

**THE HEAD VOICE AND  
OTHER  
PROBLEMS: PRACTICAL  
TALKS ON SINGING**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649450824

The Head Voice and Other Problems: Practical Talks on Singing by D. A. Clippinger

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**D. A. CLIPPINGER**

**THE HEAD VOICE AND  
OTHER  
PROBLEMS: PRACTICAL  
TALKS ON SINGING**



# THE HEAD VOICE AND OTHER PROBLEMS

## PRACTICAL TALKS ON SINGING

BY  
D. A. CLIPPINGER

*Author of*  
SYSTEMATIC VOICE TRAINING  
THE ELEMENTS OF VOICE CULTURE

1.00



BOSTON  
OLIVER DITSON COMPANY  
NEW YORK CHICAGO  
CHAS. H. DITSON & Co. LYON & HEALY

FOR THE PRESS.

Ms. 391. 37.5



*Copyright MCMXVII*  
**BY OLIVER DITSON COMPANY**  
*International Copyright Secured*

To  
MY STUDENTS  
*Past, Present and Future*

## INTRODUCTION

---

The following chapters are the outgrowth of an enthusiasm for the work of voice training, together with a deep personal interest in a large number of conscientious young men and women who have gone out of my studio into the world to engage in the responsible work of voice teaching.

The desire to be of service to them has prompted me to put in permanent form the principles on which I labored, more or less patiently, to ground them during a course of three, four, or five years. The fact that after having stood the "grind" for that length of time they are still asking, not to say clamoring, for more, may, in a measure, justify the decision to issue this book. It is not an arraignment of vocal teachers, although there are occasional hints, public and private, which lead me to believe that we are not altogether without sin. But if this be true we take refuge in the belief that our iniquity is not in-born, but rather is it the result of the educational methods of those immediately preceding us. This at least shifts the responsibility.

Words are dangerous things, and are liable at any moment to start a verbal conflagration difficult to control. Nowhere is this more likely to occur than in a discussion of voice training.

From a rather wide acquaintance with what has been said on this subject in the past hundred years, I feel perfectly safe in submitting the proposition that the human mind can believe anything and be conscientious in it.

Things which have the approval of ages emit the odor of sanctity, and whoever scoffs does so at his peril. Charles Lamb was once criticised for speaking disrespectfully of the equator, and a noted divine was severely taken to task for making unkind remarks about hell. Humanity insists that these time honored institutions be treated with due respect. I have an equal respect for those who believe as I do and those who do not; therefore if anything in this book is not in accord with popular opinion it is a crack at the head of the idol rather than that of the worshipper.

There is no legislative enactment in this great and free country to prevent us from *believing* anything we like, but there



should be some crumbs of comfort in the reflection that we cannot *know* anything but the truth. One may believe that eight and three are thirteen if it please him, but he cannot know it because it is not true. Everything that is true has for its basis certain facts, principles, laws, and these are eternal and unchangeable. The instant the law governing any particular thing becomes definitely known, that moment it becomes undebatable. All argument is eliminated; but while we are searching for these laws we are dealing largely in opinions, and here the offense enters, for as Mr. Epictetus once said, "Men become offended at their opinion of things, not at the things themselves." We can scarcely imagine any one taking offense at the multiplication table, neither is this interesting page from the arithmetic any longer considered a fit subject for debate in polite society, but so far as we know this is the only thing that is immune.

Our musical judgments, which are our opinions, are governed by our experience; and with the growth of experience they ripen into solid convictions. For many years I have had a conviction that voice training is much simpler and less involved than it is generally considered. I am convinced that far too much is made of the vocal mechanism, which under normal conditions always responds automatically. Beautiful tone should be the primary aim of all voice teaching, and more care should be given to forming the student's tone concept than to that of teaching him how to control his throat by direct effort. The controlling power of a right idea is still much underestimated. The scientific plan of controlling the voice by means of mechanical directions leaves untouched the one thing which prevents its normal, automatic action, namely tension.

But, some one inquires, "If the student is singing with rigid throat and tongue would you say nothing about it?" I would correct it, but not by telling him to hold his tongue down. A relaxed tongue is always in the right place, therefore all he needs to learn about the tongue is how to relax it.

It has been hinted that he who subscribes to Dr. Fillebrown's declaration that "The process of singing is psychologic rather than physiologic" has nothing tangible to work with. Now tone concept and musical feeling are absolutely essential to singing, and they are definite entities to one who has them. All musical temperaments must be vitalized. Imaginations

\**Resonance in Singing and Speaking*, by Thomas Fillebrown.

must be trained until they will burst into flame at the slightest poetic suggestion. Musical natures are not fixed quantities. They are all subject to the law of growth. Every vocal student is an example of the law of evolution. Few people find it easy in the beginning to assume instantly a state of intense emotion. These things are habits of mind which must be developed, and they furnish the teacher with definite problems.

To repeat, *the tone is the thing, and how it sounds* is what determines whether it is right or wrong. And so we come back again to the ear, which is the taste. Does it please the ear? If so, is the ear reliable? Not always. If all teachers were trying for the same tone quality there would be no need of further writing on the subject, but they are not. On the contrary no two of them are trying for exactly the same quality. Each one is trying to make the voice produce his idea of tone quality, and the astounding thing about the human voice is that for a time at least, it can approximate almost anything that is demanded of it. If a voice is ruined, the ear of the teacher is directly responsible. It is useless to try to place the blame elsewhere.

Truth is always simple. If it seems difficult it is due to our clumsy way of stating it. Thought, like melodies, should run on the line of the least resistance. In the following pages I have eschewed all mystifying polysyllabic verbiage, and as Mark Twain once said, have "confined myself to a categorical statement of facts unincumbered by an obscuring accumulation of metaphor and allegory."

It is hoped that this book will be useful. It is offered as a guide rather than as a reformer. It aims to point in the right direction, and "do its bit" in emphasizing those things which are fundamental in voice training. Whatever is true in it will reach and help those who need it. Nothing more could be asked or desired.



Kimball Hall, Chicago.  
May, 1917.

## CONTENTS

---

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	VI
I. VOICE PLACING . . . . .	1
II. THE HEAD VOICE . . . . .	9
III. A GENERAL SURVEY OF THE SITUATION . . . . .	28
IV. HINTS ON TEACHING . . . . .	38
V. THE NATURE AND MEANING OF ART . . . . .	64
VI. SINGING AS AN ART . . . . .	70
VII. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SONG . . . . .	80
VIII. HOW TO STUDY A SONG . . . . .	86
IX. SCIENTIFIC VOICE PRODUCTION . . . . .	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	101