

## ***Connecting Voice Science to Vocal Art***

Presentations offered by Lynn Holding  
Associate Professor of Voice/Dickinson College  
Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013  
Contact: [holding@dickinson.edu](mailto:holding@dickinson.edu)

### ***Lecture II: The Cognitive Theory of Multiple Intelligences: Toward a Rapprochement Between Science and Art in Vocal Pedagogy***

#### **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 II: The Cognitive Theory of Multiple Intelligences: Toward a Rapprochement Between Science and Art in Vocal Pedagogy***

What many singers infer from the ubiquitous exhortations on the worth of voice science is that scientific knowledge is more highly valued than an artistic, empirical approach to voice teaching. These inferences are drawn more generally from the Western cultural milieu which *en masse* values certain types of intelligence more highly than others, a premise which forms the foundation of Howard Gardner’s revolutionary *Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983). The most critical of Gardner’s “intelligences” for the singer is not Musical Intelligence, but Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. As Gardner noted:

*This divorce between the “mental” and the “physical” has not infrequently been coupled with a notion that what we do with our bodies is somehow less privileged, less*

*special, than those problem-solving routines carried out chiefly through the use of language, logic, or some relatively abstract symbolic system.*

We in the western world are inheritors of a philosophy that declares bodily processes to be earthbound and therefore ignoble, while rational thought and its by-products aspire to the divine. The *mind-body problem*, traceable back to Plato, was famously encoded by Descartes (*ego cogito, ergo sum*) and is ensconced in Western thought. Therefore it is essential for singers and others who professionally inhabit the realm of the body to consider the historical and cultural sources of this split. Only by doing so can artists guard against professional pitfalls, ranging from the practical considerations of hiring and promotion practices in the American university system, to the personal challenges inherent in the vulnerability required for life-long learning.