

Dr. Barbara Hoos de Jokisch, University of Fine Arts, Berlin, Germany

## **How do I actually teach? –**

### **Discerning method within the kaleidoscope of vocal methods**

#### **I. Looking through the kaleidoscope - at the colourful landscape of singing methods**

During the last 30 years since the BDG (Bundesverband Deutscher Gesangspädagogen), the German Association of Voice Teachers, was founded, public interest in singing, vocal performance and voice in general has increased significantly. At the same time, there has probably never been such an abundance, such a broad variety of different voice teaching methods as at the beginning of the 21st century. The view at the colourful landscape of singing methods resembles the view through a kaleidoscope, in which a few coloured glass stones are arranged into beautiful, ever new pictures by rotation and reflection. Thus, the content and technical elements that contribute to the training of the singing voice have in principle been approximately the same for 400 years – but their composition and weighting in the individual teaching methods results in a different pattern in each case. Many different methods are possible with the same ingredients.

This variety of the currently offered singing methods first of all challenges the students, interested in singing: How can they even find their way around such a wide range of offers? How do they find the singing method that best suits their vocal interests and stylistic goals without long detours?

Second, as voice teachers, we may also ask ourselves the question: How do I actually teach? What makes my teaching special? What elements and focal points do my approach to teaching, my method, contain? What is my personal contribution to the big kaleidoscope of singing methods?

#### **II. First aim of the vocal pedagogical training: authentic voice teachers**

For twelve years now I have been training future voice teachers at the University of the Arts in Berlin, teaching the subjects methodology and teaching practice. During my own voice training I have already experienced various, sometimes very contradictory singing methods "at first hand". Especially for teaching later on I have profited a lot from this. Therefore, from the very beginning of the Methodology Seminar, it has been of great importance to me not only to teach my students a single method of vocal pedagogy, but to broaden their view of the

variety of methods. I try to do this by inviting guest lecturers with different approaches who are passionate about their special methodological approach and who can inspire the students. On the other hand, I work with the students in the course of their studies to develop the basic elements and principles of vocal pedagogy in terms of terminology and content. In this way we create together the prerequisites for characterising historical as well as current methods, and comparing them objectively. Thus, by combining practical experience and theoretical knowledge, a space can be created in which students can find their own personal approach to teaching.

In my lecture I would like to share the theoretical results of this work with you: I would like to present an overview of nine basic parameters which form the basis of singing lessons as concrete content and pedagogical components. These parameters have a certain arrangement and weighting in the different methods, similar to the coloured stones in the different pictures of a kaleidoscope.

**The nine basic elements or parameters are**

1. the basic starting point of teaching - from the sound or the function of the voice
2. the weighting of the three main elements of singing technique, music and interpretation in class,
3. the handling of the three functional areas in the field of vocal technique,
4. the language of instruction with which the content is taught,
5. different teaching models concerning the student-teacher relationship,
6. the possible inclusion of typologies,
7. the possible use of technical aids,
8. special competences of the teachers,
9. the presentation of the method to the outside world.

Due to time constraints, I will focus on the first three elements today, and only briefly introduce the others.

As a result of our considerations, an overview will finally be created which attempts to capture the manifold parameters of singing lessons at a glance. This model, the kaleidoscope of singing methods, can give teachers an insight into their own methodological profile. In addition, the kaleidoscope can also serve as a guide for those interested in singing, in their search for the right teacher for their needs.

### **III. Method - restriction or guarantee of quality?**

By vocal pedagogical methods we understand certain procedures in the classroom that are intended to train singing voices. The attitude towards the term "method" varies greatly among singing teachers. On the one hand, method is understood as a negative definition - a schematic narrowing that completely disregards the individuality of the human singing voice. This view developed particularly at the beginning of the 20th century, when vocal and also instrumental students were taught according to rigid, sometimes very one-sided methods.

Today the term method is used more loosely. Especially in the training of popular singing, methods have become a guarantee of quality. The term method, connected with a name, becomes a trademark, as for example with the Estill method. Other educational institutions use terms such as technique or model instead of method - for example, the Complete Vocal Technique and the Lichtenberg Model.

Whatever we think about the term method: Each of us has developed our own way of teaching in the course of our professional lives, and this has proved its worth. I would therefore suggest that we understand the term method - neutrally and in an etymological sense - as a path towards a goal. In this way, development can happen, both for the learners and for the teachers.

### **IV. Nine parameters of teaching**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> parameter: Basic methodological orientation: sound or function.**

Until about 1830/40 it was not at all common to speak of methods, because until then bel canto was the only teaching method in the classical field. At best, a distinction was made between different pedagogical pedagogues' pedigrees (see Ernst Haefliger, *Die Singstimme*, Bern: Hallwag, 1983, pages 160-171). The teaching of bel canto focused on sound and music. The voices were to be trained in such a way that they were able to perform certain compositions, i.e. to fulfil a certain sound ideal. Bel canto can therefore be described as a sound-oriented teaching method (1<sup>st</sup> parameter: Basic methodological orientation). Great care was taken in the training of vocal technique, virtuoso mastery of the musical elements was strived for and put at the service of interpretation, which was often almost tailor-made for the singer (2<sup>nd</sup> parameter: Levels of vocal training). The lessons were based on a holistic approach to vocal functions and singing (3<sup>rd</sup> parameter: Vocal technique – three functional areas), which was mainly conveyed through pictures and comparisons (4<sup>th</sup> parameter: Teaching language). The teachers passed on their large knowledge of experience through imitation

(5<sup>th</sup> Parameter: Teaching models). Oral tradition – oral transmission from the teacher to the student – is the characteristic feature of the personal teaching method of bel canto (9<sup>th</sup> parameter: Presentation of the method to the outside world). The teaching of singing changed when, towards the middle of the 19th century, voice physiology emerged as a new science and the human body was explored as an instrument. Now the first thing that was looked at, was the vocal function. However, this was not yet understood as a whole, but first in individual parts - and so at the beginning of the 20th century a wealth of contradictory singing methods emerged, in which individual voice physiological knowledge was isolated from the whole and declared to be a panacea. A positive consequence of the inclusion of the scientific point of view, which was symptomatically expressed in the invention of the laryngeal mirror by Manuel García in 1854, are the functional singing methods, which have been particularly successful since the middle of the 20th century, and increasingly prevail. Today, knowledge of vocal physiology and vocal function is a natural part of a solid vocal pedagogical education. The analytical language with scientific-anatomical terms is used in particular.

After both positions were initially irreconcilably opposed, today even a change of perspective - both from the sound and the vocal function - can be considered fruitful. Methodical "bilingualism" is in any case useful and helpful for the singing teachers. In some situations the pictorial language has advantages, in others the exact description of the physiological processes. At best both complement each other.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> parameter: Levels of vocal training: technique, music, expression**

A second distinction is to consider the levels at which singing lessons take place. Some of us teachers focus on voice training, i.e. they teach primarily vocal technique. Others open up the voices through vocal literature, especially if they play the piano well. A lesson becomes complete when, in addition to vocal technique and musical work, the third level of text interpretation, role design and presentation can be included by means of knowledgeable suggestions.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> parameter: Vocal technique: three functional areas**

Because of the absence of the external instrument in singing, an important task of singing lessons is, to develop vocal technique. How exciting it can be to support a voice in developing its full potential! In the field of vocal technique, the concept of three functional circuits or functional areas has become more and

more familiar and is used as a helpful model. The first functional circuit, also called the "big system", is located in the fuselage area. Here the phonation is stimulated by breathing and energization/toning, and thus the duration of the sound is significantly determined. We have the third functional area, the "small system" in the embouchure areas in the head area. Here the sound is formed through articulation and resonance, i.e. the timbre of the voice is developed. And between the two we have the second functional circuit in the immediate larynx area, in which register and dynamics are regulated and pitch and volume are essentially determined.

In the 3rd parameter, vocal technique, we find big differences between singing methods. Some teachers open up a voice completely from the first functional area and are very creative in the use of various aids from physiotherapy (e.g. in Norma Enns' inspiring workshop "Ribbons, balls and balloons"). Other colleagues contribute experience from bodywork, such as the Alexander Technique or the Feldenkrais Method. Methods of breathing training also find their way into this workshop. To be mentioned above all in Germany is the large Berlin breathing school of Ilse Middendorf with the basic work *Der erfahrbare Atem* (The Experiential Breath), its further development by her successor Erika Kemman-Huber with *Der bewusste zugelassene Atem* (The Conscious Allowed Breath) and the continuation with Maria Höller-Zangenfeind with *Atem-Tonus-Ton* (Breath-Toning-Tone). The school Schlaffhorst-Andersen also has a main focus on the breath and is based on the breathing theory of Leo Kofler, a German immigrant to the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Still other singing methods turn intensively to articulation and sound shaping in the third functional area and build on phonetics and speech training. Julius Hey and Julius Stockhausen with their large, parallel singing schools from 1882-1886 were of course among these, and Franziska Martienßen-Lohmann is their successor, calling phonetics the "science of the singer". The *Schule der Stimmenthüllung* (School of vocal unveiling) after Valborg Werbeck-Svärdström primarily focuses on articulation and resonance and thus on the "small system". Other directions include knowledge from speech therapy and voice therapy, such as Evemarie Haupt with her method of "Integrative Voice Therapy", ISTP.

Even though the second functional area with the topic "register" contains the most central task of voice training, in classical voice training direct attention to the throat area was rather avoided. Functional methods do not know this caution,

and, following Husler, Reid, Rabine, Rohmert and their successors, such as recently Ulrike Sowodniok, work directly at the larynx level. This also includes our colleagues Thomas Heyer and Noelle Turner, whose main approach is direct register work, the separation and new connection of the registers. In this approach they also agree with Franziska Martienßen-Lohmann.

The vocal exercises of this formative vocal pedagogue of the 20th century were personally transmitted to me by one of her last students still teaching, Prof. Reinhard Becker, and I have summarized them in a practical teaching book which was published by Breitkopf & Härtel this spring (2020): *The seven basic elements of voice training*.

The comprehensive and varied range of Franziska Martienßen-Lohmann's vocal exercises can easily be assigned to the three functional areas of the voice. In her opinion, the classical training of the voice in each functional area is based on balance between two opposing poles. Thus, a comprehensive voice training can be divided into six basic elements, which are concluded by a seventh, the synergy. In the book, the graphic figure shown above, the "Babushka", **contributes to the** orientation within the chapters and makes it easier to find the exercises.

### **Further parameters: Article "Integrative Vocal Pedagogy"**

In addition to these three first parameters of teaching, in which the main distinguishing features of vocal methods are found, there are six more, which, as announced above, I will show you here only in the final overview. All characteristics are described in detail in the second part of my essay, which is expected to be published in the fall of 2020: "Unity in Diversity? - On the concept of integrative vocal pedagogy", in: *Handbuch des Gesangs, Volume 2: The voice in the age of its medialization: Singing in the 20th and 21st century*, edited by Grosch, Nils and Seedorf, Thomas; Laaber-Verlag.

## **V. Overview: Kaleidoscope Model**

For dealing with the kaleidoscope, it is important to me to provide a kind of instruction manual, the importance of which became clear to me especially from conversations after the first lecture at the annual congress in Berlin, April 2018.

1. "Separate - to connect". In practice as well as in theory, a topic that we want to address in particular must be temporarily separated from the overall complex. This can be a specific vocal training task in the classroom or a concept in vocal methodology. So if we want to understand one of the nine vocal pedagogical

parameters - and maybe even only a certain aspect of it - we have to isolate it for a moment - otherwise we have only an undifferentiated mixture. This does not contradict the fact that the voice is a large, holistic entity, in theory and above all in practice.

2) If we observe that a particular singing method has its focus in a specific area (e.g. in register work), this does not mean that this singing method completely disregards the other components, but only that it opens up the understanding of the whole voice through a particular gateway.

3) The handling of the kaleidoscope and the characterisation of the nine parameters of vocal methods is value-free under all circumstances! Tolerance is the highest bid on such a sensitive subject as method comparison. The objective, value-neutral, non-judgemental examination and description of the phenomena is the highest commandment.

4) The mention of certain methods does not mean their propagation - the kaleidoscope is about the value-free recording of the greatest possible variety of practiced singing methods.

## **VI. summary:**

If the nine parameters are conscientiously worked through one after the other, e.g. with regard to one's own singing method, such a "method check" can help to create clarity for our pedagogical action as teachers - and orientation for singing students in their search for their suitable lessons. If we know how we teach, which elements make up our teaching, where our focus and special skills lie, this can definitely strengthen our professional self-image. We can make our profile more clearly visible to the outside world, e.g. on our own website or in job applications. The kaleidoscope model offers the opportunity to awaken our understanding of other methods, whose focus and characteristic profile we can then better recognise. And finally, the kaleidoscope itself can inspire us to expand our own methodological possibilities and means.

The Kaleidoscope is a consistent result of my longstanding interest in vocal methods and my methodological research, my vocal pedagogical practice and last but not least the many different methodological suggestions I have received from the BDG since 1990. I hope I could also stimulate and strengthen you with this model.

***Factual comparison of methods instead of methodological controversy, diversity and tolerance of methods instead of methodological one-sidedness and exclusivity - these are the characteristics of integrative vocal pedagogy at the beginning of the 21st century.***

The Federal Association of German Vocal Pedagogues has played a decisive role in its creation over a period of 30 years - and all of you have made your contribution to this with your personal professional practice on site and your participation in the congresses and further training courses.

Voice pedagogy is facing many challenges at the beginning of the 21st century - the better we know our means and the more consciously we use them, the better we will be prepared for the tasks ahead.

This is a translated and revised version of the German Article in "Vox humana", 12/2019.

**Note:**

Following the lecture, invitations have been extended to various music academies and further education institutions. There, workshops and upgrade training courses will provide the opportunity to delve deeper into the topic with practical exercises. The method check according to the kaleidoscope of singing methods is suitable for internal collegial work as well as for open day or weekend workshops.

In June 2019, I was invited to present the Kaleidoscope for the first time in English to my American colleagues, at the NATS mini conference in Berlin. The interactive lecture at the EUROVOX-congress in Edinburgh was planned as a continuation.

I look forward to developing forms of practical application of the Kaleidoscope Model together with you – and gratefully receive your comments and proposals.

Contact me:

E-mail: [barbara\\_jokisch@online.de](mailto:barbara_jokisch@online.de)

[www.gesangspaedagogik.org](http://www.gesangspaedagogik.org)

Dr. Barbara Hoos de Jokisch

Barbara Hoos de Jokisch studied music and German literature as well as voice pedagogy at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK). Already during her solo career as a concert singer - with a focus on early and contemporary music - she worked as a voice teacher, among others at the UdK and the Escuela Nacional de Música in Mexico City. Since 2012 she has been teaching singing and methods/teaching practice at the UdK, since 2015 she has been part of the teaching team of the GPZ course of the BDG.

Barbara Hoos de Jokisch dedicates herself to the areas of vocal pedagogy and vocal methodology not only in practice, but also in scientific lectures and specialist publications. In 2011 she completed her doctorate in music education with *summa cum laude*. From 2010 to 2014 she was a member of the board of the BDG. In 2012 she was one of the founding members of the German Society for Vocal Science. Since 2015 she has been a member of the editorial team of the BDG journal *Vox Humana*, where she is responsible for the section "Aus der Praxis". In 2015 her dissertation *Die geistige Klangvorstellung* Franziska Martienßen-Lohmann - vocal theory and vocal pedagogy was published at Breitkopf & Härtel. She was a member of the team of authors of the *Lexikon der Gesangsstimme*. Her book *Die sieben Grundelemente der Stimmbildung* was published in spring 2020.

As a coach for voice and personality, Barbara Hoos de Jokisch offers workshops, seminars and individual training for people in speech professions and for those who want to optimize their vocal presence. She works in therapeutic and pastoral environments, as well as in business contexts, including *Dirigieren & Führen*.

*"Working with and on the human voice - with its artistic, technical, intuitive and scientific components - is one of the most exciting pedagogical challenges of our time. That is why the strengthening of the professional self-confidence of singing teachers is particularly close to my heart."*