeare, in one of the better books on singing, summarizes the advice of several singers, including many old masters, and again we note this divergence of views and terminology more picturesque than precise” (Punt, 1979, p. 48).

The scientific nomenclature in current use in vocal science has been accompanied by a precision in description that was previously lacking. Norris Croker, an eminent early 20<sup>th</sup> century writer on the voice, generalises by stating that all vocal problems are an inheritance of bad speech patterns learned through childhood up until the first voice lesson (Croker, 1920, p. 60). Current specialists, such as Sataloff (1998), Punt (1979) and Lebon (1999) believe that most vocal problems are physiological ones. As recently as 1949, voice teachers were advised that, “It is true that singing can be taught entirely by abstract, more or less emotional appeals to the entire personality of the student” (Vennard, 1949, p. 1).

Since the early and mid-1980’s vocal science has made enormous leaps. A common scientific language has been formulated so that the study of the voice can be understood by anyone with the necessary knowledge of the basics of anatomy, speech production, and vocal health.

Sataloff (1998) states, in the introduction to his collection of scientific articles, that, “Students trained with this information appreciate the importance of and techniques for maintaining vocal health; and they seem to spend less time sick, injured, or in a physician’s office (especially for preventable problems) than their colleagues without such training” (p.viii).

Oren L. Brown (1996) is a leader in the United States on the scientific approach combined with the earlier oral tradition. In the introduction to his book on singing he notes that his ideas are based on scientific and clinical evidence.

To give students the necessary vocabulary, the first-year course focuses on an introduction to basic anatomy of the voice. It describes the larynx and its component parts: the cartilages, the intrinsic and extrinsic muscles, the tongue, and the method of producing sound. Without the knowledge of the particulars of the anatomy, and the scientific names, the student would have no understanding of even basic texts.

In the second year of the course, students are introduced to the anatomy of the body that is involved in singing – the large muscles of the abdominal structure, the lungs, and the notion of “support”. They also focus on more advanced issues concerning general vocal health, allergies, and medications.

The third year of the course is specifically designed to study the advanced knowledge of the intrinsic vocal muscles, included diseases and injuries to the thyro-arytenoid structure. It also treats in-depth the ear and hearing.

It is imperative that the teacher of singing, or the voice student, has the ability to keep abreast of the current developments in the understanding the way the voice works. David Manson (2000, p. 200) says that the teacher of singing must have scientific knowledge when dealing with physiological aspects of the voice.

### **Managing others**

Jean Callaghan (2000) points out that the teacher of singing can not rely on experience alone. “A flexible model of professional education for singing teachers needs to take account of both the craft of knowledge currently employed by practitioners in skill teaching and the voice knowledge accumulated through experimental and qualitative research” (p. 118).

My course is specific in its third year to the art of the teaching of singing. The students are taught to recognise voice types, to classify the sub-groups, to devise suitable exercises, and to distinguish common vocal problems and to find appropriate solutions.

The research assignments are always aimed at problem solving. It is by devising programs of study for new singers who present with vocal difficulties and/or physiological problems that the students themselves are able to recognise their own ways of singing. This is the most important practical lifelong learning exercise in terms of their voice. By writing about what they do, they are expressing in concrete terms their own vocal production. By self-reflection and examination of their craft, they start the process of a continued self-examination and learning program of their performing abilities. Expressing this process in medical terms makes the reading of the scientific literature applicable in a real sense.

### Managing money

Reynolds, Savage, and Williams (1994) sum up the need for the self-employed person or small business manager to stay abreast of the current and growing database of applicable knowledge, when they state, "Because small business is subject to rapid changes, it is essential that you maintain your knowledge of technology and techniques" (p. 433).

The second semester of the third-year students is devoted to business development. The students are taught the basics of accounting, self-employed business management, the law, the system of agents in professional performance, and the writing of curriculum vitae and performance biographies. They are also instructed in self-devised performance and innovation to self-promotion. Michael Hannan uses an excellent example of the need to self-promote. "There's an old industry adage that no-one is going to knock on your door to give you a break. Most successful people in the music industry are actively involved in self-promotion." (Hannan, 2003, p. 268). Poklemba (1995) tells us that conservatoria in the United States see career education as a very important part of the general education of music performance students.

## CONCLUSION

Lifelong learning is the keystone to successful music performance and teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Musicians in today's society must be equipped with knowledge that they can use to develop their own artistic, financial and intellectual capacities in the workforce. A tertiary course that offers the music student the fundamentals of lifelong learning benefits not only the musician, but the community around them through the continuing enrichment of the personal and professional skills of the performer and/or teacher.

While my course is aimed at the singer, the fundamentals can be applied to other performing musicians, and indeed to any artistic calling that requires lifelong learning skills to cope with self-employment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Writers, artists, actors, theatre directors, and designers are examples of arts professionals that would benefit from similar courses delivered at a tertiary level.

Without the development of lifelong learning skills, people in these professions will be ill-equipped to cope in the economic rationalism that is pervasive throughout the arts today.

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## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND WORKPLACE LEARNING – CHANGING PERSPECTIVES, ISSUES, AND UNDERSTANDINGS

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### ABSTRACT

Knowledge management discourse over the past decade reflects a critical shift in the understanding of knowledge within organizations. The developing sophistication with which knowledge is understood as “becoming” within individuals and collectives rather than “being” within information systems leads to learning that seeks to synergise humans and knowledge-enabling tools, and to redefine what it is to learn in post-information organizations.

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### INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management is evolving from its efficiency-driven past to embrace all four pillars of lifelong learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and with others, and learning to be (Delors Report, 1996 as cited in Burns, 2002). Generative change in knowledge-management theory has led to understandings that guide organizations through the creation, development, sharing, and institutionalisation of knowledge through knowledge-enabling tools, a focus on development of new knowledge through collective cognition, diversity in collectives and networks, and developing the whole person by

suggesting new freedoms in workplace learning opportunities.

The divide in knowledge-management theory over the past decade has had at its focus an ancient debate concerning the nature of knowledge itself. Is knowledge about truth? Is knowledge about understanding? This divide has been reflected in practice that has fallen either toward codification (digitisation of information for organizational members' access) or the personalisation of knowledge (retention of knowledge within organizational members, and sharing of knowledge between members). Recent theory seeks not only to recognise the value to organizations of both approaches to practice, but extends understandings of