ABSTRACT

Most singing studied and taught before the 20th century was based on western European classical forms. The continual development of opera and its increase in popularity caused singers to adjust vocally to changing orchestral forces and larger theaters among other factors. As a result, the pedagogy of classical vocal styles has been studied, developed and written on for hundreds of years.

With the invention of both recorded and amplified sound however, new styles of singing emerged, allowing singers to be heard without the need to project over large orchestras and huge spaces. These new types of singing styles, developed for the most part in the United States, created a need for new pedagogical methods. In the late 1980’s a new group of teachers emerged, looking to develop and legitimize the singing of popular styles. Over the last thirty to thirty-five years, strides in voice science have facilitated these teachers and their students to mainstream the teaching of CCM or contemporary, commercial music.

Because of the tremendous progress made in vocal pedagogy, we have the opportunity to take the next steps in our development as singers and teachers of singing. It is time to recognize that we can teach our students multiple styles healthily, enabling them to become more flexible and marketable performers. The key is the functionality and flexibility obtained with the proper techniques of cross-training.
This study examines the written interviews of eight pedagogues teaching multiple styles and vocal cross-training. Each is asked questions regarding his or her formal education, techniques and observations of both students and colleagues using this method. The resulting answers show evidence that vocal cross-training strengthens voices to create multiple sounds and enables singers to perform in numerous styles. Unfortunately, their responses also illustrate the prejudice and skepticism that still exists among colleagues, barring the way to progress.

That said, this is evidence that we can imagine a world where all types of singers are accepted into traditional conservatories, music programs and private studios, regardless of the styles they sing. University programs can expand and grow their curricula beyond the traditional western classical modes and accept all singers and styles as worthy and healthy.