

# Dynamics

*Carol Grimes*

To describe a person as having a dynamic personality, or a performer as *being* dynamic, would indicate energy, passion, movement & expression.

On the written score, the signs that specify the music be played very softly or very loudly, are the symbols or directions the musician reads in order to be able to interpret the so called 'dynamic range' of the composer's music. Part of the map, along side the melody, harmony and tempo.

Dynamics however, go deeper than the degrees of loudness, & are far more than the marks on a score. A singer is in essence, the *dunamikos*, from the Greek, meaning powerful, carrier of the *word*, & behind the word lies all emotion, a direct line of communication with others.

The voice is the first & primary means of interlocution & disclosure, & it is with our voice that we speak:- we sing, we cry, howl, laugh & weep, we croon & roar, whisper & moan.

To sing with heart, & to produce a dynamic performance, is more than simply acquiring good vocal technique, & far more than a collection of sung notes. To sing with your whole voice is to embody the whole person. Finding the many voices that lie within all of us, is the way to fully realising the power & passion inherent in the human voice.

A song is also a story, a tale told, & in order that the words hold meaning, the singer must *feel* the song & communicate that to the audience. If the song is telling a story of yearning or of elation, then surely the audience must share in that emotion, be witness to the story. If your song is one of pain, then your fully released voice expresses that pain.

The song should be truthful; sung with an understanding of that which the song is conveying. If the lyric means nothing to *you* the singer, then the song is not for you. Melody, harmony, lyric & rhythm are the foundations, but the song will need the emotional input from the singer in order to exist as a dynamic rendition, & an eloquent & inspiring performance.

The body contains the voice, & therefore the body is involved in this presentation of song or story. It is within the calligraphy of the body, the human map, that the history of our lives is stored as memory.

Memory is not *only* narrative, it is also materialised through sensations & feelings. Words are not applicable here. Not nearly enough. It is from this deep well of memory that we can draw upon our emotions, investing the songs with vitality & significance, thus finding the authentic realisation of the song, & its relationship to us both as singers & as audience.

A tense tightly held body resistant to the music, operating purely from the head, fighting the pulse & rhythm & denying access to the emotions, will result in a singing voice using only a fraction of its potential, & a delivery that has limited dynamic range. The message will be contrived & empty. A shallow performance.

In trusting the natural motion of voice and body, a compelling performance can be accomplished. To sing in a way that transmits only an educated singing technique & a polished & rehearsed repertoire, will impart a mere fraction of the singer's potential.

**T**o sing with emotional commitment, is a courageous & sometimes exposing experience, but one which is rewarded by the connection that one has made with the spectators, & the exhilaration of being at one with the music, & your heart & soul. Living in the music.

**V**ocal dynamics therefore, are the total embodiment of voice, soul & body; singing from a place of spontaneity & truth; connecting with the inner self, & flying with your voice in full allegiance with your persona in all of its unique temperaments.

**N**ervousness will often stand as a sentry, guarding the gateway, through which one must pass to personify an uninhibited & integrated performance. The stories of singers who have confessed to anxiety & insecurity before going onstage to face an audience, are numerous, & yet many of those same singers overcame these apprehensions when in the *flow* of a performance.. once the music 'takes them.' Dr. Footlights....etc.

**I**t is crucial therefore, for professional singers to find the resources within themselves in order to fully focus in on the voice in the body, & in doing so, avoiding the suppression of the full dynamic range of the voice. To stand in fear and rigidity will produce a rigid & fearful vocal delivery, obscuring all that is on the inside,& concealing the full voice lying in wait underneath the nervousness.

**B**reathing into the songs; inhabiting the melody, the lyric & the rhythm, a singer has the ability to create a whole vocal orchestra. A song can speak of tenderness & of anger, of humour & of hurting, & the human voice can whisper & holler, playing with the cadence, dancing with the melody, & intonating the full range of emotional possibility, bringing the songs to life.

**I**nvesting the songs with your understanding & presence, will bring the responses to you as a singer that will complete the circle that is the singer the song & the audience. The involvement of the whole voice is an experience that can be stimulating , dynamic & fulfilling.

**T**he joy that I have found in singing lies in the pursuit of the truthful utterance of who I am and what I feel. I have found in my singing voice a path towards being entirely myself.

**We are what we sing.**

## **“Everyone Sang”**

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;  
and I was filled with such delight  
as prisoned birds must find in freedom winging wildly across the white Orchards and dark  
green fields;  
on, on, and out of sight.  
Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted,  
and beauty came like the setting sun.  
My heart was shaken with tears;  
and horror drifted away....  
Oh but everyone was a bird;  
and the song was endless,  
and the singing will never be done.

**Siegfried Sasson.**