

TAMARA CASHOUR
STATEMENT OF ARTISTIC AESTHETICS/ETHICS

Welcome to my website: Clients, Colleagues and Visitors!

It will become clear from this site that I have self-styled my career in music and theatre from what has been known as the “Renaissance” approach, which is to say, that I am a person whose broad range of interests and talents in the fields of music, theatre and writing have led me in the directions of synthesis and relational artistic process.* In this world which is overwhelmingly demanding of specialization and the focused approach on a single discipline, I have chosen the road “less-travelled”, i.e. that road which seeks to find how various fields of artistic endeavor intersect with, and enhance one another. Another way to say this is that I am an “Interdisciplinary”. Fact is fact: both my Bachelors and Masters degrees are interdisciplinary in nature, with concentrations in Piano/Music Theory and Vocal Technique/Opera Performance/Directing, respectively. Each of my degrees had qualitative performance requirements in both music and theatre thrown into their mix, along with my elective choices in the field of writing (fiction, poetry and criticism). These degrees prepared me to make certain economic and artistic choices which have always been in the direction of original and unique creative impulse, whether in my own work as an academician and performer, or in assisting others with their artistic process. My ultimate goal has always been to blend time-honored pedagogies in certain fields of artistic endeavor with new angles of perception, with the end result of stretching the boundaries of both academic endeavor and performance practice into untried arenas. To this end, I engage in ongoing, daily study and research in all of my fields of endeavor so that I may service others in the highest qualitative manner. [See RESUMES/REPERTOIRE page]. Also, BOOK LIST AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST [Books I have read and whose selected tenets I employ in: collaborative piano, vocal, piano, organ, choral, compositional and conducting techniques; cultural theory; music theory; dramatic theory, feminist theory].

I hope you all will find something on this site which will be of interest to you. Please feel free to visit as many areas of this extant site as you can to get a complete picture of my artistic persona and collaborative services, as many pages are cross-referenced to one another. This site is intended to be reflective of my personality while conveying aspects of my professional history and accomplishments to you in such a way that you may choose to benefit from one or more areas of my expertise. I look forward to our artistic collaboration!

* A definition of Renaissance Person from: <http://www.callcentres.net/CALLCENTRES/LIVE/me.get?site.sections&CALL674>

“The term ‘Renaissance Person’ originated in the 15-16th centuries and refers to someone who has experienced a cultural or artistic rebirth or revival. The original Renaissance Person led the way out of the Middle Ages into the modern world by sheer determination and courage. They are hopeful and expectant, observant, curious and creative. They are also optimistic in a healthy way, able to recognize the limitations that come from the past, politics, culture and the intellect and instructs of others they lead.

...There are definite parallels with the Renaissance Person of yesterday to what is needed so badly in the contact center of today – where financial, technical or other ‘experts’ have come to rule our centers, craving control but lacking the balance necessary to achieve sustainable results.”

COLLABORATIVE PIANO is my first and foremost area of artistic expertise and accomplishment, my “Main Gig”, so to speak. As a collaborative pianist in all capacities (COACH, RECITALIST, ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR, CHAMBER MUSIC ARTIST), my aim is to offer you my highest values of technical astuteness and stylistic validity.

As a VOCAL COACH to individual singers, I offer a broad range of knowledge in languages (grammar and diction), interpretation of period/compositorial style as well as the musical and dramatic interpretation of operatic roles and art song texts. How do each of these facets of a singer’s art combine to produce a stylistically and technically valid performance which is also unique to you, the artist? My non-authoritarian approach is to ‘suggest, guide and support’, while allowing you your own process toward development of your unique artistic persona and communicative presence. In this effort I make use of my training not only as a collaborative pianist, but as a singer, published poet and stage director (see below).

As an INSTRUMENTAL COACH to individual instrumentalists, my creed is also to provide you with expert technical and stylistic support in piano accompaniments. To the extent that certain published instrumental accompaniments do not always provide ideal backup, I utilize my knowledge as a composer and orchestrator to develop musical arrangements which are more reflective of orchestral sound image as transferred into piano technique that must be rendered in performance situations in a musically accurate and aesthetic manner.

As a RECITALIST for an instrumentalist or vocalist, I enjoy collaborating with the artist on: choice of repertoire for thematic or non-thematic programs, selection of performance venue and preparation for a confident performance. I offer as many rehearsals as you desire to shape the recital. See my REVIEWS/TESTIMONIALS page for commentary by specific recitalists!

As an ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR-COLLABORATOR, my playing is an extension of the conductor’s baton. Her/His musical wishes must be honored above my own. I have worked under and/or studied with, several highly competent conductors, and am a conductor myself. Sensitivity to various personalities and respect for conductor’s personal musical choices are key to this aspect of my collaborative skills.

As a CHAMBER ARTIST in collaboration with two or more musicians, my goal is a successful ensemble effort and advanced-level music-making which honors all the subtleties and detailed aspects of group effort in the service of a great composer.

It goes without saying—or perhaps not—that the field of Collaborative Piano is a ‘Service Industry’ in market terminology. We are there to provide support, guidance and “team player” effort. Otherwise, we would have become solo concert pianists. I believe I excel as a

collaborator; since a very young age, my greatest results have arisen through collaboration with others, over and above solo effort.

MUSICAL DIRECTING is my “Second Main Gig” and one which I adore: it requires me to take the reins more authoritatively and directorially, while still working collaboratively. I am wholly responsible for the composer’s musical intentions, and usually, his/her intentions for the theatricality of a work. In this job capacity, I always work closely with stage directors, honoring their protocols as well towards an authentic, cohesive and exciting musical result which is ultimately: Entertaining! As a contractor, I attempt to choose musicians of the highest caliber available for my pit orchestras, while honoring the budget of the particular producing organization. I insist that my instrumentalists provide a ‘tight’, musically sparkling back-up, which supports not only big production numbers, but also individual singer-actors, allowing them to shine and display their talents and interpretative gifts which are singular to them.

VOCAL DIRECTING/CHOIR DIRECTING is often a major component of MUSIC DIRECTING. I work with both amateur and professional choirs; it is paramount for individual singers to be competently and confidently ready for choral ensemble effort. In this respect, I provide tailor-made group vocal exercises (warm-ups), bodywork and time-honored choral techniques to ensure that their instrument, i.e. the voice, is sufficiently prepared to take on the demands of choral compositions of every size and scope. For non-readers in musical theatre and choral settings, I am happy to teach and record individual parts in solo and ensemble numbers. NOTE to Non-Readers: Break Away from Rote! Ask about my special ‘No-Rote Theoretical Methods’ to supplement traditional rote/repetition learning of a part or role. Learn more quickly and efficiently, and, when you are ready to make the leap, I offer music theory/ear-training/sight-singing incorporation into a regular coaching or rehearsal. (More extant/structured lessons in music theory offered separately).

As a SOPRANO, my goal is to serve the composer as best I can in the union of text and music, whether in art song, opera or musical theatre/cabaret. I study and research the historical couchings of opera repertory roles in depth, as well as composer style, in order to consistently present a character with realistic accuracy and dramatic aplomb. Where realism is not called for (i.e. as in a ‘Concept’ Staging) I call upon my training in alternative, avant-garde acting and staging techniques to collaborate with the stage director of a production in creating a character that is consistent with the goals of the production. I am able to sing in both Classical and Music Theatre techniques: I classify myself as an Italian Dramatic-Spinto Soprano in Classical Standard Repertoire, and in Music-theatre, I am a Low to Mid-Range Belt/Mix, with ‘Character-Accent Belt’ capability [such as the roles of: Adelaide, Mrs. Lovett and Eliza Dolittle]. I am familiar with and willing to perform certain extended vocal techniques/sounds requested by contemporary composers of New Music.

VOICE TEACHING is a career that I would classify as tied with Music Directing my 'Second Main Gig'. After beginning private vocal study in classical voice at age 17, I began teaching voice at a high professional level at the comparatively early age of 20, when I was the youngest voice teacher ever hired at Frederick Community College in my hometown of Frederick, Maryland. I was hired to teach young amateurs and adult non-professionals in the FCC Continuing Education Division; several of my students went on to major in Voice at colleges and universities in the United States. At the time of my hire, I was matriculating a voice major at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and was a soprano soloist in the Frederick Chorale under the direction of nationally recognized choral conductor Nancy Roblin.

Many qualified voice teachers have tended toward one of two career paths: 1) beginning as a professional performer and gradually segueing to a teaching career at a later age or 2) proceeding from the 'git-go' as a professional pedagogue, but lacking significant performance experience, or having none at all. By way of contrast: I began teaching and performing while still an undergraduate, and strongly maintain that the two fields intersect and overlap in crucial ways for the singing artist. I regularly synthesize technical information and performance requirements for singers who study in my studio. It goes without saying that one's vocal technique must be employed securely in rehearsal and performance, and, conversely, there are particular elements of performance that must be dealt with in the vocal studio. I believe that my particular interdisciplinary background and holistic approach enables me to 'offer the best of both' to singers, ultimately rendering them super-prepared for the rigors of a professional singing career.

Over the years I have expanded and improved my technical base of knowledge by studying with several noted vocal pedagogues, among them: David Jones (3 years study, as well as his 3-day Seminar for Voice Teachers at NYC's City College), William Riley (2 years study), the late Norma Newton (7 years study) and Judith Oas-Natalucci (7 years study). All of these pedagogues have produced singers of international reputation. In addition, I have as a pianist accompanied in the studios of such well-known instructors as: Patricia McCaffrey, Joanna Levy and Ashley Putnam (see COLLABORATIVE PIANO RESUME under: LESSON PIANIST). Currently I am accompanist in the studio of the wonderful Kenneth Kamal Scott at the Mannes College of Music Extension Division, who, like myself, believes that singers are equipped to sing classical and popular styles in the same technique, and he of course demonstrates that in his own performing and teaching, as do I.

I have found several of the techniques parlayed by the foregoing pedagogues to be useful in my own teaching, and I always credit that particular pedagogue whenever I do employ a particular exercise or principle that I originally learned from them. In addition, I have read the texts of, and have distilled for singers the time-honored bodies of knowledge of internationally recognized vocal pedagogues, among them: Barbara Doscher, Jo Estill, Kristin Linklater, Johan Sundberg and William Vennard. Finally, I have developed creative technical approaches of my own which I have found are particularly useful to singers. At this point, I do not have what could be called "The Cashour Method"; I actually do not espouse the idea of reified methods that are stamped, cookie-cutter style, onto every singer. Every singer has his/her peculiarities/exigencies and is located at a particular stage of development from rank beginner to fully professional; it is my job to ascertain an individual's technical position, hone in on his/her

learning style (i.e. how that individual best receives and processes information) and teach that person to the best of my technical abilities.

VOICE TEACHING ETHICS CLAUSE: At the time of this writing, September, 2010, I do not teach vocal developmental techniques to male voices, but specialize in female voices of all sizes and fachs. I do coach male voices and am happy to refer male singers to voice teachers whom I trust with those particular clients. Meantime, I am every day acquiring new technical information and attending seminars in order to prepare myself to fully and competently teach the male voice (tenor, baritone and bass fachs). Also, if I feel I am unqualified to teach a particular voice or personality, I will without hesitation refer a singer to someone whom I feel is expertly qualified to do so. All teaching ethics and standards espoused by NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) apply in my private voice studio.

I hope you will review my MUSIC TEACHER RESUME for a complete work history of my vocal teaching, and also visit my Voice Teacher Website at:

www.tamaraCvoiceteacher.vpweb.com, where you can find more in-depth information.

COMPOSING allows me to exercise the most creative part of my musical endeavors, i.e. the portion that does not just interpret the work of others, but creates something original and unique. Composing, I must confess, allows me to parlay my truest and deepest self, but to make the leap to full-time composer is just too risky in most ongoing economic climates. And so--the other job descriptions !

Composing was my first musical love: at the age of 13, I transcribed (ripped off?!) by ear the song "Happiness... (Is)" from the musical *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (my hero) and put in a few 'curlicues' of my own. Upon graduating from Columbia University, I would have settled into a composing career had I not had the economic responsibility of caring for an ill family member. As it were, I had to hold off composing for more than a few years while I slowly built my performance career. I began composing again in 2004, inspired by a dear composer friend, and have since won several awards for composition. Many of my works have received world premieres by reputable organizations. As a composer I gravitate toward musical works that involve theatre; since my background has involved much theatre, in particular: socially conscious theatre, avant-garde theatre, feminist theatre and comedic theatre of parody and commedia dell'arte. In addition, I retain a sincere interest in performing the works of other living composers and composer colleagues in my immediate circle, who are daily creating new and interesting aesthetics.

STAGE DIRECTING is perhaps the most underutilized of my talents, but one which I continue to study, and will soon parlay within my newly formed opera company, OPERAVANT, Inc. Via my Masters degree at New York University, I had the opportunity to study with some of the best directors and drama theorists in the fields of Traditional and Avant-garde Theatre and Performance Studies (see STAGE DIRECTOR resume). This masters degree was in major respects a degree of my own fashioning via NYU's Gallatin School of Interdisciplinary Studies,

wherein I explored new avenues of analysis and performance practice in both new and preexisting theatre forms, and in original theatre/opera pieces. I am continuing this work in 2010, after a 12-year hiatus, with OPERAVANT, Inc. –Opera Ahead of Its Time, For Its Time !

Finally, WRITING is a huge component of my work as a musician and thespian; I publicly read my first poem in the 6th grade (*Our Wonderful Woods!*). Much later, as a young woman living in the ‘Big City’, I wrote tons of poetry, some of which was eventually published by small presses and anthologies. I took elective courses in Fiction and Poetry in the Columbia University School of Writing as part of my degree there in Music Theory. I have written plays, poetry and short stories as well as non-fiction articles, academic papers and original and translated libretti. I have published a full book of poems entitled *The Blue Hour*; I plan a second book for 2011.

In addition, I have written music criticism and academic papers in the fields of musicology and theatre performance practice. I was music critic of the Barnard Bulletin from 1981-82 (school newspaper of Barnard College, NYC) and have written music criticism for the International Alliance of Women In Music Journal. A few of my articles of music criticism are available as PDFs on this site.

Thank you for reading and please contact me with any requests/questions you may have.