

A Review of Training Opportunities for Singing Voice Rehabilitation Specialists

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Summary: Objectives. Training opportunities for singing voice rehabilitation specialists are growing and changing. This is happening despite a lack of agreed-on guidelines or an accredited certification acknowledged by the governing bodies in the fields of speech-language pathology and vocal pedagogy, the American Speech-Language Hearing Association and the National Association of Teachers of Singing, respectively. The roles of the speech-language pathologist, the singing teacher, and the person who bridges this gap, the singing voice rehabilitation specialist, are now becoming better defined and more common among the voice care community. To that end, this article aims to review the current opportunities for training in the field of singing voice rehabilitation.

Methods. A review of available university training programs, private training programs and mentorships, clinical fellowships, professional organizations, conferences, vocal training across genres, and self-study opportunities was conducted. All institutional listings are with permission from program leaders.

Results/Conclusions. Although many avenues are available for training of singing voice rehabilitation specialists, there is no accredited comprehensive training program at this point. This review gathers information on current training opportunities from across various modalities. The listings are not intended to be comprehensive but rather representative of possibilities for interested practitioners.

Key Words: Singing voice rehabilitation specialist—Clinical training.

INTRODUCTION

Training opportunities for singing voice rehabilitation specialists are growing and changing. This is happening despite a lack of agreed-on guidelines or an accredited certification acknowledged by the governing bodies in the fields of speech-language pathology and vocal pedagogy, the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) and the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) respectively. The roles of the speech-language pathologist, the singing teacher, and the person who bridges this gap, the singing voice rehabilitation specialist, are now becoming better defined and more common among the voice care community.¹

Certified speech-language pathologists who evaluate and treat patients with voice disorders hold a certificate of clinical competency (CCC-SLP) from ASHA. Licensure is also required in most states. Requirements for certification include a minimum of a master-level degree in speech-language pathology, completion of a supervised clinical fellowship, and continuing education. It has been shown, however, that typical speech-language pathology programs include limited educational and clinical experience in the area of voice.² Furthermore, singing voice pedagogy and rehabilitation are not typically addressed in the speech-pathology curriculum, as it is not in the scope of practice of general speech-language pathologists. As for vocal pedagogues, there are no specific certi-

fication criteria for vocal pedagogues, and vocal performance and pedagogy programs vary in their curriculum offerings with regard to vocal health, voice science, and medical/clinical applications. Many pedagogues who seek singing voice rehabilitation specialization, however, typically hold a master-level or doctoral-level degree in vocal pedagogy and/or have significant performance and teaching experience. In most states, it should be noted, only certified speech-language pathologists may legally call themselves “voice therapists.” Currently, singing voice rehabilitation specialists are either completing training in speech-language pathology and vocal pedagogy separately to become dual-trained professionals or fulfilling single training in either vocal pedagogy or speech-language pathology with add-on training via programs in the secondary area of specialization or other informal means of education.

For approximately the past 30 years, leaders in the field have been attempting to create guidelines for a training program for professionals seeking expertise in rehabilitation of the singing voice.³ This endeavor began to garner attention with the 1991 proposals for training programs by Robert Sataloff, MD, DMA, and Ingo Titze, PhD, at the annual Voice Foundation Symposium.⁴ More recently, in 2013, the Proposed Specialty Training in Vocal Health conference was held in Salt Lake City through the National Center for Voice and Speech to further address the issue. There also is continued exploration within ASHA for voice specialization that may help practitioners to streamline education and substantiate competency and to help consumers to identify professionals with specific training in voice.⁵ Although, at the time of publication, there is not yet a recognized certification to guide the curricula and training protocol for singing voice rehabilitation specialists, practitioners still seek their own methods of training from a diverse variety of nonstandardized educational opportunities.

This article offers a review of current training in the field of singing voice rehabilitation, which comprises cross

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development in the fields of vocal performance, vocal pedagogy, and speech-language pathology. These options include university training programs, private training programs and mentorships, clinical fellowships, professional organizations, conferences, vocal training across genres, and self-study.

UNIVERSITY TRAINING PROGRAMS

Organized add-on programs exist at the university level in the fields of speech-language pathology and vocal pedagogy in order for singly trained professionals to supplement their skill sets toward a more comprehensive educational background for the treatment of professional voice users. Some examples of these programs within accredited universities include, but are not limited to, The Ohio State University Singing Health Specialization, the University of Iowa Vocology Track/University of Utah Summer Vocology Institute, and the James Madison University Singing Health Specialist training, as described in the following.

The Singing Health Specialization at The Ohio State University in an interdisciplinary add-on program focused on the care of the professional voice. The program comprises lectures, seminars, clinical observations, and lab practicum courses taught by specialists from the School of Music, Department of Otolaryngology in the School of Medicine, and Department of Speech and Hearing Science. Students may choose to complete this program in addition to the master's degree in voice performance or speech-language pathology or as part of a doctoral degree in Music or Speech and Hearing Science. The specialization is currently 16 credit hours and can be completed within the standard time frame of a doctoral program; an additional semester might be required to complete the program while pursuing a master degree. Students in the specialization complete a core curriculum including a seminar in singing health specialization, laryngology lecture series, laryngology surgical observation, clinical observation (at the Ohio State Voice Clinic), and a pedagogy lab practicum, during which students are directly observed while working with singers who have vocal injuries. All pedagogy students learn to use instrumentation via voice laboratory assignments and pass a comprehensive final exam. There have been 19 graduates from the program since 2007. The program is directed by Scott McCoy, DMA.

The University of Iowa offers an add-on vocology track for specialty voice training in the speech-language pathology MA and PhD programs in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. The courses, Principles of Voice Production and Voice Habilitation, are also open to students within the doctoral programs in performance and pedagogy in the School of Music. In addition, a nine-credit graduate program is offered during a summer semester through the University of Utah and the Summer Vocology Institute at the National Center for Voice and Speech in Salt Lake City, Utah. Attendees include primarily laryngologists, speech-language pathologists, and vocal pedagogues. Courses include Principles of Voice Production, Instrumentation for Voice Analysis, Voice Habilitation, and Voice for Performers. The program began at the University of Iowa in the early 1990s, and the Summer Vocology Institute had its first

class in the year 2000. There have been 18 graduates from the University of Iowa's Vocology track and greater than 150 graduates from the Summer Vocology Institute. Program director Ingo Titze, PhD, works together with other high-level voice specialists to deliver this hands-on curriculum.

James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA, offers an add-on program for Singing Health Specialist training between the School of Music in the College of Visual and Performing arts and the Department of Graduate Psychology and Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Integrated Science and Technology. The optional Singing Health concentration can be taken as part of the Doctor of Musical Arts or the Master of Music degrees and includes study of performance psychology, speech pathology, clinical laboratory experiences, and vocal pedagogy. Clinical observation at the James Madison University/Rockingham Memorial Hospital Collaborative Voice and Swallowing Clinic and a comprehensive final examination are requirements of this specialization. The program was initiated in 2011, although no students have yet graduated from the program. Leading faculty include, Kevin McMillan, MM (voice pedagogue), Christy Ludlow, PhD (speech-language pathologist), and Robert Harmison, PhD (sports psychologist).

Several vocal pedagogy programs have affiliations with medical voice centers and/or speech-language pathology programs. Although they do not offer a specific certification in singing voice rehabilitation, per se, these programs provide students with excellent exposure to and interaction with medical care for the performing voice. Examples of programs include but are not limited to Belmont University, Boston Conservatory, New York University, Shenandoah University, the University of Kansas, and the University of Miami. This list is representative, not exhaustive, and is aimed at providing students an idea of possible collaborative aspects of programs to seek out when planning their training.

The Vocal Pedagogy Program within the Belmont University School of Music in Nashville, TN, offers a collaboration with the Vanderbilt Voice Center. Under the direction of Jennifer M. Coleman, DMA, students have the opportunity to observe speech-language pathologists' therapy sessions and medical voice assessments at the voice center. Students may take courses regarding voice science and related topics through Vanderbilt University. Belmont's students also are involved in the annual Commercial Voice Conference offered through the Vanderbilt Voice Center.

The Boston Conservatory Vocal Pedagogy program, led by Kevin Wilson, MM, has an affiliation with the Voice Center at Massachusetts General Hospital. Pedagogy students participate in clinical observations of assessments and singing voice therapy along with video review of surgical procedures. In addition to standard pedagogic coursework, students are taught to collaborate with medical professionals, such as speech-language pathologists and otolaryngologists, to create a successful plan for rehabilitation.

The New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development offers a Master of Music in Voice combined with an Advanced Certificate in Vocal Pedagogy through the Department of Music and Performing Arts

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