

# **SINGING SECRETS**

A musical staff with several notes and a large bass clef symbol.

**What Every Singer  
Needs to Know**

A musical staff with notes and a pen resting on it.A musical staff with a pen and some scribbles on it.

**"A book unlike any other!  
A must read for every singer."**

*Anne Nelson, performer*

**by Kristina Seleshanko**

***Singing Secrets:  
What Every Singer Needs to Know.***

Copyright © 2002, 2005 by Kristina Seleshanko.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying or information storage and retrieval systems—without written permission from the copyright holder.

Pioneer Printwork, Cottage Grove, Oregon.

ISBN: 1-885133-03-0

# CONTENTS

## Introduction

### **PART ONE:**

#### *Techniques Every Singer Needs to Know*

- Different Methods of Singing? . . . 6
- Recording Yourself . . . 10
- The Basics of Good Singing . . . 13
- Posture . . . 16
- Breathing & Support . . . 18
- Opening the Mouth . . . 27
- Resonance & Placement . . . 32
- Vocal Anatomy . . . 37
- Registers . . . 42
- “Mixing” the Head and Chest Voice . . . 47
- Voice Types . . . 49
- Great Singers, Great Actors . . . 54
- Remembering the Joy . . . 61

### **PART TWO:**

#### *Problem Areas Every Singer Should Know How to Battle*

- Vibrato . . . 66
- Singing Flat and Sharp . . . 68
- Nasally Singing . . . 71
- Volume & Power . . . 73
- Range . . . 75
- The Tongue . . . 78
- Breathiness . . . 80
- Flexibility . . . 82

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Taking the Head Voice Too Low . . .  | 84  |
| Tension . . .                        | 85  |
| Nervousness . . .                    | 88  |
| Scatting . . .                       | 92  |
| Belting . . .                        | 96  |
| Screams, Yells, Growls, & More . . . | 101 |
| Whistle Voice . . .                  | 106 |
| Allergies & Illness . . .            | 108 |

### **PART THREE:**

#### *Artistry, What Every Singer Should Know*

|                                           |     |
|-------------------------------------------|-----|
| Warm Ups . . .                            | 112 |
| Tips for Effective Rehearsing . . .       | 114 |
| Auditions . . .                           | 117 |
| Working with a Pianist or Conductor . . . | 124 |
| Growing as a Singer . . .                 | 127 |
| Your Style . . .                          | 131 |
| How to be a “Perfect” Voice Student . . . | 135 |
| What to Expect from a Good Teacher . . .  | 138 |

### **FINALE:**

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Vocal Maintenance . . . | 142 |
| Exercises . . .         | 149 |

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| <b>Index . . .</b> | <b>154</b> |
|--------------------|------------|

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks must first go to the members of Tessitura (an Internet forum maintained by Dwayne Allen Thomas), who nearly demanded I write a book on singing, and who kept asking “When’s the book going to be out?” It’s for them—and others who’ve written to me with singing questions—that I wrote this book.

I also wish to thank each and every one of my students, who’ve forced me to sharpen my ideas and find new and innovative ways to express what singing is all about.

There are also friends and acquaintances who read over my manuscript in its early stages and offered invaluable comments. Among such helpful critics were Kara Churchill, Angela Cockburn, and Suzannah Doyle (who also provided the graphics for pages 51–53 of this book). Thank you all!

Finally, but most importantly, I thank my husband, Alexei, who is endlessly supportive of all my endeavors, and who never complains about all the screeching, squawking (and sometimes singing!) that goes on in our home.



# INTRODUCTION

---

## *Why another book on singing?*

---

There are many books about singing—some published decades ago, others published a few years ago. Why another book on the topic?

In my experience, both as a singer and as a voice teacher, I've found that older singing books often contain incorrect or dubious information. Newer books about singing frequently omit vital information or are overly-complex. (Learning to sing needn't be complicated, yet many people try to make it so.) On the other hand, this book contains the basics that singers must know in order to be a success, whether they're singing hard rock, classical, or something in-between. And, I hope, these basics are presented in a simple, easy to understand fashion.

Granted, there are areas of singing that are extremely difficult to teach through a book. Frankly, there's no substitute for studying with a teacher, in person. Phone lessons may be somewhat helpful, CDs and DVDs may be useful to a degree, and books can be valuable guides, but nothing takes the place of having a qualified person *watch* and *hear* you *in person*. In addition, beyond a foundational understanding of what good technique is, no two

singers will discover the same “cure” for their singing woes. A good teacher customizes lessons accordingly, creating new ways of explaining things and finding innovative exercises to help individuals reach their goals. In a book, however, the best anyone can do is offer advice on what has worked for many other singers.

Nonetheless, so many people have written to me with questions and concerns about singing, I felt a book would be helpful to getting them on the right track.

In this book, I haven’t limited myself to vocal technique (although that’s certainly an important part of this volume) but have also covered rarely discussed topics such as working with musicians and conductors, style, and other practical details I wish I’d learned from a teacher instead of from the school of hard knocks.

This book covers the basic information I try to give all my students. As I’ve already indicated, lessons vary from student to student, according to their personal needs. However, a good understanding of basic vocal technique is essential to all singers, as is some understanding of vocal anatomy. I don’t try to turn my students into scientists; it isn’t necessary, and tends to be confusing to many people. However, the taste of anatomy I give will, I hope, be enlightening. For those who are medically minded, what’s offered here should be a spring board for researching more information about their bodies.

Once I’ve covered the basics of technique (covered in Part One of this book), I start fine-tuning my students’ voices. Not everyone needs the same

sort of help, but topics that are frequently covered are listed in Part Two of this book. As students become more proficient, we also discuss such things as style, performing, auditioning, et cetera. You'll discover these topics in Part Three. In short, if you follow this book in the order it's given, you'll have a simulation of the lessons I give in person.

Be sure to take each chapter slowly. Trying to focus on too many things at one time will tend to lead to frustration and confusion.

It's my hope *all* singers will benefit from this book. If you're a novice singer who's never taken a voice lesson, this volume should give you a good foundation to build upon. If you've had some lessons but still have "problem areas," this book will probably address them. And if you're an advanced singer, I think you'll find tips and insights you haven't encountered before.

There are a small number of teachers who only accept students who are already fairly accomplished, but I enjoy having students of all levels; frequently, the students who struggle are the most exciting; they constantly challenge me to come up with new ways of explaining things and new exercises to help them achieve positive results. I've had singers come to me who'd been told by other teachers they were tone deaf; I've had actors who could barely carry a tune seek my help; and I've had extremely talented singers come in for coaching, too.

It doesn't matter where your skill level is now or how talented (or not) you consider yourself to be. As I once read:

*To own a Stradivarian is an asset, but it doesn't follow that every owner of a fine violin is a good violinist. Similarly, the possession of a beautiful vocal instrument doesn't constitute the entire equipment for a singing career. How can you learn to best "play" whatever instrument you possess? That is the question.*

And that's what this book is all about.

# ABOUT



## KRISTINA

Kristina Seleshanko began her singing career at the age of three when she stole the microphone during a Sunday school choir concert, creating her own solo. At the age of nine, she began studying voice with Patti MacDonald, vocal coach to most Miss California's. At 15, she started studies in opera with Dr. Nellie Arnold, making her operatic debut at age 16.

Kristina's passion is musical theatre; she was once an actress in New York City, and has performed in regional theatre in California and Oregon. In the 1990s, Kristina regularly sang at New York City's Village Gate, a jazz spot where Harry Connick Jr.'s band sometimes followed Kristina's act. Today, Kristina offers voice lessons in Oregon, and teachers and voice students from around the globe consult her on vocal issues.

Kristina is also the author of 13 books, and her musical *Jane Eyre, the musical classic* (with music by Suzannah Doyle) premiered with enthusiastic reviews in late 2003.

For more information about Kristina and singing, visit: <http://voicestudio.kristinaseleshanko.com>.