SIXTY YEARS ON THE BENCH
From *The Modern Singing Master:*
Essays in Honor of Cornelius L. Reid

The very thought of being honored by a Festschrift, gratifying as it may be, comes as a complete surprise. When I began teaching over sixty years ago, my motivation was simply a love of singing and a desire to spend a lifetime probing the mysteries of the singing voice. Little did I suspect that my personal curiosity into the workings of the singing voice would prove to be so far-reaching. Certainly, I had no idea that my teaching would extend beyond the mere giving of voice lessons and touch the lives of so many in such a profound way.

I was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on February 7, 1911. From the beginning the cards seemed to be stacked against me. As my father reported to me many years later, I was not expected to live. I was brought up at a time when whatever the doctor and the minister said, that was the final word. This did not work to my advantage. A current medical fad at that time was to give infants so much food, so many times a day, and no more. Unfortunately, my mother followed this instruction to the letter. I screamed and howled, driving everyone crazy, but nothing was done about it. My grandmother intervened, saying that all I needed was more nourishment – but that advice was not acted upon.

I was not a happy baby under the circumstances, but fortunately for me, my mother came down with peritonitis and could not take care of me, so off I was sent to a Swedish wet nurse. That did it! Months later I came home robust and apparently in full health.

Contentment, however, was not to be my lot. Soon I was sent off to kindergarten, and again, my troubles began. The teacher assigned was a Miss Weylan, whose demeanor was as rough and threatening and disagreeable as her voice. She terrified me! I clearly remember throughout that school year crawling into bed with my mother and father, pleading with them not to send me to school. Nevertheless, bathed in tears, off I was sent. As if this was not bad enough, lo and behold, when I was promoted to the first grade, Miss Weylan again put in an appearance. That finished any hope of classroom learning for me. Put me in a classroom with a teacher to the very day and I will freeze mentally and psychologically.

If Miss Weylan had been a trial to me, I certainly became a trial to all who attempted to instruct me. I did, however, have one opportunity to avenge myself. At one point when I was twelve years of age, a music teacher was imported to give music lessons at my grammar school. Pitch pipe in hand, she went from student to student, testing whether they could match pitches. When she reached my desk and played a note, I responded by droning some vague frequency being either somewhat sharp or below the pitch. After a few futile attempts the teacher gave up and I was placed in the tone-deaf section at the back of the room.

This was fine, except that my regular classroom teacher was Episcopalian. For some reason or other on one occasion she decided to attend an Evensong service at Trinity Church, Wall Street and Broadway, in New York. By chance, the anthem for that afternoon was Schubert's The Almighty (Die Allmacht). In this choral arrangement the B section was to be sung by a solo soprano, which happened to be me! She had blown my cover!

The trauma of those school years was alleviated somewhat because I had three important outlets – singing, sports, and reading. Since my academic failures followed me

to Dickenson High School, where I spent my freshman year, it was decided, since my older brother had attended Pennington Prep School and graduated with honors, that perhaps this would instill in me a greater love of learning. This proved an unmitigated disaster. Immediately upon arriving on the campus, I was pledged to a fraternity, Theta Phi. Now, instead of Miss Weylan, I had this to contend with. As a pledgee, there were certain obligations to be fulfilled in order to become a member, none of which were to my liking. I didn't like the idea of my behind being paddled (I submitted to it but once and that was enough) I certainly was not going to clean the room of a fraternity member and I refused to step off the sidewalk every time a fraternity member passed by. So I was blackballed

None of this boded well for my future as a scholar. I was not only blackballed, but members of the fraternity wouldn't even speak to me. At that time, in that school, if one was not a member of a fraternity, they were labeled an oddball and generally avoided. It was a lonesome time.

As it turned out, my athletic skills brought about a change in attitude, on their part, not mine. I made the varsity baseball team, and that was a big thing. Fraternities, it seemed, were 'graded' on the umber of lettermen that were on their roster. So, all of a sudden, Cornelius Reid became socially acceptable. But I would have none of it, and at the end of the year left school and formal education forever.

What seems to have emerged out of this background is a distrust of all authority. If not for this distrust, I would have gone through life accepting as valid anything that was commonly believed to be true. This means that my 60 years on the bench would have been spent passing on to my students, unquestioned and unsupportable concepts instead of searching for a verifiable truth. Standing my ground within the framework of a rigidly set prep school atmosphere was good training for the future. My decision to go it alone prepared me to follow a path I knew to be correct despite the abuse and criticism I would receive because I was presumptuous enough to promote ideas contrary to popular beliefs.

On the plus side of my upbringing, I was fortunate in having sound parental guidance to act as a stabilizing force. Music making was important to our family and from my earliest recollections, singing has been a dominant part of my life. I recall with certainty at the age of six looking over my mother's shoulder and singing as she played the piano from a volume entitled *Favorite Songs*, some classical others semi-classical, while my father played the violin.

In fact, I seemed always to be singing, so much so that a neighbor five houses removed stopped my mother on the street one day and remarked, "Your son has a beautiful singing voice." She then strongly urged my mother to contact the Choir Master of Trinity Church, New York City for the purpose of entering me into the choir so that I could have formal musical training. My mother, although a devout Methodist and despite her hesitation in sending her son to an Episcopal Church, nevertheless thought that this was a proper thing to do and straightway made an appointment for me to audition for the Music Director. This marked the beginning of my formal singing career.

From the age of nine, when I became accepted as a chorister in the choir of Trinity Church, I had the great privilege of singing a far ranging repertoire of music covering many styles, periods and cultures. It was a wonderful opportunity and I realized, although not consciously, that the real purpose of the singing voice was to make music and to revel in its beauty.

Retrospectively, one of the great advantages of the training given the choirboys of Trinity Church at that time was that the technique of tone production was never a matter for discussion. To the contrary, we were simply encouraged to sing musically and to

pronounce the words distinctly. Singing itself was the object of study, not the mechanics of singing. Looking back over the many decades I have been teaching singing, this has been a continuing emphasis, the purpose being to communicate through the act of singing itself.

My years as a chorister at Trinity were to provide a beneficial and permanent factor in my life. It was there that I learned that making music was a disciplined art requiring hard work and dedication, but bringing at the same time rich rewards. I received a wonderful musical education and indeed, whatever it is that I have become as a human being has been a reflection of the influence of my early years at Trinity.

A year or two after I had joined the choir Channing Lefebvre was appointed Organist and Choir Master. Channing, as in later years I was asked to call him, had been a chorister at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine and while there, studied organ with Dr. Myles Farrow, then Organist and Choirmaster of the Cathedral. When Channing was chosen to fill this position at Trinity he was only twenty-six years old. A wonderful, sensitive musician, and being ambitious to succeed, he worked diligently to bring the choir up to a high level of technical proficiency.

In keeping with the liturgical movement initiated at that time, the music program gradually shifted from nineteenth century English music tradition to a new repertoire more appropriate to an Anglo Catholic liturgy. This meant that Byrd, Farrant, Gibbons and Purcell took center stage along with polyphonic compositions by Palestrina and Vittoria. Also included, were Bach, Handel, Russian liturgical music and works written by contemporary composers. Because of his association with Dr. Farrow, a number of concerts by the combined choirs were arranged and given at the Cathedral. In the main these featured antiphonal music with the Trinity Choir singing from the Chapel directly behind the High Alter, and the Cathedral Choir taking their usual place in the choir stalls located in the Chancel. All of this was like living a dream – it was all too good to be true and I knew then that to me music was life itself.

One of the more significant memories dating back to that period of my vocal life occurred upon graduation from grammar school. One of the teachers, who had many occasions to hear me sing, inscribed this little poem in my autograph album, which reads:

God sent his singers upon earth
With songs of sadness and of mirth,
That they might touch the hearts of men,
And turn them back to Heaven again.

Reflecting on the significance of this entry, I like to believe that it speaks of my intuitive understanding of singing as it relates to philosophy and the human condition. In any event, this is what singing means to me today, and while I have never expressed this aspect of singing to my students, I like to believe that these unspoken realities are an integral part of our mutual learning experience.

As it must with adolescence, my voice change from soprano to baritone created problems not previously encountered. Where singing soprano had come easily and was free of technical difficulties, in common with most young singers venturing into a baritone repertoire, I had difficulty singing high notes. Although my baritone voice was not distinguished, it was considered by many to possess considerable promise. The proposed solution, of course, was to take voice lessons.

On consulting Dr. Lefebvre, he advised me to study with his assistant, Dr. George Mead. George was a fine singer, later to become a conductor, composer and translator of

operatic works, who was to exert a powerful influence on me personally over a period of many years. He was a rare individual, witty, brilliant without flaunting it, friendly, but not buddy-buddy; he saw the humor in the human condition, but did not find it laughable. Throughout his lifetime he remained a cherished friend and role model.

George was a common sense teacher, but vocal technique was not high on his list of priorities. Therefore, being driven and ambitious, I was determined to make a change and study with someone whose commitment to the development of the singing voice was total. At the time this decision appeared to be sound. While I felt that my voice was not progressing as it should, I was nevertheless pleased with my studies to the extent that I was encouraged to sing musically, and this was important to me above all else.

Before acting on my decision to make a change I audited lessons given by teachers who had been recommended to me. This experience proved to be more confusing than helpful. One would advocate a type of breathing technique where the chest would be elevated, another with the abdomen protruded with breath expelled with an "in, down, up and out" movement, while at the same time associating these techniques with what was at that time a new fad in voice training called 'support.' What was never made clear, however, was what had to be supported – the tone itself, the tone through diaphragmatic control, or some part of the complex muscular system central to the production of singing tone qualities.

Other bodies of instruction I observed further complicated matters by combining one or the other of these breathing techniques with voice placement where the sound waves generated by the vocal folds were to be directed "up and over," "more forward," "farther back," or placed in the facial masque where it was to be resonated. This concept of resonance was particularly confusing. On reading treatises published on the subject, no satisfactory explanation was offered to establish a believable distinction between nasality and nasal resonance. Nevertheless, there seemed to be general agreement that development of this resource would provide the ultimate solution to all vocal problems. Never made clear, was how the cavities of the antrim and sinuses, being fixed and non-adjustable, could be made to effectively resonate a broad range of pitches or vowel qualities efficiently, especially when no verifiable acoustic evidence was offered to account for such an event.

As I became increasingly uncertain as to the real significance and practical value of these theories, what distressed me most was that the art of singing as a spontaneous act was being replaced with a concern for *how* one breathes, *how* one directs the tone, and the extent to which the larynx should be lowered (if at all). An even more extreme tactic impossible to reconcile was the practice of punching one in the stomach in order to make certain that the tone was being properly 'supported.' In fact, my basic instinct for singing led me to intuitively reject these theories in their entirety.

Left with many unanswered questions I became increasingly uncertain as to what direction my vocal studies should take. This issue resolved itself when one day I ran into Spencer Schorr. Spencer had also been a soloist in the choir of Trinity Church leaving because his voice had changed the same year I entered. I spoke to him of my difficulties in finding a voice teacher. He immediately pointed out that my reaction to the information I had gleaned was evaluated correctly, suggesting with great enthusiasm that science had the answer to my problem and that I should study with Douglas Stanley author of *The Science of Voice*. The year was 1930.

For the first six months of study with Stanley, my voice grew in power and in retrospect it was the kind of vigorous exercise that on a *pro tem* basis was needed. On the

strength of this improvement I decided to enter a national vocal competition sponsored by the Atwater Kent Radio Corporation. This competition was similar in purpose and intent to that of the Metropolitan Opera auditions, except that the winners of each state moved on to the semi-finals and from there a selected number moved on to the finals. To my surprise I was declared the winner of the first stage of the auditions, but was unfortunately not chosen to represent the state of New Jersey.

Shortly thereafter, I auditioned for a position in the choir of St. Bartholomew's Church where David McK Williams was Organist and Choirmaster. I remember beginning my two-year stint during the Lenten Season. This was an interesting experience. The four o'clock Evensong service each Sunday of the year was devoted to the performance of major choral works. So, on successive Sundays with but two rehearsals I sang the Mozart and Brahms Requiems and Stainer's Crucifixion. On Wednesday of Holy Week, the choir performed Bach's St. Matthew Passion, while on Easter Sunday morning we sang the Dvorak Te Deum with organ, brass and timpani accompaniment.

I was overwhelmed. The choir went through the rehearsals reading the musical notation as though it were a newspaper, with scarcely a hitch. Although I was a pretty good sight-reader, to sing these compositions while reading the Latin text at the same time presented a real challenge. However, at the conclusion of the Easter Season, David had selected some compositions unfamiliar to the choir. This proved a boost to my ego, because by the time the others had learned the notes, I had virtually committed the score to memory.

The vigor to which my voice was being subjected during those early years of training with Stanley soon outlived its usefulness. What at first was healthy and needful exercise increasingly became vocal abuse. For example, I would be using effort to such an extent that my body would be shaking like an aspen leaf in the wind while Stanley kept saying, "But you are not working," never suggesting what I should do to transform effort into a productive use of energy.

Despite this abuse, I continued my studies with Stanley for several reasons. During the course of instruction, Stanley had difficulties with a succession of secretaries and he asked me to assume those duties. Thus, I became a member of the household, leaving my choir position at St. Bartholomew's. Shortly after assuming secretarial duties, Stanley sent me pupils who could not afford to study with him, and although I did not know it at the time, this proved to be the beginning of my life as a teacher.

Another factor of importance was Stanley's connection to Electrical Research Products, Inc., a branch of the Bell Telephone Company, where he was engaged in vocal research. Here it was that I had my first experience with the workings of science as it pertained to the study of the voice. Two of the tests given had to do with measuring the rate of breath expulsion while singing and acoustical studies of the vibrato. In retrospect, I find it difficult to understand the purpose behind these studies. They seemed mainly to record and analyze a status quo without offering any suggestions as to how the mechanical condition of the voice was to be improved; in other words, it was merely an accumulation of data.

With the passing of time I realized that Douglas Stanley's method of teaching may have been based on certain scientifically verifiable truths, but when translated into a practical pedagogy could be badly misused. Certainly his observations and comments on twentieth century pedagogic practices were correct (such as the inability to control involuntary muscles and the fallacy of breath support) however, the wild excursions into a misunderstanding of his own theories lead to more disastrous consequences than those he

wished to replace. Violence and abuse of the instrument is not the answer. For example, it is one thing to separate the falsetto from the chest register and develop each independently, but only when necessary. The problem he failed to address was how these two parts of the voice were to be joined into a seamless scale. He rendered lip service to this objective, but never succeeded in devising a means for its accomplishment. Since he was neither a singer nor a musician, it ultimately dawned on me that he had no ear for, or appreciation of, healthy singing tonal qualities.

The years I spent as part of the Stanley household can only be described as oppressive. What at first appeared to be a golden opportunity subsequently proved to lead to the destruction of my voice and my psyche. As my anxiety level increased, I began to avoid taking lessons, inventing any pretext I could. Stanley was sadistic and overbearing and enjoyed belittling everyone falling under his influence. In addition to the psychological abuse, I was little better than an indentured servant, acting as secretary, chauffeur, running errands and being constantly at his disposal. For this I received board and lodging, plus ten dollars a week 'salary,' which was hardly just compensation for what amounted to a seven-day work week.

When it finally dawned on me that any hope I had entertained of being a professional singer was dashed, I was devastated. Suddenly my dream had turned into a nightmare. Worst of all, I had been taught to hate and despise another human being. My ego was destroyed and my prospects for the future nil. My emotions boiled within me becoming more intense because they were suppressed. This pent-up rage finally came to a head one day, while driving Stanley and his wife back from a weekend in the country. We were engaged in a conversation where some remark was made by me concerning my mother. Stanley dismissed what I said making the following comment, "Well, she is nothing but a charwoman." With that I slammed on the brakes of the car, jerking it to a halt in the middle of Riverside Drive and Eighty-Fifth Street. Consumed by rage, I yanked open the door to the rear seat of the car, reached across the body of his wife Alma, grabbed Stanley by the throat and shook him violently as though he were a rag doll. He was terrified, I was out of my mind, and if not for the intervention of his wife, instead of spending 60 years on a piano bench I would have spent them confined to a prison cell.

The next morning I left the Stanley's apartment never to return. Acting on impulse, I shortly contacted Channing Lefebvre. After an exchange of greetings he asked me if I would like to substitute for a few months as part of the bass section of Trinity Choir. What a God-send! Trinity has had a long musical tradition (the first performance of Handel's Messiah in the United States was given there) and members of the choir were not only well paid, but received an extra stipend for each of the special services held throughout the year, of which there were many. In any event, I ended up 'substituting' for the next twenty-five years.

Singing as a member of Trinity Choir as a baritone was a unique experience. There was a sung Eucharist each Sunday and on special Feast Days. There was also a sung Evensong Service sung held each Sunday afternoon. This led to a special relationship among the choir members because between the services, the church provided a catered lunch. This led to the forming of social groups among the choir members and this was exactly what I needed – wholesome companionship. It has been said that the families that pray together, stay together. It is also true that those who have sung together form a very special bond. Thus, I began life anew and the friends that I made at that time have remained so throughout the ensuing years.

The flare-up with Stanley became an important turning point in my life. While I never lost a belief that science had the potential for supplying answers to vocal questions, I realized that much of the scientific investigations pointed in a wrong direction. This then became the focal point of my teaching – to search for better answers regarding vocal instruction. I was convinced that if I could provide those answers there would no longer be any need for talented students to fall by the wayside because of an inept vocal pedagogy.

Upon leaving Stanley, I had scant means of economic survival and although I was being well paid as a choir member, it wasn't enough to live on. My only available option was to apply to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for a position as a teacher of singing. I was accepted in 1938 and became a member of the Manhattan Music Project that year. One of the rules of the project was that teachers could not give individual lessons, only class instruction. Meeting this requirement immediately confronted me with the impossible task of teaching basic vocal mechanics to groups of eight individuals per hour. Although I had reservations (and they still remain) of the value of group instruction, I was obligated to follow the guidelines of the program. The most difficult problem was teaching repertoire. To circumvent this difficulty I formed them into a chorus, a venture that proved to be very successful.

In 1939 when the World's Fair was held in Flushing Meadows, the Director of the Music Project decided to form a chorus comprised of all divisions of the Project, for the purpose of presenting a program with full orchestral accompaniment. I was selected to test the competency of the choral applicants and place them within the sections to which their voice-types would be most suitable. Those in charge seemed pleased with the way I handled this assignment and appointed me assistant conductor.

As things turned out, before the rehearsal period had gotten underway the head conductor left the program to direct a Broadway musical. Being in the right place at the right time, I was appointed to replace him. Since I had no experience conducting an orchestra, a program of traditional choral repertoire featuring Brahms' Song of Destiny was chosen. Thus, I found myself conducting three performances at the World's Fair.

As all positions with the Music Project were limited to a two-year period, my employment terminated in 1940. Fortunately, I had begun to develop a private voice studio among choristers singing under my direction, and it was here that it could be said my sixty years on the bench had their real beginning.

It was about this time that I formed a small choral group called the Lawrence Reid Singers. (Lawrence being my middle name and commonly used before the publication of my first book) By happenstance, a member of the group worked for the Consolidated Edison Company. Informed that they were looking for a conductor to direct their choral group, I applied for the position and was accepted. By another stroke of good fortune, one of the members of the Consolidated Edison Chorus was an officer on the board of the Ars Musica Guild located in Flushing, Long Island. As that organization was also looking for a director, he suggested that I apply for the position. Again, I auditioned and received the appointment.

The Ars Musica Guild was a fine organization with a tradition extending over a period of some twenty-five years. Two performances a year were given, a Christmas Concert, and a Spring Concert featuring Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas. As it turned out, The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of New York held monthly meetings, at which time various groups were invited to perform, the Ars Musica Guild being among them. One of the pleasant surprises of my experience as a conductor was receipt of a citation given in 1942

by the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Society to the Ars Musica Guild for our performance of the *The Pirates of Penzance*.

In addition to my private vocal studio and choral conducting, I spent hours at the New York Public Library researching books on vocal pedagogy. I had been so outraged because of the incompetence of the teaching I had experienced and witnessed that I was determined to search for better answers. I had come to realize that my vocal situation was not unique in that many promising young singers had been victimized. Indeed it appeared to be the rule rather than the exception. Surely, I reasoned, there must be some sensible answers to questions related to technical training. Thus, my real vocal study began by believing nothing and questioning everything.

At first, I began reading contemporary books on singing, gradually working my way back to original treatises by Tosi, Mancini, Corri and the early writers who taught during the Bel Canto era. At the outset I had no thought of writing a book, but as time passed and I had accumulated notes explaining the origins and development of vocal technique relevant to this era, it gradually dawned on me that I had material that would be of interest to others. Caught in mid-stream in forming these notes into a book, I was drafted into the United States Navy in 1943.

After the ordeal of boot camp was over, I was assigned to the 107th Construction Battalion. Shortly before joining the Seabees, as they were known, a military band had been assembled conducted by one who was awaiting his assignment as a Chaplain. After a week or two his orders arrived, leaving the band without a leader. It was at that moment that Commander Ritter called me into his office. Noting that I had in civilian life conducted choruses, he asked me to take over the duties of bandmaster until a replacement arrived. I strongly protested that I had no experience with bands, but being told that the position was temporary I said that I would do my best. As things turned out I conducted the band for the entire twenty-eight months that I was in the service.

The purpose in forming the band, of course, was to march the battalion to the raising and lowering of the Colors each day. This presented an immediate difficulty. The path to the flagpole was not in a straight line. This meant that I had to teach the band how to maneuver from place to place. Being completely ignorant of such matters, I hastened off to town to purchase a couple of books on how to teach basic changes of direction. While these boiled down to left and right obliques, and a reversal of direction, this task was not easy. Translating diagrams and explanations from the printed page to the field of action proved to be a traumatic experience. What appeared to be simple with a book in hand was not so simple standing on a parade ground and attempting to communicate the directions to those who are marching. It was an experience I hope never to repeat. I hardly believe that my performance could have merited the Navy's approbation, "Well done!" It was more like "Got done!"

Almost immediately after my taking over the conducting responsibilities of the military band, it was suggested that a dance band be formed. I was officially the conductor of this band and retained some input. However, the fact is that one of the trombone players really instituted the training discipline necessary to make a dance band a success so that I became, in effect, a front man.

This was another new and interesting adventure, because in the battalion we had several individuals with a diversity of talents. One was assistant to the famous magician Blackstone, another an Olympic gymnast, and yet another a singer of popular music who was quite excellent. Out of a combination of these elements, we put together a show that we performed for various units stationed in the United States, on board ships anchored off

the West Coast and later on islands in the South Pacific. While on stateside, we played for dances at the Hollywood USO and, believe it or not, substituted for Rudy Vallee's band at the graduation dance for officers of the Marine Corp.

Another amusing episodes of my Navy experience occurred while boarding ship headed for Ebe, one of the South Pacific Islands. This proved to be a traumatic experience because in addition to the rifle and required accoutrement packed into my duffel bag, I brought along my notes, two reams of paper, and my trusty Royal typewriter. Climbing up the rope ladder to reach the upper deck almost did me in. In fact, I was so fatigued, that I though I would fall off and land in the water. Fortunately, just as I was about to give up, two burly sailors reached down, grabbed my arms and literally threw me onto the deck.

While we were overseas, the band was provided with special quarters where instruments were stowed, the band rehearsed and some of us slept. One end of the Quonset hut had been set up as an office where the material for the rehearsal schedules could be kept in some kind of order. Since a desk had been provided, it was there I spent a considerable portion of time writing *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices.*

Throughout all of these episodes it appears that a Guiding Hand was at the helm. The last island of the several we occupied was Tinian, and it was from this island that we were informed by Commander Ritter that our Battalion had been given orders to be among the first to invade Japan. In his very words he addressed us saying, "We are ready!" To my dismay, I had not fired my rifle since boot camp so the prospect of having to use it was not a pleasant one. I was not comforted by the fact that members of the battalion would jokingly tell me that everything would be all right - all I had to do was shake my baton and the enemy would melt away. At the time, I did not consider their joking to be either amusing or appropriate. However, it seems that the purpose of my life was not to be a casualty of the invasion of Japan. Fortunately, as our ship was well on the way, the Atom bomb was dropped, so we turned around and headed for home.

On returning to civilian life I immediately resumed my duties as a choir member at Trinity Church. However, only two of the private students who worked with me before entering the Navy returned, I was therefore obliged to seek employment outside of music. Finding a job was not easy, but I was fortunate enough to be hired by the New York Trust Company. This proved to be very convenient, because its offices were located opposite Trinity Church, which made it possible for me to sing many of the special noonday and Saint's Days services, which meant additional income.

By the end of a two-year period of employment with the New York Trust Company, a sufficient number of pupils found their way to my studio and I was again able to focus my attention on music alone. An amusing episode occurred when I informed Mr. Moore, head of the department in which I had been working, that I was leaving to resume my career as a voice teacher. He remarked that he thought I was making a great mistake because, to quote his very words, "You have a promising future in this bank."

My next area of concern was getting the manuscript of *Bel Canto* published. I felt greatly encouraged when the Oxford University Press, to whom I had submitted the manuscript, kept it in their possession for six months. While they considered the manuscript worthwhile, they did not consider it to be sufficiently scholarly in tone and unfortunately, it was rejected.

As it happened, my last vocal recital was given before the Musicians Club of New York in 1949. On leaving the hall I spoke to one of the members and suggested that if she were going in my direction I would be delighted to share a cab. In the conversation that ensued I mentioned my manuscript and briefly summarized the nature of its contents. She

said that she knew of just the right publisher for such a book, the Coleman-Ross Publishing Company. Shortly after I had submitted the manuscript, I received a letter from Mr. Coleman asking me to stop by his office. During the course of that discussion, he informed me that he liked the book immensely, but being a small publishing house, his company did not have the resources to undertake its publication.

Having asked him how much it would cost for an edition of two thousand hardback copies, he replied that it would amount to twenty-five hundred dollars. At that point, I replied that I could muster up two thousand dollars (my last penny) and if he would agree to publish the book, would it not be possible to deduct the balance from the royalties I would receive. He agreed, and *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* appeared on the market in 1950. The reviews of the book were extremely favorable and my teaching career began to take a new turn.

The next step in my career development occurred when Dr. Lefevbre resigned his position as Organist and Choirmaster of Trinity Church and was succeeded by George Mead. About that time Canon Bernard C. Newman assumed the position of Vicar on the clergy staff. One of his obligations was to sing the communion service. A man about fifty, he had never sung a note in his life. After two or three embarrassments, he spoke to Dr. Mead and asked for assistance. It was then that he was advised to study voice with me. This proved to be a successful undertaking, and the next thing I knew the Rector, Dr. John Huess, asked to study, later urging the Curates on the staff to do so as well.

It was at this point (1954) that the position of Speech Instructor opened up at the General Theological Seminary. To my surprise, I received a letter from Dean Lawrence Rose asking me to call and make an appointment concerning this vacancy. During the meeting he remarked that I had been recommended by Dr. Huess and Canon Newman, and enquired if I would be interested in assuming the position of Speech Instructor at the Seminary.

At the conclusion of the interview I informed Dean Rose that I would like to consider his offer for a day or two. What was on my mind was my lack of formal education and I did not feel that I would be an appropriate candidate for membership on such a distinguished faculty as that attached to the Seminary. A few days later I received another communication asking me to discuss the matter in more detail. At this second interview, Dean Rose explained that the former instructor of speech had been on the staff for many years and had not received a salary commensurate with either the position or the current economic climate. Therefore, due to the gross inadequacies of the salary proposed, he offered a substantial increase.

Embarrassed by this gesture, I decided to be forthcoming and pointed out my lack of educational credentials, to which he replied, “Each member of this faculty has so many honorary degrees that your lack of scholastic achievement is not an issue. We wish you to join us on the faculty because of your teaching skills.” Deeply moved, I accepted the position and remained a member of the faculty for the next fourteen years. At the request of the Dean, I contributed an article to the *Bulletin of the General Theological Seminary* in 1965 entitled, *Liturgical Speech.*

After the psychological trauma I had suffered under Douglas Stanley, subsequent developments further reinforced my belief that a path had been laid out for me, my obligation being to recognize and follow it. This belief was again reinforced when I was introduced to a book written by Wilhelm Reich called *Character Analysis.*

Reich’s theories proved a revelation for many reasons, principal among them being an awareness of the restriction of free organic movement due to anxiety - a condition

indicating a breakdown between the oneness of the nature inside and the nature outside ourselves. Reich called this stasis of movement 'armoring.' It was his contention that armoring restricts bodily movement in six principle areas; the eyes, jaw, throat, chest, abdomen, and the pelvic region. With the exception of the jaw it is interesting to note that these areas directly correspond to what is described in the Vedas and the Upanishads of Hinduism as Chakras.

I immediately perceived a direct relationship to exist between the energy centers defined by Reich, and the stasis of movement within these areas as it pertains to the singing voice. Of particular significance was Reich's belief that the most important release of these tensions centered in the throat segment. With the mechanical processes essential to phonation lying within the laryngeal musculature it also became apparent that this area should be the focal point of technical training.

With an understanding of these concepts came a realization that the tonal product itself was neither the problem nor the solution. To free the voice, the motility of the body must be restored and the area that needed to be focused upon is the complex laryngeal muscular systems without which it would be impossible to speak, much less sing. This area of the anatomy is highly sensitive to emotional stimuli, all emotions being experienced within the throat parts. For example, laughter, rage, fear, tears are all outward manifestations of strong emotions and find expression in a disruption of normal laryngeal functioning. Consequently, it is here that the constrictive tensions brought on because of anxiety can be corrected. Free movement is expansive movement, and expansive movement reverses tension brought on because of anxiety, whether it be chronic or temporary.

Much of the success of my teaching can be attributed to an awareness of the need to restore motility within the vocal mechanism, and having devised strategies for releasing constricting tensions within the throat. Although I had no knowledge of it at the time, I was to learn much later that these procedures shared many principles with the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method. Both of these approaches teach the release of inhibitory tensions by means of a more efficient use of the body, with emphasis placed on 'non-doing.'

In retrospect, I discovered that I had been using fundamentals common to all three disciplines (Reich, Feldenkrais and Alexander) each of which stresses the necessity for abandoning habitual responses that are generally negative. Release of energy is a primary objective, a release dependent on de-control and the encouragement of free, spontaneous movement – the very basis on which I have founded my training procedures.

Throughout my teaching career I have designed vocal exercises whose purpose is to free the laryngeal musculature inaccessible to volitional control by stimulating natural, reflexive movement. Success in achieving this objective was obtained by setting up an environmental control system, the environment being special combinations of pitch, intensity and vowel so arranged as to induce the vocal mechanism to respond in a healthier way and free of restrictive tensions. The conclusions reached based on these principles led to the writing of my second book, *The Free Voice* (1965).

On the basis of my first two books, in 1967 I was invited to give a master class at the English Bach Festival held at Oxford University. This proved to be an interesting session. However, I was greatly disappointed in that Frederick Husler, who together with Yvonne Rodd-Marling wrote *Singing: The Physical Nature of the Vocal Organ* (1964) with whom I was to share the week's program, unfortunately died of cancer some months before the

Festival. Professor Husler was one of the great German vocal authorities and I felt his absence from the festival a great loss.

With the publication of *Bel Canto* and *The Free Voice*, my vocal studio flourished to the point where I was able to devote my time exclusively to the teaching of singing. Therefore, I resigned my positions as a choir member of Trinity Church and as instructor of speech at the General Theological Seminary. Still under the influence of the theories promulgated by Wilhelm Reich, and having arrived at a more profound understanding of their significance to vocal theory and practice through my association with his designated successor, Dr. Elsworth F. Baker, I was prompted to express these views in my third book, *Voice: Psyche and Soma*.

By 1975 the Coleman-Ross Publishing Company was no longer operative and my first two books were out of print. I submitted the manuscript of *Voice: Psyche and Soma* to Joseph Patelson of the Joseph Patelson Music House and he agreed to publish it. At the same time he decided to reprint *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* and *The Free Voice*, all three being presented in the form of a Trilogy. Despite the passing of time, these books are still available.

The knowledge gained through the experience of writing *Voice: Psyche and Soma* added a new dimension to my teaching, bringing with it the realization that singing involves the totality of human beings, their intellect, their psyche and the extent to which they are able to respond openly and freely to a musical stimulus. As time passed, I realized more and more that one of the vicarious benefits to be derived from freeing the voice was to affect a corresponding psychological freedom. Subsequently, the belief that psychology and physiology shared common ground found expression in an article published in two parts entitled, *Functional Vocal Training*, that I contributed to *The Journal of Orgonomy* (December 1970, Volume 4, No. 2 and March 1971, Volume 5, No. 1) a publication advocating the theories of Wilhelm Reich.

Although Reich's views strongly influenced my thinking, I cannot emphasize too strongly that I have never, ever, attempted to play the role of psychiatrist. I teach my students to sing, and to sing freely, and all I can say is that I observe the psychological benefits derived as a result of those studies. I never discuss these observations with the pupils, nor do I, during the course of a lesson, encourage comments other than those pertinent to technical development. I am there to teach singing and that is all I do, or attempt to do.

After the publication of *Voice: Psyche and Soma*, things seemed to settle in and become fairly routine. This tranquility was not to last. During a weekend visit with friends in Connecticut a discussion took place concerning vocal terminologies and the fact that, as yet, no one had ever written a dictionary to define vocal terms. Whether this was a challenge or not, I cannot say. In any event, I soon determined to undertake the task.

Accordingly, I applied to the Ford Foundation for a Grant, which they generously provided. Encouraged by this assistance, I spent the next seven years writing *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology: An Analysis*, a volume in which over twelve hundred terms are defined. This, of course, is not a dictionary in its traditional meaning, since all of the words and terms being defined cannot avoid a certain degree subjectivity. My intent and purpose, was to remove all of the terms defined from the metaphysical interpretations commonly attached to them and have their meanings agree with both science and logic. It was a busy time in my life, since the dictionary was written while continuing a teaching schedule averaging twelve lessons a day throughout a five-day week.

After its completion, I submitted the manuscript to the Joseph Patelson Music House, and Mr. Patelson enthusiastically agreed to publish it (1983). The Dictionary was very well received and copies have found their way to music libraries in Canada, Europe, South Africa, and even Australia.

With the publishing of the *Dictionary* a *fait accompli*, I settled into my normal routine. Shortly after, I received an invitation from John Large, editor of the *Journal of Research in Singing*, to contribute an article to that periodical. The first, of what turned out to be a series of five, was entitled, *Science and Vocal Pedagogy* (June 1984, Volume VII, No. 2). This was followed by: *The Intensity Factor in Vocal Registration* (December 1985, Volume IX, No. 1); *The Nature of Natural Singing* (June 1988, Volume XI, No. 2); *The Nature of the Vibrato* (June 1989, Volume XIII, Number 1); and *The Nature of Resonance* (December 1990, Volume XIV, No. 1). These articles addressed various aspects and theories of vocal technique that were widely at variance with the current pedagogic opinion.

Yet another interesting development in my teaching career occurred when, in 1990, I was invited to join the Faculty of Teachers College, Columbia University, as an Adjunct Professor. This affiliation extended beyond the giving of voice lessons to include the presentation of master classes. These classes ultimately resulted in a week-long seminar on the Art of Bel Canto chaired by Dr. Jan Douglas, other members of the panel including Henry Pleasants and Prof. Craig Timberlake.

By this time, my theoretical stance and teaching practices in general can be summarized by saying that their consistent purpose and aim was to discover an accommodation between theory and practice, science and early tradition. Lacking contemporary examples to point the way, I had to resort to trial and error methods to achieve what I knew to be a desired end. The essential properties of this search have been beautifully expressed by William Shakespeare in his play *Hamlet* with the following advice:

Find out the cause of this effect:
Or rather say, the cause of this defect;
For this effect defective, comes by cause.

To discover the cause of these defects as they apply to technical training in singing my studies centered on an evaluation of those principles and practices employed during the eighteenth century. In all of vocal history this was the only time a serious approach was made to eliminate defects by correcting the causative factors that produce them, as opposed to contemporary methods where defects are dealt with on a superficial level.

In essence I followed the traditional registrational concepts associated with the eighteenth century (chest voice, falsetto and head voice) and then connected them to a dimensional setting of the vocal folds, shorter and thicker for a chest voice quality, longer and thinner for a falsetto quality, and shorter with the cords vibrating only at their edges for a head voice quality. The next step was to link these dimensional settings of the vocal folds to their tensor mechanisms, the cricothyroid and arytenoid muscle systems. These complex relationships were, in turn, connected with the pitch, intensity and vowel patterns to which they correspond.

This realization led me to formulate the following equivalencies. If the tension distributed among the laryngeal musculature determines the dimensional settings of the vocal folds, and those settings are the result of a particular pitch, intensity and vowel pattern, then, since the pitch, intensity and vowel pattern determines the dimensional

setting of the vocal folds, it must also determine the amounts of tension distributed among the laryngeal musculature.

From a pedagogic perspective the question is, which among these equivalencies is able to function as a control factor. Since the muscles of the larynx are involuntary and cannot be overtly acted upon, and the quality of the tonal product is a result of the vibratory characteristics of the vocal folds as they are regulated by the amounts of tension distributed among the laryngeal musculature, the only control factor capable of regulating this complex, involuntary system is pitch, intensity and vowel. Thus, by juxtapositioning these tonal elements in a diversity of combinations, changes in the physical dimensions of the vocal folds and their tensor mechanisms reflexively take place.

Using varying combinations of pitch, intensity and vowel, I was able to observe their effect on tone quality. I then began to interchange these three tonal elements in a variety of ways. A few of the more obvious options available are outlined in the following procedures. Change the pitch and/or intensity and the vocal folds will adjust their physical dimensions accordingly. As a result, the antagonistic contractions of the muscle systems that interact with the vocal folds and maintain their vibratility will correspondingly shift their ratio of tension to accommodate those changes. Change the vowel, and both the configuration of the vocal tract and the conformation of the vocal folds will also change, each change having a direct bearing on quality.

The tonal elements noted above can be worked into an exercise that will predictably result in a special type of vocal fold conformation whose dimensions in turn will be determined by the proportional amounts of tension assumed by the cricothyroids and the arytenoids. For example, by having the student sing softly in the lower tonal range on an ‘ah’ vowel, it will produce a change in quality quite different from that which spontaneously appears when the same pitch and vowel pattern was sung loudly. In studying the reaction of the voice to a musical stimulus, I began to understand how the vocal mechanism works. Thus, the trial and error experiments that I have conducted, and continue to conduct, consist of arranging and re-arranging the three basic tonal elements and observing the differences in the resultant tonal quality.

The use of various combinations of pitch, intensity and vowel, of course, were not just wild excursions or haphazard experiments. They were carefully thought out and stored in my memory. My sense of singing kept all of these experiments within safe bounds. A factor of great significance is that the observations derived from these procedures became a long process of ear training, whereby cause and effect relationships were carefully studied and tonal qualities were related to the physical processes that produce them. Much later I came to refer to this process as functional listening.

An amusing episode worth relating occurred in connection with a master class given in Frankfurt. One of the Frankfurt newspapers had sent a cub reporter for an interview. During the course of our conversation she enquired as to how many pupils I had. In reply, I explained to her that this was difficult to say because some of my pupils fulfill singing engagements out of town and are unable to take lessons during those periods of time. I also explained that many of my pupils who teach in other cities take lessons only as occasion permits. I also informed her that on average, I give ten to twelve lessons a day, five days a week. She then asked how long I had been teaching, to which I replied that I had been teaching for 55 years or more. The next day when her article appeared in the newspaper I was surprised to learn that I had given, during that period of time, over one hundred and forty thousand voice lessons!

From the standpoint of pedagogic interest all of these lessons have been experiments based on trial and error. These sessions have resulted in confirming the pedagogic theories I have developed by proving their validity on a practical basis.

At this point in my career, the practicality of my theories had begun to attract attention in Asia. Thus, I received a letter from a Japanese publishing company asking permission to translate *Bel Canto: Principles and Practices* into Japanese. This translation appeared on the market in 1987. Apparently there is great interest in Japan in the ideas expressed in my writings, an opinion verified by the fact that at present, my *Dictionary* is being translated into that language and should be available sometime in the year 2002.

With a gradual refinement of teaching skills, I felt sufficiently confident to present my ideas with more depth and clarity in book form under the title *Essays on the Nature of Singing.* With the retirement of Joseph Patelson and the management of the Patelson Music House entrusted to his son, it became necessary to find another publisher. It was during a conversation with Walter Foster, of Recital Publications, that he expressed an interest in publishing these essays, and in 1992 this book became available to the public. In 1995 Recital Publications also re-printed *A Dictionary of Vocal Terminology*.

The significance of these writings is that they became an important venue for the dissemination of ideas often diametrically opposed to those subscribed to during the twentieth century. In fact, with the publication of two of my articles in the *Journal of Singing*, (*Vocal Mechanics*, September/October 1997, Volume 56, No. 4 and *Eighteenth Century Registrational Concepts*, March/April 2000, Volume 56, No. 4*)* I continued my efforts to promote the theoretical superiority of pre-twentieth century training concepts. It still remains my conviction that the theories advocated during the Bel Canto Era can be scientifically verified and demonstrated to be as valid in the present as they have been in the past.

Increasingly, the concepts I have championed over the years appear to be attracting favorable notice, since on the strength of the viewpoints expressed, I have received an increasing number of invitations to give master classes. Commencing in the year 1995, I have given yearly seminars in Germany, including Frankfurt, Duisburg, Wiesbaden and Munich, where in 1997 I taught at the Convention of the German Singing Teachers Association. I have also given classes at The Guildhall School of Music in London, in Toronto, Canada and several colleges and universities in the United States. I have also been invited to present seminars in Japan and for the Australian National Association of Teachers of Singing at their Annual Convention, both of which I declined because of the length of the journey. In May of 2001 I will be teaching in Vienna and speaking to the newly formed Austrian Singing Teachers Association.

An earlier master class in Duisburg led to the publication of one of my books in Germany. This publication occurred in a rather round about way. During the seminar I had delivered a lecture, which was drawn upon one of my unpublished manuscripts entitled, *Vocal Exercises: Their Purpose and Dynamics.* In discussing these ideas with Margaret Peckham (who had been in attendance at the seminar) I mentioned that the lecture was a scaled-down version of a larger work. She then suggested that I lend her a copy of the manuscript for the purpose of translating it into German. Together with Leonore Blume they presented the translation to the Schott Publishing Company. The result was a book entitled, *Funktionale Stimmentwicklung: Zweck und Bewegungsablauf von Stimmübungen*. This work became available in 1994 and is now in its second printing. It has never been published in English.

At present I am busy compiling another set of essays on the mechanics of singing, while at the same time keeping up with my usual teaching schedule. There is much work to be done and I have just begun to scratch the surface.

To digress for a moment, I would like to comment on what I believe to be my most important contribution to an understanding of vocal mechanics. Throughout the twentieth century teachers and voice scientists have devised theories based on a belief that the vocal mechanism functions exclusively within the confines of a closed system. A closed system exists when one part of the mechanism is conditioned by the limitations of movement present in another part of the mechanism that opposes its action. When applied to the two opposing muscle systems involved in phonation this viewpoint fails to take into consideration that in a closed system technical faults are 'locked in,' a condition which makes the prospect for helping the student achieve his or her vocal potential virtually impossible.

The opportunity for opening up this closed system presents itself because of an ability to produce a pure falsetto. In a pure falsetto, the only opposition supplied to the cricothyroids as they perform their pitch regulatory function is provided by the posterior cricoarytenoids. In this arrangement the focal folds are being maintained in a fully open position, thus permitting the breath to be released unchecked. Qualitatively, this pure, breathy falsetto, is short in duration, has a fundamental with no overtone content, has no vibrato, depends on the use of an 'oo' vowel exclusively, and is inflexible. Under these conditions, all members of the closing phase of the arytenoids become passive, leaving the cricothyroids to function isometrically.

Why is the isolation of this muscle system pedagogically important? It is because, were the pitch regulatory function of the cricothyroids to be imprecise, then all other members of the laryngeal musculature must compensate for the deficiency, causing a disruption in all other phases of the phonative process.

Gaining a familiarity with the dynamics of falsetto development and integration, having become a lost art, has been the study of my life and has proved to be an exciting if somewhat perilous adventure. However, the rewards that come with each success along the way are gratifying in that they prove that the development and integration of the falsetto is a tool indispensable to technical training.

Having had my own career undermined because of destructive pedagogic practices, I have been determined to do all that is possible to prevent this from happening to other gifted singers. For this reason I have devoted my life to the discovery of scientifically based principles that would substantiate and verify the practices of the eighteenth century and permit aspiring singers to realize their potential to the fullest extent possible.

To date there is available an extraordinary accumulation of knowledge based on physiology and acoustics. Within the framework of voice science, however, the theories promulgated have rarely, if ever, been tested on a practical level. Consequently, studies based on any given vocal state and condition, do little to prove how the vocal mechanism can be regulated and controlled. They can explain how the system works, but not how to work the system. Thus, there is an ever-present gap between theory and practical application.

To bridge that gap a new concept of vocal theory and practice must be introduced, a concept of voice science I have named vocology. This new science is based on ecological principles, or the reaction of an organic system to its environment. An immediate consequence of studies conducted on this basis would lead directly to an understanding of the purpose and significance of a vocal exercise by studying the interaction between the

laryngeal musculature (an organic system) and certain combinations of pitch, intensity and vowel (the environment). In pursuit of this objective I have seated myself on a piano bench for over six decades in order to bring my teaching skills to the highest possible level of attainment.

What have I learned as a teacher? That learning to sing and the teaching of singing at a high professional level is an extremely difficult undertaking. Along the way I have discovered that technical progress is not like walking up a gradual and smooth incline. The path is filled with bumps and bruises, complicated by the presence of technical and psychological blockages. Fortunately, it is also interspersed with moments of joy and exaltation. Because technical training is filled with ups and downs, the maintenance of one's equilibrium is difficult. An important lesson I have learned is to take these fluctuations with calmness and patience.

Unquestionably, the most difficult part of being a teacher, at least for me, is having to deal with being looked upon as an authority. To be accepted as an authority and then meet a required standard of measurement often places one in an uncomfortable position. Teaching is a continual learning experience, each insight gained opening up new vistas. For me, it is an ongoing adventure that had a beginning, but has no end. If I have learned anything during my career, it is that each lesson given is a shared experience wherein the teacher is also the one being taught. This interchange carries with it immeasurable rewards and for me, foremost among those rewards is an appreciation for what every student has contributed to my personal growth. In the final analysis, there has been a mutual exchange, a blend of knowledge, affection, admiration, and respect, rarely encountered in any other field of endeavor.

What have I learned over more than six decades of teaching? I have learned that a Divine Hand seems to have guided my steps and pointed me in a right direction. Sixty years on the bench? I only wish there could be sixty more! It has been a glorious experience, and to all who have journeyed with me I will forever feel love and affection.

Cornelius L. Reid