

Connecting Voice Science to Vocal Art
Presentations offered by Lynn Holding
Associate Professor of Voice/Dickinson College
Contact: holding@dickinson.edu

Lecture I: Voice Science and Vocal Art: In Search of Common Ground

Voice Science or Vocal Art?

Which vocal teaching method is better? A scientific approach, based on a thorough knowledge of physiology and acoustics, or an empirical one, based on professional artistic experience? Lynn Holding, Associate Professor of Voice at Dickinson College, offers a series of lectures entitled ***Connecting Voice Science to Vocal Art*** to explore this dilemma. Holding is both a professional singer and trained vocologist. Her work has positioned her between both worlds, where she believes a rapprochement between science and art can be found within the field of cognitive science.

It is almost twenty years since the the 1990s was named *The Decade of the Brain* by presidential decree, in order to “enhance public awareness of the benefits to be derived from brain research”. Now is the time for research in the physiology and acoustics of singing to include the fruits of cognitive science research. Cognitive science augurs profound implications for the future of enlightened vocal pedagogy, generating a paradigm shift in emphasis from how well teachers teach, to how well students learn.

Her presentations, ***Connecting Voice Science to Vocal Art*** are based on her two-part article *Voice Science and Vocal Art: In Search of Common Ground*, and *Voice Science and Vocal Art Part II: Motor Learning Theory*, published in the November/December 2007 and March/April 2008 volumes of the Journal of Singing. She has given ***Connecting Voice Science to Vocal Art*** presentations at Indiana University, The State University of New York at Fredonia, the 50th National NATS Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, and at the Third International Physiology and Acoustics of Singing Conference in York, England.

Lecture I: Voice Science and Vocal Art: In Search of Common Ground

The definitive appearance (or “invasion”, depending upon one’s point of view), of science into the field of artistic singing began when Manuel Garcia II demonstrated the laryngoscope to the Parisian *Académie des Sciences* in 1840, an act which firmly solidified his reputation as one of the premiere voice teachers of his time. His presentation in a place of science rather than the Paris Conservatory of Music was significant not only for Garcia personally, but effectively established an alternate, scientific track in the world of elite vocalism, a track which has grown continually in both importance and influence since that time.

While few voice experts agree on the quality and extent of this influence, most would concur that it is significant, that this influence has been both positive and negative, and finally, that disagreement and miscommunication between voice scientists and voice pedagogues unfortunately persists.

In this lecture, I explore the relationship between science and art through its history, its current state, and the new field of cognitive science to which voice pedagogy

could look for a rapprochement between these two valid modes of understanding and teaching voice. This lecture is based on my article *Voice Science and Vocal Art: In Search of Common Ground*, published in the November/December 2007 volume of the Journal of Singing.