

Sing Your Life Newsletter - April, 2004

After serious consideration, and an attempt to accommodate each of you, I have decided to get out of Yahoo and start a whole new Message Board. I've posted the link below, or you may click on "Message Board", from any main page on the site. Yahoo was too restrictive what with having to enter a password every time you wanted to change pages, and there were not too many of you posting. I think this might work out better for us.

In the meantime, having sent you over to the Tessitura Message Board, I decided to visit it regularly myself to check out the conversations. Have you been there?

This month on Tessitura, much of the discussion has been about the use of relaxation-type medications prior to a performance to "settle" the nerves. I've been very cautious about posting a note myself up there because let's face it! I AM a bit out-spoken and as a teacher and coach, I have promised myself and you to always tell the truth as I see it. I cannot help but feel that some teachers may sometimes surrender to cowardly acts of agreement with students rather than risk losing a paying customer. I have never and will never operate that way.

It absolutely astonishes me the way the resident coaches on Tessitura have responded to posts from singers who regularly ingest Valium or other DRUGS before a show. And let me make it extremely clear to YOU guys, my readership, that there is nothing more harmful that you can do to your voice, your career, your health than to start down the slippery slope of drug dependence.

The student who first posted the "inquiry" should have been shut down from the start, but instead, the coaches engaged the student, (maybe hoping to acquire a customer), and it started an entire deluge of posts on the "pros" and "cons" of assisted relaxation through drugs.

Television ads are replete with ads for drugs. If one has a "charlie horse", or "heart burn" or an "irritable bowel" episode, or an over-active child, there is a prescription medication to "fix" it. And of course, if one is shy or nervous about anything on Earth, there is Paxil, and Zoloft and a host of other medications to "cure" the problem. But what we singers need to always remember is that our BODIES are the instrument of our expression, and to inject a drug into it takes away the power of that expression leaving us needing more of that drug just to get by. The pharmaceutical companies get rich, we get lost in a sea of prescribed medications that deplete us.

We CANNOT LET THAT HAPPEN, SINGERS! We artists are the soul of this planet...and through our music, we will keep kindness, love, and compassion

alive in a world that has all but forgotten the meaning of those words. We must not let our bodies, our instruments, be invaded by synthetic chemicals that will ultimately dull our minds and rob our souls. I know how that sounds...overly dramatic, right? Well, I've watched friends and family members surrender to the never-ending cycle of medication-taking, and it isn't pretty. Trust me on this. THERE'S A REASON WHY THE SIDE EFFECTS OF A DRUG ARE SAID IN SOTTO VOCE (SOFT VOICE) AT THE END OF THE COMMERCIALS FOR ANY PARTICULAR PRESCRIPTION MED. And haven't you noticed how much faster the side effect words are spoken?

I remember having to read "The Hidden Persuaders" by Vance Packard back in high school. At the time, I remember finding it much too academic and dry, but later on, when I matured a bit, I read it again. Wow! Was I enlightened?? The book talked about Madison Avenue tactics to "coax" consumers into buying things by the use of colors, subliminal images and sounds. Yelling the benefits of drugs, and then practically whispering the side effects is supposed to have the effect of our minimizing the side effects (because after all, we hardly heard what they were, they went by so fast and so quietly) and go ahead and take the medication to handle our problem. I for one, feel insulted by these tactics, especially since it has been made crystal clear in the last 5 years or so, that the doctors and pharmacies are in bed together to make a profit, and not necessarily to find cures for illnesses.

I realize this is controversial stuff here, but all I am really saying, singers, is that we all need to be very discerning about what we put into our instrument. Naturally, if you do become ill and need to see a doctor, why not consult more than just one before you pay for that prescription and take it? Maybe there are other options. There are still some pretty wonderful physicians out there, usually those who have not surrendered to the mandate of Managed Care Companies to cut costs above all else including patient care. One of them may have another answer that does not require medication. Okay, "nuff" of that, huh? If I've offended any Medical professionals out there, please let me have it!

While I regularly hear from most of you through email messaging, I have discovered that you hardly ever visit the site itself! I really wish you would. We are always adding articles, midi and MP3 files and more audio aids. We recently posted articles on "Singing and Pitch", "Trying vs. Doing", "Creativity", "Self-Evaluation vs. Self-Criticism", and "Audition Tips", so check them out on the Readers' Corner Page. The Midi Files are on the Midi Page, and the MP3's are on the Accompaniments Page. Last month I gave you a partial list of lead sheets we are offering at a drastic reduction of what the sheet music would cost. I'm offering these for \$5 each, but if you order 3, the cost is \$12.00. If you order 5, it's \$20. And if you want 10 of these lead sheets, it's \$30. I'll cover the postage, and your sheets will come in a protected wrapping. Here is the rest of the list:

- Once in a While

- One Flight Down
- One Note Samba
- Our Love is Here to Stay
- People
- Poor Butterfly
- Que Sera Sera
- Rock-A-Bye Your Baby
- Secret Love
- Sincerely
- Side By Side
- Skylark
- Slow Hot Wind
- So Many Stars
- So Nice
- Someone That I used to Love
- Spring can Really Hang You Up The Most
- Street Where You Live
- Sunday Kind of Love
- Tenderly
- That's All
- The Song is You
- The Way You Look Tonight
- The Nearness of You
- Through the Eyes of Love
- They Can't Take That Away From Me
- You Don't Know What Love Is
- You Go To My Head
- Unchained Melody
- Undecided
- What Are You Doing The Rest of your Life
- When I fall in Love
- When Sunny Gets Blue
- Where or When
- Yesterday
- Young and Foolish
- Young At Heart
- You've Changed
- You Don't Know Me

And remember, singers, All the Midi's are free if you become a GOLD member of Sing Your Life along with free voice lessons for a whole year. Next month, I'll be going into the studio for the first time in 20 years to record a CD. My students here locally, and you out there have inspired me to perform once again, so I am dedicating the CD to all of you! I will post a couple of tracks on the Bonus Page and offer the CD for sale, and now that I've landed a an actual gig, I plan to sell my CD at the restaurant where I sing. And listen guys! If I can

do it at my maturing age, you can certainly do it as well! Remember to visit the Message Board and give us your thoughts, ideas and suggestions to make this site really work for you. Thanks for your continuing support, singers!