

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO "FACH"

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ABSTRACT

The Fach voice classification system is a complicated and diverse system used by the opera world to help singers better identify what roles and repertoire that would be most successful at performing. Since this is such a complex system, I have created a guide to accompany this thesis for undergraduate students to use in order to introduce the subject in a simpler and more digestible way.

Introduction

When I was a sophomore at TCU, I went out to dinner with my friend, who was a senior about to graduate with her Bachelor's in Music, and we got to talking about opera studio and being cast in the opera. She said to me "I will never be cast in that role because I'm a lyric, not a coloratura." I looked at her with confusion, I had no idea what she meant; instead of listening to what she was saying I was thinking, "what is a lyric" or a "coloratura?" I asked her and she told me that there are at least 10 different types of sopranos and she gave me a description of each. I remember her telling me all of this, but it in one ear and out the other because I was still processing the fact that there was an even further breakdown of voice types past soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass. This was my first introduction to the "Fach," system, but I had no idea until recently, when I was thinking about thesis topics and came across the subject again in my research. The Fach voice classification system is such a complex, dense, and important subject, yet it usually isn't introduced to the student, in a classroom setting, until graduate school. Naturally, I when I found out about this system, I started asking my voice teacher what type of soprano I was and, when my voice is fully mature, what type would I be then, because I wanted to know where I fit in the world of opera and classical singing. This is actually very common behavior for younger singers, to be eager about wanting to label themselves and wanting to know where they fit in. Living in a world dominated with social media and portraying your best self online in order to fit in, it comes as no surprise that psychologists such as Oksanen et al. (2020) and Nicole Mirkin (2016), have begun to research what the results of these behaviors are and what they could cause or prevent for the individual in the future. With all of this information in mind, I thought it would be beneficial to create a guide for young singers, starting at the undergraduate level, that not only eases them into the world of the Fach system, but also gives

the comfort of having a label so they can find roles and repertoire examples to practice and research. Furthermore, it is for business, not art or pedagogy, it's nothing more than a loose guide in the US, and a firmer system of classification in Europe.

History of the Fach System

Fach is a German word meaning “between a specific voice classification.” The purpose of the Fach, system is to be used as a reference point in order to recognize voice types based on their vocal drama, size, and range (Allen, pg. i). Vocal classification, as a concept, developed in Italy in the 1600s with the birth of opera (Allen, pg. i). Between the different roles opera provided and the German vocal model, outlined in Rudolf Kloiber’s *Handbuch der Oper*, the beginnings of the Fach system were brought into fruition. During the Bel Canto era (18th-19th C.) the emphasis of virtuosic solo singing and musical onstage drama became more popular and so did the need for specific voices. It was a common practice, at the beginning of this era, for many prominent composers to write music for specific singers based on their individual abilities and specific talents and as a result of this development, vocal categories became “the archetypes for dramatic characters” (Allen, pg.8). Due to the specificity of the music, because it was modeled after a specific individual’s abilities, these “archetypes” were limited and labeled due to the techniques, range and sounds these singers could produce.

In the early stages of classical singing, specifically in the church, *castrati* were the prolific singers throughout the 18th century featured in dramatic works and leading opera roles. Since castrati have higher, genuine soprano or mezzo-soprano voices due to a lack of hormonal development, they were used as an obvious replacement for females in both church choir and in dramatic onstage performances. A *castrato* voice was “comparable to that of today’s trained

mezzo-soprano voice” and they were “paragons of vocal technique whose style influenced female singers for generations to come” (Allen, pg. 11). These men were very much an influence on the beginning “archetypes for dramatic characters.” After about 1800, after over 200 years of being used for choir and on the stage, the castrati fell out of popularity. This was in part to both the inhumanity of treatment the castrati faced as well as the increasing popularity, love, and accessibility of opera and the female singers that emerged with it.

With the decline of the castrati at the beginning of the 19th century, female singers were beginning to step into the roles these men one held. These women, known as the first “prima donnas,” were known for their lower voices and their high notes that were “the products of art rather than nature,” (Allen, pg. 13). With all of these abilities combined, these women were able to sing a variety of virtuosic roles that were written specifically for them. “Combined with the development of the full-voiced *tenor di forza* [in comparison to castrati] and the gradual development of the higher-voiced sopranos, more specific categories evolved” (Allen, Pg. 13). As the ranges and abilities of women singers began to grow, both mezzo-soprano and soprano, along with the growth of the opera orchestra, the need for a change in vocal composition was prevalent. This led to the early 19th c. era of music which was fronted by composers such as Beethoven, Verdi, and Weber. These composers wrote music that not only highlighted the abilities of the singers that would sing these roles/pieces, but also challenged them. Some examples would be what has come to be known as Verdi’s *Verdi Line*, as well as Wagner’s *vocal lines*.

Due to the compositional and vocal technique evolution that occurred in the early 19th c., emphasis on emotion, character, musical cooperation and dramatic vocal declamation, divergent schools of thought regarding “voices, voice training and voice classification” (Allen, pg. 15)

began to emerge. These new evolutions encouraged theorist and musicologist Rudolf Kloiber to write his *Handbuch der Oper* where he emphasized the need to consider these new operatic works from all aspects as well as acknowledge the “question of pragmatic instrumentation” or “matching the proper voice to each role” (Allen, pg. 16). In his handbook, Kloiber split different roles into *Fachs*, or “subjects,” where they would be defined by the role’s characterizing [vocal tones](#), [vocal quality](#), [size](#) and [volume](#), and physical appearance in Germany (IPASource). This system of classification became important because it would be used as a reference tool to facilitate casting (IPASource). Kloiber split the voices into 6 divisions --- soprano, mezz-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass--- but also acknowledges that a “dramatic voice” contrasts with a Wagner style “lyric voice” and divided further into “fach” or “subjects” and thus the term used for voice classification came into fruition (Allen, pg. 17). This system has been used and developed since the early to mid-19th century and has proven to be “95% accurate for every voice of normal operatic quality and size. The other 5% are the roles that vary from person to person through individual vocal peculiarities” (IPASource).

Fach Categories Breakdown

The modern adaptation of the Fach system from Rudolph Kloiber’s *Handbuch der Oper* uses the same characterizations for the different voice types: tone, quality, size, and volume. With these characterizations, he divided up the major voice categories into the *Fachs* they belong to; the major categories included soprano, mezz-soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass, with the addition of 2 more subcategories, countertenor and bass-baritone. When deciding which sub-category one belongs to, the singer’s normal [range](#), [registers](#), [timbre](#), [weight/volume](#), [vocal challenges](#), and for some, due to the nature of this sub-category’s operatic roles available, acting

challenges are analyzed. With all of these defining factors coming into play, the sub-category divisions came to be. Since this voice classification system is used around the world to classify voices, there are different names for each sub-category in English, Italian, French, and German. In the descriptions of each below, I will put all 4 names in the above order, but if I refer back to any specific sub-category, it will be with the English name. In addition to listing the defining characteristics for each sub-category for each major category, there will also be role and repertoire examples in order to give a reference beyond just a written description. (Information in the following tables: (Singer's Edition, pgs. 8-11), (Cotton, pgs. 155-163)), (Scott-Stoddart), and (Opera Arias for Countertenor) and (The Aria Database). Below, for every chart, both male and female, the range pitch notation being used is called [the Helmholtz pitch notation](#) and the "normal range" is defined as what the singer can sing comfortable and consistently for the roles modeled for this sub-category, without taking into account the possible outliers.

The first major category is the most complex: sopranos. There are 10 different types of sopranos defined as a part of the modern Fach system: Soubrette, Light Lyric [Coloratura](#), Light [Lyric](#), Full Lyric Coloratura, Full Lyric, Light [Dramatic](#) Coloratura, Light Dramatic ([Spinto](#)), Full Dramatic Coloratura, Full Dramatic, and High Dramatic.

Sopranos

Soubrette/Soubrette/Soubrette/Spielsopran: "Delicate, supple voice, needs a dainty appearance and be a skillful actress"

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Susanna from *Marriage of Figaro* (Mozart): Act II "Venite inginocchiatevi"

Sesto from *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (Handel): Act II "L'angue offeso mai riposa"

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c'--- c'''	Good top clear middle Weak low	tender	light	flexible	Gracious look, skillful actress, good language work

Light Lyric Coloratura/Soprano leggero-lirico/Soprano léger/Koloratursoubrette: “Very agile, soft voice”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Tytania from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Britten): Act II “Be kind and courteous”

Agrippina from *Agrippina* (Handel): Act I “L'alma mia frà le tempeste”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c'--- f'''	Great top	slender	soft	Very agile	

Light Lyric/Soprano leggero-lirico/Soprano-lyrique/Lyrischer Sopran: “Soft, mellow voice with a great upper register and phrasing”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Helena from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Britten): Act I “I am your spaniel”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c'--- c'''	Good top Weaker low	Mellow	Soft	Exquisite phrasing	

Full Lyric Coloratura/Soprano leggero-lirico/Soprano-demicaractère/Lyrischer

Koloratursopran: “Very agile, a soft voice with a great high range”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Venus from *Ascanio in Alba* (Mozart): Act I “L’ombre de rami tuoi”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c’--- f”	Great top	Slender and warm	Medium	agile	

Full Lyric/Soprano Lirico/Soprano-lyrique/Lyrischer Sopran: “Soft voice with a beautiful melting quality with noble lines”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Helena from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Britten): Act I “I am your spaniel”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c’--- c”	Solid ranges throughout	Mellow	Solid and secure, but not loud	Exquisite phrasing	

Light Dramatic Coloratura/Soprano drammatico/Soprano-dramatique/Dramatischer:

“Strong with a very flexible and agile voice”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Odabella from *Attila* (Verdi): Prologue “Allor che I forti corrono”

Fiordiligi from *Così fan tutte* (Mozart): Act I “Come scoglio”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c'---f'''	Good top	<i>brilliant</i>	strong	Flexible, agile, with dramatic penetration	

Light Dramatic (Spinto)/Soprano Lirico-spinto/Soprano-dramatique

(Falcon)/Jugendlich-dramatischer Sopran: “Stronger voice with more weight and power; ability to penetrate through an orchestra”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

The Marschallin from *Der Rosenkavalier* (Strauss): Act I “Da geht er hin”

Donna Elvira from *Don Giovanni* (Mozart): Act I “Ah! Chi mi dice mai”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c'---b'''	More powerful lower than Lyric's but not as solid as a Dramatic's	Darker than a Lyric's	Lyric, with more volume	Can create dramatic climaxes, flexible dynamics	

Full Dramatic Coloratura/Soprano drammatico/Soprano-dramatique/Dramatischer:

“Agile voice with great heights; dramatic ability to *penetrate*”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Donna Anna from *Don Giovanni* (Mozart): Act I “Don Ottavio...Or sai chi l'onore”

Cleopatra from *Giulio Cesare* (Handel): Act I “Non disperar”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c'--- f''	Good top and a strong middle	<i>metallic</i>	Very strong	Flexible, dramatic penetration	

Full Dramatic/Soprano drammatico/ Falcon/ Dramatischer Sopran: “Metallic voice with great volume and ability to penetrate”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

The Prima Donna/Ariadne from *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Strauss): “Es gibt ein Reich”

Daphne from *Daphne* (Strauss): “Owie gerne blieb ich bei dir”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
b--- b ^b ''	Generous top, well-developed and rich middle, hefty low	Metallic and darker than a Spintos	Voluminous, bug, heavy, spacious	Great penetration, seldom asked to float high notes	

High Dramatic/Soprano drammatico/ Falcon/ Dramatischer Sopran: “Large, heavy, and expansive voice with well-developed middle and low registers”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Brünnhilde from *Die Götterdämmerung* (Wagner): Act III “Starke Scheite schichten mir dort”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
g---a''	Well-developed middle and low	metallic	Exceptionally strong	Great penetration	

Mezzo-sopranos

The next major category are the mezzo-sopranos. The mezzo-sopranos have fewer sub-categories with only 6: Soubrette Character, Light Lyric Coloratura, Light Lyric, Full Lyric Coloratura, Full Lyric, and Dramatic. For the purposes of charting these different subcategories, I will only be focusing on the most common 3: Light Lyric, Full Lyric, and Dramatic mezzo-sopranos

Light Lyric/Mezzo-soprano leggero-lirico/Mezzo-soprano/Koloratursoubrette: “A soft and agile voice; physically agile with good characterization”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Ginevra from *Ariodante* (Handel): Act I “Orrida a gl’occhi miei”

Dorabella from *Così fan tutte* (Mozart): Act I “Smanie implacabili”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
b---c”	Good top and even throughout	Slender	Soft	agile	Physically agile with good characterization

Full Lyric/Mezzo-soprano Lirico/Mezzo-soprano/Lyrischer Mezzosopran: “Flexible voice capable of characterization; skillful actress”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Dido from *Dido and Aeneas* (Purcell): Act I “Ah Belinda!”

Irina from *Lost in the Stars* (Weill): Act I “Trouble Man”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
g---b”	Solid throughout	Warm	Medium	Fluid	Good characterization

Dramatic/Mezzo-soprano drammatico/Falcon/Dramatischer Mezzosopran: “Agile, metallic and has a dark color, often develops later into the highly dramatic Fach (Soprano); good high notes”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Desideria from *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (Menotti): Act II “What does she ever do for you except light candles for your soul?”

Marchesa del Poggio from *Un Giorno di Regno* (Verdi): Act I “Grave a core innamorato... Se dee cader la vedova”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
g--- b ^b ”	Good top with an emphatic low	Metallic, darker and lush than a Dramatic Soprano	big	Stamina and dramatic climaxes	

Contraltos

Following the Mezzo-Sopranos are the Contraltos with even fewer sub-categories at only 4: Character, Coloratura, Lyric and Dramatic. However, the most common are Lyric and Dramatic.

Lyric/Contralto/Contralto/Tiefer Alt: “Full and dense voice with great depths in the lower register”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Florence from *Albert Herring* (Britten): Act I “Doctor Jessop’s midwife”

Cornelia from *Giulio Cesare* (Handel): Act I “Priva son d’ogni conforto”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
g---f”	Good low	Dark	Full	Less flexibility than a Mezzo-Soprano	

Dramatic/Contralto/Contralto/Dramatischer Alt: “Agile, metallic voice with well-developed high and low ranges; dramatic ability to penetrate”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Romeo from *I Capuleti ed I Montecchi* (Bellini): Act I “Se Romeo l’uccise in figlio”

The Witch from *Hänsel und Gretel* (Humperdinck): Act III “Hurr, hopp, hurr, hopp”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
g---f”	Good top and a great low	Dark and metallic	Full and thick	Dramatic penetration	

Countertenors

The next major category, the Countertenor, has the least with only 2 sub-categories: Coloratura and Lyric. Even though the Countertenor category can be split, it often is just categorized under “Countertenor” because it is not as common.

Countertenor/Alto or Tenorino/None/Sopranist: Variable and flexible voice with strong registers”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Xerxes from *Xerxes* (Handel): “Ombra mai fu”

Tolomeo from *Giulio Cesare* (Handel): Act II “Belle dee di questo core”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
f---a”	Strong throughout	Variable	Variable	Flexible	Mannered

Tenors

Next in the male voices are the Tenors which are split into 5 different sub-categories: Comic Character, Light Lyric, Full Lyric, Dramatic (Spinto), and Heroic.

Comic Character/Tenor buffo/Ténor bouffe/Spieltenor: “A clear and flexible voice; good with subtle characterization”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Don Basilio from *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Mozart): Act IV “In quegli anni”

Frédéric from *Mignon* (Thomas): Act II “Me voici dans son boudoir”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c--- b ^b ”	Mostly middle	Slender and clear	Medium	Flexible	Subtle characterization and good actor

Light Lyric/Tenore leggero/Ténor-léger/Hoher Tenor: “A soft, agile voice with a mellow timbre”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Alfredo Germont from *La Traviata* (Verdi): Act I “The ‘Brindisi’ or ‘Drinking Song’”

Hoffman from *Les Contes d’Hoffmann* (Offenbach): Act I “Allons! Courage et confiance...Ah! Vivre duex!”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c---d”	Great top with a weaker low	Mellow	Soft	Agile with a flexible top	

Full Lyric/Tenore Lirico/Ténor/Lyrischer Tenor: “A solid, but not overpowering voice with good lines”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Roberto from *Le Villi* (Puccini): Act II “Torna at felici”

Nadir from *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (Bizet): Act I “Je crois entendre encore”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c---c”	Solid throughout	Mellow	Solid but not loud	Good line	

Dramatic (Spinto)/Tenore Lirico-spinto/Ténor dramatique/Jugendlicher Heldentenor: “a strong, noble, metallic voice capable of both lyrical passages and dramatic climaxes”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Benjamin Pinkerton from *Madame Butterfly* (Puccini): Act I “Dovunque al mondo”

Faust from *Mefistofele* (Boito): Act I “Dai campi, dai prati”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c---c''	More solid lower than Lyrics	Noble, metallic, and darker than Lyrics	Strong	Can do both lyrical passages and dramatic climaxes	

Heroic/Tenor di forza/Ténor dramatique/Heldentenor: “A heavy, voluminous voice with good penetration”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Loge from *Das Rheingold* (Wagner): Act I “Umsonst sucht’ich”

Siegfried from *Die Walküre* (Wagner): Act I “Friedmund darf ich nicht heißen”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c--- b ^b	Strong middle and low	Baritonal	Heavy and voluminous	Good penetration	

Baritones

Following the Tenors are the Baritones, with 5 sub-categories: Character, Light Lyric, Full Lyric, Dramatic and Heroic. However, the most common are the Light Lyric Baritone and the Full Lyric Baritone.

Light Lyric/Baritono leggero-lirico/Bariton léger/Lyrischer Bariton: “A good actor with flexible and beautiful lines”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Pangloss from *Candide* (Bernstein): Appendix “Dear Boy”

Guglielmo from *Così fan tutte* (Mozart): Act I “Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c---a ^b	Great top	Slender	Soft	Flexible, beautiful lines	Good actor

Full Lyric/Baritono Lirico/Bariton/Kavalierbariton: “A well balanced heavy and powerful voice with the ability to change their color; good, subtle characterization”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Fritz from *Die Tote Stadt* (Korngold): Act II “Mein Sehnen, mein Wähnen”

Papageno from *Die Zauberflöte* (Mozart): Act I “Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
c---f [#]	Bright and powerful top with a good balance middle and low	Can change colors/vary	Heavy, spacious, and powerful	Good penetration	Good, subtle characterization

Bass-Baritones

Just like the Countertenor, the Bass-Baritone only has 2 sub-categories, lyric and dramatic, but they are categorized by their major category since they are uncommon.

Bass-Baritone/None/Basse de caractère/Charakterbass: “A big voice with a wide gamut of colors and dynamics; good at subtle characterization”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Bottom from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Britten): Act III “When my cue comes, call me”

King of Scotland from *Ariodante* (Handel): Act III “Al sen ti stringo”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
A ^b ---f’	Consistent throughout	Rich and wide gamut of colors	Big	Wide gamut of dynamics	Subtle characterization

Basses

The last major category for the men, as well as the Fach system, is the Bass, comprised of 3 sub-categories: Comic, Lyric, and Dramatic.

Comic/Basso-buffo/Basse-bouffe/Spielbass: “A clear, flexible voice capable of consistent vocal character; good, humorous actor”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Don Alfonso from *Così fan tutte* (Mozart): Act I “Vorrei dir, e cor non ho”

Don Pasquale from *Don Pasquale* (Donizetti): Act I “Ah, un foco insolita”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
F---e’	Vocal character throughout	Clear	From slender to voluminous	Flexible	Good actor, humor

Lyric/Basso cantante/Basse-chantante/Hoher Bass: “Warm, medium voice capable of good lines”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Attila from *Attila* (Verdi): Act I “Mentre gonfiarsi l’anima pareva”

Leporello from *Don Giovanni* (Mozart): Act I “Notte e giorno faticar”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
G---f’	Great top	Warm	Medium	Good line	

Dramatic/Basso profundo/Basse/Seriöser Bass: “A dark, rich and full voice capable of a wide gamut of dynamics”

Role and Repertoire Examples:

Boris Godunov from *Boris Godunov* (Mussorgsky): Prologue “Skorvit dusha!”

King Dodon from *Le Coq d’Or* (Rimsky-Korsakov): Act II “Shto za strashnaja kartina”

Normal Range	Registers	Timbre	Weight/Volume	Vocal Challenges	Acting Challenges*
E ^b ---d’	Great low	Dark and rich	Full and thick	Wide gamut of dynamics	

The Need for Labels

The concept of the Fach system is an important topic because “young singers are often confused and over-eager to self-label” (Allen, pg. i). However, for this generation, I believe it goes beyond just wanting to know where they fall within the Fach system and into something more psychological: the incessant exposure of social media. Psychological research has been looking into the impact that social media has both on children’s development as well as your self-perception and mental health and they have found a sizeable impact.

Some researchers estimate that the more exposure children have to social media, the more negative effects they experience towards their mental health and self-perception. The Social Media Literacy Program (SMLP) was created with the “anticipation that adolescents (exploring the many facets of their identity through social media platforms) who participated in the program would exhibit a reduction in anxiety symptoms and an increase in self-esteem, thereby reducing mental health outcomes associated with anxiety and low self-esteem, and in turn enable the development of a solid identity, which can transpire into adulthood” (Mirkin, 2016). Through the mission of SMLP, one can see that social media can cause inner turmoil in developing teens which could, unfortunately result in long-term effects. Society has beaten into this generation the need to be perfect and marketable online that it is causing stress and anxiety because we aren’t important if we can’t be a part of said category.

The concept behind social media is to be able to share your life virtually and make friends with people you have common interests with or keep up with people you already know. When you “like” certain pages or “follow” certain people, you are, in turn, labeling yourself as a supporter of “x-concept” or a non-supporter of “y-concept.” What a lot of people don’t know is that companies can create targeted ads based on your likes and dislikes in order to increase the probability you will buy from them. In theory, this sounds like a genius, fool-proof plan; it can come at a price. Christopher Summers conducted research based on “behavioral targeting” of internet-based ads. What he found was that “behaviorally targeted ads lead consumers to make adjustments to their self-perceptions to match the implied label; these self-perceptions then impact behavior” (Summers, 2016). Because of the amount of time, we as a generation in particular, spend on social media sharing our interests, likes, dislikes, etc. we create these categories and labels for ourselves that are so defined, ad companies can target us.

. Taylor et. al (2020) conducted a study where they tested “how and when children develop an understanding of group boundaries have implications for conflict resolution” (Taylor et. al, 2020). What the researchers did was they split these children from Northern Ireland by gender and community background (independence vs remain a part of UK) and were shown 2 photos from various media platforms in groups and of the 2 photos in each group, one represented Irish culture and the other represented British culture, and then they were asked to categorize them (either Irish or British). What the researchers found was the older the children were and the more exposure they had, over time, to different cultures, the easier it was for them to separate and identify with one or the other. This study is positive evidence towards the Social Identity Development Theory (SIDT) which is a “particularly helpful framework to explain when and how children develop a sense of social groups” (Taylor et. al, 2020). “Social identification is based on the fact that people have a social need to belong” (Oksanen et. al, 2020). When people use social media, they highlight the best parts of themselves, they create something called a “social media identity bubble.” These bubbles contain the person’s self-esteem, social belonging, identity, and uncertainty reduction (Oksanen, 2020). Just like in the 3D world, people on social media have the tendency to identify others and form groups; it’s just a new place for the person to belong. Being a singer, or in the arts and performing arts industries in general, you have to market yourself and find things that set you apart from other people in your industry. Knowing your Fach could help you diversify yourself and give insight into what roles and repertoire you would be the most successful at.

The Beginner’s Guide to Fach

Throughout my degree in the School of Music, I had heard about the Fach Classification system only a handful of times, and if anyone explained it to me, it was such a daunting task for both the person explaining and myself; it is a lot of information. I want to create a beginner's guide to the Fach system, something that introduces the subject to undergraduate students in a simplified, digestible way. As a singer, you have to build your brand and market yourself, and I think that capitalizing on the knowledge of a Fach to know what roles to audition for and repertoire to sing would only help them. For example, if you are a female freshman with a lower range, with a warm, medium voice, there is a good chance your Fach is a Full Lyric Mezzo-soprano. As a disclaimer, your voice will change as you mature, and your Fachs may change, but this guide would just be used as a roadmap to track their progress and give role and repertoire examples along the journey.

I interviewed Dr. James Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Voice and Voice Pedagogy at TCU, and a NCVS Certified Vocologist, and asked him his thoughts on the Fach classification system as a whole and his thoughts on creating a guide to the system for undergraduate students. I asked him if he has students who come into his studio asking him what type of voice they have. He said, "Few of my young students (in undergrad) know the Fach system and are largely operating on the SATB model from high school. Grad students will typically have more interest in this – sometimes their vocal trajectory is clear, sometimes it's not." The Fach classification system is a concept that is most commonly first introduced in a graduate academic setting, which makes sense as to why more graduate students show interest in the Fach label. In regard to the generational need to be labeled, I asked him his opinion on that, and he agreed saying "Once students learn about the Fach system or the classification system in musical theater, they automatically want to belong and can often become fixated on this idea." While I agree with Dr.

Rodriguez on a student's probable fixation, I want to reiterate that this guide will simply be a way for an undergraduate student to learn about and familiarize themselves with the system, the self-labeling will just serve as a fun way to track their progress while learning the system; it is by no means binding. Also, since the Fach system is more important and relevant, in its practical use, graduate students could benefit from the guide as well.

Conclusion

The Fach voice classification system is beneficial for the young singer because it allows them to identify with a voice type and capitalize on their strengths and be aware of and work on their weaknesses. The guide I have created to accompany this information, "A Beginner's Guide to Fach," will be beneficial because the user will be able to these things: identify their voice type, identify their strengths and isolate their weaknesses. Most importantly, it will also allow them to keep track of their individual progress by being a reference point as their voice matures and changes. Since the Fach system can be daunting, especially when the information is given all at once, this guide will help the student get familiar with the subject at their own pace. There will be a self-labeling aspect, but it will be for the purposes of making the learning process more personal and engaging. There will also be a disclaimer reminding the student to involve their teacher to make sure that their voice is progressing in the direction it should be, not what the singer prefers.

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Glossary

Castrati: Young Italian boys sold to churches and schools for singing. They were castrated in the hope to keep their falsetto voices; most became deformed and lost their falsetto voices through puberty

- Falsetto: (male voice) specific timbre or vocal sound in the male upper-range that is imitative of upper-range female voice quality

Tone: unique color, sound and/or timbre of your singing voice

Quality: whether a singer's voice is harsh, breathy, or nasally.

Size: large and full voice vs small and slender voice

Range: full spectrum of notes that a singer's voice is able to produce, starting from the bottommost note and reaching to the uppermost note

Register: a particular series of tones that possess the same quality and that are produced in the same vibratory pattern of the vocal folds within a certain range or series of pitches

Repertoire: a stock of plays, dances, or pieces that a company or a performer knows or is prepared to perform

Timbre: the quality of "color" of tone being produced by the singer

Weight/Volume: the perceived "lightness" or "heaviness" of a singing voice

- Lyric: lighter voices with smooth, silky, mellow, sensitive, warm, bright and graceful timbres
- Coloratura: light with a great deal of high-end agility, and are capable of handling florid, elaborately ornamented or embellished vocal passages
- Dramatic: large, powerful, strong, vigorous and rich, and can sing over a full orchestra or choir with a darker and heavier timbre

Vocal Challenges: skills that a singer can execute easily and well

Helmholtz pitch notation: a pitch notation that uses a prime system instead of numbers



Spinto: medium vocal weight with a more robust and full sound compared to lyrics, but not as full as dramatics; brightness and height of a lyric with the ability to cut through a full orchestra

Penetrate/Resonance: the quality in a sound of being deep, full, and reverberating

(O'Connor, 2020)