



The Psychology of Singing: A Rational Method of Voice Culture based on a Scientific Analysis of all Systems, Ancient and Modern

David C. Taylor

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“In his ‘Psychology of Singing’ David C. Taylor has made a book that teachers of singing will have to read whether they like it or not. He has examined the basis of that modern method of teaching singing which attempts to instruct pupils in the intelligent operation of the muscles of their vocal mechanism and has pronounced it utterly and fundamentally vicious. It would do many opera singers good if they would take to heart Mr. Taylor’s thoughts on the office of the aesthetic powers in conceiving the beautiful tone. It is one of the most original and stimulating books ever written on the art of singing, and it ought to do a world of good.” -New York Sunday

“A venturesome and daring book. He has undertaken to show nothing less than that all modern ‘scientific’ methods of voice culture are based on wrong principles; that the attempt of physiologists and anatomists to ascertain, from a consideration of the vocal organs and observation of them through the various instruments that have been devised for that purpose, their action and deduce proper methods of tone formation, are totally futile. He attempts to go back to the principles of the old Italian teachers of the ‘bel canto’ that have mystified so many modern students, and deduce from them the only correct way of teaching and learning to sing.” -The New Music Review and Church Music Review, Volume 8, 1909

The ground-breaking, comprehensively rational and scientific critical analysis of modern methods of singing instruction.

Probably the single most useful book on singing ever written, this work is a critical analysis which exposes the shortcomings and failures of modern methods of singing instructions. Having done so, it then proceeds to elaborate on the superseded method, namely bel canto or the so called old Italian method. The author establishes the validity of the latter method by reference to the results it obtained. He convincingly argues that the decline in the quality of singers can be arrested only by a return to the bel canto method. A peculiar gap exists between the accepted theoretical basis of instruction in singing and the actual methods of vocal teachers. Part I of this work contains a review of modern methods. In Part II a critical analysis is offered of certain theories of the vocal action which receive much attention in practical instruction. Part III contains a summary of all present knowledge of the voice. In Part IV the information about the vocal action obtained from the two sources is combined—the scientific knowledge of mechanical processes, and the empirical knowledge derived from attentive listening to voices.

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