

### Notes on "Vocal Identity" - by Gilles Denizot

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It seems to me that it is indispensable for every singer to use a healthy vocal technique, but also to succeed in defining one's voice. The singer knows then his/her "optimal" voice, he/she knows "who he/she is vocally", he/she has a clear and precise conception of his/her "vocal identity". Without this conception, the singer cannot produce his/her true voice. If he/she temporarily omits to use this "optimal" voice, the singer is in bad posture. He/she is even more in trouble because nobody can help, as he/she has forgotten the healthy principles which usually authorize him/her to sing well. The singer should then stop as long as needed in order to find the vocal identity again.

How does one obtain this "vocal identity" ? During as many individual voice lessons as needed. It is not conceivable to build one's voice without attending regular classes and without diligence in the work process. The vocal identity can be obtained neither in rehearsal nor during performances. It is during the intimacy of the lesson, the ear and the glance of the professor as guides, that the singer works on his/her vocal identity. One tests then the discoveries in a moreless public frame. A workshop, a coaching, a Masterclass, a private concert, an audition, a wedding, a small concert for children, patients, old persons, prisoners. Whatever the occasion, it offers a rare chance: being able to apply the principles and test one's experience as a singer. The absolute basic rule is to reproduce as much as possible the technical principles that have been priorily learned. Because it is in class and during personal practice that it is necessary to experiment, to ask questions, to analyze, to decide. Not in public.

I recommend for instance an oval or rounded mouth posture. NEVER horizontal. This notion is not only in agreement with the Italian School of singing, it is also a technical aspect which I used during multiple performances. I KNOW that this mouth posture favors an optimal emission of the voice of any opera singer. When one of my students forgets or voluntarily decides not to adopt this vocal posture (or any other technical recommendation), he/she asks for trouble. And I can do nothing for him/her, because he/she has to learn autonomy. If one considers that every performance or rehearsal offers different conditions, and that our physical state is variable, the only constant element in this profession is our technique. It is the only really reliable help. If one forgets it, it is necessarily at our own expense.

As a final thought, I would like to share something with you... When I debuted I was considered an extremely endowed and promising singer, capable of offering moments of intense artistic emotion and this is probably one of the reasons for the fast start of my career and at such a high level. But I was always a "singer without technique". Some people thought (wrongly) that my "vocal exploits" necessarily testified of the knowledge and the mastery of my instrument. Regrettably not. My audacity and boldness were my only tools in order to face the international contracts and opera casts. I never knew if the note was going to be produced correctly. And slowly, notes became less and less secure. Then I had to stop and study. It is only recently that I began to know my voice, to build myself a vocal identity. It takes time, but the main thing is to identify when one is vocally lost, that one forgot to reproduce what had been decided during class, and to find one's vocal identity again. I work on this myself, just like any singer.

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at [denizot@operalab.org](mailto:denizot@operalab.org) Thank You !