



Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy

By James Stark

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In this well documented and highly readable book, James Stark provides a history of vocal pedagogy from the beginning of the *bel canto* tradition of solo singing in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to the present. Using a nineteenth-century treatise by Manuel Garcia as his point of reference, Stark analyses the many sources that discuss singing techniques and selects a number of primary vocal 'problems' for detailed investigation. He also presents data from a series of laboratory experiments carried out to demonstrate the techniques of *bel canto*.

The discussion deals extensively with such topics as the emergence of virtuoso singing, the castrato phenomenon, national differences in singing styles, controversies regarding the perennial decline in the art of singing, and the so-called secrets of *bel canto*.

Stark offers a new definition of bel canto which reconciles historical and scientific descriptions of good singing. His is a refreshing and profound discussion of issues important to all singers and voice teachers.

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Editorial Review

Review

'*Bel Canto* is an extraordinarily well written, carefully researched, and meticulously documented work that demonstrates the author's vast knowledge and mastery of historical and current pedagogical literature. Uniquely authoritative, highly informative, it is a monument in its field and highly recommended to all students of singing.'

(Richard Dale Sjoerdsma *Journal of Singing*)

'In *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, Stark has brought together the worlds of voice teacher, laryngologist, and acoustician in a highly readable and informative resource. Never before has this information been more accessible. This is a treasure trove for all those interested in the human voice, and helps them to 'reason why' -- with specific information, old and new.'

(Darryl Edwards *University of Toronto Quarterly*)

About the Author

James Stark is a singer, vocal instructor and musicologist, with a lifelong interest in vocal pedagogy. He has taught for the last twenty-five years at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick.

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