

TAKE CHARGE!

The newsletter of The Business of Singing
December/January 2004 Volume I, no. 3

WELCOME!

Merry Christmas – Hanukah – Kwaanza- Winter Solstice - or Winter Holiday of Your Choice ...

And a very Happy New Year!

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"Your self image is your pattern!...Every thought has an activity visualized. Every activity belongs to a pattern. You identify with your pattern or thought. Your pattern leads your life."
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~ J. G. Gallimore

CREATING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE: WHY YOU SHOULD DRESS THE PART By Cindy Sadler

Next to the time a cab driver chauffeuring me to the finals of a competition mistook me for a lady of the evening, my favorite case of mistaken identity occurred when the media made a surprise visit to a rehearsal at which I was playing the role of second peon from the left. Imagine my surprise when the reporter, without introductions of any sort, appeared before me and said, "Right, we'll want a photo of you next to the General Director." Before I could squeak out, "Uhhhh ... me?" the conductor flew across the room, horrified at the faux pas, and guided the errant newswoman towards the Diva.

Why was I mistaken for being the Diva? Quite frankly, I looked the part. I don't remember what I was wearing, but I remember that my hair and makeup were elegant, and I had on something stylish. Most importantly, *I felt* glamorous that day, and clearly I was projecting glamour and some sort of importance, because the Diva was quite beautiful and elegant herself, and no slouch in the style department.

From the above anecdote we can deduce that I do, in fact, clean up nicely and know how to dress in a Manner Befitting a Diva. Why, then, did my drama coach (herself quite a

glamorous little thing) cock a perfectly manicured eyebrow at me and gently ask, “Do you, um ... dress up for auditions?”

I realized with horror that she had only seen me 1) in jeans and tennis shoes, 2) understated makeup, with style-free hair pulled back in a clip, and 3) hovering on the brink of exhaustion from redeye flights and lots of rushing around. In other words, every time I appeared before my drama coach, I looked like a schlub. Furthermore, we meet at a very public studio where there are always auditions going on. I was walking around in front of all these general directors, some of whom I know, have worked for, and hope to work for again, looking like my next activity of the day was going to be mowing the lawn.

Now, that’s not why my drama coach was asking me about my audition attire --- her query had to do with me reflecting more glamour as a performer. But the more I thought about it, I realized that it was a bad business decision on my part to wander around the singers’ haunts of New York dressed like a college student. That’s not the image I want to project to people who might hire me. It’s not appropriate attire for a business activity (and make no mistake, a lesson is a business activity), and it does in fact affect the way I sing, even in coachings. How can you be Carmen or Dalila, or even Amneris in tennis shoes?

Your clothing subtly affects the way you hold yourself, the way you walk, and the way you regard yourself. Why do you think we use rehearsal skirts, ladies? Any woman knows the awesome power of a good hair day, or the effect a terrific outfit can have on your mood. And men are not exempt. I once winced through *Traviata* rehearsals in which the Alfredo insisted on wearing Birkenstocks at all times. His singing was fine but he looked ridiculous, not because of his footwear but because of how they made him walk. He never looked like an aristocrat. Contrast him with the Alfredo who showed up in leather pants on days when the Board was visiting ... guess which one they’re still talking about.

So I tried a little experiment. I showed up at my next drama coaching in a dress and heels, with my hair up. And I began to “get” the groove my coach was trying to impart. I’ve been glamming up more ever since, even when I’m not around singers. It makes a big difference in how I approach my day and my work. It’s given me an artistic boost and helped me stay on task when my energy started to lag after a busy audition and lecture season. It helps me project the image of success and confidence that I have seen in colleagues working at the levels to which I aspire, and not just to *project* it, but to *own* it.

Pardon an old Southern expression, but you can’t swing a dead cat on the Upper West Side without hitting someone in the classical singing business. Maybe it’s a good idea to look put together when you go out. And that goes not only for New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and the other big opera towns, but places like Austin, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh, too. There’s an axiom about auditions --- “Dress like you don’t need the job”. Well, that’s true for all your professional appearances, not just auditions.

This doesn’t mean that you have to prance around town in three-inch heels and furs or a smoking jacket and ascot. It does mean that when you go out, you should look put together --- no flannel shirts or jeans left over from the eighties (especially if you’re a

girl). Jeans with a cute shirt and good shoes are fine. As I told my students regarding appropriate jury attire, “Don’t even think of showing up in any item of clothing you would wear to the beach, a club, or the gym.”

Looking put together doesn’t have to cost a lot of money or be uncomfortable, either. Think elegant, simple, neat clothes that fit you perfectly and you can’t go wrong. Hair, wherever on your body it may be located, should be clean and neatly groomed. A touch of makeup never hurt, ladies, and if you have good skin you can get away with sunscreen, a little eyeliner, mascara, and lip gloss. Men, a few good skincare products such as a good cleanser and moisturizer with an SPF of 15 or higher, will keep you looking younger and more heroic for all those dashing roles.

Let’s face it --- opera singers need to be elegant and somewhat glamorous. We need to be a bit larger than life, just as our art form is when it’s at its best. It’s part of the job. The only time anyone is interested in a down-to-earth diva is when she’s already a huge name, á la Fleming. The rest of us still have something to prove, and the glamour is part of what the audience wants to buy. After all, it’s a compliment when someone tells you, “You look like an opera singer!”

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Visit www.thebusinessofsinging.com for more articles, resources, and information for your career!
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IDEA OF THE MONTH: REFERRALS

When a pianist you’ve called for an audition isn’t available, he usually can give you the names and phone numbers of five colleagues to try. Orchestral players always seem to know who else in town can be called to fill in. And it’s a simple fact that any musician gets more work through direct referrals than through auditions! It’s time singers took a cue from instrumentalists and start supporting each other for work.

Why not become the go-to singer in your community --- the person who knows what all the other singers are up to, and has all the phone numbers? The person whom conductors, choir directors, wedding coordinators, voice teachers, concert organizers, and other employers call first when they’re looking for a singer? Ask your colleagues if they’d like to be on your list of referrals for church jobs, concerts, teaching, weddings, and other types of engagements --- and don’t forget to ask them to refer you as well. Be careful to only choose those singers who you know to be reliable and talented.

Next time you find you yourself going out of town for an extended engagement, you’ll have a list of qualified subs at your fingertips to cover your church job, your voice studio, that lucrative wedding you have to pass up. You’ll build good will with other singers, who should reciprocate with referrals of their own (and if, after a while, you find that certain people never return the favor, drop them off your list). When colleagues do refer you, be sure to thank them and reassure them that you will reciprocate at the next opportunity.

You'll not only make yourself popular with your colleagues, but you'll also create a name for yourself in the musical community and may very well find yourself being the first person potential employers contact when looking to hire --- and the first to be able to offer your own services!

*WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU ... learned a new role when you didn't have a gig for it coming up? Set a kitchen timer and spend 15 minutes once or twice a day pounding notes for that score you've been putting off learning. You'll be ahead of the game when an opportunity to perform it rolls around!

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IS IT NEW YEAR'S, ALREADY??
THE LAZY OVERACHIEVER'S GUIDE TO NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
By Anna K. Cox-Havron

I don't know about you, but since I'm the laziest over-achiever in the world, New Year's was always a little stressful because I always felt moved to make a life-changing New Year's resolution. See, I knew what I needed to do to transform my life -- it was just a matter of a little extra discipline. No big deal, really, right?

So when I actually didn't:
Sit down for three hours each day to write the Great American Novel, or,
Initiate a weight-lifting program so that my upper arms would look like sculpted rock, or
...

Get a second and third job so I could save enough for retirement, then . . .

I would feel disappointed in myself for being a slacker. (Even though I am one: I live to loaf in the yard, but I can't do quality loafing unless I feel I've been productive -- therefore, my deep interest in researching the fastest, easiest ways to get stuff done, so I can loaf in the yard more.)

And then it happened: One year, I realized I got much more writing done when I was much less demanding of myself. I decided to make the most minimal, underachieving New Year's resolution I could think of, so I could be sure to keep it.

That year, friends, I returned pens to bank tellers and grocery clerks EVERY SINGLE TIME. And I still do! That's right! It's now a habit! I no longer walk off with other people's pens! And I feel so good about it. It's a minor virtue I acquired, but now it's all mine.

And you know what? After that year, I also managed to write a novel, exercise regularly, and improve my finances, one underachieving step at a time.

That was a great lesson: the power of small steps. Very small New Year's resolutions can have much larger ripple effects. But if you still want to take on something big for New Year's, there's another way to do it, without missing the mark.

This next idea about New Year's came from a friend of mine named Bert, a writer, DJ, and English professor I knew, who lived in Vermont.

Bert taught me two great things: first, if you rub a dog lying on its side, at just the right spot past its rib cage (a little above and to the side of its hind legs), the dog's hind leg will start to paw the air repeatedly, in a hilarious bicycling motion. That magic spot on the flank is called the Doggie Button, and I thank Bert for showing me how it worked.

The other great wisdom my friend Bert gave me was the idea of New Year's themes. Even after the wild success of my Return All Pens resolution, I was ready for a change in the whole New Year thang. I like to think big, and I also like to win -- I knew I wanted something with more punch than pen returns.

Instead of making a specific resolution, Bert chose a theme for each year, and let the year's changes and accomplishments emerge from that. Just the sort of thing you would expect from a guy who taught English classes at a preppy New England college -- he even assigned his CALENDAR YEARS a theme!

But this approach can work in really neat ways in your life. Instead of picking a specific goal, pick a general area that you want to see change in, and give it a grand title. Bert once had a theme of The Year of Spontaneity -- for that whole year, he said 'yes' to unexpected things, inside and out.

For a few years running, I had the Year of Getting Things in Order. (I started with my kitchen, moved on to my house, then my relationships, and then my career, and I basically reinvented my whole life that way.) The year before last, I had The Year of Blind Faith. This year, 2004, was The Year of Trusting Myself -- when it came to decisions, I made it a point to 'go with my gut.' My theme years have all paid off, big time.

I don't really plan my themes: I let the theme emerge around New Year's eve. Usually lots of hors d'oeuvres and a couple of glasses of bubbly will get me feeling grandiose and rash enough to pick out a 365-daylong theme; but the themes do tend to work out for me.

Declaring a theme alerts you to opportunities as they arrive throughout the year, and spares you from rigidity, small-mindedness or beating yourself up. With a theme, it's up to life to help you develop, instead of the burden of self-improvement being all yours. A yearly theme becomes a series of surprise visitors, insights and packages, delivered throughout the seasons, of ways you can transform your outlook and your life.

I am still thinking about my theme for 2005 -- not enough bubbly yet, to take that leap. For you, I hope that whatever your resolution or theme is, that it will bring joy to you throughout next year, and all the years that follow.

Happy 2005 to us all!

Anna K. Cox-Havron is a writer and professional organizer. She is the founder and managing director of The File Factor, LLC, which specializes in goal setting, time management, and office organization for artists and other professionals. She can be reached at AnnaK@thefilefactor.com.

DECEMBER/JANUARY CHALLENGE: SHOULD MASTERCLASSES BE LISTED ON A RESUME?

As a rule, I don't advocate listing masterclasses on a resume. A resume is intended to show your experience in the best possible light without exaggeration or hype. Fifteen to thirty minutes spent working with a master teacher on a one-time only occasion does not an impressive credit make. It shows no significant performance experience or training, and any prestige associated with being chosen to participate is impressive only at school.

There are two exceptions to this rule: one is if the master class in question was part of an ongoing series, such as a full semester of classes, in which you performed on multiple occasions. The other is in the extreme case that you are a green beginner and really have nothing else to list on your resume. In that case, list the master classes under a separate category and remove them as soon as you have more experience.

Have a question for Cindy that you'd like to see addressed here? Email info@thebusinessofsinging.com with CHALLENGE in the subject heading.

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"Good resolutions are a pleasant crop to sow. —The seed springs up so readily, and the blossoms open so soon with such a brave show, especially at first. But when the time of flowers has passed, what as to the fruit?"
~ Mary St. Leger Kingsley
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NEWS

IN MEMORIUM

International star soprano Renata Tebaldi died December 19 at her home in San Marino, Italy, following a long illness. She was 82. Often considered Maria Callas' greatest rival, Tebaldi was known for her rich, powerful voice and dedication to the Italian repertoire.

IN RECOVERY

World famous tenor Giuseppe di Stefano continues to recover in a Mombassa hospital after being beaten and robbed on December 5 as he and his wife arrived at their home in Kenya. His wife was also injured in the attack.

CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

Private consultations are being booked for Boston between March 14 and April 1.
Contact info@thebusinessofsinging.com for more information.

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CALENDAR

January 8, 10, 14, 16 2005

Cindy will appear as First Maid and covering Klytaemnestra in ELEKTRA with Austin Lyric Opera. Visit www.austinlyricopera.org for details.

January 21, 2005

Soprano Raya Gonen will appear in a concert of Viennese operetta rarities with the Opera Camerata of Washington and the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Orchestra. The concert takes place at 7 p.m. at the Theater Auditorium of the University of the District of Columbia. For details call 202-722-5335 or visit www.operacamerata.org.

February 15, 2005

Voices Recital --- this organization dedicated to presenting singers of opera, lied, pop, Broadway, and cabaret periodically offers performance opportunities; the ultimate goal is creating a cocktail bar dedicated to vocal music of all genres where NY artists can strut their stuff. If you're interested in performing on a concert, contact Richard Stanton at 718 974 3017 or rsctyslkr@yahoo.com.

February 19, 2005

Application deadline for Boston Singers Resource auditions to be held in March, April, and November (open only to New England singers who are BSR members). Apply at www.bostonsingersresource.com/annual_audition.asp. Contact 978/352-5058 or info@bostonsingersresource.com for further details.

March 14 – April 1

Cindy will be offering private consultations and workshops in the Boston area, including one TBA at New England Conservatory. Contact info@thebusinessofsinging.com or refer to www.thebusinessofsinging.com for details.

March 31, 2005

Application deadline for the Slavic Vocal Master Class to be held in Litomysl, Czech Republic. Contact svam05@hotmail.com for details.

April 8 & 10, 2005

Cindy will appear as Tituba in THE CRUCIBLE with Opera Boston. Visit www.operaboston.org for details.

April 17, 2005

Cindy will be the mezzo soloist in a full version of Handel's *Messiah* with the Texas Choral Consort. Visit www.txconsort.org for details.

May 26-29

Classical Singer Magazine Convention in New York City

See www.classicalsinger.com for details

May 29 – 30

Classical Singer Magazine College Fair in New York City

See www.classicalsinger.com for details

July 19 – 25 2005

The Business of Singing Workshops and Master Classes

Astoria Music Festival and Academy, Astoria, OR

Visit <http://www.astoriamusicfestival.com/aboutFest.php> for details.

August 1 – 20, 2005

Slavic Vocal Master Class in Litomyšl, Czech Republic. Contact svam05@hotmail.com for details.

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

PARTING THOUGHT

"Be at war with your vices; at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man."

~Benjamin Franklin
