

Appendix H

Six Steps to Learning a New Song

1. Research the song.

- Opera or musical: read the scene in which the aria or song takes place. Consider reading the entire libretto and any source material.

2. Write out the text by hand.

- Make sure to write it out as a monologue, not as lyrics or poetry. Notice how it appears on the page, separate from the music.

3. Recite the text as a monologue (see Appendix G)

- Read the text aloud at different speeds, paying attention to where you breathe.
- Endow the text with “Shakespearean intent” - reciting the text with sense of heightened language will prepare you for singing.
- Focus on breath connection and honest language.

4. Learn the rhythm by intoning and the melody by singing on a lip trill, ni or n + vowel.

- Intoning is extended, energized speech without a musical pitch.
- After intoning the entire song, mix and match the other exercises throughout, discovering which ones help you in different sections of the song.
- Take your time with this step. Taking apart the song this way will allow you to bring your full technique to the piece.

5. Translate the text into your own words.

- Sung text is often poetic. You must find the essence behind each phrase and clearly communicate it.
- Translate the text line by line then try a real-time translation while singing (it doesn't have to rhyme or have the same amount of syllables).

6. Mark the high point of each phrase in the score.

- Remember high notes are not always the high point of the phrase.
- Notice if this changes where you breathe or how you experience the meaning of the phrase.