

Interview with Donna Reid Re: Master Class in Functional Singing

On Saturday, May 20, 2017, Voice Teacher and Mezzo-Soprano Donna Reid will be teaching a Master Class in Functional Singing at the American College of Orgonomy Campus in Princeton, NJ. Ms. Reid shares some insights about the class.

What can participants in your upcoming Master Class in Functional Singing expect?

Donna Reid: "First, we are definitely going to have a good time! We will be doing some group participation exercises that I think everyone will enjoy. I will also work with volunteers, as well as with two of my regular students, so participants will have a chance to see and hear me work with several different people of varying abilities. I'm also happy to answer questions if anyone is having a particular problem they would like me to address. When a singer can't sing it can be devastating. That's why when I work with someone and can help them get their voice back, the feeling of joy for both myself and the student is immeasurable."

Why did you decide to become a voice teacher as opposed to continuing with your singing career?

Donna Reid: "Through my work and life with my late husband Cornelius Reid, I discovered that my love and passion was for helping people with their voices. Cornelius was a noted vocal pedagogue and authored six books on singing. I studied with him, assisted in his master classes, and then learned how to teach from him. His approach was very closely tied with Dr. Wilhelm Reich and Reich's ideas about functional thinking. Cornelius was heavily influenced by his therapy with Dr. Elsworth Baker. Cornelius used to say, "If you free the voice, you free the self." He didn't try to do therapy or talk to his students about their personal lives, but he noticed that as their voices became freer, they themselves became freer. I can't begin to tell you how many people at his memorial service said he changed their lives, even saved their lives, just by giving them voice lessons and teaching them to sing freely."

What is different about teaching functional singing?

Donna Reid: "Most of the teaching methods out there are mechanistic. They treat the singing voice like a machine, using the same exact exercises for every single student that comes in front of them instead of teaching them as individuals. Just look at how many instructional videos on singing appear on YouTube, all with the same message. "Just do this and you too will sing well!" In addition, most teachers emphasize breath support, but unfortunately the way it is taught actually inhibits breathing. What I try to achieve with my students is freedom -- freedom of breathing and freedom of sound, in other words, a sound that is healthy and enables them to sing in a way that isn't damaging or fatiguing."

Do you have any particular teaching moments that you would like to share?

Donna Reid: "Honestly, it makes me so happy to hear any of my students sing with a healthy, free sound, but I have to say that when I saw two of my students on stage performing together as Glinda and Elphaba in *Wicked* on Broadway, I think I almost exploded from happiness!"

(Continued)

Can you give a few examples of singers who have a free sound?

Donna Reid: "Celine Dion is a good example of someone who sings freely. Kristin Chenoweth, Kelly O'Hara, and Christine Ebersole, three Broadway performers who people may be familiar with, also have what I would call free voices. Cornelius always said that Barbra Streisand had a free sound."

Who would you consider to be an example of a constricted sound?

Donna Reid: "Adele. Her chest voice is very aggressive in a constricted way which eventually caused a vocal hemorrhage. She had vocal cord surgery in 2011. Also Tina Turner has a constricted sound. You can hear it in that raspy quality she gets when she sings."

How do you teach someone who is constricted?

Donna Reid: "I first observe how the vocal mechanism is functioning in that particular individual. To give you an example, if someone is having a problem hitting high notes, there could be several reasons why. It's not always the same reason and the same fix for everyone. The vocal cords may be too thick, or the larynx may rise too high. There's not a "do x, y and z" exercise that can help a person sing more easily in the higher pitch range. I will be showing how to help achieve this in my class. I'm really looking forward to working with the class in this way and sharing with them the experience of what a joy it is to sing with a free voice!"

The cost to attend the class is \$45. Seating is limited, registration required. Call [\(732\) 821-1144](tel:(732)821-1144) or visit <http://www.orgonomy.org>

American College of Orgonomy
www.orgonomy.org