

Page Scholarship Research Trip to the States

19th March – 10th April 2011

Introduction

It is a bright, cold Sunday morning, 3rd April 2011 and I am in Oberlin, Ohio, on the penultimate leg of my Page Scholarship trip. I am walking through Oberlin Cemetery searching for the grave of Richard Miller in order to pay my respects to the great American voice teacher who died in 2010. It was through Miller's writing that I first became aware of the tradition of American voice teaching; I read his *National Schools of Singing* when I was still a student and later, *The Structure of Singing* - a classic which every serious student of voice will come across at some point in their career. Miller taught for many years at Oberlin College and I attended his Institute of Voice Performance Pedagogy there in 2002 and 2003. He was not only a great voice teacher but also a man of integrity, humour and humanity. Professor Thomas Goodheart, whom I visited at Long Island University, told me that the last thing Miller said publicly on the subject of singing was: "In the end it comes down to two basic things - air and space".

Air and space

Our breath is our energy, our 'motor' for singing, and the flow of breath between the vocal folds excites vibrations which in turn resonate within the space we create in the pharynx and the mouth. This results in our own personal sound. In this seemingly simple action lies the basis for the great art of singing and, as with many great arts, its beauty lies in its simplicity. I remember Miller stating in one of his classes: "These are simple principles, friends", and I remember being surprised (and heartened!) by that remark. All of the excellent voice teachers I observed during my Page Scholarship trip addressed these two basic aspects of vocal technique: breath and resonance. Breathing was considered not only from a physical standpoint but also as a vehicle for expression, connecting the singer to their emotions. Space was considered not only in relation to resonance but also as a vital part of the physical act of breathing, being created both actively - often with the help of visual imagery - and by releasing the tensions which interfered with freedom.

Preparations

On hearing that I had been awarded the Walter Hines Page Scholarship, I was both delighted and excited at the prospect of visiting top American music institutions and meeting many experienced colleagues - that would be once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I also relished the prospect of escaping my role of teacher for a few weeks and being

nurtured rather than nurturing, finding new impulses and inspiration. I looked forward to observing the lessons of my American colleagues and to the conversations which might ensue.

There were several specific areas into which I hoped to gain insight and it would be interesting to see on my return whether my trip would open up new areas for me to research.

Questions

- ❖ The breathing mechanism is of particular interest to me. I trained as a breathing pedagogue in Germany at the *Atemschule* in Düsseldorf and run breathing classes for vocal students at the RSAMD. I was therefore very interested to learn how this subject is approached by my American colleagues, e.g. how much time was spent on breathing and posture in singing lessons and whether it was taught anatomically in classes. Had the theory of two distinct breathing types - the active in-breather and the active out-breather (the *Solunar* theory from Germany) - made an impact on teaching in the States? Is Lamperti's command: "*inhalare la voce*" (inhale the voice) useful for all students?
- ❖ Teaching is a two-way process: "You can show a student the right doorway, but they have to walk through it themselves" is an adage often cited by voice teachers. Yet one-to-one teaching entails the responsibility of looking after students' vocal health, development and future career pathway. Often the teacher has to make decisions which have far-reaching consequences. It can be a lonely occupation with little chance to meet colleagues on a regular basis to discuss concerns or ask advice, other than in an informal and sometimes coincidental way. I would be interested to know whether, in the course of their busy teaching schedules, American teachers were able to meet colleagues, and whether their institution played a part in facilitating such meetings.
- ❖ The continuant consonant sounds [m], [n], [ŋ] and [v] are often used to facilitate vocal technique, but some voices (especially the more dramatic ones) find these sounds problematic higher in their range. Should every voice be able to use these sounds freely? This would also tie in with questions about the efficacy of practising flageolet or whistle tones (the upper extension in the female voice). Miller suggested that alto voices seldom have this register and the bigger the voice, the less likely it is to be present.
- ❖ How is the balance of technique and interpretation dealt with in lessons?
- ❖ Should the teacher set the student definite homework tasks (memorisation, for example) or should the student have more autonomy and responsibility for their own learning?

- ❖ Has the older declarative style of teaching been replaced by a more procedural approach, giving the student the opportunity to work out their own way towards their goals, whilst being encouraged and guided by the teacher?

My records reflect my own subjective view of the lessons I observed. As much as possible, I tried to take a 'fly on the wall' approach, aware that the presence of a third party in a one-to-one lesson inevitably changes the dynamics of the lesson.

Any observation of the teacher/student relationship can only be one snapshot of a particular part of the student's journey, which is a shared one between the student and their teacher. An observer may not appreciate the distance that journey has already covered. Most of the teachers did give me some background information about their students, which was extremely helpful.

Answers

- ❖ The anatomy of the breathing mechanism was taught in classes alongside the anatomy of the vocal instrument, usually as part of a broader vocal pedagogy class. At Baldwin Wallace, vocal students had attended human anatomy classes alongside first year medical students from the university but this idea was dropped when several of the singers found the dissection classes hard to take, though this was in principle an excellent idea. Breathing classes per se didn't seem to be the norm, although the breathing mechanism formed part of Alexander lessons, which most of the schools offered. Some teachers used the idea of 'singing on the gesture of inhalation' (as *Lamperti* put it) whilst others stressed the flow of the out-breath. Here was a parallel with the active in-breather and active out-breather theory, though none of the teachers I asked had heard of the German *Solunar* theory. The Alexander teacher at CW Post, Phylis Jo Kubey, told me that she had made the observation that some students were more in-breath active while others have to work harder physically to exhalale.
- ❖ All of the Schools I visited were part of larger universities. In some of the vocal departments (e.g. CCM Cincinnati) there were numerous full-time teachers of singing and departmental meetings were a weekly event. I gathered that these meetings were to discuss departmental issues rather than specifically vocal ones and it seemed that most discussions between colleagues on vocal technique took place in an informal way, much as they do at my own institution. Teachers attended conferences as well as teaching at their institutions summer schools in Europe (in particular, Italy).
- ❖ Consonant sounds were used often in the lessons as useful tools to help free the articulatory muscles (especially the jaw), to connect the voice to support or to find a slim access into the upper range (in the case of the continuant [ŋ] sound).

This was never forced, however, and if a voice did not find this sound easy in the upper range, it was not pursued. One of the teachers told me that she never asked her students to vocalise on these sounds in the upper range as she did not find them useful. Another pointed out that seldom do we hear people rave about great singers because of excellent diction on their high notes! In other words, consonants should be used sparingly at the top of the range. Professor William McGraw from CCM Cincinnati used a very effective exercise to find a slim access to the upper range by using an octave *portamento*, introducing a very small nasal [õ] vowel on the top note. Once the singer had become comfortable with this light, easy sound, he asked them to turn it into a more open vowel (either [ε] or [α]), keeping the slimmed-out quality. This produced some very free sounds and it made me aware of the delicate balance between fine sounds and those which are weighty and over-powered.

- ❖ Technique and interpretation were incorporated into the lessons in equal measure and no lessons were based solely on either. Generally the lessons began with physical stretching and posture/breathing exercises which led into a vocal warm-up. This was followed with work on repertoire with the technical exercises from earlier in the lesson sometimes re-introduced to help the student apply those tools to their songs and arias.
- ❖ None of the teachers seemed concerned with making sure that students learnt their music by heart. One of the teachers said that she encouraged her students to learn their music off copy as soon as they could as this freed them from the barrier of the music stand as well as the visual image of “all those black dots”. Another preferred her students to use their music until they had learnt the repertoire in depth and detail and only then should memorisation begin. Notating corrections in pencil on the music was a vital part of the lesson. Jane Eaglen told me that her music scores still had her pencil markings from her old teacher, Joseph Ward. She put it this way: “I tell my students that it is my responsibility to help them prepare technically and musically - but the rest they have to do themselves. Giving them responsibility in this way prepares them for the profession”.
- ❖ Most of the lessons I observed incorporated a mixture of a declarative and procedural approaches. Particularly at the beginning of the lessons, the teachers gave their students clear directions and information, but as the lessons progressed, the students were given more free rein. One aspect which made a big impact upon me was the way in which American colleagues were extremely positive in their feedback to students, telling them: “Well done, that was great!” even when the improvement may have only been slight. This positive feedback not only made for an energised atmosphere but also gave the student the courage to trust what they were doing. The power of the mind is very much at

the centre of American voice teaching and positive reinforcement of a student's achievements is seen as an important building block to their confidence and their abilities. This is a very powerful tool and one which I will use.

Itinerary:

19th – 23rd March 2011

C.W.Post Campus, Long Island University

Professor Ruth Golden, Director of Vocal Studies

Professor Thomas Goodheart

Dr Mark Shapiro

Phyllis Jo Kubey

24th – 29th March

Peabody Institute, Baltimore

Professor Phyllis Bryn-Julson

Professor Marianne Busching

Professor John Shirley-Quirk

30th March – 1st April

Baldwin Wallace College, Berea

Professor Jane Eaglen

Nannette Canfield, Assistant Professor of Voice, Assistant Director

Professor Timothy Mussard

Benjamin Smith

2nd – 3rd April

Oberlin College

Professor Salvatore Champagne, Associate Director

Professor Daune Mahy

5th -7th April

CCM Cincinnati

Barbara Paver, Associate Professor of Voice

Professor William McGraw

Professor Donna Leowy

Robin Guarino, Associate Professor of Opera

Samples from the diary of my tour

This shortened report reflects only a small part of the many observations made during my trip and of the copious notes (21,000 words) and the 78 vocal exercises I transcribed! I have so much material that it will provide food for thought for many years to come and a great deal of what I brought back with me has already been integrated into lessons with my own students at the Academy.

Long Island, Sunday 20th March

I took a long walk from my hotel at East Norwich down a busy road which took me to Oyster Bay. On this sunny but very cold morning the town seemed strangely quiet, even for a Sunday. The boats at the marina were still under tarpaulin although it was a perfect day for sailing. I called in at a café to try some of their home-made ice-cream, which was delicious. Here I found many of the young population of Oyster Bay - the café was full of tiny tots and their mothers – all eating sweets of varying sorts and creating a great deal of noise. In the corner was a pianola whose jaunty tunes were occasionally embellished by a chubby little hand plonking down on the keys.

C.W.Post, Long Island University

Monday, 21st March

I met Professor Ruth Golden, Director of Vocal Studies and gave her the details of my trip as well as my own background and my role at the RSAMD. Ruth was surprised to hear that the RSAMD is a comparatively small institution as most American universities have very large music faculties with hundreds of students. I was introduced to the Chair of the Music Department, Dr James McRoy, and I said that I would send him a copy of my report when it was complete. It was apparent that they were genuinely pleased to welcome a visitor from a European institution and I expressed the hope that Ruth might be able to make a reciprocal visit to the RSAMD.

Ruth explained that the B.Mus. course at C.W.Post is structured to give students a liberal, rounded education, encouraging awareness that they exist as performers and educators within a culture formed by historical events. I was interested to see that I

would be observing two lectures from a series on 'Women in Music' which would include a film on the suffragette movement in America and Britain as well as a lecture on the British composer Dame Ethel Smythe. To contextualise music in this way deepens understanding and appreciation of it; this is something which the RSAMD is embedding more into its own curriculum.

Studio Class. This class was taken by Ruth and her colleague, baritone Thomas Goodheart, with students from their own studios. It began with a group warm-up starting with physical stretching: circling the shoulders and arms, twisting the upper body from side to side, then letting the upper body flop over like a rag-doll and bringing it slowly up, raising the arms above the head. Siren sounds on [u] and [i] with arms circling upwards and outwards used the whole of the vocal range and encouraged physical release. The singers were then asked to walk on the spot in time to sung descending 5th scales. Rhythm and voice were thus connected to the whole body.

Building on the positive, Ruth's first request to the students after their performance was to tell the class three things they liked about their own performance. She told me afterwards that she had once asked a student this question at a public master-class and was surprised how difficult they found it to say even one positive thing about their own performance. Since then she has made a point of asking her students to think positively in this way. "Negativity is no good for the singing profession". This made me aware of how easy it is as a teacher to concentrate on those elements of performance which need improving and not give enough attention to the positive.

Meeting with Ruth Golden at the end of the day

Ruth recommended Clifton Ware's '*Basics of Vocal Pedagogy*', a concise book which is recommended reading for all voice students at CW Post. (Publisher: McGraw, ISBN: 0-07-068289-5).

We discussed my training as a breathing pedagogue in Germany and Ruth told me about Kurt Stau, an American expert on breathing. Like Julius Parow, Stau treated patients with breathing disorders as well as carrying out his own research into the breathing mechanism. Unfortunately Stau's books are no longer published, due to copyright issues. Ruth is a great advocate of the Alexander method and has built it into the curriculum of the Music School.

At the end of the day Ruth kindly gave me a tour of the huge campus which covers over 50 acres. One of the buildings was built in a mock-Tudor style with dark oak panelling and beautiful stone fireplaces and it had been the home of Mrs Post, the cereal millionairess who owned all of the estate before it was sold to the University of Long Island.

Tuesday, 22nd March

Theory Class

I took part in this lively class taken by Dr Mark Shapiro and enjoyed it very much. I was treated as a member of the class and expected to answer questions along with the students. How often does a teacher have the opportunity to see things from the student's perspective? I became aware of how removed I have become from that experience. I was impressed by the way Dr Shapiro encouraged students to take an active role in the class, insisting that they gave their answers in a very definite tone of voice, not questioning but stating the answer. The faltering "er..." was not allowed at all! This approach made the students much less passive and it encouraged them to take a positive stance.

Students were also asked to pose questions to each other – and to reply to each other, not to the teacher. Again, this made their answers definite, not questioning.

Conversation with the Alexander teacher, Phyllis Jo Kubey

I thoroughly enjoyed my conversation with Phyllis and observing the Alexander lesson which followed.

Phyllis also mentioned Stau, the breathing specialist who, like Parow, had worked with people suffering from breathing disorders such as emphysema and bronchitis. Interestingly, his book, *Breath Doctor*, has the same title as one of Alexander's first books.

Phyllis told me of two events she had experienced concerning breathing and, in particular, the diaphragm. She had been at the bedside of a friend who was dying and although the rest of the dying person's body was very weak and near death, the diaphragm continued its strong movements, to make the body breathe. She became aware of how strong our instinct to breathe is – and that the diaphragm is at the very centre of this. Her second experience was visiting a family member in hospital who was on a respirator, the violence of which was overriding the natural breathing rhythm of the body. These are disturbing images, but they illuminate how the breath and in particular the diaphragm (the breathing muscle) lie at the very core of our being, making even clearer the reason why the Romans referred to the diaphragm as the "*bridge to the metaphysical*". Phyllis added that the diaphragm is in constant motion all of our lives and, like the heart, is never still.

A rigidly held sternum is a common fault in singers. Releasing the hold on the sternum enables it to rise freely, as a result of rib expansion, and so become part of an integrated movement. This supports Parow's description of the expansion of the body during inhalation.

Phyllis had observed that some students were more in-breath active than others and that some have to work harder at exhalation.

The *Psoas* muscle is so integrated with the *crura* (the origins of the diaphragm in the lower back) that it would not be possible in pathology to see where one begins and the other ends. The *Psoas* muscles extend right down into the legs. This is an important point, connecting the diaphragm anatomically with the legs.

Phyllis recommended '*Albinas on Anatomy*', a book of excellent anatomical illustrations for artists. (Pub. Dover 0-486-25836-+)

I left with one of Phyllis's comments ringing in my head:

“We are infinitely available to change.”

Chamber Choir Rehearsal, Dr Mark Shapiro

I was looking forward to watching this rehearsal but I was a little dismayed when I found out that it would be almost three hours long. It was at the end of a long and busy day and the rehearsal was scheduled to last until 8pm. However, not only did I enjoy it immensely but I was fascinated by the work of their choir master, Dr Mark Shapiro. I also thoroughly enjoyed listening to the singing of this well-tempered - and good-tempered - group of young singers.

Naming notes while singing them, whether numerically or by their letters, is a great aid to pitching intervals and to working out relationships and tonality in the music. He formed the choir into a circle to work on text with them, singing questions at them to which the answer was the text in the repertoire. This resulted in an emotional/dramatic response to the text which was very effective (Monteverdi: *Arianna a Naxos*). The text was also worked on in a contemporary way; he spoke the contemporary paraphrase of the Italian text: “Call this a crown? It sucks, actually!” which the choir repeated with great gusto. This use of modern paraphrasing meant that the students didn't only understand the texts emotionally but they thoroughly enjoyed the exercise too. A question and answer approach is something I could use in my own performance classes. He also encouraged them use gesture to define the meaning of the Italian text and to aid memorisation.

Mistakes were sometimes made into a joke. At one point the sopranos came in on the tenor entry, so he made the tenors chant: “Don't rain on my parade!” To which the rest of the choir responded: “No, we won't!” This way, all become involved in the choir's progress and learning – all remained involved and energised, even when others were being corrected. It was also fun, energised and positive.

Dr Shapiro would break off the phrase if he felt that a singer had not prepared the breath adequately before beginning (“Complete the breath before you sing – don’t just amble into the tone”).

In the Monteverdi text, “*Tu, l’un e l’altro*” he wanted differentiation between the words *un* and *altro* (“one” and “the other”) and used left and right hand gestures to define this. The words were to be sung in two distinct musical gestures and he was very insistent that each member of the choir find this. The use of gesture to define thought is a very powerful tool.

This rehearsal was full of energy and fun and the time passed very quickly.

Oberlin College

Monday, 4th April

The last time I was in Oberlin was in 2003 when I attended Richard Miller’s Institute of Vocal Performance Pedagogy, a one-week course held in the summer recess. Being in Oberlin feels like stepping back into 1950’s America; Gibson’s Grocery Store, which is jam-packed full of everything you could possibly need – I even found a packet of Fisherman’s Friends; the local cinema, which has apparently recently been renovated with help from the actor Danny Devito; and the town square surrounded by solid university buildings, some in the Italian style. Lorenzo’s Pizza House, which I remembered from my last visit, was buzzing with families and friends, and sitting at a table alone I was soon engaged in a lively conversation about Scotland with two elderly ladies. Walking back to my lodgings I felt as if I were on a film set – the looped wires of the street lighting and the concrete slabs of the sidewalk giving an ‘other-worldly’ feel to my evening walk.

Many American schools offer summer school programmes and both Peabody and Oberlin offered programmes in Italy. Looking at the notice board I made a note to check out their website: *Oberlin in Arezzo* (Daune Mahy, whose lessons and classes I would be observing, teaches on this course). This summer, from June 5th – July 6th 2011, they would be producing two operas, *Don Giovanni* and *La Finta Giardiniera*.

CCM Cincinnati

Thursday, 7th April

Lessons observed with Professor William McGraw

Professor McGraw used humour in his lessons, creating an energised and focused atmosphere in his studio. He was extremely supportive and encouraging. Lessons began with a discussion about recent singing activities, auditions, competitions, feedback, plans etc. This conversation created a relaxed but professional atmosphere and an amicable relationship between the student and their teacher. Taking time to do this at the beginning of the lessons established a two-way process; the student had control of how the lesson was developing, right from the start.

“Finding the positive in the poop” i.e. learning from negative experiences!

His student, baritone Louis Rosco, is a very talented young singer with an excellent voice; certainly a name to look out for in the future.

“Piano singing is qualified by the space you are singing in” (i.e. the venue). By this McGraw meant that there is no one way to sing piano nor is there one measurement of piano in singing. Much depends on the voice as well as the demands of the music.

He spent time in the lesson finding a consistency of ‘solid, core resonance’ and pointed out the importance of not pulling away from that place (which he ascribed to an area behind the eyes and in the masque).

We all have moments when we forget about the music because we are thinking only of technique. He called these “eye-glazing” or “survival” moments. We must try not to look vacant at such moments.

McGraw demonstrated very clearly the differences in timbre in his own voice and the ability to manoeuvre the tone further back or further forward simply by changing the shape of the vowel. He said that these differences were sometimes a matter of choice and depended not only on the requirements of the music but also of the acoustic environment. He explained that he had sung the vowel [a] very open on an E flat (*passaggio* area) at a recording session in a studio, but for the live opera performance he had to sing the same note more forward and direct with no messing about: “Sometimes one needs sheer projection and attempts at colouring go out of the window”.

He corrected some slight nasality and asked the student to lift the soft palate more. Saying [ɛ] as in ‘egg’ corrected depressing the back of the tongue.

If the vibrato rate gets wider in the lower register it is because the singer is pressurising his voice, probably because of a lack of perceived sound. “Accepting less sound lower down is vital to vocal health”.

“Talling-up” or the verticality of a vowel has to do with support and raising the palate.

Acute kinaesthetic awareness, subtleties, sharpening the focus – they are all small but important skills.

Singing is intention, i.e. thought must precede action.

Postscript

Shortly after I returned from the States I heard an interview on Radio 4 with a professional jockey. When asked about the key to his success he said: “If you hesitate before a jump, you’ve lost it. You have to go for it; it is all about confidence”. Much of the great teaching I observed during my research trip dealt with this aspect of performance: having courage as well as enthusiasm. A heightened kinaesthetic awareness is an important asset for a singer in order to process the technical information given by the teacher, but generosity and the intention to express and share music through the voice – that is something fundamental to the making of a singer.

Thanks

I would like to express thanks to my American colleagues for their generosity in allowing me to observe their lessons and taking the time to chat to me about their institutions and their teaching and for organising my visits to their schools. I would also like to thank all of the young singers who allowed me to observe a part of their learning journey.

Sincere thanks also go to the members of the English Speaking Union in the States who kindly looked after me on my trip – especially Suzanne Schweller and Mary Hamlin.

Finally, my thanks go to the Walter Hines Page Scholarship Trust, the English Speaking Union, the Educational Institute of Scotland and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama) for their generous support of my Scholarship visit, the fruits of which will hopefully benefit many young singers in years to come.

Helen Lawson, Glasgow 2011

Appendix

Suggested reading

Clifton Ware: *'Basics of Vocal Pedagogy'*, a concise book, recommended as reading material for students of voice. Publisher: McGraw, ISBN: 0-07-068289-5

'Albinas on Anatomy', Publisher: Dover 0-486-25836, a book for artists containing excellent anatomical illustrations.

German for Singers; a Textbook of Diction and Phonetics, by Odom/Schollum (Publ. Schirmer- includes cd) ISBN: 13-978-0-02-864601-5.

Tosi: *On the Art of Florid Song* (abridged version).

Marchesi, Lamperti, Caccini: *Treatise on Singing*

Lilli Lehmann: *How to Sing*

David Adams: *A Handbook of Diction for Singers: Italian: German: French* (Publisher: Oxford University Press).

Repertoire

Ligeti: Circles 1 & 2

Robert Schumann *Requiem*: the soprano aria is a wonderfully expansive piece.

Cavalli: *Dolce amor, bendato mio*

"Florida" (Publisher: Ditzen) arrangements of arie antiche for the fuller type of voice with more romantic piano accompaniments than the Schirmer '24 Songs and Arias' book.

Vaughan-Williams 'Four Last Songs' (to texts by Ursula Vaughan-Williams).

Quilter: *Come o come, my Heart's Delight*

Donaudi: *O del mio amato ben*

Art Song in English (Pub: Hal Leonard/Boosey & Hawkes) ISMN: M-051-93385-3

Dover Publication: '20th Century Art Song' containing British and American vocal works.

André Jolivet: *Pastorale Noël* (for soprano, flute, bassoon and harp)

Bach Cantata 202 (for light soprano);

Santo-Liquido: *Canto della sera* (one of 2 Italian songs in bel canto style)

American Song Repertoire:

Phyllis Bryn-Julson recommended the following:

“What is this Crying” by Charles Tomlinson Griffes poet, Fiona McLeod

Ballad of Baby Doe aria: “Gold is a fine thing”.

The songs of Amy Beech.

Repertoire on Oberlin College notice board from a student’s assessment recital programme:

Three Browning Songs Opus 44 by Mrs H. H. A. Beach (Phyllis Bryn-Julson also suggested this composer’s songs)

- The Year’s at the Spring
- Ah, love but a day
- I send my heart up to thee

Charles Ives: ‘Songs my mother taught me’; Mendelssohn: *Der Mond; Nachtlied; Neue Liebe*. (Daune Mahy’s Concert Class)

Repertoire: ‘The Muffin Aria’ from William Bolcrom’s opera “The Wedding”.

Biography

Helen Lawson A.R.C.M. (Hons), Soprano

Helen Lawson was born in Northumberland and studied singing at the Royal College of Music and the National Opera Studio in London. She was awarded several scholarships, including a Sir James Caird Travelling Scholarship, which enabled her to pursue further singing studies in Germany with Prof. Erik Werba at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Munich, and Prof. Konrad Richter at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Stuttgart.

Helen has appeared as soloist in opera houses both at home and abroad, including English National Opera; City of Birmingham Touring Opera; English Touring Opera; De Vlaamse Opera Antwerpen; Schlossfestspiele Zwingenberg/Heidelberg and Landestheater Thüringen. Among the roles she has performed are: Butterfly (Puccini: *Madama Butterfly*), Countess Almaviva (Mozart: *Le Nozze di Figaro*), Pamina (Mozart: *Die Zauberflöte*); Governess (Britten: *Turn of the Screw*); Tatiana (Tchaikovsky: *Eugen Onegin*), Echo (Richard Strauss: *Ariadne auf Naxos*) Solo Blumenmädchen (Wagner: *Parsifal*) and Senta (Wagner: *The Flying Dutchman*).

She has also appeared as soloist in concerts and oratorio, including performances of Britten's '*War Requiem*' and Verdi's '*Requiem*' at the Royal Albert Hall, conducted by Sir David Willcocks, as well as in song recitals in the UK and abroad.

Having taught for 10 years in German universities (Bayreuth and Bamberg), she moved to Glasgow in 2002 to take up the post of Senior Lecturer in Vocal Studies at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

Helen runs German Repertoire and Lied classes, breathing courses and individual vocal tuition and coaching at both post-graduate and under-graduate level. She trained as a breathing pedagogue in Germany (Osenberg/Parow) and attended Richard Miller's Institute of Vocal Performance Pedagogy at Oberlin College, USA.

In 2011 she will be visiting several institutions in the States as part of a research project, funded by the Walter Hines Page Scholarship, looking at the American approach to vocal training.