Broadway for Bel Canto:
A Collection of Musical Theatre Literature and Its Application for the Development of Classical Treble Voices

By

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Abstract

Undergraduate applied voice instruction, until recent years, has been limited to classical singing and literature. It remains integral that students wishing to pursue classical singing as a career receive dedicated, genre-specific training. Yet, with prominent oversaturation in the classical job market, it behooves the classical singer to develop comfort in transitioning between musical genres for the best possibility of securing employment. As a genre that encompasses many contemporary styles and one that offers a breadth of job opportunities, musical theatre is an ideal genre for study by classical undergraduate singers. Moreover, there is an opportunity for musical theatre repertoire to address the vocal needs of young singers to develop their classical singing, too.

This document offers the classical voice teacher new perspectives on the possibilities of musical theatre literature in the classical voice studio, especially for treble voices, for whom there is greater distinction in vocal styles between genres. The first chapter considers the practical reasons to include musical theatre in an undergraduate classical singer's repertoire. In the second chapter, the musical and vocal developmental opportunities offered specifically by this literature are evaluated. The third chapter provides a classical instructor information on potential adjustments to vocal technique to sing musical theatre authentically. Finally, chapter four evaluates fifteen musical theatre selections for the treble voice for their pedagogical value in the classical studio.

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"The one thing I do know is that when I step on the stage…[I] know how to be on the stage. It doesn't matter what the stage is. The audience is an audience, the stage is a stage, the story is the story, and the singing is your singing."[1] Kelli O'Hara, one of the most prominent Broadway stars of the twenty-first century, shared this quote *not* in reference to the premiere of a new musical performance. Rather, in this 2018 *New York Times* article by Michael Cooper, O'Hara and opera star Renée Fleming discussed their momentous "swaps"—that is, while O'Hara sang in a Metropolitan Opera production of *Così fan tutte*, Fleming stepped on the Broadway stage to perform in *Carousel*. These two powerhouse singers are only two examples of cross-over performers, or singers who perform with equal comfort in several genres. Amongst teachers of singing, there is often a focus on the *differences* between these styles and a lack of interest in instruction of both genres to aid in the development of a singer capable of cross-over performance such as Fleming's and O'Hara's. O'Hara's quote, though, reveals how the most integral aspects of performing both musicals and opera are the same.

In recent decades, there has been heightened interest in the performance of musical theatre within classical circles. Major opera houses and festivals, including Houston Grand Opera, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and the Glimmerglass Festival, have produced at least one musical as part of their operatic seasons.[2] Furthermore, this trend has trickled down into the academic voice studio, with even the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) including a musical theatre division in its annual Student Audition Competition since 2014.[3]

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[1] Michael Cooper, "Two Divas Trading Places," *New York Times* (March 11, 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/arts/music/renee-fleming-kelli-ohara-carousel-mozart.html.
[2] Brian Kellow, "Opera's Broadway Overtures," *Opera America*, Fall 2015, 22-24.
[3] "History—National Student Auditions," National Association of Teachers of Singing, accessed December 1, 2023, https://www.nats.org/national_student_auditions.html#history.

The inclusion of musicals has drastically increased revenue and public interest for opera companies. Houston Grand Opera staged a production of *Show Boat* in 2013, and the show's run garnered ticket sales filling the house to ninety-one percent capacity. Two years later, when the company produced *Sweeney Todd*, eighty-nine percent of seats were filled, and 1.5% of those single-ticket holders even returned to buy full-season tickets the next year.[4] Similarly, when the Lyric Opera of Chicago presented Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* in 2014, fifty percent of the ticket sales stemmed from patrons who hadn't previously attended a performance at the Lyric. Even opera companies in Europe—including prominent houses, such as the Volksoper in Vienna—have begun to stage American Broadway musicals, from *Guys and Dolls* to *Sunset Boulevard*, to attract new patrons.[5] These successful runs of musicals arrive at a time when opera companies struggle to fill seats. In a phone interview with Justin John Moniz, Michael Ballam, founder of The Utah Festival Opera & Musical Theatre, stated, "[o]ften opera companies add musicals into the mix for the economic boon they bring to the company. There is no question that *My Fair Lady* financially enables us to offer *Manon Lescaut*."[6] A sharp increase in general opera attendance coincides with the inclusion of musical theatre; per the 2024 OPERA America Annual Field Report, total operatic attendance increased by a promising twenty-three percent from the previous year.[7]

The prominence and continued growth of musical theatre within traditional opera houses certainly intensifies demand for classical singers who have familiarity and capability with this literature. Currently, there are more classical singers and fewer classical singing jobs than ever

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[4] Kellow, "Opera's Broadway Overtures," 23.
[5] David Belcher, "Musical or Opera? Stage Companies Are Drawing on Both Art Forms," *New York Times* (March 26, 2014), https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/26/arts/international/opera-companies-turn-to-musicals.html?camp=7JFJX.
[6] Justin John Moniz, "The Changing Face of Opera in America: Musical Theatre on the American Operatic Stage," *Journal of Singing* 78, no. 2 (2021): 172.
[7] OPERA America, *2024 Annual Field Report* (New York: OPERA America, 2025), 2.

before. In her book *The 21st Century Singer: Making the Leap from the University into the World*, Susan Mohini Kane details statistics on the current operatic job market in the United States; of approximately 30,000 classical singers actively auditioning each year, only 6 percent have management, and, therefore, regular or guaranteed employment as a classical singer.[8] While the number of auditioning singers may stay the same or even increase year to year, a decreasing number of companies produce operas, with the 2024 Opera America Report indicating performances in 9 percent fewer venues than in the previous year alone.[9] Meanwhile, operatic performance, in general, makes up a relatively small percentage of live sung performances, with classical singing creating only 4.5 percent, and all other commercial styles (including musical theatre, pop, rock, country, etc.) making up the remaining 95.5 percent.[10] Frequently, Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) singers are expected to have the ability to sing in multiple genres—this includes musical theatre singers, some of whom move from genre to genre multiple times in a single show. In contrast, classical singers typically only train in the classical style, limiting them to performing only in classical settings. Experience and comfort with repertoire beyond the Western classical cannon opens career possibilities for classical singers at a time when competition for jobs acts as a type of natural selection for a classical performance career.

Beyond providing additional career paths, the study of musical theatre literature—which itself is rooted in many commercial genres—is becoming increasingly important due to the

[8] Susan Mohini Kane, *The 21st Century Singer: Making the Leap from the University into the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.
[9] OPERA America *2024 Annual Field Report*, 3.
[10] Lara C. Wilson, "Bel Canto to Punk and Back: Lessons for the Vocal Cross-Training Singer and Teacher" (doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2019), 1.

expansion of sonic ideals within contemporary opera. In her DMA Document, Ariana Nicole Horner Sutherland explains the new sounds of modern American opera:

> 21st-century American opera reflects the complexity and diversity of American culture through its use of mixed genre types, diverse narrative themes, and historical content. Composers draw inspiration from the microcultures that make up the experience of their protagonists, incorporating elements like musical theater rhythms, jazz idioms, vernacular music, and avant-garde tonalities.[11]

Sutherland goes on to use Susannah's aria "Ain't it a pretty night" from Floyd's *Susannah* as an example of the necessity of theatre-related skills in opera; Floyd dictates an Appalachian accent via his libretto, and as such, an opera singer must convey this accent in some way, through musical choices—like portamenti and straight tone—less common to operatic performance, but quite ordinary and expected on the Broadway stage.[12] Even operatic composers have begun drawing on commercial genres to help depict the story's drama most accurately. Thus, operatic singers still require some working knowledge of singing in genres outside of the classical idiom, just to adequately sing their roles within a classical performance.

Neither is the performance of contemporary operatic works an optional specialization for auditioning opera singers—in the 2022-2023 season, works written post-1970 made up just under 50 percent of all performed titles.[13] Likewise, of venues performing these new works, the most prominent are especially tied to younger, actively auditioning singers: Young Artist Programs, or YAPS, and "B-list" houses, or smaller, regional venues which boast less international acclaim ("A-List" houses in the United States might include The Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, or the San Francisco Opera). Often, these performance venues offer contracts to singers with less experience on their

[11] Ariana Nicole Horner Sutherland, "Cross-Genre Pedagogy in 21st-Century American Opera: Evolving Educational Practices for Vocal Performance" (doctoral dissertation, University of California Santa Barbara, 2024), 10.
[12] Horner Sutherland, "Cross-Genre Pedagogy in 21st-Century American Opera," 14-15.
[13] OPERA America *2024 Annual Field Report*, 3.

resumes—typically, those who have more recently completed vocal degrees. Of the thirty-seven North American operas premiered in 2024, only one opera was performed by an "A-List" company (*Adoration*, composed by Mary Kouyoumdjian with libretto by Royce Vavrek, was premiered by Los Angeles Opera). Furthermore, seven of these operas were premiered by YAP Festivals, and, thus, by pre-professional vocalists. The vast majority of the other premieres were commissioned by small professional companies—such as New York's Heartbeat Opera and Boston's Guerilla Opera.[14] Because of the prominence of new works that often require the singer to demonstrate the very basics of commercial styles of singing, promoted by companies at which young singers are most likely to find employment, it remains especially integral that the student of classical singing dedicate some study to genres such as musical theatre.

Despite many arguments regarding the importance of the study of musical theatre literature by classical singers for the purpose of employment, there remains one major hindrance to its inclusion in the classical studio: the sacrifice of time dedicated to the development of the classical voice for time spent developing the voice in a commercial style. It would be foolish to deny the importance of *bel canto* training for a student who wishes to sing classical music, nor to underestimate the number of individual practice hours and lessons required to effectively develop a classical singer's instrument. Thus, with an irrefutable need to expose students to musical theatre literature for the health of their careers and a seemingly conflicting necessity to allocate as much time as possible to the development of the classical singing voice, perhaps it is time to meld these two ideals. Just as voice instructors evaluate classical literature chosen for student study, teachers can select musical theatre repertoire with specific criterion for student development. In this way, a teacher can successfully address a student's classical vocal

[14] "Timeline of North American Works," OPERA America North American Works Directory, accessed April 13, 2025, https://apps.operaamerica.org/Applications/NAWD/timeLine.aspx.

inefficiencies and musical deficiencies through the exposure to and instruction of musical theatre repertoire in the classical voice studio.

Chapter 2: Developmental Opportunities Presented by Musical Theatre Repertoire

Of all musical theatre literature, the most utilized repertoire by teachers of the classical studio includes that of the Golden Age of musical theatre, or works from approximately 1940-1960. The musicals of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein are the most well-known and frequently studied by classically based voice students, because this repertoire closely aligns with their vocal technique. These works can be easily added as a supplement to *bel canto* study, without detracting from or significantly modifying technique. Still, rather than treating solos from these works as "add-ons" adjacent to classical repertoire, how can instructors embrace the characteristics unique to musical theatre to develop classical student technique? Furthermore, how might instructors look beyond the "standard" musical theatre repertoire of classical singers and incorporate less-performed literature from all eras of musical theatre history? Some opportunities presented by this approach to musical theatre literature might include the expressivity, accessibility, musicianship skills, and vocal inefficiencies that are especially well-addressed by this body of music.

Expressivity

In one of his articles for *The Journal of Singing*, Scott McCoy, an esteemed voice pedagogue, describes elements essential to a professional singing career. Of these eight "non-negotiables," two factors relate directly to expression: the ability to authentically portray a character, and what McCoy calls "It," or a sense of "musical charisma." While the second is an ability McCoy believes is innate to some singers, he also provides options for instructing "It," one of which is dedicated training in stage acting—not just operatic acting—in order to enable a student to discover the necessity of stage presence.[15] Unfortunately, many music programs are

[15] Scott McCoy, " Teaching 'It,'" *Journal of Singing* 76, no. 3 (January/February 2020): 284-286.

asked by their universities to reduce the total credit hour requirements for graduation. This forces some reduction in the courses necessary for a comprehensive music education. As such, it becomes unfeasible for a student majoring in vocal performance to include an outside acting requirement as part of their music major. Many pre-professionals lack any kind of dedicated acting training—be it operatic-specific or general stage acting—prior to entering the audition circuit. Seasoned professional opera singers continuously discuss the necessity of character portrayal on the operatic stage. Indeed, in his article about Maria Callas, one of the most renowned sopranos of all time, Peter Clark describes her acting abilities as distinguishing Callas from those with similar vocal talents: "…Callas the artist was an undeniable phenomenon. Her intense musicality and expressive abilities revealed the dramatic genius behind the works she sang, from the most familiar operatic warhorses to the rarely heard novelties so often revived expressly for her."[16] The importance of acting training in classical singers cannot be undermined, yet, as in all facets of a classical singing career, time is limited. Therefore, instructing musical theatre literature in the undergraduate classical classroom is one small method of filling this gap in student training.

Why utilize musical theatre, rather than impress the importance of characterization within the framework of an aria or an art song? First, American musical theatre is (almost) always written in the English language, and, coming into its modern form less than one hundred years ago, the text of musical theatre literature is far more related to the vernacular of native-English-speaking students. The additional steps of translation and interpretation of historical, foreign language texts build a challenging wall to characterization for a young student singer. As such,

[16] Peter Clark, "Maria Callas at the Met," The Metropolitan Opera, accessed April 13, 2025, https://www.metopera.org/discover/archives/notes-from-the-archives/maria-callas-at-the-met/#:~:text=But%20Callas%20the%20artist%20was,often%20revived%20expressly%20for%20her.

the ability to express meaning of a musical theatre piece becomes more accessible—and less frightening. Indeed, McCoy details this struggle in his "Teaching 'It'" article:

> When a cellist plays a transcription of Massenet's Élégie, s/he must use appropriate late nineteenth-century French musical style—but the piece isn't actually played in French. S/he also doesn't need to communicate the meaning of the French text. So, it becomes a great deal more complicated for those of us who conceal our instruments within our bodies…we must do this in a way that is dramatically expressive, musically accurate, in tune, and with passable diction; only then can we really focus on making the performance come to life through characterization.[17]

Likewise, Mark and Lynn Clark, in their book *Singing, Acting, and Movement in Opera*, state: "[we] recommend that, whenever possible, artists practice in their native language. Most likely it is the language that will reflect their thought processes and emotional center."[18] For native English speakers, singing in English simply removes one barrier to an authentic, convincing performance. Musical theatre literature, then, allows a student to work on expression of a character with a pre-defined storyline that may be more comprehensible and relatable to them, thus reducing the amount of interpretation the singer must do to focus upon *conveying* this character.

One may argue that the study of English-language arias could serve this same purpose, and in many ways, this would be true. However, unlike much musical theatre literature, which was often written for singers with no formal training, English-language arias are often inaccessible to younger voice students. Most English-language opera has only flourished since the twentieth century, with a particular outpouring of American opera in the twenty-first century. The musical traits of opera from these periods tend to include atonality, large melodic leaps and demanding ranges, dissonances, challenging or atypical rhythmic figures or mixed meters, and

[17] McCoy, 284.
[18] Mark Ross Clark and Lynn V. Clark, *Singing, Acting, and Movement in Opera* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 79.

busy or unsupportive accompaniments: consider the works of Benjamin Britten, Phillip Glass, or John Adams as examples. These traits make this music more difficult for young singers to learn, and even potentially damaging to young instruments still undergoing physical development. Contrastingly, in her article "Music Theater as Technical Tool and Pragmatic Business Choice for the Classical Singer" Claudia Cantania states, "[l]egitimate lyric music theater repertoire provides an easier and more practical challenge that is vocally and dramatically possible for young singers while they slowly and carefully grow into the classical repertoire."[19] While providing ample opportunity to develop a character through a single selection, the approachability of musical theatre literature suits both the musical and vocal requirements of beginning or developing singer.

Accessibility

The American Broadway musical has its roots in a vast array of genres from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: operetta, vaudeville, burlesque, minstrel shows, revues, and more. Though operetta was certainly a major influence of the genre we now define as a musical, it was the only genre which utilized trained singers; indeed, George M. Cohan, the creator and star of what many scholars consider the "first American musical"—*Little Johnny Jones*—was not a classically-trained musician, but rather a vaudeville performer. His music reflected this fact and established a standard taste for early musical theatre in America: lyrics which moved in rhythms that accurately reflected speech patterns, unfussy and approachable melodies with limited ranges, and simple, helpful accompaniments.[20] Though the genre continued to evolve and expand,

[19] Claudia Cantania, "Music Theater as a Technical Tool and Pragmatic Business Choice for the Classical Singer," *Journal of Singing* 61, no. 2 (November/December 2004): 185.
[20] Orly Leah Krasner, "Birth Pangs, Growing Pains, and Sibling Rivalry: Musical Theatre in New York, 1900-1920," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 3rd ed., ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 80.

Cohan's tenet of music subservient to comprehensible text remained; in her article "Vocal Training for a Career in Musical Theatre: Pedagogical Goals," Susan D. Boardman describes the continued importance of the text in musical theatre performance: "[n]o matter how well-trained a voice may be, in musical theater the voice is subservient to the text, and therefore must not become monochromatic or beautiful for its own sake. The singer must be able to produce a variety of tone qualities and sing in a variety of vocal modes to reflect and express the lyrics, the character, and the emotions of the piece."[21]

Even in contemporary musical theatre literature, musical features of this body of repertoire allow the singer to prioritize the text: rhythms natural to vernacular speech, generally smaller melodic ranges, stepwise melodic motion, and tonal, often repetitive melodies. Furthermore, musical theatre literature tends to have more supportive accompaniments, often including melodic doubling. While musical theatre solos contain rich, complex musical aspects, from blazing fast tempos or rhythms, large melodic jumps, or difficult and independent accompaniments, often, these solos only contain *one* difficult element at a time, rather than a combination of multiple challenges, so that both the performer and the audience can place their focus upon the text and the emotion it conveys. Consider "You'll Never Walk Alone" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*[22]—though the piece contains a substantial vocal range of an octave and a fifth and sits in the singer's upper passaggio for an extended period of time, the melody is doubled the entire time, and the only rhythms present in the piece are quarter, half, and whole notes. The piece contains a substantial vocal challenge, but its other simple and supportive musical elements allow it to be suitable to a vocally ready undergraduate.

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[21] Susan D. Boardman, "Vocal Training for a Career in Musical Theatre: Pedagogical Goals," *The NATS Journal* 48, no. 4 (March/April 1992): 11.

[22] An excellent arrangement demonstrating these traits is available in *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology*, *Soprano Volume I,* ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1987): 63-65.

Lastly, a standard of the musical theatre world is the freedom to change keys to suit the vocal needs of the singer. As in art song repertoire, in which any number of keys are available for performance, musical theatre literature is available in many keys to fit a number of vocal ranges. Unlike in operatic auditions, it is appropriate for singers to audition for musicals using a piece in the key of their choice (so long as it is not a piece from that particular musical), thus continuing to make this literature more accessible to younger singers. Moreover, with websites such as www.musicnotes.com, which allows the singer to select from a wide number of key choices before purchasing sheet music, as well as through a number of high-quality anthologies, such as Richard Walters's *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology* series, these various keys are easily and affordably obtainable.

Musicianship

Just like classical art song, musical theatre repertoire can be used in the classical studio to develop musicianship skills. In his book *Literature for Teaching*, Chris Arneson states that "[o]ne of the biggest challenges for voice teachers is choosing repertoire that meets a pedagogical end without exceeding the student's ability."[23] Because of its approachable nature, musical theatre repertoire provides instructors with a large body of solos that are exciting and relatable to students and that have great potential to be applied to the student's musical development, as well.

First, musical theatre literature can help train melodic independence. While accompaniments tend to double the singer, there are many instances of accompaniments that provide only chordal outlines, allowing the singer to grow in confidence on their own melodic line. Some pieces include more complex accompaniments, challenging the independence of

[23] Christopher Arneson, *Literature for Teaching: A Guide for Choosing Solo Vocal Repertoire from a Developmental Perspective* (Delaware, OH: Inside View Press, 2014), 1.

skilled singers, and other pieces allow a singer to perform sections a capella—for instance, "Lay Down Your Head" from Jeanine Tesori's *Violet*, which will be discussed more in depth later in Chapter 4.

We have discussed the nature of the rhythms of musical theatre to reflect speech patterns. While this becomes an easy rhythm to perform once the singer associates it with a particular text, the setting of these rhythms can often look frightening—quintuplets or unfamiliar sixteenth note groupings may frequently appear. Still, musical theatre literature provides students the opportunity to learn how to perform these rhythms in a "safe" context. Furthermore, a teacher may choose to present a student with the challenge of performing rhythms precisely as written, which may contrast the recordings to which a student listens! This provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the unreliability of listening to recordings as the lone source of learning one's music and a chance for the student to work with a metronome and lean into their aural skills training. David Alt, who promotes the use of rhythm-reading and musicianship training in his musical theatre voice studio, describes his use of contemporary musical theatre for this very purpose:

> Forcing the student to read complicated rhythms found in the songs of Stephen Schwartz, Jason Robert Brown, and Richard Maltby/David Shire, rather than just imitating what is in their ears from a well-known recording, can require considerable discipline…Asking the student to systematically correct rhythm, pitches, words, and tempo components takes time, but it will result in real learning and musical self-sufficiency. Since most mistakes are rhythmic, I ask the student first to correct the rhythm before adding the words and then the pitches. Once this process is understood, singers get used to and derive great satisfaction from solving these problems on their own.[24]

Intonation and the accurate singing of "unusual" intervals are areas of musicianship that beginning students may find especially challenging, and which voice teachers may find equally

[24] David Alt, "Triple Threat Training Program's Weakest Area Reading Music: Reinforcing Sight Reading in the Voice Studio for Singer/Actors," *Journal of Singing* 60, no. 4 (March/April 2004): 393.

difficult to address. However, guidance in these skills is essential to a student's success. Marcia McCarry describes three duties of voice teachers to their students who may lack expected music theory skills in the studio: to reduce student frustration and increase student comfort; to build student skills in understanding music, in general, beyond their individual pieces; and, last, to demonstrate patience when students struggle.[25] Musical theatre literature offers instructors the opportunity to address all three of these responsibilities in intonation/interval training because of its roots in American popular music, such as jazz and blues. Often, it includes condensed occasions for students to explore raised and lowered pitches, chromaticism, and even "strange" intervals—my own beginning aural skills courses utilized samplings of "Maria" and "Somewhere" from Bernstein's *West Side Story* to teach tritones and major seventh intervals. In this way, musical theatre literature offers an exciting, approachable tool for students to apply sight-singing skills.

Finally, while this body of work can be used to build musical independence separate from the listening of recordings, the study of musical theatre literature does offer students a chance to develop ears for the qualities of good singing (regardless of genre) through the accessibility of numerous professional recordings. Recording technology has been available for nearly the entire history of modern musical theatre. As such, nearly every musical theatre solo that a teacher might wish to assign a student has multiple recordings by different singers and in different keys.

When students arrive in my studio, they often know more musical theatre literature than I do because many—if not *most*—of my students regularly listen to Broadway cast recordings of shows. Thus, when I assign them musical theatre literature, even if it is unfamiliar to them, they are already accustomed to listening to recordings of this genre of music as both a learning tool

[25] Marcia McCarry, "Music Theory for Voice Students," *Journal of Singing* 66, no. 4 (March/April 2010): 451.

and for entertainment. The same does not always hold true with their classical repertoire: unfortunately, even my most musically and intellectually gifted students report, when asked directly, that they had not regularly listened to recordings of their art songs or arias. Especially in the early stages of the semester, the difference in their learning of the musical theatre repertoire, to which they have listened to recordings, and their classical repertoire, to which they have not, is apparent in both mastery of notes/rhythms, but also in the clarity of the sounds of their vocal production.

James McKinney, a prominent vocal pedagogue of the last century, reiterates the importance of a knowledge of good vocal sounds through listening in his widely read book *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults*:

> Beautiful sounds start in the mind of the singer. If you cannot think a beautiful sound, it is an accident if you make one…the best way to achieve the proper mental image of a beautiful vocal sound is by listening intelligently to a sizable number of artist singers. You should listen to live performances and recordings until certain recurrent features begin to emerge from most of the singers you are hearing.[26]

McKinney was certainly referencing classical singing in this quotation. However, it remains that certain tenets of good vocal production are consistent between any genre: McKinney's own characteristics of good vocal sound include descriptions such as "freely produced," "pleasant to listen to," "rich, ringing, and resonant," "consistently produced," "vibrant, dynamic, and alive," and "flexibly expressive."[27] There are vocal qualities and sounds which differ between genres—these will be explored in the next chapter—but, knowing these descriptions could easily be applied to either genre, it remains that good singing is good singing. Encouraging students to listen to good singing is an integral part of developing their voices, and,

[26] James McKinney, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2005), 78.
[27] McKinney, 77.

once again, musical theatre repertoire can act as a stepping stone to promote this habit in all aspects of their vocal studies. Furthermore, when this literature is specifically used as a cross-training tool to address a classical vocal inefficiency, a teacher can also encourage a student, through listening, to emulate certain positive vocal sounds and, therefore, reduce their own incorrect habits.

Vocal Inefficiencies

All repertoire assigned in the studio must address a student need—be it an expressive one, a musical one, or a vocal one. Just as classical repertoire is used in conjunction with vocalizes to address vocal inefficiencies and develop good vocal habits in students, musical theatre literature can be utilized when assigned with care. The idea of "cross-training," or pairing *bel canto* vocal training and classical repertoire study with the study of musical theatre or another commercial genre to develop a well-rounded voice (and performer), has been heavily promoted by pedagogues Mary Saunders Barton and Norman Spivey in their book *Cross-Training in the Voice Studio: A Balancing Act*.[28]

Indeed, because of its basis on speech, and, therefore, melodies that often sit in a tessitura closer to the one of a student's spoken voice, musical theatre offers an opportunity for students—especially treble-voiced students—to develop the musculature necessary for chest-voice-dominant singing. In their book *Vocal Technique*, Julia Davids and Stephen LaTour describe the vocal registers, or areas of the voice and their resulting tonal qualities, as chest, which is dominated by the thyroarytenoid (TA) muscles of the larynx, and head, dominated by the cricothyroid (CT) muscles. They also describe a middle or mixed voice register, which requires a

[28] Norman Spivey and Mary Saunders Barton, *Cross Training in the Voice Studio: A Balancing Act* (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2018).

combination of the functions of these musculatures, and that pitches which lie in between the head and chest registers can be sung with a chosen blend of the musculature actions of the two registers, depending on musical or emotional demands. Often, musical theatre and other contemporary genres will prioritize greater TA involvement in the mixed voice, while classical repertoire calls for greater CT activity in this range. Importantly, they note that the female voice has a much larger range of mixed voice pitches than the male voice.[29] Classical singers—especially females—generally utilize more CT-dominant sounds, and their main aim is to seamlessly sing through registers without audible shifts. To achieve this sonic goal throughout their entire range, classical singers must still make TA-dominant sounds: for instance, in "Deh vieni, non tardar" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*,[30] a soprano must sing below the staff to an A_3 (Figure 1)—a pitch which would be inaudible without the use of chest voice/TA-dominance.

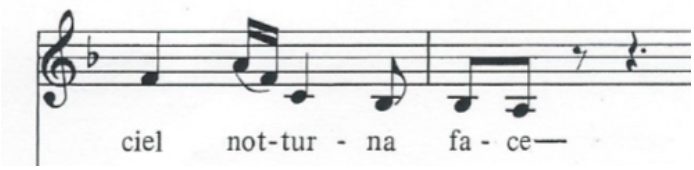

Figure 1. "Deh vieni, non tardar" from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, mm. 39-40

Singing musical theatre repertoire, with a tessitura generally in a TA-dominated, natural spoken pitch range, allows a predominantly classical student to develop these musculatures. Moreover, this repertoire provides the student a chance to approach these pitches with confidence, rather than fear: when approaching a low note in an art song or aria, with beauty as the tonal priority, a student may simply develop tension in apprehension of difficulty. In musical

[29] Julia Davids and Stephen LaTour, *Vocal Technique: A Guide to Classical and Contemporary Styles for Conductors, Teachers, and Singers* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2020), 159-161.
[30] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, "Deh vieni, non tardar," from *Le nozze di Figaro* in *Arias for Soprano*, ed. Robert L. Larsen (New York: G. Schirmer, 1991), 39-43.

theatre, with intelligibility and emotional communication as the priorities, a student may begin to approach these pitches with speech in mind—a natural occurrence in their daily lives.

When considering vocal inefficiencies such as hyper- and hypofunctional phonation, McKinney suggests one approach to correct these issues is to introduce the opposite fault as a means to an end.[31] Musical theatre literature may provide an approachable repertoire choice to address the inefficiencies of students who struggle with either hyperfunctional phonation (pressed sound) or hypofunctional phonation (breathy sounds). Much contemporary musical theatre repertoire encourages a breathy sound as the sonic ideal—for instance, "Once Upon a Dream" from *Jekyll and Hyde*.[32] Because, as established, students are listening to many recordings as they learn their musical theatre repertoire, they may also be encouraged to imitate this breathy tone. When approached emotionally, this breathy sound is necessary to convey the character's message accurately. Thus, for a student who struggles with a pressed tone, a selection like this one may be an excellent way to begin to address their hyperfunctional phonation.

Contrastingly, a vast majority of musical theatre encourages a vocal tone that encourages intelligibility of text: bright, forward, resonant, powerful, even nasal. Thus, for a student who struggles with breathiness—a lack of glottal closure often caused by a shortage of energy utilized when singing—musical theatre directly addresses several of McKinney's suggested corrective procedures. These include singing louder, becoming emotionally involved in the music, and even imitating a more pressed sound.[33]

The idea of using an "opposite" inefficiency could also be applied to overly dark singing. One area in which many young singers struggle is in correct diction of American English. Due to

[31] McKinney, 92.
[32] See Chapter 4 for a full analysis of this piece.
[33] McKinney, 86.

the necessity of more open, rounded vowels for a choral blend, many young singers—who frequently begin their musical journeys in choirs—only know to utilize an open, often overly dark, vowel sounds in their solo singing. Musical theatre allows students to transition their natural spoken sounds—especially [æ]—into singing. These sounds, still necessary in English language art song and aria, can continue to be developed in both genres. Furthermore, with its emphasis on text, musical theatre literature also encourages young singers to determine just how much effort is required for crisp consonant sounds, as well.

Lastly, one important element of singing musical theatre is its physicality, or the student's bodily engagement in singing the piece. We have previously explored the ways in which musical theatre makes characterization accessible to young students. Just as instructors utilize kinesthetic activity during vocalizes to encourage freedom and the release of tension, so too can the performance of musical theatre repertoire encourage this bodily freedom in young students, stemming from their rich understanding and embodiment of the characters in these pieces.

Chapter 3: Authentically Approaching Musical Theatre

Though musical theatre literature is a genre that can and should be sung within the classical studio, the classical singer must make brief technical considerations to sing an authentic interpretation. Only a few integral changes *must* be incorporated for the classical singer to perform the literature with accuracy, despite end results that can vary greatly. Some singers' voices may be better suited to cross-over singing than others, and with that flexibility, an instructor may incorporate greater adjustments as appropriate. Just as a teacher must assign classical repertoire for each student judiciously, careful selection of musical theatre pieces with student needs and abilities in mind remains of utmost importance.

Belting

The most prominent and controversial variation in technique between classical and musical theatre vocal styles involves the use of a belt. This is particularly true with repertoire rooted in pop or rock idioms—such solos tend to require a sustained heavy belt. When first studying musical theatre repertoire, some primarily classical singers may not be comfortable with this style. Indeed, in the second article of his series "Belting 101," prominent musical theatre voice teacher Robert Edwin states, "[n]ot everyone takes well to belting the first time out. Some female singers, for example, are unable to make any sound in their chest voice at their initial voice lessons. For them, belting is an impossibility until their chest voice is explored and developed."[34]

Though used frequently, the meaning of belting is not an easily definable one—exploring the concept throughout the entirety of his first article, Edwin arrives at the following definition for a belt in his second:

[34] Robert Edwin, "Belting 101, Part Two," *Journal of Singing* 55, no. 2 (November/December 1998): 62.

> …a twangy, often loud, bright sound that is the result of the coordinated activity of thyroarytenoid ("chest") and cricothyroid ("head") vocal fold muscles that, although thyroarytenoid dominant, includes cricothyroid activity which increases as the voice ascends in pitch. In addition, the belter's larynx is in a higher position, the pharynx is tighter, the mouth is spread laterally, and overall, the whole body is working harder to produce tone than in classical vocalization.[35]

A belt is not a vocal register—a fact that is commonly misconstrued by students. All singers, regardless of genre, utilize the chest register; its use is integrated into the teachings of famed classical pedagogues Garcia, Reid, Venard, Lamperti, and more.[36] The application of chest register, though, differs from a musical theatre singer to a dramatic operatic soprano in her lowest range.

Indeed, even within musical theatre singing, there are different approaches to the application of chest register. In *The Vocal Athlete*, Wendy D. Leborgne and Marci Rosenberg describe variations of singing styles within musical theatre: Traditional Musical Theatre Legit, Traditional Musical Theatre Belt, Contemporary Musical Theatre, and Pop/Rock Musical Theatre.[37] The differences in these styles not only include range, but also differences in perceived timbre and vocal weight stemming from variances in belt style (or, in legit, the lack thereof). The registration terms chest, chest-mix, or head-mix are each given the designation due to their increasing balance of CT versus TA dominance. Because of their wider use of the mixed area of the voice, these designations are critical to the production of a musical theatre sound for female voices. Traditional Musical Theatre Legit style of singing is closest to classical singing, involving mainly the female head voice. Traditional Musical Theatre Belt is associated with the full-chest sound of early Broadway belters, and these melodies sit in a lower tessitura.

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[35] Edwin, 61.
[36] Janette LoVetri, "Voice Pedagogy: Female Chest Voice," *Journal of Singing* 60, no. 2 (November/December 2003): 161.
[37] Wendy D. Leborgne and Marci Rosenberg, *The Vocal Athlete* (San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2021), 186-89.

Contemporary Musical Theatre includes a Traditional sound with some aspects of pop or rock influence; singers must belt much higher in music of this style. Lastly, Pop/Rock Musical Theatre style reflects directly the vocal sounds of contemporary commercial musical artists.[38] Concerning the latter three styles in female singers, the use of chest- and head-mix is integral to achieve a belt sound over increasingly higher pitches, especially in Contemporary and Pop/Rock styles. Still, Davids and Latour remind us of the important caveat that musical theatre singing involves more than just belting: "[i]ndeed, within a given song, [musical theatre singers] may sing in both a legit style or a belting style, depending on the mood they want to create."[39] It is important for the classical teacher to remember that not all musical theatre repertoire involves belting, and that, should literature demand belting, the style can be both healthy and even beneficial to the development of the classical singer.

Tone Quality and Vowel Shapes

Whether selecting only legit repertoire or utilizing more contemporary selections, a priority of dramatic presentation over beautiful singing must be established to perform a musical theatre selection authentically. Therefore, the vocal tone quality for a musical theatre solo may need adjustments for expressive purposes—the style of the music, the dialect of a character, or the situation in which the character resides. Julie Balog, a voice teacher specializing in musical theatre and a student of Mary Saunders Barton, states, "[t]he quality of the voice becomes a means of expression; even 'ugly' sounds can be acceptable, and in fact, are required at times to reflect text or character."[40]

[38] Leborgne and Rosenberg, 186-89.
[39] Davids and LaTour, 163.
[40] Julie E. Balog, "Popular Song and Music Theater: A Guide to Evaluating Music Theater Singing for the Classical Teacher," *Journal of Singing* 61, no. 4 (March/April 2005): 401.

Likewise, in general, a more forward and bright vocal tone is necessary for musical theatre singing than standard in classical singing.[41] Less vowel modification should be utilized than in *bel canto* technique, as realistic pronunciation of the text is musical theatre's priority. In classical singing, vowel shapes tend to have more height in the back pharyngeal space of the mouth. To create brighter, authentic-to-speech vowels, musical theatre emphasizes more frontal mouth space, along with a higher-positioned tongue. Additionally, these sounds are achieved through more horizontally positioned lips, especially in vowels like [u] and [o].[42]

Vibrato

Consistent legato and vibrato are applied differently in musical theatre repertoire: the use of vibrato in musical theatre is an expressive choice. In *bel canto* singing, vibrato is a necessity to connect pure legato lines. Within musical theatre styles, more vibrato would be employed in shows linked more closely to the Western classical style, whereas shows composed in contemporary styles, such as rock or pop, would use vibrato minimally, perhaps only as an effect on the last held note of a phrase.[43] In the article "Modern Voice Pedagogy: Functional Training for All Styles," author Elizabeth Ann Benson reminds us that "the functional training to produce and control the vibrato is not inherently linked to any style of music."[44] Rather, it is more important for a singer to develop a healthy, pleasing vibrato, while also learning to utilize it as they choose within any piece.

[41] Davids and LaTour, 85.
[42] Davids and LaTour, 101.
[43] Balog, 403.
[44] Elizabeth Ann Benson, "Modern Voice Pedagogy: Functional Training for All Styles," *American Music Teacher* (June/July 2018): 11.

Breathing

The last technical consideration between musical theatre and classical styles of singing is the approach to breathing. In classical singing, several "schools of breathing" exist—with major pedagogues arguing for the ideas of chest breathing, belly breathing, back breathing, and many other types of breathing in between. While an entire document could be completed on breathing for classical singing, generally, pedagogues agree on the basic tenets of a relaxed, silent breath, allowing for expansion in the lower core, generally taken through the mouth, with a focus upon aligned body posture. McKinney describes the breath for classical singing as, "…quicker, the quantity of air inhaled is greater, and the breath goes deeper into the lungs than in natural breathing."[45] Without delving deeply into the necessities of breathing for classical singing—including the ideas of breath support, breath management, etc., it is apparent that it requires the singer to *think* about the breath they are inhaling, with practice and an approach that differs from every other breath they take in a day. Indeed, in his book *Solutions for Singers*, Richard Miller, a classical vocal pedagogue confirms: "[a]lthough it is in accordance with natural function, natural breathing as employed for speech is not adequate to the tasks of cultivated singing. Breathing for singing is based on natural processes but must be enhanced in order to accommodate extended duration and intensity."[46]

In Amanda Flynn's book *So You Want to Sing Musical Theatre*, the author details differences between the classical and musical theatre genres. However, when discussing breathing, Flynn states that "the technique remains the same."[47] Davids and LaTour second this statement, reflecting that this similar style of breath amongst genres provides singers with the

[45] McKinney, 48.
[46] Richard Miller, *Solutions for Singers: Tools for Every Performer and Teacher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18.
[47] Amanda Flynn, *So You Want to Sing Musical Theatre* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 60.

greatest possibility of regulating their breath support and control.[48] However, both books discuss the impact of dance—integral in most musical theatre productions—upon breathing. Dancers are often trained to tense the abdominal muscles for a strong core for proper dance movement, resulting in a higher chest breath, which directly opposes the expanded core ideal of breathing for singing.[49] Thus, a musical theatre singer must take care to practice releasing these core muscles to navigate both dancing and singing simultaneously.

One must also consider the exhalation of air—in singing, this results in phonation when combined with vocal fold closure—as it pertains to musical phrasing. In classical singing, breath management is of utmost importance in order to sing through long phrases; Miller describes how the upper echelon of classical singers must be able to sing lengthy phrases at all dynamics and in any pitch range.[50] However, musical theatre allows for greater flexibility in phrasing—first, due to the cardio demands of dance with singing, but also due to the emphasis upon dramatic communication. Should a singer desire a particular dramatic effect, a breath might be inserted or taken away within a phrase; this may serve a dual purpose to assist the singer who needs an additional breath. Such approaches to phrasing are generally less flexible in the classical genre, particularly in operatic repertoire. Still, in both genres, breaths are purposeful, and, even when taken for a dramatic reason, must be carefully considered and planned.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Musical Theatre Selections for the Undergraduate Classical Treble Voice

This document accompanies a lecture recital; as such, the literature analyzed is suitable for my own treble voice. However, it also became apparent during research that the relative differences in singing musical theatre versus classical styles were greater and more impactful in

[48] Davids and LaTour, 31.
[49] Flynn, 60.
[50] Miller, 18.

treble-voiced students, primarily due to the use of speech-pitch ranges in musical theatre and a distinct need to utilize the chest register consistently. Indeed, in "Belting is Legit," Robert Edwin reports that "in order to belt, men are not required to change vocal registers. Using bright, speech-like sounds, a non-continuous vibrato, and more text driven approach to the repertoire puts a male singer on the right track to develop his voice."[51] Because lower voice types require less drastic transitions from genre to genre, I find it more important to provide primarily classical teachers and singers with a list of musical theatre repertoire for treble-voiced students as a starting point for integrating musical theatre into classical studios.

Therefore, the remainder of this paper will provide literature suggestions for collegiate-level treble voices based upon four categories: musical theatre solos for beginning students, musical theatre solos to develop musicianship, musical theatre solos for classical auditions, and, finally, musical theatre solos to develop classical-specific needs. With much repertoire from the Golden Era of musical theatre already used in the collegiate classical studio, such as the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, the selections represented in this paper aim to expand the primarily classical voice teacher's ideas of usable musical theatre repertoire, with most pieces less commonly sung in classical competitions, recitals, and auditions.

Part I: Musical Theatre Solos for Beginning Students

In Chapter 2, many benefits of the study of musical theatre in the classical studio were examined. The repertoire selections in this first part focus upon musical theatre's trait of accessibility: all songs selected are ideal for first-time students in the undergraduate studio, particularly those who may have never taken a voice lesson prior to collegiate study. All songs in this category emphasize simplicity in melody, accompaniment, text, and meaning, creating an

[51] Robert Edwin, "Belting is Legit," *The Journal of Singing* 64, no. 2 (November/December 2007), 215.

opportunity for a student to succeed quickly. It is my hope that these selections can assist a voice teacher in building rapport with a student through music that is enjoyable to sing, easy to learn, and able to be expressed with clarity, encouraging the student to continue studying music, increasing in difficulty over time.

"Anyone Can Whistle" from *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964)- Stephen Sondheim: Repetition, Phrasing, and Legato

Often, the music of Stephen Sondheim is considered particularly complex in comparison to the works of other musical theatre composers, especially those of his predecessors. Seeking to define Sondheim's musical and theatrical influences in his book *How Sondheim Found His Sound*, author Steve Swayne states that Sondheim's music, with "[t]he unusual harmonic turns, the countermelodies and contrapuntal connivances, the motivically generated melodies that populate Sondheim's canon: such are more the concerns of a classically trained composer, not a commercially oriented one."[52] The navigation of Sondheim's musical language does typically require more advanced musical ability and independence than other musical theatre demands. Still, Sondheim's skill at creating music that highlights the beauty and capability of the singing voice makes his solos conducive to study in the classical studio. Many of his "monologue songs"—solos in which a character stops in time and sings a dramatic narrative, such as "On the Steps of the Palace" from *Into the Woods* or "Ephiphany" from *Sweeney Todd*—remain overly sung by classical students and too difficult for the beginning undergraduate. Yet, Sondheim's musical language also relies on the idea of *pastiche*, or the drawing upon a diverse range of musical styles in a single piece.[53] Therefore, within many of these musically challenging productions, Sondheim offers beautiful, simplistic solos appropriate for early study.

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[52] Steve Swayne. *How Sondheim Found His Sound* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 53.
[53] Jim Lovensheimer, "Stephen Sondheim and the Musical of the Outsider" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 3rd ed., ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 249.

Anyone Can Whistle, premiered in 1964, was the second musical in which Sondheim served as both composer and lyricist. It is also one of Sondheim's least successful musicals, closing after only nine performances after its official Broadway debut. Despite the show's flaws, many songs from the work—primarily the title number—remain popular in musical theatre circles. The title song "Anyone Can Whistle" is sung by Fay Apple, a nurse at the local mental hospital, as she shares her desire to discover the confidence to be herself.[54]

The solo is comprised of several musical traits that make it an ideal one for a beginning undergraduate: most prominently, its tempo, phrase length, and melodic range and repetition. Unlike many of Sondheim's solos, this piece does not fly by at a breakneck speed; rather, it moves at a gentle andante throughout. This tempo allows a young student time to think about vocal and musical needs—and the expression of the lyrics of the song—as the piece progresses. This steady tempo also allows the student plenty of time for breathing; in turn, breath management is also addressed through the piece's short, parseable phrases. Musical phrases in the piece are, at a maximum, four measures long. However, even these four measure phrases can, and often, *should*, be broken down further based on Sondheim's text setting. Most phrases are only two measures long, and some phrases may only last a single measure (Figure 2).

[54] Stephen Sondheim, "Anyone Can Whistle" in *The Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology—Volume I: Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1987), 17-20.

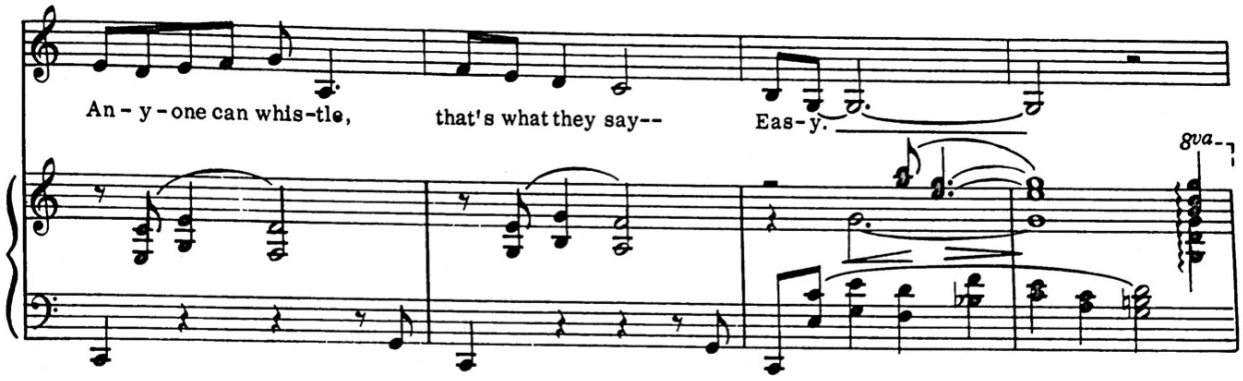

Figure 2. "Anyone Can Whistle" from Sondheim's *Anyone Can Whistle*, mm. 5-8

This musical setting allows a young singer ample opportunities to breathe fully and as often as needed, creating habits of tension-free deep breathing while singing.

Also helpful to the beginning voice student is a moderately-sized range, sitting in a comfortable tessitura. The song spans an octave and a third, but a single phrase never spans more than a seventh. Though the original key of the song (C Major) may require a young singer to sit low in their range—the song extends from G_3-C_5—it would make an ideal piece for a student comfortable in either commercial music or musical theatre who is beginning study of classical music; furthermore, this piece could easily transpose up and sit in a comfortable, easily accessible tessitura throughout.

Along with the use of musical pastiche, a second Sondheim musical trademark is frequently repeated motives used to symbolize characters or act as building blocks for larger musical material.[55] This trait is particularly helpful to any singer, but especially to a younger student: consistently repeated melodic material results in more manageable learning of music. In "Anyone Can Whistle," the melody presented in the first two measures of the piece (see Figure 2) is repeated four more times; all melodic phrases are repeated at least twice within the song.

[55] Lovensheimer, 249.

Text is often repeated, as well, making memorization of the piece less daunting to a young student.

Finally, the text itself offers an applicable dramatic message for a young college student to convey: Fay speaks of her desire to be herself, yet finds it difficult—a sentiment certainly shared by a youthful undergraduate. This relatability allows for more freedom in expressing this text naturally, which can be difficult for a beginning singer.

With its many helpful traits, one challenge of this piece arises in its large melodic leaps. Though most motion is stepwise, Sondheim does utilize large descending *and* ascending leaps throughout the piece (Figure 3).

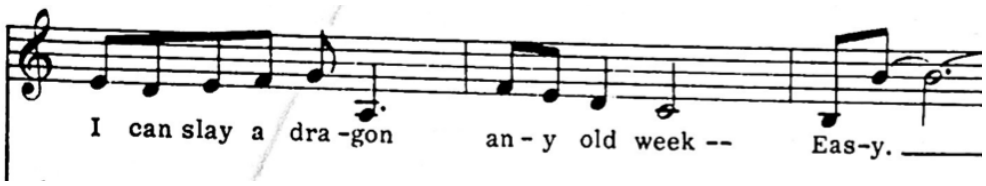

Figure 3. "Anyone Can Whistle" from Sondheim's *Anyone Can Whistle*, mm. 25-27

These leaps may be an opportunity for a student to work on register navigation, as the phrases all end with these leaps—the student would only have to navigate either into or out of chest register, not in and out within a phrase. However, these leaps may still pose a challenge too great for a student who lacks comfort in either the head or chest register. It remains important that an instructor assign musical theatre literature—like classical repertoire—judiciously, with student needs and abilities in mind.

"My New Friends" from *The Madwoman of Central Park West* (1979)- Leonard Bernstein: An Easy Introduction to Syncopation

The Madwoman of Central Park West is a one-woman show, which starred and was crafted by Phyllis Newman. With a book by Newman and Arthur Laurents, songs were sourced and compiled from various composers, two of which were penned by Leonard Bernstein.

Bernstein, equally famous in classical and musical theatre genres, is the perfect composer to select when first considering musical theatre repertoire for the classical studio. Like Sondheim, Bernstein is known for his oft challenging music. Yet, his vocal pieces become more manageable due to his skill with crafting memorable melodies, his frequent referencing of popular music genres, and his ability to emulate colloquial speech rhythms when setting text.[56] Indeed, despite distinct complexities in harmonies, melodic gestures, rhythms and meters, Paul Laird, a Bernstein scholar, states that "[a]n unmistakable feature of Bernstein's music is its accessibility."[57]

"My New Friends" is a particularly achievable Bernstein solo.[58] One of the final pieces in *Madwoman*, it depicts a scene of serenity and gratefulness by the main character, who decides to make peace with her family, realizing they are the best part of her life.[59] Mirroring the emotion of the character, Bernstein creates a calm, reflective atmosphere in this song, which features musical elements conducive for a young singer to navigate successfully.

Like "Anyone Can Whistle," "My New Friends" moves at a slow and steady tempo, leaving room for the singer to think, prepare, and express. The rhythms are all simple, with repetitive melodic and rhythmic motifs; still, they offer a young singer the chance to work on brief syncopations and tied rhythms in an isolated setting (Figure 4).

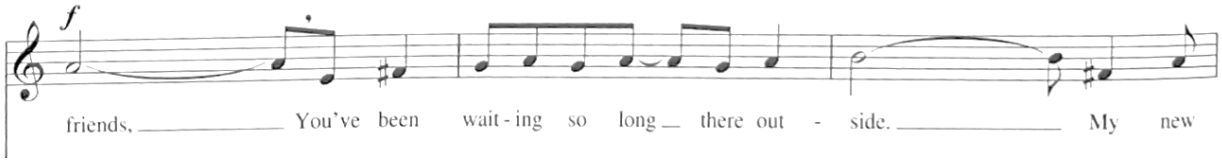

Figure 4. "My New Friends" from Newman's *The Madwoman of Central Park West*, mm. 7-9

[56] Paul R. Laird and Hsun Lin, *Leonard Bernstein: A Research and Information Guide*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015) 39.
[57] Laird and Lin, 22.
[58] Leonard Bernstein, "My New Friends" from *The Madwoman of Central Park West* in *Bernstein Theatre Songs: Medium/Low Voice*, ed. by Richard Walters (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 2010), 26-28.
[59] "Notes on Shows and Songs," in *Bernstein Theatre Songs: Medium/Low Voice,* ed. by Richard Walters, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 2010), vii.

Melodically, the piece contains numerous instances of repeated motifs, making the learning process easy. Additionally, Bernstein's melody features frequent scalar motion, especially in places in which a singer may need to switch registers, depending on the key selected; this assists a young singer in navigating the portions that sit in a higher tessitura. When leaps do exist in the melody, they are often familiar to a beginner's ear, fourths moving from sol to do.

While simple, Bernstein's solo is not boring—it even features sections of modal mixture, resulting in chromatic alterations in the melodic line. A prominent feature of Bernstein music is his simplification of difficult harmonic or rhythmic motion with direct accompaniment doubling. This holds true in "My New Friends": when raised pitches occur (as in measure 9), they are either directly doubled by the piano or introduced just before the singer must navigate them. Furthermore, doubling in the accompaniment occurs often throughout the piece, especially at each new entrance after an interlude. This provides the young singer with plenty of support to sing with full confidence (Figure 5).

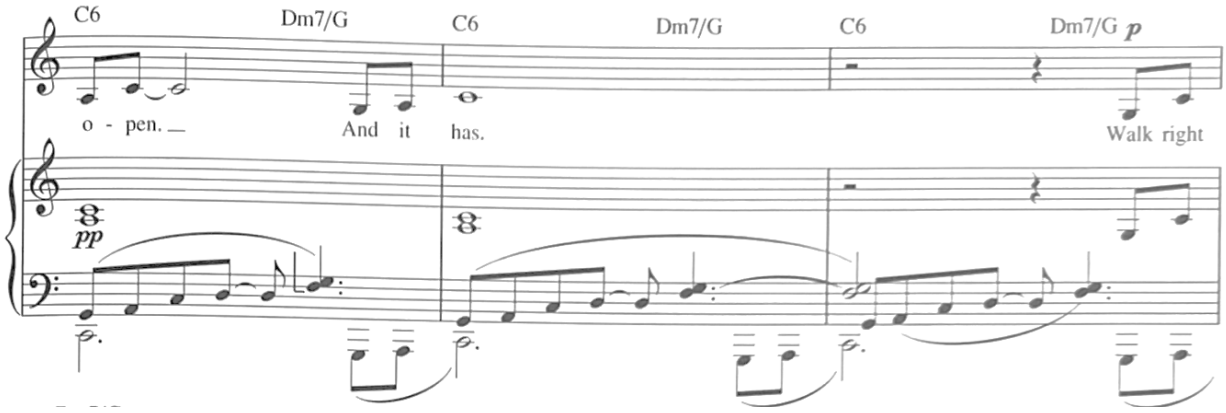

Figure 5. "My New Friends" from Newman's *The Madwoman of Central Park West*, mm. 13-15

"To Keep My Love Alive" from *A Connecticut Yankee* (1927)- Richard Rogers and Lorenz Hart: Humor in a Natural Speaking Range

Though the repertoire explored in this paper does not include the work of the composer/lyricist team Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein, it *does* include solos penned by Rogers apart from Hammerstein. Though many of these pieces follow similar musical contours of the well-loved R&H classics, they remain less performed than their Golden Age counterparts. Thus, the deceivingly comic song "To Keep My Love Alive" from *A Connecticut Yankee*, a show loosely based on Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889)[60] with music by Rodgers and lyrics by Lorenz Hart, proves to be a suitable alternative for the standard Rodgers and Hammerstein literature that also expands the student's and the instructor's body of repertoire. This solo has a simple, beautiful melody that contrasts shockingly to its dark, witty lyrics. At this point in the production, Morgan Le Fay, sister to King Arthur of Camelot, sings this solo to describe the way she kills off her husbands (allowing her to have many, without divorcing a single one).[61]

The comedy makes the text and the dramatic interpretation of this song the most central element, rather than beautiful tone. Rodgers, therefore, sets this piece in a speech-like range: it sits low and remains there throughout. There are a few instances in which a singer may change registers. In general, though, the range and tessitura make this piece an excellent pick to develop comfort in the chest register through the use of natural speech sounds.

The solo is also musically appropriate for a beginning singer, presenting few challenges to the college-aged student. The song follows a strophic form with an introduction and brief coda. This directly repeated musical material is simple to learn—assisted by the fact that the

[60] Dominic Symonds. *We'll Have Manhattan : The Early Work of Rodgers and Hart* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 238.
[61] Richard Rodgers, "To Keep My Love Alive" in *Musical Theatre for Classical Singers*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2010), 26-29.

melody moves in scalar motion for a majority of the piece. Likewise, this melody is either directly doubled (especially during the instances in which the melody leaps, rather than steps—see Figure 6) or includes supportive chordal outlines.

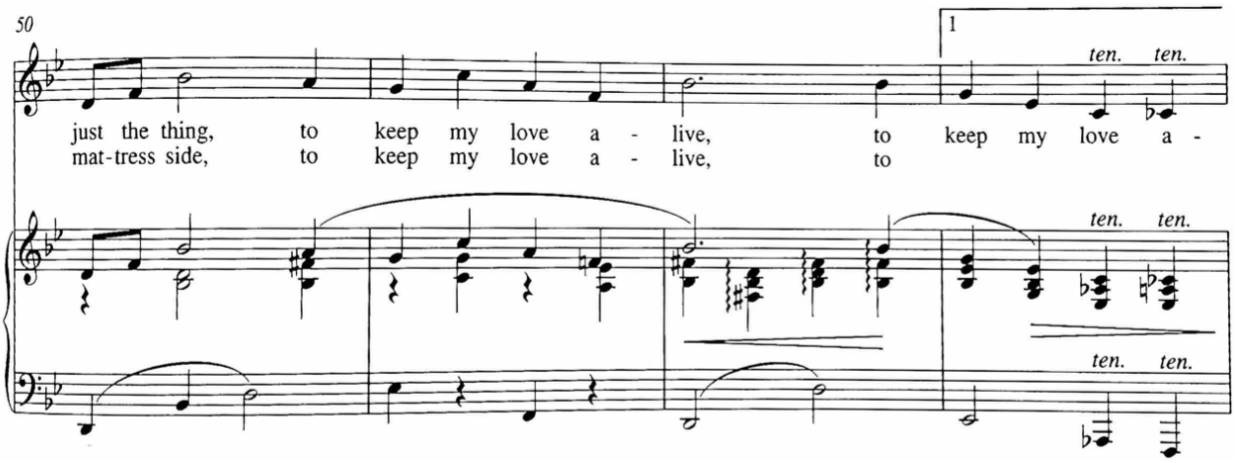

Figure 6. "To Keep My Love Alive" from Rodgers and Hart's *A Connecticut Yankee*, mm. 50-53

Lastly, phrases are generally only two measures long, reflecting the pauses one might take if they were to speak the lyrics. With ample opportunities to breathe—and with these breaths naturally reflecting the pace of speech—the singer can focus completely on the text and expressing it clearly with purposeful dramatic intent. A student can also give added focus to physical movement, facial expression, and other aspects of dramatic interpretation that, when coupled with a technically difficult melody, may have to be reduced for freedom of the vocal mechanism. Therefore, this solo is not only musically appropriate for a beginning singer, but also offers a student the chance to fully focus upon comedic expression. Because of the positive audible feedback a performer receives from an audience, comedy can help an inexperienced performer gain confidence and freedom in portraying a character in front of others. This can lead to greater expressive freedom in more complex characters as the singer continues study.

Part II: Musical Theatre Solos to Develop Musicianship Skills

The second part of the repertoire analysis section considers musical theatre solos that can be utilized to address specific musicianship deficiencies frequently found in undergraduate classical singers. This repertoire, with its approachable nature, may encourage additional practice time on these specific musical needs from intonation to rhythmic accuracy, whether or not a teacher chooses to bring awareness of this intent to the student. Though some selections are better suited for targeted work on certain musicianship skills in singers who have completed a few semesters of study, many remain appropriate for beginning undergraduates, as well.

"Do I Hear a Waltz?" from *Do I Hear a Waltz?* (1965)- Rodgers and Sondheim: Chromaticism and Intervallic Motion

Combining the talents of two composers listed in the first part of this analysis section, "Do I Hear a Waltz?" is an excellent example of a musical theatre solo that promotes the development of specific musicianship skills. Arthur Laurents, a famed playwright, originally approached Rodgers and Hammerstein to collaborate on the musical. With Hammerstein's death soon after, Sondheim, the lyricist's protégé and frequent colleague of Laurents's, stepped in to write lyrics. The collaboration between these three greats had much promise; unfortunately, even Sondheim admitted that the foundational story was not a good one.[62] The show has not had lasting success, but it does contain several noteworthy selections, especially its title song.

"Do I Hear a Waltz?" has the distinct musical soundscape of Rodgers's Golden Age solos, and, as such, is particularly suitable to classical singers—less modification of vocal technique would be required to perform an authentic interpretation. However, to complement Sondheim's quintessentially intricate word play, the melodic line is a bit more complex than that which would typically be associated with Rodgers. Sung by the main character, Leona, an American

[62] Meryle Secrest, *Somewhere for Me: A Biography of Richard Rodgers* (New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2001), 371.

woman on a trip to Venice, “Do I Hear a Waltz?” occurs after Leona hears music out her window and is swept away by the romantic Italian atmosphere.[63]

Due to its use of chromaticism and a series of intervallic leaps, the melody is well-suited to address intonation issues, as well as interval navigation, in students who may struggle with keeping pitch. In the first page of the song, we can identify a series of descending fourths and ascending thirds— as the piece moves at an allegro, this requires the singer to navigate through this series quickly while maintaining correct intonation throughout. This series is not directly doubled by the accompaniment, at least on the downbeat of each measure, requiring the student to maintain independence (figure 7).

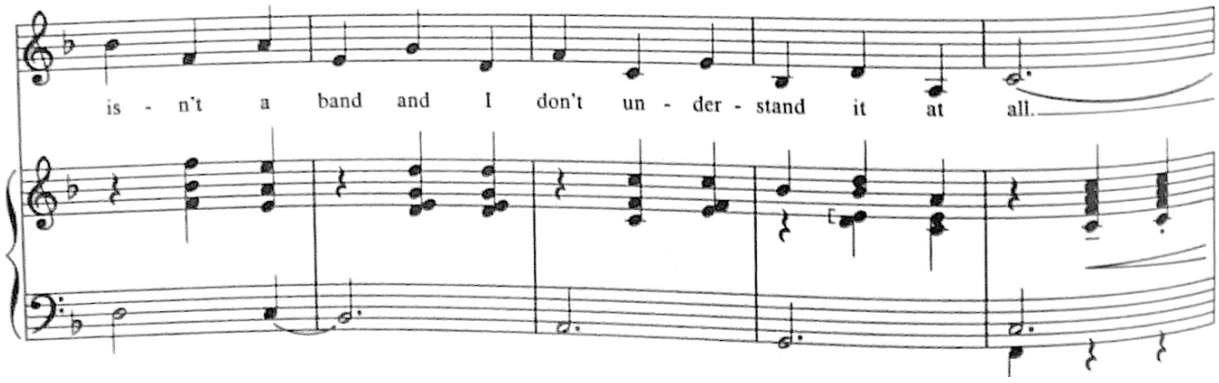

Figure 7. "Do I Hear a Waltz?" from Rodgers and Sondheim's *Do I Hear a Waltz?*, mm. 10-14

Additionally, the frequent chromaticism in the melodic line requires the student to navigate raised and lowered scale degrees within a single phrase, while still moving at a fast tempo. Making these phrases easier on the student, though, is the doubling of the accompaniment throughout the entirety of these lines (Figure 8).

[63] Richard Rodgers, “Do I Hear a Waltz?” from *Do I Hear a Waltz?* in *The Singer’s Musical Theatre Anthology: Mezzo-Soprano/Alto*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1986), 56-63.

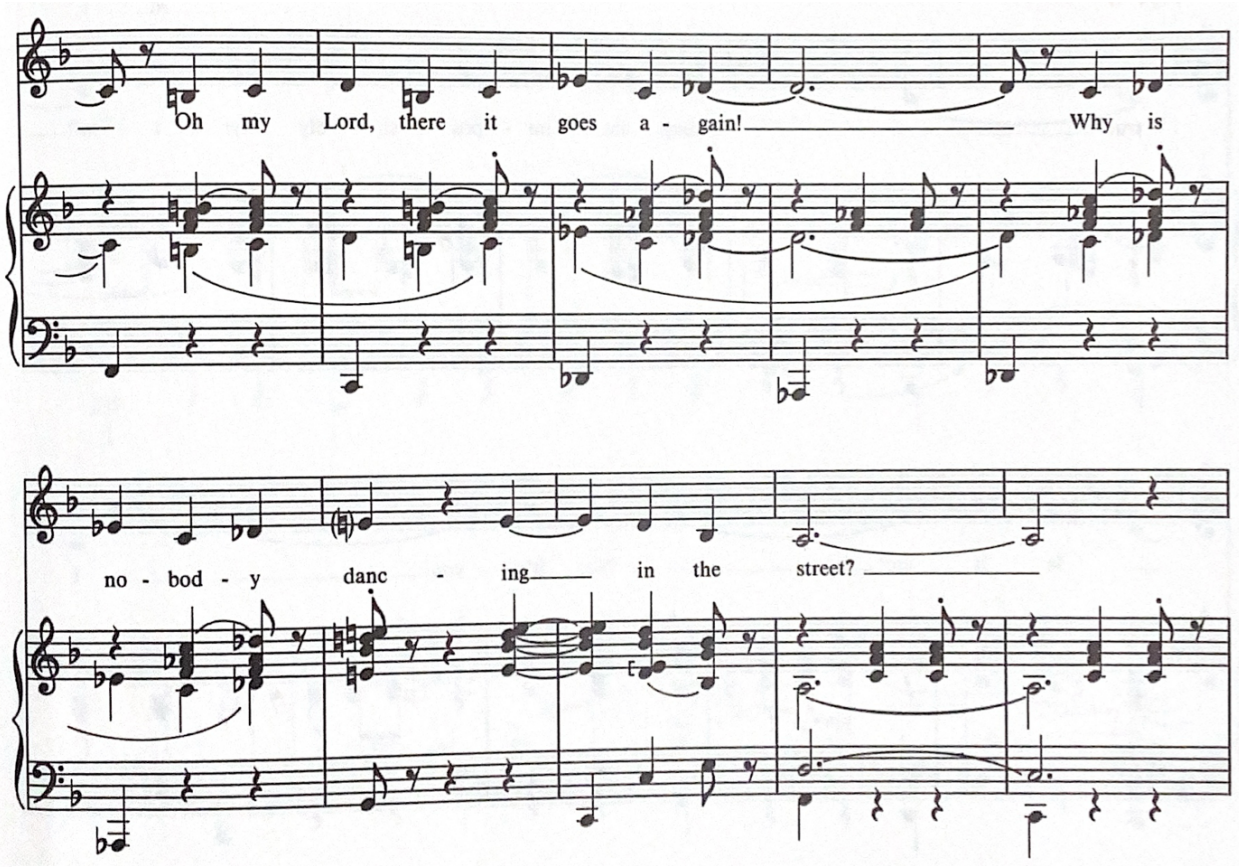

Figure 8. "Do I Hear a Waltz?" from Rodgers and Sondheim's *Do I Hear a Waltz?,* mm. 20-29

Later in the song, the singer must also independently navigate a key change during a moving interlude in the accompaniment (measure 75), offering further challenge.

Other elements of this solo help it remain accessible to the younger undergraduate student. The range of the piece is small, spanning just over an octave—depending on key chosen, the tessitura sits in the comfortable mid-range of a treble voice throughout. Likewise, the accompaniment does double the melody in its most challenging spots or offers support in others. Lastly, the meaning and character behind the song are not difficult to interpret, nor express. Thus, this piece offers unique challenges that remain achievable, and enjoyable, to a young undergraduate.

"Lay Down Your Head" from *Violet* (1997)- Jeanine Tesori and Brian Crawley: Accessible *A Capella*

Jeanine Tesori, a Tony Award winner for Best Musical (*Fun Home*), is also one of the first women commissioned to write an opera by the Metropolitan Opera. A self-described melodist, Tesori demonstrates that her music, no matter the genre, is composed expertly for the singing voice.[64] "Lay Down Your Head," sung by the title character in *Violet*, is a simple yet beautiful lullaby.[65] Violet, a young woman with a disfigured face, travels by bus from North Carolina to Tulsa seeking healing—she sings this song after a romantic encounter with one of her travel partners. With its peaceful message and music to reflect it, this piece encourages freedom and relaxation from a young singer, while also assisting in improving melodic independence.

The difficulty, and developmental opportunity, of "Lay Down Your Head" begins at its start—after a brief introduction, the singer must enter and sing the first fifteen measures of the solo completely a cappella (Figure 9).

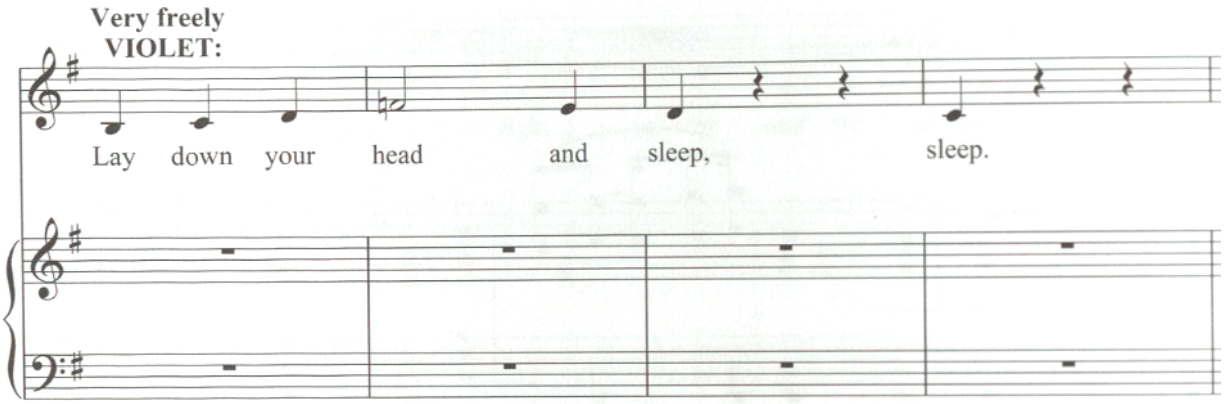

Figure 9. "Lay Down Your Head" from Tesori's *Violet*, mm. 5-12

While marked as "ad lib," allowing the performer some freedom in expression of the melodic line, a young singer must demonstrate complete ability to remain independent on a melodic line to remain in tune and in the correct key with the return of the accompaniment at the

[64] Raymond Knapp and Holley Replogle-Wong, "A conversation with Jeanine Tesori," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 17, no. 1 (2023): 42.
[65] Jeanine Tesori, "Lay Down Your Head" from *Violet* in *The Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology— Volume VI: Mezzo-Soprano*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2015), 224-28.

end of the verse. This solo, then, is particularly helpful for students who struggle with melodic independence or intonation—or, for those students gifted with an excellent ear who rely on the piano, rather than practice, to learn their repertoire.

Aside from the beginning, "Lay Down Your Head" also remains a piece appropriate to a beginning student. The *a cappella* section is made more feasible through its generally stepwise motion. Written in an AABA' form, the song features frequent repetition of the initial melody, making learning the piece more easily achievable. The range of the solo remains within an octave, other than a single departure to the third above in the B section. Furthermore, the slow, legato tempo of the piece allows a student time to adjust their intonation. Simple rhythms also permit a student to focus more deeply upon vocal tone and expression, rather than complex rhythmic accuracy.

"Johnny One Note" from *Babes in Arms* (1937)- Rodgers and Hart: Syncopation and Chromaticism

The second piece from the Rodgers and Hart songbook on this list, "Johnny One Note," is the selection *least* appropriate to the average beginning undergraduate. A piece that requires a comfortable belt to be sung in the correct style, "Johnny One Note" still offers plenty of opportunity for musical development in classical studies. Sung by Baby Rose, a former child star, "Johnny One Note" is a number from the show-within-a-show that offers a singer the opportunity to explore a multitude of vocal colors driven by character expression alongside distinct musicianship training on rhythms and intonation.[66]

Set in a jazzy style appropriate to the 1930s setting of a vaudeville troupe, "Johnny One Note" includes the expected syncopation, chromaticism, and blues notes typical of the genre.

[66] Richard Rodgers, "Johnny One-Note" from *Babes in Arms* in *The Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology—Volume II: Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leaonard, 1993), 40-47.

Particularly challenging, both vocally and musically, are the large intervallic sequences that must be navigated repeatedly at the quick cut-time tempo of the piece (measures 13-17).

However, adding another interesting intonation challenge is the chromaticism of the B section—the singer must navigate up and down by half steps, while also singing syncopated rhythms (figure 10). These musical features offer a fun challenge for a singer who struggles with intonation, rhythmic accuracy, or both.

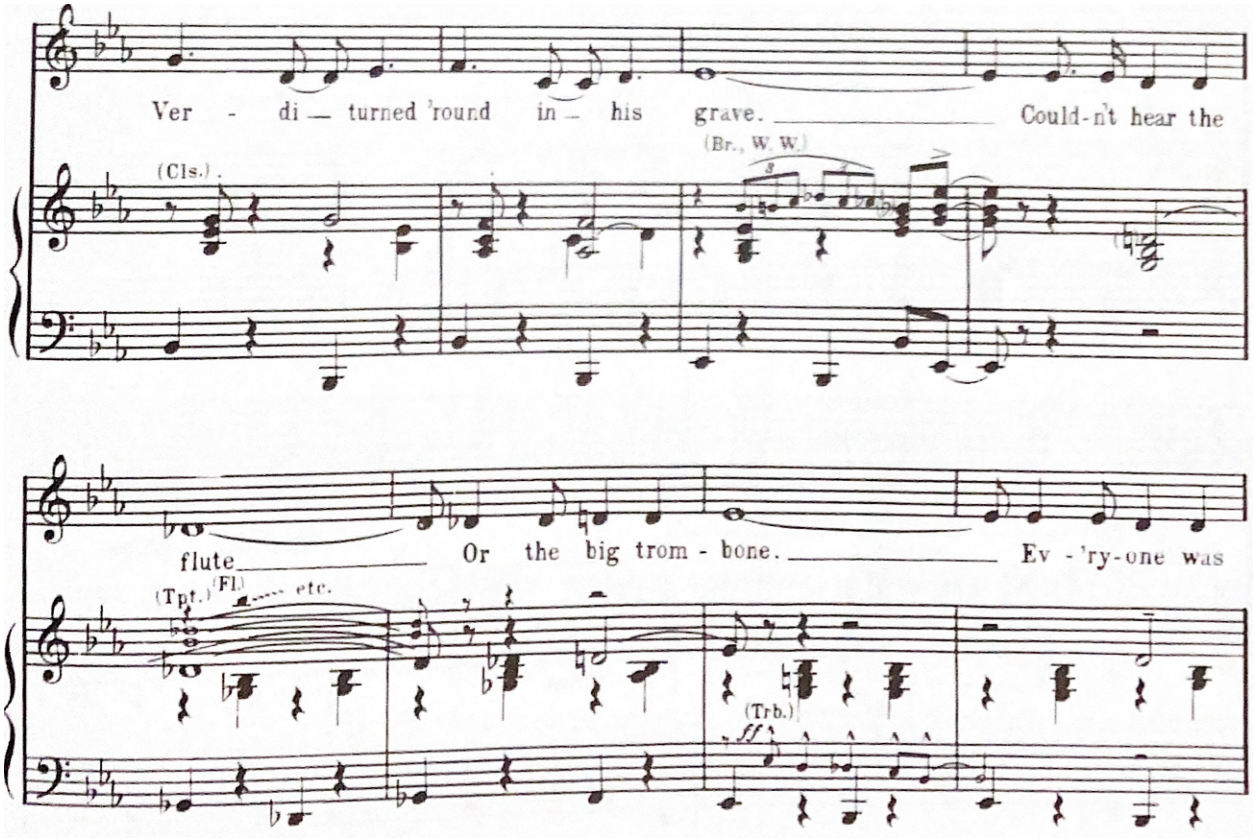

Figure 10. "Johnny One Note" from Rodgers and Hart's *Babes in Arms*, mm. 55-62

A final vocal opportunity presented by this piece occurs in the sung introduction: a series of repeated notes over four measures (in the original key of E♭ major, $B\flat_3$; see Figure 11).

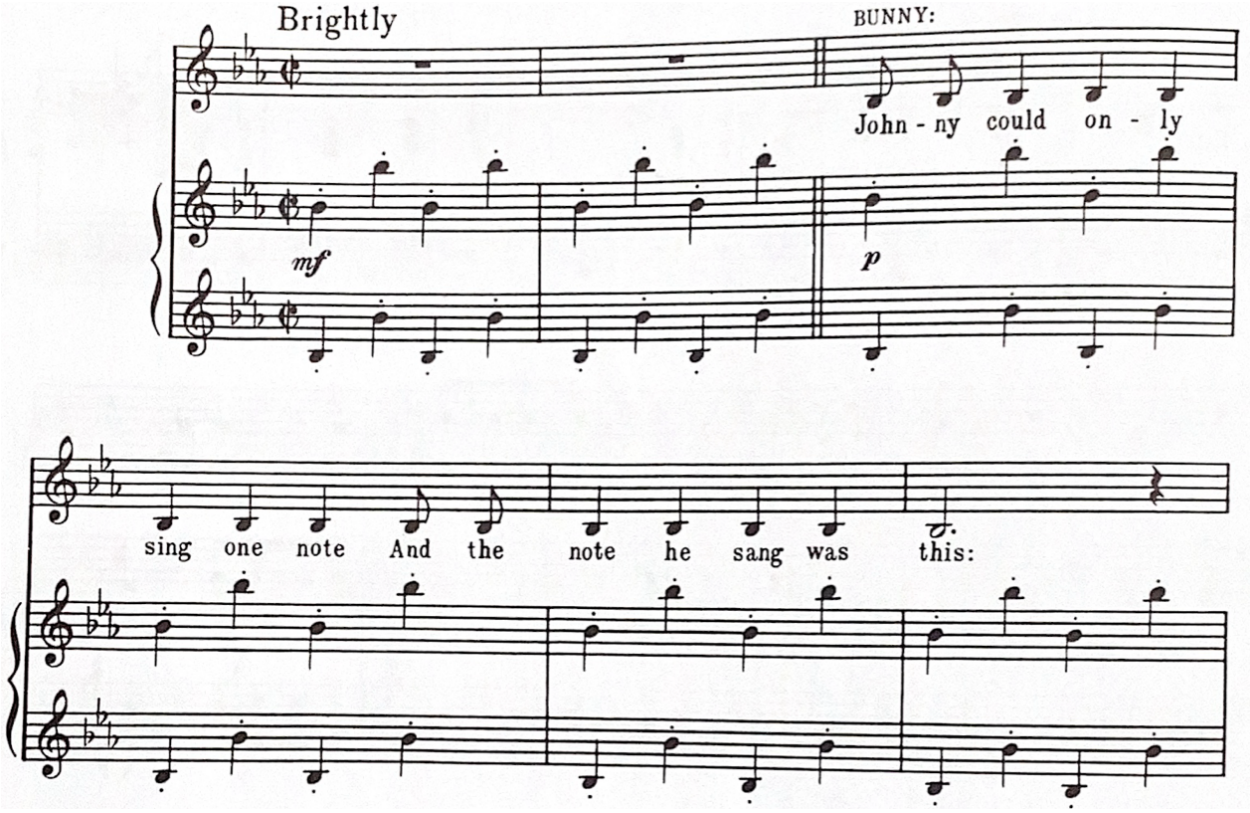

Figure 11. "Johnny One Note" from Rodgers and Hart's *Babes in Arms*, mm. 1-6

For a classical singer, especially a beginner, with little experience singing in the chest register, these four measures allow a singer to easily work from speech to singing, as they can be spoken around this pitch level, then immediately sung without having to navigate pitch changes. This skill is one that can also be used to discover how to navigate low tessitura sections in classical music. For instance, an instructor may utilize the same approach to assist a high voice in navigating the introduction in Respighi's 1906 song "Stornellatrice" (Figure 12).[67]

[67] Ottorino Respighi, *Stornellatrice* (Bologna: F. Bongiovanni, 1906), IMSLP, accessed April 13, 2025, https://ks15.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/1/10/IMSLP96911-PMLP199194-Respighi_-_Stornellatrice_(voice_and_piano).pdf.

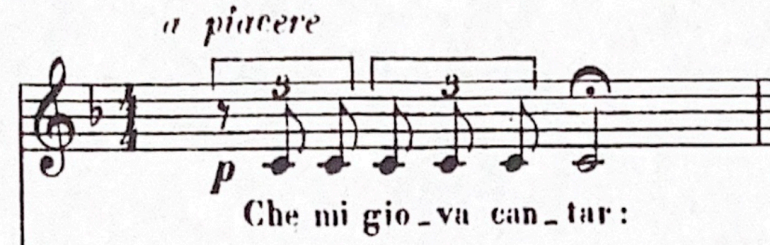

Figure 12. "Stornellatrice" by Respighi, m. 1

Lastly, an enjoyable feature of this piece is the possible use of vocal colors for comedic purposes. For a seasoned undergraduate singer with a deeper understanding of their vocal technique, utilizing different sounds in their voice—from a classical Broadway belt to an overdramatized, swallowed operatic tone, even to healthy vocal growls—can be an enlightening and entertaining experience that is not often found in classical literature. The greater the spectrum of sounds a singer knows they can make, the more possibilities become available for learning, discovery, and professional use of their singing voice in the future.

Part III: Musical Theatre Solos for Classical Auditions

The penultimate section of repertoire analysis concerns an expansion of options for the classical singer to include in their "package" for classical auditions—especially summer young artist programs and other music festivals which feature a musical. With audition panels hearing over fifty singers in a day, over multiple days of auditions, it is of utmost importance for the auditioning singer to remain in the panel members' minds. Utilizing less-common audition pieces that show off a singer's talents may be one way to achieve this. In a blog post about audition repertoire on the website for Wolf Trap Opera, a top-tier young artist program, Kim Witman—who served as head of the program for twenty-two years—stated, "…we are *always* happy to have the chance to hear something different, and we love to see artists immersing themselves in new and different music…[i]ts presence is an indication of a healthy

artistic curiosity."[68] Certainly, this rhetoric applies to the musical theatre selection of a singer's package, too. With most companies programming Golden Age musicals, Sondheim concept musicals, or "operetta musicals" such as Adam Guettel's *Light in the Piazza* (2003), all selections in this portion are more legit in style, allowing a classically trained singer to demonstrate their vocal skills without greatly altering vocal technique.

"Home" from *Phantom* (1991)- Maury Yeston: Operatic Inspiration and High Notes

Though best known for his theatre works, Maury Yeston is no stranger to classical music—in fact, he is lauded for it. Yeston studied music theory at Yale, published papers and even a book on rhythm, and was named director of undergraduate music studies at his alma mater by the time he was 29 years old. Unfortunately, despite his early success, he encountered struggles beyond his control while composing *Phantom*—a musical based on the same material as Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*. Yeston's version was completed a decade before its premiere in 1991, but the show did not find funding before Lloyd Webber's hit London stages. Never making it to Broadway, the musical still found radical success in smaller theatres; it has even been dubbed "…the biggest hit never to play Broadway."[69] Inspired by the same setting as Lloyd Webber's version, though, *Phantom* offers the classical singer a wealth of easy crossover repertoire. "Home" is sung by Christine Daaé, making the solo a practical solution for teachers whose young students eagerly request to sing the solos of the ingenue. This piece is more accessible to the younger classical singer than the Christine solos by Lloyd Webber, and it still features captivating melodic lines in an operatically inspired style.[70]

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[68] Kim Witman, "Something Old, Something New," *Wolf Trap Opera Blog*, last modified September 22, 2009, https://opera.wolftrap.org/something-old-something-new/.
[69] Ken Ringle, "Steady as He Goes," *Washington Post*, July 11, 1999.
[70] Maury Yeston, "Home," in *Phantom: The American Musical Sensation* (Port Chester, NY: Cherry Lane Music Co., 1992): 2-15.

With plenty of melodic doubling in the piano, repetitive melodic phrases, a modified strophic form, and a range that, until the very end of the piece, remains within a ninth, sitting on the staff, “Home” is an excellent selection for a younger singer. However, the piece also offers moments for a classical soprano to showcase talents above the staff, with the final phrase leaping up the octave to extended high G and A♭ (Figure 13).

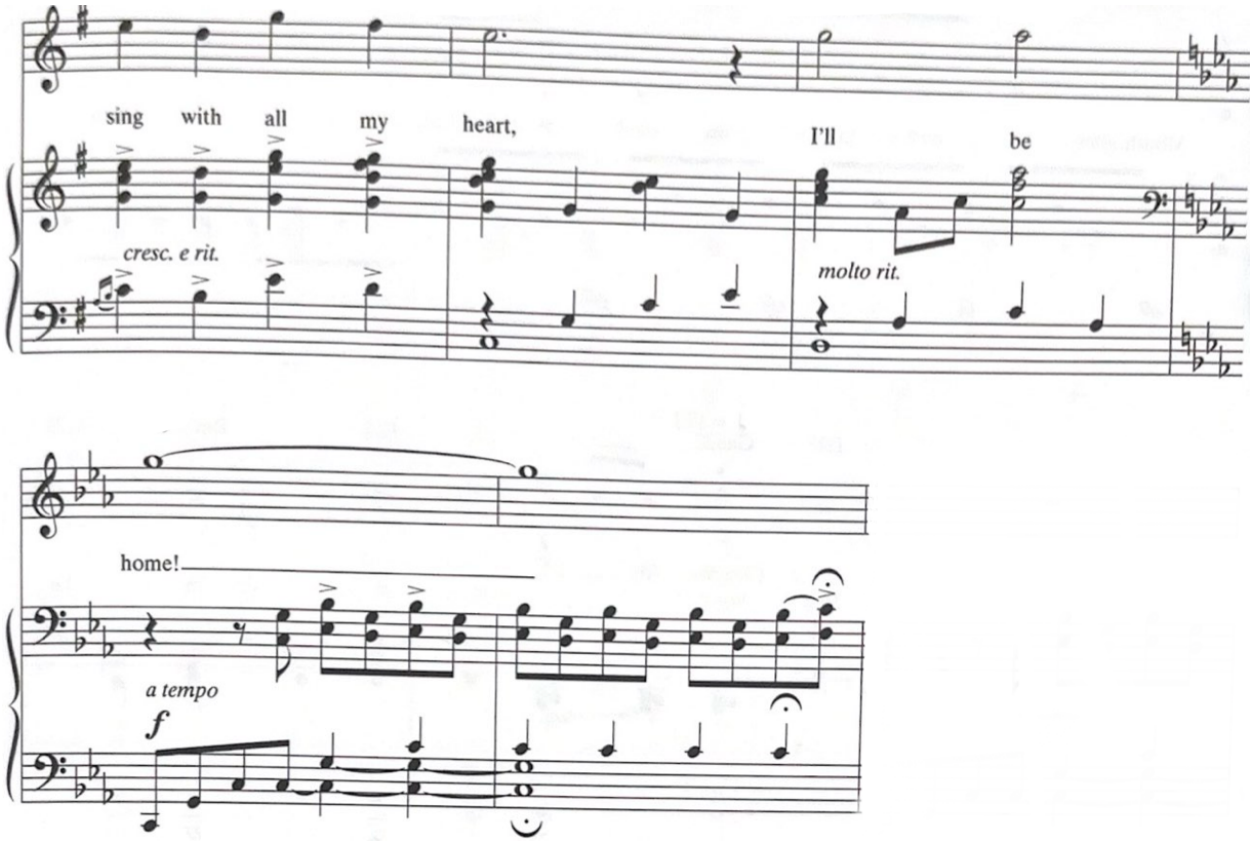

Figure 13. "Home" from Yeston's *Phantom*, mm. 76-80

Combining these elements, “Home” would make an excellent steppingstone selection to an operatic aria for a younger student, or as a relatively underperformed showcase musical theatre solo for a classical audition.

“Moonfall” from *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1985)- Rupert Holmes: Less-Performed “Legit” Literature

Although the winner of the 1986 Tony Award for Best Musical, the music of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* remains relatively underperformed as standalone repertoire. The musical, based on the unfinished Dickens novel of the same title, was the first musical to offer the audience a vote to pick one of several possible endings. Its creator, Rupert Holmes, may be best known for his pop hit "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)," despite his personal Tony wins of Best Lyrics, Book, and Music for *Edwin Drood*—the first time all three awards have been presented to the same individual in a year.[71] A show-within-a-show depicting performers of a Victorian-era music hall, it is no surprise that the music reflects sounds (and melodrama) of the earlier era—"Moonfall," a piece sung by leading lady Rosa Bud near the beginning of the show, is no exception.[72] Set during Rosa's music lesson, it is appropriate that the character's voice is more classical in nature, as would be expected for a singer during this time.

"Moonfall" would make an excellent audition piece for an appropriate classical treble voice because of the vocal skill required to sing it. Although the solo is very repetitive and largely doubled in the accompaniment, the melody of the piece is deceptively difficult. With lines that shift from the upper passaggio down to chest voice and back to the high head voice within the span of a few measures, the piece requires a voice that can easily navigate between these registers (Figure 14).

[71] Judith Newmark, "Mystery of Rupert Holmes is how he does it all—and on little sleep," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dec. 29, 2004.
[72] Rupert Holmes, "Moonfall", Musicnotes.com, accessed Oct. 31, 2024, https://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtd.asp?ppn=MN0107348.

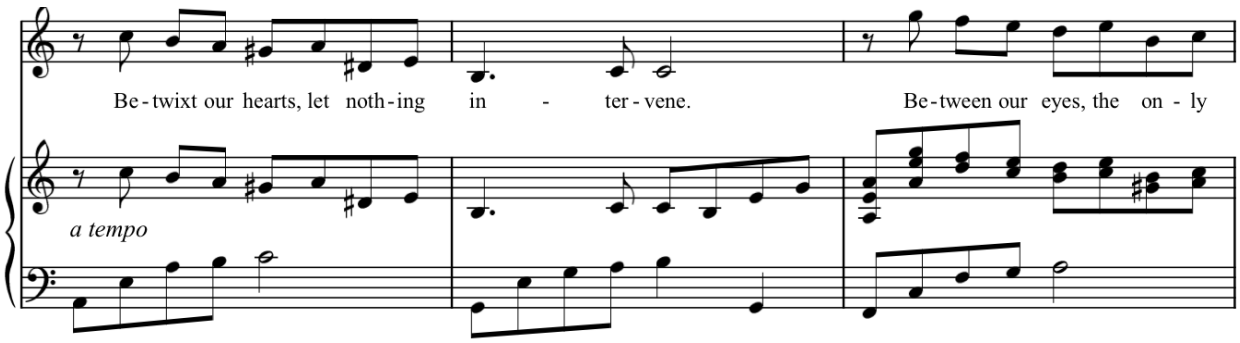

Figure 14. "Moonfall" from Holmes's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* mm. 27-29

In addition, several phrases tend to sit in the upper passaggio of a treble voice (Figure 15), an issue which might be mitigated by shifting keys. Due to the expansive range of the song, though, this may result in other pitches of the piece resting outside a useable range for younger voices.

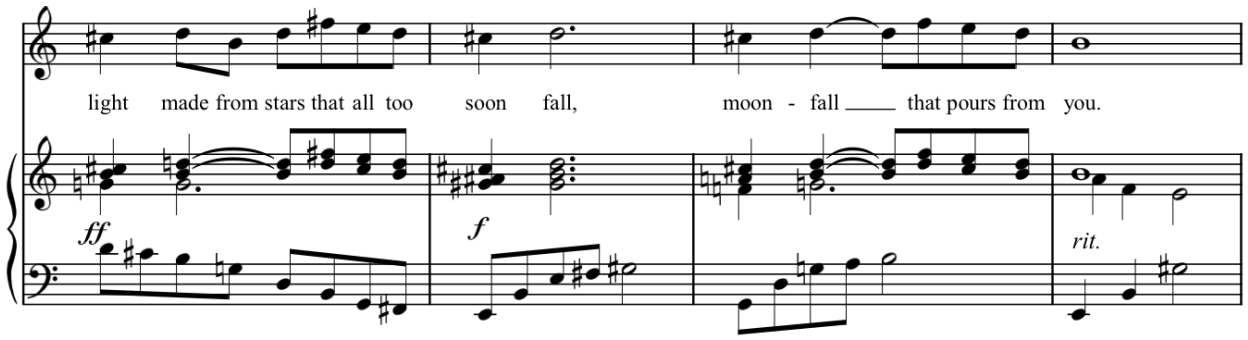

Figure 15. "Moonfall" from Holmes's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, mm. 23-26

Because classically trained singers dedicate much time to register blending, and because this song is closely adjacent to the classical style, this solo is particularly well-suited to a classical voice. As a lesser-known work that reflects skill in both musical theatre and classical singing, it would be an excellent piece for a capable singer to include in an audition package.

"Unusual Way" from *Nine* (1982)- Maury Yeston: Lower-Range Legit Repertoire

Far more successful on Broadway than *Phantom*, Yeston's *Nine* won five different Tony awards. Yet, with its most recent revival occurring in 2003, many of its solos are less familiar to today's young singers and, therefore, audition panels. Reflective of Yeston's classical

background, “Unusual Way,” sung by Claudia, an actress from France, is an excellent crossover piece for a classical singer.[73]

Unlike the previous two high voice solos, this selection is best suited for a lower treble voice. With a range that spans from G#$_3$-E$_5$ in the original key, the tessitura of this piece dictates its need for a lower voice—the solo tends to sit at or below A$_4$ throughout, with frequent dips below the staff. Intended to be sung in a legit style, though, this solo is well suited to a classical mezzo-soprano who is comfortable using chest voice.

Additional challenges, and places to demonstrate musical skill, occur throughout the piece. One recurring difficulty is the relative lack of support from the accompaniment—though most chords are well outlined, the accompaniment does not typically double the melody directly, sometimes even sounding dissonant to it (Figure 16).

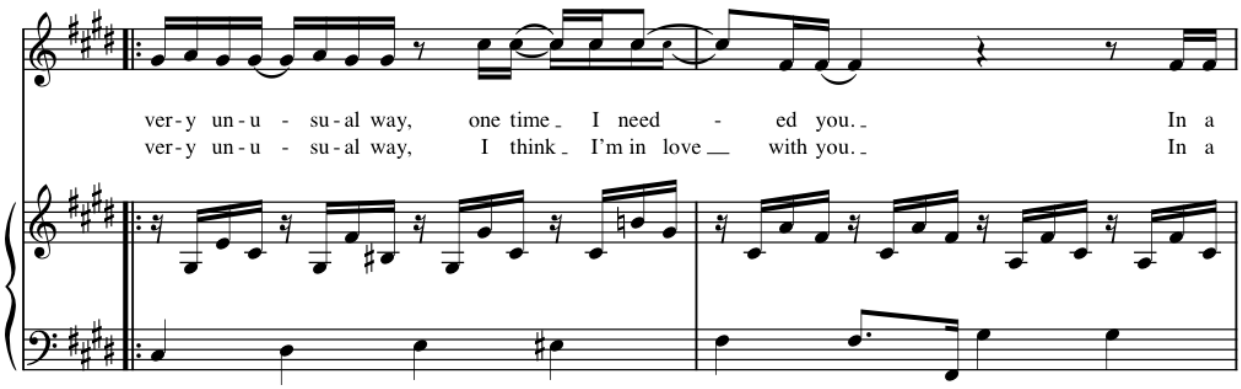

Figure 16. "Unusual Way" from Yeston's *Nine*, mm. 3-4

With the accompaniment moving in constant arpeggiations, it is imperative that the singer demonstrate the ability to maintain independence on their own melodic line, as well as comfort in moving flexibly through sixteenth note rhythms that reflect speech patterns, without losing tempo.

[73] Maury Yeston, “Unusual Way,” Musicnotes.com, accessed April 13, 2025, https://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtd.asp?ppn=MN0076102.

A final challenge, but equally impressive opportunity, is the dramatic portrayal of this solo. Yeston describes the selection as "…an extraordinarily revealing and almost embarrassing song. It's a different and very hard song to sing because it's a real song."[74] "Unusual Way" is sung by Claudia as she realizes the impact that Guido—the show's main character—has upon her, but that she must let him go. Especially for a young singer who may not have yet experienced these emotions, expressing them authentically may prove difficult. Indeed, even the composer details the difficulty in portraying the heartbreak in this piece, and how taxing it can on the performer.[75] However, for a singer capable of portraying these complex emotions, "Unusual Way" offers a showcase for both the classical voice and the singer's acting abilities.

"The Simple Joys of Maidenhood" from *Camelot* (1960)- Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner: Humorous Legit Repertoire

Though "The Simple Joys of Maidenhood" is a well-known and frequently performed musical theatre selection, it is an excellent choice for the classical singer in an audition setting—and included in this document—because it is a rare example of a legit selection that allows for the demonstration of comedic acting chops. Considered "…the heirs apparent to the Rodgers and Hammerstein tradition," Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe continued the standards established by the Golden Age duo, including classically-influenced music requiring trained singers.[76] The collaborators' emphasis on humor is evident q in all three of their major shows: *Brigadoon*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Camelot*, with prominent comedy-infused solos in each. "Simple Joys" is sung by the young Guenevere, who laments her inevitable fate of marriage and monarch

[74] Maury Yeston, interview by Liane Hansen, *Weekend Edition Sunday,* NPR, June 8, 2003.
[75] Yeston and Hansen.
[76] Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears, "The Successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein from the 1940s to the 1960s," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 3rd ed., ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2017), 209.

duties. An age-appropriate solo for the auditioning undergraduate, this solo offers opportunities for the singer to demonstrate a variety of vocal colors, and, especially, acting chops.[77]

Several features keep this selection suitable for a younger undergraduate. The solo begins with an introduction reflective of the recitative-aria structure familiar to a classical singer—an excellent learning occasion to explore the development of operatic structures in historical musical theatre. Like recitative, this portion of the solo allows for some flexibility in rhythms, with mostly open chords in the accompaniment below. However, by the arrival of the "aria" portion of the solo, the singer's melody is completely doubled by the accompaniment. This melody generally sits on the staff and moves in easy intervals or stepwise motion (Figure 17).

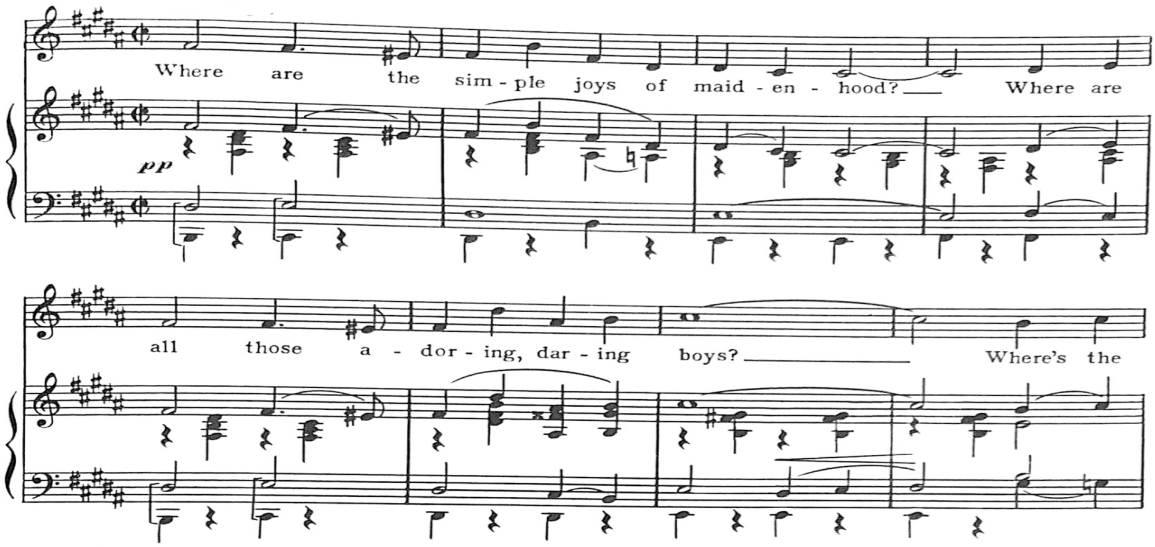

Figure 17. "The Simple Joys of Maidenhood" from Lerner and Loewe's *Camelot*, mm. 87-94

Likewise, the melody is repetitive, the rhythms are not complex, and the range of the piece never extends beyond an octave and a third, mostly sitting in the middle of the staff throughout. Musically, the piece is easily suitable for a young singer, which allows for greater focus upon the dramatic expression of the piece. With humorous expression allowing for the

[77] Frederick Loewe, "The Simple Joys of Maidenhood" from *Camelot*, in *The Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology—Volume I: Soprano*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1987), 38-46.

release of tension in the body, as explored previously, "Simple Joys" makes for an excellent piece for beginning auditioners as they gain comfort as acting singers in front of a panel.

Part IV: Musical Theatre Solos to Address Classical-Specific Development Needs

In the final section of this paper, I compile solos that might assist a teacher in simultaneously addressing the needs of classical singing while working on musical theatre. This section begins with works that address dramatic necessities of opera that may extend beyond the typical demands of the undergraduate classical studio, such as how to initially approach recitative. To conclude the section, I will explore musical theatre repertoire that directly addresses classical vocal inefficiencies in an approachable way.

"Princess" from *A Man of No Importance* (2002)- Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens: Theatrical Skills Training through Accent

Comfort and proficiency in speaking and singing in various dialects or accents are common traits in musical theatre. In the selections already explored, several might call for the use of accented English ("To Keep My Love Alive," "The Simple Joys of Maidenhood," and "Unusual Way" are possibilities). Since opera is often sung in a foreign language, less thought is given to the accent in which it is performed. However, especially in American opera, the use of dialects and accents has become a more prominent feature in accurately depicting characters and setting. For instance, an Appalachian dialect is indicated by the libretto of Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*: lines such as "ain't it a pretty night," or "look at all them stars… the longer y' look, the more y' see" provide distinct direction for the singer.[78] Another example of opera arias that require a singer to use an accent or dialect include "I want magic" from Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and "This Journey" from Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*.

[78] Horner Sutherland, 14.

Musical theatre repertoire, then, can introduce performing in an accent different than a singer's own, while using music better suited to a young singer. One lesser-known musical requiring comfort with an accent is *A Man of No Importance*, with music by Stephen Flaherty, lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, and a book by Terrence McNally. Based on the 1994 film, the musical depicts the struggle and desire of the director of an Irish theatre group to produce the play *Salome*, despite backlash from the church at which the show would be hosted. "Princess" is sung by Adele, a young woman new to the theatre group, as she considers the director's offer to play Salome.[79]

The music includes a light Irish flavor, most apparent in the orchestrated accompaniment, but the vocal melody includes some use of syncopation that reflects a folk feel (Figure 18).

[79] Stephen Flaherty, "Princess," Musicnotes.com, accessed June 10, 2025, https://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtd.asp?ppn=MN0044971&srsltid=AfmBOorZzvUeTKPlh4Ay_99-3BFVzFdEpdDLl4GiAJ89wn054FR0vGKp.

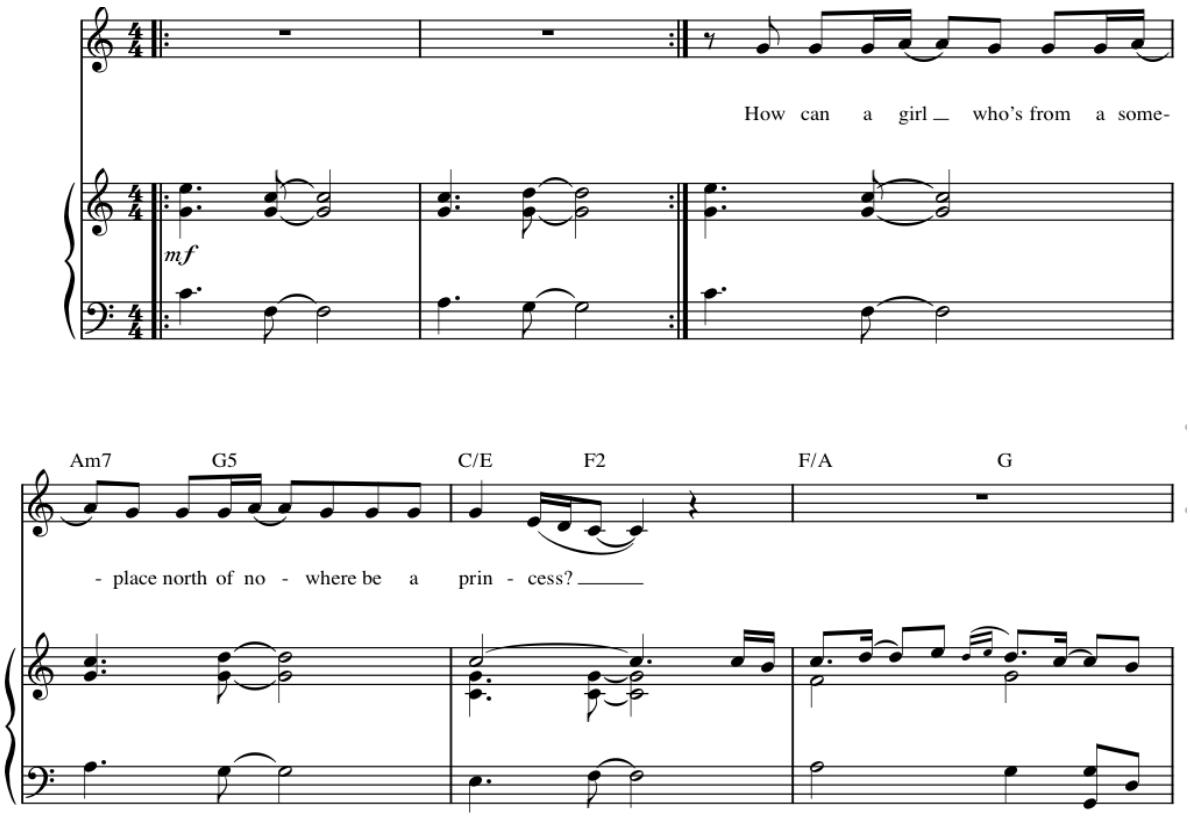

Figure 18. "Princess" from Flaherty and Ahrens's *A Man of No Importance*, mm. 1-6

Combined with some sudden phrases leading into mode mixture, the music is not beginner-level; however, because the melody is repetitive and spans only a small range (exactly an octave, until a brief departure in the final phrase), it is certainly achievable for an undergraduate singer. Less complex music allows for greater focus upon the text, and, most importantly, the use of Irish accent. More challenging than the familiar Southern dialect frequently used in opera, this solo provides a singer with a unique occasion to develop a skillset and process for singing in accents through approachable and unique musical theatre repertoire.

"He Plays the Violin" from *1776* (1969)- Sherman Edwards: An Introduction to Recitative

The study of recitative, and, especially, how to approach this unique phenomenon to classical music, is a difficult topic that may extend beyond the time constraints of the undergraduate studio. Just as it is beneficial to the undergraduate to integrate acting and

expression study into repertoire, integrating some study of recitative into a young student's repertoire gives them a strong foundation as they dedicate more time to opera arias outside of the studio and after undergraduate studies. Often, arias with recitative may be too difficult for a young voice to sing, leading to a lack of exposure to the style. By studying musical theatre solos that reflect operatic structures and being given dedicated instruction on how to approach the recitative-like sections, a young voice can still benefit from the learning process without studying music that exceeds their current abilities.

Many, if not all, of the repertoire examples explored in this document may easily serve a purpose outside of the category in which I analyze them. For example, "The Simple Joys of Maidenhood" could also act as an excellent introduction to the study of operatic recitative. However, to continue to expand the body of repertoire of a new instructor of musical theatre literature, another selection to consider for this purpose is "He Plays the Violin" from *1776*.[80] A tale of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence, the musical centers on Abigail and John Adams. In this scene, John has asked Martha Jefferson how she managed to fall in love with the uncommunicative Thomas, and she sings her reply to him.

Compared to "Simple Joys," this solo provides greater distinction between sections. The style of the accompaniment starkly contrasts from the introduction to the main body of the solo: as in operatic recitative, the introduction to this solo is underscored only by block chords, allowing a singer complete freedom in the pacing and rhythms of the sung text (Figure 19).

[80] Sherman Edwards, "He Plays the Violin," Musicnotes.com, accessed April 12, 2025, https://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtd.asp?ppn=MN0107644.

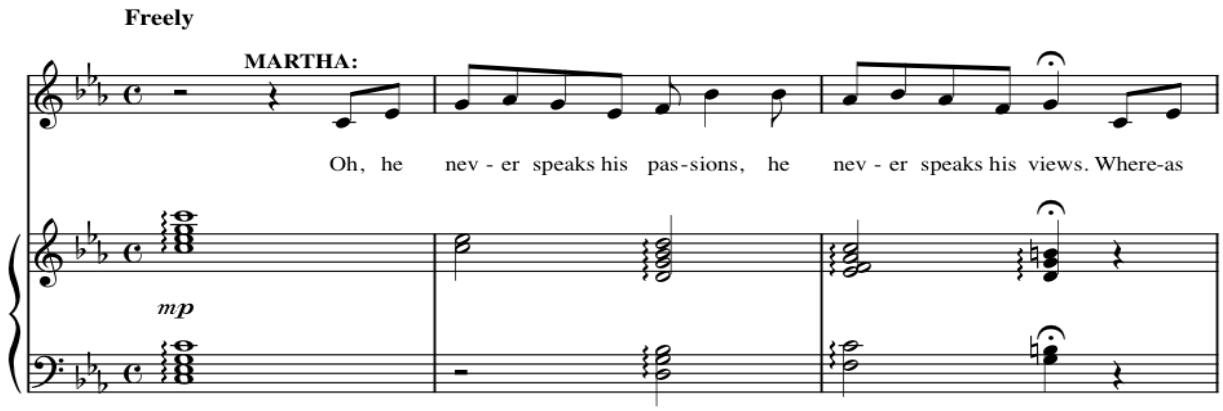

Figure 19. "He Plays the Violin" from Edwards's *1776*, mm. 1-3

An instructor can guide a student to learn this section in the same steps as they would instruct the recitative of Handel or Mozart by speaking the text on the written rhythms, speaking the text naturally, singing the text on written rhythms, then singing as one would speak them naturally, and so on. Without the barrier of a foreign language, the concept of natural speech rhythms as approximated with musical notation can be made clear and accessible to a young student; then, the future process of learning operatic recitative becomes less frightening and more systematic.

Aside from the concept of recitative, "He Plays the Violin" also offers an opportunity to work on other vocal issues common in a younger singer. For instance, the song repeats the word "heigh" on held pitches that tie to a descending pitch on each repetition of the refrain. Frequently, young students struggle with the correct navigation of such a diphthong, especially when moving pitches. With its frequent repetition, this piece offers the instructor and student the opportunity to focus on the [a] vowel—or the first vowel sound of the [ai] diphthong—and put it into muscle memory. This concept can then directly apply to classical English-language art song and aria.

"Once Upon a Dream" from *Jekyll and Hyde* (1990)- Frank Wildhorn: Addressing Hyperphonation

Chapter 2 explored some of the ways in which musical theatre literature, because of its unique traits, might be used to address classical vocal inefficiencies—perhaps, in some cases, better than classical repertoire could. One such inefficiency that can be particularly well-served by musical theatre literature is hyper phonation, or an excess of laryngeal mechanism activity resulting in a pressed or tight vocal tone. As previously stated, pedagogues such as McKinney and William Vennard agree that one possible method of addressing this inefficiency is to, for a short time, introduce the *opposite* fault.[81] In this case, explicitly encouraging a breathy tone can assist a singer in actively reducing the activity of their laryngeal muscles. Ideally, when used purposefully and carefully, exploring both extremes can help a singer settle in the middle: balanced phonation.

Rarely does classical literature call for purposeful breathiness in vocal tone. Musical theatre, on the other hand, values expression above vocal beauty, resulting in many solos that call for a breathy tone to convey despair, wistfulness, bashfulness, and so on. Because of the character's personality and situation, "Once Upon a Dream" calls for a breathy tone, and, therefore, would make an excellent solo for a student struggling to relax the laryngeal mechanism.

Jekyll and Hyde is based on the well-known story by Robert Louis Stevenson, and contains many popular solos from its two main female characters. Lucy, a prostitute, sings music and uses vocal tone that convey the hardship of her life and her internal strength: her solos (such as "Someone Like You") are power ballads requiring a full high belt. Emma, who is Jekyll's fiancée and the daughter of a wealthy, caring member of parliament, has music that reflects her elegance, purity, and kindness—her solos are generally sung with a lighter timbre, edging

[81] McKinney, 92.

towards legit over belt sound. “Once Upon a Dream” is sung by Emma as she realizes Jekyll, due to the influence of Hyde, is pulling away from her; thus, the vocal tone should convey sadness, hopelessness, and melancholy as she reflects on her past dreams.[82]

Musically, the simple, sparse accompaniment allows a singer to sing with a lighter, quieter tone without feeling like more sound needs to be produced to be heard (Figure 20).

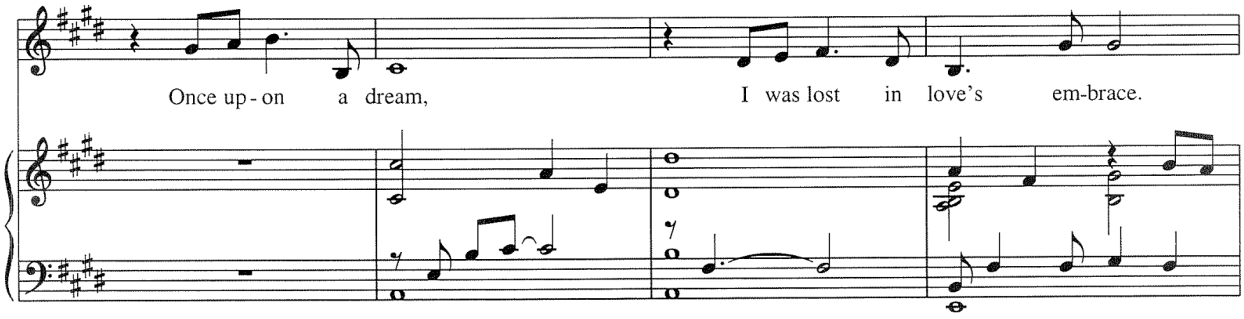

Figure 20. "Once Upon a Dream" from Wildhorn's *Jekyll and Hyde*, mm. 11-14

A legato tempo and longer rhythmic durations allow for full, slow breaths, further encouraging general body relaxation. Likewise, a general emphasis on back vowels (the [ə] and [a] sounds repeated many times in the phrase “once upon a dream”) fulfills another “corrective procedure” for hyperfunctional phonation suggested by McKinney.[83] Lastly, a simple, repetitive melodic line and a small range of a ninth make the music easily achievable for a young singer, a student more likely to struggle with this type of vocal inefficiency.

“One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man” from *Wonderful Town* (1953)—Betty Comden, Adolph Green, and Leonard Bernstein: Discovering the Modal Voice

The connection of speech to singing is increasingly studied, especially in musical theatre, with its basis on the expression of text. However, in recent years, more research has been performed on the connection of the health and vibrancy of the speaking (or modal) voice to the

[82] Frank Wildhorn, “Once Upon a Dream” from *Jekyll and Hyde*, in *The Singer’s Musical Theatre Anthology—Volume III: Soprano*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leaonard, 2000), 61-63.
[83] McKinney, 92.

singing voice, both in modal pitch range and far above it. Spivey and Saunders Barton explore the concept in depth in Chapter 3 of *Cross-Training: A Balancing Act*, entitled "The Balancing Act of Registration and Resonance." They conclude that:

> The goal of any singer is to build a strong "core" modal voice out of which the extended range blossoms. The metaphor of a tree with strong roots is useful. Leaves and branches can't survive without a trunk and roots…we encourage women to release into that chest extension below the primary passaggio between E4 and G4 as a foundation for the "building" above it.[84]

The easiest way to develop modal voice—a singer's speaking voice or sung pitches within that range—is to dedicate efforts to a student's speech. Therefore, Bernstein's musical theatre output may be particularly well-suited to promote this endeavor. Indeed, Laird states that "[s]peech may, in fact, be the single most important influence on rhythms in Bernstein's vocal music." Bernstein himself, when asked about his inspiration in setting vocal music, replied simply, "…the vernacular. The way Americans talk."[85] "One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man" is particularly speech-based in that it incorporates not only an accurate reflection of speech rhythms, but also sections requiring actual speech, and a tessitura that sits, for the majority of the song, in the modal range of a treble voice (Figure 21).[86]

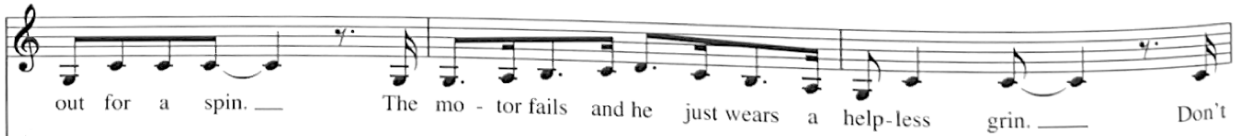

Figure 21. "One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man" from Bernstein, Comden, and Green's *Wonderful Town,* mm. 6-8

"One Hundred Easy Ways" is sung by Ruth, who has just moved to New York City with her sister. During the song she humorously laments her inability to find a mate while her sister

[84] Spivey and Saunders Barton, 43-44.
[85] Laird and Lin, 31.
[86] Leonard Bernstein, "One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man" from *Wonderful Town*, in *Bernstein Theatre Songs: Medium/Low Voice*, ed. Richard Walters (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 2010), 176-181.

dates with ease. Communicating the text is essential in this piece—neither the melodic line nor the accompaniment is particularly stimulating, with the melody moving by step up and down a scale for most of the piece. All interest in the piece lies in its comedy, found in the text written by Comden and Green. Because of the simplicity of the music and the exceedingly low tessitura of the song, along with the actual use of spoken asides in each verse, it is essential that the singer approach it with speech from the start. Thus, the song provides an opportunity for a singer to develop chest register through easy connection to speech, for deliberate work on diction and enunciation, for dedication to acting and comedic timing, and for the benefits of vocal cross-training on the modal voice to extend into the rest of the singer's range in the future.

"The Worst Pies in London" from *Sweeney Todd* (1979)- Stephen Sondheim: Patter for Reducing Tension

As this repertoire list began, so also must it end with Sondheim, whose works have such an impact upon singers of all genres. "The Worst Pies in London" is a well-known, eagerly performed solo; however, because of its belted style, it is not as frequently performed by primarily classical singers. With Sondheim's careful crafting, though, the piece is particularly well-suited to a classical singer; moreover, it offers several opportunities to address vocal inefficiencies in a delightfully comedic package.[87]

Sung by Nellie Lovett as she bemoans the failure of her pie shop, "Worst Pies" is an example of a Sondheim monologue song. Filled with syllables that never stop and a spiraling tempo to match Lovett's agitation, the greatest challenge in this solo is the diction. In it also lies an excellent opportunity: as explored in Chapter 2, one method to address tension in the jaw and articulators—the mouth, tongue, and lips—is through the use of patter song. With the verses

[87] Stephen Sondheim, "The Worst Pies in London" from *Sweeney Todd*, in *The Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology—Volume I: Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, ed. Richard Walters (Milwaukee: Hal Leaonard, 1987), 228-234.

containing up to fifteen syllables per measure at a tempo of 112 beats per minute (Figure 22), the articulators cannot make it through the solo with any kind of tension.

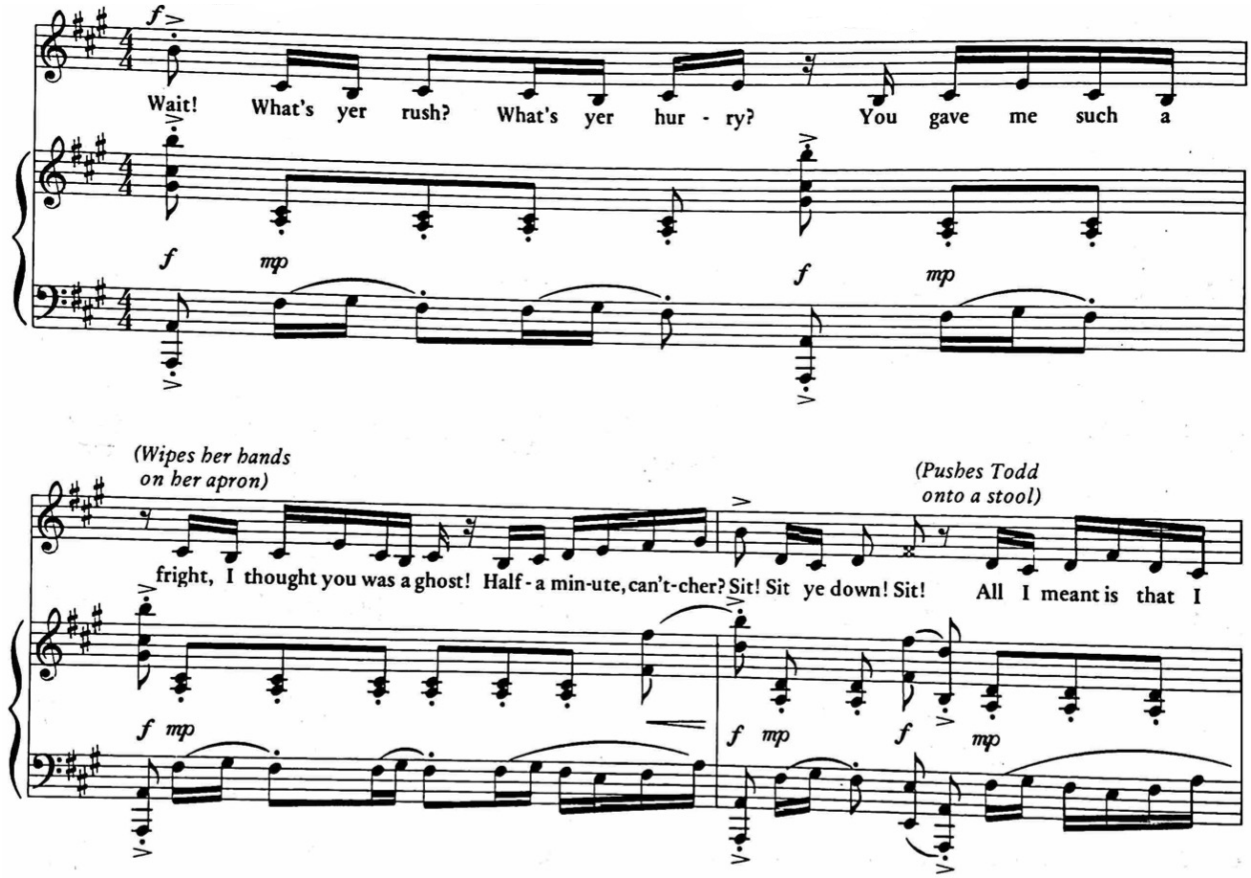

Figure 22. "The Worst Pies in London" from Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd, mm. 1-3*

Second, a classical singer is assisted in discovering a forward, bright sound appropriate to musical theatre because of the nature of the Cockney accent used by Lovett. Though the song extends through a wide range, the forward, more horizontal nature of this accent helps a classical singer discover a "mix belt"—a forward, TA dominant sound—without excess effort or thought. Thus, this selection is a good one to explore musical theatre style and various vocal colors for a classical singer with less experience in the genre.

Lastly, Sondheim's careful vocal setting works to develop register navigation. Most melodic lines of the solo move in step, or small jump, up and down a scale. The range of the solo

is fairly substantial—in the original key, from $B\flat_3$ to E_5. With these lines moving constantly in and out of all registers of the voice, a singer must have flexibility to keep a consistent sound in all parts of the range. Dedicated practice of this song can certainly result in greater comfort and familiarity in shifting between vocal registers.

Musically, dramatically, and textually, "Worst Pies" is not a solo recommended for a beginning undergraduate singer. The solo contains many instances of chromaticism, altered scale degrees, and singer-driven key changes, all at a breakneck tempo, while sung in an accent, and, even in a recital or audition setting, requiring great physicality and movement from the singer. Yet, for a seasoned classical singer looking to explore musical theatre repertoire, it offers distinct opportunities for vocal development while also being extremely musically fulfilling—and greatly rewarding with inevitable laughs from an audience.

Conclusion

Anthony Freud, former general director of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, stated, "[a]n opera company is a cultural service provider, and if at the end of the day we have attracted people to set foot in our building when they never attended anything here before, that is an end in itself…[w]e have become a better opera company because we have produced these musicals."[88] More and more members of the classical music community have begun to reconsider the view of musicals as a "second-rate" art form to opera. This is not to discount the beauty of the operatic art form, nor to think it should be replaced by musical theatre. There is room and need for both genres, and for singers of both genres. Still, it is evident that the genre of musical theatre contains a rich body of work that is both acceptable for classically trained singers to perform and beneficial to their development as flexible, marketable singers. As teachers, it is our job to adequately prepare our students for careers in vocal music—whatever that career might look like. If we limit ourselves to instruction of art song and aria, we miss out on an exciting, engaging, and pedagogically beneficial opportunity to train our students in musical theatre repertoire, not only aiding in their vocal development, but also giving us an opportunity to become more flexible, knowledgeable pedagogues in the process.

[88] Anthony Freud, "Opera's Broadway Overtures," interview by Brian Kellow, *OPERA America* (Fall 2015): 23.

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