

Interview with Edvin Szamosi

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Don't pretend anything, don't pretend feelings, or pretend to have a beautiful voice, or pretend to have a *bigger* voice than you have at the moment, but be content with *this* voice. The voice is not an end in itself. The goal is that the real person become manifest in the voice, liberated from physical tensions, spiritual inhibitions, so that she can be genuine, undisguised, without having to distort herself to try and produce a "more beautiful" or a bigger voice than she has at the moment. Otherwise she can only pretend. Pretending can also sometimes lead to outward successes, popular or material success, but that is not the same as artistic success.

The goal is also to solve all the problems that an instrumentalist has to overcome, so that the voice is balanced from top to bottom and from bottom to top, that it flows freely, that you can play freely with it as an instrumentalist does, that you can sing piano and forte, crescendo and decrescendo, runs and coloratura, that you can make ornamentations, trills, and so on. And to be able to do all this easily, without strain, that is the goal.

If someone can sing in a way that is emotionally and physically without impediment, that is free singing. If the breath flows unobstructed, and there are no superfluous, extraneous efforts or tensions, that is free singing.

Your body knows better than you.

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I see my work as helping the students to shed bad habits, wrong muscle movements. When those disappear, then more spontaneity arises. Then the person is there as he is. I could almost say, naked. That's why so often students say, "I am so exposed, I am so

vulnerable.” It’s not easy to arrive at that point. But the teacher has the job of encouraging the student to *accept* himself just as he is at the moment.

I ask the students, “How do you feel?” and “What do you feel?” That’s partly because I want to know what they are experiencing physically, what changes they are perceiving in the body. On the other hand, I have to know how the student *evaluates* the momentary function, the momentary way of singing. Then I can adjust my work accordingly. I can’t say mechanically, “do this exercise,” or, “practice that.” Rather, the student has to learn in this process to sense and perceive himself, his own physical condition, his own spiritual condition (because the liberation from tensions also leads involuntarily to greater spiritual freedom). This question: “What do you feel?” is helpful, because the student becomes conscious of what he is experiencing, and then we can talk about it. The student learns from that. And I learn from it. Again and again.

My father used to quote Michelangelo: the statue lies within the stone, you just have to chisel away what is unnecessary. That means letting go of what is too much muscle work, too much *will*, too much nervous tension. This is possible because humans are programmed – every organ is programmed to work well when the person doesn’t get in the way.

It turns out that holding the breath results in muscular tensions and vice versa.... The essential thing is breath; breath is a vital function. Without good breathing there is no good singing. The old Italian masters always said that. Everyone who teaches singing knows about this, but many of them only focus on the inhalation. But breathing is both inhaling and exhaling, and singing happens on the *exhalation*. I try to encourage the student not to hold back the breath, to let the breath out. It’s not important at that moment whether the voice sounds beautiful or not. What is important is that the voice become freer through the breath becoming freer.

The teacher is good when he makes himself superfluous. That’s what I would like to do.