

**THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL**  
**TRUST OF AUSTRALIA**

**Report by Gina Bashford – 2009 Churchill Fellow**

*The Gallagher Bequest Churchill Fellowship to study the practice of aural development strategies in vocal performance and teaching - Hungary, Finland, United Kingdom.*

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Signed GINA BASHFORD

Dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 2010

*“Everyone who learns an instrument should sing first. Singing, independent of an instrument, is the real and profound school of musical abilities.”*

– Zoltán Kodály.

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## INTRODUCTION

The receipt of a Churchill Fellowship enabled me to travel to the United Kingdom, Hungary and Finland to study the practice of aural development strategies in vocal performance and teaching.

During my 7 weeks of travel I met with several leading exponents in various aspects of vocal technique and performance and also aural methodology. I participated in classes, observed lessons and master classes, discussed methodologies and strategies and observed performance.

My heartfelt and sincere thanks firstly go to *The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust* & the associated Bequest from the Gallagher Family for both the means and the opportunity to pursue my project. Without this wonderful opportunity and its financial means to pursue it, I would not have been able to grow professionally as I have. For this I am immensely grateful.

I'd like to express my gratitude for the generosity, time & assistance of both the teaching and administrative staff in each of the academies and institutions visited.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my generous referees, Dr. Maria Grenfell and Ms. Jane Edwards for their support, effort, and belief in my work and my application.

Also, Mr. Jabra Latham who initially and consistently encouraged me to apply; Mr. Jamie Rose and my family and friends for their ongoing encouragement and support from home while overseas.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Gina Bashford**

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Phone: +61 (0)402 024 867

- Freelance Musician
- Singing Teacher at *Gina Bashford Vocal Tuition* - Private Tuition in Musicianship and in Healthy Vocal Technique, Classical and Contemporary Styles.
- Director of the UTAS Conservatorium of Music Vocal Ensemble- *University of Tasmania, Conservatorium of Music.*

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Fellowship was undertaken between the 5<sup>th</sup> January and the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010, covering a total of seven weeks duration.

The aim was to visit, observe and investigate the best current practices and methodologies of vocal teaching and aural methodology relevant to improving the aural development and skill set of a singer, and to improve my own practices in vocal teaching and performance in Hungary, Finland and the United Kingdom.

During this time I visited the *Royal Academy of Music & Guildhall School of Music and Drama* in London, then the *Kodály Institute* in Kecskemét Hungary, and the *Sibelius Academy* in Helsinki, Finland.

I participated in consultations with performers and teachers, I observed classes, rehearsals, performances, lessons and master classes, met with colleagues and students, and sourced new repertoire & recordings.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Meeting Visiting Professor & Soprano Barbara Bonney & observing her Vocal Masterclass with Royal Academy of Music Vocal Students. - *Royal Academy of Music*, London.
- Attending Choral Conducting classes & discussion with Mr. Patrick Russell at the *Royal Academy of Music*, London.
- Attending professional performances and observing current professional vocal practice in music theatre; *Les Misérables* and *Avenue Q* on the West End, London
- Observing Kodály methodology taught at its source to Primary school children at the Kodály School, and the renowned Hungarian childrens choirs *Miraculum* and the *Aurin Girls Choir* Rehearsals. - Mr. László Durányik, Kecskemét, Hungary.
- Attendance at the *Kodály Institute*: Choral Conducting classes, Choir rehearsals and Aural Classes and discussion with staff. Particularly Dr. László Norbert Nemes, Head of School; Mr. Zoltán Pad, Solfége and Choir Building; and Dr. Péter Erdei, Choral Conducting.
- Interview with Dr. Eija Järvelä regarding links between Singers and Aural Development - Sibelius Academy, Finland
- Observing professional and semi-professional singers work with teacher Ms. Janice Chapman at the *Guildhall School of Music and Drama*
- Observing and discussing a cappella choral rehearsal at the *Guildhall School of Music and Drama* with Mr. Eamon Dougan.

## SUMMARY OF LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Gained valuable insight into the nature of a Singers career.
- Became familiar with distinct teaching methodologies.
- Was exposed to repertoire suitable for both solo and ensemble singers
- Gathered specific vocal exercises relevant to the development of aural perception in singers, in both solo and ensemble contexts.
- Vocal technical knowledge in choral conductors in addition to conducting skills is *highly* valuable to the aural development of ensemble singers.
- Aural Training in Singers developing their sight reading skills needs to address both theoretical and physical awareness.
- The body language of the conductor affects the responses of singers and their following behavior.
- Teaching style appears to be based on a combination of experience, success and various blends of methodology that have best served their purpose over time.
- Became familiar with specific vocal exercises relating to Aural Development.
- Vocal technique & understanding of music theory needs to be made directly & cognitively relevant to a young singer in a meaningful way within the context of their current repertoire.
- The combination of vocal/technical knowledge and skills in vocal training in choral conductors is of great importance to the development of good Choral Conductors.
- Affirmation that ideal vowel and consonant placement and precision affect pitch directly.
- Aural Training in Singers needs to address both the physical vocal training and technique to build laryngeal muscle memory, and the mental understanding of intervallic training to ensure long term understanding and faster development of skills. The use of Solfège plus vocal technical training in combination addresses this deficit.
- If appropriate pedagogical connection is made, children and young adults are innately capable & thrive on attaining advanced skills in music reading and performance.
- Gaining specific control of their vocal aperture relates directly to the ear and brain and often is the difference between a singer hearing mentally what they wish to achieve, and then being able to physically manifest it.

## DISSEMINATION & IMPLEMENTATION

The Australian community will be informed directly through my teaching practice as it applies to individual lessons, workshops, master classes and ensemble direction through private tuition and my teaching work at the University of Tasmania.

In my private teaching practice *Gina Bashford Vocal Tuition*, I teach 20- 30 singers a week of all ages and abilities in both classical and contemporary repertoire with a focus on healthy technique and performance practice. I also offer lessons in musicianship and aural training for singers, which are directly incorporated into the voice lessons.

These skills are also implemented and disseminated at the University of Tasmania, where I direct and conduct the UTAS Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music Vocal Ensemble and have lectured in Aural Studies for the past two years. Local Schools can also benefit in the future through workshops, or music relief teaching as I have full teaching qualification to teach in schools from Kindergarten to year 12.

As a musician, my learnt skills are most appropriately & best assimilated into my vocal teaching & performance. Students will directly benefit from my broader skill set & knowledge of current best practice of techniques, trends and enhanced performance practice gained from my fellowship experiences. Having a wider world view of current best practice in the area of Aural methodologies in teaching singing specifically, gives me a clearer view of teaching areas needing revitalising or reconsidering not only in my own methodology in teaching, but possibly also the wider local and national music community.

As a full and current member of *The Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing* (ANATS), I have a resource of professionals who would have an interest in this project and as such I can liaise, discuss, and open conversation with other teaching professionals in my field, both at ground level as I relate to them in person in my local community, but also nationally via the tools ANATS offers; with online teaching discussion boards, conferences, newsletters, and papers.

## **PROGRAMME**

### **Royal Academy of Music – London: Jan 7 – 17, 2010**

- Mr. Patrick Russell - Choral Conducting
- Mr. David Pettit - Advanced Aural Studies
- Ms. Esther Jones – Sight Singing
- Mr. Ryland Davies (Tenor) – Singing Teacher
- Ms. Barbara Bonney (Soprano) - Visiting Professor of Opera

### **Guildhall School of Music and Drama – London: Jan 20-30, 2010**

- Ms. Janice Chapman (Soprano) – Singing Teacher
- Ms. Linnhe Robertson (Soprano) – Head of Voice
- Mr. Eamon Dougan – Vocal Ensemble
- Mr. Armin Zanner – Deputy Head of Voice

### **Kodály Institute - Kecskemét ,Hungary: Feb 2 – 14, 2010**

- Dr. Katalin Kiss - Solfége
- Dr. László Norbert Nemes – Head of School + Choral Conducting and Choir
- Mr. László Durányik – Choir Director at the Kodály School. (Aurin Girls Choir & Miraculum Children’s Choir)
- Mr. Zoltán Pad – Solfége and Choir Building
- Ms. Sarolta Platthy – Primary Music Teaching Methodology
- Dr. Péter Erdei – Conducting Lab.
- Ms. Ildikó Szegedi - 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Music Teacher at the Kodály School

### **Sibelius Academy – Helsinki, Finland: 16-23 Feb 2010**

- Dr. Annika Ollinkari. -Head of Vocal Department
- Dr. Eija Järvelä - Lecturer in Vocal Arts
- Ms. Leena Veijonsuo International Student Department Administration and Orientation
- Professor Hyökki –Vocal Ensemble
- Ms. Monica Groop - Oratorio Masterclass

## **MAIN BODY**

### **Royal Academy of Music, London:**

London's *Royal Academy of Music* was the first item on my itinerary in early January 2010. Over 1.5 weeks, I observed and participated in workshop with students in the Advanced Choral Conducting class taught by Mr. Patrick Russell, with whom I spent time discussing aspects of the choral conducting course, and aspects of working with vocal ensembles. I also spent time in the following classes: Advanced Aural Studies class with Mr. David Pettit; Sight Singing for Undergraduate Singers with Ms. Esther Jones; Individual Voice lessons with Mr. Ryland Davies and Master class with Ms. Barbara Bonney, Visiting Professor of Opera.

### **Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London:**

My time at Guildhall School of Music and Drama consisted of various vocal workshops, observations, rehearsals and discussions over 1.5 weeks. Individual Singing lessons with both professional and undergraduate singers of the School were observed in Studio lesson time with Ms. Janice Chapman, renowned Singing Teacher in classical repertoire and vocal technique. Opera rehearsals, workshops and vocal warm-ups with undergraduate opera Students were observed, lead by the Head of Voice, Ms. Linnhe Robertson, along with observation and discussion of the a cappella choir being developed and rehearsed with Guildhall Voice Students by Mr. Eamon Dougan. Conversation and liaison was also undertaken with Deputy Head of Voice, Mr. Armin Zanner, regarding the growth of the Vocal Department at Guildhall, and its rich curriculum of classes and workshops for both the classical singer and music theatre singer.

### **Kodály Institute - Kecskemét, Hungary:**

Almost two weeks were spent in Kecskemét at the *Kodály Institute* and The nearby public *Kodály School*. Time was spent observing, discussing and participating in Solfège classes, Choral Conducting, Choir, Primary Music classes and various rehearsals & workshops, all of which were of an outstanding nature.

The following staff members were all of great assistance and information:

- Dr. László Norbert Nemes – Head of School + Choral Conducting and Choir.
- Dr. Katalin Kiss – Solfége.
- Mr. László Durányik – Choir Director at the Kodály School. (Aurin Girls Choir & Miraculum Childrens Choir).
- Mr. Zoltán Pad – Solfége + Choir Building.
- Ms. Sarolta Platthy – Primary Music Teaching Methodology.
- Dr. Péter Erdei – Conducting Lab.
- Ms. Ildikó Szegedi - 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Music Teacher at the Kodály School.

Time was also spent conversing with International Students of the Institute who enlightened me with their positive educational experiences within the Institute, and with whom I discussed various aspects of the courses offered to international students.

### **Sibelius Academy – Helsinki, Finland:**

Time at the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, was spent observing workshops, rehearsals and classes, as well as meetings to discuss Aural Development in Singers. Brief discussion was had with Dr. Annika Ollinkari, Head of Vocal Department, regarding the Vocal Department at the Sibelius Academy, and longer meeting and interview with Dr. Eija Järvelä, Lecturer in Vocal Arts, involved detailed interview on her thoughts and experiences of working with the Aural Development of Singers and strategies she has employed in her experiences. Ms. Leena Veijonsuo, from the International Student Administration gave great insight into the broader statistics of the Academy and also generously provided me with orientation and much needed information regarding Helsinki, its culture and the cultural life of the students there. Time was also spent observing classes with Professor Hyökki, Vocal Ensemble, and Ms. Monica Groop, Oratorio Master Class.

## **Reflections and Affirmations:**

### **Singers Aural Training in relation to Performance and Vocal Technique:**

Observing and participating in voice training classes, individual lessons, and rehearsals, I was affirmed in my thoughts regarding the development of aural skills in a singers' vocal technique & their ensuing aural perception across the Institutes and Academies visited in London, Hungary and Finland.

Most of the singing tuition and vocal technical work observed was directly relatable to the aural development of singers in regards to the technical and anatomical. Various spatial variants in a singer's resonance contribute to the addressing of freedom of timbre, particularly in the upper register.

'Shiny overtones'; and breath management directly relating to pitch, slurring onto high onsets, and the creation of ideal overtones or 'colours' in the voice production all work towards a freely produced sound.

The following points outline only some of the many relevant points in voice training relatable to my study:

- "Overtones do not like muscles"<sup>1</sup> -Muscles distort our natural sound, we ideally want to sing acoustically. Singing with freedom through the vocal posture, jaw, neck, tongue and body allows for the freedom of movement required for full and free muscle coordination. A lack of muscle tension therefore ensures the freedom of natural overtones in the sound
- Singing unaffected and authentically within the constraints of a singers age. Deliberate forced maturity can only add muscle tension etc. Return to natural, free, authentic sounds.
- Healthy control of head movement and posture is influential to a singers' technique and pitching. A singer needs to address and consider correct vocal posture for each individual within the exterior physical posture.
- Ideal vowel placement/vowel modification towards upper register. Vowel precision affects pitch directly, as the variables in the timbre

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Bonney, Barbara Bonney Master class. Royal Academy of Music, London. January 2010.

either dampen or enrich the tone, and so along with correct pronunciation of language for accuracy and communication, vowel placement is important aurally, along with the singers' physical and mental awareness of what the ideal, free vowel positions are in each individual. Awareness of vowel placement is a valuable step towards more reliable pitch control in a singers' development.

- Breath control, as previously mentioned, is another large contributing factor to developing more reliable sense of accurate pitch and freedom of sound and timbre. (Vocal pressure versus freedom). The air speed used for various phrases needs to be conducive to freedom of sound, and energized tone. Muscles in the throat and neck are not to be considered an active part of the *creation* of healthy air pressure in singing. Natural coordination of the anatomy required to produce sound is, of course, essential, yet physical tension or pressure in regards to muscles in this area are not involved. *Less is more*' in regards to muscle involvement around the airflow of the vocal tract is regarded as healthy when aiming for vocal freedom. There is, of course, much more energy being supplied from the leaning, engaged supportive muscles of breath flow from the rest of the body.<sup>2</sup>
- Nerves and Emotions may affect the pitch, air pressure and overall vocal production to either their benefit or detriment according to the circumstances of each individual, their style of thought, personality and the preparedness of the material performed. There are a number of productive approaches, techniques and methods that address detrimental nerves and emotional engagement that can assist the singer onto a pathway of performance and vocal ease over time. (Rational versus Irrational Fears)
- Consonants and Text have an influence on the singers' air flow, pitching and potentially detrimental muscle involvement. Generally, awareness and technical use of the spoken word and its mouth shape for the individual can lessen the over effort a singer may use in 'working too hard', or 'chewing' at the text, which creates less than ideal muscle tensions. Consonants, (both strong and soft) need to be clear and clean, precise and energized along the flow of air, and not separate to the air

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<sup>2</sup> Breath support is of course a vital attribute to healthy free singing, but detail on this into greater depth past a mention is not engaged into for the purpose of this report.

flow. All consonants are connected to the breath, and need to be linked to the breath in teaching.<sup>3</sup>

- Voice type and each individual's natural limitations need to be considered in all vocal teaching both in regards to realistic potential, and repertoire choice within that potential. The teaching of each individual student has to be catered to specifically to address the individuality and uniqueness of each voice. Adjustments need to be made for individual voice capabilities, learning style and the personality attached to each singer.
- Affirmation that because the student is young doesn't mean they can only achieve limited skills for their age. Whilst the voice has its limitations on growth and appropriate repertoire within an individual *Fach*<sup>4</sup>, there is an immense amount of learning young people can achieve to very advanced standards at a very young age. This is something adults can reflect on when teaching students so as not to 'dumb them down' because they are simply 'young'. Children seem to thrive when they have high standards reflected/expected of them in a realistic, fun and individualized way. This 'dumbing down' of a skill set that may only be attained once a student gets to a certain age may well be one of the key limitations of both student and teacher, and it affects directly the aural skill development of the young singer which can so often be in deficit later in their teenage development.
- Singers who listen and see themselves in various ways (recording lessons and performances via audio and video in a variety of acoustic spaces) are more likely to have a better aural perception of their live sound, and are more likely to make beneficial modifications to their sound due to extended self awareness of their sound. Recording their own voice in lessons and rehearsals helps develop the singers' concept of their perceived sound, and more importantly, their *actual* sound.
- Awareness and control of larynx position, both physically and mentally, at any given time is of great importance to the aural vocal development of a singer. Gaining specific control of their vocal aperture relates directly to the ear and brain and often is the difference between a singer

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<sup>3</sup> Again, much more depth of content can be addressed in regards to vowel & consonants, airflow and support, along with every point outlined, but for the purpose of this report, they are only mentioned.

<sup>4</sup> Voice type.

hearing mentally what they wish to achieve, and being able to physically manifest it. This training and control is vital for developing the aural skills and performance skills of a singer.

- A singer's *awareness* of training *Muscle Memory* within their technique seems an important part of developing the aural skills and muscle coordination required in beginning singers. Their understanding of **why** they are doing specific exercises (and repertoire) will allow for more patience and more growth whilst being patient in their physical 'renewal' of habit. This awareness of the new neural pathways of muscle freedom and control becoming habitual over older habits of tension and effort may help the young singer lessen frustration over time when learning new skills. Until the muscle memory reacts and becomes habitual in a more ideal way without the students awareness and effort to do so mentally through thought-aware processes, learning new skills can feel mechanical and unrelated to the reasoning behind why they are attending lessons. It's important that all technical/aural development aids the artistry and storytelling of the artist. Technique is not separate to repertoire; it is there to serve the artist so they may tell their story just as they wish to. The *student* must understand that it *all* is done so the singer may address artistry and communication more freely. The young singer should also be encouraged through these developing stages to be working on and performing repertoire that is both age/vocal development appropriate and that satisfies them creatively whilst they are practicing patience with their developing instrument.
- Affirmation in the Solfège Methodology. Consistent training at a holistic musical level. It appears that consistency of training in this methodology as a foundation to learning is open to the inclusion of other methodologies in later training without detriment or confusion, and this training can be elaborated on endlessly throughout lifelong learning. The Intervallic memory building formed through the use of Solfège in singers also solidly and consistently encourages mental and physical (particularly laryngeal muscle) memory. The combination of the two areas making meaningful developments in the development of sight singing skills in singers and musicians.

## **Singers Aural Training in relation to Choral Conducting:**

Observing and participating in the Choral Conducting classes, I was affirmed in my thoughts regarding the connection between *pitch and gesture* in a singer's aural perception.

The gesture & body language of a conductor is of great significance to the aural perception of the singer & therefore their performance and aural development. 'SOUND' and gesture is also of great significance.

The role of the choral conductor is a myriad of complex simultaneously coordinated skills. In addition to the already complex direction of conducting an ensemble in regards to time, phrasing etc, and the initial coordination of the architecture and detail of the music, the choral conductor relays specific vocal, aural and technical information to the singer. This relay of information occurs on both aware and subconscious levels between the physicality, and body language of the conductor to singer (and vice versa).

This specific vocal information includes the visual reminder to the singer/singers of overall body posture, as well as vocal and laryngeal posture, consonant delivery and timing, resonance, vocal placement of sound, text, phrasing, articulation and in turn the appropriate breath flow/energy needed for that phrasing and articulation, emotion, passion, and actual technique cue reminders, either as required or consistently, depending on the level and ability of the singers.

Often in choral groups, the accuracy of pitch is therefore greatly influenced by the physical gesture and body language of the conductor. For example, if the direction is too rigid in the physical movement of the arm and body language, the sound produced will most likely reflect this. If the singer becomes nervous due to pressure or stress as a result of the conductors' body language and expectations, the pitch will be suffer most likely going sharp and the breath control and resonance will suffer. If the chorus is not given ample breath preparation time via the conductor, the pitch may suffer with rushed onset and ineffective breath management. Also the resonance and timbre of the sound will be diminished. To simplify in other words, the body language of the conductor affects the responses of singers and their following behavior.

Good choral conductors have a responsibility to deliver in such a way that gives confidence, technically assures the singer, assists in their story telling, and

delivers constant healthy postural visual language in their own stance and cues, amongst other elements.

Singers, like in any learning style, seem to have a dominant visual aspect to their learning and delivery, (closely linked to their aural perceptions). In many performances, singers rely on visual cues from a conductor. Singers, particularly those who are predominantly highly influenced by a visual learning type, may find that their mental reactions have more of a physical reaction in turn, which can be either beneficial or detrimental to their sound, according to their perception, and according to the gesture portrayed to them in attaining that perception. It appears that in amateur singers particularly, this is predominantly subconscious to begin with, in my experience. This can be anything from ‘fear of high notes’ for example, – where a singer may view the ‘height’ of a note on a music score, and react physically to it with more vocal tension and effort than is ideal or preferable in order to attain vocal freedom and ease on that higher pitch. The reality is that the tension added, (subconsciously most often), only inhibits the natural sound and vocal freedom, thereby self-sabotaging their efforts. Until awareness is attained by the individual singer of this habit, with solutions of healthy free vocal technique, a singer may well continue to sing with this restriction.

If a choral conductor has a similar fear as the above example, they too may convey this vocal tension via their gestures and stance, communicating them directly into an approach by the vocalist to similar detriment despite intent otherwise. This is one example of how gesture can affect pitch and free sound, and of how the success of a vocal ensemble seems greatly affected by the level of vocal technical knowledge in choral conductors in addition to clear musical direction and conducting skills.

A Choral Conductor must be self reflecting enough to assess, question and deliver;

*“Am I giving a clear focus of energy?”*

*“Am I communicating effectively in both my words and my physical gesture to my ensemble?”*

*“Am I giving these singers confidence in their abilities?”*

*“Am I calming the singers with my body language in rehearsal and performance?”*

*“Am I communicating consistently?”*

*“Am I tightening the neck or jaw as I conduct? Is this affecting the singers inadvertently?”*

*“Am I vital in my physicality and communication?”*

*“Am I savoring the detail enough?”*

*“Am I being too mannered in my delivery?”*

*“Am I in control of the musical narrative?”*

*“Are the singers unified in the musical narrative?”*

The list goes on to whatever aspect is needed to benefit the performance and the intricate communication of conducting a group leading up to, and during a performance.

My experiences within Choral Conducting in London, Hungary and Finland reiterated and affirmed these elements of my existing pedagogy and provided me with conducting skills, repertoire & further insight into English Choral Traditions, and the Kodály Methodologies in particular.

The Choral warm-ups experienced were particularly beneficial for the dual purpose of both training the aural development of groups of singers whilst warming the voice and teaching vocal techniques in a group environment.

## Conclusions:

(Some of many...)

- Vocal technical knowledge in choral conductors in addition to conducting skills is *highly* valuable to the aural development of ensemble singers.
- Aural Training in Singers developing their sight reading skills needs to address both theoretical and physical awareness. Physical awareness in regards to *feeling* the movement and position of the larynx particularly. The mental engagement and understanding of harmony and intervals is vital to assisting the faster development of sight singing skills.
- Observed that vocal teachers generally don't preface their pedagogical style on one theoretic label, but their style is to teach based on a combination of experience, success and various blends of methodology that has best served their purpose over time. Their success is in the ability to communicate it effectively and meaningfully to their students.
- If vocal technique or music theory understanding isn't made directly and cognitively relevant to a young singer in a meaningful way within the context of their current repertoire, it appears that over time, that singer may potentially become deficit in a vital aural skill set of which may limit them later in their career.
- The combination of vocal technical knowledge and vocal training in choral conductors is of great importance in the development of good choral conductors.
- Affirmation that a conductor's body language affects the responses of singers and their following behavior.
- Affirmation that ideal vowel and consonant placement and precision affects pitch directly, as the variables in the timbre either dampen or enrich a singers tone according to onset, muscle engagement, and air pressure etc.
- Intervallic memory building through the use of solfège in singers' solidly and consistently encourages mental and physical (particularly laryngeal muscle) memory. The combination of the two areas making meaningful

developments in the development of sight singing skills in singers and musicians.

- Aural Training in Singers needs to address both the physical vocal training and technique to build laryngeal muscle memory, and the mental understanding of intervallic training to ensure long term understanding and faster development of skills. The use of Solfège plus vocal technical training in combination addresses this deficit.
- If appropriate pedagogical connection is made, children and young adults are innately capable and thrive on attaining advanced skills in music reading and performance.
- A singer's awareness and control of larynx position, both physically and mentally, at any given time is of great importance to their aural vocal development. Gaining specific control of their vocal aperture relates directly to the ear and brain and often is the difference between a singer hearing mentally what they wish to achieve, and being able to physically manifest it. This training and control is vital for developing the aural skills and performance skills of a singer.

## Recommendations

### **Improvements and Developments in Australia:**

- The level of vocal technical knowledge in choral conductors is paramount in addition to clear conducting skills. Many amateur choral conductors may only have minimal knowledge of the technical issues of the voice. It is recommended that we need to increase the knowledge of vocal technical issues in singers, and choral conductors and find vocal-technical solutions for them. Choral Conductors need to be equally efficient in their coordination and delivery in the skills of conducting, as well as attain and deliver healthy vocal knowledge that supports and develops the singer positively. This all needs to be communicated effectively through both language in rehearsal and supported by their conducting gestures.
- Sightreading/Solfège/Aural training via extra tutorials or specialised classes specifically aimed at and designed for Singers, particularly at an undergraduate level. This training, amongst other things, should include solfege, vocal-technical training, anatomical awareness and further insight into vocal control and voice types.
- Vocal technical training workshops made directly relevant to aural teachers or any music teaching involving sight-singing and voice use. This could be specifically catered to Pre-Tertiary Music Teachers, Music teachers in Australian Schools from Kindergarten to Year 12, and Tertiary Music Teachers of relevant aural subjects.

These workshops (2-3 times a year ideally as professional development) should involve information and practical engagement and practice in;

1. **Healthy voice use**
2. **Vocal anatomy and laryngeal action**
3. **Male and female vocal differences in adolescence and throughout life.**
4. **Breathing: Healthy Air Pressure and Vocal Support**
5. **Physical and Vocal Posture**
6. **Voice Types**
7. **Advancing sessions elaborating further into other areas of training the voice after the above initial workshop.**

To conclude, it is my recommendation that Australian Music Educators who work with singers, consider the vocal technical difficulties within aspects of

Aural Training, and embrace and utilize the skill set of qualified professional voice trainers to supplement to enhance their own professional development regarding healthy and proficient voice use for themselves and for their students.