



# Oxford Singing Lessons

Alexander Massey BA PGCE MA MSc  
T: 01865-716571 M: 07771-988207  
W: [www.OxfordSingingLessons.co.uk](http://www.OxfordSingingLessons.co.uk)  
E: [Alexander@OxfordSingingLessons.co.uk](mailto:Alexander@OxfordSingingLessons.co.uk)

## COMMITTED STUDENTS WELCOME

I currently have spaces for serious singing students who already have some experience of singing and performing, and who are musically competent. A significant number of my students are professional musicians, singing teachers or studying music at university or music college. Those who are not yet at those levels are able to demonstrate they have the musical and vocal potential, temperament and mental approach required to reach such levels (even if they do not ultimately wish to be a professional singer). A high level of commitment is expected from all those who work with me.

On these pages, I describe what I offer, how I work, and the kinds of singers / students who typically have lessons with me. If, after you have read this, you feel that the description fits you, then please get in touch with me.

## WHAT I OFFER

**Vocal development:** voice training to professional level - clear explanations of vocal anatomy and function - mastery of register transitions - maintaining optimum vocal function when introducing melody, words, interpretation, and stage movement - methods that address the relationship between voice, emotion and mental habits - thoroughly researched and historically accurate tuition in the traditional, specialised techniques of bel canto - a well considered response to and guidance through methods such as Estill Voice Craft, Vocal Process, Vocal Awareness, Natural Voice, Accent Method, Speech Level Singing, music theatre styles, crooning, belting, pop / rock / jazz / folk styles - learning methods, memorizing, rapid skill development

**Rehabilitation:** voice care and vocal recovery techniques; 'wounded' singers - professionals who need a safe space to reassess their goals and technique, and recover their sense of self, direction, and confidence

**Performance preparation:** professional appearances; interpretation, and adapting to musical styles; stage roles (opera, musical theatre); professional auditions (opera, musical theatre, professional choirs); Finals recitals; choral scholarships; university and music college auditions; recitals; microphone based performances; recording studio

**Performance skills and confidence building:** mastering nerves - the 'inner game' of performance psychology and the cycle of improvement; preparation skills and checklists; mental rehearsal techniques; stage presence and self-presentation; engaging the audience; interpretation; working with other musicians; balancing control and spontaneity / creativity in performance; handling the unexpected; dealing with negative experiences

## HOW I WORK

Understanding how the voice works, how to make the most of it, and how to look after it are all essential - and that is the core of the work. But by themselves, they are not enough. My first singing teacher always said that singing was 10% voice, and 90% brains. It's all about having the right information, and then the coaching and accurate, sufficient repetition of muscular and mental processes so that we anchor the skill in reliable, automatic memory (neural pathways - understanding the neuro-science and methodology of how we develop new skills can accelerate our learning. This also means developing practice routines, and skills of self-analysis, self-monitoring and self-teaching.

Once we have established a healthy, reliable way of producing beautiful, evenly matched tone throughout the whole voice, we need to learn how to maintain that when introducing vowels, melody, words, foreign languages, meaning, emotion, character, story, and stage movement. We must work with other musicians, master performance nerves, hold an audience, handle the unexpected - and use each performing experience as a way to learn how to improve for the next one.

Singing is more than just a set of physical techniques. **Singing involves the whole person**, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. What this means is that singing teaching needs to be a holistic process that takes account of the fact that singing is about a human being expressing, communicating and relating - and there may be long-held psychological blocks to overcome as part of the journey towards vocal freedom and excellence <<http://www.oxfordsinginglessons.co.uk/overview.html>>. I have pioneered work in this area, teaching groups of psychotherapists about voice and communication, and facilitating keynote sessions for organisations such as the Guild of Pastoral Psychology (founded by Carl Jung), Oxford Psychotherapy Society, Raphael Jewish Counselling Service (London), and Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy (Australia), and been a consultant on voice documentaries for BBC Radio 3 and Channel 4.

The world of singing is vast and diverse. There are many methods for teaching and learning singing - many of them based on incomplete understanding of physical anatomy and vocal function, the brain science of learning a skill, the science of acoustics, the psychology of voice and performance, imitating the wrong singers, applying the wrong technique for different musical styles, and so on. There are fundamental principles for creating a great sound - healthily - that apply to all voice and musical styles. The task is to master those principles, and the *art* is to adapt them to the music you want to sing.

## WHO I TEACH

Before you contact me, it is worth bearing in mind that people who learn with me typically have the following attributes:

- musical confidence and reliability
- experience of performing (not necessarily professionally)
- experience singing in a group and /or solo beyond age 17
- willingness to work methodically and, if necessary, to review the foundations of the technique they have used up until the point of coming to me

- willingness to work on the technique of sound production almost exclusively (i.e. not repertoire, words and extended melody) until it is basically healthy and secure
- openness to the holistic approach described on my website
- take notes during lessons
- commit to the process sufficiently that the approach is given a real opportunity to make positive impact - this means, for example, practising between lessons, having lessons frequently enough, sharing concerns with me, asking lots of questions, taking responsibility for your learning, taking seriously advice to consult other professionals (e.g. Pilates, Tai Chi, or Alexander Technique instructors, chiropractors, clinicians, therapists) looking after yourself and your voice
- after solid technique has been established, and applied to a small amount of repertoire, find an opportunity to perform this repertoire in a 'low-risk' setting in order to enhance learning and develop the next level, which is honing performing skills
- do not attend lessons with another singing teacher during the period of having lessons with me (although sometimes we agree that the student is given complementary musical and interpretive coaching for a role by a vocal coach)
- availability for lessons Mon-Fri, with the latest end time being 6.30pm

### MY BACKGROUND OVER THE LAST 27 YEARS

My **teaching** has taken me into the classical and opera world, the music industry and recording studio, universities, schools (also heading school music and drama departments), colleges of further education, choirs and opera choruses, and professional theatre. I have helped well-established professional singers, singing teachers, speech and language therapists, music students, undergrads and postgrads, and recording artists and been a main presenter for the British Voice Association and keynote speaker for the International Association of Voice Movement Therapists.

"one of the best-known singing teachers based in Oxford. Anyone who uses their voice would benefit from a session with Alexander"

*Hugh Vickers, music critic for the Independent, Oxford Times feature article*

"I've always felt that with you, I'm in a safe pair of hands. You have a really detailed physical knowledge of the voice, understand the psychology involved in developing as a singer, and have all that real life experience as a performer to draw upon as well. You've really supported me, and at the same time helped me to trust myself."

*Undergraduate, Manchester University*

As a **professional singer** (and multi-instrumentalist), I have worked across the musical spectrum - in the classical world (e.g. Bach Evangelist, Verdi Requiem, Opéra de Lyon chorus work, opera roles such as Don Ottavio, Peter Quint & Pinkerton, recitals with David Roth from the Allegri Quartet, lay clerk at Christ Church Cathedral Oxford and York Minster), jazz (Philip Clouts), folk (e.g. Guernsey International Festival of Folk and Blues) and world music (e.g. At-Ma).

"Alexander Massey was excellent" *The Independent*; "consistently thoughtful and light of touch" *Oxford Times*; "Eloquent ... Alexander Massey projected a honeyed tenor line" *Gloucestershire Echo*