

A Pathway to Fauré: French Songs for Developing Singers

Demand for voice lessons for children and avocational adults has increased over recent years. The possibility of remote virtual voice lessons via Zoom and other mediums opens voice lessons to new populations. Voice lessons for children, youth and avocational adults present a challenge to the private voice teacher who is well-versed in professional level repertoire which may be too advanced for a developing singer. Gabriel Fauré's *Ici-bas* is frequently suggested as a "first" French song even though it presents many challenges for a developing singer: sophisticated poetry, chromatic melody and independence from the piano part. It is categorized as an advanced, Level 9 song in the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM)'s Voice Syllabus. Even at the college level, *Ici-bas* could be a challenge for a singer who is building foundations for vocal production. Is *Ici-bas* the best choice for an 8th grade singer? a high school sophomore? a Music Education Major who is studying voice and trumpet? Where does one find appropriately challenging and engaging songs in French for developing singers that fall between *Frères-Jacques* and *Ici-bas*?

In this presentation, I will take teachers back a few steps to explore repertoire for teaching developing singers, a repertoire that they may have not yet explored and perhaps by-passed in their own vocal training. I will define what "developing repertoire" means in terms of subject matter, range, dynamic control, harmony, piano accompaniment and diction requirements. This "developing" repertoire could be helpful for teaching young singers in the private studio, the elementary music classroom setting or college level voice where teachers need to find accessible yet appropriately challenging French repertoire. In this presentation, I will explore resources such as the RCM Voice Syllabus, obscure art songs available on IMSLP and popular songs from France and Canada, helping teachers to fill in the gap between "Frere Jacques" and Faure's *Ici-bas*.

I will show attendees how they can use the RCM Voice syllabus to identify French repertoire for various levels. I will also highlight some lesser known composers of French songs, such as François Delsartre, whose songs can be found on IMSLP. Finally, I will present some options from the French Popular Song canon in Canada and France from various time periods. French pop songs can be engaging and appropriate choices for students. Popular music can be used to discuss French history and culture, develop storytelling in French and ignite a passion and curiosity for singing in French and other languages.

In addition to the presentation, I will provide attendees with helpful handouts that they can use to teach French songs to developing singers. These will include:

- Access to a Google Spreadsheet called "French Songs for Developing Singers," that catalogues and categorizes French songs by RCM level with semi-annotations.
- French warm-ups for developing singers
- A short guide for some helpful tips for teaching French diction to beginners

Dr. Tracey Ford teaches singers of all ages in classical and musical theatre styles at her private studio in Western Springs, Illinois. Tracey is a Certified Teacher through the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) and regularly prepares students for RCM voice and theory examinations. In 2019, she

was nominated by her students and received the RCM Teacher of Distinction Award. Tracey recently presented an RCM Webinar entitled, “Online Teaching with Different Learners.” She served as a reader for the 2019 RCM Voice Syllabus and presented “Structured Vocal Training in the Private Studio: The Music Development Program,” at the 2016 CRNATS Conference. Tracey holds a B.A. in French Language and Literature from the University of Michigan, as well as an M.M. and a D.M.A. in Vocal Performance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is a past-President of Chicago Chapter NATS.