

It's All in the Mix: Finding and Keeping the Mix Voice in MT Repertoire

Sarah Wigley

The terms “mix” and “belt” voice are often confusing for both teachers and students of singing. Even if we regularly use these terms, clarifying exactly how “belt” voice and “mix” voice are differentiated and how each term specifically functions in regard to vocal pedagogy is essential to understanding a healthy, sustainable vocal production for the musical theatre stage.

These two terms are often misused and very misunderstood amongst both students and teachers. Questions such as, “Does ‘belt’ voice mean full chest voice?”, “When do women need to switch from ‘mix’ to ‘belt’?”, “How does one know when to ‘belt’ and when to ‘mix’ in a song?”, and “How do I know I am actually in a ‘mix’ voice and not just putting my classical sound more in my mask?” occur with great frequency, and can have a substantial impact on a student’s ability to navigate the demands of musical theatre repertoire.

“All in the Mix: Finding and Keeping the Mix Voice in MT Repertoire” is a 50-minute presentation designed to pinpoint these complex questions and arm both teachers and students with a myriad of exercises to aid both male and female students in finding and keeping a flexible, powerful, healthy “mix” voice that is essential for singing in musical theatre. Audience participation is highly encouraged as exercises for the following scenarios will be specifically addressed and demonstrated:

- Lyric/coloratura soprano vocalists wishing to find a contemporary mix voice from complete head voice dominance
- Mezzo/belter vocalists wishing to find a lighter mix voice without fully shifting into head voice
- Baritone vocalists who wish to gain higher pitch registration for musical theatre repertoire requiring a tenor range
- Tenor vocalists who wish to discover more variety in falsetto, mix, and belt registration
- Young vocalists (Ages 6-13) wishing to lighten the “baby belt” voice in order to assist with consistency in phonation

Sarah Wigley is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Voice for the Lyric Theatre department at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, where she instructs Lyric Theatre Studio, Musical Theatre Repertoire, and Singing in Musical Theatre while maintaining a private voice studio and

frequently stage directing both opera and musical theatre. Wigley holds an MM in Voice Performance from Colorado State University and a BM in Voice from the University of Minnesota. While residing in Minneapolis, Wigley performed professionally with regional companies such as the Guthrie Theatre, the Skylark Opera, the Mystery Cafe, the Minnesota Centennial Showboat, and the Minnesota Opera. Ms. Wigley's Denver credits include roles such as Aldonza in *Man of LaMancha*, Emma in *Jekyll and Hyde*, Dolores in *The Wild Party*, and Miss Scarlett in *Clue-The Musical*. Sarah Wigley has served as faculty for the Musical Theatre department at the University of Northern Colorado as well as Parlando School for the Arts in Boulder, Colorado, and has had several students appear on Broadway and in national tours and regional theaters across the nation.

As a contemporary voice specialist, Ms. Wigley frequently presents workshops concerning flexible voice technique and crossover training for both studio voice teachers and choral educators. Sessions ranging from "Crossing Over: Contemporary Voice Technique for Solo and Ensemble Singing" to "Crossing Genres: A Classical Singer's Guide to Jazz" have energized the International Congress of Voice Teachers in Stockholm, Sweden, the National Association for Teachers of Singing, Illinois Music Education Association, Iowa Choral Directors Association, and Minnesota Music Education Association. Professor Wigley's students are frequently awarded as finalists in musical theatre competitions for the National Association for Arts and Letters and the National Association for Teachers of Singing, and she currently sits on the board of the Chicago chapter of the National Association for Teachers of Singing.