

Composing for Singers...as told by a singing composer

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I. The Interview

Range vs. Tessitura

- Passaggio: Italian for “passage” - areas of transition and instability in the voice
- Table of general/approximate passaggi¹

<i>Voice Type</i>	<i>Primo</i> passaggio	<i>Secondo</i> passaggio
Soprano	E4	F#5
Mezzo-soprano	F4	E5
Contralto (very rare)	G4	D5
Tenor	D4	G4
Baritone	B4	E4
Bass-baritone	A3	D4
Bass	Ab3 (G3)	Db4 (C4)

Strengths and weaknesses of the voice

Text and Language

- Importance of syllabic stress
- How to serve the text

Recital Placement and Purpose

...all lead to the Commissioner's thumbprint remaining on your music.

II. Longevity

Accessibility and “Singability” – in order to promote the possibility for future performances

Pursuing your own understanding of the voice

III. The Importance of Being Earnest

Affective new music – text is a privilege and a gift which makes vocal music unique and special.

“The priority of all vocal music...is text!” - Dr. William Lock: Professor Emeritus, Biola University

¹Table adapted from: Clifton Ware, *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy: The Foundations and Process of Singing* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998).
Everyone’s voice is different and so an individual’s passaggi may not correlate exactly to this table.

Additional Resources

Poetry

www.lieder.net

www.poetryfoundation.org (also has a wonderful app for iPhone and Android)

Vocal Repertoire

The Art of the Song Recital – Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag

Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music – Carol Kimball

Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature – Carol Kimball

The Anatomy of Melody – Alice Parker

www.hampsongfoundation.org

Vocal Mechanics

How to Sing – Lilli Lehmann

Structure of Singing – Richard Miller

Cantabile – Katharin Rundus

Basics of Vocal Pedagogy – Clifton Ware

Effective Setters of Text

English: Dominick Argento, Samuel Barber, William Bolcom, Benjamin Britten, Tom Cipullo, Aaron Copland, Kurt Erickson, Charles Griffes, Ivor Gurney, Daron Hagen, Michael Head, Jake Heggie, Lee Hoiby, Richard Hundley, Charles Ives, Libby Larsen, Lori Laitman, John Musto, Stephen Paulus, Ralph Vaughan Williams

French: Georges Auric, André Caplet, Cécile Chaminade, Claude Debussy, Henri Duparc, Franz Liszt, Francis Poulenc, Maurice Ravel

German: Fanny Hensel, Carl Loewe, Franz Liszt, Gustav Mahler, Felix Mendelssohn, Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, Richard Strauss, Hugo Wolf