

University of Texas at El Paso

From the Selected Works of Elisa Fraser Wilson

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Documentation of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities

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Documentation of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities

I. Publications

A. Dissertation

The following is an abstract of my dissertation, completed while at UTEP. The complete document can be sent as hard copy upon request.

THE COUNTERTENOR VOICE IN THE SYMPHONY ANTHEMS OF HENRY PURCELL: A STUDY OF RANGE AND TESSITURA

Elisa Fraser Wilson, A.Mus.D

School of Music

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2003

Dr. Nicholas Temperley, Adviser

Modern singers and conductors interested in presenting the sacred music of Henry Purcell face a performance practice dilemma: what voice type should sing alto? Where skilled male altos are unavailable, many recordings feature contraltos or mezzo-sopranos as soloists and chorus altos, a practice contradictory to English cathedral tradition. Alternatively, early music specialists have produced a proliferation of recordings featuring “countertenors” or male altos who produce a “white,” somewhat colorless vocal quality completely at odds with twentieth-century opera-oriented vocal practice. Would Purcell truly have favored this, the tone quality of the exclusively falsettist countertenor? Or is it possible that the countertenors of Purcell’s time were actually light, lyric tenors with highly developed upper registers?

The literature on this topic is fairly sparse, and much of it is the product of male singers who wish to validate their own voice type as the most appropriate for Purcell’s music. This paper presents a more disinterested investigation based on concrete data. Its centerpiece is a quantitative analysis of range and tessitura in Purcell’s verse anthems with string accompaniment (or “symphony anthems”), a body of literature that has been largely neglected in discussions of the countertenor voice.

Theories regarding the nature of the countertenor voice vary greatly. Some scholars and singers believe that the Purcellian countertenor was a falsettist using only head tones with no application of the fundamental voice. Others surmise that the Purcellian countertenor was actually a high, light tenor, a singer using both fundamental and *voix mixte* but no falsetto. A third theory holds that the ‘true’ countertenor is a “through-range” singer using all available registers. This survey of range and tessitura indicates that the last-named theory best fits the countertenor parts in Purcell’s symphony anthems, with solo lines seemingly written for “low” countertenors using chest and middle-falsetto registers, and choral lines written for “high” countertenors using middle and upper falsetto registers.

B. New curriculum generated for implementation at UTEP

1. BFA in Music Theatre
2. BM in Commercial Music (Voice Area consultant)

C. Accreditation materials generated for UTEP

1. National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) Accreditation documents for BFA in Music Theatre
2. SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) Accreditation documents and website for BFA in Music Theatre

D. Collaborative works for music theatre

- [*Libretto y Canto*](#) - performed Fall 2004; collaboration between UTEP Theory/Composition students (Ruben Gutierrez, supervisor), Bilingual Creative Writing Program (Dr. Johnny Payne, director), and Music Theatre Company

E. Grant proposals

1. Creativity in Motion
 - Grant for development and presentation of two original musical dramas through Music Theatre Company class. Co-authored with Dr. Johnny Payne, Director, UTEP Bilingual Creative Writing program. Submitted December 2004.
2. UTEP University Research Institute
 - Grant for advanced study in Contemporary Commercial Vocal Styles at Shenandoah University, to be followed by research and performances by UTEP students. Submitted Fall 2005.

F. Recordings

- Professional perusal recording, [*Romeo and Bernadette*](#) by Mark Saltzman, Theatrical Rights Worldwide, Music Theatre Company, May 2008

G. Articles

- “Healthy Belting,” a pedagogical guide to teaching contemporary vocal styles, to be submitted to various choral and vocal journals in 2009, in progress.

H. Anthologies

- Five-volume operetta anthology for singers, in collaboration with William Everett, University of Missouri at Kansas City, in progress.

II. Creative activities, shows, performance

Note: Programs and audio files available at digitalcommons.utep.edu

A. Solo Performances

- Faculty Recital Series, UTEP
 - Joint recital with Dr. Christopher Meerdink, February 2005
 - [An Evening of Cabaret with Voice Faculty](#), May 2005
 - [Joint recital with Dr. Steve Wilson](#), bass trombone, January 2006
 - Recital, *Aspects of Love* with Voice Faculty, February 2006
 - [Recital with Dr. Dominic Dousa](#), composer/piano, November 2006
 - Recitals with John Siqueiros, guitar, October/November 2007
 - Soloist, Jack Stamp Symphony #1 with UTEP Wind Symphony, March 2008

- [Recital with Voice Faculty, *Still Falls the Rain*](#), original works by student composer Stephen Jackson, April 2008
- Recitals with John Siqueiros, guitar, October/November 2008
- Faculty Recital with Dr. Dena Kay Jones, piano, Joaquin Rodrigo International Festival, February 2009
- El Paso Symphony Orchestra
 - Guest Soloist, Holiday Concerts, El Paso and Juarez, December 2004
- UTEP Choirs and Orchestra
 - Soloist, Haydn *Paukenmesse*, October 2006
- Composers' Forum (MUST 3319)
 - Lecture/Recital on music theatre repertoire for MUST 3319 Advanced Composition class, September 19, 2006
 - Composers' Forum Performance, UTEP Bilingual Creative Writing and Department of Music Composition Area, December 2006

B. Ensemble Performances

- Commercial Music Faculty Combo
 - Concert, UTEP, November 2004
 - [Texas Bandmasters Association Conference at UTEP](#), June 2006
- Season of Lights
 - Quartet, UTEP Voice Faculty Ensemble, Season of Lights and Alumni Association Reception, December 3, 2004
 - Season of Lights with Carmen Diaz Walker and Orit Amy Eylon, December 2005

B. Music Theatre Performances

- Union Dinner Theatre, UTEP
 - Ensemble, *Leader of the Pack*, October 1998
 - Eva Peron, *Evita*, April-May 1999
 - Victoria Grant, *Victor/Victoria*, October-November 2000; also, American College Theatre Festival (ACTF) Regional Conference, Tyler, TX, February 2001
- Music Theatre Company, UTEP
 - [Mama Euralie, *Once on this Island*](#), November 2005
 - [Camille Penza, *Romeo and Bernadette*](#), April 2008

D. Conducting Appearances

- UTEP Music Theatre Company, El Paso, TX
 - [Broadway in Concert: *A Little Night Music*](#) by Stephen Sondheim, with UTEP Orchestra, November 2004
 - [Suor Angelica/*Gianni Schicchi*](#) by Giacomo Puccini, April 2006
 - [Gallantry](#) by Douglas Moore and [The Telephone](#) by Gian Carlo Menotti, February 2007
 - [Elegant Excerpts: An Evening of Excerpts from the Golden Age of Broadway, Operetta, and Opera](#), November 2007
 - [Contemporary Voices: Scenes from Modern Music Theatre and Opera](#), November 2008
 - [Susannah](#) by Carlisle Floyd, with UTEP Orchestra, March 2009

- UTEP Orchestra
 - Commencement, December 2004
- UTEP Women's Glee Club
 - 5-6 performances per year, August 2005-present
 - Programs and audio files available at digitalcommons.utep.edu

E. Stage and Musical Direction

While they are part of my teaching load, I consider my work with Music Theatre Company and the BFA students' performance projects as creative activity, largely because so much of what I do happens outside the scope of my teaching duties. In addition to teaching stagecraft on a daily basis, the production aspect of MUSA 2253/3253/3311/4311 requires me to function simultaneously as music director/conductor, vocal coach, stage director, producer, set and light designer, light operator, costumer, accountant, propmaster, and cast member as needed. Additionally, the performance projects are original works completely designed, directed, and produced by me. Representative photos and audio files may be viewed in a powerpoint presentation by [clicking here](#).

- UTEP Music Theatre Company, El Paso, TX
 - [*Contemporary Voices: Scenes from Modern Music Theatre and Opera*](#), November 2008
 - [*Romeo and Bernadette*](#), April 2008
 - [*Elegant Excerpts: An Evening of Excerpts from the Golden Age of Broadway, Operetta, and Opera*](#), November 2007
 - *Song Slam 2007*, April 2007
 - *Man of La Mancha*, March 2007
 - [*Gallantry*](#) by Douglas Moore and [*The Telephone*](#) by Gian Carlo Menotti, February 2007
 - *Song Slam 2006*, semi-staged workshop performances of classical and music theatre repertory, December 2006
 - [*Songs for a New World*](#), October 2006
 - [*Once on this Island*](#) by Ahrens and Flaherty, public performances November 2-6, 2005, Recital Hall; youth performances November 8-9, Recital Hall
 - [*Berlin to Broadway with Kurt Weill*](#), March 2005
 - [*Libretto y Canto: An Evening of Original Music Theatre Works by UTEP Students*](#), October 2004
- UTEP Music Theatre BFA Senior Performance Projects
 - *Song and Dance: Music From Andrew Lloyd Webber's Musical*, Malori Cade, February 2009
 - *Cycles of Life: A One-Woman Cabaret*, Laura Sambrano, May 2007
- UTEP Department of Theatre, Dance, and Film, El Paso, TX (musical direction only)
 - *The Romance of Dance: The Course of True Love*, February 2008

III. Other evidence of scholarly work

International Conferences

- Technology Institute for Music Educators (TI-ME) International Convention: “You Sing You Tube”: Using Technology in the Performance Curriculum,” Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA) Convention, San Antonio, February 2009

Regional Conferences

- Presentation for College Music Society Super-Regional Conference, Bloomington, IL, March 2008: “You Sing, YouTube: Using Technology in the Opera Workshop”
- Panelist for College Music Society Super-Regional Conference, Bloomington, IL, March 2008: “Assessment of Current Curriculums and New Uses for Technology in the College Curriculum”

Teaching In-Services

- “Process vs. Product: Fostering Student Success,” EPISD Fine Arts Job-Alike In-Service, El Paso High School, August 2004
- “Vocal Jazz in the Choral Curriculum,” YISD Fine Arts Job-Alike In-Service, Plaza Theatre, El Paso, TX, August 2006
- “The Art of Healthy Belting: A Guide for Teaching,” EPISD and YISD Fine Arts Job-Alike In-Service, UTEP, August 2008

Clinics/Adjudications

- Clinician, Franklin H.S. Choirs, December 2004
- Adjudicator, EPISD Vocal Solo and Ensemble contest, February 5, 2005, Burges High School
- Clinician, Coronado H.S. Treble Choirs, April 12, 2005, UTEP Recital Hall
- Adjudicator, EPISD Jazz Festival, Coronado H.S., February 24 and 25, 2006
- Clinician, EPISD Voices of the Future 5th and 6th Grade Honor Choir, Chapin High School, May 12 and 13, 2006
- Clinician, *Broadway Scenes* with Sun City Youth Opera, UTEP, June 2006
- Adjudicator, Vocal Solo and Ensemble Festival, EPISD Fine Arts, February 10, 2007
- Clinician, Coronado High School choirs, April 2008
- Choral Adjudicator, EPISD Choral Concert and Sightreading Festival, May 2008
- Vocal Jazz Adjudicator, Heritage Festivals, Inc., San Francisco Festival, May 2008, May 2009
- Conductor, TMEA XXII All Region Treble Choir, November 2008 (also October 2000 and November 2003)
- Conductor, Ysleta ISD District Honor Choir (High School), December 3-4, 2008
- Adjudicator, YISD UIL Solo/Ensemble Contest, Riverside Middle School, March 2009
- Clinician, Hanks High School choirs, April 18, 2009

- Sight Reading Adjudicator, EPISD Choral Concert and Sight Reading Contest, May 5 and 6, 2009

Invitations to serve as guest artist

- University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, Fall 2006

Invitations to present scholarly work

- North American British Music Association Conference, Oberlin College, June 2004
 - Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities, January 2005
- Both invitations involved presentation of dissertation on countertenors in anthems of Henry Purcell (UIUC, October 2003). Unable to attend due to financial considerations.

IV. Other Evidence

Honors and awards received

- Induction, Pi Kappa Lambda National Honor Society in Music, April 2005

Professional organizations

- TMEA (Texas Music Educators Association)
- TI-ME (Technology Institute for Music Educators)
- CMS (College Music Society)
- NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing)
- NABMSA (North American British Music Studies Association)

Professional workshops and courses

- CETAL workshops: Grant Writing, September 2004; Teaching Portfolios, September 14, 2004
- Faculty Mentoring Program for Women: Goal Setting, September 15, 2004
- CETAL: Build a syllabus for learning, January 20, 2005
- UTEP Student Success: Designing an Exiting Students and Beyond College Program, Webinar Conference, June 13, 2007

Quality of the applied studio

All of my students are active in the department's choral ensembles and Music Theatre Company. Additionally, they are very involved in other university and local music and theatre organizations at the highest level, including the UTEP Dinner Theatre, Viva El Paso, and El Paso Opera.

My students have consistently excelled in competition with singers from other regional colleges and universities. At the National Association of Teachers of Singing, New Mexico Student Auditions held at UTEP in February 2004, five of my students placed in their divisions, including two first places. At the same event in Santa Fe, NM, February 2005, my applied students competed and placed in classical and music theatre categories.

Further, former students are successful public school teachers in choral, dance, and theatre programs, and are attending/have attended graduate school at top tier universities, including Boston University, UT Austin, and New York University.