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With the voice, the tradition and the mp3-player About educating folk singers at university level

The process of how folk music at large gained a place at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, and the history surrounding it, is described in detail in another part of this publication. Here is a presentation of above all the role of Swedish folk song in this development.

In the late 1970s the opportunity was created for musicians with different backgrounds to apply for individual study programmes for musicians. This course was aimed at everyone who did not “fit in” to the ordinary classical musician program. Three folk singers took this course during the 1980s: Marie Selander, Lena Willemark and myself.

The traditional instrumental/ensemble teacher training largely aimed at music teachers for art and culture schools and music schools was also opened up for folk musicians in the early 1980s. It was also possible to apply to that course with song as ones principal instrument. Only one folk singer has begun that course - Eva Åström Rune.

Some well-renowned folk singers have also studied on other courses at KMH, for example Maria Röjås who did the classical song teacher training, and Gunnel Mauritsson who did the double-subject teacher training, both during the 1980s.

Folk song at KMH after 1994 within the folk music department

The folk music department was established, as described elsewhere in this publication, in 1994, which also made it possible for folk singers to apply to a specialized musician/performance course - the first of its kind in Sweden. One song student, Ulrika Bodén, was accepted for the academic year 1994/95 and Eva Åström Rune gained a song classmate! Folk song has since gained visibility both within KMH and in the range of courses available, and the number of applicants and students has increased since then.

Some statistics

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this is a translation and reprint from the jubilee publication “1996-2006 - twenty year of folk music at KMH” KMH 2009
The (blue) bars above show the number of students per academic year since 1994, as well as how many of these students have been singers (orange).

On average, two folk song applicants have been accepted per academic year, and altogether there are 28 folk singers who have studied at the department since 1994. This is exactly one quarter of the total number of students, 112, during the period 1994-2007. The singers are the second largest instrument group after the fiddlers, closely followed by the nyckelharp players.

Male - female

The largest proportion of applicants is and always has been female singers, and the majority of accepted applicants are also women. About a quarter of accepted applicants are male singers, and the majority of them focus on »folk music/ classical music from other cultures«.

Preparatory courses within the area of folk song

The majority, approximately 80%, of those who have applied to study Swedish folk music have done a preparatory course, for example the song course at Malung’s Folkhögskola, the conservatoire in Falun, Bollnäs Folkhögskola, Ingesunds Folkhögskola or Music School, Hemse Folkhögskola and more. It is much more common in the 2000s that those who apply already have a preparatory education than in previous years.

Students from other parts of KMH

Since the department was formed, the number of students from other parts of KMH wishing to study folk song has increased, from almost none at all to approximately ten students per academic year who want to broaden their knowledge through folk song, or gain deeper expertise in the field. In addition, special courses in kulning, folk song ensembles and folk choirs are open to other students, as well as an annual folk music project for other programmes within KMH, in which folk song plays an important part. The department has also had the possibility to organize several extension courses in for example kulning, polyphonic singing, folk song and more, aimed at professional musicians and teachers active outside of KMH. In addition to this, those who study a broader, so-called mixed methodology course in song also now receive a short course in folk song methodology.
Ladi Mbengani, one of the song students within the specialization »folk music from other cultures«. Here between two classmates – Pontus Estling and Jonas Åkerlund.

Linn Arrias, one of many students who have come from other parts of KMH to study folk song at the folk music department, here with the classic attributes of a song book and an mp3 player.

Course content - which teachers?

Since the start of the department, those of us who work in the department have had an idea that there should be a mix of permanent staff who will provide continuity, as well as a wealth of freelance teachers who can be employed according to the students’ wishes and needs. For
Singers who have studied Swedish Folk Song or Folk Song/Classical Song from other cultures at the folk music department between 1994-2007 in chronological order and with geographical background:
Eva Åström-Rune (Dalarna), Ulrika Bodén (Ångermanland), Sofia Sandén (Dalarna), Sofia Karlsson (Stockholm), Kersti Ståbi (Hälsingland), Marie Axelsson (Medelpad), Karin Ericsson-Back (Dalarna), Malin Foxdal (Dalarna), Unni Bokasp (Norge), Maria Misgeld (Stockholm), Johanna Hertzberg-Bölja (Hälsingland), Annar By (Norge), Ebba Jacobsson (Bohuslän), Kaja Dahlström (Närke), Ladi Mbengani (Kongo), Rostam Mirlashari (Baluchistan), Mamadou Sene (Senegal), Katarina Hallberg (Hälsingland), Xavier Perriot (Frankrike), Calle Arnberg (Stockholm), Tara Aziz (Kurdistan/Iran), Emma Björling (Jämtland), Shipra Nandy (Bangladesh), Chitra Paul (Bangladesh), Josefin Peters (Stockholm), Maja Eriksson (Uppland), Lisa Lestander (Västerbotten), Bahram Badjelan (Iran), Sofia Berg-Böhm (Stockholm)…

song, myself and Gunnel Mauritzson have provided the continuity. Through their education, a folk song student has many possibilities to choose different paths and profiles, both in terms of specializing and/or broadening their studies. In this way, each student receives a unique education with an individual profile but with a shared foundation when they graduate from KMH. Regarding profile and broadening/specializing their studies, a student may choose freely amongst teachers in Scandinavia, and also where possible, to temporarily employ teachers from a broader geographical field.

Students often have one of the permanent staff within the institution in their main subject for one to two years, and then the student will either change to the other permanent song teacher for one year or choose a different main teacher.

Examples of teachers who have worked within the department with the main subject of song are (apart from myself and Gunnel Mauritzson) Lena Willemark, Marie Selander, Hanne Kjersti Yndestad, Mousa Elias, Abdul Rahman and more.

In addition to this, the student chooses according to their own interest either specialization in the folk song genre, or broadening towards other genres. Examples of teachers for advanced studies within the folk music genre are, apart from the above: Ågneta Stolpe, Ånon Egeland (Norwegian), Rogelio Duran (Flamenco), Sanna Kurki Suonio, (Finnish folk song) Bahram Badjelan (classical Persian song), K Shivakumar (classical South Indian song). Some students wish to specialise in tralling (singing instrumental melodies) and they nearly always choose to study with a spelman (often a fiddler), for example Ellika Frisel or Sven Ahlbäck.

When it comes to broadening studies regarding genre, the choices students make are quite varied, but many wish to have a jazz, pop or musical teacher at KMH, whilst some are interested in theatre song or wish to study with a speech therapist. Fewer students wish to study classical song, but throughout the years some have chosen to work with early music for example.
Gunnel Mauritzson who has worked as a teacher since 1998 sings at Folk Baltica, spring 2007.

The Sean Nós singer Eilis O’Sullibhan works on pronunciation and song style together with Thyg, a song student at the University of Limerick, Ireland, where the KMH song pedagogue students travelled for a study visit 2003.

In principal, there is no limit to which teacher students can wish for, both within their main subject and within specialization/broadening, as long as the teacher lives within a reasonable distance so that a certain level of continuity can be achieved. There are also students who have chosen to travel to a special musician or singer and spend some time there for intensive study, both in Sweden and to Ireland, Finland and Norway.

During their education, folk song students also meet many singers through seminars and group lessons, and throughout the years we have had visits from both older and younger tradition bearers and singers from different cultures, and have collaborated with singers from different cultures.

Both during their study period, and following completed studies, most singers work as freelance singers in different bands, often in combination with some teaching (for example within the preparatory courses), and compose/arrange music or work in for example the theatre. The performance course for folk singers becomes a platform from which each individual creates their own profile and market.
Since the middle of the 1990s, folk song has gained a much stronger position in the music scene, both at home and abroad, and it is now normal to have an ensemble in which song plays an important role, compared to the folk music revival of the 1980s and 1990s where it was not so common at all. The possibility of higher education has definitely contributed to a rise in the number of folk singers and their strengthened position in the music scene.

A collaboration between a Corsican song ensemble and KMH’s folk song ensemble, the KMH singers from R-L: Susanne Rosenberg, Karin Ericson-Back, Kajsa Dahlström, Katarina Hallberg och Johanna Bölja-Hertzberg, Jokkmokk 2003.

Nandi Vileika (far left) who studied optional folk song methodology, corrects the breathing technique of her practice student Fatima, and in the photo on the right Ebba Jakobsson (in black) who studied to be a folk song teacher, here with her practice students.

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But to return to the description of the actual course at KMH, there is a general study plan for song teaching which reflects the principal idea of the course as a whole (which is the same for all main subject teachers across the department) - that each student works within the folk music genre, regarding both repertoire and method. During song teaching, the students work with their own voice based upon Swedish folk song (or if they have a different background) in the following way:

**Folk song studies at KMH**

The goal of the teaching is that the student will become a better singer, through developing their voice, their repertoire, their interpretive ability and through finding their own profile with folk song as a starting point. One can say that the main subject teacher has the role of tradition bearer, singing teacher, coach/supervisor and inspirer.

The teaching is based mainly on the successfully tried-and-tested method of teaching by ear, in which the students learn songs by ear from both a living person and from recordings. In my case for example, I teach songs that I have learnt in turn from the singers Eva Eriksson and Lisa Boudré, whose songs are part of my core repertoire, but I may also teach songs that I have learnt from traditional recordings of folk singers from different parts of Sweden or Scandinavia. An important part of the teaching is also that students receive supervision in how they themselves can learn songs from recordings of both young and old folk singers, and as a smaller part to also learn songs from transcriptions, notation. Self-reflection about the process, working method and repertoire are of course included in the teaching.

In order to learn songs between lessons, the students record repertoire at every lesson, either on an mp3 recorder or often on their laptop computer. The majority of traditional/archive recordings used in the teaching are available on a server, to which students can log in and listen for example to Lena Larsson or Vickes Johan Persson. Sometimes, as a teacher, one uploads certain recordings and tunes to ones own internal server, where students can listen to or download recordings from. Song texts are sent diligently by email and are reworked and changed during the process.

»There is a general study plan for song teaching which reflects the principal idea of the course as a whole - that each student works within the folk music genre, regarding both repertoire and method.«
Maria Misgeld experiments with finding the sound of a folk song.

"We have been on several study trips with focus on methodology, and in my work as a teacher at the folk music department I have become increasingly interested in the methodological aspect of folk song."

I myself have created an updatable web book »Med blåtoner och krus« (See www.uddatoner.com/blatoner) where recordings and transcriptions are combined with information about the singer, all in the same place, and with additional comments about song style, singing exercises and how one finds more information about folk song¹. All the students who study Swedish folk song are eagerly encouraged to visit Svenskt Visarkiv (the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research) to find their own repertoire and to learn how to browse and search in an archive!

The core, the starting point and the springboard for teaching lies continuously in the songs and the singers of these songs, plus active reflection based upon this - what does one need to develop and work further with regarding for example song technique, voice technique, musical expression, personal style, song style, improvisation, variation and more. Throughout their education the students with Swedish folk song as their main subject also receive a practical review (by singing through the material!) of different song types, different folk singers, nordic folk song, improvisation within the style, polyphony, kulning and diddling. We also widen our gaze towards other song styles and genres based upon our different specialities - for example, I work with Irish song, »early music«, »contemporary art music« and more. Other teachers have different specialities and based upon this the students themselves choose how they wish to broaden or deepen their studies.

We have also been on several study trips with focus on methodology, for example to Ireland and England, and in my work as a teacher at the folk music department I have become increasingly interested in the methodological aspect of folk song. What makes sense to teach and practice when one wishes to sing specifically folk song, and which exercises and characteristics are worth dedicating ones time to? Since 1994, five singers have chosen to study...
Folk song methodology? – a new subject

For folk singers in the so-called agricultural society, it was not necessary for them to think about song style or how they sang. They were part of a tradition where song style, songs and aesthetics were a given - it was something one learnt as a whole, by ear, and which was confirmed by the surrounding music environment. Today, folk music is a genre or style amongst many others, and the music we experience around us contains for the most part other ideals and stylistic elements.

In today’s media society, one could say that the same reasoning that applied for the agricultural society’s folk singers is now valid for today’s pop singers - they mostly do not need to think about song style, as they are surrounded by that music through TV, radio and adverts, and through that they receive the necessary style ideals so that they can simply »join in« and learn both songs and song style by ear. But that does not mean that there is a lack of ideals or common features in song style for pop singers (for example voice sound ideal or the treatment of language sounds with American diphthongs even in Swedish, and more.)

»For many people it is still a little bit odd to imagine that there are specific stylistic features which are characteristic for folk song.«

Shared stylistic features?

When one looks more closely at the folk music area, one notices that there also appear to be shared stylistic features here too. Even if the individual differences in folk song (as with other styles) can be huge, the shared stylistic features are still there. If one does not notice this, there is a chance of not seeing the forest for all the trees! Stylistic features within different genres already create a richer and more interesting music scene by providing a variety of expressions. But for many people it is still a little bit odd to imagine that there are specific stylistic features which are characteristic for folk song - since personality and individual style are so obvious.

On the other hand, there is also the opinion that the removal of eventual specific style ideals to be found in folk song is preferable to having an awareness of and paying attention to these ideals. The argument for this is that through giving greater attention to certain stylistic features such as hitting a note or sound, these specific features will be conserved. But to give attention to and highlight certain stylistic features is usually about the fact that one likes these specific features because they do give a distinct edge to the music, and it is possible that it is the verbalising and raised awareness of this which separates today with how many singers in the past related to it. There have been many so-called tradition bearers who were also skilled at highlighting typical stylistic features verbally, for example Ragnar Vigdal, Knis Karl Aronsson and others.

This is a translation and reprint from the jubilee publication ”1996-2006 - twenty year of folk music at KMH” KMH 2009
Is it necessary to divide into genres?

There is no purpose in itself for dividing music into genres or different styles, rather that definitions exist because they can be useful, for example in a methodological context or in order to highlight differences and likenesses in a general way. They can help in identifying a specific characteristic for how one starts a note or chooses to use a language sound in general within a style, or for example to create an awareness of the need for space for specific musical characteristics such as variable intonation.

Folk song = natural?

When it comes to folk song, there is also sometimes a tendency to view the singer as singing »naturally«, in other words without style - an approach which unfortunately only gives the genre a mythical and mystical aura, where ways of singing are described as being so personal that it becomes impossible to talk about them generally or for that matter, to learn them. All song styles are in the best of cases »natural« for those who are fluent in them.

Personally, I choose to use the term genre-specific song style or way of singing in order to be able to define and categorise the details which I regard as being shared within a style or genre, and which from a methodological context are useful to highlight when one wishes to learn/ teach folk song. To be able to more easily identify the elements which create excitement and musical expression.

My point of view about song methodology within folk song

Today, if you start to sing folk songs it is usually your own choice, it is more unusual for someone to have grown up with it as a natural ingredient in a musical environment. Instead, many people become interested in folk song through having heard a singer or a certain song, and then they search onwards to find out more. That is how it began for me.

»When it comes to folk song, there is also sometimes a tendency to view the singer as singing »naturally«, in other words without style.«
Juulia Salonen from the Sibelius Academy folk music education and Josefin Peters from KMH sing together during the 10-year jubilee LAT! 2006.

Even if there is much to be said about specific ways of singing and stylistic features in folk song, I do not intend to go into that here, but rather refer to, for example, my essay »Lisa Boudrè's sångliga och melodiska gestaltning i tre visor« (1986), »Med blåtoner och krus« (1993) and the more recent web book »Med blåtoner och krus« (2004–2007) in which styles of singing are described in detail based upon my perspective.

What I would like to highlight here instead are thoughts about what is general and what is typical for different song styles from a methodological perspective. These are thoughts which I have developed during my song methodology teaching at KMH. The question is not limited to only folk song, but rather mirrors an approach that could also be applied to everything from violin playing to winter sport. The question is what are general aspects of how the voice is used versus style-specific aspects. To keep the general perspective I have chosen not to specify singing exercises for example, and instead refer to the web book mentioned above.

There is no technique without music

Sometimes one talks about a basic vocal technique, one which is not bound to an ideal or a genre but which instead is about simply learning to sing. But is it really possible to say that there is a technique which does not also reflect a musical ideal? As soon as you sing a note in a song, you hopefully have a musical intention with it. Technique does not need to be spoken of and verbalised in order to stand for an artistic decision. Technique is there as a means in order to achieve an artistic expression. In addition to this, one could say that as soon as you start to sing you have already chosen something other than for example speaking, calling or remaining silent.

So, the technique that one uses reflects an artistic choice - a style ideal from the very first note formation. But isn’t it possible to think genre-free/style-free? Yes, to a certain degree, but as mentioned before, as soon as you begin a note, it is also about an artistic choice - should the start be soft, fast, direct, from below, strong, quiet... quite simply, how you think it should sound. The ideal that steers this choice may in itself be »we will not think about genre here«, but maybe that is also a style too?

Of course, somewhere there is a basic vocal technique which is needed for all types of song regardless of genre, such as an adequate breathing technique. But as soon as one starts to sing
a song, every genre bears specific ideals which will be expressed through the song technique, regarding for example sound treatment and language sound treatment (for example diphthongs in pop, »pure vowels« in classical song, voiced consonants in folk music.)

**Different song styles enrich – specialization enriches**

Different ways of singing and different styles enrich each other the whole time, both from a personal perspective for the person singing and in general. But at the same time, one should not disregard what a specialisation in one style - even from a methodological perspective - can actually give, above all for ones own singing through being given a specific tool to use.

**Does methodology exist without style?**

Every genre or style has its own special song-technical difficulties, so within different styles different exercises are needed, as different skills are required for example to be able to:

- sing high notes quietly as in classical song.
- sing falsetto as men do in heavy metal.
- sing with the chest voice at a high pitch as women do in for example pop and musical song. Technical skills which are usually called belting/twang.
- change quickly between different vocal registers as in kulning in the folk music genre.

As all of these different skills require different knowledge and skill training, it might be sensible to apply the necessary effort in the right place and practice specifically what you need, instead of wasting energy practicing how to sing quietly at a high pitch when you really want to »kula« strongly!

Focus may be placed on different parts of the same skill for different types of song - the same exercise may be used for different purposes.

But it is not completely straightforward - sometimes one may need the same skill, but it is needed for different uses. Let us take the example of breath control. In many song styles, one needs the capacity to take in large amounts of air into the lungs so that a build-up of pressure occurs and then distribute the air in some way. To do that one needs good »support«, that is to say a well-developed breathing technique, with which one learns to control the air flow during singing. A folk singer who is going to »kula« needs to be able to take in a lot of air into the lungs and then manage the high pressure beneath the vocal chords without using such a large air flow. In other words, one keeps the air inside the lungs for a longer period of time, not so much air is used up and the phrases are relatively short.

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*This is a translation and reprint from the jubilee publication “1996-2006 - twenty year of folk music at KMH” KMH 2009*
General voice knowledge is taught by the Mongolian teacher Bayarbaatar - Calle Arnberg learns how to breathe correctly in overtone singing (2002).

A classical singer on the other hand, having breathed in a large quantity of air in the same way as above, needs to keep an even pressure beneath the vocal chords and then use the air in the lungs with that pressure. The pressure varies depending on whereabouts in the breathing cycle one is, and sometimes one uses up all the air, down to the last air bubble. One needs to be able to sing long phrases and make the air last for the entire phrase.

Both of these singers need to learn to »control a lot of air in the lungs«, and can work with exercises which will develop this skill, but the following areas of use for the skill are then completely different.
_Eva Åström Rune, now also a teacher at Ingesund School of Music, practising song knowledge in a song from Enviken during the jubilee LAT! 2006._

**The same term can mean different things within different genres**

Sometimes, it can appear as though one is talking about the same thing after all, as the same terminology is used. One such example is when one talks about mixed voice or mixed sound - a mixture of chest voice and head voice. But it can sound completely different depending on which genre it is about, so the term mixed voice can in other words mean completely different things. Different »mixtures« often demand completely different types of exercises. If you sing with a mixed sound which is airy and light, you will use a very different technique than if you were to sing with more full closure of the vocal chords. When one talks about wanting to find a mixed sound, it may seem as though one is referring to and talking about the same thing, but in reality it may be that one is actually talking about diametrically opposed things.

**Is a vowel the same thing in every type of singing?**

To even out the sound palette of vowels is an important element of the classical song education, it is known as equalization. Within pop and musicals, equalization is also used to a certain extent, for example by using »twang«, but it does not sound quite the same, and is not produced in the same way either. In folk song, one often uses the opposite of equalization - instead, one increases the difference between vowel sounds in order to use the contrast as a part of music making. These different ways of treating vowels require different exercises.

**A line of approach for song methodology**

And so, there are skills that differentiate how to use the voice between styles, and there are skills that unite. Where do the similarities and difference begin and end?

**The difference between vocal knowledge and song knowledge**

To begin with, I think that it is possible to distinguish between two basic concepts:

Vocal knowledge, which is about common skills for the voice when one is going to use it to sing, regardless of genre. The other basic concept is song knowledge, which is the skills that one needs to know within different genres. As far as song knowledge goes, there is a lot to be
gained from learning the specific song knowledge needed for the music that you want to sing. From my experience, it is more rewarding to get straight to the point and learn the specific things that you will need.

To be able to more easily describe the special skills of different styles, and to understand how they relate to each other, I use a metaphor in the form of a chest of drawers, in which four different sizes of drawers represent the different skills and areas of knowledge. Furthest down are a few really large drawers, above these are some medium-sized drawers and at the top are many very tiny drawers. The level in the bottom are the ”body-drawers” and then follows

**Large drawers - The voice**

Regardless of what kind of style you sing in, you begin by looking in the drawers furthest down, this is where the vocal knowledge is, where you will find the shared elements, that which for example differentiates vocal usage for song from vocal usage for speech:

- The ability to be able to use breathing in an adequate way for song (as opposed to speech for example)

- The ability to keep the pitch that one wants in a song

**Medium-sized drawers - The singing voice**
In the medium-sized drawers are skills which deal with more specific characteristics, the things that differentiate one style from another, and which one does differently depending upon which style or genre one sings within, this is about song knowledge. The labels on the drawers can be the same but the ingredients are often different. For example, everyone can probably agree that an awareness of how to treat sound is necessary in order to be able to sing well, but sound treatment does not happen in the same way in a folk chorale as it does in a Mozart aria, it is therefore not about only one type of sound treatment for everything, but rather many different types:

- Sound treatment, classical
- Sound treatment, folk song

or choose between

- Trill technique within folk song
- Trill technique within classical song

or choose between

- Sing »in tune« within folk music (sing with microtones)
- Sing »in tune« within western intonation praxis
- Sing »in tune« within jazz intonation with »blue notes«

and think about what one wishes to work with/learn

It is unnecessary for example to teach or work with an exercise for gaining an equalization timbre throughout an entire passage if that is not what one wants.

- Treatment of language sound – equalized, as in western art music
- Treatment of language sound – unequalized, as in folk music

Very tiny drawers - The singing voice specific

At the top of the chest of drawers are several tiny drawers which each contain very specific song knowledge, for special features even within a genre or a style.

Examples within folk song:
- Treatment of language sound in diddling
- Sound placement in kulning
- Phrasing technique in chorale song

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Within classical song, the drawers could contain:

- Coloratura technique in Mozart’s repertoire
- Sound placement in Italian opera repertoire
- Trill technique in Dowland’s songs

Every specific drawer leads to special exercises. But now one might think, why make it all so complicated? Why not open all the drawers instead - a bit like going into a large sweet shop, with many different sweets in different colours and shapes in all the drawers - one wants to taste everything! Yes, it is quite alright to do that, it can only be a good thing to know about and try all these exciting different ways of singing. But if we now consider that every drawer that is opened means that you must actually learn that particular technique, then the question is if one really has time to «consume» everything in each drawer before one’s time on earth comes to an end? The conclusion, seen from a methodological perspective, is that instead every person must create their own path through the song chest of drawers. By being aware of the structure, one can make the right choices. It may be necessary to opt out of one thing in order to choose something else! All of the different approaches and song-technical skills help to create the personal expression. It is often a good thing to master completely different styles and ways of singing, it creates a vocal flexibility and personally I have only had joy from all the different styles I am continuously interested by.

*What is the difference between the different levels?*

The large drawers contain basic vocal knowledge, which in general can be the same regardless of what you plan to sing, the methodology there can be the same regardless of what you plan to sing. There are only a few of these drawers, they are large and they have a broad content.

In the very tiny drawers at the top, the differences between the descriptions of the skills are already so specific that no-one could doubt that different methods, exercises and knowledge are needed to teach or learn these skills. For example, it is probably quite unnecessary to put too much energy into learning how to treat language sounds when diddling LappNils polskas, if one is just about to sing a Wagner opera in Bayreuth! Having said that, it may actually be quite useful and enriching for everything that one sings to practice language sounds as used in diddling, but it is just that one cannot entirely replace the other. Seen from the opposite perspective, if one practices an equalised sound as if one were to sing the Valkyrie in Bayreuth but in actual fact will diddle LappNils polskas, one won’t get much training in the contrasting language sounds and pulse markers needed for diddling.

But the middle ground, which often causes problems when it comes to song methodology contexts, is how one views the contents of the medium-sized drawers. Here we find for example, terms such as sound placement, mixed voice, trill technique, and it would be easy to imagine that these are the same things regardless of genre, and that therefore the method to learn these things would also be the same. In other words, that the actual skill and ability are the same just because they share the same terms. But actually, I think that the difference here can be very large. Therefore it can make sense right from the start to consider that what one works with song technique-wise is connected to the music one plans to sing. It is probably quite usual to work with song exercises that are actually created for a different type of vocal use than what one is actually aiming for, which becomes very counterproductive. A bit like

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practicing fast starts when you actually want to run a marathon - there is no primary use for fast starts in marathon running, instead it is endurance that is needed! Thus, there are skills at the middle level where the difference is great between what you need to practice regarding tone for example, if you plan on singing folksong, arias or musicals.

But finally, when it comes down to it, all song technique is subordinate to musical expression - that which really moves us. My experience is that by creating a structure for what one actually wants to learn, it is possible to gain a richer palette. I think that I have become more flexible by being able to see typical characteristics or differences between different song styles.

There is no technique without music. The meaning of technique is to help you get the musical expression that you want, technique is not a goal in itself!

Susanne Rosenberg – folk singer and teacher. Studied at KMH 1984–1987 and began working as a folk song teacher at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm (KMH) in 1994. Today she is a professor of folk song, doctor in Music and since 2005 the head of the folk music department at KMH. To contact Susanne Rosenberg you can use the following email adress: susanne.rosenberg@k mh.se

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