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## The Psychology of Singing: A Bioenergetic Perspective

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SINGING: A BIOENERGETIC PERSPECTIVE

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SINGING: A BIOENERGETIC PERSPECTIVE

Culminating Project



In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Counseling/Psychology  
Lindenwood Colleges for Individualized Education



by

Nicki R. S. McClusky

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Covering of the Freudian Character Structure	7
Lowy's Five Character Types	9
The Anxious Structure	9
The Oral Structure	17
The Psychosomatic Structure	14
The Masochistic Structure	17
The Rigid Structure	18
Hysterical Female	14
Phallic, Narcissistic Hate	19
Compulsive Character	20
II. CRITIQUE OF THE FIVE	23
The Oral, Psychosomatic, and Narcissistic Structures	25
Oral/Anal Projection	25
Compulsive/Borderline Character	26
Narcissism	29
Projective/Clamp	31
Masochistic/Compulsive	32
Oral/Compulsive	33
III. CHARACTERIZATION OF CHARACTERS THROUGH LANGUAGE	37
Oral, Anxious, and Psychosomatic Structure	37
Masochistic	38
Anxious/Oral	37

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments . . . . .	i
Introduction . . . . .	v
Chapter	
I    ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER . . . . .	1
Character, Armor and Energy . . . . .	1
Historical Perspective . . . . .	1
Origin of Armor . . . . .	4
Seven Segments of Armor . . . . .	5
Layering of the Armor . . . . .	6
Character Structure . . . . .	7
Lowen's Five Character Types . . . . .	9
The Schizoid Structure . . . . .	9
The Oral Structure . . . . .	12
The Psychopathic Structure . . . . .	14
The Masochistic Structure . . . . .	17
The Rigid Structure . . . . .	18
Hysterical Female . . . . .	18
Phallic, Narcissistic Male . . . . .	19
Compulsive Character . . . . .	20
II    ELEMENTS OF SINGING . . . . .	25
The Basic Variables/Dimensions Involved in Singing . . . . .	25
General Tone Production . . . . .	25
Breathing/Breath Control . . . . .	26
Resonance . . . . .	29
Register/Range . . . . .	31
Timbre/Tone Color . . . . .	32
Articulation . . . . .	33
III  EXPRESSION OF CHARACTER THROUGH SINGING . . . . .	37
Voice Dimensions and Personality Structure . . . . .	37
Breathing . . . . .	38
Schizoid Singer . . . . .	39

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Oral Singer . . . . .	41
Psychopathic Singer . . . . .	43
Masochistic Singer . . . . .	44
Rigid Singer . . . . .	46
Resonance, Tone Quality, Range and Register . . . . .	47
Schizoid Singer . . . . .	47
Oral and Psychopathic Singer . . . . .	50
Masochistic Singer . . . . .	53
Rigid Singer . . . . .	54
Articulation . . . . .	56
Schizoid, Oral, Psychopathic, Masochistic and Rigid Singer . . . . .	56
Character and the Process of Voice Study . . . . .	58
Initial Contact and Business Matters . . . . .	59
Goals, Agendas, and the Relationship . . . . .	60
Case Studies . . . . .	64
Schizoid Case Study: Brian . . . . .	64
Oral Case Study: Barbara . . . . .	66
Psychopathic Case Studies . . . . .	67
Paul . . . . .	68
Bob . . . . .	69
Gail . . . . .	70
George . . . . .	72
Masochistic Case Study: Sandra . . . . .	72
Rigid Case Study: Sam . . . . .	73
IV THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF SINGING AND THE CORE SELF- EXPRESSION OF THE PERSONALITY . . . . .	77
Infantile Core Expression . . . . .	78
Developmental Dynamics and the Infant's Voice . . . . .	78
Sublimation of Core Feeling Expression Through Singing. . . . .	81
Case Study: Jonathan . . . . .	83
The Ego Building/Modifying Function of Singing . . . . .	84
The Ego . . . . .	85
How Singing Increases Pleasure in Life . . . . .	87
Bioenergetics and Pleasure . . . . .	87
Case Study: Judy . . . . .	88

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Singing, the Creative, Self-Expressive Act . . . . . 90  
Creativity . . . . . 91  
CONCLUSION . . . . . 95  
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 97

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is an exploratory work dealing with the relationship between personality and the singing voice. Interest in this relationship has emerged out of this writer's involvement in psychology and music during the past ten years as voice teacher and therapist. This study is not an experimental one; material from direct clinical observations and case studies of voice students composes the evidence which supports the propositions suggested in this exploratory thesis.

Specifically, this paper explores and expands a particular theory of personality developed by Alexander Lowen, the founder and creator of Bioenergetic Analysis. He has outlined characteristics of musculature and motility that have provided us with theoretical constructs of personality. These categorized structures or character structures, as Lowen calls them, enable us to understand disturbances in the personality.

This work suggests that one can also predict certain aspects of personality by observing several independent variables of the singing voice, just as Lowen understood aspects of the personality by studying the body's musculature and motility.

Lowen's understanding of the ways our motility is restricted and the ways our musculature is constricted is valuable information for the singer and the voice coach, as well as the therapist. This paper will, therefore, have a dual focus. Lowen's understanding of personality will hopefully be amplified by including indices of singing in

this discussion. This paper will also attempt to bring further clarity to our knowledge of singers and their difficulties through our understanding of the body's energy processes and blocks that inhibit energy flow, seen particularly through a Bioenergetic perspective.

Furthermore, Lowen's theory of Bioenergetics is based on the work of Wilhelm Reich, his former teacher and analyst. Both men theorized about the human energy system and developed dynamic therapeutic techniques designed to free bound or blocked energy. Reich's work (as well as Lowen's) was anchored in the psychoanalytic framework of his teacher, Sigmund Freud.

Freud contributed greatly to our understanding of personality structure, development, and dynamics. Reich developed a dynamic technique for dealing with emotional illness and understanding resistance. He also contributed a theory of character formation which Lowen elaborated upon in his theory of Bioenergetics. And it is Lowen's analytic model and this writer's treatment of it that will receive the majority of attention in this paper. Freudian and Reichian terminology will be defined and utilized herein, but their theories will not receive elaborate consideration.

The first section of this thesis will explain and define the elements of character. The concepts of character, armor and energy will be described before Lowen's five structures or character types are introduced: (1) Schizoid; (2) Oral; (3) Psychopathic; (4) Masochistic; and (5) Rigid.

In the second section six elements of singing will be presented. The basic variables involved in the singing process include: (1) general



tone production; (2) breathing/breath control; (3) resonance; (4) register/range; (5) timbre/tone color; and (6) articulation.

The third section of this work explores the ways in which singing reflects the character of an individual. We first examine what the variables of the singing voice reflect about the personality, and then speculation is made about how character is reflected in the process of voice study. Case studies that illustrate this relationship are presented thereafter.

In the fourth section of this paper, the interrelatedness of singing and the core self-expression of the personality is explored. Focus is on: (1) infantile core expression; (2) singing as a sublimating and ego building or modifying activity in relation to the development of the personality; (3) singing and pleasure in living; and (4) the creative, self-expressive nature of the singing act.

Finally, conclusions are drawn about the relationship between singing and personality, and limitations of this work are considered. Pursuant to these remarks, suggestions regarding the possibility of future research in developing measurement tools for studying voice variables as characterological indices are made.

The reader will notice the predominant use of the feminine pronoun "she" throughout this paper. This is done to avoid using the cumbersome combination of "he/she", which would provide equality. Either pronoun could be used except in sex-specific case studies.

## Chapter I

### ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER

#### Character, Armor, and Energy

##### Historical Perspective

We can more fully understand the development of Reich's and Lowen's thinking about character, armor and energy if we trace the history of the psychoanalytic movement back to Freud, Reich's teacher. Sigmund Freud's interest in neurology caused him to specialize in the treatment of nervous disorders. Freud had originally intended to conduct medical research, but through his association with the French psychiatrist, Charcot, he became interested in hypnosis and the treatment of hysteria. Freud believed that sexual conflicts were the cause of hysteria, and pursued his clinical interest in this relationship even though it met with severe criticism by his colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

Freud identified psychic or sexual energy as "libido." He developed a theory as to how psychic energy is distributed and used by the id, ego, and superego (the structures of the personality), since there is competition among them for existing available energy. One of the most important concepts developed by Freud, the mechanism of identification, accomplished diverting energy from the id to both the ego and the superego. "Once the energy furnished by the instincts has been channeled into the ego and the superego by the mechanism of identification, a complicated interplay of driving and restraining forces becomes possible."<sup>2</sup> The id possesses the driving forces in the personality, and the energy of the ego and the superego is used to both

forward and frustrate the aims of the instincts. All the conflicts within the personality may be reduced to the opposition of these two sets of forces; prolonged tension is due to the counteraction of a driving force by a restraining force.<sup>3</sup>

Wilhelm Reich, an important student of and theorizer about human energy, became a pupil of Freud when psychoanalytic theory was becoming a recognizable form. Reich identified psychic energy or "libido," as "orgone energy," the capacity for gratification. Lowen, Reich's student, believed this theory too limiting. He began to look at the entire organism and its capacity to experience pleasure on a broader energetic scale. All three theorists have been concerned with the human energy system with regard to maximizing health. How we attend to this in a clinical setting would be addressed differently by Freud, Reich and Lowen.<sup>4</sup>

Reich's major contribution to the field of psychology was to identify the functional purpose of muscular armoring as a manifestation of an individual's bodily defense mechanisms.<sup>5</sup> The two types of muscular contraction seen in the body are natural or temporary muscular constriction, and permanent or chronic constriction: the former is a response to a perceived threat which dissipates when the threat is removed; the latter originates in a similar manner, but is maintained in response to a continuing threat, either from the environment or from a perceived threat inside the person. Character armor refers to this latter type--chronic muscular tension.<sup>6</sup>

Reich defines character armor as "the molded expression of narcissistic defense chronically embedded in the psychic structure."<sup>7</sup>

He also teaches us that economically, the character in everyday life serves "as a means of avoiding what is unpleasant, of establishing and preserving a psychic balance, and finally of consuming repressed quantities of instinctual energy . . ." (see Footnote 7).

Ellsworth Baker, another student of Wilhelm Reich's, clarifies this concept further, defining character as:

the sum total of the character attitudes which an individual develops as a defense against anxiety, resulting in character rigidity, lack of contact, 'deadness' . . . functionally identical with muscular armoring.<sup>8</sup>

The theory of character was originally developed out of Reich's discoveries about the movement and blocking of energy in the body. In Reich's thinking, character eventually became synonymous with biophysical behavior, and this view resulted in the development of his theory of orgone biophysics (a highly disputed scientific treatise [see Footnote 5]).

Bioenergetics built upon Reich's knowledge of character structure, but departed from his focus on orgone energy theories. In Reich's theory there was considerable emphasis on sex-economy and orgasmic potency. Reich believed that the healthy individual would have unbound sexual energy available to her total being, thus ultimately enabling her to have a highly creative life. Bioenergetics departed from Reich's focus on the importance of the orgasmic response by more inclusively considering entire organismic functioning aimed at integrating bodily processes and psychic phenomena (see Footnote 5).

Energy for Lowen is bio-energy. He writes: "It is a basic physical law that all movement is an energy phenomenon." "Movement involves the

discharge of energy, and action equals reaction."<sup>9</sup> The energy Lowen simply calls "bioenergy" is the one fundamental energy in the human body, and it is manifest in psychic phenomena and in somatic motion (see Footnote 9).

#### Origin of Armor

Reich postulated that human beings began to armor themselves as they developed self-awareness. He believed that with the advent of self-perception, man became frightened and "began to armor against the inner fright" he experienced (see Footnote 6). Armoring was an attempt to control one's perceived sensations. This theory evolved out of Reich's understanding of schizophrenia, or "the universal terror of living": to face the unknown is frightening; to examine it, terrifying.<sup>10</sup> The drive to know, to understand, emerged as an attempt to deal with fear resulting from self-awareness, simultaneously excluding the contemplation of natural emotions and their expression. Reich also thought that armor was formed because of the frightening sensation of control loss experienced during orgasm (see Footnote 6). In short, then, the need to know superceded natural functioning which resulted in "holding back" as a way of life. Hence, we ostensibly armor to tolerate our own perceptions of life.

Regardless of the origin of armor, we have learned that armor prevents energy release and achieving satisfaction in the organism. Hence, one continually strives to release and satisfy one's self. Baker writes, "With loss of orgastic release, oneness with the cosmos is lost; we no longer feel contact with nature, and cosmic longing

supervenes."<sup>11</sup>

Armoring apparently develops in an orderly fashion and is segmental in arrangement. According to Reich, armor is the somatic aspect of repression; repression aimed at expediency in the short run, which is the basis for neurotic conflict in the long run. Impulses are blocked from both awareness and expression.

The following factors determine character formation:

1. The time at which an impulse is frustrated;
2. The extent and intensity of the frustration;
3. Against which impulses the central frustration is directed
4. The ratio between frustration and permission
5. The sex of the main frustrating person
6. The contradictions in the frustrations themselves.<sup>12</sup>

(For a more thorough explanation of these factors, the reader is referred to Character Analysis, beginning p. 150.)

#### Seven Segments of Armor

The seven segments of armor in the body are the ocular, oral, cervical, thoracic, diaphragmatic, abdominal and pelvic segments. In Reichian therapy these segments are usually freed in this order, with the exception of the chest. The chest and the breathing mechanism are often mobilized first to increase the energy level of the body.

In Bioenergetic therapy, work proceeds from the ground up. The feet are worked with first to "ground" the person (one develops one's sense of reality by planting the feet firmly on the ground) which reflexively impacts on the ocular segment. The eyes are worked with directly in Bioenergetics, but are not dealt with early in therapy.<sup>13</sup>

Let us focus on the muscular composition of these segments:

- Ocular:** This segment includes all the muscles around the eyes, forehead, eyelids, tear glands, the deep muscles at the base of the occiput, even including the brain itself.
- Oral:** Muscles of the chin, throat, the annular muscle at the mouth, and the muscles of the occiput form this segment. These muscles all together make a functional unit.
- Cervical:** In this third segment of the body, we find the deep muscles of the neck, the platysma, and the sternocleido mastoids. The tongue and larynx are included in this segment, also.
- Thoracic:** The thoracic segment consists of the intercostal muscles, the chest cage and its contents, the hands and the arms. This is the most important segment of the body because it houses the heart and the lungs.
- Diaphragmatic:** This segment can be divided into upper and lower parts, because the diaphragm can remain immobile even though the chest moves and vice-versa. It contains all the organs below the diaphragm and the two muscle bundles along the lower thoracic vertebrae.
- Abdominal:** All of the large abdominal muscles, the rectus muscles, the muscles of the back, and muscles of the flanks comprise this segment.
- Pelvic:** The muscles of the pelvis and the lower limbs are components of this body segment, the anal sphincter and the pelvic floor notwithstanding. Organs housed in the pelvic area are also considered in this segment.<sup>14</sup>

### Layering of the Armor

The three basic layers of armor include: (1) the superficial veneer or social facade; (2) the middle layer where the sum of built-up repressions lie (destructive forces lie here and many layers co-exist); and (3) the healthy core (this is the locus of the simple, decent individual free of irrational training and environmental influence).<sup>15</sup>

The three layers are dealt with in each segment of the body as

that segment is mobilized and its armor dissolved. The goal of therapy is to reach the final core of unitary functioning in the organism.<sup>16</sup> The specific function of chronic armor is to hold back and reduce anxiety--to hold back unitary movements, which allow us to surrender to biological emotions.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note that armoring first occurs in the diaphragm "in an inspiratory contraction where holding is most effective" (see Footnote 17). This has particular significance for singers since this is the one area of the body that needs free mobility. Learning to breathe effectively is also the "first order of business" in voice study. (Breathing in singing is treated extensively in subsequent sections of this paper.)

### Character Structure

People do not usually come to therapy with awareness of constricted areas in their bodies. They likely do not perceive that they are "armored" or disturbed in their energetic functions. Nor are they usually aware of any mind/body disunity in their organism. They have lived with compensations and adjustments for any existing disunity throughout their lives--i.e., with their character structure. When they experience "cracks" in their armor, or when their structure no longer "defends" them adequately, then help may be sought.

An individual's structure emerges out of the way she has managed her energy system; this system may seem to function well--charging and discharging in satisfying and pleasurable ways--or it may seem to be blocked--energy is "held" or "bound"--providing little sense of release or pleasure for the person (see Footnote 13).



Lowen teaches us that "character structure defines the way an individual handles his need to love, his reaching out for intimacy and closeness, and his striving for pleasure."<sup>18</sup> People who do not have issues involving intimacy have no "holding" against the impulse to reach out for closeness and contact; those who do withdraw because it is too threatening to reach out.<sup>19</sup> Each person's structure is the best compromise that individual has been able to make in the attempt to get her needs met during her life.

It can also be said that a person's character structure represents her primary defensive mode of functioning in the world. Which kind of structure one has depends on many factors: which clusters of structural traits appear where in the body; when they develop in relation to whom, etc. (Please consult Lowen's The Language of the Body for a full description of character formation.) According to Lowen, we, in modern civilization, all have a character structure.<sup>20</sup> We each have a mixture of traits in addition to our basic character. For example, a person whose structure is psychopathic may exhibit oral traits in her personality. And the oral individual may experience schizoid disturbances along with her basic orality (see footnote 13).

Another Bioenergetic therapist, Carl Kirsch, writes that "there are character types and mixtures of types which may closely describe a person in therapy." "Then there is a mixture of types and traits that come more closely to describing the person."<sup>21</sup> All of this simply points out that each being is a unique and complex entity. General character typology helps us to understand similarities and differences in people, and helps provide us with a common language aimed at

increasing our understanding and appreciation for/of each person.

### Lowen's Five Character Types

Now let us turn our attention to the five different character structures identified by Lowen. It is important to remember that each structure corresponds with a developmental level in the life of the growing child. The first three structures are pregenital structures, and the last two are genital structures. Also, there is a hierarchy in this spectrum of character types, according to the degree that each allows for intimacy and contact. Each structural level is a defense against the one lower down in the hierarchy. The five types and the central conflict of each are: (1) Schizoid--existence versus need; (2) Oral--need versus independence; (3) Psychopathic--independence versus closeness; (4) Masochistic--closeness versus freedom; and (5) Rigid--freedom versus surrender to love (see Footnote 20). We will explore each of the five types in depth herein. The schizoid and oral structures will be elaborated most since the blocks producing these structures receive direct attention in voice study.

### The Schizoid Structure

Features. In the schizoid personality a severe disturbance in the unitary functioning of the organism has occurred--there is a split between thinking and feeling. Bodily sensations or contact with one's body is greatly reduced as is contact with the world and external reality. There is a predominant inward withdrawal. The inner charge is frozen in the core area of the body; this lack of peripheral charge produces an individual with a weak ego boundary. Also, when a person

lacks identity with her body, she is left with an inadequate sense of her Self. Will motivates her actions rather than feeling since the latter is greatly diminished. In short, will power and a focus on reasoning with the mind are dominant schizoid traits.<sup>22</sup>

And so, we ask, what causes this state of affairs resulting in dissociation. Lowen instructs us that the child dissociates herself from reality and from the body to survive an untenable early situation. The child experiences early rejection by the mother and is terrified by the unconscious hate she perceives from this parent. An infant has no adequate means to deal with being hated by the person she is dependent on for her survival. The child perceives this hate as a threat to her existence (which in truth it is psychologically), is terrified by it, and feels murderous rage in response to this dilemma. Feeling intense terror and rage are powerful, overwhelming feelings too large for a small being to cope with in its underdeveloped state. And so the child walls off all feeling in self-defense. This is done in order to survive (see Footnote 22).

Body. How does a small child wall off all feeling and still remain alive? Primarily through contraction of muscles prohibiting sensation. Since the defense (the splitting of awareness from feeling) is aimed at containing the explosive energy that would flood the small person with too high a charge and feeling, a pattern of muscular tension is created to aid in defensive "protection." This produces a narrow and contracted body (see Footnote 22).

The primary block in the schizoid person is a severely constricted diaphragm. It "splits" the body in two. When the diaphragm undergoes

severe and chronic constriction, breathing becomes very shallow and superficial. Sensation and perception are greatly reduced and remain unintegrated. When this happens the primary defense of the schizoid is operating: feeling is dissociated from thinking.<sup>23</sup> Other main tension areas are located at the base of the skull, the shoulder joints, the leg joints, and the pelvic joints. Lowen also speaks of energy being frozen in the joints of the extremities; he has found either extreme inflexibility to exist or hyperflexibility. In both cases, sensation is dulled.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, we often find a mask-like face in the schizoid individual. The eyes are not alive. This individual has difficulty making contact with others (she is not in contact with herself to begin with). We also find that this individual usually has cold, contracted feet with high arches. She pulls away from the ground (the ground equals mother in Bioenergetics) and reality. It is too painful and too dangerous to be in touch with a "hostile earth" (see Footnote 23).

In addition to finding a marked discrepancy between the two halves of the body (the upper segment being smaller and more contracted), we may also find that one side of the body doesn't go with the other. This vertical splitting can indicate ambivalence toward reaching (taking in or giving to another) and striking out against the world (see Footnote 23).

Much of this person's energy is used up in the struggle for survival. Existence versus need remains a major conflict for this individual. She feels unprepared to stand on her own two feet. Rather,

there is an unconscious pull upward (toward a loving mother), away from independence and the ground. The tendency to pull upward, however, is blocked by despair; the longing to return to mother is also denied. Thus, a cycle of unfulfilled longing → despair → illusion of reunion is created, and is then transformed into the image of a sexual partner.<sup>25</sup> The perpetuation of this cycle is antithetical to downward growth--toward a grounded, independent self.

The schizoid individual is afraid of the ground (as clarified earlier). Lowen claims that unconscious panic prevents the individual from "going down," as it were, into her feet, her body, and her reality. Instead, she withdraws from reality.<sup>26</sup>

Part of the price one pays for being out of touch with reality is the difficulty in experiencing pleasure. As the schizoid person armors herself against pain and loss of control, so does she limit her capacity to experience pleasure (see Footnote 26). The body armor originally erected to preserve and protect the organism from extinction now becomes a prison in which this fragmented individual is trapped.

### Oral Structure

Features. A principal feature of the oral character is deprivation. There is usually an inner feeling of longing and neediness which may eventually turn into a feeling of "the world owes me a living." This person's love demands are great and complicated by her inability to reach out to the world. She will likely report feelings of loneliness which are linked to her inability to reach. Aggression is weak although hostility is present; hostility may show itself in the form of "biting

sarcasm.<sup>27</sup> Someone with an oral character often seeks the admiration and affection of others by engaging in extensive talking (symbolic sucking). She may exhibit dependent, clinging qualities in relations with others, and may have difficulty with her perception of desire.<sup>28</sup>

There is usually a tendency for the oral person to become depressed in cyclic fashion: elation followed by depression, followed by elation, and so on. The mania or upward swing results from an increase in self-esteem. This elation needs to be avoided in order to prevent the depressive phase from occurring subsequently.

We mentioned earlier that a deep sense of deprivation can result in a "demandingness" toward life. This can become manifest in one's reluctance to accept the necessity of work and other "real" aspects of adult life. It also shows up in a stubborn refusal to accept that which is considered to be "unfair" (see Footnote 27).

Another major problem faced by the oral personality is the fear of rejection (fearing the loss of the loved object). This fear "lurks in the unconscious as a great danger and threat."<sup>29</sup> What is held out as love to the "other" is experienced by that other as a demand for love. Need and demand replace adult give and take in the love relationship. True empathy is missing.

### Body

Whereas the schizoid structure is primarily contracted, the oral character has an underdeveloped muscular structure. There is a prominent weakness in the legs and feet. The knees are locked, the body's weight is on the heels, and good contact with the ground is missing (see

Footnote 28).

The oral character is an undercharged organism (an unfilled sac); the charge that does exist is upward, away from the ground. There is an overall disjointed quality about this person. Tensions in the head and neck are common (which produces headaches). The throat is contracted, the chest, deflated, and the belly, soft. The shoulder girdle and the pelvic girdle are both tightly contracted. And, as might be expected, the genital function is weak (see Footnote 28).

Unfortunately, the back is used to support the body instead of the legs. This causes a sway back and renders the back muscles unavailable for aggressive action. The ends of the organism, Lowen says, are pulled back and the head is used to initiate forward movement.<sup>30</sup>

The early deprivation experienced by this individual may be due to the actual or figurative loss of a warm and supportive mother figure. Illness, death, prolonged absence, depression, or emotional unresponsiveness of the mother can leave the infant with a considerable sense of loss or longing. In order to "cover" her sense of loss, the child often compensates by becoming prematurely independent or precocious. The child has to stand on her own two feet too early in life (see Footnote 27).

### Psychopathic Structure

Features. This structure can be a rather complex one to understand. Lowen explains why there are potentially two body types for individuals with this structure. The essence of the psychopathic disturbance is the denial of feeling. In this personality the ego or

mind turns against the feelings of the body, particularly sexual feelings. Normally a healthy ego supports the body's striving for pleasure. In the psychopathic character, striving for pleasure is subverted by an image created by the ego. There is a great investment of energy in the image, particularly with regard to the drive for power and the need to dominate and control.<sup>31</sup> Since this person has the need to control someone else, she is inadvertently dependent on the other. Hence, there is a degree of orality in all people with this disturbance. Closely related to the "need to control" is the fear of being controlled or used; this tendency evolves out of a prior dominance struggle between parent and child in the early years of life. Lowen has found that sexuality is always used in the power plays of the psychopathic person--sex being secondary to performance or conquest.<sup>32</sup>

The psychopathic individual denies her needs along with denying her feelings. She maneuvers situations and people to avoid expressing her need; she would rather be needed. Accordingly, this manipulative character has an "as if" quality about her. She lacks substance and core.<sup>33</sup> Instead, there is strategizing, image filling, and maneuvering from a power based consciousness--not a person/core based consciousness.

Body. Of the two body types of the psychopathic structure, type one "rises" above other people literally in an energetic sense. There is a high energy over-charge in the head and from the waist up, plus a reduced charge in the lower end. Constriction at the diaphragm and waist blocks the flow of energy and feeling downward. The overcharged head indicates a hyper-excitation of how to gain control and mastery



over situations. The eyes are watchful, not seeing nor understanding interrelationships that exist in life. The head is held tightly (control is directed against the self) which in turn holds the body "tightly in its grasp."<sup>34</sup>

This type of disproportionate body gives us the impression of the top half being "blown up," "top heavy," and rigidified. The lower segment is narrower and weaker, similar to the oral character structure (see Footnote 34).

Type two, or the body of the seductive or undermining individual, is more regular in appearance. Herein there is a spasticity of the diaphragm and an overcharged, disconnected pelvis, but no "blown up" look on top. This person typically has a hyperflexible back and marked tension about the eyes and the occipital region (see Footnote 32).

It appears that the child's psychopathic structure or defense is created in order to survive an untenable triangular involvement with her parents. Lowen contends that the covertly sexually seductive parent of the opposite sex aims to tie the child to her/him. This parent is concomitantly rejecting of the child's need for support and physical contact while still continuing covert seduction.

This seductive relationship creates a barrier to the necessary identification with the same sex parent since the child has been put in a position of challenging that parent. If the child were to reach out for contact in any direction it would become extremely vulnerable. Hence, the child either rises above her needs or manipulates the parents to fulfill her needs (see Footnotes 32 and 34).

Work with this kind of individual is difficult because she denies

what she experiences. In order to understand one's behavior, one needs to be able to look at one's past experiences; we cannot look at that which is denied (see Footnotes 32 and 34).

### The Masochistic Structure

Features. Two primary traits of the masochistic character type are (1) outward suffering and (2) submissiveness. On a deeper level, this individual has strong feelings of spite, negativity, hostility and superiority. However, expression of these internal feelings are blocked by the fear of exploding in violent behavior. Blocking takes the form of muscular holding in; only complaining or whining "leak through" the severely constricted system of the masochist. This person's fully charged system is tightly held, reducing self-assertion and aggression. Lowen states that the "holding in" is so severe that it results in a compression and collapse of the organism.<sup>35</sup> Provocative behavior replaces aggression; explosive reactions provoking forceful reactions from others are typical in interpersonal relations.

Body. Masochistic individuals are usually heavy set and have strong muscular development. The neck and waist are constricted points in the body since the individual's energy is lodged between the mental and genital function. Hence, this person has a short, thick neck and a contracted gut that replaces the backbone function. Her arches are tightly contracted and she has substantial tension in both her calf muscles and the front of her thighs.<sup>36</sup>

Severe pressure plus conditional love and acceptance are typical dynamics in the family producing a masochist. Lowen identifies the

mother as a dominant and sacrificing figure and the father as passive and submissive.<sup>37</sup> The mother literally smothers the child who then feels extremely guilty about any attempt to either express her negativity or declare her freedom. Pressure is applied from "above" and "below" due to a strong focus on eating and defecation. All attempts to resist pressures of various kinds are crushed; the child then feels trapped and defeated, seeing no way out. She reacts with spite and deep feelings of humiliation to this "binding" (see Footnote 37).

Working with the masochist is an extremely difficult task because of the underlying position taken--"I dare you to help me." Success is experienced as defeat.<sup>38</sup>

### Rigid Structure

Features. Individuals with rigid structures are usually people who function well in the world. They are anchored at both ends of the body--the head and the genitals--which produces good contact with reality. However, conflict in the personality results from an over-emphasis on reality. This individual "holds back," resists "letting go," and thus defends against the striving for pleasure. "Holding" takes the form of defensive pride, stiff and unyielding in nature (see Footnote 37).

This broad character type encompasses the phallic, narcissistic male, the hysterical female, and the "old fashioned" compulsive character. The phallic, narcissistic male focuses on erective potency, and the hysterical female uses sex as a defense against sexuality.<sup>39</sup>

Hysterical female. Hysteria has been traditionally described as one's structure being "determined by a fixation on the genital phase

of infantile development with its incestuous attachment.<sup>40</sup> We have come to learn that the antagonistic impulses of longing and anger produce the rigid armor of this character. Sexual submission (for this female) covers an aggressive attitude--the distinguishing mark of the hysterical character. Lowen believes that the submission is based on the fear of strong genital excitation--the fear of becoming overwhelmed or of losing control. This person is afraid of deep love feelings coming from the heart.<sup>41</sup>

The rigidity of the hysterical female is a total body process. The head is held erect and the neck is tight. The pelvis is tightly held and retracted. The back is rigid and unbending, and the front of the body is hard.<sup>42</sup> And it is this rigidity of bodily structure on which hysterical attacks erupt.<sup>43</sup>

Phallic, narcissistic male. We can expect to see ambition as a dominant feature in this character type and a fear of failure. There also exists the unconscious fear of punishment for genital activity. In response to this fear, the phallic, narcissistic male is defiant, rebellious, and aggressive.<sup>44</sup>

Energetically, these males usually have an overcharge in the head and genitals. If the pelvis is contracted, then the amount of overexcitation in the genitals can result in either immediate discharge (premature ejaculation) or incomplete discharge. Rigidity at the other end of the body, the head, can result in obsession. The energy overcharge is located in the frontal lobes and is experienced as tension in the forehead (see Footnote 43).

Compulsive character. Compulsion (repetitive behavior) is a close relative of obsession (repetitive thought). Compulsion often seems less disturbing but is more pathological than obsession. A compulsion, in the analytic sense, is a defense reaction against the obsession.<sup>45</sup>

Lowen writes about the way in which the compulsive person's energy swing recedes somewhat from the normal outlets in the genital area and in the forehead. This results in overcharge at the top of the head and the anus. Since these outlets cannot adequately discharge the energy, it must be held. Tension will create a tight anus and a loss of hair (at the top of the head see Footnote 45).

Body. People with a rigid character type appear proportionate and harmoniously structured in their bodies. There is a characteristic "aliveness" in both the body's physical appearance and movement. Coordination and grace are present; good skin color and bright eyes are also characteristics of this individual. However, these features are correspondingly less positive when severe rigidity is present (see Footnote 39).

For a child, erotic pleasure, sexuality, and love are all one. If trauma exists or severe frustration is experienced as the child strives for pleasure on the genital level, the child feels that her love needs are rejected. Consequently, this rejection hurts her pride; in turn, an insult to her pride is experienced as a rejection of her love. The rigidity that develops is meant to both protect the child from further injury to her pride, to reduce her feelings of vulnerability, and to protect her heart. Surrendering ego control and letting the heart govern in interpersonal relationships is difficult for this individual.

The rigid character guards her freedom by preventing her head from being turned very much by her heart.<sup>46</sup>

We now have a basis for understanding Lowen's view of character formation which reflects the personality of an individual. I have postulated that aspects of the personality (and one's character structure) are reflected in the singing voice as well. Before we can deal with the relationship between character and singing, we need to discuss particular variables of the singing voice. This will enable us to speak of the singer and her process with clarity and precision.

<sup>1</sup> Wilma Wilbur, *Bienergetic Analysis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 22-23, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Lowen, *The Language of the Body* (New York: Collier Books, 1958), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Cleworth Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Lowen, *Bienergetic Analysis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971),

<sup>8</sup> Cleworth Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Lowen, *Bienergetic Analysis*, p. 170.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

## NOTES

- 1 Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 3rd edition, pp. 32-36.
- 2 Ibid., p. 46.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 44-47.
- 4 Elsworth Baker, Man in the Trap (New York: Avon Books, 1967), p. 57.
- 5 David Boadella, In the Wake of Reich (New York: Ashley Books, 1977), pp. 181-183.
- 6 Elsworth Baker, op. cit., p. 57.
- 7 Wilhelm Reich, Character Analysis (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 51-53.
- 8 Elsworth Baker, op. cit., p. 25.
- 9 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body (New York: Collier Books, 1958), p. 17.
- 10 Elsworth Baker, op. cit., p. 58.
- 11 Ibid., p. 63.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
- 13 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics (New York: Penguin Books, 1975),
- 14 Elsworth Baker, op. cit., pp. 76-88.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 89-90.
- 16 Ibid., p. 91.
- 17 Ibid., p. 69.
- 18 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, p. 170.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 170-172.

- 20 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body,
- 21 William Caspary, "Character Types: An Overview of the Bioenergetic Therapy Perspective," Introduction. Unpublished Manuscript, Washington University, July 1978.
- 22 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, pp. 151-155.
- 23 Alexander Lowen, The Betrayal of the Body (New York: Collier Books, 1967), Chapters 2 & 3.
- 24 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body, p. 375.
- 25 Alexander Lowen, The Betrayal of the Body, pp. 163-164.
- 26 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
- 27 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, p. 158.
- 28 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body, pp. 161-193.
- 29 Ibid., p. 168.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 176-177.
- 31 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, p. 160.
- 32 Ibid., p. 161.
- 33 Dr. Hilton, "Psychopathy."
- 34 Alexander Lowen, op. cit., p. 160.
- 35 Ibid., p. 163.
- 36 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body, pp. 19-218.
- 37 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, pp. 165-166.
- 38 Curt Wolf, Culminating Project Tutorial
- 39 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, p. 168.
- 40 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body, p. 240.
- 41 Ibid., pp. 239-286.
- 42 Ibid., pp. 257-258.



<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 287-311.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 306-310.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander Lowen, op. cit., pp. 166-169.

## Chapter II

### ELEMENTS OF SINGING

#### The Basic Variables/Dimensions Involved in Singing

##### General Tone Production

Tone in the human voice is essentially produced by air pressure impacting on the vocal cords. The texture of the vocal cords or bands influence the quality of the voice: supple cords coupled with good air flow produce a mellow tone; stiffer cords restrict the air pressure to a degree and emit a firm, ringing sound. It is the particular combination of shape, size and tension in the cords which controls the pitch and timbre of the tone produced.<sup>1</sup>

Three specific actions are required to make a good sound--attack, sustained tone, and release. When we focus on tone we are usually focusing on the second action, that of sustaining the tone. Most authors would agree that the best sustained tone is a resonant and free one, "based on the characteristic of humming."<sup>2</sup> We develop good tone production by working in the best area of the voice and then working out from there in both directions. This is typically done by raising and lowering the pitch by half-steps on the best vowel. The singer changes vowels later after adequate sound is produced on her "best" vowel.

Moreover, the singer's conception of tone impacts on the quality of what is produced. Sometimes a student has difficulty with her conception of sound; she may not be able to hear timbre (color). This is

a more complex problem than is an improper conception of sound.<sup>3</sup>

It is my experience that the main problem with tone conception involves the student's image of the sound she wants to make. She may try to copy a favorite artist, or exaggerate a "manufactured" sound she likes to produce instead of exploring the natural quality of her voice.

We mentioned air pressure at the beginning of this section. To sustain a tone a singer must develop some measure of breath control in order to produce any sound at all. When effective breath control is coordinated well with the natural functioning of the vocal mechanism, a vibrato usually develops. When this coordination is missing, so is the vibrato. At the other end of the spectrum (away from a flat tone or a vibrato) is the tremolo or wobble. The tremolo often indicates too much tension, and the wobble indicates not enough. In any of these instances work should be focused on correct breathing. Proper breath control usually takes care of most vibrato problems (see Footnote 3).

#### Breathing/Breath Control

Chapters, books, articles, and papers are written about this seemingly enormous topic (and perhaps the most important aspect of singing). I, too, wrote graduate papers on this subject attempting to help myself learn to breathe more effectively in the studio and on the stage when I sang. Even though I majored in voice as an undergraduate, it was not until I worked with my third and final voice instructor in graduate school that I truly understood and mastered a solid breathing

technique. Her main focus in teaching breath control centered around my getting "in better touch" with my body so that I could breathe and sing with ease. This teacher used touch in a limited and appropriate way to efficiently detect improper tightening in the throat, to assure adequate rib extension during the inhale, and to determine the amount of abdominal support engaged to support the emission of sound (exhale).

In my own teaching I physically check the flexibility or inflexibility of the larynx, the level of constriction in the neck and shoulder girdle, the degree of motility in the rib cage area (sides and back), and the amount of tension in the abdominal area just below the belt. This is an unorthodox and efficient practice in voice pedagogy--one that I have found produces excellent results in helping students begin to coordinate their breathing for singing. Students soon take over any tactile checking of their bodies once they know what they're looking for (in particular areas). Touch is used by me only after I explain its purpose and receive permission from the student to do so.

To breathe well, students first need to learn to stand in a grounded, non-collapsed position which will allow maximum freedom above the diaphragm, and maximum support of the muscles below (including those of the upper thighs). The chest is held comfortably high, the shoulders are down, knees slightly bent, and feet approximately 10 inches apart (one slightly ahead of the other), in touch with the ground. Second, air is taken in through the mouth easily and fully as in a yawn. This both opens the throat and creates a sensation of openness

which (ideally) is retained while sound is expelled. Telling someone to "open their throat" usually makes them constrict it. Asking them to yawn and hold the yawning sensation throughout their singing (psychologically and physically) focuses on ease and comfort, not tension. Third, the student needs to allow the "yawned-in" air to fill the lungs, which extends the rib cage horizontally, causing the diaphragm to descend vertically. The chest and shoulders should not move.

Also, it takes time to learn to coordinate rib-extension flexibility and time to strengthen the muscles that keep the chest cage expanded (as the air is expelled in sound). I ask students to practice their breathing alone before they produce sound so that they can coordinate the breathing apparatus unencumbered by what they will hear later. This breathing exercise is simply: 1) blow out all the air (first time only); 2) yawn in the air (ribs extend horizontally); and 3) blow out a tiny stream of air through pursed lips (small pucker), conscious of ribs staying extended, not allowing them to collapse. Steps two and three are repeated again and again without tone. Later, open vowel sounds such as oo, oh, ah, etc., are substituted for the unphonated air stream; 4) air is expelled in sound by keeping the ribs from collapsing, by air pressing on the vocal cords, and by contracting the muscles of the lower abdomen (and sometimes thighs) near the end of the phrase. Coordinating balance between control and relaxation is delicate and within reach of the student during the early months of study.

Some male singers augment their "costal" (rib extension) breathing with abdominal breathing as well. The rib cage and the abdomen both extend as air is taken in; coordinating the use of the abdominal muscles as supportive agents in expulsion and then relaxing them on the inhale can be confusing for some singers. However, many male singers naturally perform the relaxed-extension intake and contracted/supportive expulsion with apparent ease. It is my experience that costal (rib extension) breathing is more natural for female singers.

It is also noteworthy that some teachers instruct their students to breathe only through the nose, not the mouth. Some also teach abdominal breathing as a preferred method to both men and women. Few teachers teach high chest breathing to singers (fortunately for their students).

Hopefully the reader has some conception of what is meant when speaking of breath control in singing herein. Simply stated, it encompasses the ways in which we get air into and out of the body so that sound may be produced in song.

### Resonance

There is disagreement among the authors and scholars of the voice about which parts of the human apparatus constitute the resonators. Norman Punt, noted laryngologist, contends that the primary resonators are the pharynx, the mouth and the nasal (sinus) cavities.<sup>4</sup> Trusler and Ehret, co-authors of class voice texts, teach their students to regard the mouth as the first resonator (producing the primary brilliance of the voice), the head and nasal cavities as the second resonator

(producing a sonorous quality--full and rich, sometimes very loud), and the chest area, which produces vibrations below the larynx, as the third resonator. The chest resonance provides depth and richness to the tone.<sup>5</sup>

Paul Moses, author of The Voice of Neurosis, lists the resonators as the chest, the pharynx, the mouth and naso-pharynx, the nose, the nasal sinuses, and Margagni's ventricles.<sup>6</sup>

I have found it useful to ask students to think of the resonators as places in which sound vibrates or is amplified. The head, including the nose and nasal passages, adds brilliance to the sound. The mouth is the primary resonator, producing the fundamental quality of the voice. And the chest area is the production site of depth, richness, and "earthiness."

Technically speaking, resonance begins in the pharynx since it is the meeting site of air pressure and the vocal cords. When the former acts on the latter, sound is produced: the air stream passing up from the lungs through the trachea and into the pharynx, is like a rapid series of puffs. As air "puffs" or passes through the triangular space between the vocal folds, they consequently form a tone. The edges of the vocal cords are thrown into rapid vibration--vertically and horizontally--during this process. The cords vibrate in segments and these segmental vibrations add harmonics (overtones) to the fundamental cord tone.<sup>7</sup>

This is a detailed explanation of the way resonance participates in tone production. However, I have found that students are less likely

to try and manipulate their sound when they think of the resonators as the head, mouth, and chest, not the throat or pharynx. For purposes of discussion in this paper, we will refer to the first three as resonators.

The important thing to remember about resonance is that color from each resonating area is present to some degree in every tone we sing. In traditional voice study a primary goal for all singers is to "achieve evenness of resonance throughout all pitches of the vocal range."<sup>8</sup> This is not necessarily true for other styles of singing (jazz, folk, popular, gospel singing) other than the classical style.

#### Register/Range

Just as there are numerous registers on a pipe organ, so are there registers in the human voice. In the voice, register refers to a "physical acoustic event which results from an energetic change within the muscular coordination of the vocal cords."<sup>9</sup> Paul Moses identifies changes in vocal registration as "switching points." In singing from a high pitch on downward, a certain sequence of tones has a similar character, referred to as the head register. Then a "node" is encountered and a sequence of tones with yet a different character is heard. (I identify this as a shift in vocal cord vibration.) This second register is commonly referred to as the middle register or mixed register. And then the singer reaches yet another "node," and switches to the lowest third of the range, the chest register (see Footnote 9). Trained singers learn to unify the qualities of these registers so that others do not hear any noticeable "switching" or



shifting.

It is important to remember that "voices are not classified simply as head, chest, or mixed voices, but are differentiated according to the dominance of one or the other registers in the 'voce mista,' the unified product."<sup>10</sup> The quality of the voice, in addition to its tessitura (most preferred range), determine voice types. This is why we say that a lyric soprano sounds different from a dramatic soprano; the ranges may be similar but the qualities differ.

In the male voice, the falsetto is equivalent to the high register. Years ago adept falsetto singers were considered "exponents of the highest singing art," particularly in Spain and Italy (see Footnote 10). Today, classically trained singers learn to use and control their delivery from this register of the voice; no particular emphasis is placed, however, on perfecting its use exclusively. Interestingly, twentieth-century falsetto singing is lauded in the world of "rock" music. Instead of the rich, soprano-like quality produced by 18th century falsetto singers, we hear a more raw, screaming falsetto in the rock singing of today.

#### Timbre/Tone Color

Van Christy, author of another voice text, defines tone color as the distinctive resonance quality and character of a tone (as expressed in a vowel), caused by the number and character of the partials (over-tones) present.<sup>11</sup> He believes that all truly great singers have mastered tone color variation in their singing (see Footnote 11).

None of us have the physical capacity to compel our vocal cords to act in any certain manner. If, though, we have an image of the sound we wish to hear ourselves sing, this image induces automatic actions on the part of the vocal mechanism.<sup>12</sup> When we are familiar with the characteristic tone color appropriate to the song literature of a particular period and the general sentiment of the text (plus the specific meaning of the words), this gives us an excellent sense about the kind of color our tone should emit. For example, bright and light color in sound reflects a happy, gay text. A darker, fuller sound is more appropriate in expressing a sad, gloomy or serious text.<sup>13</sup> A purer, nearly "chaste" tone color is befitting Gregorian Chant, whereas a mournful wail is suited to the "Blues" and Gospel singing.

Many voice texts elaborate on techniques students may practice to develop differentiated tone color(s). Van Christy suggests that students learn to produce their own normal tone color on all of the vowels, a dark tone color on all the vowels, as well as a bright tone color on each vowel (see Footnote 13).

I agree with this practice if there is a fundamental focus on free, open singing. I believe that the open and freely produced voice will contain sufficient "rays" of color. Then, if particular "hues" are desired, this will best be derived from the imagination, emotion and artistry of the singer. (Christy's suggestion would apply here.)

I prefer to think of tone color as a reflection of warmth from the heart--not a mechanistic concept of sound generated from the head.

### Articulation

Paul Moses teaches us that the six month old baby begins to

experiment with her mouth and tongue during the second stage of vocal development. (The "crying" stage comes first.) Regardless of their parents' language, children all over the world develop articulation in the same sequence: from lips (P, B, M) to the tip of the tongue (T, D, L, N) to the back of the tongue (K and G).<sup>14</sup> As the child develops, so does her adeptness in articulation.

Articulation in singing, however, differs from everyday speech due to elongation of particular sounds; syllabic stresses are tied to note values, the time span of words is lengthened, and vocal stylizing affects both the delivery of vowels and consonants.<sup>15</sup>

"The ultimate purpose in singing is the communication of ideas, emotions, and situations" (see Footnote 15). As the articulators--tongue, lips, teeth, palate, and velum--interrupt the vocal airstream, meaningless tones are transformed into intelligible sounds. Without this kind of transformation, singing would lose much of its power to entertain, educate, and persuade (see Footnote 15).

Students of the voice are usually given a variety of exercises to practice to increase the independent action of the various articulators. They learn to move the tongue without the jaw (a difficult task at the beginning of study), lips, or velum (the soft palate). They master moving the lips without engaging the action of the other articulators. Also, students learn to use minimal movement of an articulator to produce usable consonants, even in the high range of the voice.<sup>16</sup> For particulars regarding execution and efficient articulation, the reader is referred to Richard Alderson's Complete Handbook of Voice Training, Chapter seven (or any chapter on voice articulation

in a voice text).

Now that we have a basic understanding of the variables/dimensions of the singing voice and Lowen's conception of character structure, we can look more particularly at the relationship between them.

1. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10.

2. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

3. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

4. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

5. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

6. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

7. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

8. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

9. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

10. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

11. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

12. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

13. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

14. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

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18. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

19. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

20. *Journal of Voice*, 1972, 1, 1-10. (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 10.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Richard Alderson, Complete Handbook of Voice Training (New York: Parker Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 64-70.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 76.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-95.
- <sup>4</sup> Norman Punt, The Singer's and Actor's Throat (London: Heinemann Medical, 1967), p. 20.
- <sup>5</sup> Ivan Trusler and Walter Ehret, Functional Lessons in Singing (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 15.
- <sup>6</sup> Paul Moses, The Voice of Neurosis (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1954), p. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> Norman Punt, op. cit., p. 17.
- <sup>8</sup> Ivan Trusler and Walter Ehret, op. cit., p. 15.
- <sup>9</sup> Paul Moses, op. cit., p. 45.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 46.
- <sup>11</sup> Van A. Christy, Foundations in Singing (Dubuque, Ia.: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1975), p. 225.
- <sup>12</sup> Paul Peterson, "Natural Singing and Expressive Conducting" (Winston Salem: John F. Blair, 1955).
- <sup>13</sup> Van A. Christy, op. cit., pp. 53-54.
- <sup>14</sup> Paul Moses, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
- <sup>15</sup> Richard Alderson, op. cit., pp. 174-175.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

## Chapter III

### EXPRESSION OF CHARACTER THROUGH SINGING

#### Voice Dimensions and Personality Structure

The close connection between the voice and the personality has been considered for centuries. The term "personality" has two root meanings, one opposite of the other: (1) "Persona" originally referred to the mask an actor wore in a play which defined his role. In this sense, personality is determined by the role the individual plays in life or by the face she presents to the world; (2) "Per Sona" means "by sound." Herein, personality is reflected in the sound of an individual. The vibrant quality of a living organism is reflected in its voice, whereas the mask is a nonliving artifact or a manufactured representative of someone or something.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Moses, author of The Voice of Neurosis, states that persona means that the voice stands for the person whom it expresses. In Moses' book, he cites the work of Austrian analyst, Karl Bühler, who conducted some of the earliest studies of audiences and their vocalizations. Bühler found that a human utterance of almost any kind (including singing) has three functions: (1) Representation--it tells something; (2) Expression--it reveals something about the speaker; and (3) Appeal--it wants to and does elicit a reaction from the listener. Moses believes that the main body of observation should be directed toward the second function, that of expression.<sup>2</sup>

Bühler and Moses were primarily concerned with speaking voices in their studies. However, I believe that singing, like speaking, reflects one's personality. The dimensions of the speaking voice are amplified, elongated, and exaggerated in the process of singing. In this sense, we could say that singing gives us an "expanded" view of the personality through a "compacted" activity. This view enables us to understand and recognize aspects of an individual's character structure. And this vision will be aided by the reader taking a closer look at the variables of singing and how they reflect aspects of the personality and character.

### Breathing

Major advances were made in analytic technique once the use of respiration was included in therapeutic procedures. Therapists found that patients universally held their breath and pulled in their bellies to suppress anxiety and other sensations.<sup>3</sup> Attending to the way one breathes is the first order of business in both Bioenergetic therapy and voice study. The way in which a student handles her attempts to develop a breathing technique for singing is an important indicator of character structure, primarily because of the critical relationship between breathing and feeling.

In any individual, tension or immobility in the diaphragmatic area results in reduced sensations in the lower half of the body, especially the sexual feelings in the pelvis.<sup>4</sup> In healthy breathing there is a total body action which allows the deep pelvic muscles to rotate the pelvis slightly backward and downward during inspiration.<sup>5</sup> Unless the chest and the abdomen are engaged in the respiratory effort, the unity

of the body is split and, in turn, this splitting limits the emotional responsiveness of the individual (see Footnote 4).

We can understand a great deal about the relationship between breathing and feeling and its implications for all character structures by first focusing on the schizoid singer's breathing. Given that we work with the diaphragm in singing, regardless of the singer's structure, and given that we all have some schizoid tendencies (which directly affect the action of the diaphragm), we can see the value of thoroughly discussing schizoid breathing difficulties.

Schizoid singer. There is a markedly low air intake in the schizoid singer in spite of the soft chest and seeming expansive rib cage. Paradoxically, the expansion of the chest cavity is accompanied by a contraction of the abdominal cavity. The diaphragm is therefore prevented from descending; it contracts so that the downward movement of the lungs does not occur. Under such a condition, the schizoid individual primarily breathes in the upper part of the chest in order to obtain sufficient air. The diaphragm is relatively immobile--it is frozen in a contracted condition. In normal respiration the chest and belly tend to make the same movement; the wall of the thorax and abdomen move as one piece. In schizoid breathing, the belly is sucked in during inspiration and pushed out during expiration (see Ch. 1, Footnote 24).

This disturbance is the direct cause of the schizoid singer's inability to develop adequate breath support. As a compensation, this individual incorrectly over-uses the muscles of the shoulders, neck and throat to support her sound, producing incredible body tension in the process. The frozen muscles of the schizoid become even more tense



when she sings, unless she is able to develop an alternative breathing technique specifically for use in singing.

I have seen this "alternative" develop in the study of voice: the schizoid singer will slowly learn to expand the lower ribs and abdomen during the intake stage of respiration, and will gradually learn to control the exhale well enough to produce pleasurable singing. However, this individual usually reverts back to her primary breathing pattern (where the chest and belly move separately) when she stops singing. Sometimes there is a carryover from the deeper breathing learned in singing lessons into the individual's regular respiration. The possibility of this happening depends on the severity of the schizoid disturbance and the individual's ability to tolerate any increase in feeling.

Teachers of the voice need to proceed slowly with schizoid students when working with the breathing process. The student will tolerate growth only at her own speed.

Breathing in is an aggressive action in which one sucks in the air from the environment. The schizoid individual's aggression is reduced stemming from her inability to make demands on life (she does not feel she has the right to do so). The head and throat form a "great sucking organ" which brings air into the lungs. When the throat is constricted, the sucking action is reduced, and breathing is shallow (see Footnote 4).

Restricted breathing also prevents the spread of sexual excitation in the body, and keeps sexual feelings localized in the genital area.

Conversely, the fear of allowing sexual feelings to flood the pelvis and the body (sexual inhibition) is one of the causes of shallow and limited breathing (see Footnote 4).

In sum, we can see that diaphragmatic disturbance, aggression, sexual discharge (particularly the fear of it), and inspiration (sucking in the air) are closely interrelated. Issues related to aggression, fear, and sexuality coexist in the schizoid singer and can be present in singers with other structures as well.

Oral singer. The oral individual who sings, like the schizoid, will have decreased aggression, and will breathe rather shallowly. Since the diaphragm is not frozen like the schizoid's, the singer with an oral structure will be able to cultivate a sufficiently viable breathing technique in spite of the blocks around the mouth (conflict over sucking) and the throat (where deep longing has been suppressed).<sup>6</sup> However, if throat constriction is severe, this individual will have great difficulty taking in the air aggressively. The intake charge will be weak; the singer may complain of a "tight" throat, or of a choking sensation when asked to "yawn in" the air during the inspiration phase. If the teacher tries to move the larynx  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch horizontally to either side while no tone is produced, she will discover extensive rigidity and "popping" as these muscles are gently manipulated. Students usually react with amazement (some with anger) in finding such constriction in their throats. They are generally willing to learn how to massage the throat, particularly the larynx, in an effort to reduce the chronic tension in their singing mechanism.

Constriction in the deep muscles of the throat is best relieved by deep sobbing. Singers with an oral structure have reported experiencing great vocal freedom when they sing after they have cried in some situation. Often the crying is in response to frustration that accumulates when one practices unsuccessfully, or it may result from connecting with one's sadness when singing something melancholy. Remembering that direct anger expression is not typical of individuals with pronounced orality, and the fact that this individual has not likely finished (perhaps not even begun) grieving over any early deprivation, helps us understand the connections between crying, frustration, and melancholia.

Any exercise involving a "reaching" action with the lips may be threatening to this singer, or may provoke an irritated response (usually defensive) from her. The muscles around the mouth are typically weak; singing oo or Oh may produce a quivering in these muscles followed by fatigue or collapse. "Reaching" with the lips for air may evoke feelings of dependency or conflicts over sucking. Also, this individual armors against her "biting" impulses by chronically tightening the corners of the mouth. When breathing exercises loosen this armor, the formerly blocked feelings of negativity and spite will likely be released. The singer may attempt to modify suggested exaggerated movements with the mouth so as to decrease her anxiety or her perception of feeling. If she is asked to sing "oo," she may instead sing "oh" or "Ah." She does so out of her character, not necessarily out of obstinance or stubbornness.

Psychopathic singers. "Reaching" with the lips has been known to offend students who are particularly image-invested (one component of the psychopathic structure) if they think they look "weird" when extending this part of their face. It is interesting to note a general cultural reluctance to move the mouth very much when speaking or singing. Teenagers, who are extremely (and naturally) image-invested, move their faces the least when dealing with non-exclamatory expressions. Operatic and classically trained singers exert great control over this part of the oral segment. And we will remember that control is another important aspect of psychopathy.

Some psychopathic individuals typically enjoy developing expert control over their breathing, control over their thinking (not losing one's head), and control over the environment (see Ch. I, Footnote 34). They enjoy mastering or "controlling" difficult passages in the literature and love to "display" vocal feats for others to admire.

This singer will have a remarkable capacity to expand the chest cavity, but will pull up and away from the abdominal area. Curiously, some men with this structure breathe abdominally to produce an excellent sound. One might think that they "let down" into the musculature of the abdomen. However, they do not; they pull up and away from abdominal sensation even though the muscles are used in the singing process.

Moreover, this singer's body has a "blown-up," "top-heavy" look about it (discussed under Psychopathic Character Structure) which results from a disturbance in the energy flow between the two halves of the body (see Ch. I, Footnote 31). Even though there is marked

spasticity in the diaphragm, the singer can control its descension and ascension. If the teacher works toward a natural "letting go" or natural diaphragmatic movement, she will meet with great characterologic resistance.

Fortunately, many psychopathic singers benefit from their need to "control." Most of our great opera singers and many of our prominent jazz singers have psychopathic structures. They exhibit a remarkable ability to sustain lengthy phrases, executing difficult passages with seeming ease.

Singers with Lowen's Type II body structure (that looks more normal and well proportioned) are typically disinterested in developing a solid breathing technique. Some actually refuse to do so. Control is directed toward others, not the self. This singer prefers to try and control the teacher or tries to seduce the listener.

Image-investment causes/allows this person to "discount" or deny the need for developing a technique that would require her to be in touch with her body. This singer thinks she breathes deeply. However, she does not. She is afraid to do so. Developing breath control for singing would mean relinquishing ego control, which is very difficult for her to do. Instead, she breathes high in the chest, exerts a great deal of pressure on her throat, and has difficulty sustaining long phrases.

Masochistic singer. Like the schizoid and oral structures, aggression in the masochist is greatly reduced. We will remember that people with this structure are "bound up"--there is severe holding;

energy is held in tightly throughout the body and is blocked at the neck and waist.<sup>7</sup>

Masochistic singers will likely not study the voice for a prolonged time. There are two reasons for this. First, they will experience great difficulty achieving any kind of comfortable breathing technique for singing because of their "holding in" at the two critical areas of the singer's body that need to be open (an open throat and a relaxed or flexible diaphragm). These are pressurized areas and will not allow the necessary openness one needs to enable adequate inspiration and expiration. Since the aggressive function is reduced, air will not be "sucked in" assertively. Also, once the breath has been taken, the masochistic singer will be reluctant and resistant to release it in a flowing, easy manner, particularly in the high register of the voice.

Secondly, the "holding" characteristic of the masochist affects this singer's willingness to learn any new techniques that would develop vocal competence and pleasure. Characterologically this individual experiences success as failure; if she allows me to teach her a way to support her high notes, she interprets this as my success and her defeat. If she practices her breathing like I suggest, she can't spite me. Rather, she will not practice, provoke a fight about her lack of progress, and leave voice study feeling triumphant. She wins by losing, unfortunately.

On the positive side, I have seen students with masochistic structures gain enough relief and release by singing to enable them to "stick with" lessons. They don't practice and progress like some other students,

but they do seem to benefit from the total process if they can avoid the provocative-explosive-reactive syndrome they are likely to initiate. If they can get beyond needing to provoke the teacher to feel relieved of their internal pressure, they then can experience pleasure in their singing and breathe somewhat comfortably.

So, I would not recommend developing skill with these individuals. I would, instead, focus on pleasure and enjoyment. Then there is some possibility of developing skill and breathing technique. This is truly a paradoxical and unorthodox approach to teaching voice, and I have seen it work with masochistic singers.

Rigid singers. Rigidly structured individuals, on the other hand, will work hard to master a solid breathing technique. Their high level of ego development will serve them well in their intellectual approach to understanding how the body needs to coordinate its movement to allow effective breathing for singing.

The teacher can expect a "no nonsense" approach to studying the voice in general. As some level of trust is developed between teacher and student, the rigid singer may show some softening and openness, which is vital to her being able to relax the rigidity in her chest and back muscles.

Often rigid students will breathe "stiffly." The harder they try to force abdominal and chest extension, the more constricted they become. One cannot force relaxation. Forcing and relaxing are mutually exclusive. However, when rigid singers try to breathe in this manner, they eventually stress their steeled muscles to a point where they are forced

to relax. The student usually experiences this as collapse; ironically, this is the point where she allows her lungs to fill more effortlessly with air. Her rigidity softens enough to allow motility in the long muscles of her back which in turn enables deep and relaxed breathing.

The guardedness of this individual needs to be reduced in order for her to extend the muscles of the chest and the abdomen during inspiration. Once this has occurred, the rigidly structured singer can progress rapidly in her mastery of proper breathing technique.

#### Resonance, Tone Quality, Range and Register

It is difficult to speak about one of these voice variables apart from the others when considering how they reflect the structure of an individual. Each is a component of the sound produced when air pressure impacts on the vocal cords (which we discussed in Tone Production), and each component affects the functioning of the others. For example, tone quality is largely determined by the amount of resonance that is present in a particular part of the voice's range. The degree to which resonance is present in the voice, coupled with the kind of breath control the singer is able to manage, determines how much of each register is used in song. Similarly, when we speak of issues related to and involved in the singing process such as sexuality, control, and fear, plus how they are reflected by a singer's structure, we can do so more proficiently by integrating our discussion of these voice variables.

Schizoid singers. Schizoid singers often have fairly extended ranges but do not have a balanced quality of tone throughout their voices. It is likely that they are not identified with their sound.



Like the psychopath, the tone quality may reflect a "hollowness"--something is missing. That something is contact with the self. In a colloquial sense, "no one is home." The splitting mechanism that is used to defend the ego is reflected in the quality of voice. The body and the mind are not unified. If they were, the tone would be richer, fuller, and integrated throughout the registers.

Instead of being concerned about the lack of integrated quality in the voice range, the schizoid individual may see this as an asset--as a "unique" and "special" way to produce sound. (I have seen these quality changes used successfully as theatrical effects in some cases.)

Splitting in the male voice usually occurs in the use of the falsetto. Paul Moses makes an interesting point about the prolonged and preferred use of the head register in speech, which, I believe, applies to the "prolonged" and "preferred" use of the falsetto in the male schizoid singer and the unintegrated quality of the female schizoid singer:

It is easily understandable that by using isolated head registers a high voice can be produced which is similar to the high voice which would result from an infantile larynx. The normal adult male larynx produces through this head register a voice which is similar to the voice of the same individual before mutation, while his larynx still had infantile measurements. This fact in itself explains that in fixation to infantile patterns or in regression into childhood the use of this isolated head register is a perfect instrument to simulate childhood situations (see Ch. 11, Footnote 10).

This brings to mind the thirty- and forty-year old rock singers who seem to cling to their adolescence and all of its explicit rebellion.

We will remember that the schizoid defends herself against experiencing her own terror and rage (see Ch. 1, Footnote 23). It seems possible that both are expressed by the rock singer who screams high and angrily. This person is likely not aware of the characterological significance of her expression nor of the disassociation from feeling that takes place. To be in touch with one's true terror and rage would probably make it impossible for this individual to sing, unless these issues were dealt with therapeutically.

Singing high and fully corresponds with losing control, or "blowing one's top." This is terrifying to the schizoid singer who fears loss of ego control (see Ch. 1, Footnote 23).

Reich and Lowen both state that the scream is energetically similar to the orgasm in that ego control is relinquished while energy is being discharged at either end of the body.<sup>8</sup> The schizoid avoids being overwhelmed by feeling at all costs. Hence, we can understand the dissociation from the genital area and the avoidance of producing sound that creates the sensation of too much energy discharge in the head.

Integrating the 'womanly' or 'manly' quality of the voice (the low registers) with the more youthful sounding high range is a threatening task for the schizoid. Since this individual is not identified adequately with her sexuality (the lower half of the body is markedly split off from the top half), it is difficult for her to integrate the woman with the girl; for the male singer, integrating the man with the boy poses the same problem. Resonance will not be even throughout



the range if the schizoid disturbance is severe.

If the schizoid disturbance is not severe, these students will likely try very hard to realize their full potential as singers. When they allow the true quality of their voice to emerge, one will hear an innocence and purity of sound that comes from the core of their being. The tone will be "young" sounding at first, and then will blossom if the person is not too frightened by the change they experience.

These students are usually extremely self-critical. They have great difficulty in accepting their basic tone quality and expect themselves to master complex tasks quickly. They become extremely frustrated if they cannot develop resonance in a part of their range that is not open to them, and they work hard to compensate for their inability to sing freely. Frustration about tension will lead to increased tension, then to anger, and then to tears, which has the positive effect of relaxing some of the chronic constriction in the body. Afterward the student can sing with greater resonance, which usually comes as a pleasant surprise to her.

Oral and psychopathic singers. One can learn a great deal about an individual's structure if attention is paid to the quality of a singer's voice, particularly in the lowest and highest part of the vocal range. Oral individuals, like the image-invested psychopath, may avoid producing rich, resonant tones in the bottom of the range, each for a different reason. Oral issues keep people from making an "adult," grown-up sound in their singing. The lowest tones in the

chest register are evocative and representative of one's sexuality. Adult acceptance of reality includes coming to terms with one's sexual self. If this part of one's reality has not been integrated--if the lower half of the body is not connected with the upper half, then this phenomenon will be reflected in the quality of the singing voice (similar to the schizoid voice). It will be "flute-like," light, and thin.

An individual with marked orality will have difficulty integrating a full body sound in the head register. The tone may reflect fragility and innocence, lacking support and strength, or it may have a "biting" quality to the tone from an "overdose" of head resonance.

The middle range may be "breath-y" which also reflects unintegrated tone quality. Breathiness can mirror the undercharged state of the oral character; it takes an extra energy charge to make this "collapsed" tone come alive. Resonance from both the head and chest must be mixed proportionately to produce an interesting color in the middle range of a singer who tends to let air escape middle-range pitches.

The oral singer's general style may be "charming" and somewhat seductive. Breathiness can be used to add sensuality (particularly in popular music and jazz singing) as a stylizing technique. A "pure," innocent-sounding tone, sung without vibrato, can be used advantageously by this songstress.

However, if singers with an oral character become attached to the sound of their innocence, naivete and immaturity, they usually find

themselves unable to reach anyone else through the artistic medium of singing.

The psychopath who rises above others, who denies feeling in favor of thought, or who is continually considering how to gain control and mastery over situations, will be capable of producing rich, resonant tones from the chest (see Ch. 1, Footnote 31). Notice that I use the term produce. Control and production will be important to this singer. She will be able to make a gorgeous, rich tone in the lowest part of her range; she cannot allow the natural, effortless fullness of the tone to emerge spontaneously. To do so would be too threatening. It would require this individual to relinquish ego control.

The "undermining, seductive" type of psychopath will have less brilliance and richness in the quality of her singing voice than will the "blown-up" psychopathic singer (see Footnotes 2 and 3). Her voice may sound hollow; head resonance will be reduced and chest resonance will be minimal. Unfortunately the throat is called on to do most of the work in producing tone; the fundamental resonance of the vocal cords (in the pharynx) cannot replace the kind of resonance and amplification that normally takes place in the chest and sinus cavities. With this extra stress on the vocal cords, they are not free to function as naturally intended. Thus, range is limited for this singer. Without adequate head resonance, use of the upper register (head register for women or falsetto for men) is severely impaired. The voice has a "throaty" quality about it.

Interestingly enough, this singer usually hears herself differently

than do others. Her perception of color is skewed. She may think that the quality of her voice is seductive when actually it is not. Her behavior and stage presence are. And so when any feedback regarding tone color is given contrary to the singer's image of it, the feedback is received as an insult, not as information. Sometimes demonstrating a flat versus resonant sound can be helpful to this student (when cultivating color differentiation). Also, work with the tape recorder is sometimes productive.

When a singer has a fairly even mixture of orality and psychopathy that is not severe, we will likely hear a fairly extended range. A full spectrum of color and resonance may be available to this person, and she will enjoy the variety of sound she can produce. She will achieve vocal dexterity and agility in the top of her head register. If sexual issues have been resolved or have not been significant, then she will not fear "blowing her top" (figuratively speaking) like the schizoid does by singing with full resonance high in her range.

Masochistic singer. People with masochistic structures typically have a speaking voice that is higher in pitch than their singing tessitura (the most frequently used pitches in the vocal range). Women usually have a contralto range and the men, a baritone range.

The tone is forced, not freely emitted. A heavy chest quality dominates the tone in the lower and middle registers. The quality and resonance change dramatically with registration changes: the head voice in women is weak, and the falsetto in men is difficult to produce. Both sexes have trouble developing richness and fullness in their high range

because resonance does not occur in the head; there is too much pressure at the base of the neck and at the base of the skull (see Footnote 3). These individuals typically do not like what they consider to be any weakness in their voice, especially regarding color and volume.

Registration "shifts" are accentuated in the masochistic singer. You can hear a "bump" or "shifting action" at one or two points in the range (especially in women) rather than smooth transitions between registers.

It is very difficult to help singers with masochistic structures "open," expand, and integrate the colors available to them in the quality of their voice. This is due to their pattern of "holding in" (described in the previous section on Breathing), to the way they squeeze and force sound, and to their basic characterological resistance to being taught.

Rigid singers. As with all students, I have found a great variety of color present in the voices of rigid singers. Those with fairly well integrated personalities sing with great ease and love to perform. The color of their voices reflects this integration; there is evenness of brilliance and richness throughout their range, and the tone is quite clear.

However, if the rigidity is heavily mixed with other structural traits (as is usually the case), then the color will not be so clearly defined. Men and women who appear to identify strongly with their sexuality seem not to have difficulty with resonance or vocal projection. Paul Moses has clarified that the larynx is a secondary sex organ. He

also states that singers who derive great narcissistic satisfaction from singing high notes are inadvertently making a statement about sexual potency.<sup>9</sup>

Remembering that the rigid structure is a genital structure helps us to understand why sexuality is or can be a characterologic issue. The fear of having one's sexuality and love rejected by another causes the rigid individual to carefully monitor expressions of these feelings. Also, pride in the voice, pride in one's vocal "potency," and pride in one's self are closely linked for this singer.

If longing has been suppressed along with loving, rigidity in the throat and neck will need to be loosened. Tone that is rather flat and hollow sounding frequently indicates that love and longing need expression, but are choked off and held in rigidly. As the student comes to accept and like the sound of her voice and feels that it is also accepted by the teacher (or a significant other), the hollowness and flatness gradually change. Resonance and brilliance are cultivated and incorporated in the sound. Acceptance allows change which allows/ increases acceptance, which invites expressiveness, and so on.

I have discovered a relationship between flat tone and early trauma with singing. These people have usually suffered ridicule about their voices during the formative years, either at the hands of unkind peers or insensitive adults. The flatness reflects dulled feeling and sensation and exacerbates any difficulty they may already have with tone differentiation. Teaching tone matching builds confidence and trust. As these singers experience success, singing once again becomes



the satisfying, beloved activity it probably once was.

### Articulation

One must have some measure of agility and control over each part of the oral segment that participates in vocal articulation. The verbal component of singing requires clear enunciation so that words can be differentiated. A rigid jaw, a stiff tongue, and weakness around the mouth make enunciation difficult. Sometimes singers are simply sloppy and inattentive to good articulation; once they are aware of this problem they can usually correct it. However, others have varying degrees of difficulty coordinating the action of the tongue, the jaw, the lips and the facial muscles. A closer look at these difficulties will hopefully help us to understand articulation in singing from an expanded point of view.

Schizoid, oral, psychopathic, masochistic and rigid singers. How a singer uses the muscles at the sides of her mouth instructs us about her structure. Psychopathic singers who are seductive types (see Ch. 1, Footnote 13) will not want to "spoil" the looks of their face by reaching forward with the lips nor by moving the mouth in any exaggerated way other than opening it more fully. Consider how Elvis Presley usually left his mouth partially open in his photographs. This type of singer has difficulty being in touch with his body in a real sense, and he usually thinks working on articulation both strange and funny. Psychopathic singers who look "blown up" (see Ch. 1, Footnote 34) are eager to learn any technique that will increase their agility, speed, efficiency and excellence. They enjoy exaggerating, and they love to

watch themselves do assigned exercises in the mirror.

Schizoid individuals, on the other hand, greet looking in the mirror with great disdain. They often have severe blocks in the ocular section of the head, and asking them to both look at and be in touch with the way their faces move can be frightening. Reaching with the lips can stimulate anxiety for both schizoid and oral types: issues of deprivation, longing, reaching for contact and basic nurturance in life are closely related to this movement.

Any individual who has difficulty with aggression or sexual issues will also have some kind of difficulty changing the action of the jaw. John Pierrakas, a close associate of Lowen's, writes ". . . the jaw and pelvis correspond in movement and structure." "When one opens, the other may close." "Many people are afraid to open the voice for fear of opening up sexual feelings."<sup>10</sup> One of the most important tasks of learning to sing clearly is that of being able to move the tongue fairly independently of the jaw.

Masochistic students often refuse to admit any difficulty with this, and resist working on techniques thus related. Oral students find it very tiring to master these independent jaw/tongue actions and often get mad at the teacher when working with the jaw. Schizoid singers are afraid (unconsciously) to work with the jaw because of its connection with anger, and the possibility of opening up other feelings (see Ch. 1, Footnote 13).

Rigid (and some psychopathic singers) will find work with the jaw less threatening than do singers of other structures. Rigid

students will only "let go" if they feel safe; relaxing the rigidity in the jaw corresponds with reducing their stiff pride and determination. They must trust the teacher before they will be willing or able to relinquish this self-control. Type I (the "blown-up" look) psychopathic singers will control the opening of the jaw; they will not simply allow it to drop or hang loose. Type II (the more "regular" appearing body) will avoid any exercise designed to separate the action of the tongue from that of the jaw; this is due to factors Pierrakas has cited (see previous page).

Character and the process of voice study. Now that we have a working knowledge of character structure, the elements of singing, and the expression of character through the activity of singing, we can expand our view by examining ways in which character manifests itself in the process of voice study. In this portion of the paper which presents material from direct observation and case studies, we will see our theoretical tenets come even more alive.

Students reveal aspects of their character in the process of voice study; i.e., in the way they approach and manage themselves in their lessons and in the way they relate to their teacher, just as they reflect their structures in the content of their singing. Much like the first few sessions of therapy where we begin to see a "compact picture" of a person, the initial inquiry about lessons and the handling of business matters are similarly instructive. We will discuss these matters, student goals, and possible teacher responses at this juncture of the paper.

### Initial Contact and Business Matters

Schizoid individuals are initially distrustful and deal with their fear of the unknown by asking lots of specific questions about voice instruction and how the teacher handles particular aspects of the lesson. The initial inquiry is usually a time when the student "checks out" whether or not the instructor is a safe person with whom to work.

These students are usually competent in handling appointments and payment if the schizoid disturbance is not severe. If it is, then business matters get confused, the student is often late or forgetful, and fearful of the teacher's response to this behavior. Some become quite rigid in their reactions to changes in business initiated by the teacher. The student may want special treatment; this trait is compensatory--in reaction to the deprivation experienced early in life (see Ch. 1, Footnote 23).

Individuals with oral structures or who have oral traits usually like to talk a great deal at the outset of contact. They are cooperative, deferential, and eager to please. These students are likely to make calls between lessons about miscellaneous matters, and expect the teacher to be a loving or forgiving parent when they make mistakes regarding time and money.

In contrast, psychopathically structured individuals will spend most of the early contact sessions impressing the teacher with how much they know. Usually there is an attempt to flatter the teacher: "I heard you were wonderful with Sam," which is manipulative in nature. These individuals can be very charming. For example, after discussing

the possibility of voice study with one young man on the phone, I felt like I'd been invited to a party, not arranging a business/educational appointment. Psychopathic singers will likely forget spoken business terms and will discount written notices about them as well. These students typically forget their checkbooks and will call at the last minute to cancel or ask for their lesson to be 15 minutes later than usual.

If the masochistic person calls at all to study, she will likely want the teacher to listen to an extensive discourse about all that ails her vocally. She will do this especially in the first lesson. Also, the teacher can expect lessons to be ended abruptly; this student may simply not show up for her lesson or may refuse to pay for missed lessons. Both actions are intended to provoke the teacher.

Rigid singers usually take a serious approach to the study of voice, and will treat business practices in a matter-of-fact way. However, if there is disagreement between student and teacher regarding business matters, this student may have difficulty (or will resist) admitting any error on her part. Stubborn pride may interfere with objectivity. Pride is usually not an issue after trust has been established. This singer wants clear information about lessons and will honor payment arrangements.

#### Goals, Agendas, and the Relationship

I always ask students what goals they have in studying the voice and why they want to take lessons. Many can articulate their needs and interests clearly; others come to lessons for reasons that remain

unspoken throughout our time together. the student can develop trust

People who are terribly frightened (schizoid) will have the most difficulty reaching out to a teacher. People who are severely schizoid will surely not study the voice. However, those who do will want to know and understand clearly what is going to happen. They are curious, orderly, and thorough (compulsive sometimes) in their accumulation of knowledge. These students usually know what they want to accomplish; I have found that "what they want" is ideational (and unrealistic) in nature, and often at direct odds with what their body needs. For example, one young man wanted to develop (force) a vibrato. The frozen state of his muscles would simply not allow his diaphragm the necessary freedom it needed to flutter (part of the mechanism involved in the emergence of the vibrato). What he needed was less constriction at the diaphragm. This we could not accomplish in voice lessons. they

Schizoid students may want assistance with their stage fright. If they speak of it, they ask for specific skill development in coping with fear and anxiety in performance. This kind of "symptom relief" will usually help, but the real and unstated request is "help me to not be so afraid," a much more complex issue to address. Therapy is the most effective way to relieve and work through the terror of the schizoid. However, the voice teacher can help the student decrease her anxiety by: (1) teaching the singer to be completely prepared for performance; (2) providing several incrementally more stressful performance opportunities for the student so she can experience success even when scared (i.e., normalize some of the fear); (3) working in a

supportive and accepting manner so that the student can develop trust in the teacher and confidence in self; (4) keeping in mind that the schizoid has been scared out of her body and cannot be scared back into it (see Ch. 1, Footnote 23).

Many people with oral traits or oral structures study the voice. They will likely thrive on the intimacy of the one-to-one relationship and the attention paid them by the teacher. They will be highly cooperative and may or may not work hard. If the teacher assumes a parent role, she will likely find the student reacting more and more dependently. Oral students love to be taken care of, told what to do, and expect the teacher to have all the answers. I think the voice instructor does a disservice to her student if she feeds the orality by "parenting" the student. I have had excellent results working contractually with this kind of singer: we share the responsibility for deciding what will be learned. I encourage the student to develop her own sense of autonomy and separateness from me.

The first lesson with a psychopathic student is usually an interesting experience. The teacher will probably feel controlled by the student's monologue and by the subtle ways she resists instruction that feels controlling to her. She may thank the teacher profusely for all that has been taught (at the end of the session), which, in fact, may be very little.

Other psychopathic singers may drive themselves (and the teacher) to achieve and excel. They often have a marvelous sense of humor and will spend a great deal of the lesson time entertaining and impressing

the teacher (I find this to be more true of jazz singers than classical students). This is a distancing and controlling mechanism for some. For others, it is a way to make limited contact with the "other."

If psychopathy is heavily mixed with masochism, the student will likely not study long--just long enough to charm the teacher, stop coming to lessons without notice, and leave the teacher feeling incompetent. If the singer has a psychopathic structure and dominant oral traits, then she may allow the teacher to help her. The dependency needs of this individual will serve her well; they will allow her to receive from the teacher.

Students with masochistic structures will likely come to lessons for two main reasons: (1) to express and release bottled-up tension; and (2) to experience success by defeating the teacher (as stated in the previous section). The latter will make it difficult to help the student achieve the former. The masochist's characterological "holding in" will be transformed into holding out on the teacher. In addition to resisting practicing and learning, the student will focus responsibility for her lack of progress on the teacher. Any weakness in the teacher will be cited as cause for the student's enigma. When the time is up for the lesson, the student may resist leaving.

Students with rigid structures will want technical instruction in voice technique. Beginning students will also (covertly) want some kind of help in building confidence (if they lack it) with regard to opening up. To have their singing voice exposed is similar to being seen naked. If the sound is primitive it will need to be accepted by the singer and the teacher before the feeling dimension of the voice



can flourish.

If motivated, this singer concentrates and responds well to new challenges. Rigid singers will exhibit an independent attitude of, "I can do it myself." They will readily accept instruction and then prefer for the teacher to be quiet so they can think and integrate the information by themselves. In the initial lesson rigid singers become quite fatigued as a result of the steeled muscles being loosened in the back from expanded breathing. This is a beginning in the softening process. If the student works toward greater expression and openness, the teacher can expect to see more and more warmth develop in the relationship.

#### Case Studies

In the following case studies the reader will note a fluid interplay between dimensions of the singing voice as characterological indices and a therapeutic response to working with them. It will become quite clear that isolated work with the voice remains incomplete when viewed exclusively as that--work with the voice. The singer's character is integral to voice study; it enables or prohibits singing, giving pleasure in many instances.

Hopefully, these individual cases will illuminate and add to our comprehension of an already established body of theory.

Schizoid case study: Brian. This case will exemplify the frozen condition of the schizoid body. Severe constriction in the diaphragm, throat and chest make it nearly impossible for this individual to sing

without the benefit of therapeutic work. The case of Brian also illustrates how tenaciously the will can be exerted over the body.

Brian's progress in freeing his voice was badly impaired by his character armor. His body was incredibly tight and contracted. His diaphragm would simply not relax enough to allow sufficient breath support. His upper chest was immobile and frozen. His throat muscles were extremely tight; they looked as if they pulled up from the base of the throat, and in, squeezing the larynx. His speaking voice was tight and strained, and I was surprised that he could make much of a singing sound at all.

When I first heard Brian sing, I was struck by the innocence and "sweetness" of his voice. Its quality was clear, light and fairly thin.

Ironically, he came to voice lessons to learn how to "comfortably" scream high rock-range notes in his falsetto. He had great difficulty with the highest pitches in his regular range due to the extreme tension in his body, particularly in his face, throat and shoulders. The harder he tried to sing high, the more tense and frustrated he became with himself and eventually, with me. His falsetto voice was light and pleasant. His true natural range was low and fairly rich in quality. Brian didn't like this part of his voice at all. It sounded "young and fruit" to him. He wanted to sound powerful in the top of his range.

Brian worked harder than any student I have ever taught. Paradoxically, the more diligently he worked, the tighter his body became, and the less able he was to sing. He pushed himself, tried to push

me, tried to force vocal freedom, and tried to make certain things happen that he decided were important. Brian simply could not breathe any more deeply (to achieve these goals) than he already was without freeing his schizoid block--his frozen diaphragm (See Ch. 1, Footnote 23).

Moreover, Brian was extremely tough on himself, had great difficulty accepting warmth or praise, and needed to keep a distance from me when I was warm. He fundamentally could not tolerate the fact that I accepted him as he was when he could not.

Oral case study: Barbara. Barbara's case demonstrates how an individual's orality, particularly the "pull" to depend on and find an adequate mother figure in the world, can remain a dominant theme in that individual's life. Barbara was able to grow and mature in her adult life as long as she could find support from someone to do so. When her dependency issues were reinforced, however, she reverted back to a dependent position in that relationship. She was not able to stand on her own two feet and support herself emotionally.

Barbara lacked vocal strength as well as physical strength when she began her voice work. She studied with me over a two-year period. As this young woman grew as a singer and as a young adult, she increased behaving autonomously, her voice became richer, darker, and "womanly" in quality. She came into voice study with a small, wispy, light and high voice. She reminded me of a small bird. Barbara left with a fuller, rich quality throughout her range. She had begun to support herself financially, was dating men, and was thinking about a teaching

career near the end of our work together. Instead of teaching, she decided to return to graduate school.

Two years later Barbara invited me to her graduate voice recital. I went expecting to hear an even fuller, clearer, more adult quality in her voice. Instead, I heard a precisely honed version of her light, bird-like quality which dominated her singing at the outset of study four years previously. The richness we cultivated was gone. She sang in tune, pronounced four different languages clearly (the typical repertoire requirement for graduate level work), and seemed delighted with herself throughout the recital.

I was surprised and somewhat disappointed to find this "vocal regression." I also felt very warm and supportive of her. Barbara's voice lacked pathos. There was no distinguishable dynamic change in any of the songs; on a few numbers she sang very softly. For the most part, the entire recital was sung 'mp' (medium soft).

Her attire was youthful. She wore a long dress with a "flouncy" top. This seemed curious since she had dressed in a very sophisticated manner during our two years together. It seemed to me that Barbara's orality emerged once again in an environmental atmosphere that encouraged dependence and discouraged autonomy--traditional graduate school.

Psychopathic case studies: Paul, Bob, Gail, and George. We will remember that one way the psychopath's character works to her advantage is her ability to control and produce that which is imagined. For example, if I can become my image, I can make my voice sound like I imagine it to be. This feeds a feeling of omnipotence: the more

omnipotent one "is," the easier it becomes to simply make things happen. If I want to sound a certain way, I simply imagine it and I produce that sound. Difficulty arises, however, when reality intrudes on image. If this happens, the psychopath may seek out a voice coach.

Paul. This case study is illustrative of considerations mentioned in the preceding paragraph, particularly the issue of image investment. Paul has an image of himself, projects this image fairly successfully as a performer, but lacks substance as a singer. This young man is not aware of his voice as a tonal entity; he uses it as an instrument to serve his self-image. Hence, his sound is hollow and uninteresting. Paul is not aware of this in the least.

Paul sings professionally and wants to become a "star." His performing strength lies in his ability to reach his audience primarily through seductive eye contact--smiling warmly--and through theatrical behavior. His "act" has commercial value. Notice that I have not mentioned his singing yet. It seems to me secondary to his performing; his image takes precedence over his singing voice. The color of his sound reflects this to me. It is breathy, etereal, lacking both head and chest resonance. When I first heard him sing I kept waiting for his voice to warm up, clear up and get richer. Instead, it got thinner and weaker as the evening went on. As far as I can tell, Paul breathes high in the chest and sings in full volume most of the time (it is not particularly loud at full volume). He has a high energy charge in his eyes and face; his throat sounds closed, however.

Paul's basic tone color reflects his ethereal self-image--his illusion about being a star. The flatness in his sound indicates his

basic disinterest in singing. Once he spoke to me about his voice. He asked me point blank how I liked it. When I responded honestly, saying, "I thought he stylized well with the part of his voice he was using," he was insulted and only slightly curious about what I meant. He asked me about which part that was. I began to answer; he interrupted me after a few words and then started telling me how great he was. The feedback I gave him was received as an injury. It then occurred to me that he had not wanted honest feedback. He was soliciting "rave reviews" about his performance.

Bob. The psychopath denies reality. When, however, the psychopathic defenses crumble, when a blow has been dealt sufficiently to wound or penetrate the image's "bubble," the psychopath can be devastated. Fleeting moments of denying reality and then recognizing it can leave this kind of individual immobilized or frantic. They are used to manipulating the other person or situation to fit their needs. Bob's case illustrates these points, as well as the psychopathic tendency to be seductive.

This young man had difficulty taking in any instruction from me. He talked about how wonderful his voice was, how wonderful lessons were, and then would sing to me as if he were in front of a large audience. His manner, gestures, eyes (and occasionally his voice) were seductive. If I offered anything other than praise or acceptance it offended him. I really wondered why he came to lessons. He did allow me to teach him one breathing exercise. He treated it very humorously, however, and would interrupt constantly when I tried to explain something.

The one time he made the most contact with me was when he came in looking defeated, pale, and deflated. He had experienced a considerable personal loss and seemed to be in shock. He insisted on singing, but he couldn't sustain any sound he made; he'd sing a few phrases and collapse. He seemed to have sustained quite a blow to his pride and his image of himself. He was in a great deal of pain and it seemed that it increased as he breathed more deeply to sing.

Bob finally asked if we could just talk for a while. It was hard for him to speak of his recent loss--"his lady" had left him abruptly. Bob would switch back and forth between saying he was O.K. and feeling awful. He tried to sing once more but was spending most of his energy holding back his tears and wrestling with his pride. He was "stuck" and could barely breathe. I then did something I had never done before. I asked him to sit, relax and listen. Bob did, and I sang "Don't Cry Out Loud" to him. He got all excited, asked me to sing it again, with tears brimming in his eyes. I did. Afterward, he thanked me and thanked me, said he was touched by the song and the singing of it, started to cry, and exclaimed over and over about how surprised he was to feel so moved. Bob seemed to be caught between his need to let go and yield to his sadness, and his need to pull above and deny his feelings.

Gail. Gail's case also demonstrates the psychopath's inability to accept another person's reality when it collides with her self-image. The color of the voice reflects much of the inner being of an individual, particularly feelings involving the heart. Some psychopathic

singers find it too threatening to connect with this part of their body/soul reality, and so they actually cannot sing from the heart. They sing from how they imagine. Particularly, they seduce and control, as Gail's case demonstrates.

The psychopath will accept help with the development of her tone if it is in service of her image. For example, Gail, who studied voice for two years with me, was highly insulted by some initial suggestions I made regarding her tone. It was thin and "screechy" up high; she thought it was gorgeous. When I indicated the need to cultivate a fuller sound incorporating chest resonance throughout her range, she got mad at me and cried. This manipulative behavior was an attempt to control me and what I said to her. When she listened to a taped recording of what she sang, she was able to tolerate what I said a little more. Eventually she developed the capacity to accept some of my suggestions and not always be so offended. She began to like her deepening tone; she modified her image of sound enough to grow vocally.

Interestingly, Gail's seductive efforts centered around religion. She was a part of a religious group that evangelized a great deal through singing. Conversion of others was the main goal of their ministry. It appeared to me that Gail had not come to terms with her sexuality as a woman, but rather, had sublimated her sexual and aggressive drives through religious music. She sang lustily and with passion. Her body moved sensuously when she sang; she was unaware (I believe) that she did so. But the whole effect of her singing was seductive.



Also, she typically had a sneer on her face when she sang. It was a semi-smile, but her expression primarily conveyed contempt. Her voice and body said, "come here." Her facial expression said, "go away."

George. George's psychopathy affected him in a way similar to that of Gail's. He could not integrate feedback about his singing that was counter to his image of himself. George imagined that he sounded like Elvis. His sound was similar, but it didn't "pass" adequately as show material. When George got this feedback from others, his image suffered a blow. His toleration of image intrusion was very low. Instead of studying Elvis' sound more closely and mastering his imitation of it, he ignored the feedback and eventually didn't find work.

Masochistic case study: Sandra. This young woman's case is illustrative of the major difficulties experienced by the masochistic singer and the frustration of working with such an individual. Sandra's severe constriction at the base of the neck, her holding-in pattern, her provocative behavior, and her tendency to force singing, all exemplify the masochistic singer.

After Sandra left her first lesson I felt worse than I did when she came in (I had felt fine). She seemed to take great delight in telling me of her concern over various difficulties she was having with her singing. Her style of reporting was highly analytic and dramatic. I expected to hear a stunning sound from this woman after she told me about her singing. It soon became clear that she was speaking about her image of herself--her hopes and dreams of how she

she might sound--rather than what was real.

Sandra forced out her low chest voice, had no control nor much strength in her middle range, and made a fairly young sound in the top of her head register. This was understandable since she had never studied the voice and was not actively practicing. Rather, she was pushing herself toward a recording deadline and was escalating her tension level in the process. She had become hypercritical of herself and was choking when she sang. Sandra complained, was self-loathing, and was provocative in her behavior toward me. She acted indignant and spiteful toward any intervention I made. I was to suffer, too, not prescribe change directed toward gratification or pleasure.

In the second lesson I had her stand on her feet and started her off singing right away, allowing no opportunity for an expose to begin. She seemed surprised and displeased by this approach, and expressed her irritation by refusing to do what I would suggest. Sandra smiled broadly at me when announcing that she hadn't practiced since the first lesson.

Sandra did not show up for her next lesson. Nor would she return my call of inquiry.

Rigid case study: Sam. Sam was one of the most serious and delightful students I ever had the privilege to teach. He was able to use most of his energy mastering a singing technique that served him well long after he stopped taking lessons. Sam had the kind of high motivation, non-nonsense approach and responsible attitude toward voice study that one might expect to see in people with well-functioning rigid structures.

His rigidity was not severe; he was well anchored at both ends of the body but was not "stiff with pride." He did hold his feelings in reserve somewhat, and controlled the "warmth quotient" of our relationship.

Sam had full use of all the notes in his range once he mastered his breathing technique. He seemed unafraid of his sexuality; the depth and richness of his lowest tones were available to add color to the tones in his upper range as well.

It did take him some time and concerted effort to cultivate sufficient resonance in his upper range. Students often feel quite vulnerable during this time of vocal development. Sam did at first. Then as he had fun making "buzzing" sounds in his head (the resonance that eventually produced a striking brilliance in his tone), he began to risk a little more. As he opened up, his tone blossomed along with his improving technique. He trusted that I would not ridicule him; he also "lightened" up about making new and unusual sounds--treating the adventure with humor.

Sam was able to bring the resonance from his upper range down into his middle register once it felt controlled (he had mastered blending depth and richness much earlier). In short, he was able to integrate all the resonance present in his voice throughout his range.

It is a fascinating process to study how character is expressed by different individuals when they sing and when they study the voice. Hopefully the reader will find this to be true in pursuing the case studies presented herein.

It is also equally interesting to speculate about the relationship between singing and the expression of the deepest part of an individual's core self--the part of our being that lies beneath all levels of armor.

We come into the world with a minimal amount of armor; Lowen believes that we may begin to armor inter-utero if that environment is perceived as hostile. However, the bulk of the armoring process occurs after birth.<sup>11</sup> And so we have a relatively free and unarmored tiny individual come into the world with a very primitive and powerful means of expression--the voice.

If we ask why it is important to study the voice, we can begin to respond by recognizing that the voice is the only form of expression available to the human infant before she has motility. We have thus far explored the manifestation of reduced motility and expression--character--and its relationship with singing. We have yet to explore and speculate about the role of singing in the natural development of the personality and its core expression. This will now be addressed.

## NOTES

- 1 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 269.
- 2 Paul Moses, The Voice of Neurosis (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1954), p. 13.
- 3 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body (New York: Collier Books, 1958), p. 15.
- 4 Alexander Lowen, Pleasure (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 40-43.
- 5 Alexander Lowen, The Vibrant Way to Health (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1977), p. 24.
- 6 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics, pp. 155-158.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 163-164.
- 8 Wilhelm Reich, Character Analysis (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972); Alexander Lowen, The Betrayal of the Body (New York Collier Books, 1967).
- 9 Paul Moses, op. cit., pp. 89, 90, 116.
- 10 John Pierrakas, "The Voice and Feeling," Lecture 11, Public Lectures, New York.
- 11 Alexander Lowen, The Language of the Body, Chap. 17.

## Chapter IV

### THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF SINGING AND THE CORE SELF-EXPRESSION OF THE PERSONALITY

As we explore the ways in which singing and the core of the personality are inter-related, we will focus on the relationship between the development of the voice and character formation from birth into childhood. This will be accomplished by first examining infantile core expression and the developmental dynamics of the small child's voice.

We have discovered that character is expressed through singing (as presented in previous sections of this work). Even though singers are sometimes limited by their structures, it is not uncommon for certain individuals to circumvent or transcend that which limits them or circumscribes their behavior. In Freudian terms, sublimation occurs; a forbidden feeling or thought is channeled into an acceptable form of expression.<sup>1</sup> The second section of this chapter discusses this possibility at length.

Then, attention is turned to ways in which singing can be an ego builder or modifier and why this might be valuable to singers with various character structures. Finally, this discussion concentrates on how singing increases pleasure in life and the phenomenon of the creative process.

Infantile Core Expression  
Developmental Dynamics and the Infant's Voice

The organs of speech and song have a discharging function and may be libidinal and aggressive (sexual or erotic) in character; the production of sounds and noises takes place in conjunction with pleasing body sensations (see Ch. 11, Footnote 14). John Pierrakas, who has traced the development of the voice through infancy and early childhood, reminds us that life itself begins with sound. The baby's unique rhythm, pitch and range are present in the fourth week of infancy, and around the fourth month the voice is musical.<sup>2</sup>

Paul Moses states that the infant begins to produce sounds that resemble singing around the fourteenth week of life. What begins as a reflex soon becomes a play pattern. The baby's range expands, the dynamics become more pronounced, and she vocalizes and laughs loudly (see Ch. 11, Footnote 14).

The first stage of vocal development is the "crying" stage. The cry is purposeful, expressing fear, rage and love (see Footnote 2). In approximately the sixth month of life the baby enters the second stage of vocal development, the lalling period. She does not intend to communicate but simply wants to experience the pleasurable sensations of performing motor rhythmic movements with the mouth and tongue. "This is an outer erotization coupled with motor and acoustic sensations, a triple enjoyment" (see Ch. 11, Footnote 14). Lalling has a dual function: (1) this stage is the dress rehearsal for later articulation; (2) vocalizing satisfies a narcissistic libido (self-love

eroticism). Moses states that lalling is an oral satisfaction "of a higher level than sucking." "It is almost an artistic phenomenon" (see Ch. II, Footnote 14). Voice production at this vocal age is nearly unlimited; displeasure and happiness can be expressed over endless periods. Hoarseness is not an issue and the breathing capacity functions ideally (see Ch. II, Footnote 14).

Children who are not permitted to vocalize freely, however, and are shut-up, develop severe disturbances in their breathing patterns and their voices then become mechanical and dry, sometimes limited in range (see Footnote 2).

The child is pressured to learn around the first year, and enters the world of words and speech patterns when she enters school. "The voice of the child is like a complicated engraving which is etched in experience."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore:

When vocal expression is disturbed, the respiratory function is affected and the total expression of the emotions is basically altered. The blocking in the throat due to holding becomes a neurotic pattern stamped in the character structure of the individual. (See Footnote 3)

Through her interactions with the world, the expressions of the organism through the voice may be gradually reduced and inhibited. The body concurrently becomes blocked and breathing is suppressed as expression is inhibited (see Footnote 3). If the child takes singing lessons some eighteen years later, she will experience great difficulty in regaining some of her ideal breathing and phonation. Speech and articulation have been superimposed and interfere with free functioning of the vocal cords and with free breathing. The voice becomes



subordinated to speech (see Ch. II, Footnote 14).

We produce children and adults in our society(ies) who are reluctant or unable to speak their minds and express their emotions. Somehow they are able to express both in song. I believe this happens because singing involves not only the verbal sphere of "civilized" communication, but the pre-verbal feeling states of the infant. Moses writes, "Perhaps it is because voice production in the wordless age of infancy leaves solely agreeable memories that we have the urge later in life to sing when we are happy and gay" (see Ch. II, Footnote 14).

Through singing we can rejoin the pure, innocent, pleasure-loving part of our Self that has somehow preserved its integrity through the developmental periods of life. The self-enjoyment and self-appreciation of the "Ialler" remain intact and are available to the adult singer. She can reconnect with a pure and uncontaminated part of her core Self.

People listen to children sing and remark that they "sound like angels." They do because their voices reflect the purity of their core. The adult singer is capable of this same reflection. However, the accumulation of restrictions and body blocks makes it difficult for the adult to sing with the same freedom that children exude.

We could ask, "How can anyone sing when the vocal apparatus undergoes such restriction and blocking?" It is this writer's proposition that the activity of singing, in fact, may enable singers to circumvent or transcend these blocks and restrictions. It is paradoxical that the expressive activity, singing, helps us to "go around," if you will, character blocks that were erected to limit and prohibit expressiveness

in the first place. Some theorists would describe this "circumvention" as a sublimation. Reflection on these possibilities will hopefully illuminate them.

#### Sublimation of Core Feeling Expression Through Singing

It is interesting to note that in a culture that inhibits vocal expression, we have an outpouring of song and singing. I think that the latter helps us cope with the former. People unknowingly seek song singing as a medium/activity which allows them to "circumvent" their bodily armor and character structure. Our armor is designed to "protect" us; however, it traps us in the process, reducing and limiting our outlets for expression. Our organism seeks ways (both consciously and unconsciously), to express itself. Singing can provide us with an outlet for expression that may otherwise be forbidden. Understanding the mechanism of sublimation will shed further light on this subject.

Freudian theory teaches us that sublimation is an "unconscious process whereby the libido or sex instinct is directed or transformed into a more acceptable form of outlet."<sup>4</sup> Anna Freud identified sublimation as the tenth mechanism of ego defense in which "instinctual aims are displaced."<sup>5</sup> Simply stated, energy is directed at a target (evolving out of our biological instincts). The original target for discharging the energy is not reached. The energy is instead directed elsewhere . . . "in conformity with higher social values" (see Footnote 1). For example, many of the art forms we enjoy today are sublimations. The evocative music produced in the Romantic Period exemplifies how sexual or erotic energy was transformed into an

acceptable medium after 1750.

Singing has been designated an acceptable behavior in our culture, with the exception of factional opposition to "punk" and "new wave" rock music. These kinds of rock music explicitly express sex and aggression. The lack of sublimation causes criticism and censorship of this "art form." Society does condone the expression of longing, love, anger, passion, and sadness in ballads, blues, art songs, folk songs, etc. It is acceptable to express one's sexuality in a "sassy" jazz tune, just as it is deemed appropriate to express grief in a requiem.

Regardless of the content of our vocal literature, the process of singing accomplishes one aim of sublimation: when we sing we partially discharge energy (see Footnote 5). To illustrate, in a public lounge it is acceptable to sing about making love. It is not acceptable to make love in the same setting. Sexual energy can be partially discharged in the singing activity. The sexual urge directed toward physical gratification is sublimated, however. Moreover, sublimation in singing can deal with issues of love that are less sexual in nature --self-appreciation and self-acceptance particularly. I have observed this phenomenon directly in my work with voice students and other singers during the past twelve years. When I taught voice in a local community college I began to notice particular self-allowing attitudes and behaviors in my students which did not seem present in other spheres of their lives. Something happened when they sang that did not happen ordinarily. Certain singers seemed to "rise above," "go around,"

or circumvent specific characterological limitations in singing that were otherwise noticeable in other areas of their functioning. Sublimation was occurring. One rather fragmented young man who came for private lessons gave me ample food for thought.

Case study: Jonathan. Jonathan's eyes looked glazed-over usually, and he had significant difficulty matching pitches even when he tried hard to hear them. At first I thought he had some kind of hearing impediment, but as we worked together slowly and painstakingly, he managed to match pitches and maintain a melodic line correctly. At these times his face looked relaxed, but the most striking change occurred in his eyes--they were clear and bright when his head was clear enough to hear pitch. When Jonathan's eyes were not clear, he had difficulty singing correct pitches. He seemed "partly gone." In fact, he was not all there, which showed in his eyes. Part of him was split off at these moments, and his contact with the real world was reduced. Sometimes he could not think clearly; his "foggy" condition would last throughout the entire lesson during the first two months of study.

In the third month I noticed that Jonathan would "clear up" somewhat after his warmups. As time went on he was able to make more and more contact with me and with himself. His singing improved and so did his reality testing ability.

He seemed to have a very self-critical, judgmental part of his personality that was self-abusive. He was psychologically battered, and this intra-psycho dynamic seriously affected his ego functioning.

Through singing he was able to circumvent and modify his internal struggle. He found comfort in the sound of his voice. He loved to sing and needed someone else to encourage or "allow" him to do so in a non-threatening environment. Jonathan was a loving, quiet young man, but very frightened of life and contact with it. Mostly, he was afraid of his own feelings, was split off from them, and was unaware of his condition (as is typical of the schizoid person). However, through singing he was able to connect with a part of his core that allowed self enjoyment.

The Christmas after he completed his lessons he arrived on my doorstep with a beautiful and expensive gift, saying how much he appreciated my putting up with him.

Jonathan's case illustrates one way sublimation can occur, particularly in a schizoid individual. Similarly, I have seen the rigid male express love and longing through his voice and his eyes, and have seen the masochistic singer release sound without making vocal "explosions." I have watched the psychopathic individual yield to real feelings and contact with the other, and the oral individual become more grounded and comfortable with adult reality as she grew as a singer. The schizoid can release herself from the fear of being in touch with herself--of breathing and feeling more fully, keeping in contact with reality in the process.

#### The Ego Building/Modifying Function of Singing

We will remember that some individual's characterologic limitations revolve around integration problems. Thinking and feeling remain apart

from one another. Blocks are erected in the body to either prevent "feeling floods" or to maintain ego dominance. However, certain individuals need to learn to tolerate increased feeling without feeling overwhelmed, and others need to relinquish the mind's control over the body. The boundaries of the ego are either too permeable or too rigid. If there is too much rigidity in the body, feelings will not be expressed nor synthesized in directing the individual's actions. The head will dominate. If there is too little rigidity, feelings will dominate and functioning in the real world will be impaired (see Ch. 1, Footnote 13). Achieving a balanced state between feeling and thinking is a desirable goal for people of all structures. It is my contention that singing is an activity that helps us achieve this balance. It functions as an ego builder and modifier. We will consider how this is so.

The ego. Freud described the ego as a "structure of the personality that distinguishes between the mind and things in the external world."<sup>6</sup> The mental processes of the ego--perception, reality testing, internal and external motility regulation, and memory--are all involved in singing, and all can be enhanced by it (see Footnote 6).

For Lowen, the ego is a synthesizing agent. It is the representative of reality within the personality. The ego mediates between the inner and outer world, between the self and the other. The ego shapes the individual's self-image and dictates what feelings and impulses are to be allowed expression. Simply stated, the ego is the mind.<sup>7</sup>

People with schizoid or oral structures need to improve ego functioning by integrating their thinking with their feelings and their bodily awareness. Psychopathic individuals have risen above the needs of the body in service of their ego image. The normal function of the ego is to support the body's striving for pleasure, but for this structure, the ego subverts the body in favor of an ego image. In both the masochistic and rigid structures, there is disturbance in the unity of the mind and body. The ego control over the body produces a condition of holding in for the masochist and a condition of unyielding stiffness for the rigid character. In the latter there is too much emphasis on reality, and in the former, reality is distorted by suppressed feelings (see Ch. 1, Footnote 13).

Since integrated functioning is desirable for all of the five structures, how then, does singing promote or reduce ego dominance in the personality? In singing we cross back and forth between the conscious and the unconscious spheres of our physical and mental being. The singer "touches" her creative center in the unconscious: original, conscious expression then evolves. There is a natural ebb and flow between these states when one sings.

For example, we hear of people "losing" themselves in their music. Self-consciousness is lost during this time--a state that is usually desirable for the rigid, masochistic, or psychopathic individual. Losing and finding oneself in creative expression can also be an exercise in integration. To yield and then regain ego control teaches one the value of safely letting down or letting go. Schizoid and oral

people need to experience precisely this kind of synthesis.

Singing, therefore, promotes unified organismic functioning. The ego can be strengthened or modified depending on the characterological needs of the individual.

In this self-expressive process (singing) the individual will hopefully experience or derive some measure of pleasure for themselves-- the key to self-expression in life. Self-expression is pleasurable in and of itself.<sup>8</sup> Singers take pleasure in using their instrument, accomplishing an artistic goal, and in expanding their creative-expressive capacities. The close interconnection between pleasure and self-expression will be clearer if we examine Lowen's view of pleasure and its relationship to singing, the creative, self-expressive act.

#### How Singing Increases Pleasure in Life

##### Bioenergetics and Pleasure

In his book, Pleasure, Lowen stipulates that it is not necessary to have fun or be happy to experience pleasure. Pleasure is a mode of being. It requires that there be a "concurrence between one's inner state and the outer situation."<sup>9</sup> When a person is identified with an activity there is a free and spontaneous flow about her. When we hear this in the voice, we notice an easy and rhythmic manner; it is a pleasurable event for the speaker and listener as well (see Footnote 8).

For pleasure to occur, the will recedes and the ego surrenders control over the body. The individual looks unified in her movements-- comfortable with herself. However, when someone looks uncomfortable



it may be that flowing movements are inhibited by unconscious restraints that limit or restrict feeling flow in the body.<sup>10</sup> The individual's movements are awkward and unrhythmic. She likely feels dis-ease and discomfort, not pleasure.

At the other extreme is the exhibitionistic individual who seems uninhibited and appears to enjoy herself. Her energies are focused on the image she wishes to present. Her behavior is dominated by her ego aimed at achieving power, not pleasure.<sup>11</sup>

Many people sing for pleasure and the simple joy of hearing their own voice. Some sing to achieve an end. Some manage to enjoy themselves while producing an end product. Many take pleasure in seeing others react to their singing, and many strive for praise and approval.

When I work with voice students, I work toward pleasure, not achievement. Ironically, the students who enjoy themselves and their voices achieve more than those who do not. Those who are more goal-oriented and who do not enjoy themselves, miss out on the essence of the creative process. One of my former students taught me a great deal about this phenomenon.

Case study: Judy. Judy was truly naive about her vocal capabilities when she began to learn to sing. She told me that she simply "wanted to learn how to sing." Even though she practiced faithfully and could have expected to progress with the effort she put forth, she was rather amazed at the changes that consistently took place. I was surprised and delighted to hear depth and richness emerge in her sound fairly soon in the course of study. We had no preconceived plan for

her except that she would "learn to sing."

As Judy grew, so did a kind of self-confidence that other students admired and struggled to find for themselves. Judy knew what she was doing. She took pleasure in her knowledge and her experience. She enjoyed singing and sang from her core. There was grace in her movements and in her manner.

Lowen describes self-confidence as an awareness that one can express oneself in any situation with appropriate and graceful movements.<sup>12</sup> Judy developed this kind of self-confidence inadvertently by allowing herself and her voice to "become." Others who tried to manufacture this kind of authenticity, failed. They are mutually exclusive and incompatible states of being.

Students/singers who take pleasure in their voices come alive in their bodies. Their eyes sparkle, they laugh, they attend to their fatigue and they feel their joy. They learn to trust their organism and honor their body's needs. When they're vocally tired, they stop singing. If they feel "heavy laden" about something in their life they learn to comfort themselves at these times instead of pushing themselves vocally. They stay in touch with the reality of their body and are not governed by either their ego or their ego-image.

Singing is not used to promote an image of success nor is there an attempt to gain conditional acceptance or love from others. Rather, one sings for the simple joy of singing, to bring pleasure to one's life, to experiment with one's creative process, and to express feelings from the core of the Self. This core is the heart.<sup>13</sup> When one sings from the heart we hear it clearly. Love is expressed in the voice, and

others are touched by it. There is no falsity, no attempt made to move the other. The essence of one being emerges in song and touches the core of another. It is a powerful and moving experience to share.

### Singing, the Creative, Self-Expressive Act

Lowen teaches us that self-expression "describes the free, natural and spontaneous activities of the body and is (like self-preservation) an inherent quality of all living organisms" (see Footnote 10). Each bodily activity contributes to self-expression, no matter how mundane. Fundamental self-expressions such as the way we walk and the way we eat indicate something about the person; so do the more sophisticated expressions such as singing and dancing (see Footnote 10).

The Self is expressed not only in bodily action and movement, but in form, shape, sound and smell. We express ourselves simply by "being," by doing nothing. Whether or not we are aware of it, we are expressing ourselves all of the time. Lowen believes that the Self is not limited to consciousness and is not identical with the ego.<sup>14</sup> He also thinks that the greater "the motility of the organism, the more self-expressive it is."<sup>15</sup> Motility and energy are directly related to one another; when energy is low, motility is reduced. A direct line connects energy to self-expression: energy --> motility --> feeling --> spontaneity --> self-expression. This sequence operates in reverse, for if an individual's self-expression is blocked, his spontaneity is reduced as are feeling, motility, and energy.<sup>16</sup>

If a person's self-expression is blocked or limited, she may compensate by projecting an ego image. This is most commonly done

through the use of power. "Power creates only a larger image, not a bigger self."<sup>17</sup>

I believe that the Self is our total being state. The Self is the essence of the whole person. We can express our Self in action, and we need not. We simply are.

Throughout this paper we have looked at different aspects of the Self. We have seen how our expression is limited (character blocks), how these limitations are reflected in the singing sphere of our lives, and now we are looking at the ways in which the activity of singing positively embellishes or enhances self-expression. Singing is a self-expressive act in and of itself. Singing involves creativity. It is recreational and re-creative as well.

Creativity. Creativity in singing results from the freed-up energy produced by this activity. When we sing, we double or triple our oxygen intake which in turn increases the energy flow in the body. The line Lowen draws showing the relationship between energy and self-expression certainly applies to the singing process. I also think the simple act of expressing the Self in singing puts this "chain" into effect in a positive reverse order: self-expression --> encourages spontaneity and increased feeling --> which enable greater motility --> which produces greater energy in the organism (which usually results in increased self-expression). So goes the cycle.

The creative process involves having the ability or power of creation, and it results from originality of thought and/or expression.<sup>18</sup> Creative products or acts then (obviously) result from original thought

of expression.

Creativity is, therefore, a very personal and primitive experience. Before the infant differentiates itself from the other, all things may seem possible--"the sky's the limit." Infantile grandiosity prevails (see Ch. 1, Footnote 34). The tiny human is completely self-absorbed; nothing else matters but its needs. (This is ironic since the infant has neither a sense of Self yet nor any concept of "needs".) It is simply overwhelmed by hunger when hungry, by pain when hurting, and is pleased when satisfied. Interestingly, one of the tasks of adulthood is for us to each come to terms with our infantile grandiosity, to give up our illusions and to accept our limitations as adult beings.<sup>19</sup>

I think it is important to maintain a balance between accepting oneself realistically and expressing one's creative self. We need to somehow maintain our ability to experience the world in new ways, to live these experiences without illusion, keeping both feet firmly planted on the earth's surface while we do so.

Lowen speaks of creativity as "any form of expression that adds new pleasure and meaning to life" (see Footnote 9). It can simply be an expression, a word, a thought, or an action, not necessarily an end product or a tangible object (see Footnote 9). Creativity stems from the desire for pleasure and the need for self-expression. To be creative, one needs to suspend that which is known (a healthy schizoid process [see Ch. 1, Footnote 38]) to allow the new and the unexpected to emerge from the imagination (creative make-believe is an example).<sup>20</sup>

Creativity is the opposite of image making. It is an open, allowing process whereby the Self is expressed and is permitted to grow. Image making may seem creative, but in truth, it is a closed process that nullifies the true Self. Lowen clarifies that we create an ego image when our self-expression is blocked (see Footnote 16). Perhaps when we engage in self-expressive activities such as singing we will be less likely to "create" a false Self or image. Rather, we can constructively use the energy of our core Self to increase our enjoyment of life through the expressive act of singing. We can recreate the feelings of self-acceptance and self-love we once had as "lalling," cooing infants when we enjoy our adult voices.

When we engage in a process that allows us freedom of expression that enables us to "circumvent" blocks in our body that limit our expressiveness, and increase our pleasure in living, we are most certainly engaged in a worthwhile endeavor.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Lowen, pp. 515, p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>18</sup> Max Stein, Ed., *Avon's World Dictionary* (New York: Avon Books, 1967), p. 281.

<sup>19</sup> Marion Kopp, *An Owl To Singing* (New York: Avon Books, 1977).

<sup>20</sup> Alexander Lowen, *Presence*, pp. 21-22.

## NOTES

- 1 Michael Brown, Psycho-Diagnosis in Brief (Dexter, Mich.: Huron Valley Institute, 1977), p. 6.
- 2 John Pierrakas, "The Voice and Feeling," Lecture II, Public Lectures, New York.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- 4 J. P. Chaplin, Dictionary of Psychology (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1975), p. 522.
- 5 Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense (New York: International University Press, Inc., 1966), p. 44.
- 6 Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978) (3rd edition), pp. 36-40.
- 7 Alexander Lowen, Bioenergetics (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 142-165.
- 8 Alexander Lowen, Pleasure (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 31.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- 12 *Ibid.*, Chapters 1 and 2.
- 13 Alexander Lowen, op. cit., p. 118.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 262.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 265.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 266.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.
- 18 Jess Stein, Ed., Random House Dictionary (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 341.
- 19 Sheldon Kopp, An End to Innocence (New York: Bantam New Age Books, 1978).
- 20 Alexander Lowen, Pleasure, pp. 21-28.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to clarify and delineate the ways in which personality and the singing voice are related. It has looked at the expression of the organism, from a pathological position (character armor) and a healthy standpoint (free expression).

Correlations between character armor and singing types have been drawn, particularly in the case study presentations; predictions about personality can be made when one studies a singer's bodily attitude and how this attitude is manifest in the dimensions of the singing voice. Ways in which the singer is limited by her character are explored as well as the phenomenon of sublimation--the mechanism that enables one to "circumvent" structural restrictions.

We can also conclude that those who work with the voice as an exclusive entity face the difficult task of working with the student's character, whether or not they wish to do so. It would behoove these individuals, I believe, to understand the ways in which a singer's character will enable or restrict her in vocal pursuits. One can then holistically approach and appreciate the abilities and difficulties of the singer. It is this writer's contention that harm can inadvertently be done to both the singer and her voice when one lacks this important knowledge. For example, when a teacher is sensitive to the schizoid's inability to breathe freely in the diaphragmatic area, breath control mastery will be approached slowly and patiently in the studio.



Insensitivity to the state of this person's frozen condition will only lead to greater tension and frustration.

The material presented in case studies suggests that an individual's character can be worked with effectively in the voice studio as well as the therapy office. The bioenergetic nature of singing coupled with the dynamics of the creative process puts voice therapy in a potent therapeutic position. The explorations of this paper have not provided hard data about this latter supposition; however, research focusing on voice therapy and character modification warrants further investigation.

Since this work is not an experimental study, it is limited by the absence of "hard data." If a measurement tool could be developed to study the variables of the voice and character, more conclusive evidence could be drawn to support some of the suppositions put forth in this work. Paul Moses' work in the field of onthology might serve as a model for solidifying the evidence presented herein. Furthermore, some connection between this kind of research and the character typology pencil and paper tests being designed might also be of interest to a future student of these relationships.

In any case, the purpose of this study revolved around the inter-relatedness of the voice and the personality. The ways in which singing enhances self-expression in a society that struggles with organismic expressiveness has only begun to be understood. It was this writer's intention to shed some light on this topic. Hopefully, this is a beginning.

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