

— New York —
**THE METROPOLITAN OPERA GUILD,
MANNES COLLEGE OF MUSIC,
AND THE NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FINDING THEIR VOICES AS
ARTISTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOLARS:
THE MANNES COLLEGE/
METROPOLITAN OPERA GUILD
GUIDED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

by

DAVID DIK

The voice is an enchanting and peculiar instrument with its own set of unique and inherent problems. Since the voice, the instrument, and the body are one, the human voice is highly fragile and extremely sensitive to the conditions surrounding it. The voice can be temperamental, and, when for whatever reason it doesn't sound quite right, it cannot simply be fixed or replaced mechanically; rather, it needs time to adjust to humidity, blood flow, or simply to heal.

Yet it is this ever-changing quality of the voice that requires a singer not only to perform, but to diagnose and learn—to become, as Jennifer Zetlan calls it in the reflection piece that follows, “a scholar of the voice.” A high degree of scholarship is required in order to determine what is appropriate to sing and what is not. Further, many singers must exercise another kind of scholarship as they study languages, literature, diction, and acting as they prepare to perform roles. Their Artist-Teacher-Scholar persona is not fully realized until they commit themselves to education.

The partnership between the New School University's Mannes College of Music and The Metropolitan Opera Guild has enabled singers who study at a school without a music education program to think of themselves as educators. The program introduces students to an educational persona that will aid their future careers. Jennifer Zetlan and her fellow students at Mannes understand that a successful singing career is not simply measured by her performances on stage, but also by her experiences in the classroom and the vocal studio. Mannes interns have discovered that learning to comprehend the technique of their artistry and communicating that understanding to others in turn makes them better, more engaged performers.

The Mannes College/Metropolitan Opera Guild Guided Internship Program certainly provides invaluable instruction to students at the various New York City Public High Schools; however, the program is also a valuable source of professional development

DAVID DIK WAS APPOINTED THE
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE
METROPOLITAN OPERA GUILD IN 2003,
HAVING SERVED AS THE GUILD'S DIRECTOR
OF EDUCATION AND DIRECTOR OF GUILD
MEMBERSHIP AFFAIRS SINCE 1997. WHILE
EDUCATION DIRECTOR, DAVID FURTHERED
THE WORK OF THE NEW YORK CITY
CHORAL MUSIC INITIATIVE, LATER TO BE
CALLED URBAN VOICES, WITH THE HELP OF
THE VIVENDI UNIVERSAL FOUNDATION.
THE GUILD'S URBAN VOICES CHORAL
ARTIST TRAINING PROGRAM HAS TAKEN
PLACE IN NEW YORK, BOSTON,
WASHINGTON AND LOS ANGELES.

for the classroom teachers and music specialists with whom the interns collaborate. As the City of New York has over the past few years dramatically increased the number of music teachers who work in its public schools, the Mannes interns work with teachers who are new to the field as well as support those programs that are considered exemplary. Even the most accomplished school music choral instructors value new repertoire ideas for a voice that is unlike their own. They also find it extremely useful to have in their classrooms a different musical personality who brings new and different ways of reaching out to students.

At the Long Island City high school, Jayne Skoog, a former MET singer, incorporates interns from Mannes College of Music to work with students on a host of activities in her studio and ensemble classes. These activities range from preparing opera scenes of Menotti or Mozart to the choral works of Stravinsky or Poulenc. Mannes interns observe and assist high school students as they prepare written critiques of their performances, journals about the opera scenes from the DVDs that Ms. Skoog assigns, and musical analyses of the text and music from the *Symphony of Psalms*. In addition, the high school students are also required to compose music for hypothetical advertisements and to create their own opera scenes on topics of their own choosing.

As the student interns regroup by attending to their Music-in-Education classes with



The Mannes Guided Internship Program is a collaboration between the Voice Department at Mannes College of Music and the Metropolitan Opera Guild Education Department. Students selected carefully by Beth Pierson enjoy the benefits of participating in Metropolitan Opera Guild school programs and opera events at Lincoln Center.

Beth Roberts (the chair of the Voice Department), they are challenged to report on what they are learning about the field of education. What can pre-professional singers learn about the voice by helping others find their way through moments of insecurity as performers or through their uncertainty regarding vocal technique? What are the observable features of what might be termed the ‘art of teaching’ as applied to musical instruction?

To the extent that the Mannes students elaborate and reflect on the scholarship of singing, teaching, and learning through their guided internship experiences, they teach each other the purposes and rewards of the singer-educator-scholar. The testimony recorded in the following article creates a multi-dimensional ‘portrait’ of a young musical artist who teaches music in the service of the Metropolitan Guild’s MIENC laboratory school sites. ¶

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