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Amanda Johnston, *English and German Diction for Singers: A Comparative Approach*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2011. Cloth, xiv, 295 pp., \$49.95. ISBN 978-0-8108-7766-5 www.scarecrowpress.com

Lyric diction resources that contain several languages are not an innovation. *Diction* by John Moriarty (Boston: E. C. Schirmer Music Company, 1975) and *Diction for Singers* by Joan Wall et al. (Dallas: Pst . . . Inc., 1990) focus upon four and six languages respectively. *A Handbook of Diction for Singers: Italian, German, French* by David Adams (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) studies three languages, while Richard Cox presents a pair in *The Singer's Manual of German and French Diction* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1970). Aside from a chart in the Moriarty text that gives examples for IPA symbols, however, these diction books place minimal emphasis on comparison. Amanda Johnston, who is collaborative pianist and vocal coach at the University of Mississippi, Oxford, proffers a comparative approach to lyric diction for English and

German by drawing upon the shared heritage of the languages.

English and German Diction for Singers is intended as a text for undergraduate and graduate courses in English and German diction, either simultaneously or consecutively. The book is divided into four broad sections. The first contains an introduction to the study of diction, including an overview of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The second and third segments are separate studies of English and German diction, while the final part identifies commonalities between the languages. Throughout the volume, there are exercises in IPA transcription and pronunciation, with an answer key at the end of the book.

The opening section presents the IPA symbols and sounds, as well as the name for each symbol. (The importance of the latter is often underestimated by authors of diction textbooks; information is imparted more quickly and more clearly if the name of the symbol can be communicated orally as well as visually.) General information about diction—vowel classification, the organs of speech, and points of articulation—accompanied by corresponding diagrams makes the opening section an excellent introduction for beginning students. The author categorizes vowels according to emotional impact, employing the descriptors “bright,” “central,” “dark,” and “R-less.” For each language, Johnston recommends resources for guidance in pronunciation. English speakers are probably familiar with General American and Received Pronunciation for their native language, but they may be unaware of language reforms recently adopted by German speaking countries. Aspects of this *Neue Rechtschreibung* include the reduced use of *Eszett* (ß),

and the separation of compound words. Although the spelling changes do not affect existing song texts, singers may encounter the revisions in settings of contemporary poetry, in research, or in conversation study.

In regard to the schwa in German, Johnston has coined the term “vocalic chameleon” because the color of the schwa is directly related to the quality of the vowel immediately preceding it. She warns against the common mistakes of opening the schwa to an open *e* [ɛ], or over-rounding the lips to produce [œ]. Johnston points out other common pitfalls in singing German and English. She underlines that the key to successfully singing in one’s native tongue is to approach it with the same methodic study that one applies to foreign language. Advanced concepts in diction for both languages (including suggestions for the treatment of monosyllabic, incidental words; imploded versus exploded consonants; and strong and weak forms of vowels) offer further refinement of clear and accurate diction.

The final section identifies the commonalities and differences between English and German, and the challenges posed by lyric diction in operatic repertoire. In regard to legato, Johnston underlines that, despite the popular notion that neither language is inherently connective, both English and German can have fluidity. “Legato,” she writes, “is achieved through the merging of all phonemes on a column of released air . . . supported by the body, and *executed by the imagination*” [italics added]. That instruction neatly reveals one of the most important features of *English and German Diction for Singers*. Johnston never overlooks the purpose of diction: to share the explicit and implicit meaning of text. For example, the importance of a par-

ticular word in a phrase is the determining factor in the use of phrasal double consonants. Lyric diction is more than a mere application of pronunciation rules; it is the communication of words in a meaningful and linguistically idiomatic manner.

Johnston explains the components of diction with pertinent illustrations and useful insight. She exhibits a command of the English language that rivals her skills as a diction coach. In the opening chapter, the author makes a parallel between phonetic symbols and chemical symbols; the latter represent elements of life, while the former denote elements of sound. The analogy is an excellent example of the author's skill in enlivening the study of diction. Voice teachers and coaches will find this volume a useful addition to their libraries; those diction courses that combine English and German will find in this a tailor-made text.

Corrine J. Naden, *The Golden Age of American Musical Theatre*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2011. Cloth, 266 pp., \$39.95. ISBN 978-0-8108-7733-7 www.scarecrowpress.com

Oklahoma!, which opened to war-weary audiences in 1943, is recognized as the first truly integrated musical. It ushered in an era of shows that won approval from theater-goers and critics alike. For more than two decades after Rodgers and Hammerstein's quintessential work, musicals from *Carousel* to *Fiddler on the Roof* have captivated audiences; the frequency of revivals indicates that shows of the epoch are still favorites of contemporary viewers. In the mid-1960s, the musical underwent substantive alterations, such as the incorporation of rock and roll. To author Corrine Naden, the changes signified

the end of an era. In *The Golden Age of American Musical Theatre 1943–1965*, Naden presents an overview of this memorable period on Broadway.

The volume begins with a forthright explanation of terms pertaining to the genre. The definitions are as matter-of-fact as Adelaide reading from the psychology book in *Guys and Dolls*. The reader can imagine the words "It says here . . ." (with a broad New York accent) prefacing Naden's definition of Broadway musical: "any performance incorporating music and dance in one of thirty-eight professional theatres that each seat 500 or more people in the Times Square district of the borough of Manhattan, New York City [or at the] Vivian Beaumont in Lincoln Center." The author goes on to explain terms that are commonly used, such as Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway.

A brief history of Broadway begins with information about the street itself. Stretching from the Battery in lower Manhattan to Albany, 150 miles to the north, it is one of the longest boulevards in the United States. But to most, Broadway is synonymous with theater. The author provides a synopsis of Broadway's history. Its annals are colorful, and Naden skillfully weaves tales of riots, sordid love triangles, triumphs, and destitution into a condensed historical account of the Great White Way.

The majority of the volume is devoted to catalogues of information. A timeline offers a chronology of the musicals premiered between 1943 and 1965. Another section lists the musicals in alphabetical order, with detailed data—including credits, cast lists, plot synopses, major songs, awards, and other relevant information—for each. Naden also notes, in abbreviated entries, the "flops" of the period. She explains that the term "flop" is arbitrary; the moniker may be applied to

shows that had a respectable run, but were a financial loss for the backers. For the purpose of this volume, Naden adopts the standard of fewer than 161 performances as the criterion for the designation. Some of the flops are spectacular. Associates of the problem-plagued *Spiderman: Turn off the Dark* can find solace in some of the entries; for example, the director of *Shinbone*, which closed after just forty-nine performances, asked that his name be removed from the credits.

While notable flops are interesting, it is obvious that Naden sets out to celebrate the American musical and its exponents. She devotes a section to brief biographies of noteworthy actors, directors, composers, lyricists, and choreographers; another part presents details about the theater buildings. The final chapter lists the awards given to music theater productions, and the roll call of winners from 1943 to 1965. The volume is rounded out with an appendix of show tunes from the era, and a bibliography that is largely comprised of playbills for the period.

Naden is a former children's book editor, and the author of more than 100 titles for children and adults. Additionally, as this volume reveals, she has a strong interest in the American musical. Enthusiasts of music theater are beneficiaries of her skills both as storyteller and researcher; the historic summaries in the introductory chapters are particularly enlightening. *The Golden Age of American Musical Theatre* is recommended for libraries and institutions; those who frequently teach and perform this repertoire should consider adding it to their holdings as well.

Scott D. Harrison, ed., *Perspectives on Teaching Singing: Australian Vocal Pedagogues Sing Their Stories*.