

## **TAKE CHARGE!**

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## **WELCOME!**

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## **IN THIS ISSUE --- THE POWER OF TEN**

Ever noticed how magazine covers are always barking numbers at you? “Seven signs you may be losing your job!” “Six ways to break up with your hairdresser!” “Guys tell their top ten sexual fantasies!” Numbers have power, and they get attention. This month, *Take Charge!* is jumping on the numbers bandwagon with ten great tips, signs, and suggestions in every article.

\*In the last issue, Cindy explained why image is important in marketing yourself for opera jobs and talked about questionable strategies. This month, she offers **Ten Terrific (and Free) Ways to Market Yourself for Opera and Concert Gigs**, plus **Ten Tremendous Marketing Tips for Non-Opera Work**.

\*Once again, straight-shooting Tytania tells it like it is in **Top Ten Signs You May Be in the Wrong Fach**.

\* Just in time for that busy fall audition season, organizational expert Anna K. Cox-Havron offers her **Top Ten Principles of Getting (and Staying) Organized**.

\*Also in this issue, our regular features, including Idea of the Month, Letter to the Editor, news, a calendar of events, and more!

Enjoy.

### **ARTICLES:**

Ten Terrific (and Free) Ways to Market Yourself for Opera and Concert Gigs  
by Cindy Sadler

Ten Tremendous Marketing Tips for Non-Opera Work  
by Cindy Sadler

*Je Suis Tytania*: Top Ten Signs You May Be in the Wrong Fach  
by Tytania Strange

Top Ten Principles of Getting (and Staying) Organized by Anna Cox-Havron

## **REGULAR FEATURES:**

Letters to the Editor

Idea of the Month: Create your Top Ten Role list!

*When's the last time?*

News

Calendar

Parting Thought

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## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Dear Cindy,

I cannot thank you enough for empowering young singers like myself with so much important knowledge! I am a young mezzo-soprano and I just came back from a summer program. I was surprised to learn that many singers have wonderful instruments, but not enough information on how to get started on a career. I did not go to a music school and realized early on that if I was going to be able to compete with people from all the big name conservatories, I needed to have a business plan. So, this year I took a lot of time organizing the business side of my career. In fact, so much of what I now know about marketing comes from either meeting you directly (we had a private consultation a year ago in Boston; I was a soprano then), through your monthly newsletter or through research by way of your website. I took your advice to heart and now have my first contract with a local opera company! It is not a big role or anything, but it gets me one step closer to my goal for this year AND I get to sing! I am hired to sing in the production of *Suor Angelica* and scenes from *Porgy and Bess* (I'll be singing Bess) for this company's annual spring concert. I am also organizing my own opera scenes concert with local young professionals! So, I am constantly working on things, even if my calendar is not exactly full just yet. :) I finally feel like a young professional, rather than a student with potential. So THANK YOU! Please know that your hard work is so appreciated. Thank you!

Sincerely,  
Zhanna

Hi Zhanna,

How nice to hear from you again! Of course I remember you from Boston. Congratulations on your first professional role. How exciting! Brava to you for putting together your own scenes concert, as well. Simply by keeping busy singing, and establishing relationships with opera companies, you are building career momentum as well as your resume. And I am thrilled that you found our consultation helpful.

Thank you for writing to share your story. It's important for singers to hear each other's stories and be encouraged by other people's success.

Wishing you all the best of luck,

Cindy

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Dear Cindy,

How DID you get to be so smart? Girl, you're terrific. Your newsletter also touched on two things that really got my attention this month: one, that suggestion that a GD would like to have dinner with you instead of his family or friends to discuss a job after hearing your audition. If you are the next Pavarotti maybe, but otherwise? So much of the marketing advice for singers I read makes one feel exhausted. When are people supposed to practice or 'commune with their art'?

Two, the Netrebko CD which you mentioned (*What Kind of Car Are You?*, June 2005) was the most offensive, misguided thing I've ever seen. Dubbed! I won't go into it if you've seen it, but whoever is advising that gorgeous, talented singer is a disgrace and if that's 'marketing' my question is "for whom"?

In one production, I was asked to sing a duet with lots of High B's while on all fours with the tenor sitting on my back playing the violin. On my way home from rehearsal I thought, "would Galli Curci do this on a High B? Would Caballe?" and the next day I told the director I respectfully declined to do this bit of staging. He was disappointed/chagrined and I felt liberated. Even in the name of marketing or putting yourself out there or being a good soldier there are times when NO is the correct answer. No?

Name on File

Dear Diva,

Thanks for your letter! I love to hear tales of singer empowerment like your story about reclaiming your staging from the director. Singers need to hear true-life stories of their colleagues standing up for themselves and WINNING.

I did see one of the Anna Netrebko videos (*Rusalka*). To my taste, it wasn't trashy so much as boring and stupid and well... rather unflattering. I didn't find it sexy at all. I agree with you that it does nothing to advance the cause of classical music; perhaps it advances Anna Netrebko as a popular artist, because that's certainly what it seems aimed at doing. But it does illustrate my point --- you don't advertise yourself to an audience of purist hardcore opera buffs (which would most likely include many of the people who are doing the hiring) as you would to a more general audience, such as might be hiring you to sing at their wedding, on a cruise ship, or for a cabaret act.

Cindy

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Hi Cindy,

I'm wondering if you can assist me with a question I have regarding negotiating a fee.

A few months back I was offered a concert job with a company out of state. I received an email offer at that time with "a fee offer to be forthcoming". The fee offer came in the contract that I just received in the mail.

This company does not have a huge budget, but I will making an effort to fly there in order to do this concert (airfare is included). I feel that what they offered me is a little low, and I'd like to negotiate a higher fee (without being greedy, it is my first time working for this company and I don't want to put a bad taste in anyone's month - but I also don't want to lose money.) This job came about via recommendation, but I don't know the director. Can you give me some hints on how to negotiate this? Any advice is helpful.

Thanks,

K.

Dear K.,

First, congrats on the job offer!

Second, it helps to have a bottom line and some information.

Is it going to cost you money to do this job, and can you afford to lose money? If you're not losing money, is the amount you're making worth what you're getting out of the experience? How does this offer compare to other similar contracts you've done? Do you have any way of finding out what other singers are being paid?

I have a bottom line --- a minimum fee beneath which it is not feasible or desirable for me to work. If an offer comes in that is under that, I weigh it against how much I want the job for other reasons (just need the work, want to try out the role, want to get my foot in the door, etc.). Sometimes it's worth it to take it even if it's less money than I want. Other times, it's not. Regardless, you can't go into a negotiation without a clear idea of what you WANT to get and what you will SETTLE for. Also, you should have in mind some non-monetary compensation they could offer you, that would add value to the contract, such as housing if they aren't providing it, a rental car, another role later in the season or next season, the opportunity to do concerts or master classes while in town, the ability to come a few days later, etc.

So. Once you've established that, what you do is pick up the phone and call whoever is making the offer. You tell them that you are THRILLED that they

want you to sing with them; you're dying to do this role, you're so excited, blah blah blah. Unfortunately, the fee is quite a bit lower than what you're used to getting and what with rent, coaching fees, etc. you stand to lose money by taking it. You wonder what they might be able to do for you.

Don't give them a dollar amount first if you can avoid it --- let them make you an offer and work from there. If they don't come up with a little more money immediately or if they want you to tell them how much you want, then be prepared with a figure that's a bit higher than what you will settle for. That way they can work you down and feel they're getting a deal (although on occasion, I've had people capitulate outright, which usually means I didn't ask for enough!).

If they say, "We're sorry, that's all we have in the budget," then you can try for some of the add-on compensation. Whatever you do, keep reiterating that you really want to work with them and ask what they can do for you. If they won't budge --- well then, you've already decided on your bottom line and you know whether you will take their original offer or decline it. Be calm and businesslike about it. No one really LIKES doing this but it's something you have to learn, and you have to go in knowing that you have a worthwhile and valuable product that is worth a certain amount.

Good luck! Let me know how it turns out.

Cindy

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*Have a question, comment, rant or rave? Email Cindy at [info@thebusinessofsinging.com](mailto:info@thebusinessofsinging.com) with LETTER TO EDITOR in the subject heading.*

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## **TEN TERRIFIC (AND FREE!) WAYS TO MARKET YOURSELF FOR OPERA AND CONCERT GIGS**

**By Cindy Sadler**

1. **Brand yourself.** No, I don't mean with hot irons (keep your kinks to yourself, please). I mean, create a unified image of yourself as an artist and present that whenever you are in contact with potential employers. Get out every piece of material you send to opera companies. Make sure that you are using the same fonts, colors, letterhead, and type of paper on every single document: resume, bio, cover letter, review sheet, headshot. Your website should reflect this same look. Decide whether you will be known by your full name, nickname, or a stage name --- then stick to it and use that professional name in all your dealings. You can also brand on a more subtle level, through the arias you choose to present at auditions, to the way you describe yourself in your bio. The point is, you don't just want to toss everything you've got into the wind and see what people pick up. Create a cohesive overall presentation to show people who you are and make it stick in their minds. You can tinker with it until you've got it right.

**2. Establish yourself as an expert in a niche.** Maria Callas made a name for herself as a champion of rarely performed bel canto works, bringing many of them back into the repertoire. Cecilia Bartoli has made a career recording 18<sup>th</sup> century song and singing Rossini, Mozart and Hadyn roles. Baritone Jubilant Sykes has carved a niche for himself singing almost exclusively concert and oratorio works. Find out what really suits your voice and your temperament, and become an expert in it --- or better yet, THE expert. Write articles, post on forums, publish material (including sound clips) on your website, and most importantly, get out there and SING your niche material every chance you get.

**3. Keep in touch by email.** While emails are an informal method of communication and should not be used for your initial contact with an opera company, they're great for following up on audition requests or keeping contacts at the company apprised of your latest achievements. As my friend, director Marc Verzatt says, "Keep your name coming across their desk."

**4. Solicit testimonials.** When audience members approach you and tell you how much they enjoyed your performance, ask them to write a note to the general director! If you work with a composer who is happy with your work on his music, ask for a letter of recommendation. When I sang Effie Belle Tate in the second production ever of Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree*, I asked for (and received) a very gracious and complimentary "review" of my characterization. I send it to prospective employers as part of my review sheet!

**5. Know the top five most often produced roles in your Fach.** Don't wait until someone hires you to learn them ... you should be adding at least two new roles a year, period. Then find someplace to perform them --- any place. Invite critics, managers, conductors, opera company administrators, board members, regular folks --- any who will come. (While they're there, ask them to sign up on your email list). Companies are more likely to hire you if you have already done, or already know, the role.

**6. Schmooze.** Get to know the board members of the opera companies you're working for. Get to know the influential people at your church, work, charity organizations. Talk to strangers in elevators and on the subway (just the ones who don't look crazy). Let people know that you sing, and that you want to be paid to sing, and that you're available to sing.

**7. Coach** with people who are connected. Coach with conductors whenever you can. When one of them asks you what roles you'd like to sing, be ready to rattle off a list and speak knowledgeably about each one.

**8. Ask for work.** While you're at the opera house, doing a great job and making the admins happy, ask what they're doing in upcoming seasons and suggest yourself for roles ... in a charming manner, of course. Over drinks or dinner, perhaps.

**9. Referrals.** When you do get hired, and you know your client is happy with your work, ask them to refer you to *other* opera companies, especially companies that are doing the

same production you're working on now. Ask for letters of recommendations. Ask for phone calls.

**10. Sing really, really well.** It may sound glib, but the very best marketing you can do for yourself is to offer a truly spectacular product. If you rock, people will notice. To do this, you have to be willing to perform without fear. You have to be willing to own the stage. You have to be willing to be a star for that ten minutes you're in the audition room or for the three hours you're on stage. Perfect doesn't matter. Thrilling performances are rarely perfect. A little danger, a little risk, a little attitude --- these are what make performances thrilling and what make you a spectacularly marketable singer.

*Cindy Sadler is a professional opera singer, consultant, teacher, and writer. Her upcoming engagements include Zita in Gianni Schicchi with Opera Santa Barbara, and Bertha in Barber of Seville with Austin Lyric Opera. She recently appeared at the Astoria Music Festival in concert with Cynthia Lawrence and Clayton Brainerd, and survived her first efforts in administration as Executive Director of the Astoria Music Academy. Cindy is also writing a book to help pre-college singers and their parents understand how to choose the right school and get an education that will prepare them for performance careers.*

## **TEN TREMENDOUS MARKETING TIPS FOR NON-OPERA WORK**

If you're not strictly interested in opera/concert work, and more interested in getting any singing work you can, try these ten tips for marketing your act.

1. **Offer free samples.** Everybody likes free stuff, as long as it's not junk. One of the best ways to get people interested in your product is to offer a free sample. But it doesn't have to be something tangible! One of my first professional gigs ever was as a ringer in a church choir which was performing John Rutter's Requiem. The gig paid \$200, and that was a lot of money for a college student! Even though I came with a recommendation from a faculty member, the conductor was reluctant to hire me because he was afraid my large voice wouldn't blend with the choir. He hemmed and hawed, and I finally said to him, "Look. I'll come to your first rehearsal. If you don't like my voice, I'll go my merry way and you don't have to pay me a cent." Not only did he end up using me, but he later hired me as a soloist for other things.

I've also gotten highly lucrative wedding work by inviting brides and their families to church services in which I was singing solos. I received a role offer after singing at a charity fundraiser for my local Gilbert & Sullivan Society. So, if you're trying to get your foot in the door with a local venue, offer a free sample! Hand out mini-CDs with three songs on it, and your website URL plastered in large letters across the label. Who doesn't want a free CD? Sing a rehearsal for free, put on a mini-recital for a charity organization, perform at community events (always with business cards and CDs handy). You'd be surprised at the kinds of singing work you can pick up --- and where it can lead.

2. **List in every free directory you can find.** There are all kinds of online directories where you can list services for free. (My resources site is one of them)! It's a great way to pick up voice students, wedding and funeral work, parties and corporate events, and quirky little gigs you might not have thought of on your own. Try sites like [www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com) , [www.classifieds-for-brides.com](http://www.classifieds-for-brides.com), or [www.cruise-ship-jobs-directory.com](http://www.cruise-ship-jobs-directory.com) , and be sure to regularly re-post in order to bump your name to the top of the list. Post in industry-specific forums and directories as well --- if you offer entertainment for corporate events, for example. Post on wedding and entertainment forums (just google --- hundreds will come up). Use free classified ads on the Internet. If forum rules dictate no advertising, you can post as a "civilian" and frequently, but discreetly, reference your work. For example, if someone on a wedding forum asks a question about service music, you can answer, using a lead-in like, "In my experience as a professional wedding singer ...". And don't forget free online press releases! Sites like [www.pressweb.com](http://www.pressweb.com) will catalogue and distribute your press releases FREE.
3. **Prepare a one-minute demo.** When someone asks you what you do for a living, expresses interest in your singing, or gives you any sort of opening at all, be ready with a memorable, fun little demo of what you do. It should be an automatic response. Someone says, "Did I hear that you're a singer?" and without shame, you launch into your mini-demo or speech. Sing a brief phrase from your best party piece or theme song, chuckle self-deprecatingly, and say something like, "You've heard of 'will work for food'? Will sing for money!" Or rattle off your inventory. "You name it, I sing it! I do opera, concert, cruise ships, weddings, corporate events, and I have an awesome cabaret act with a full band. Here's my card. Do you know anyone who's looking for an entertainer?" Whatever you say, you want to invite interest and inquiry. You should also have a longer presentation prepared, in case someone is interested in more detail.
4. **Follow up.** Staying in touch with a potential client is an essential step to closing the deal and getting a gig. After your initial presentation, whether that is an audition or sending a materials packet, send a handwritten thank-you note within 48 hours. Make sure you call, email, or fax after a couple of weeks. See if there's anything else you can do to help them make a decision. Send little notes with news of your latest triumphs.
5. **Be seen.** Go to every concert you can in your community. Talk to the people around you at intermission. Go backstage afterwards to greet and congratulate the artists and the conductor. Tell everyone that you are a singer and what you do. Give 'em your one-minute demo. You never know what kind of connections you can make this way.
6. **Never turn down an opportunity to sing.** Particularly when you're getting your career off the ground or trying to break in a new idea or venture, you should sing pretty much whenever someone asks you to, as long as they're willing to give you a little something in return. It needn't be money. Your pastor wants you to do solos in church? Fine --- if he'll donate space for a recital later in the year. Aunt



Betty would like you to do a little concert for at her assisted living facility? You'll be glad to, if you can invite the general public, sign people up for your mailing list, and speak to the activities director about doing a regular, PAID program. The local coffee house is soliciting performers for their open mike night? You'll sing, if they'll let you pass the hat and sell your CD.

7. **Fusion, baby --- it's not just for science and cuisine!** Every time a new kid's movie is released, you can bet one of the big fast food chains is going to have related toys, drink cups emblazoned with the movie's characters, contests, and meal deals. And chances are, that restaurant's products are going to appear in the movie. This is an example of *fusion marketing* --- different companies advertising each other's product to the benefit of both. As a singer, trying to sell your voice lessons, concert series, or comedy opera act, you too can partner with related businesses! It can be something as simple as posting your fliers and business cards at local coffeehouses, public bulletin boards, schools, gift shops, museums, art galleries, nursing homes, music stores, or wedding dress shops, and taking some of their advertising materials in exchange to display in your home studio. It could be a more involved and formal partnership, such as arranging semi-annual concerts at a coffee shop or chic gift shop and then offering a free coffee or 10% off gift coupon with every 10 voice lessons purchased; while the coffee shop displays (and plays) your CD or the gift shop offers a bowl where people can drop their business cards to draw for a free voice lesson. Be creative and don't be afraid to approach non-traditional venues. As long as you can show your potential partner a significant benefit to working with you, you'll have their ear.
8. **Create a great "window display".** When you think about the typical storefront, you probably think about beautifully decorated shop windows showing off the store's merchandise in a tempting display. Singers don't have shop windows, but we DO have "storefronts". Your website is a prime example. So are any materials you send out to help you get jobs: from brochures to business cards to demo CDs. These should be spectacular and eye-catching. They should invite people to ask for more details. You want to invite a chance to educate potential clients about your product. And remember, the more people you can get to look at your "storefront", the more potential clients you have.
9. **Be available.** How can anybody hire you if they can't find you? In this era of cell phones, email, and websites, there's no excuse for not being easy to locate. If you travel a lot, get a cell phone with a national plan and use it as your primary contact. (No one should ever have to make more than one call to find you). If you don't already have one, get an email address that is yourname@yourservice.com and use it. No cutesy names --- this is business, and you want your email contact to be intuitive. Same goes for your domain name. It should be www.yourname.com (or your business name), and all your contact information should be prominently displayed on the site. You should also have downloadable press kits, sound clips, and lots of photos of you in action. Good graphics are more interesting than words!

**10. Develop a fan base and keep renewing it.** Singers often ignore the power of a fan base, because they think fans are only for stars. Not true! If you've been singing in public for any length of time, you probably have some fans. The nice old ladies who compliment you on your church solos, the folks who come up to you after your concerts and tell you how much your singing moved them, the stranger who stops you in the grocery store to say how much he enjoyed your show last weekend --- these are all fans. By developing and maintaining a following in the many different venues where you work, you are providing producers with a ready-made audience. Be available to your fans --- talk to them after performances and make it easy for them to get in touch with you via your website. Find out what they like most about your act! Refresh your material so longstanding fans will continue to patronize you, and ask them to bring their friends. Let them know when you'll be in their area. Do a little survey with them on your website and find out where else they like to go for entertainment --- these may be other possible venues for you, and other sources of new fans. Finally, be sure to ask your fans to communicate with producers on your behalf. Like the old advertisements used to say, "Ask for it by name!"

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**Idea of the Month: Create your own top ten roles list.** What's missing from your resume? What could you add this year? Next year? Five years from now? Target your top ten roles and make it your goal not only to learn each of them, but to find a performance venue and DO them --- at least one a year.

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## **JE SUIS TYTANIA: TOP TEN SIGNS YOU MAY BE IN THE WRONG FACH** **By Tytania Strange**

Another audition season is rapidly approaching, that special time when a black-hearted fiend's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of faching around. We all know how it goes, we practice a bunch of arias and we're convinced that we're suddenly Callas re-incarnated only without the emotional problems. Then, suddenly, the hard cold reality of fach descends and we go back to singing our bread and butter roles like sensible people. Unfortunately, we occasionally run into some snags along the way. The roles that we're "supposed to sing" or desperately desire to sing don't quite fit for some reason and suddenly fach is no friend of ours. So, without further ado, the top ten signs that you might be singing in the wrong fach:

1. You claim that you're "bored" with the top ten roles in your fach and therefore you should not be expected to sing them at auditions- even though everyone else somehow gets over it.

Look, we all get a little tired of standard rep, but it's not as if there is any shortage of it. Most of us run an endless rotation of top ten arias, because if we don't offer them, your average audition panel is smart enough to ask why. When almost every aria from your fach's signature series is pure misery in music every time you have to sing it, it's time to ask yourself if this rep is right for you.

2. You're singing arias from roles that you could never get through in a live performance, but you're sure that you'll grow into them someday.

Oh, we've all done this at one time or another. Remember school and the arias that would show our "potential"? The problem is that potential is a sort of negative equation. We're not showing who we are, we're showing off who we're not and that's never good. At best, people smile and put us off for a few more years, hoping we'll grow into the person we might be. At worst, we're taking a big old highlighter pen to point out potential weaknesses no one even thought of yet. If you can't sing the roles, then it's time to find a fach that suits the present you a bit better.

3. You have the notes, really, you just aren't comfortable actually singing them.

Okay, so this is a no-brainer. All the same, I've heard tons of singers saying that their teacher swears they are a (insert nitpicky voice classification here) --- they just can't quite manage to sing all those high/low/sustained notes consistently. Actually, singing all the notes kinda goes without saying in any opera role. If you're not comfortable with the range, don't beat yourself up, pick something that is comfortable now and save the fach-to-be for the day it becomes the fach-that-is.

4. Your audition list covers three different fachs, and you're the only one who hasn't noticed how schizo that is.

Repeat after me, we can sing it all, but do we really want to have to listen to it? When we're famous, we can sing everything and we'll get away with it. As aspiring singer-weeds, we have to stick to what we sing best. By definition, what we sing the best does not cover twenty different things. We have to narrow it down to one. When we list arias that cover too wide a spectrum of voice types, the listener has no idea what to do with us or how to cast us. Our professional package speaks volumes before we open our mouths to sing. We don't want it to say that we don't know what we're doing, or to leave too much ambiguity about the job we're hoping to be hired for.

5. You insist that your real voice type is something completely different from the rep you actually sing, because well, you're not being conceited, it's totally true!

No, I don't think you're conceited, just misguided. There are zillions of singers. If we're not singing the roles that are the best fit for our voices, we're doomed to be constantly edged out by singers who are playing their strengths. I'm not saying that we can't make choices within our fach that play up our other assets. I'm just saying that when we decide to stray outside of our comfort zone because of look, personality or whatever, we're up against a hundred others who have the look, personality, whatever and have voices that are far better suited to the roles we're competing for. Yeah, there are exceptions, but if you are one, you probably already know it.

6. People in real life aren't telling you what you want to hear, so you go to anonymous pixies on the internet who will.

As singers, we hear a lot of criticism. It's not easy to take. We're also very wrapped up in our roles and rep, because our instrument is a part of us. When the people closest to us are telling us things that we don't like to hear, it's tempting to shut them out in favor of an audience that is more accommodating. Unfortunately, people who haven't seen us or heard us are not the best judges of what is best for us. Before we start asking for anonymous help, we need to ask ourselves why we think we need it.

7. Anonymous pixies on the internet don't tell you what you want to hear, and you're pissed as Hell about that.

Let's face it kids, we all get emotional when people strike us close to where we live. It's hard not to get mad when people make suggestions that border on the ridiculous. It's easy to get angry when we're hearing unpleasant things that are true, or close to it. We can still be angry, but if a hundred people are telling us that we're behaving foolishly, we have to at least consider the possibility that they're right.

8. You have arias on your audition list that no one has ever asked for in an audition, despite having auditioned for just about everyone out there.

Auditors don't ask for arias at random. If we're bringing arias to auditions and no one wants to hear them, maybe there's a reason for that. It's a waste of our time and effort to be practicing and coaching music that no one wants to listen to, that's for certain. It's always wise to take a good long look at our little musical outcasts and ask why they're so unloved. Sometimes, no one wants to hear them because we shouldn't be offering them.

9. You had to make up a fach.

I like to think of this as the "zwischen" syndrome. If we're not imagining "zwischen" where it was never meant to be used, we're hyphenating fachs or adding qualifiers. We're "full" this and "with extension" that. That's not to say that voices fit into neat little categories. Most voices aren't a perfect fit for any single fach. All the same, it's wise to keep-it-simple-stupid as much as possible, and that means letting go of the qualifiers and the hyphens and the frills and the misused German musical terms. Find the one real fach that fits the best and save the rest for water-cooler chat at rehearsals.

10. The fach system is evil and limiting and we should sing whatever we want!!!  
WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!!!!

Fach is not that bad. For one thing, most of us don't live in Germany and are not expected to adhere precisely to those lists. For another thing, fach lists are supposed to protect us from having to sing roles that might hurt us. Best of all, fach is the niftiest marketing tool ever. We can sing one or two arias and thanks to the wonder of fach, the listener has a ready made shopping list of additional roles that would suit us. Better yet, once we find our strengths, we have a ready made list of rep suggestions that are likely to suit us and play up our best features. There are so many roles on those lists and so much cross-over,

that it's pretty hard not to find a set of five or ten arias that make us sound like we're worth a million pre-paid ticket sales.

Unless, of course, we're singing in the wrong fach, in which case, it can be hard to find anything that fits.

Fach isn't a limitation, it's a tool. Use it wisely. Use it well.

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**When's the last time** ... you checked out Opera America's Top Ten Most Frequently Produced Operas of the Year to discover this season's hottest roles in your fach?

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## **Top Ten Principles for Getting (and Staying) Organized**

**By Anna K. Cox-Havron**

1) Ask Dumb Questions. Dumb questions lead to smart systems. People pay me good money to ask them stuff like, "What do you use this room for? What is this object? Why is it here? Is there anything else you usually use with it? How many of these do you actually use?" Etcetera. Let's consider an example: Would you like your kitchen to be better organized? Dumb question number one: which activities do you, personally, use your kitchen for? Your answer might be: "We cook meals for two people, we feed the dog in here, and I pay bills at the kitchen table." The functions you define for that room will guide you in knowing what to move elsewhere, what to keep, and where to put it.

2) Have a Better Reason to Get Organized, Than Just 'Getting Organized.' What do you really want? What defines the good life to you? A home which is peaceful and presentable? More time to read, bungee jump, travel? Real progress toward your financial goals? Organization is just a tool, like a compass. It can help you get around, but first you have to decide where, exactly, you wish to go.

3) Create Exit Strategies for Your Stuff. We all know how to shop. We all routinely bring new things in. What most of us need is a plan to get stuff out. Creating and using exit strategies allows you to keep what you currently like and use, and get rid of the stuff that's now in the way. How do you create an exit strategy? See Principle Number One: Ask dumb questions. "Will I ever use forty empty margarine tubs at once? Have I worn this in the last two years? Am I willing to schedule a Saturday to repair this broken toaster?" If you clear out what you no longer love and use, you will be able to find the good stuff really fast.

4) If You're Not Using It, There is a Good Reason. Let's think about wardrobes. We wear 20% of our clothes, 80% of the time. What's going on with the 80% of your wardrobe that you push out of the way, to get to the 20% you actually wear? Does this sweater itch? Does that shirt have an olive oil stain you could never get out? Is this bracelet from a person who gives you the heebie jeebies? And now

for the big question: Will that reason ever change? No? Then get rid of what you have good reasons not to use.

5) Set Up Work Stations for Routine Tasks. Here's my cautionary, caffeinary tale. When we moved into our house, I put the coffee maker near the sink, right under the cabinet with the coffee cups and filters. Then -- every night for a year afterwards -- I walked across the kitchen to the pantry, got out the coffee, walked back to the sink, measured coffee into the pot, set the timer, and then walked back across the kitchen again to put the coffee away. One day... after I had had some coffee . . . I thought, HEY!! What if I clear out a dozen of our freebie advertising promo coffee mugs . . . AND PUT THE COFFEE IN THE CUPBOARD right above the coffee maker??????? What a time saver! (I used that extra time to linger over another cup.)

6) You Can Compound Time As Well As Interest. Speaking of coffee, I have a friend who is a financial advisor. She talks about the Latte Factor in her presentations. She points out that if you buy a latte once a week instead of daily, you can put away over a thousand dollars a year into a retirement account, and take advantage of the magic of compound interest to end up with many thousands of dollars over time. Taking two or three minutes daily works like saving two or three dollars daily. It's not much on any one particular day, but it can yield months of free time over your lifetime. For me, I found that spraying and wiping down my bathroom every day meant that I never again had to spend an hour cleaning it. It never gets that dirty. I timed myself cleaning this bathroom once: it took me two minutes and thirty-eight seconds. For under three minutes a day, I get a lifetime of enjoying a clean bathroom, and of never having to worry if a visitor asks to use it. Small regular efforts add up to long relaxing hours!

7) Find the Cow on the Tracks. Some things hold up all the works. If you can shift that one thing, very often you can get the whole train moving. Think about something which routinely drives you crazy. Let's say it's a pain to cook in your kitchen. You resolve to watch for stalled cattle, the next time you make dinner. You find dirty dishes in the sink. You notice that it's hard to use the sink to cook, because it is filled with dishes which must be moved, before you can wash the veggies. And why haven't they been moved? Because the clean dishes haven't been put away yet. Hmmmmmm . . . Perhaps that china ought to sport a Holstein pattern! You test this hypothesis by putting away the dishes. Voila -- by putting away your clean dishes, you've simultaneously solved your counter space deficit, your cooking utensil shortage, your occupied sink, and . . . finally . . . you've got enough glasses to go around the table! (Finding a cow on the tracks always calls for a celebration! In this case, I suggest dining out.)

8) Offload Your Brain. One of the joys of literacy is being able to store boring information outside of your head. Use calendars and lists to liberate your brain. If you have a reliable system which you can use to record your appointments and tasks, this frees your mind to be wildly creative. The key to offloading your brain is in taking Mark Twain's advice. He said to put all your eggs in one basket, and

watch that basket! Keep all your to-do lists and appointments in one place (a planner, a calendar, a program like Outlook), and check it frequently throughout the day.

9) You Cannot Make Another Person Get Organized. Organization, like so many things, is an inside job. You cannot make another person exercise. You cannot get another person to stop drinking too much. You cannot force another person to love you. And you cannot make another person get organized. What you CAN do, is organize yourself so that the other person's disorganization doesn't mow you down, too. Let's say your partner stacks papers everywhere, and refuses to throw anything out. You may not be able to get the other person to cull or tidy up those papers, but perhaps you can come to an agreement. ("I want us to be able to use the dining room. Do you mind if we store these in the attic?"). Be sure to pull out and organize the papers you need to stay sane and keep things going. Your partner may keep fifteen years' worth of old catalogues stacked in the attic, but if you've safely filed the house deed and car titles, you'll sleep better.

10) However . . . Changing Systems Often Changes People. Quality expert W. Edwards Deming's advice was one of the factors which transformed Japan's post-war industry from designing and manufacturing novelty salt and pepper shakers, to designing and manufacturing my reliable car. Deming said that 95% of the time, what we think of as people problems are actually system problems. Change the system, and the people problems often vanish. A client of mine recently found a cow on the tracks: her family rarely left the house quickly, because no one could find their shoes. She could have blamed character flaws: "It's hopeless! We're moral slackers! We're always losing our shoes!" Instead, she put a mat near the door, and asked her family to leave their shoes on the mat, instead of expecting them to put their shoes away in their bedroom closets (which, in practice, no one did). Guess what. They happily do it, because it's easier than running upstairs, and no one nags. And now, they leave on time, because no one has to run around looking for shoes. Often, what we think of as a people problem is really a system problem. So ask dumb questions, and tweak the system. You may just create an all-around winner.

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## NEWS

Mezzo-soprano, editor-in-chief, and founder of *Classical Singer Magazine*, Carla Wood (also known as CJ Williamson) passed away on July 14 in Draper, Utah, after a brief battle with cancer. Diagnosed in May with a brain tumor, she underwent surgery and radiation. Treatment failed to halt the advance of the disease.

Ms. Wood's singing voice was heard at New York City Opera in roles such as Meg Page in *Falstaff* and Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She covered frequently at the Metropolitan Opera and in 2003 sang the role of the Old Shepardess in *Jenufa* there. Her regional career included debuts as Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Seattle Opera, Utah Opera, and El Paso Opera. She is also the featured soloist on the world premiere recording of the Villa Lobos Symphony #10 with the Santa Barbara Symphony.

In 1998, frustrated by the lack of career information available to singers, Ms. Wood created the New York Opera Newsletter. Within ten years the newsletter had grown into a national publication and transformed into *Classical Singer Magazine*. Eighteen years after Ms. Wood's vision became reality, *Classical Singer* is an international publication with readers in 50 states and 25 countries. In 2004, Ms. Wood organized the first Classical Singer Convention in Hartford, CT. The 2005 Convention was held in New York City and included a College Expo; both events are planned to occur annually.

Ms. Wood is survived by her husband, David D. Wood, and two children, David (NJ) and Lindsey. The Carla Wood Vocal Scholarship, to provide full tuition assistance to a vocal performance major at Brigham Young University, has been established in her honor. Donations may be made care of BYU. A guestbook is available at [www.classicalsinger.com](http://www.classicalsinger.com) for those who would like to remember Carla Wood and leave condolences for her family.

On a personal note, I would like to speak of the impact this lovely woman had on so many singers and their careers. Carla was a passionate champion and advocate for singers everywhere, of all levels. She gave us an unprecedented forum to share thoughts, ideas, and information --- first, through the magazine, then through the *Classical Singer* website, and finally, through the Convention. She empowered professional and avocational singers of all persuasions with her work, her compassion, and her spirit.

Carla was also my friend --- giving, concerned, loving, funny, and brilliant. We met online, when she emailed me after reading my complaints about the New York Opera Newsletter on an online forum. When she identified herself as its publisher, I thought I was in trouble, but instead, Carla agreed with all my criticisms and recruited me to write and advise. Now, ten years later, I have been published over fifty times in *Classical Singer Magazine* and continue to write a monthly advice column, *Ask Erda*.

Over the years we have not always shared the same views, but my respect and admiration for Carla have never flagged. No other singer has given to the



profession what she has given. As her friend and colleague, I am proud and grateful for the legacy Carla Wood has left for singers. I hope to honor her memory by helping to carry it on.

Cindy Sadler  
August 10, 2005  
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## **CALENDAR AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### ATLANTA --- SOPRANO SOUGHT FOR VOCAL JAZZ ENSEMBLE

A soprano is sought for a professional, collaborative jazz group currently forming in Atlanta. The ensemble is to consist of one soprano, one alto, one countertenor, a tenor, bass, and drums. Repertoire is to include jazz arrangements of a variety of genres of music. Both demo and commercial CDs are being planned, as are tours and concerts. Interested parties please contact Steven Stewart at 404-597-3328 or [penneyworth@hotmail.com](mailto:penneyworth@hotmail.com).

### APPLETON, WI --- JOB OPENING FOR VOICE FACULTY

Lawrence Conservatory of Music

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF FACULTY POSITION IN VOICE - SEPTEMBER 2005

**RESPONSIBILITIES:** Studio teaching of voice and related activities; possible voice-related course work.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Outstanding teacher and performer. Low Male Voice preferred; all voice types considered. Appropriate terminal degree or equivalent experience.

**RANK AND SALARY:** Non-tenure-track. Dependent upon qualifications and experience.

**APPLICATIONS:** Should include letter of application, curriculum vitae, copies of representative concert and opera programs, recent performance recording(s), four letters of reference, and academic transcripts.

**CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC:** Serving over 360 music majors (including 100 voice majors), the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, founded in 1874, is a distinguished undergraduate program offering preparation for professional careers in music within the intellectual environment of a liberal arts college.

Consideration of candidates will begin June 18, 2005 and will continue until the position is filled. Applications and nominations should be directed to:

Kenneth Bozeman  
Chair, Voice Search Committee  
Conservatory of Music  
Lawrence University  
420 East College Avenue  
P. O. Box 599  
Appleton, WI 54912-0599

Telephone: (920) 832-6611

NEW ONLINE RESOURCE FOR NYC REHEARSAL/PERFORMANCE SPACES

NYC Music Places is a new, free website that allows musicians in New York City to find rehearsal and performance spaces that fit their schedule, budget, and other specific needs. Hundreds of spaces are listed on the fully searchable database, which allows users to search for spaces by entering basic criteria such as desired rental rate, borough or neighborhood, and size of rehearsal/performance space. Search results provide a list of "matches"; details about each space make comparisons easy. Contact information is provided so that musicians may arrange a site visit or check availability. The site also free space-related classified ads for space shares, office spaces, short-term discounts on space rentals and seasonal performance opportunities. Visit [www.nycmusicplaces.org](http://www.nycmusicplaces.org).

SEPTEMBER 15, 2005

Deadline for entering the ASCAP-Lehmann Foundation Song Composition Competition. Age limit 30. First Prize is a \$3,500 commission for a song cycle for voice and piano, publication by E.C. Schirmer of the completed work, and performances of the song cycle in three major American cities, including New York. Second Prize (\$1,000) and Third Prize (\$500) will be awarded to commission two new songs for voice and piano. Applicants must be US citizens, permanent residents of the US, or enrolled students with student visas. One original work per composer may be submitted.

Guidelines and application can be found at:

[http://www.ascap.com/press/2004/lehmann\\_121704.html](http://www.ascap.com/press/2004/lehmann_121704.html)

CHICAGO --- SEPTEMBER 25 AND OCTOBER 1

Bowen Park Opera Company will hold auditions for Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* and Moore's *Gallantry*. Performance dates are February 17, 18, 19, 24, and 25, 2006. Auditions will be held on Sunday, September 25 at the Dr. Lynn Schornick

Theatre, 39 Jack Benny Drive in Waukegan, and on Saturday, October 1 at St. Gregory Episcopal Church, 815 Wilmot Road (corner of Wilmot and Deerfield Roads), Deerfield. Be prepared to offer 2 contrasting selections in English. At least one should be an aria. Legitimate musical theater is acceptable; current rock or pop are not. Bring headshot and resume to audition. For appointments, please call Jack Benny Center for the Arts, 847-360-4740.

CHICAGO --- October 21 - 23

OperaModa is seeking understudies for several roles in their October production of Adamo's *Little Women*. Roles are unpaid. For information, visit [www.operamoda.com](http://www.operamoda.com), email [nlyons@operamoda.com](mailto:nlyons@operamoda.com), or call 312-893-2099.

GREEN BAY, WI --- OCTOBER 24 & 25

The first round and semi-finals for U.S. singers of the 8th Montreal Czech/Slovak International Voice Competition will be held on October 24 and October 25 at Fort Howard Hall, Weidner Center, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Green Bay, Wisconsin. Three semi-finalists will be flown to Montreal to participate in

the finals October 28 and 29<sup>th</sup>. Visit [www.uwgb.edu/international/music/](http://www.uwgb.edu/international/music/) for more information.

*Do you have a performance or event you'd like to see listed on the calendar? Email [info@thebusinessofsinging.com](mailto:info@thebusinessofsinging.com) with CALENDAR in the subject line.*

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**PARTING THOUGHT**

*Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.*

~ Will Rogers