

# AMERICAN ACADEMY OF TEACHERS OF SINGING



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## ADVICE TO STUDENTS, Part I

Since 1922, the year of its founding, the American Academy of Teachers of Singing has been actively writing and disseminating papers on all subjects pertaining to the teaching of singing. Inevitable changes in the profession itself and in musical life in general have since demanded that the Statements from the Academy be brought up to date. This Statement, changed to its present form in 1997, was originally prepared in 1955 in response to questions about the possibilities of a career either in opera or concert, the conditions of study, the amount of preparation needed, the cost in time and money, etc. These recommendations are intended to assist you, not to discourage you.

Nobody should undertake a professional career in singing unless the call to do so is imperative and irresistible. Many students come to a major center without such a call, unprepared to meet the requirements and difficulties of its life. Much waste of time, money and health would be avoided if aspirants and their parents or sponsors would realize that the road to success is long and arduous and only achieved by those of exceptional gifts and staying power.

The whole future of a singer may be ruined by incorrect teaching in the beginning- therefore choose your teacher with as much care as you would your doctor.

**AVOID** teachers who make extravagant promises and beguile by flattery.

**AVOID** teachers who advertise themselves as "the greatest living authority."

**AVOID** teachers who claim the discovery of new and wonderful methods.

**AVOID** teachers who promise results in a short or specified time. Singing is a physical development in which muscles are trained to coordinate. This takes time and varies with each individual.

**AVOID** teachers who claim to teach the method of some well known artist with whom they have never studied, or with whom they have studied for only a few sessions.

**AVOID** teachers who offer a few tricks as a "cure-all" for vocal ills.

**REMEMBER** that the most effective teaching requires personal contact, close observation and constant reiteration.

**REMEMBER** that a beautiful natural voice is no more valuable to its possessor than a beautiful violin or piano. It is just as difficult to master one as the other. A singer must be trained, no matter how beautiful the natural voice.

**REMEMBER** that a thorough musical foundation, authoritative languages, and general culture are indispensable.

**REMEMBER** that intelligence, diligence, determination, vigorous health, and adequate financial resources are necessary for the student of singing.

**REMEMBER** that there is no quick result in the study of singing. The student should be prepared for an extended period of study. This does not exclude the possibility of earning money by singing within this period.

**REMEMBER** that a career in singing is one of enormous difficulty, in which few achieve success.

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## ADVICE TO STUDENTS, Part II

### Aspirants to a Professional Career

This Statement, changed to its present form in 1997, was originally formulated in 1977. The American Academy of Teachers of Singing offers. In addition to the general statements listed in Part I of this Statement, the following advice to students who are faced with a decision concerning their future.

During the early years of study, the question often arises as to whether the student possesses those qualities essential to success in the professional field. The American Academy believes that a year's study [during that time] should consist of sixty hours of private lessons covering a period of nine months.

The following are some questions the student should ask. In arriving at a decision, consultation with competent authorities in the field of singing is strongly advised.

1. Is the voice adequate or perhaps exceptional?
2. Is the desire to become a singer based on innate musical talent?
3. Is there robust health, and are there any physical defects that cannot be overcome by training?
4. Is there mental and emotional stability?
5. Is there sufficient evidence of ambition and drive-necessary to become a professional singer?
6. Is there evidence of an ability to concentrate and to memorize?
7. Is the potential musicianship adequate to meet future professional standards?
8. Is there an expressive personality? Is the personal appearance appealing?
9. Is there evidence of interpretative ability?
10. Is there the reliability and responsibility necessary for all the demands of professional life?

There is a natural capacity for growth and development in every human being. The student who desires to enter the professional field and eventually become an artist must constantly have this principle in mind and practice it with the realization that, if the process stops, development ceases.