

## Vocal Science/Technique Master Class with Jean-Ronald LaFond

### INTRODUCTION

The point of this master class is to help the singer understand how the voice works anatomically and acoustically, in order to understand precisely the **few things for which s/he is responsible during singing**. Most of the physical functions of the voice are automatic and are based on the sound that the singer imagines and desires to produce.

*Problem 1:* Often the sound the singer has in mind is incompatible with the true nature of his/her instrument. We have enough scientific information to help the singer determine what that sound should be.

*Problem 2:* Most singers begin their training with a history that produces a voice out of balance. Our aim is to discover the imbalances and correct them. The imbalances are often muscular in nature. Anyone who has ever visited a gymnasium or fitness center knows that muscular training and strengthening takes time. The same is true of singing. The work of rebalancing a voice is often done by trial and error with the hopes that the ear will guide us to balance. In many cases the changes cannot be made immediately because of muscular weakness. The point of this master class is therefore not about immediate final results but about understanding the workings of the vocal mechanism and where necessary devise a strategy to strengthen what is weak to achieve final results. Naturally, in some cases where coordination is the only problem, results can be acquired more readily, and certainly even the weakest instrument will show clear improvement when coordinated properly.

*Problem 3:* Some vocal issues are emotional and sometimes psychological. A singer develops a vocal identity early and may have difficulty shedding that identity if s/he discovers that that identity is against the nature of the voice. Although this class will concentrate on physical mastery, pedagogy is not done in a vacuum. Where helpful, these issues will be addressed.

The vocal instrument, like every other instrument is made of three elements: 1) A vibrator (the vocal folds, equivalent to the strings of a piano) 2) an actuator which causes the vibration (the breath stream, equivalent to the hammers of a piano) and 3) a resonator (the vocal tract, equivalent to the soundboard of the piano) that helps maintain the strength of the original vibration.

The class will consist of three days of instruction covering each of the three elements. The morning sessions will deal with anatomic and acoustic principles in a lecture/seminar format. The afternoon sessions will be in a standard master class format. On Friday the 19<sup>th</sup>, the master class will be preceded with a one-hour body warm-up led by **Lauren Lee**. The fourth day will consist of a musical coaching with **Kanako Nakagawa** in preparation for the final recital in the afternoon. (There may be changes to the daily schedule when participants are finalized).

## **CLASS SCHEDULE (There may be minor schedule changes)**

### **Thursday February 18, 2010: Phonation (The vibrator)**

*Common questions addressed:* How do the vocal folds work? When are they in a balance state? How do we “feel” the vibration of the folds? How do we recognize a balanced state? What are the causes of breaks in the voice? How many registers are there? Etc.

10:00-12:30 the process of phonation (lecture and discussion)

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-18:00 Master-class concentrating on phonation (20min for each of 12 active participants)

### **Friday February 19, 2010: Breath Support (The actuator)**

*Common questions addressed:* How does the breath drive the voice? What is the difference between good airflow and breathy singing? What is the difference between a well-focused voice and a pressed voice? What is breath support (appoggio), exactly? Etc.

10:00-12:00 Breathing and support (lecture and discussion)

12:00-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:30 Body Warm-up with Lauren Lee

14:30-18:30 Master-class concentrating on breathing and support (20min for each of 12 active participants)

### **Saturday February 20, 2010: the vocal tract, vowels and articulation (The resonator)**

*Common questions addressed:* What is resonance, exactly? What creates excellent diction? Must singers sing pure vowels or must vowels be modified? How do vowel choices affect the vibration of the vocal folds? What about mask and chest resonances? Is the nose a resonator? Etc.

10:00-12:30 the process of resonance (lecture and discussion)

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-18:00 Master-class concentrating on resonance and articulation of consonants (20min for each of 12 active participants)

### **Sunday February 21, 2010: Performance Preparation and Concert**

11:00-15:00 Musical coaching and run-through of concert repertoire

17:00 Concert of Active Participants

## APPLICATION

The class is opened to singers of all levels from those who have already experienced music studies at a level equivalent to University, Hochschule or Conservatory to professional. Those who have not yet had formal vocal study but have a strong music background will be considered on an individual basis. The course is also geared toward singing teachers who wish to have a basic foundation in vocal science.

Application Materials for participants: Must be received by email ([toreadorssong@googlemail.com](mailto:toreadorssong@googlemail.com), CC [info@berlininternationalopera.de](mailto:info@berlininternationalopera.de)) on or before 31 January 2010

- 1) A résumé detailing the singer's musical/vocal/performance experience
- 2) A statement explaining what the singer hopes to learn from the four-day master class
- 3) A good quality recording of the singer's voice in mp3 format (1 or 2 songs or arias, no more than 8 Mb)
- 4) Copy of receipt of Bank Transfer for 250 Euros (performing participant) 100 (non-performing participant, active in morning sessions only):

**Berlin International Opera**

**Dresdner Bank**

**BLZ (Bank code): 120 800 00**

**Kontonr.(Account Nr.) 4049 137 800**

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## REPERTOIRE

Singers should prepare 2 or 3 contrasting arias and/or songs that they wish to perform in the performance sections. All repertoire must be memorized. Repertoire for the final concert will be chosen from the prepared selections.

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## SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTATION

The course will make use of the **Voce Vista** System which provides both glottal information via EEG (Electro-glottograph) and acoustic information via spectrograph both in real-time. Those who wish to acquire Voce Vista may contact Dr. LaFond personally. He will make arrangements to have either the acoustic software or the complete package available at the time of the master class. More information at [www.vocevista.com](http://www.vocevista.com)

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## LANGUAGE

The official languages of the course will be English because of the international nature of the student group and German because it will take place in Berlin, Germany. However, Dr. LaFond also speaks French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

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## CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

Each participant will receive a certificate as proof of participation in the master class.

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## TEACHERS

### **Dr. Jean-Ronald LaFond, vocal science and pedagogy**



Jean-Ronald LaFond is a singer and voice teacher based in New York and Berlin. He holds the Doctor of Musical Arts and Masters degrees from the University of Michigan and the Bachelor of Music degree from Westminster Choir College. He has presented over 300 recital programs, nearly 40 operatic roles and many oratorio and orchestra concerts throughout North and Central America, Europe and Asia. He speaks six languages fluently and sings in ten. While a university teacher he began a 15-year collaboration with various vocal scientists, which led to several papers in journals such as the *Journal of Voice*, *Australian Voice*, and the *Journal of Singing*. He was also trained as an orchestral conductor and composer and has had experience in most areas of music theater production. He has worked as a vocal coach for both actors and singers for close to 20 years. His vocal technique blog, *Kashudo* (歌手道) *The Way of the Singer*, <http://tsvocaltech.blogspot.com>, is read by thousands of visitors monthly from over 50 different countries. Students of Jean-Ronald LaFond sing lead roles in theaters throughout Europe and the United States.

### **Kanako Nakagawa, musical coaching and preparation**



The pianist Kanako Nakagawa grew up in Japan and then in New York. After studying piano with Prof. Yonty Solomon at the Royal College of Music in London she was accepted in the “Lied” class of Prof. Hartmut Höll and Prof. Mitsuko Shirai at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Karlsruhe. During her studies she won several Scholarships and, together with Baritone Herman Wallèn, the Second and “the Best Interpretation of Schubert” Prizes at the International Competition “Schubert and Modern Music” in Graz 2000 and the First Prize (“Großer Liedduo Preis”) at “Internationale Wettbewerb für Liedkunst” in Stuttgart 2001. She has given song recitals in many European countries, Japan and Korea and made recordings for radio and TV in Germany and Finnland. Since 2003 she teaches as Repetiteur for Singing at Hochschule für Musik “Hanns Eisler” in Berlin as well as at Hochschule für Musik in Karlsruhe. As the music director of Berlin International Opera she successfully led the productions of Mozart’s “Don Giovanni”, “Le Nozze di Figaro”, and Verdi’s “Macbeth”.

### **Lauren Lee, movement and body awareness**



Lauren Lee was born in Seoul, Korea. At the University of Southern California she studied music and film production receiving both a Bachelor of Arts in Film Production and a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Arts. During her studies she interned at Warner Bros. Studios as well as the Documedia Group, learning the foundations of documentary and television production. In addition to her film experience, Lauren performed frequently with the USC Chamber Singers, the USC Opera and was a soloist at St. Margaret’s as well as the First Baptist Church of Hollywood. Upon graduation she started working on the documentary series “Secrets of War,” as a post-production coordinator and was quickly promoted to associate producer for further episodes. When the series finished she began work as a production coordinator at 3 Ring Circus, a multi-media graphic design firm. During this time she also appeared in several short films, including “Dead Man Shoes” which was featured at the Toronto Film Festival. Her performance credits include; Poussette/Manon, Barbarina/Le nozze di Figaro, Sandman-Dew Fairy/Hansel and Gretel, Giannetta/L’elisir d’amore, Lucy/The Telephone, among others. She also enjoys experimental theater, creating the roles of the “Palm Tree,” in Mesopotamia Opera’s new work The Tree, as well as the “Lead Anchorwoman” in The Beastly Bombing. Most recently she has performed a program of Poulenc songs at the Clärchens Ballhaus, Berlin as well as self-producing, directing and starring in a show Miss (T)Kommunikation, which included 2 American chamber operas- “The Telephone,” and “The Letter.”

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