

THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE FOR SINGERS

# iSing

ISSUE 12

**PRINCE**

THE ART  
OF **KISS**

HOW TO

**SHINE**

IN AUDITIONS

BRITISH

AMERICANA

**Balsamo**

**Deighton**

ON THE RISE

**FRANCES**



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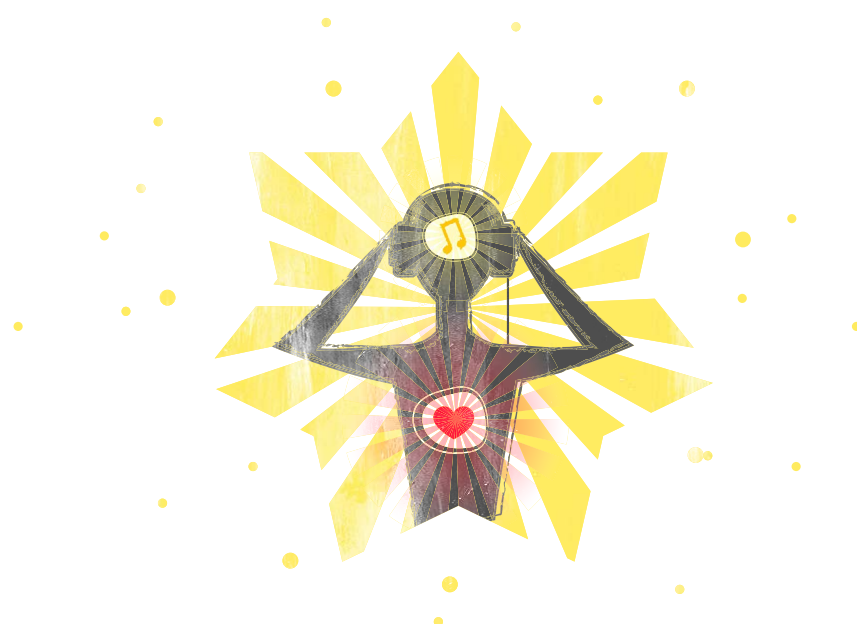
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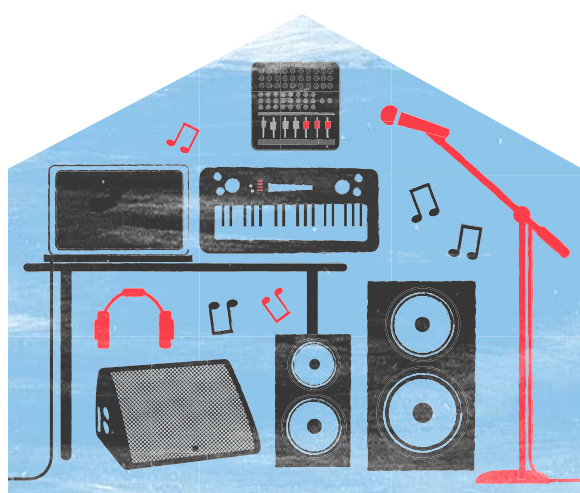
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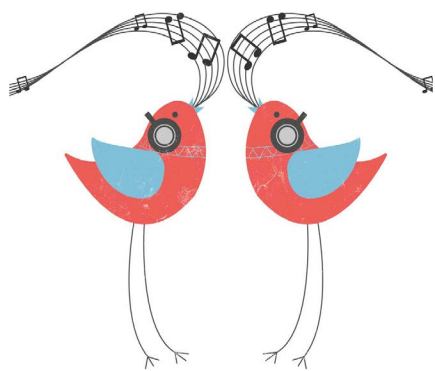
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# DEAR READERS



So here we are half way through 2016, eek! Has the year been kind to you? For me the past few months have been hectic, challenging and immensely rewarding as I feel I am making real progress in my mission to encourage singers and the music industry to take better care of the voice.

In May iSing magazine hosted three webinars featuring three amazing experts – voice scientist Dr Ingo Titze, vocal coach Joshua Alamu and professional singer Katie Holmes-Smith. I'm proud to say over 500 people from around the world tuned in to hear our guests share their knowledge on vocal warm ups. What impressed me most was the calibre of the questions which came flooding in. There is obviously a great hunger out there for more information about vocal care and a real passion for singing. Which is great because that is what iSing magazine is here for – to educate and inspire singers. You can still catch the webinars if you missed them. Click [HERE](#) to register to watch the the recordings. There will be more in the future.

If you are looking for a little inspiration, make sure you read our interview with this issue's cover, Frances. This young English singer and prolific songwriter has already performed at Coachella and has been booked to play Glastonbury (and she is only 22). Find out what makes this immensely talented and driven young woman tick in our interview with her in the careers section.

So what else is in this issue? As always you can enjoy great interviews with artists, useful advice from industry pros and the latest news and technology.

So please keep reading iSing and checking our website as we have more exciting things for you singers in the pipeline. Don't forget to come hang out with us in the [iSingmag Facebook group](#). Here you can talk to any of the contributors and other like minded singer folk. Hope to see you in there!

Yours in singing,

*Line Hilton*  
Editorial Director



- Frances interview
- Balsamo Deighton interview
- Song DNA: The Art of *Kiss*
- Top six supplements for singers
- Portrait of a trailblazer, Gregory Batsleer

Please don't hesitate to send us your music for review,  
feedback, or topics requests to

[editor@isingmag.com](mailto:editor@isingmag.com)

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# *The* **FUNDAMENTALS**



**VOCAL NERDS** Vocal fold closure – clean up your act



**VOCAL STYLE** Seven ways to develop the right vocal style mindset



**SONG DNA** The art of Kiss - Prince's blues



**HOW TO AUDITION** Tips from a producer





# VOCAL FOLD CLOSURE

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CLEAN UP YOUR ACT

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**H**ere we are with another nerdy piece, and today we're rattling on about vocal fold closure. The question is to what degree do the vocal folds close? Are they gently closing for delicate sound, or with the force to crush watermelons? Either way, we can exercise control over the muscles that adduct (that's the medical blurb for close or bring together) the vocal folds. This will help us to create different vocal colours and tones but also will give us some ability to control our efficiency as singers, which is somewhat of a problem these days.

### WHY IS VOCAL FOLD CLOSURE CONTROL IMPORTANT?

Vocal fold closure is vitally important for singers. To go back to Vocals 101 for a sec, air pressure build up is required underneath the vocal folds to create the vibration needed for sound production. It's the same as blowing a raspberry, in a way: air builds up behind the raspberry and then it bursts through vibrating your tongue and lips. Then you get your sound. If your raspberry lips and tongue are too tight or too loose then the vibration can become impossible, and sound isn't created at all well. You'll also look a bit weird.

### SORRY ABOUT THIS...

Truly, but we're going to have to talk about muscles a wee bit. We'll keep it simple with the main ones though, so just relax and take it in.

**Arytenoid cartilages** - These little cone-shaped fellas are what the vocal folds attach to at the posterior \*chortle\*, meaning rear, of the larynx. These are important because we initiate our closure by bringing them together with the interarytenoid (IA) muscles. But the IAs don't do the whole job.

**Lateral Cricoarytenoid** - A raised larynx, and/or an open mouth, can influence more TA and more closure. Not always, but can. The opposite could influence less TA and possibly less closure. So depending on your situation, a hooty whoop or a bratty wail could give you a little extra help on the closure front.

**Thyroarytenoid** - We mention the TA muscle a lot because it's the bulkier of the muscles in the vocal folds. It's also responsible for timbres that most would call "chest voice", because it's thick and gives us a rich tone when it's vibrating. If the TA is active when we sing, then we're likely to get the bottom two thirds of our depth of vocal cord closure from it.

**The Ligament** - The top third is where the ligaments meet. When they are in vibration on their own they are usually attached to the term "head voice", as they are thin and flexible and hence give a thinner sound. And if they are also at the party when we sing it finishes off our closure, so we all (hopefully) should get good healthy function of all muscles that close the vocal folds. Front to back, and top to bottom. You'd hope so right?

### WE'RE NOT SAYING IT'S BAD

If one of those bad boys isn't functioning correctly then there'll be a problem with vocal fold closure. And hey, for some styles a little less closure isn't a bad thing. It's a necessity. But, for

one thing, being able to achieve a good balance of the vocal muscles at any time is a powerful tool in maintaining a cracking voice until you're a hundred or something.

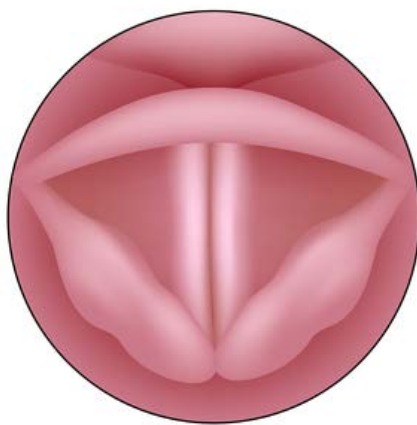
So how do we train some of these aspects of vocal fold closure? Well, a start is to determine what needs work. Just so you know, we're definitely not going to attempt to diagnose you via an article. That would be ridiculous, even for gods like us. But here are some tips for you to mess around with:

**Creak and fry** - Popular to the max, are these. Often used as onset exercises to influence how you begin a line, or an exercise. You can use these to primarily influence how the arytenoid cartilages come together, as they kinda enhance the closure there a little. They can also thicken up the TA to give the impression of some chest-like sound in the resulting phrase, and obviously do the bottom third job of the closure.

**Cry** - Like, quite a "complains" #makingupwordsagain whinge. Like that petulant little so and so. Again helps with the closing of the arytenoids, but the upset undertone is a way of ensuring the ligament is present in the vibration of the vocal folds. Hopefully helping us to get the top third of adduction! Voila.

**Straw phonation** - We're not getting paid to say it, promise. But on training strong sounds the straw can balance out the problem of excess vocal fold closure, or squeezing. On quieter sounds it can also train the arytenoid cartilages to stay closed to avoid breathiness, as quiet isn't always breathy.

**Larynx and mouth position** - A raised larynx, and/or an open mouth, can influence more TA and more closure. Not always, but can. The opposite could influence less TA and possibly less closure. So depending on your situation, a hooty whoop or a



bratty wail could give you a little extra help on the closure front.

**Airflow** - Too much is usually the case in most of us. After all, we're all mental right? Constantly wanting to be bigger and louder. However, if we push air and our vocal folds can't handle the pressure, then they'll bow open. Only vast amounts of vocal squeezing will be able to deal with high air pressure, and then you'll sound like a bad Pavarotti lifting a piano whilst giving birth. Not good... and a little surreal. Try relaxing airflow a little by not pushing with the abs, or even just not thinking RAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGHHHH. Kay?

**The missed point** - As closure comes from so many angles, it should be obvious that the whole voice needs to be on point for you to have comprehensive closure. But sadly it is missed. The bottom (or chest) voice gets the best closure to our ears, so we overuse it to add TA, and closure, to the weak notes on the top. That may be the right thing to do, but there's a whole other third of closure that the ligament provides. And



**We're all mental right? Constantly wanting to be bigger and louder**

what sound or voice quality involves the ligament? YES: the upper (or head voice). It can be a bit alien to think that training the lighter head tones of our voice can be the missing key to our full, rich, face-melting bangers. But in a lot of cases, it is.

**It's not our fault if you die** - As always, we have this disclaimer. Messing around with this stuff may help you to partly figure out your problem, or enhance your strengths.

That's great! It's also worth remembering that a rich closure can provide such a full sound wave that you feel ease, rather than tightness or tension. Even though tension (in the right places) is what has occurred. Keep that in mind, but please, for goodness sake, find yourself a great coach to guide you through the minefield ■

## VOCAL NERDS WEBINAR

They will answered your questions on the topic of:

**Vocal fold closure**

on July 1, at 3pm

**TRIBE MEMBER?  
CLICK HERE**

## THE NAKED VOCALIST



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Chris Johnson and Steve Giles are both experienced vocal coaches working in Southampton and London. They are with the **Vocology In Practice** teacher network and specialise in training clients in advanced vocal technique, style and improvisation. They are co-founders and presenters of the popular iTunes singer's interest **podcast** The Naked Vocalist. As well as coaching and podcasting they are also in-demand performers and manage their own successful soul acts.



<http://thenakedvocalist.com>



# 7 ways to develop the right VOCAL STYLE MINDSET

There is a lot of information out there on the mindset a singer should develop when performing on stage, dealing with performance anxiety, auditioning or working on technique. Those mindset strategies have their value and place for sure, but there is rarely any mention of the “vocal style mindset”.

What do I mean by vocal style mindset? I mean the development of a mindset that is open to growth, change and is ready to engage in the process of what vocal style development actually is.

This may be because vocal style is considered to be a by-product of good technique. Or because singers feel it should evolve naturally as a result of their musical influences. Whatever the reason, I have come across many singers who struggle to actually get to grips with what their vocal style is.

One student in particular stands out in my mind. She came in saying “I want to know what my vocal style is and how to develop it”.

She was so frustrated by her lack of vocal identity and vocal choices and how she perceived her sound

“There is a particular mindset needed to engage in the experimentation and discovery of one’s vocal style



MISSY ELLIOT IS KNOWN FOR HER UNIQUE VOCAL STYLE.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JOAN LEONG, PRESS ASSOCIATION



ALONE - SELAH SUE

during our session that after our first lesson I could sense that she was not at all impressed or encouraged, not necessarily with me and my coaching but it was like she had already decided she was not capable of expressing herself the way she imagined herself doing.

This experience taught me a huge lesson: that there is a particular mindset needed to engage in the experimentation and discovery of one's vocal style and that this can mean getting dirty, vulnerable and uncomfortable when rolling about in the mud of change and uncertainty with the sounds you are making.

The thing to remember though is it needs to be done and can be done

“  
Lady Gaga, Missy  
Elliot, James Brown,  
Bob Marley and Selah  
Sue all have their own  
unique vocal style.



successfully if the right mindset is adopted and the right approach is applied.

If you are looking for inspiration singers such as Lady Gaga, Missy Elliot, James Brown, Bob Marley and Selah Sue all have their own unique vocal style.

Watch the video below to discover the seven principles that I have learned through my own personal

experience. I have also used these to successfully guide my own students and clients to discover their stylistic potential.

They sum up my advice in helping you to develop the correct mindset for vocal style experimentation, discovery and mastery. I hope you take them on board and that they help lead you to a very expressive voice ■



JOSHUA TALKS ABOUT THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES TO DEVELOP THE RIGHT VOCAL STYLE MINDSET

## JOSHUA ALAMU



**W**HO IS HE? Joshua Alamu is a professional voice coach with over 15 years experience as a singing teacher in the music and television industry. He has been a voice coach for the TV talent show The Voice UK and is currently vocal coach stars such as Fleur East, Little Mix and JP Cooper. Joshua's video enhanced vocal style course Mad About Vocal Style part 1 was launched in 2014 to rave reviews. [CLICK HERE](#) to find part 1 of the course on iTunes. Joshua is also the co-founder of Ultimate Artists, the UK's most in demand artist development camp (nine days of music industry mentorship and artist development).



<http://www.joshuaalamu.com>



# THE ART OF KISS PRINCE'S BLUES

**T**he passing of the artist ultimately known as Prince left a void in the music universe. (Geez, how many music icons do we have to lose this year...stahhhp...please...). Reams have already been written of his genius level contributions to the lexicon of pop music. To honour him, I thought we could take a look at his song *Kiss*.

## Chords

*Kiss* is based on a 12 bar blues pattern in the key of A.

As a reminder, here is the chord progression to a standard\* 12 bar blues:

\*(I use the term "standard" very loosely. There are MANY ways to play a 12 bar blues.)

**A7...A7...A7...A7**

**D7...D7...A7...A7**

**E7...D7...A7...E7**

Each of those chords represents one measure. Line one is four measures of an A7 chord; line two is two measures of D7, followed by two measures of A7; line three is a measure of E7, a measure of D7, a measure of A7, and a measure of E7.

Prince alters this pattern of the last line replacing the last two chords by repeating E7 and D7 (with the addition of that signature funky E7 guitar strum right before he sings "kiss" after the last D7 chord). His progression looks like this:

**A7...A7...A7...A7**

**D7...D7...A7...A7**

**E7...D7...E7...D7 (E7)**

He also doubles the time of each measure, making each line feel like eight measures, instead of four. This extra time on each chord makes the progression slow and sensual. Prince is seducing us, taunting us, playing with us.

## Melody

There are two main branches of blues melodies: the "minor" or "major" blues. For *Kiss*, Prince chose the more gospel influenced major blues scales, whose note degrees include:

**1 2 b3 3 5 6**

The notes of the major blues scale in the key of A are:

**A B C C# E F#**

Bonus note: Prince tends to end some of his melodic phrases on the flatted 7th degree, which is borrowed from the minor blues scale. TL/DR: Prince ends some of his lines on the note "G".

Prince, singing in the upper limits of his falsetto, keeps the melodic range fairly tight, the majority of the action happens within a five note range except for a sneaky lower run when he sings "yeah", and a brilliant push to a high A when he sings "You don't have to be rich..." in the third verse. That high A is even more special considering it is the second



note of a three octave jump. Wow! Finally, and most importantly, the actual hook “Kiss” is further emphasised from a moment of melodic silence (not counting the five smooches!). The word “kiss” is brilliantly comprised of a descending, major 6 leap, emphasising the two characteristic pitches of the major blues scale (the “3” and the “6”, in other words: the C# and F#) ■

# KISS

## BY PRINCE



KISS - PRINCE

You don't have to be beautiful to turn me on  
I just need your body baby from dusk till dawn  
You don't need experience to turn me out  
You just leave it all up to me, I'm gonna show you what it's all about  
You don't have to be rich to be my girl,  
You don't have to be cool  
To rule my world  
Ain't no particular sign I'm more compatible with  
I just want your extra time and your  
Kiss,  
Oh oh  
You got to not talk dirty, baby  
If you want to impress me  
You can't be too flirty, mama  
I know how to undress me, yeah

I want to be your fantasy  
Maybe you could be mine  
You just leave it all up to me  
We could have a good time  
Don't have to be rich  
To be my girl  
Don't have to be cool  
To rule my world  
Ain't no particular sign I'm more compatible with  
I just want your extra time and your  
Kiss  
Yes, oh oh oh  
Ah  
I think I want to dance, uhh, ooohh  
Gotta, gotta, oh  
Little girl Wendy's parade  
Gotta, gotta, gotta

Women not girls rule my world  
I said they rule my world  
Act your age, mama (not your shoe size)  
Not your shoe size  
Maybe we could do the twirl  
You don't have to watch Dynasty  
To have an attitude  
You just leave it all up to me  
My love will be your food  
Yeah  
You don't have to be rich  
To be my girl  
You don't have to be cool  
To rule my world  
Ain't no particular sign I'm more compatible with  
I just want your extra time and your  
Kiss

## SHANE ADAMS



Shane Adams is a twice Grammy nominated music educator (non self-nominated), award-winning producer, composer, songwriter, and author. Shane is president of Artist Accelerator and is a founding lyric/songwriting instructor for Berklee Online. Shane is a featured songwriter and instructor for the Taylor Swift Education Center at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. They honoured him with their TOP TEN HITMAKER award for 2014. He is recognised internationally as a groundbreaking songwriting lecturer and music production panelist. Shane's current projects include developing two songwriting apps for the iPad platform and producing and co-hosting the songwriting podcast Studio Soundtrack available on iTunes. Shane's book: The Singer-Songwriter's Guide to Recording in the Home Studio, is available online and most bookstores.



<http://www.artistaccelerator.com>

An illustration depicting a scene from an audition. In the background, three people are seated at a light green table. On the left, a woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black sleeveless top, rests her head on her hand with a bored expression. In the center, a man with a beard and a blue shirt looks frustrated, holding his head with one hand and his mouth open as if shouting or singing. On the right, a man in a black jacket and red shirt holds a blue coffee cup and a red smartphone. The table is cluttered with a laptop, a glass of water, papers, and a pen. In the foreground, a woman with long red hair, wearing a black top with yellow polka dots, is shown from the side, smiling and playing a red acoustic guitar. The overall style is flat and modern with a muted color palette.

# How to shine in auditions

It's not always easy to get producers to sit up and take notice. Industry expert MICHELLE COHEN shares her audition tips.



# Audition tips from a producer

**G**rowing up as a concert singer and musical theatre performer, I always loved performing but hated auditioning. I kept worrying “What do they want? What are they thinking?”

Then the tables turned. As a producer, director and coach, I began auditioning other people instead of standing in front of the production team myself. And finally I fully understood the real secret to auditions. Those people staring at you? Here is what they are thinking: “Please be good! Dear God, after waking up early, sitting for hours, wondering ‘Will this ever end?’ I am begging you to be the one.”

They are just dying for you to blow them away and solve their predicament. I now understand ways to absolutely thrill people into hiring you.

The main thing to keep in mind is that they are not only wondering are you talented but are you a) reliable and b) someone they want to hang out with for hours on end? There are so many elements to putting a production together. Are you someone to be counted on to not become a headache? If you show you can be trusted you will become someone who gets hired and recommended again and again with enthusiasm.

## Please don't...

- Show up for auditions ill prepared. This is something that you have control over, so why throw that to the wind?

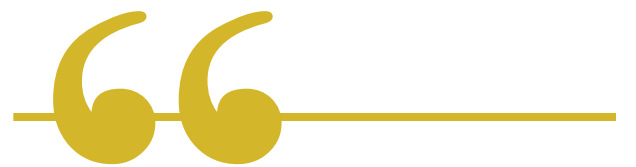
Don't get there on time. I repeat. Don't get there on time. Get there EARLY. Give yourself the gift of being completely ready before your appointment and give everyone the confidence that you are responsible.

## Please do...

- This will sound odd, but please bathe and wear clean, tidy clothes. The auditioner is contemplating time with you. Also, help them see your body and that you are comfortable in it. Don't be afraid to create a look that makes you stand out, but don't wear something that might frighten people. Remember, they are trying to decide if they want to be around you.
- Anticipate there are little tests going on where you least expect it because those carrying out the auditions are trying to glean as much information about you as possible. I always have one of my friends act as monitor. That is the person who takes your name and gets you ready to go into the audition. Why do I do this? Because I want to know how you treat people. You may be the nicest person to me in the audition room, but if I find out later you were rude and obnoxious to your fellow colleagues and haughty to my monitor, why would I want to work with you?
- Make friends with the accompanist if you are bringing in sheet music.

Say hello and thank them in advance for assisting you. I always watch this interaction as it shows me how you inter-relate with the people who will ultimately be working with you.

- Tell the truth on your résumé or bio or when answering questions. I promise you, you will be caught if you lie. What level of experience you have is always obvious. If you are incredibly talented and lovely at your audition, that will go a long way towards getting you the role over someone else who has worked a lot but is not necessarily as gifted or as nice. If you start to think of auditioning as a way to show what a great friend you can be, the life of the party or the awesome steady person that everyone counts on, you will have a completely different aura about you from the second you enter the room.



If you are incredibly talented and lovely at your audition, that will go a long way towards getting you the role



# And remember...

- Make every second count. Smiling helps. If you like, joke around with the people waiting outside with you so that you enter laughing. Who wouldn't want to work with someone who knows how to have fun? Don't slink in nervously fidgeting and looking slightly nauseous. Everyone knows you are probably nervous, but you have already proven you are brave by showing up.

- Don't get thrown if those auditioning you ask you questions. Even weird ones. They are trying to get a sense of who you are and how you handle challenges. Just be engaging and open and if you feel like it, funny. If you don't want to answer a specific question, feel free to deflect it in a fun way. If asked to make

an adjustment, it is really important that you feel confident enough to drop what you have rehearsed and try something new. They are merely seeing if you can take direction or are curious to see a different element of your talent. Don't freak. It's just an experiment. And don't be shy about getting help. Again, they want you to be good, so help them help you.

- When it is time to present your song, feel free to take over the room. There is nothing better than letting everyone know that they can sit back and enjoy themselves, a professional is now in charge.

- Also, your exit from the room needs

to be as impressive as your entrance. Don't storm out, don't be dejected. You have no idea whether you gave them what they needed. So stay upbeat and positive and make them miss you when you leave.

As for getting a gig or not getting a gig, I can promise you one thing — there is so much more going on than you will ever imagine behind the scenes so don't take it personally. Many times it has nothing to do with what you presented. I have sometimes been made ill over people whom I thought were the most talented performers I have ever seen yet I couldn't hire them for reasons that would make your head spin ■

## MICHELLE COHEN



A multi-faceted writer, director, producer, performer and coach, Michelle Cohen and her diverse projects have been featured on CNN, Good Morning America, MTV, NPR's All Things Considered, and in People magazine and Entertainment Weekly. Michelle has been an adjunct member of faculty at several acting schools, including NYU and has privately coached actors and singers for decades. Her book, *Of Course You Can Sing!*, has been translated into inspirational coaching lessons by text and voice Mail. Michelle also produced the off-Broadway mega-hit, *Schoolhouse Rock Live!* in New York.



[http:// www.michellecohenprojects.com](http://www.michellecohenprojects.com)



# *singing* CAREERS



**ON THE COVER** Frances, on the rise



**WORKING SINGER** The rise of a West End girl



**MUSICAL THEATRE** Oliver Tompsett, what a guy!



**INTERVIEW** Balsamo Deighton, British Americana



**INTERVIEW** Miss Beehive makes a return to pop







on the  
**COVER**

**FIRING UP, FRANCES**

ARTIST/SINGER & SONGWRITER



# Professional Profile

## FRANCES

London, UK



**Q SINGING PROFESSION?**  
Artist/singer and songwriter.

**Q FIRST INSTRUMENT?**  
Violin (piano now).

**Q FIRST SONG YOU PENNED?** *Unbreakable* when I was 13.

**Q AGE YOU REALISED YOU WANTED TO BE AN ARTIST?**  
18, previously just wanted to be a songwriter.

**Q WHAT DID YOUR PARENTS SAY ABOUT THAT?**  
Very encouraging, if a little nervous I'm sure!

**Q A SONG YOU WISH YOU'D WRITTEN, WHY?**  
*Firework* by Katy Perry. It's uplifting and empowering but without being cheesy. A hard balance to strike.

**Q FAVOURITE PLACE TO WRITE?**  
At home when no one else is in the house.

**Q NAME DROPPING (PEOPLE YOU'VE WORKED WITH)**

Sam Smith, James Bay, Disclosure, Greg Kurstin, Linda Perry, Jimmy Napes.

**Q WHO ARE YOU LISTENING TO NOW AND WHY?**

New Radiohead album, Liv Dawson, Drake, The Chainsmokers, Honne, all sorts! I love keeping up to date with new music, but at the same time I always go back to my old favourites.

**Q WHAT YOU WISH YOU'D KNOWN FROM THE START?**

As an artist you also have to be a PR expert, model, fashionista, social media guru and serious business person.

**Q UPCOMING GIGS/ PROJECTS?**

Debut album, summer full of festivals including Glastonbury, Bestival, T in the Park, Latitude, Longitude, Festival No.6 and others in Europe and the US.

**GET SOCIAL**  
with Frances





**C**urrent talk of the industry is singer/songwriter Sophie Cooke, aka Frances. She has been featured on BBC Live, toured as support and artist in the UK, Europe and USA and was shortlisted for the Critics Choice Award at the Brits this year. As they say, there is no smoke without fire, Line Hilton spoke to Frances to find out why the industry is all fired up about this talented redhead.

**iSing:** You're a multi instrumentalist, so why singing?

**FRANCES:** I love playing music, but singing is a way to communicate with words and share things with complete strangers. It's empowering and beautiful all at the same time.

**iSing:** First singer/songwriter you noticed, and what about them attracted you?

**F:** Carole King. The songs attracted me first. Her voice is beautiful and an amazing means of delivering her incredible songs. But it's the songs that really attracted me. To be able to sum up how so many people in the world have felt is just amazing.

**iSing:** Which five music industry people (alive or dead) would you like at your "ideal" dinner party and why?

**F:** Michael Jackson, Carole King, Rick Rubin, Chris Martin and Bjork. The talent around the table would be outrageous, and they're all not

just great artists but producers, songwriters and icons.

**iSing:** You are rumoured to have perfect pitch. How does this help and hinder you as a musician, singer and songwriter?

**F:** It helps sometimes because if I hear something in my head, I know what the notes are so I can write songs very quickly if I want to. I can write hooks in my head and immediately sing them into the mic without having to experiment using my voice (saves my voice working too hard). But at the same time, it can be frustrating always knowing exactly what sound is going to come out when I press notes on the piano. I'd like to be surprised sometimes as I feel like it could make my writing better and open me up to combinations I may not have thought of. Sometimes I shut my eyes and play, or try writing on a different instrument that I'm not as familiar with.

**iSing:** How did your signing with Capitol come about?

**F:** We were meeting a few different labels, but I knew the team from Capitol were perfect for me. Their dreams matched mine, they were so passionate but at the same time they were not at all afraid to tell me where I could improve and how they might challenge me. That's what really sold them to me because I just want to be pushed and challenged and so far they're doing pretty well at that.

**iSing:** How did your artist name "Frances" come about?

**F:** It's my middle name. I felt like not being "Sophie" on stage could help me separate my artistic life from my home life. It's working so far.

**iSing:** You've been supporting such great artists such as Sam Smith, James Bay and working with people like Disclosure. How have these experiences helped you in your development as an artist so far?



DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME – FRANCES



**F:** They've been amazing. It's really inspiring to meet artists who are further ahead in their careers. They're very inspiring and make you realise that things really are possible if you work hard enough.

**iSing:** What surprises you about the music industry to date?

**F:** The amount that an artist has to do as well as singing and writing — interviews, press shoots, showcases, meeting fans, signing, negotiating and essentially being the boss/final voice of a 20 to 30 person team. I wasn't quite prepared for that, but I'm loving it.

**iSing:** What annoys you?

**F:** There are "annoying" parts to every job I'm sure. But if I ever feel annoyed I just have to remember that I'm getting to do my hobby/passion every day of my life, and for that I'm

incredibly lucky.

**iSing:** What role does vocal care and technique have in your singing?

**F:** It plays a huge role. I have a vocal lesson once a week when possible, and I try to exercise my voice around that as much as possible too. It can be hard to fit it in sometimes but even 10 to 15 minutes here and there feels beneficial to me.

**iSing:** Do you have any specific vocal exercise that work well for you?

**F:** I use a small straw pretty much every day. Even if I'm not singing, I feel like it gets my voice ready for a day of talking or even just singing round the house or laughing which I do a lot of.

**iSing:** You attended the Liverpool

Institute for Performing Arts, what are the pros and cons of taking a formal educational route as a music artist?

**F:** Those kinds of schools are great, and I loved my time at mine. But you really get out what you put in. It's all about being around like minded people and just throwing yourself into as many musical experiences as possible. One con I can think of is that some people can feel like they're going to walk out with a record deal, or like an opportunity is going to arrive on their doorstep one day. I worked out fairly quickly that that wasn't the case, and made a promise to myself that I would be a signed writer and artist before I left so that I didn't have the graduation scare I'd seen my peers have. So I signed to Capitol and Universal Publishing during the first term of my third





year. I'm not entirely sure how, but I did everything I could including writing until 3am or 4am a lot of nights. I believe you create your own luck.

**iSing:** Do you think artists should get training of any kind? What kind of training in particular?

**F:** I think vocal training is very important – you have got to keep that voice healthy and happy. Media training is also pretty important. Just understanding how to avoid a tricky or intrusive question whilst still remaining polite and charming.

**iSing:** Live versus recording, which do you prefer and why?

**F:** Recording. I love performing live, but the studio is my habitat. Creating music is just so special.

**iSing:** You recently played Coachella, what did you enjoy about it? Any surprises?

**F:** The atmosphere was amazing with

beautiful surroundings and amazing artists. The conditions were pretty harsh on the voice though. It's in the desert so you're constantly moving between 35 degree heat and then your lovely air conditioned dressing room. Add to that the dryness and dust in the air, especially when the wind picks up. So that was certainly a challenge.

**iSing:** You are very involved with producing your music. Tell us what aspects in particular you like to control and why.

**F:** I generally write every part that's played on my records. Guitar lines, bass parts, drum patterns and obviously the piano and vocal parts. I have a lot of say on the mixing as well, I'm a little nerd underneath it all. That's not to say that I'm averse to other people's ideas at all though. I love collaboration and I've collaborated a lot on my debut album, both in terms of writing and the production.



**iSing:** Tell us about your song *Don't Worry About Me*. Who did you write it for and why?

**F:** The song is about someone close to me who was unwell, and me wanting to tell them to not worry about me and to concentrate on themselves because it's my turn to be strong for them.

**iSing:** What advice would you give some who wanted to become a signed artist today?

**F:** You just have to work really hard and keep at it. If you're good enough then someone will sign you at some point, even if it takes a few years. And in the meantime there is nothing stopping you from releasing independently and getting things going on your own.

**iSing:** What is your overall goal as an artist?

**F:** I've always just wanted to move people with my songs and to make people feel something. To share my music and give back to an industry that has provided me with so much joy would be just wonderful.

**iSing:** What's next for Frances?

**F:** Lots of festivals over the summer and then my debut album towards the end of the year. So lots of travelling and experiencing lots of new things. It's an exciting time ■



GROW – FRANCES

# The rise of a WEST END GIRL



It's like a  
candy store  
for those  
who love the  
old song and  
dance



TANYA NICOLE EDWARDS

From California to Calcutta, music is a universal language. You can travel the globe and no matter what language you speak, the melodies and various instruments serve as a translator and unifier for music lovers of every kind. As a touring singer, I love that no matter what city I'm in, I can tap into a local bar, open mic, coffee shop or night club and find people who share my passion for music.

So jazz lovers have numerous festivals around the world in places such as Rotterdam, Montreaux and Cape Town. For country music, there is Calgary, and various cities in Australia. And for those who love the lights of the Big Apple's Broadway, there is London's West End theatre district.

It's like a candy store for those who love the old song and dance, set amidst restaurants, shopping and tourist souvenir traps. Many historic theatres host musical revivals, plays and even some of the newer theatrical presentations that have made their way around the world.

As a singer, especially one who can act, musical theatre can be a lucrative career. When stability and security is an issue in the entertainment industry, the promise of a paid, long-term contract is the answer.

I grew up watching movie

versions of musicals such as *West Side Story* and *Singin' in the Rain*, so it's a nice treat to see a live show. In August of last year, I saw *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, and was blown away by a richly diverse and talented cast.

One performer, Tanya Nicole Edwards, stood out to me as she sang, laughed and danced effortlessly across the stage, and I just had to meet her.

I introduced myself after the show, and she informed me she would be soon ending her contract to begin a new one with *Motown: The Musical*. Tanya Nicole's talent and determination has led her to be a part of the musical theatre community for several years.

She has appeared in: *Motown: The Musical* (Shaftesbury Theatre), *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Aldwych), *The Book of Mormon* (The Prince Of Wales Theatre), *Hairspray* (Singapore and Malaysia tour), *Dirty Dancing* (Aldwych), *The Lion King* (Lyceum), and *The Legend of the Lion King* (EuroDisney).

Tanya has found her niche and made a home in the West End, but her story doesn't end there.

In this issue of iSing, we catch up with Miss Edwards and find out where this West End girl will end up next ■



# Tanya's top tips

1. Vocal warm ups (before auditions or just to stay in shape)
2. Physical warm ups are just as important for vocals so complete a 10 minute skip and stretch
3. Research agents and never target only one, send your CV to a number of agents as you're a little fish in a huge pond
4. Prepare for auditions, never leave learning a song to the last minute
5. To grow as a performer means having patience and being a sponge, learn something new at every opportunity from show to show and gig to gig



DENOSH BENNETT MEETS WEST END GIRL TANYA NICOLE EDWARDS

## DENOSH BENNETT



Denosh Bennett is a Canadian-born singer, dancer and artistic director with two decades of experience in the entertainment industry. Her versatility and broad résumé has led her to tour as a dancer and/or backing vocalist with many international artists including Faith Evans, Justin Timberlake, Alicia Keys, Drake, Whitney Houston, Robbie Williams, Demi Lovato and Rihanna.



<http://DenoshBennett.com>

# OLIVER TOMPSETT

## What a Guy

MUSICAL THEATRE STAR OLIVER TOMPSETT TALKS TO ISING'S BRONWYN BIDWELL

**Q CURRENT JOB:** Sky Masterson in *Guys And Dolls* on the West End.

**Q PAST JOBS:** Paperboy, sales assistant at Superdrug, giant promotional banana.

**Q VOCAL RANGE:** Lowish to pretty high...I stopped worrying about notes a long time ago. Apply your technique and either hit or don't.

**Q VOCAL ROLE MODELS:** Stevie Wonder, Michael Bolton and my Dad.

**Q WHAT DID YOU THINK AFTER YOUR FIRST PRO JOB?** Wow doesn't doing it eight times a week take away some of the fun! But hey it's better than a nine to five job.

**Q NAME DROPPING (TELL US SOME OF THE PEOPLE YOU HAVE WORKED WITH):** Brian May, Roger Taylor, Idina Menzel, Shane Ward, Darren Day and most West End performers between the ages of 30 and 40.

**Q SHOWS YOU HAVE BEEN IN:** *Our House, Mamma Mia, Over my Shoulder, Kismet, West Side Story,*

*Royal Hunt of the Sun, Wicked, Rock of Ages, We Will Rock You, White Christmas and Guys and Dolls.*

**Q THREE THINGS YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT WHEN PERFORMING:** An interval, a day off and water.

**Q WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE MT SINGER:** Kerry Ellis, Louise Dearman or Alice Fearn.

**Q FUNNIEST (UNSCRIPTED) MOMENT:** Delivering the a "I'm the man" speech in *Guys and Dolls* before *Sit down you're rocking the boat* and, upon exiting, walking face first into the pole right behind me. Or just most shows performing opposite Rachel Wooding in *We Will Rock You*.



If I thought I had already had my career highlight I would stop driving forward to achieve more and surprise people.





# OLIVER TOMPSETT

**iSing:** You're currently playing Sky Masterson in *Guys and Dolls* on the West End, what are the challenges of the role?

**OT:** The challenge at first was to honour the incredible world and characters that Damon Runyon had created. To play a tough chauvinistic gambler that the audience will like, but yet believe has lived a life of sin and is actually kind of dangerous, is difficult. I also have to remain the charming loveable romantic male lead, so it is a hard tone to hit spot on. I still think I can push the boundaries each way to see what I can get away with. If I can make Sarah Brown (the female romantic lead) wary of me, yet charm the socks off her, then hopefully the audience should feel the same. I have done a lot of high tenor roles but Sky is a low baritone role so it has been a challenge to find the vocal tone not to mention the low notes, but I'm getting there.

**iSing:** Are there many similarities between you and professional gambler Sky?

**OT:** I like a gamble every now and then but I'm not a massive risk taker with money. I tend to avoid danger but I am not frightened by it. I have always had the utmost respect for women. Saying that I am a chancer — if I need to get my way I will always turn on the charm offensive. I love a game and I love a challenge. I remember as a young lad enjoying the chase of the opposite sex but I am also a bit of a romantic and have my own Sarah Brown now — minus working for the Salvation Army.

**iSing:** You've had a number of roles in big West End productions, what



MEET THE PRINCIPALS OF THE WEST END CAST OF GUYS AND DOLLS

**is your career highlight so far?**

**OT:** It's very hard to compare all of my roles as different jobs come with different perks. How can you compare the pleasure of being part of the legend that is *Wicked* versus playing the part of Drew in the original London cast of the show that was a party every night in *Rock of Ages*? How can you compare singing *Bohemian Rhapsody* in *We Will Rock You* at the Dominion with Roger Taylor and Brian May playing alongside you versus the actor's gift of a role such as Sky Masterson in arguably one of the best musicals of all time *Guys and Dolls*? It's impossible to choose. I realise just how lucky I am. It sounds like I'm bragging but honestly I find it impossible to compare. If I thought I had already had my career highlight I would stop driving forward to achieve more and surprise people. Never underestimate what someone might achieve.

**iSing:** Performing in a West End show can be gruelling, how do

**you look after yourself and your voice? What's your vocal routine?**

**OT:** I try to stay on top of my voice with discipline and through seeking the advice from the most respected singing teachers. But fitness and health are a massive factor in how strong your voice may feel. So I try to start with myself and my well-being before trying to improve on my voice. Different roles demand different vocal qualities and to remain working in top flight theatre you have to be a chameleon.

**iSing:** Do you have any rituals/tricks to help deal with the pressure of performing?

**OT:** Once when I was stressing about a show, making myself tense and worried about what might happen if I mucked up, someone said to me "You're not packing parachutes". This phrase now calms me down instantly. If I have a bad one no one dies — just a bit of my ego. I think is healthy have a good ego debt every now and then.



**iSing:** You've worked a lot with composer Scott Alan (and recorded an album of his songs with Cynthia Erivo last year). Can you tell us more about that particular collaboration?

**OT:** Over the years Scott has become a dear friend of mine and when I can I will always rock up and sing one of his songs. His lyrics are heart breaking and his melodies soar. What's not to like.

**iSing:** The blogosphere is very complimentary about your performances of Scott's work. What do you think makes singing his songs so special?

**OT:** Scott has great pop sensibility which is rare in musical theatre writing. There are way better pop singers out there and there are better musical theatre singers out there but I sit somewhere in the middle marrying the big melodies with the heart of an actor and I guess that I get Scott and I understand where every lyric comes from (nearly).



Fitness and health are a massive factor in how strong your voice may feel



JOURNEY'S DON'T STOP BELIEVING - PERFORMED BY WEST END CAST OF ROCK OF ALL AGES



OLIVER TOMPSETT AS SKY MASTERSON IN GUYS AND DOLLS. PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHAN PERSSON



“  
I was attracted  
to all aspects  
of storytelling

**iSing:** What's the best piece of advice about the business someone has given you?

**OT:** Take every performance opportunity there is be it karaoke, monologue open mic nights, school productions or local theatre. We are all capable of being free on stage and acting the socks off a character or singing like we do in the shower but it's the little voices of inhibition that stop us from being great.

The little negative thoughts that go off in your head need to be fought with the voices of self-belief. Negative thoughts will always be there but the more you put yourself in challenging situations the more confident the other positive voices will get and cover those negative voices with cheers and words of encouragement. If you had done an exam ten times you'd feel a lot less nervous doing for the 11th and even more confident on the 100th and so on.

Once you've done 50 auditions you're likely to feel better in auditions so if you have sung a song in 30 karaoke bars or at a local theatre or even your living room for your friends and family you are going to feel better than if you just do it for the first time. There's that saying: "If you fail to prepare then prepare to fail."



STAY BY SCOTT ALAN - PERFORMED BY OLIVER TOMPSETT

**iSing:** What drew you to musical theatre in the first place?

**OT:** I was attracted to all aspects of storytelling — through dance through dialogue and through music. Sadly in this country it is hard to prove you can tell a story through several mediums and not get pigeon-holed.

Yes my career has been predominantly musical theatre but I am an actor, I am a singer and I am sometimes an average dancer, but I am proud and grateful for the work I have done. The snobbery that goes against musical theatre in a lot of cases comes from other performers' shortcomings. I have done a few plays and it is a whole lot easier finding the truth and telling a story with heart when you don't have to break into song and dance every five minutes.

**iSing:** Where do you see yourself in five years?

**OT:** Hopefully happy that I have no idea where I'm gonna be in another five years ■

“  
We are all  
capable of being  
free on stage and  
acting the socks  
off a character or  
singing like we  
do in the shower

**GET SOCIAL  
WITH OLIVER**





# British Americana

## A new genre?

Steve Balsamo on playing Jesus, joining forces with fellow singer/songwriter Rosalie Deighton and returning to his musical roots.

By Bronwyn Bidwell

He made his name on stage as the lead in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, but Steve Balsamo, one half of Balsamo Deighton, has always written and played his own music. With his latest album, a country-esque collaboration with Rosalie Deighton called *Unfolding*, he heads back to his roots. The duo spoke to iSing about Messiahs, melodies and making it in the music business.

**iSing:** Is it true that you were told as a child that you couldn't sing? Given this advice what made you decide to pursue a singing career?

**STEVE BALSAMO:** Haha, it's true. In school I wasn't allowed to join the school choir. We had to get up and sing *Morning Has Broken* in front of everyone else, and I was very sad I didn't get in, but my mate Andrew did. I always believed I could sing, I loved it and never stopped. My late mum said I literally sang before I could speak, and would always sing myself to sleep. Interestingly two children do the same thing now.





**iSing:** At 21, after cutting your teeth singing in working men's clubs in Wales, you landed a role with a touring production of *Les Misérables*. How did that work out for you?

**SB:** It worked out perfectly I think. Having sung in pubs and clubs, I attended a performing arts course at Neath College in South Wales. The singing teacher Rhian played me some songs from *Les Mis* and I loved Colm Wilkinson's voice and the songs. She thought I had a similar tone to Colm [who had played the lead role of Jean Valjean in the West End and on Broadway], and taught me *Bring Him Home* and a few others. The college was doing a production of *Superstar* and I got to play Jesus. Spookily, during the last crucifixion scene of our run, I had this overwhelming feeling that I'd play the role again...

I was on the college course for three months when an open audition for *Les Mis* was advertised in *The Stage*. I took the early train from Swansea, drank buckets of coffee and was first in line for the audition at 10am, wired and full of youthful swagger. I sang *Bring Him Home* and *Gethsemane* and was quickly ushered into a room with Cameron Mackintosh the producer. I was clueless and didn't realise the significance and that he was the boss. I got in, joined the cast and toured with the show for a year and a half. It was fantastic training, and I made a lot of lasting friendships, but at the end of the run, although the director encouraged me to audition for other roles, at that time I wanted to get back to writing and playing my own music. So that's what I did. I went back to Wales and formed a band.

**iSing:** So what made you go and audition for *Jesus Christ Superstar* (JCS)?

**SB:** A friend from *Les Mis*, Jonathon Greator, had stopped acting and become an agent. He called and asked what I was up to. I said I was writing songs and looking for a recording deal. He told me about *Superstar* and asked if I'd like to audition, with a view of getting the role and securing a recording deal. Looking back, intention and the naivety of youth is a powerful thing. I auditioned 14 times, won the role, won an award and got a record deal with Sony.

**iSing:** In terms of working on JCS, how did working in that show impact your understanding of voice and performance?

**SB:** The great singing teacher Mary Hammond was looking after the show, and she gave me some excellent advice. I began to realise that rest, warm ups and downs, no smoking and keeping boozing in check were all essential in keeping

healthy and maintaining a healthy voice for eight shows a week.

**iSing:** *Gethsemane* is one of the well known songs in JCS — a notoriously difficult song to sing — with some wildly high Gs. How did you prepare to sing the song back then, could you do it now?

**SB:** Back in Neath College, Rhian the singing teacher and I worked on the song, and luckily it was within my range, having covered Deep Purple songs in bands years before (Ian Gillan is Purple's singer and the original Jesus). We looked at every Jesus that had come before, I stole my favourite bits and changed the scream in the middle section to, I believe, a more theatrical rising scale to the high G falsetto note. I love the fact that this has been mostly adopted by the interpretations that have come after me, and Rhian, the brilliant JCS musical director Mike Dixon and I have left a little bit of us in the notes of the song



GETHSEMANE FROM JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR - PERFORMED BY STEVE BALSAMO

“  
Sometimes  
an idea will  
rattle around  
my head  
and demand  
attention. I  
have one of  
those right now  
that just needs  
to escape.

**iSing:** What happened after JCS?

**SB:** I signed a deal with Sony and travelled around the world for about five years writing songs with some of the best writers on the planet and really learning the craft. I released a solo album, *All I Am*, got in the charts, and even got to play on *Top of the Pops*.

**iSing:** How did you find the experience of going solo after being so closely associated with Andrew Lloyd Weber's musical JCS?

**SB:** It was interesting, as back then there was a clear demarcation of theatre and pop/rock music. However, as I came from rock bands, it was as if I was going back to that rather than changing direction. It's all music, and all I've ever tried to do is make music with as much authenticity and soul as I can, regardless of genre.

**iSing:** How have you coped with/managed the disappointments of the music industry? What keeps you going?

**SB:** Doing anything creative is precarious, tough and real hard work. I believe everything is an experience to learn from, so even though knock backs sting, I view them as invaluable learning. Singing, music and writing is in me, and it's something I will always do...I'm a lifer! There's something magical about getting together with like-minded writers, sitting in a room with nothing, and coming out a few hours or days later with feelings distilled into a song. It is alchemy and I can't think of a time in this life when I won't be doing it.

**iSing:** Do you have any kind of vocal routine? Or coaching?

**SB:** I take singing very seriously and I see a great teacher in London called Mark Meylan. I warm up and do exercises every day. I steam, trill and am dedicated to always learning more about my voice.

**iSing:** Your band the Storys toured with the likes of Elton John, Santana, Celine Dion and Joe Cocker. Can you tell us more about that? What did you learn from them?

**SB:** It was like going to school. Being around people of that level of greatness is interesting in lots of ways.

How they are, how people relate to them, how they work, and getting a little glimpse into their world was amazing. They were all charming, and although they have god-like status to some they are just people, albeit with exceptional gifts.

Speaking to Elton before one of the shows, just after he been to collect an award from a music magazine, and seeing how excited he was after meeting one of his heroes, Scott Walker, was fabulous. It

just goes to show you even heroes have heroes.

**iSing:** How does the song writing process work for you?

**SB:** I'm constantly writing words down and recording ideas into my phone. There are more than 200 snippets at the moment, some of which will be developed. Every few weeks, I'll take a look and see which jump out, and work on them. Sometimes an idea will rattle around my head and demand attention. I have one of those right now that just needs to escape.

**iSing:** Now in terms of the duo – how did it come about? How did you and Rosalie get together and what was it that made you decide as a duo it would work?

**SB:** Rosalie and I met about 15 years ago in the London recording studio of producer Martin Terefe. Martin was producing tracks for our respective major label albums. We love the same music, have a similar sense of humour and really like each other's voices, and way back then said at some point we'd write together. Years later Rosie came and supported The Storys and, when one of the members left, she joined the band, writing and recording our third album, *Luck*. When the band called it a day, we decided that the time was right to make a duet record.

**iSing:** Balsamo Deighton's new album *Unfolding* was four years in the making. Can you tell us more about it?

**SB:** We had no time frame, and really took our time writing and recording it. We wrote about 30 songs, and it was very tough making a 12 song album. Since we started, some people close to us have died and some have been born, so a lot



of life passed under the *Unfolding* bridge, as it were. Some of the experiences were channelled into the songs, and we are very proud of the album we've created. We think it's beautiful.

**iSing:** It's been described as Americana but how do you describe your music with Balsamo Deighton?

**SB:** It has influences of folk, as Rosalie comes from a traditional family band, The Deighton Family, that played cajun, blues and folk music and found success worldwide. We both like country music, so there's a little of that, and there is a little Americana in the mix too. But we think it's poppy and rocky in places, as we gravitate towards radio friendly choruses. Ultimately it is an album of good songs that the two of us love to listen to.

**iSing:** Tell us about working with Julian Wilson (of Grand Drive) on the album?

**SB:** We worked with a few great songwriting friends on the album that we both love. Julian is such a tasty and clever songwriter and we are both huge fans of him and his brother Danny, of Danny And The Champs (Rosalie was in them for a while). We also had Andy Collins of The Storys write some beautiful tunes, a great writer Mick Lister and producers Tim Hamill and Ben Robbins who are both fabulous writers. We also covered an amazing Jackson Browne song *Sky Blue And Black*.

**iSing:** There are lots of female/male duo country-esque groups around at the moment, why do you think this is?

**SB:** I think everything is cyclical, and the mix of male and female in harmony will always appeal. There is also a resurgence of country and roots music in the UK, so



LIGHT IN THE DARK - BALSAMO DEIGHTON

it's a wave that we are very happy surfing.

**iSing:** What's next for Balsamo Deighton?

**SB:** We will be touring *Unfolding*, starting to write and collect songs for the next album, and heading over to Nashville to start that process.

**iSing:** Why do you think Balsamo Deighton works so well?

**ROSALIE DEIGHTON:** I think it works so well because we both like the same music, are moved by very similar things, and that our voices blend beautifully. Some people like you to dance when you hear their music, we just want to break your heart!

**iSing:** Has working with Steve changed your approach to music/signwriting or singing?

**RD:** I always learn from everyone I work with. With a specific duet/harmony album, there are parameters we have to work in for the music to really chime. We have this almost psychic approach to both writing and singing, which is unspoken, spooky and very easy. It's quite effortless

and lovely, and something I don't want to think too much about...it just happens.

**iSing:** How has working in a duo impacted your music industry experience?

**RD:** Only in that since we started, there have been lots of people recording as a duo. It seems the cool thing to do.

**iSing:** What is the secret to a great vocal blend?

**RD:** Space, respect, knowing when not to sing. It's what Emmylou Harris calls "the rub"; that indefinable chill you get when you know there is something beautiful happening ■

**GET SOCIAL  
WITH BALSAMO  
DEIGHTON**



# MISS BEEHIVE MAKES A RETURN TO POP

In the 1980s she rose to fame singing pop-soul songs while sporting a skyscraping beehive. Three decades later Mari Wilson is still going strong.

She spoke to Bronwyn Bidwell about her career.

**M**ari Wilson's fans can take the credit for her latest album coming together. Not only did they keep asking Mari to make it, they funded it as well through crowdsourcing site Pledge Music.

The result is *Pop Deluxe* a selection of Dusty Springfield, Petula Clark and Cilla Black covers which have been given an electronica makeover thanks to Alastair Gavin (the keyboard player from Mari's 1980s band the Wilsations).

"A lot of artists use Pledge Music these days," Mari said. "Not just people starting out but established names that just don't have record deals, as they are quite hard to come by. I feel for young artists these days. There is very little artist development, if they don't have a hit they are dropped. When I started an artist could have two or three albums without that kind of pressure." Mari has history with Dusty – back in 2000 she toured the UK playing the lead in *Dusty the Musical*. Ever since then fans have emailed and asked for Dusty songs.

"So eventually I decided to just do it," she said. "But I didn't want it to be some kind of tribute act, I wanted to

put my own stamp on the music."

But the Dusty phase is just one part of her varied career which started in Neasden, North London, where Mari grew up surrounded by music (and where she earned the nickname Neasden Queen of Soul). When she left school she combined office jobs with working as a backing vocalist. "But I always wanted to be the lead singer, I just kept working at it," she said.

"Eventually I got a call from a studio saying there was a group with a song, but they had tried it with three different singers and it hadn't really worked."

She went along, the musical chemistry was right, and Mari Wilson and the Wilsations were born. It was the early 1980s and she made several appearances on *Top of the Pops* with a skyscraping beehive and her 12-piece band. The group were renowned for their camp staging – for one *Top of the Pops* performance she was surrounded by giant stacks of pink candy floss. She had six hit singles and spent her time mingling with New Romantic artists like Human League and Boy George. She said: "In those days there was a lot of humour. We loved to dress up and go to the Camden Palace on a Thursday night with people like the Thompson Twins, Culture Club and Frankie Goes





to Hollywood.

“My look just evolved. The hair just got bigger and bigger. I didn’t have a stylist, no one did. We all just developed our own style. If you look at a lot of female singers today, with the exception of Lady Gaga, they all look fairly similar.”

Mari and the band toured Europe in a sleeper bus. “The idea was that we could get straight on the bus after a gig and sleep, but of course no one did.

“Even though I wasn’t really looking after myself too much back then, I only lost my voice once. I went to a Harley Street clinic and the doctor gave me creosote sweets. They tasted liked somebody’s garden fence but they did the job.”

Mari and the band toured the US but by 1985/86 she was keen to get out of her contract. “All we were doing were end of the pier gigs, I wanted more creativity,” she said. After 18 months of wrangling she was finally released.

Mari moved into jazz, learning her trade in Covent Garden wine bars. “Those jazz standards are hard to sing. But that is really how I became a singer. First of all jazz fans were quite cruel, watching with their arms folded thinking ‘you’re a pop singer what can you do?’”



MARI'S NEW ALBUM IS AVAILABLE ON HER WEBSITE  
<http://www.mariwilson.co.uk>



CRY ME A RIVER - PERFORMED BY MARI WILSON ON TOP OF THE POPS

She also took care of herself (as a type 1 diabetic she had to) and her voice. “That means getting enough sleep, not drinking too much and not smoking,” she said

After taking a career break when her daughter was young, she appeared on stage in musicals such as *Dusty*, *Sweet Charity*, *Taboo* and the *Chainsaw Manicure*.

“So I kind of went full circle,” Mari said. “Dusty brought me back to my thing, which is soul/pop.”

Mari’s daughter is now following in her footsteps and is studying songwriting at university.

She said: “I was daunted by the idea at first – it is so different these days, the competition is enormous. I mean did Springsteen study songwriting at university?”

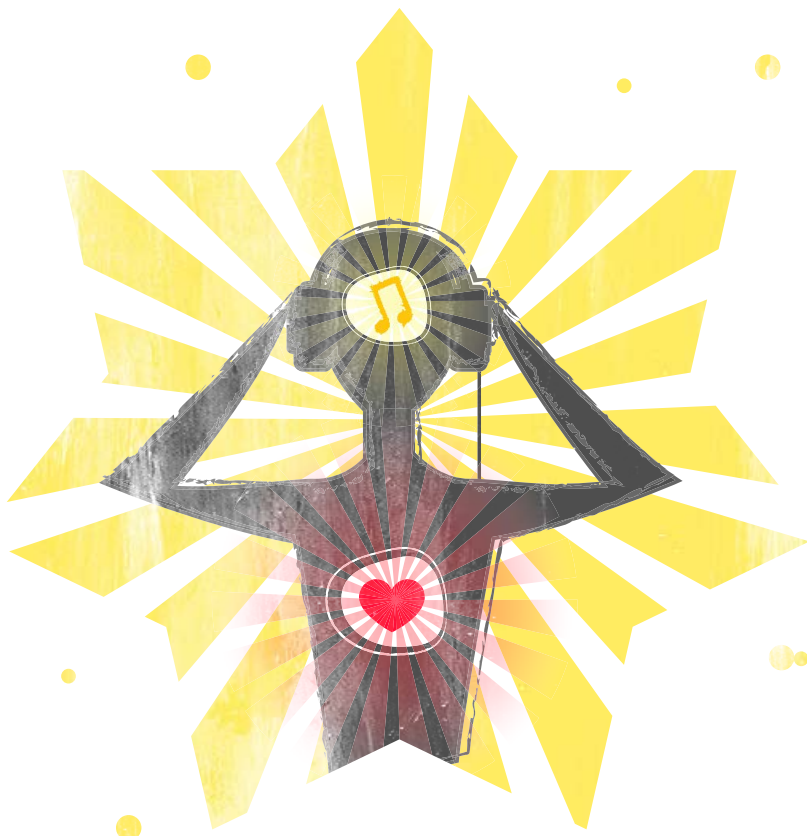
So what advice does Mari have for newcomers to the industry? “Play live, even though I started in a different time it was playing live that taught me about performing.

“That’s the only way you are going to get any good. Practising at home is one thing, but it’s not the same as performing in front of an audience. Eventually all your hard work will pay off.” ■



GET SOCIAL  
WITH MARI





# *mind body* & SOUL



**NUTRITION** Top six supplements for singers



**WELL BEING** Learning through movement –  
the art of Feldenkrais



**MUSIC THERAPY** Rhythm and beat perception



**HI TECH FITNESS** Getting to the core





# TOP 6

## SUPPLEMENTS FOR SINGERS

**T**he voice is obviously a singer's most precious tool and the anxiety surrounding vocal health can often verge on neurotic. I certainly remember early in my career never being able to perform without thinking I had acute laryngitis. However, there are times when there are real reasons to worry.

At [The Balanced Performer](#) (my holistic health clinic in East London) I specialise in working with performers and the all-time number one issue patients present with is — you guessed it — vocal health.

Working with voice-related issues can be a complicated process as they are often entrenched deeply in emotions. But I have devised the Six Supplements for Singers Emergency Tool Kit, which should see vocalists through almost any vocal health mishap, whether it's just to get through a gig with vocal cords like sandpaper or more long term maintenance. I use four companies for my totally natural, organic, high grade, non-synthetic supplements: [Nature's Sunshine](#), [Epigenetics](#), [Nutri Advanced](#) and [Metabolics](#). There are links provided throughout



this article if you want to get yourself stocked up with anything mentioned. These are the products I use myself and in my clinic for my patients and I know them to be highly effective.

#### BUT BEFORE WE START...

Please remember you should always consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking any supplements. This article does not aim to diagnose conditions.

#### 1. OMEGA OILS

You wouldn't dream of running a car without oil and water, so why would we run on empty ourselves? We are just a more complicated type of machine and, at the most basic level, we require water and oil to function. It is estimated the human body is made up of 80% water, and a huge portion of our brain, cells and muscle is fat. If we are not watered and oiled optimally we will not function optimally. In order for water to actually be absorbed into the body it requires oil. Most people are under oiled and dehydrated on the whole. As an essential daily maintenance for your whole body, and to keep your voice hydrated and ticking over, I recommend taking some form of Omega oil supplement. Eating fish three times a week and avocado for breakfast just doesn't cut it.

##### GET SOME:

- [Super omega -3 epa omega](#)
- [Omega 3-6-9 flaxseed](#) (v)

#### 2. A, B, C

I call this the alphabet army defence kit. In a nutshell Vitamin A in beta-carotene form draws moisture and hydration to all the parts of the body that requires it: mouth, eyes,

lungs and throat. The singers I treat swear by dosing up on Vitamin A running up to, during and after a gig. B vitamins are depleted during times of stress and guess what? Giggling and performing is stressful. Supplementing with Bs can aid in stress management, helping us to keep calmer. B vitamins also aid hugely in digestion and we all know stress goes straight to our stomach. Vitamin C is an obvious one to keep the immune system ticking over to combat bacteria and viruses.

##### GET SOME:

- [Vitamin A](#) (beta-carotene and antioxidant)
- [Nutricalm](#) (vitamin B complex with nervous system calming herbs)
- [Vitamin C](#) (with citrus bio-flavonoids)

#### 3. MAGNESIUM

This is referred to in my line of work as "miracle magnesium". This is because it addresses and balances so many ailments it's impossible to list them all. Most general aches, pains, strains and cramps are down to a deficiency in magnesium. This trace mineral is essential for almost every bodily bio-chemic function. If I had it my way almost everyone would be on some form of magnesium supplementation because we are just not getting enough of it from our food. If you are ever stressed (ahem), drink coffee, alcohol, sweat, or take over the counter or pharmaceutical medications then you will probably have a magnesium deficiency.

##### GET SOME:

- [Magnesium](#)

#### 4. FENUGREEK AND THYME

Fenu-what? I know, funky name right? Of all the natural supplements I prescribe to my patients, fenugreek

and thyme is the top all time wonder herb. It is responsible for (like Vitamin A) drawing extra moisture to those areas that need it most.



You wouldn't dream of running a car without oil and water, so why would we run on empty ourselves?



My patients who suffer from dry, scratchy throats, voice loss or any other kind of ear, eye, nose or throat irritation report miraculous symptom loss after taking these magical herbs. It can be administered for almost any upper respiratory condition involving the ears, eyes, nose and throat. In conjunction with Vitamin A the results can be mind-blowing. I know opera singers who say they owe their careers to Vitamin A and fenugreek and thyme.

**GET SOME:**

- **Fenugreek and thyme**

**5. COLLOIDAL SILVER**

Colloidal silver is a liquid solution created using electrolysis to suspend pure, metallic elemental silver in groups of particles of 15 atoms or fewer, each with a positive electric

charge, attached to simple protein molecules, in distilled water. In simple terms, this wonder solution is anti-bacterial, anti-viral and — it's pretty much anti-everything and is my first go to when I feel the dreaded scratch or tickle. A 60 second gargle every few hours usually knocks out any kind of oncoming sore throat or infection. I take a bottle with me everywhere I go. It is also hugely effective for urinary tract infections, cold sores, infected wounds, ear infections, eye infections and most other types of bacterial or viral infection.

**GET SOME:**

- **Silver Shield Liquid**

**6. HIGH POTENCY GRAPINE**

The part of our anatomy we so heavily rely on is so delicate and affected so easily by external forces such as dust,

pollen and smoke. If you've ever suffered with hay fever, dust allergies or asthma right before a performance you will know how debilitating it is. Grapine is another supplement I never leave home without. It is nature's anti-histamine and can eradicate allergic reactions within 20 to 30 minutes. Musty, sweaty, smelly clubs, old dusty dressing rooms and pre-show flowers may never bother you again.

**GET SOME:**

- **Grapine**

**AND A FINAL NOTE ABOUT ALLERGIES**

Allergies usually indicate an imbalance in the immune system so an appointment with a good kinesiologist is recommended to nourish and rebalance it if you want to get rid of them for good ■

**GARY ALBERT HUGHES**

Gary is an experienced singer, musician and kinesiologist. He trained with full scholarships at The Purcell School of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal Academy of Music. He is qualified with a diploma in Vocal Coaching and is a Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music. As well as working as a vocal coach for the likes of The Sam Wanamaker Festival at The Globe Theatre and the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, Gary runs his own kinesiology practice. At The Balanced Performer clinic he uses a natural, holistic approach to help performers improve their physical, emotional and nutritional health. He helps clients with a variety of issues including acid reflux, skin problems, food intolerances and anxiety and depression.



<http://www.thebalancedperformer.com>

# LEARNING THROUGH MOVEMENT

## – THE ART OF FELDENKRAIS

**A**s a training provider, I'm always investigating potential for new learning and I've recently become interested in the work of Moshe Feldenkrais. So who was he? And why does he have such a loyal following?

I don't profess to be an expert on Feldenkrais but I have recently conducted some research that may be of interest to both singers and teachers. [Moshe Feldenkrais](#) was a physicist and engineer with a passion for judo. After recurrent knee problems, he developed a system of learning through movement. His intellectual ability and thirst for knowledge led to a lifelong study of anatomy, physiology and neurology as he sought to establish whether the brain could be retrained through movement and awareness. Feldenkrais devotees consider him to be the pioneer of brain plasticity as he developed a system which enables the brain to change through forming new connections.

His body of work and philosophical teachings have great relevance to all types of practitioners including singers and voice teachers. His methodology is an invaluable tool for developing vocal efficiency because it focuses on the nervous system and provides an insight into the workings of our "somatic map". As singers we often exhibit postural habits that compromise



A STUDENT LEARNING FELDENKRAIS.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ROSALIE O'CONNOR. USED WITH PERMISSION  
OF THE FELDENKRAIS GUILD® OF NORTH AMERICA



voice production. We are told that we need to tuck our chin in, not raise our eyebrows on the high notes, not slouch or raise our shoulders but such simple movements can be so hard to change. Feldenkrais is based on an understanding of the neurological system and change is harnessed through allowing our bodies to experience alternative ways of moving.

According to [Marina Gilman](#) in her book [Body and Voice Somatic Re-education](#), Feldenkrais “teaches us how to have a conversation with a person’s nervous system rather than their cognitive mind” and she refers to this process as “somatic learning”.

She provides a comprehensive insight into habituated movement and identifies how they interfere with voice production. A parasitic movement for example, is an unnecessary movement that interferes with our intended movement or function. These movements are often unconscious but can be difficult to undo. If we were aware of them we wouldn’t do them because they create resistance and excess effort. When we sing a high note, we may unconsciously raise our eyebrows and this unnecessary movement creates tension.

Diversionary movements occur when a singer moves an inappropriate part of the body to carry out a particular vocal task. In her book, Gilman gives an example of a student who was unable to release her abdominal muscles so instead would bring her forehead forward. She knew that she needed to do something but she didn’t know what. Feldenkrais enables “somatic learning” by using small movements to discover habitual patterns of movement and posture. It encourages new alternatives through self-discovery and play. It is highly effective because it is compatible

with how our sensory motor nervous systems are geared to learn.

Feldenkrais is not built on a specific set of rules or a right way of doing things. It’s about exploring possibilities of movement and increasing body awareness. It explores how different muscles and parts of the body are interconnected and by increasing



Simple movements  
can be so hard  
to change



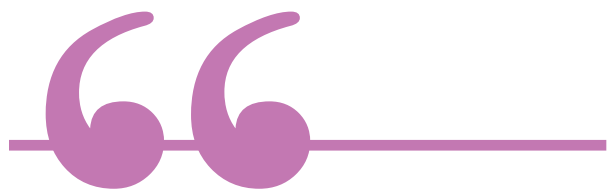
FELDENKRAIS IMPROVES BODY AWARENESS. IMAGE BY ROSALIE O'CONNOR. USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE FELDENKRAIS GUILD® OF NORTH AMERICA

awareness of separateness as well as interconnectedness we can improve our voice.

Feldenkrais provides an important set of tools that facilitate self-awareness of habituated patterns of movement enabling change to take place from the inside out. Its non-judgemental, gentle approach empowers singers to address subtle patterns of movement that interfere with respiration, phonation and resonance.

#### LEARN MORE

There are many Feldenkrais practitioners who can be contacted through the [Feldenkrais Guild UK](#) and in the US at [The Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education](#). Both organisations also provide a wealth of information on their websites. There are a number of practitioners who specialise in voice and Feldenkrais



Gentle approach empowers singers to address subtle patterns of movement that interfere with respiration, phonation and resonance.



ROBERT SUSSUMA EXPLAINS HOW TO RELEASE FOOT TENSION



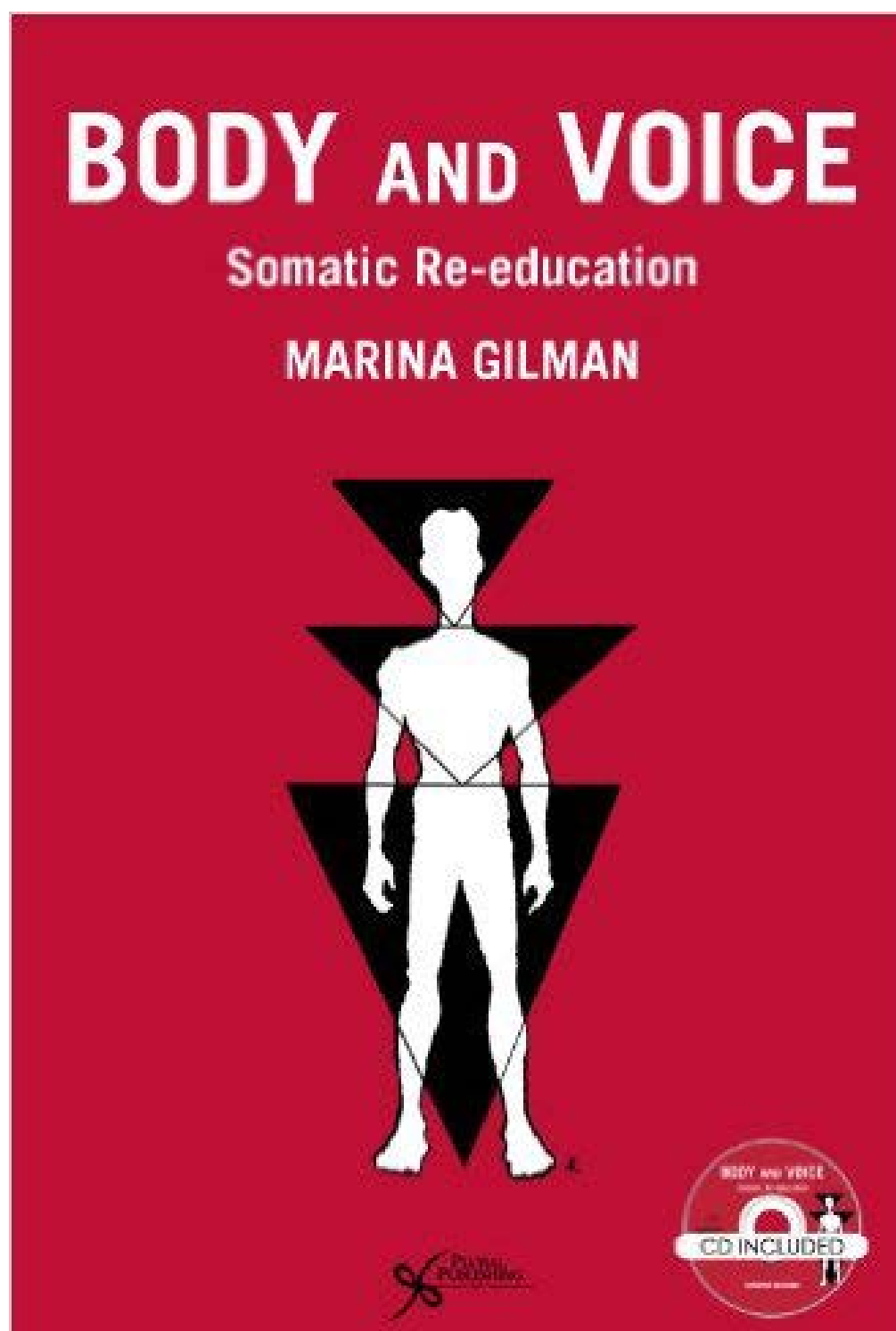
AWARENESS THROUGH MOVEMENT. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROSALIE O'CONNOR.  
USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE FELDENKRAIS GUILD® OF NORTH AMERICA



and if you have an interest it may be worth taking a look. In the UK, Maggy Burrowes blends Feldenkrais into her work and she has created an effective model called Vocal Dynamix T. Her website [www.vocaldynamix.com](http://www.vocaldynamix.com) provides a range of interesting articles as well as information on available classes. London-based Anita Morrison of the [Whole Self Singer](#) is a certified practitioner with a background in classical singing. She's a teacher at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and blends Feldenkrais into her work. In the US, leading practitioner [Robert Sussama](#) blends Feldenkrais with his advanced knowledge of the Estill Training model. His generous website conveys a passion for Feldenkrais and he provides a weighty selection of high quality training videos for you to try.

With regards to literature, Gilman's text is fascinating, clear and detailed. She provides guidance and exercises to work through and she tackles many issues that impede both voice production and performance. Although the book is aimed at voice teachers, it is useful for singers.

You can also view her website [www.voice-movement.com](http://www.voice-movement.com) to learn more ■



## DEBBIE WINTER



Debbie Winter established Voice Workshop in October 2012, a professional development company that provides teacher training for both singing teachers and professional singers. She has hosted a number of workshops with leading pedagogues and has worked alongside Dr Jenevora Williams, ENT surgeon Declan Costello and Cardiff Metropolitan University to develop a postgraduate certificate that facilitates the study of Vocal Pedagogy. This pioneering qualification has been featured on the Science and Singing programme on Radio three. You can view both her courses and her articles at



[http:// www.voiceworkshop.co.uk](http://www.voiceworkshop.co.uk)

# Rhythm And Beat Perception

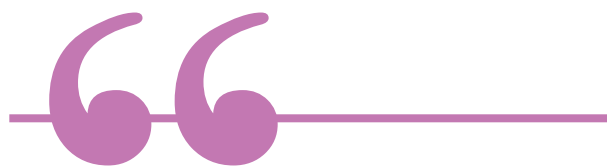
HOW HORSES AND MUSIC CAN IMPROVE LEARNING

Dr Caren Hession has two passions: singing and horses. So perhaps it's not surprising that when she came to study for her masters degree her two loves featured prominently with remarkable and inspiring results.

Pursuing a Masters by Research investigating the benefits of equine therapy seemed like a good idea at the time. My aim was to show how horses help children learn better. Perhaps a daring premise, but one I believed to be true. And I suppose not realising how daring it was helped somewhat; until I left a full-time job to pursue my studies only to discover there was very little scientific research to support this novel field.

So I did what anyone else would do — I started looking at pretty pictures of horses. Having a degree in Fine Art, I had always been fascinated by them and, in particular, the swirling patterns of dust and breath they leave behind as they move.

Then I remembered a picture I had taken (it's the black and white image featured right). I remembered when I took it the horses' breath had lingered in the air, forming lines of waves that looked a lot like musical bars. And so sparked my investigation into rhythm and beat perception; an element characteristic of equine motion and music, turning my two year Master by Research into a five year PhD. The truth is music has always been



My aim was to show how horses help children learn better





my first love — my obsessive hobby, as I called it. From attending every single training event or masterclass available, to setting up [Mad About the Voice Ireland](#) with Joshua Alamu and offering mentorship to aspiring singers, music and singing has always held a prime place, even throughout my PhD. However, I never foresaw the possibility of marrying these two interests together, until now.

When I began my research in the field of music, I came across countless studies supporting the premise that children who learnt music were smarter, brighter and more emotionally stable than those who didn't. However, having been already burnt by my previous idealistic beliefs, I wasn't quite so quick to maintain this theory.

You see, one thing none of these studies seemed to recognise was the common denominator between all the

different kinds of musical training — the fact that western music (like the horse's gait) is rhythmical and beat based.

The human body naturally likes to move in time to the regular beats and rhythms that it perceives; as evident daily when we tap our foot in time to music. This is called Beat Perception Synchronisation — an innate instinct, which is not only noticeable in toddlers who “bob” to music, but also by the foetus as it develops in utero.

From conception, the foetus is exposed to regular beats and rhythms within the womb; the mother's heart beat, her locomotion and her breathing. This perception stimulates the vestibular system, which consequently plays a major role in the development of all our other senses. For those of you who are parents, you will know that “hand-clapping” is a fundamental milestone in infancy.

Now in the classroom, much of our learning takes place by following teaching instruction. This requires our brain to pay attention, to process information in real time, in sequential order and to respond accordingly. For many of us, this is not the most difficult task. However, for someone with a physical or cognitive impairment, it can be quite a different story. Although it is widely accepted that we learn better when we learn through rhythm, children with learning difficulties often have poor rhythm timing skills.

Music consists of a series of beats and rhythms which unfold over time. Perceiving regular beats and rhythms, either physically or acoustically, stimulates memory, attention, performance accuracy, performance velocity and learning ability. As such, listening to music helps our brain to stay “on-line” so it can predict, process



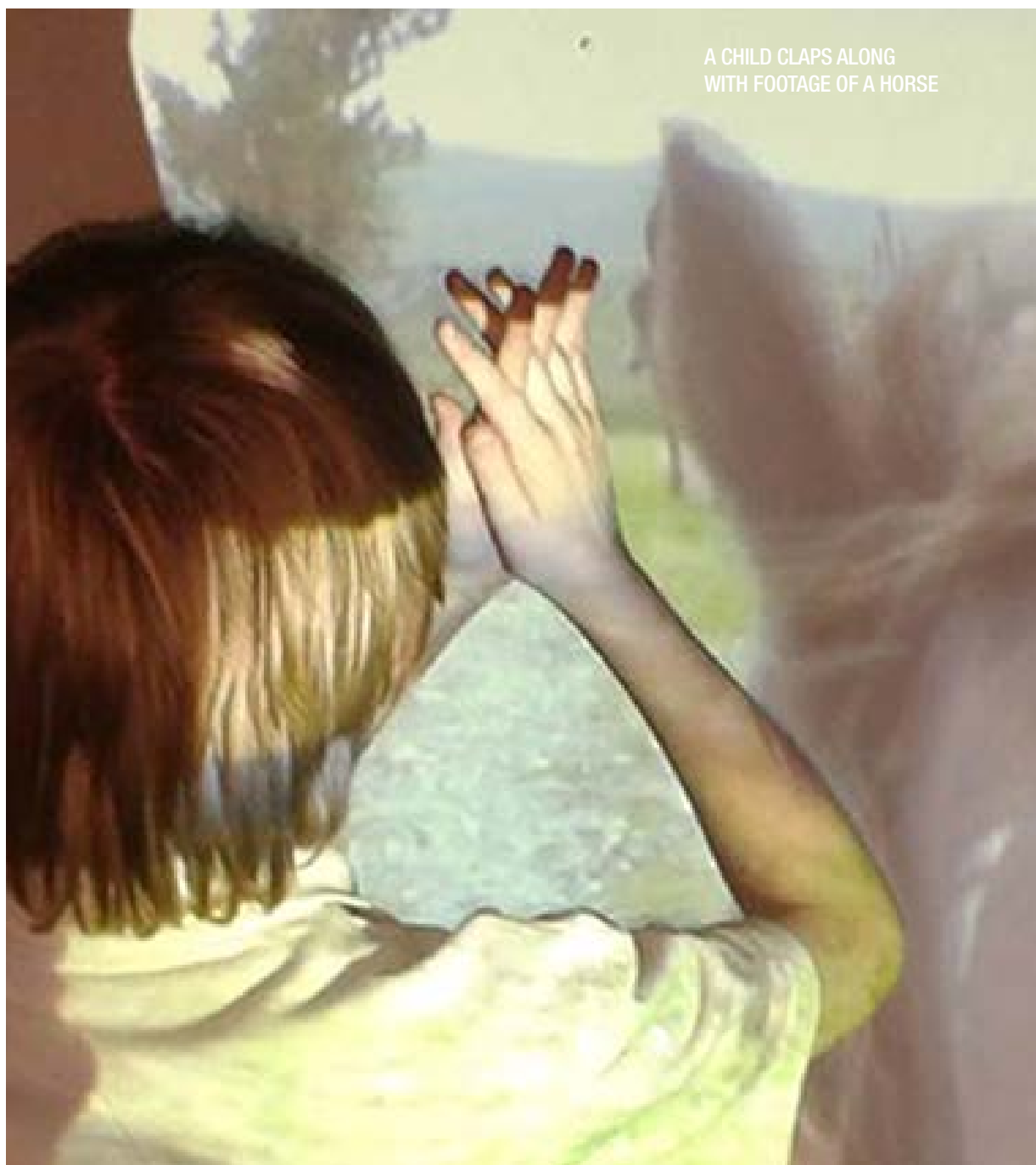
THE PHOTOGRAPH WHICH INSPIRED DR CAREN'S RESEARCH

and piece information together in real time — exactly what one needs to keep up in the classroom.

More specifically, exposure to rhythm and beats in the form of music learning has been shown to increase connectivity between the left and right side of the brain by stimulating the corpus callosum (part of the brain which links both hemispheres together), thereby making it work more effectively. Incidentally, this part of the brain is often undeveloped in children with social and behavioural learning deficits. And this is only the tip of the iceberg!

Knowing how the brain works, how it reacts to rhythms and beats, and how we can manipulate that to promote social, emotional, behavioural, physical and cognitive development in those with special needs through a singing lesson, forms the heart of my practice and the marriage of two unique fields; music and equine therapy.

Perhaps my initial premise wasn't such an unbelievable concept after all ■



A CHILD CLAPS ALONG  
WITH FOOTAGE OF A HORSE

## DR CAREN HESSION



**D**r Caren Hession works with children with special needs, focusing on rhythm and beat perception, an element characteristic of both equine motion and music. Through her work with Developing Minds, Developing Voices her primary aim is to help children and young people achieve greater self-expression and actualisation through music (singing) and/or horses. In addition, Caren is dedicated to her first love, singing. Caren has devoted considerable time to developing her skills in vocal technique, vocal style, songwriting and performance under the guidance of several internationally recognised vocal coaches, most influentially, Joshua Alamu. It was with Joshua she set up Mad About The Voice Ireland.



<http://spiritusstudios.com>





# *the* **BIZ**



**PASSING IT ON**    The learning curve



**DEAR ISING**    Our resident experts help you with your struggles



**ULTIMATE ARTISTS**    Take your talent to the next level



**COMPETITION**    How to win a place at the 2016 Ultimate Artists Development Programme





# Passing it on

IAN DAVIDSON  
explains how  
vocal coaches  
can continue  
to educate  
themselves and  
stay inspired.





# “ No Man is an Island.

– John Donne's Devotions (1624)

I'm sure that you've come across this quote before. It's fairly well known and has definitely passed into our vernacular. The presumption from this quote is that human beings depend and rely upon each other. That we naturally create communities, we are herd animals, we don't do well on our own.

Except that sometimes we do find ourselves on our own. And very often, the singing teacher finds themselves on their own. However, the truth is that no singing teacher is an island. And shouldn't aspire to be. Why not? Well there are several reasons really.

Firstly, singing teaching is a largely unregulated industry. There is no gold standard that we can adhere to nationally or internationally that will certify us as being skilled or even qualified really to do our jobs and so it is of critical importance that we keep abreast of the many changes that are being made to vocal health and science research as well as differing pedagogies and schools of thought. As mentioned above, many of us teach alone, without colleagues to learn and study from and so end up being responsible for our own learning, and it can be hard to know where to start.

Secondly, the natural isolation of the singing teacher can inadvertently cause the teacher to become “stuck”. The

best case scenario is that you just stick with teaching what you know, but you can very quickly become disillusioned and bored with the job, which in turn leads you to becoming demotivating and uninspiring to your clients. The worst case scenario is that you can end up becoming labelled with the smear of smears – the “bad singing teacher”. I think you can agree that neither scenario is particularly appealing.

I don't know if this is an actual quote by the way, but I've definitely heard this bandied about over my career as a singing teacher, and I'm sure you will have too.

I've always derived much amusement from the image of this Machiavellian singing teacher — the arch-nemesis of singers everywhere, complete with underground studio/lair, hooded cowl, breeze block close at hand for diaphragmatic breathing exercises, with out-of-tune piano, no internet and a high-pitched Voldemort-esque laugh, devising new cruel and unusual ways to be a “bad” singing teacher. Sounds crazy right? And that's because it is. Surely nobody sets out to become a “bad singing teacher”? It can't be an aspirational role? And yet, there are individuals who may fall into this category from time to time. Whether

they “ruin” singers' voices or not is another matter entirely. Personally I believe that ultimately a singer is responsible for their own voice, but maybe that's a discussion for another time. But although I personally don't believe in the “bad singing teacher”, bad direction or teaching can definitely play a negative role in development of a singer's voice.

So how do we end our isolation and avoid the label of “bad singing teacher”? The answer quite simply is by engaging in “Continuous Professional Development”, or CPD. CPD is the sure fire way to avoid the being labelled a “bad singing teacher” and can propel us into joining communities that can help to end our isolation.

What I love about my continuing study of the human voice is how relaxed and confident it has allowed me to become about my own teaching. The further I dig into this world, the more I realise there is to learn and this is tremendously exciting. And the great thing is that I don't have to do this alone.

I belong to two organisations: Vocology in Practice (ViP) and BAST (Be A Singing Teacher). I am also a member of the British Voice Association (BVA) and I subscribe to the Naked Vocalist podcast/vodcast



FIND STIMULATING CLASSES TO BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND NETWORK WITH LIKE MINDED FOLK



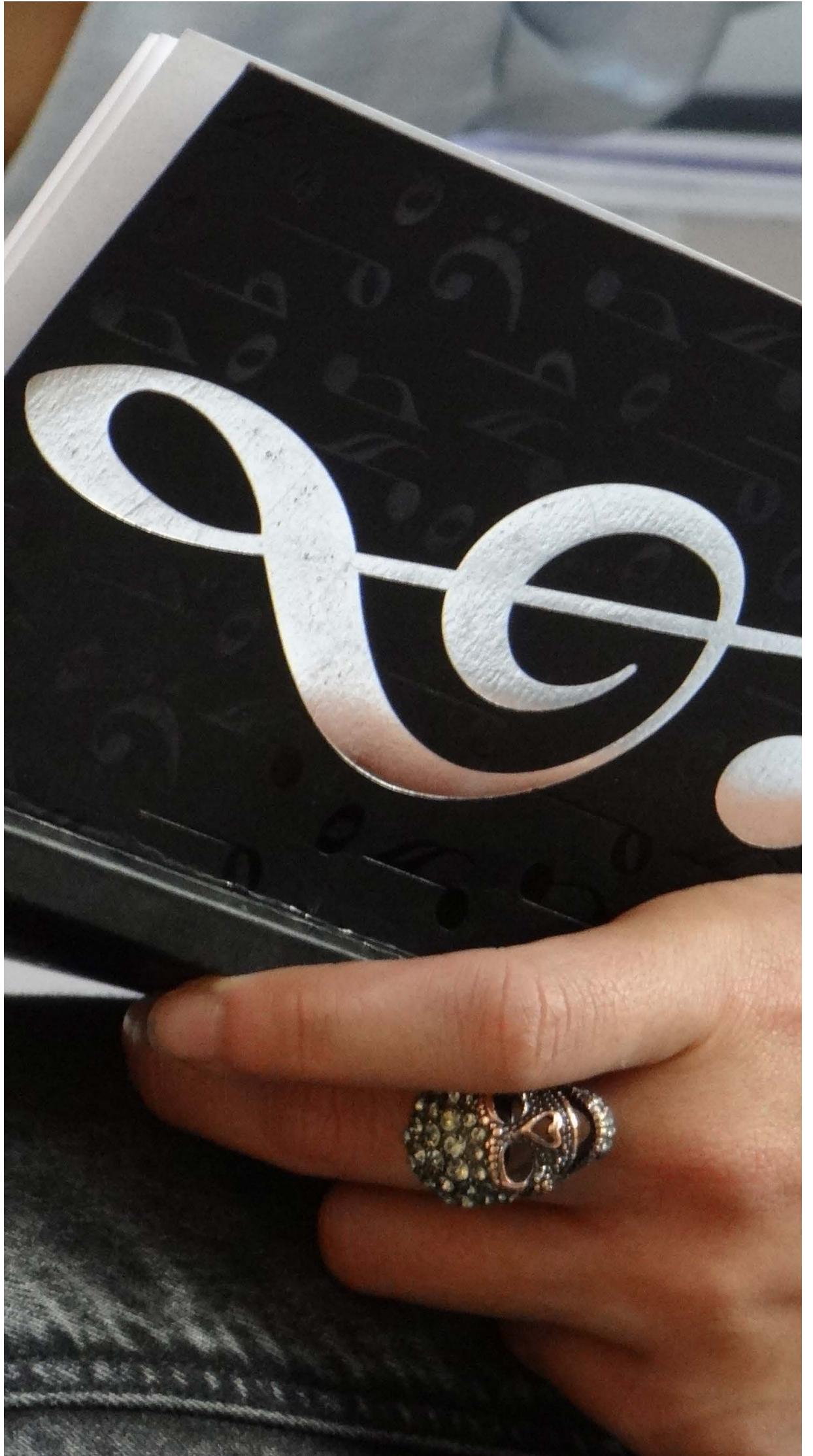


I can't even imagine teaching now without YouTube, or Spotify or Ultimate Guitar or any of the myriad of online resources that are available to us

in conclusion, no singing teacher should ever aspire to be an “island”, and yet sometimes it can be one of the loneliest professions. The reality is that it is up to us to get connected and stay connected to relevant communities that can help to grow and develop. There really isn't any excuse, especially with social media being the way it is these days. It is extremely gratifying to me as somebody who trains singing teachers, to watch people engaging in online forums, asking questions about the voice and receiving answers from all over the world.

There have been times during a lesson that I've found myself stumped and I've very quickly sent a message to a fellow teacher and received an answer back in the same session. It's such an exciting time to be a singing teacher!

When I first started out, I remember being sat in my room with a piano and tape recorder so that students could record the lesson onto a cassette. I can't even imagine teaching now without YouTube, or Spotify or Ultimate Guitar or any of the myriad of online resources that are available to us, and I can't imagine being a singing teacher on my own without being plugged into various global communities. Get involved and get better — swim for the mainland ■





## SOME USEFUL LINKS TO SINGING TEACHER EDUCATION RESOURCES



Vocology in Practice  
Your voice. Your passion. Our purpose.



VOICEWORKSHOP



AUSTRALIAN VOICE ASSOCIATION

## IAN DAVIDSON



Ian Davidson is a singing teacher and vocal coach based in Liverpool and Manchester (UK). He is the Co-director of Balance Vocal Studio and past Education Director for the Vocology in Practice global network of singing teachers, and one of five certified BAST (Be a Singing Teacher) trainers in the world. Ian regularly lectures at a number of different universities and colleges, most notably the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts and he holds an MA in Music from the University of Salford. His thesis entitled “Can’t Sing, Won’t Sing - Afraid to Sing?” earned him a distinction in his studies and continues to help people to overcome their fears and find their voices on a regular basis.



<http://www.balanceyourvoice.com>

# Dear iSing

Here we help readers with their singing related struggles. A problem shared is a problem halved right?



**Q:** How can I make sure my anxiety doesn't stop me delivering a good singing performance?

**A:** Nerves and anxiety will very likely occur when we perform as a result of more stress, heightened perception, and new surroundings. It's how we react to them that can really make all the difference. When we get anxious our internal thought system usually starts to go into overdrive and it begins to assess, critique, and worry about many details. This heightens the anxiety. But there are three things you can do to start to turn this around.

The first is simply to practice performing. So instead of thinking you need to be perfect on stage, allow yourself to practice on stage. It's important to try new things, and

make mistakes without judgement.

Secondly, you can have a little flexible routine which may involve getting the physical outcomes of anxiety (shallow breathing, dry mouth, tension, etc) in a good space. Try doing a few physical stretches, vocal warm ups, breathing, and visualisation. Lastly, know this, if you have something external to focus on you will be more successful in the end. Focusing in on connecting with the audience, being present on stage, and things like this will help bring you out of anxiety and into your artistry. But it takes time, so allow yourself time to grow and experiment. [Tamara Beatty](#)

**Q:** I am overcoming laryngitis and want to learn to sing safely. I have had no previous vocal training but have been singing for many years. What should I do?

**A:** Laryngitis is a voice killer! There are many potential causes of laryngitis: bacterial, viral, fungal, medication, acid reflux, vocal abuse, stress, fatigue, malnourishment, weak immune system, general illness e.g tonsillitis or flu, dehydration, inhaling toxic substances, smoking, alcohol and allergies.

So if you do contract laryngitis you need to deal with the cause. This could mean anything from rest, to taking antibiotics, to dealing with the stressor, eliminating reflux and removing yourself

from environments that contribute to the issue.

As far as the voice is concerned, regardless of the cause you will need to take vocal rest for a few days or as long as the laryngitis lasts, as your vocal folds will be swollen and vulnerable to injury. Beyond that make sure you develop a good vocal warm up routine before singing and consider getting some vocal technique lessons. If singing is important to you, ensure you take your vocal health and fitness seriously. [Line Hilton](#)

**Q:** The trend at the moment is for high-voiced men and I am a baritone, where does this leave me?

**A:** I feel you sir! Pop music has often demanded a lot from male vocalists, and there's no change now with your CeeLos, Brunos and Weeknds. I blame MJ. He ruined it for all the true basses and shaped pop forever.

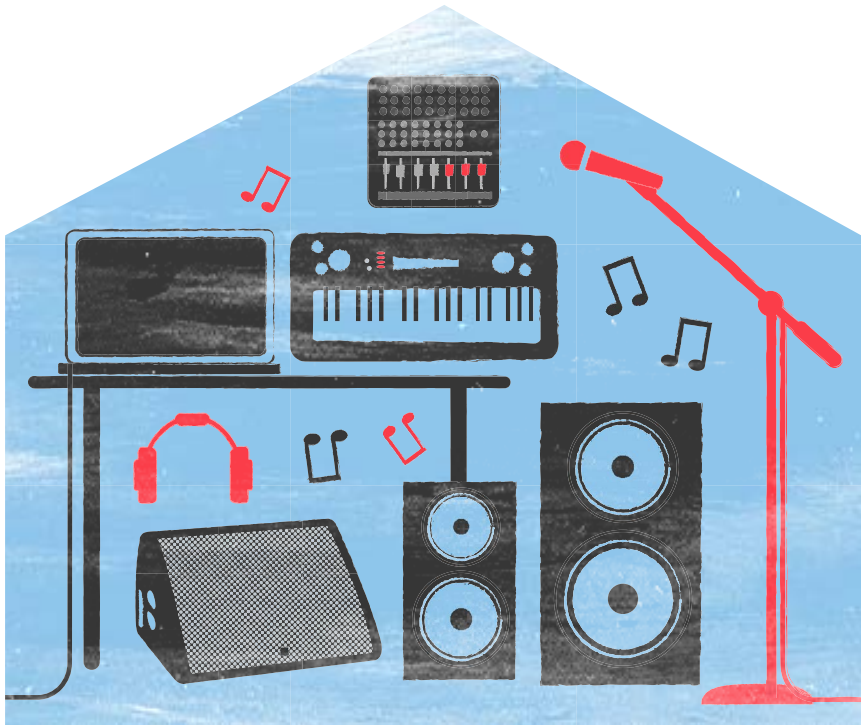
First thing's first: ditch the classification of baritone. Voice classification doesn't have as much relevance to style these days. The game is open to anyone. Singers who classify themselves without the proper info can easily feel limited, and create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It's worth noting Michael Jackson was a baritone-type underneath. It's just his environment and training set him up to be able to overcome the much discussed baritone limitations. You can work towards a sound and pitch range that's more synonymous with the modern male vocal if that is your goal. The "baritones sing low, tenors sing high" discussion is a semi-myth and you can certainly train your way around it.

However if your goal isn't to tighten your undies, but to "go deep" then that's also cool. Plenty of guys out there, such as Sam Sparrow, make it work. Your songs, your artistry and your connection to your audience transcend any voice classification. [Chris Johnson](#)

**Got a singing related struggle?**  
[CLICK HERE](#) to get advice.





# GEARING<sup>up</sup>



**MUSIKMESSE 2016** Slate Digital – Going virtual to go back



**NEW PRODUCT** Pop Audio – the pop filter reimaged



# Slate Digital:

## Going virtual to go back

By Line Hilton and  
Sheena Ladwa

When I recently attended Musikmesse 2016 in Frankfurt with fellow singer and iSing contributor Sheena Ladwa we were on a mission: to continue to build on the connections I'd made with brands at NAMM earlier this year.

So what is Musikmesse? It is the international trade fair for musical instruments, sheet music, music production and marketing. About 65,000 people (most of them from Europe) attend so it is on a smaller scale than NAMM, the behemoth music tech extravaganza held in the US each year.

However Musikmesse is still a great opportunity for people who love music to test new products and network with industry representatives. If you are a singer there are plenty of chances to perform so it is a great way to get your name (and voice) out there.

One singer we met who was doing just that was AQUILLA Fearon, ex-pat Brit living in Germany.

Singer/songwriter and actress AQUILLA is doing what many singers do to make a living today — diversifying to ensure she is always earning her keep. At Musikmesse she was demo singer for Slate Digital's Virtual Microphone





System, singing throughout the day to demo the product.

We also spoke to sound engineer and Slate product developer Jesse Honig from LA. It was very evident that Jesse loves the singer and respects the voice, always a pleasure to find tech heads who get singers. They are a rare breed, right?

Sheena chatted to Jesse about Slate's Virtual Microphone System and how it can help singers and producers get those very expensive vintage sounds and to AQuilla about her experience setting up in another country and how she got this gig ■

“  
technology  
brands and  
singers could  
improve their  
understanding  
of each other



<http://www.slatedigital.com>



JESSE HONIG TALKS ABOUT HOW SLATE DIGITAL GIVES PEOPLE MIC CHOICES FOR A FRACTION OF THE COST



SINGER AQUILLA FEARON TALKS ABOUT HER CAREER SINCE MOVING TO GERMANY



SLATE DIGITAL PROMO THE FUTURE OF MICROPHONES



# POP AUDIO

The pop filter reimaged







A pop filter aimed at meeting the needs of working singers was recently unveiled at Musikmesse and is now available in the UK.

Pop filters have long been a frustrating but necessary tool for vocalists with key gripes including drooping arms, weak and clunky clasps and unhygienic filters.

But the team behind Pop Audio's debut product aim to change all that. The new filter comes with a quick release clamp, a heavy-duty adjustable arm and a range of interchangeable and replaceable filters. This means singers will no longer have to worry about a drooping pop filter hindering vocal sound.

Co-creator Jonathan Hucks said: "We had the idea when we were chatting about work and studio gear that's just not good enough. Neither of us knew of a pop filter that always stayed in place and did a great job."

Irked that pros, aspiring audio engineers, and musicians were stuck with a fairly average product offering little variety, Jonathan and his business partner John Metcalfe set about designing a pop filter that solved that common drooping issue, and offered a variety of different quick release filters for the many different environments

and situations that music creators work in.

Co-creator John said: "The acoustic transparency across the entire range of filters is extremely high, something we focused on from the very beginning of the design process. You now have the choice between an interchangeable metal, foam or fabric filter."

The fabric filter is the reliable all-rounder which is ideal for most recording environments, the metal filter is hard wearing and perfect for life on the road, whilst the foam filter provides absolute acoustic transparency. The arm's removable filter attachment point also enables filters to be screwed directly onto a microphone stand.

Pop Audio was inspired by heavy industry, where stability is key, so the arm allows unprecedented levels of adjustment and is extremely stable with absolutely no movement once it's in position.

The arm is also fitted with a quick release clamp, which dramatically reduces set up time. Now users can just clip it straight on to a microphone stand and record. Synthax Audio UK has been announced as the Pop Audio distributor, and the full range of products is now available in the UK ■



[www.synthax.co.uk](http://www.synthax.co.uk)

The acoustic transparency across the entire range of filters is extremely high, something we focused on from the very beginning of the design process.





# *look listen* & FEEL



**#ISINGDOYOU** Listen to our readers



**CHORAL MUSIC** Portrait of a trailblazer, Gregory Batsleer



**PRINCE** A musical genius



**NEWS** Awards





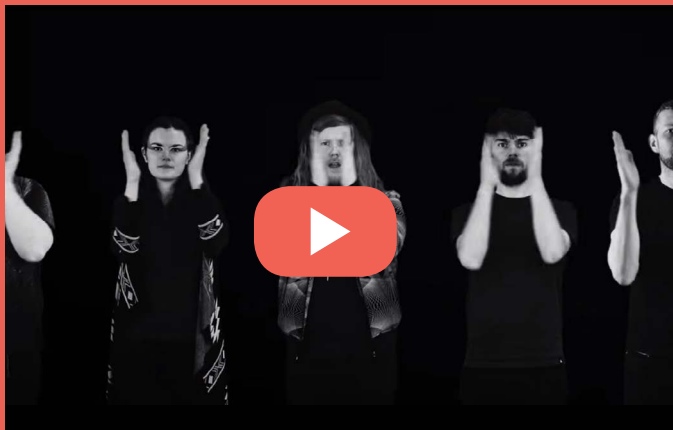
# #iSingDoYou

Many of iSing's readers are passionate artists in their own right creating music across all genres. Lots of performers submit their work to iSing and here are five we think are worth a close listen.

If you would like to share your music with other iSing readers then submit your music and details to <http://www.isingmag.com> select the tab **Be in iSing** and fill in the form. Who knows you might be next to be featured in #iSingDoYou, or maybe we'll do a whole feature on you!



## FIREWOOD ISLAND



**F**irewood Island has a unique pedigree. It all started in 2010 as a solo project for Norwegian singer songwriter Stian Vedøy when he was studying in Cardiff, Wales. Stian then found a group of like-minded musos and Firewood Island blossomed into a band recording what Q Magazine described as “uplifting anthems that would fit as comfortably on the radio as around the campfire”. Firewood Island have enjoyed airplay on BBC1 and BBC 6 Music and twice made the Top 40 on Norway's Radio 102. Their new album is called Dome.



<http://www.firewoodisland.com>

## SHEL

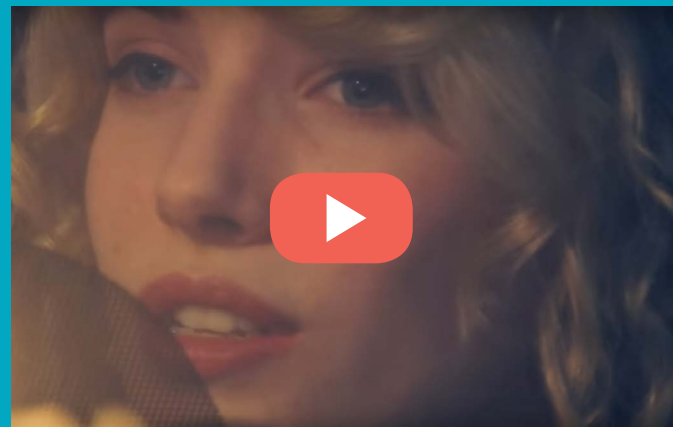
**S**isters Eva, Hannah, Sarah and Liza Holbrook – who make up SHEL – were raised in a bohemian family in Fort Collins, Colorado. As youngsters the sisters mastered between them the piano, guitar, mandolin, drums and violin. The ability to create glowing vocal harmonies followed next. So it's not surprising SHEL are making waves with their brand of indie-folk. SHEL's latest album Just Crazy Enough features great vocals and dense, ethereal textures that hover between the digital and the analog.



<http://www.shelmusic.com>

## SOPHIE JANES

Sophie Janes is an East Sussex singer songwriter who will release her debut album, a brooding, melancholy affair called *The Fog* in July. She co-produced the album with her father Barry Durdant-Hollamby who was one of the first UK songwriters to sign to Motown's UK publishing division and spent the 1980s and early 1990s producing UK house/dance records. Sophie has twice performed at the official artist showcases at the South By South West Festival in Texas.



<http://sophiejanes.co.uk>

## LOVEY JAMES



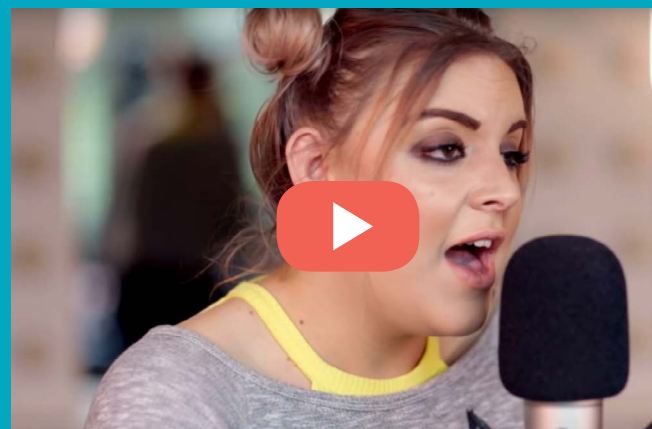
This All American girl has been singing since the age of eight, and even quit high school so she could dedicate more time to her career. The singer songwriter was projected into the limelight when she was a top 20 contestant on the 2015 series of *American Idol* (where she met Aretha Franklin). Since then Lovey has clocked up a strong following on social media and released her self-titled pop album which was produced by Steve Sundholm, who has worked with stars such as Carrie Underwood and Hall & Oates.



<http://www.loveyjames.com>

## SCARLET BAXTER

London-based singer Scarlet Baxter has a voice that is rich, deep and full of soul, calling to mind that other London girl Adele. With a solid fanbase already in place after show-stealing supports with acts like Chic, Bombay Bicycle Club (DJ set) and Hot Chip (DJ set) as well as her own performances at venues like London's Camden Barfly and Troubadour, Scarlet's star is on the rise. Her new record is *Dancing All Night*, a catchy, beat driven track with strong vocals.



<http://www.scarletbaxter.co.uk>



# Portrait of a **TRAILBLAZER**

Choir conductor Gregory Batsleer talks to Clarissa Land about combining art forms, battling tradition, the importance of a good vocal coach, and what the worlds of classical and contemporary singing can learn from each other.

**H**ailing from Manchester, 27-year-old Gregory Batsleer is a young choir conductor on a musical mission. He's dynamic, charming, humble and passionate with infectious verve and an impressive array of professional achievements already under his belt.

Gregory joined Manchester Boys' Choir at the age of eight, and later the Royal Northern College of Music's Junior Department and the Hallé Youth Choir. Seduced by the English choral tradition, he began conducting while in sixth form and won a scholarship to Princeton where he conducted the prestigious university's Chapel Choir. Upon his return to England at age 20, he took up the post of conductor of the Hallé Youth Choir. At 21, he began conducting the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) Chorus. At 23, he became the Director of Chors at Manchester University. At 24, he took up the coveted mantle of Artistic Director of the Choir in Residence at the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) and, at 25, he added the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) Chorus to his remarkable list of creative endeavours. Gregory has also collaborated with many pop acts including Elbow, Clean Bandit, James, New Order and Tim Burgess. He lives in London and Edinburgh.

Gregory's work with the Portrait Choir, a professional choir inaugurated in June 2013, is where he is breaking newest ground. This is the first time a visual arts organisation has ever had a full-time music department – a brave and unprecedented move by the NPG. The Portrait Choir presents four shows a year and Gregory goes to great lengths to avoid these being run-of-the-mill classical concerts. Instead, he creates events that centre on choral music but combine with different art forms. While these events run concurrently with the NPG's exhibitions, Gregory's aim is not to mirror themes directly or replicate the portraiture in music, but to provide a different avenue through which an audience can explore the themes for themselves. How does he achieve this? Take the Audrey Hepburn exhibition *Portraits of an Icon* in Summer 2015, which he said he found hard to programme.

"She was in lots of musicals, but I don't think we're doing our job if we respond in such a basic way", he explains. "A big problem in the classical music world is the voice of a female composer. We've had female



composers for hundreds of years, but many couldn't get publishing deals, or published under male pseudonyms, or their siblings took on their music.

"What was Audrey Hepburn? Well, she was a feminist icon and believed in the power of women and equality, so to celebrate that we had a programme of solely female composers that went back much further than people would have thought it could, to the 18th century when people assume that all the music was written by men. We commissioned a new piece, *Audrey*, by an amazing young composer called Josephine Stephenson. She and her librettist responded directly to the exhibition, which is really cool."

In 2014, the NPG was the first UK gallery to have an exhibition commemorating the centenary of the First World War. *Anonymity* combined choral music with spoken word and portraiture. Avoiding an obvious interpretation, Gregory chose to programme 17th and 18th century oratorios and librettos written by Handel about biblical wars, exploring the loneliness and fear experienced by soldiers:

"We found letters and poems written by politicians, soldiers and soldiers' families and juxtaposed these with this really old music, an electric and inspiring musical interpretation of historical wars, to show that people have been having these feelings of isolation due to war for hundreds of years. You find that when you add spoken word, people engage with that easily and directly, whereas music, especially classical, requires more digestion to get the full cathartic value."

I tell him how much I enjoyed



THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY CHOIR

the Portrait Choir's latest offering, *Confession*, which fused seminal works from Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky to explore themes associated with the gallery's exhibition *Russia and the Arts*. Surrounded by grand portraiture and bathed in candlelight, David Horovitch's performances of Tolstoy's *Confession* interwove with the Portrait Choir's renditions of Tchaikovsky's *Liturgy of St John Chrysotom* to reveal the simultaneous existential crises of two Russian icons that had never met.

"We wanted to provide a cultural insight into mid-19th century Russia and have the audience ask questions of themselves. The NPG is more about people than art; it's a display of people. This was a way of tapping into their thoughts."

Alongside the Portrait Choir, the gallery is home to two other choirs; the Staff Choir and the Visitors' Choir. The Visitors' Choir is open to anyone and comes together three times a year on a Sunday afternoon. Tickets are £25 and include talks from gallery curators, tickets to exhibitions, rehearsals with Gregory and a unique opportunity to perform in the gallery. He says participants are made to feel part of the NPG family. The beauty of the Staff Choir,

he explains, is that people from different departments can socialise and do something creative together. What inspired him to triple his already heavy workload?

"If we just have a professional choir, there is still a divide; people can enjoy it as an audience member, but how much better to have an opportunity to sing in the gallery? You have to establish who each of these choirs is for. The professional choir has to give something to the audience so that we can have a dialogue about what it is we're presenting. The Visitors' and Staff Choirs are about the power of bringing people together."

His enthusiasm and sincerity is so evident, so refreshing. He is borderline evangelical about the positive ways in which singing affects normal life: "There are so many things about singing that you can bring into the everyday. You can't do music without listening. By its very nature, music requires people to listen and appreciate other people. Even as a soloist, you have to appreciate other people because you're doing it for someone else. Music also builds trust; trust that someone is going to come in when you start singing."



“People often make their greatest friends through music. Sharing a creative endeavour with someone requires you to drop your barriers and, in essence, become naked, particularly through singing because you have no instrument to hide behind. You are saying, ‘Look, this is who I am.’”

In his view, singing is the closest thing to an honest expression of the soul that we have and he contends that professionals often need reminding of this.

“It’s really important that I also work with people who don’t sing often or who have never sung before and remember that the reason professionals got into music originally was because they felt just like they do. Even though we feel pressured about having to earn money, ultimately we all did this because it’s the most amazing thing we ever did when we first tasted it. It gives people so much joy.”

His work in Scotland differs to the NPG, particularly in that both choirs have responsibilities to their respective orchestras. Scotland has a

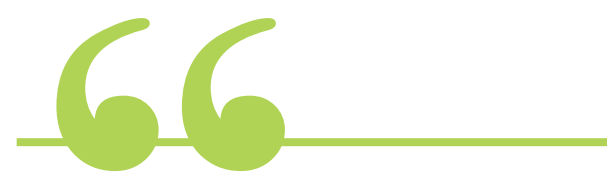
huge artistic offering but audiences tend to be older and it is difficult to achieve wider recognition. Gregory feels a real responsibility to develop new audiences and stay relevant:

“That’s paramount, to make sure that what we’re doing isn’t just insular and navel-gazing, but means something to the people it’s being performed to, otherwise you lose your audience.”

Having achieved so much at such a young age, I wonder if he has encountered any resistance from singers far senior to him. Has his age been an issue?

“You must have complete respect for the people you are working for, and then a mutual respect for what you are aiming to achieve together,” he says. “Offer constructive thoughts and create an environment where everyone can contribute equally, then age becomes irrelevant. The problem comes with dictating to someone who has been singing a piece for longer than you’ve been alive.”

His aim is for singers, of whatever age, to “infuse each note with their personality”.



singing is the closest thing to an honest expression of the soul

How much room is there, I wonder, for individual style and personality within the context of a choir? “It’s less to do with the sound and more to do with the thought process,” he explains. “Do they mean it? Are they committed to the words? Are they being artists and conjuring something up? If you think like that, your singing will have more immediacy. You want people to take individual responsibility for what they’re singing and not wait for someone else to do the communication. You don’t ever want the music to sound mannered. It



THE SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA CHORUS. PHOTOGRAPH BY JEN OWENS

must always sound live. A danger of classical performance is that it has all the blend and precision without communication and therefore it's meaningless. Sometimes art needs to be risky and dangerous."

I draw upon some of my own recent conversations with other choir directors and admit that I was horrified to learn many (classical) choir conductors don't understand the basic mechanics of singing, let alone technique or vowel modification. Surely this is this tantamount to wilful ignorance?

"Generally speaking, up until 15 years ago, choir conductors were organists. This is beginning to change now, but a lot of people still have a dated mentality. You're identifying a problem that is an institutional issue about the way choirs are being run. About 30 years ago, conductor Simon Halsey took over a big choir in Birmingham and blazed a trail by employing a vocal coach. He knew that if he could help the singers to sing better, then the choir would sound better. He showed that we can modernise the way we think. More

and more now, understanding the voice is a prerequisite of conducting."

Gregory employs vocal and language coaches for his choirs in Scotland. He knows it is crucial that singers are guided through technically demanding pieces. I ask him what the "worlds" of classical and contemporary singing can learn from each other.

"The classical world has to work against tradition, which includes a tradition of not having vocal coaches for choirs. The contemporary world is much more open to sharing and developing itself, which requires self-confidence, and I would love to see more of that in the classical world."

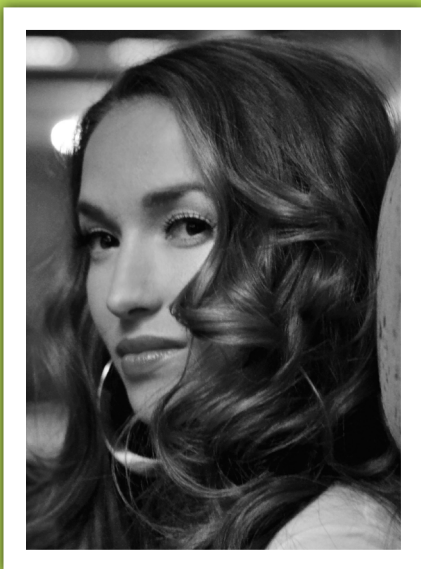
I talk about iSing's mission to educate the music industry – labels, managers, musical directors and artists alike – about the importance of vocal coaches. Too many of our brightest stars are overworked and undertrained, leading to

vocal burn out. Some fear tuition will alter their sound. Does he encounter similar problems?

"A lot of singers try and sing repertoire that is too big for them without guidance. For example, Verdi requires much more weight in the voice than Mozart. Someone might take on that role, seeing it as some kind of promotion, and force their way through it. To sing Verdi by trying to replicate the way you sing Mozart, instead of training with a coach, means you'll land yourself in vocal trouble. There is an understanding in the classical world that a 'natural gift' is the start of a journey, but if you don't train – and soon – the gift will run out. If you get the right coach, you can turn that into a gift for life. In the amateur choral world, which is dominant in the UK, it's very similar to what you've described, but in the professional world we're not afraid of it at all. Really, the gift is in expressing yourself and your soul and you don't lose that." ■

 <http://www.gregorybatsleer.co.uk>

## CLARISSA LAND



Clarissa Land is a London-based singer and songwriter currently recording her debut solo album. She sings, tours and records with major artists, most recently Crystal Fighters. She also has a busy teaching practice, where she provides vocal coaching to a wide range of singers; from the novice singer all the way through to bands signed to major labels



<http://www.thevocalvibe.com>



A photograph of Prince performing on stage. He is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with a colorful, patterned collar and cuffs. He is holding a bass guitar and has his mouth open as if singing or shouting. The background is a solid red color.

# PRINCE

## a musical genius

He was a hit maker and an innovator who left a (purple-hued) mark on the world of music unlike anyone else. iSing pays tribute to Prince



When Prince, aka the Purple One, died on April 21 at the age of 57, there was an outpouring of grief from around the world. Thousands of tributes were placed outside his home, Paisley Park, and fittingly an all-night dance party took place in his hometown of Minneapolis.

The hugely talented musician and songwriter left behind a musical legacy which defined a generation. He managed to fuse jazz, funk, soul and rock to create his own distinct sound – which is much imitated and reimagined by artists today.

Prince pushed musical boundaries and confounded expectations. His songs could be deeply emotional (*Purple Rain*), flirty (*Kiss*) or filthy (*Head*, *Soft and Wet*). His music could get a party started (*Lets Go Crazy*, 1999) or reduce an audience to tears (*Nothing Compares 2U*).

And he was prolific, releasing 39 studio albums, five soundtrack albums, four live albums, five compilation albums and 17 video albums during his career.

Prince Rogers Nelson was born into a musical family in Minneapolis on June 7, 1958. His father was the leader of the Prince Rogers Jazz Trio and his mother a vocalist. Two years after Prince was born his sister, Tyka, entered the world. But family life in the Nelson household was chaotic and his parents separated when Prince was ten. He lived with his father and then his mother, before opting to live with neighbours instead.

One constant in his life was music – he wrote his first song at the age of seven. An early concert trip to see James Brown also proved seminal. In high school he joined a band, Grand Central, but by 1976 Prince was performing in his own right and attracting attention.

So much so that Warner Bros gave him an album deal.

His first solo album – on which Prince produced, arranged and performed every instrument – *For You* was released in 1978. This was followed by *Prince*, which included the hit single *I Wanna Be Your Lover*. Next came *Dirty Mind*, which featured Prince on the album cover wearing bikini briefs, a leather jacket and a knowing pout. On the back of the album he posed in black thigh-high stockings.

This album highlighted one of Prince's main preoccupations – sex. His look, a kind of flamboyant androgyny,

and actresses. Sheila E, Vanity, Kim Basinger, Wendy and Lisa, Sheena Easton and Carmen Electra all, at some point, served to inspire him. This was another Prince contradiction – he surrounded himself with women who were the embodiment of heterosexual fantasies, whilst never being seen out of his trademark stiletto boots.

A year after *Dirty Mind* he was at it again with *Controversy*, and sexually explicit songs such as *Jack U Off*.

But the big breakthrough came in 1984 with the hit album *Purple Rain* (featuring the singles *When Doves Cry* and *Let's Go Crazy*) which sold 22



WHEN DOVES CRY - PRINCE

played with ambiguity. Meanwhile his lyrics often left little to the imagination. Take *Head* for example, about a chance oral encounter with a bride-to-be.

*'But I just a virgin and I'm on my way to be wed*

*But you're such a hunk, so full of spunk, I'll give you head'*

Who else but Prince could pull off (no pun intended) these lyrics with credibility and style?

The pint-sized one (he was 5 foot 2 inches) was also in the habit of surrounding himself with astonishingly beautiful statuesque dancers, singers

million copies – and projected him into the stratosphere.

He followed this album up with *Parade*, which featured the chart-topping single *Kiss* – which has been covered and endlessly reworked ever since.

The albums *Sign o' the Times*, *Lovesexy* and *Diamonds and Pearls* followed. But while the hits kept coming global stardom was having an impact on him. On stage he was funny and extroverted, happily licking his guitar and strutting his stuff, but off stage he shunned the press and public



and at one point even announced his retirement from performing.

He also became increasingly frustrated with the machinations of the music industry.

In 1992, after negotiating a US\$100 million dollar record contract with Warner Bros, he discovered in the fine print, that he would no longer own the copyright to his master recordings. In his fury he refused to be called Prince, opting to use a mysterious symbol instead of a moniker. His next album was known as the *Love Symbol Album* and Prince became known as the Artist Formerly Known as Prince. He appeared in public with the word “slave” written across his cheek.

The row rumbled on but Prince kept recording and released *Come*, the *Black Album* (1994) and *The Love Symbol Album* (1995) which include hit single *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*.

*Chaos and Disorder* was next but by 1996 the row with his record company appeared settled. Tellingly his next album was called *Emancipation* – indicating he was free from record company control. Over the next two decades he went on to release a series of



A TRIBUTE LEFT OUTSIDE PRINCE'S PAISLEY PARK HOME. PHOTOGRAPH BY RICH RYAN, PRESS ASSOCIATION

albums – 18 in total – on his own label NPG although none reached quite the dizzying heights of his 1980s works.

Prince will perhaps be best remembered for his extraordinary songwriting. Not only did he pen numerous hits for himself he also wrote *Manic Monday* for The Bangles, *Nothing Compares 2U* made famous by

Sinead O'Connor and Chaka Khan's *I Feel For You*. While he had the magic touch with his music, his forays into film were, for many, underwhelming. *Purple Rain*, *Under the Cherry Moon* and the much panned *Graffiti Bridge* failed to have the mainstream appeal of his music.

On the personal front, he married backing singer and dancer, Mayte Garcia on Valentine's Day in 1996. The pair had a son Gregory who was born with a rare skull defect and died a week after birth. The couple divorced in 2000.

In 2001 he married Manuela Testolini, whom he met while she was working at his charitable foundation. They divorced five years later. In 2003 Prince became a Jehovah's Witness.

The details of his death remain surrounded in mystery, and are still being investigated by US authorities. He is survived by his sister Tyka ■



NOTHING COMPARES 2U BY PRINCE PERFORMED BY SINEAD O'CONNOR



# New awards recognise unsigned talent

By Bronwyn Bidwell



Three music industry pros have announced a new initiative to recognise the talents of unsigned artists.

Simon O'Kelly, Georgina Thomas and Ben Connor are the team behind the Unsigned Music Awards (UMAs) – a scheme which acknowledges the changing musical landscape. Whereas once all aspiring artists needed a traditional recording contract to succeed, today the term “unsigned” can carry different connotations.

Even well-known artists such as Macklemore and Stormzy are turning their backs on traditional recording contracts to remain totally independent and retain creative rights to their music.

Simon Kelly, UMAs CEO, said: “The model has shifted away from the need for a typical record deal and this needs to be acknowledged.

“I feel that unsigned artists deserve

the same airtime, attention and glamour as international superstars, because with that leverage, we can start to build a new and respectable industry for some truly deserving artists.”

## SO WHAT DO THE UMAs OFFER?

The UMAs are designed to discover, fund and reward the most promising emerging and independent talent. Unsigned artists are invited to submit their music to the UMAs. The awards will include 16 categories, with five nominees in each. Judging will be carried out by a voting panel of 100 music industry professionals.

Sixteen winners will be announced at the inaugural UMAs ceremony at The Troxy Theatre, London, on Thursday, October 27, 2016. Winners will be rewarded with the chance to work with some of the industry's most reputable publishers, booking agents, sync agencies, managers and studios.

## SO HOW DO I ENTER THE UMAs?

Application is free and open now for artists of all genres. So if you are a band, singer, producer or aspiring musician of any kind sign up at <http://theunsignedmusicawards.com/apply>. Applications close August 31, 2016.

## BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE

The UMAs have established an innovative new music fund to invest in the wealth of talent flowing through the doors of the UMAs, offering a powerful and realistic alternative to the traditional record deal.

The UMAs aim to become a go-to portal for both their applicants and other unsigned artists worldwide with their website providing invaluable resources and a blog section showcasing “One To Watch” artists. Listen and learn

The UMAs team also produces a podcast series, *Inside The Music Industry*, which is dedicated to providing vital industry insight for all entries. Now available on iTunes, podcast guests include Andy Parfitt, the longest serving head of Radio 1 and now head of content at Vevo, Louis Brown (Project Manager at Island Records, now Head of Label at Metropolis) and Lily Crockford (previous artist manager to the likes of Jessie J, Ellie Goulding and Iggy Azalea) ■



SIMON O'KELLY, GEORGINA THOMAS AND BEN CONNOR

<http://theunsignedmusicawards.com>