

PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING IN BEL CANTO SINGING TEACHING: EXPLORING THE DEEP INTEGRATION OF VOCAL PERFORMANCE AND STAGE SKILLS

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Abstract: The study examined the perspectives of bel canto singers and instructors regarding the role of philosophy in informing vocal practice and artistic expression. Our findings showed that Singers emphasized the importance of overcoming physical tension (30) to achieve vocal freedom and effective emotional expression. Breath control (42) and vocal technique (35-40) were seen as fundamental for conveying emotions (38-45). Vocal colour (28-42) and resonance (38-42) were considered crucial for emotional impact, alongside clear communication (32-45). Singers discussed achieving physical freedom through proper technique (aligning with Aristotle's form and function), using breath as a source of power (linking physical singing to emotional delivery, similar to Descartes' mind-body dualism), and finding resonance for optimal emotional impact (echoing Plato's ideal forms). Additionally, the importance of shared interpretation resonated with Buber's I-Thou relationship, while the role of the singer as storyteller connected to Aristotle's concept of mimesis. Finally, the power of music to communicate universally aligned with Wittgenstein's later ideas about language games. While integrating philosophical concepts into vocal training presented challenges, particularly regarding practical application, singers perceived potential benefits. These included enriching artistic expression, enhancing stage presence, and fostering deeper interpretations of the music.

Keywords: Bel Canto, Singers, Philosophy, Vocal Expression, Emotional Connection, Vocal Colour.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bel canto, the Italian term for "beautiful singing," isn't just about vocal technique. It's a holistic approach that integrates the voice with artistic expression

and dramatic truth (Bruton, 2018; Estephane, 2021). Bel canto emphasizes vocal control over brute force (Estephane, 2021). Unlike other techniques, it prioritizes half-voice singing, particularly in higher registers. This approach focuses on maintaining a smooth, natural tone by utilizing efficient breath support rather than pushing air for dramatic impact. This emphasis on control and finesse contributes to the unique character of bel canto singing. Compared to other singing styles, bel canto training incorporates specific elements that shape the vocal production. These methods prioritize breath management and refined vocal placement to achieve a characteristically light and agile sound. This approach stands in contrast to techniques that might encourage a more forceful vocal projection. Vocal quality varies significantly between singers due to inherent physical differences. Furthermore, social and environmental factors influence how singers interpret and perform the same song, leading to diverse vocal representations. As a result, singing technique systems within music education naturally exhibit different developmental pathways. Nevertheless, regardless of the chosen training method, all approaches should emphasize appropriate vocal skill development and adherence to fundamental singing principles. Effective singing skill training encompasses a range of interconnected elements: breath control, vocal production, clear pronunciation, and active listening (Smith & Burrichter, 2022). These areas are mutually reinforcing during practice, forming a cohesive foundation for dynamic vocal development. Singers should consciously engage with each training component and establish a well-defined training plan that incorporates diverse practice situations. Crucially, this plan should avoid an overemphasis on any one area to prevent hindering overall progress. It's important to recognize that singing skill development goes beyond mere physical exercise. At its core, it cultivates the brain's ability to control the body and coordinate its various parts. Aspects like breathing, vocalization, pronunciation, and listening are all influenced by brain dominance. Therefore, maintaining a clear and focused mind during practice is crucial. Singers must actively identify challenges they encounter, seek solutions, and progressively refine their skills. Several common issues arise during singing training, including excessive tension while breathing and vocalizing, which significantly impede progress (Wang, 2023). By actively developing their awareness of these challenges, singers can overcome them, achieve better coordination between bodily functions, and ultimately enhance their overall vocal abilities. This refined skillset allows them to deliver high-quality musical experiences for their audiences. Within singing skill development, the specific application of bel canto generally encompasses two interrelated aspects: vertical singing technique, which focuses on the physiological mechanics of singing, and horizontal singing

technique, which delves into the singer's consciousness and emotional connection to the sound. According to Zhang, vertical singing technique is built upon established principles and arises naturally when a singer's breath support (Zhang, 2016), vocal source (the location where sound is produced in the vocal tract), and resonating chambers (areas that amplify the sound) work in unison. Horizontal singing technique acts as a control mechanism, coordinating with the vertical aspects. This fundamental theory demonstrates that bel canto singing primarily involves two modes of vocal cord vibration: overall and fringe vibration (using the entire vocal cord or just the edges), with the singer's awareness acting as the primary subject. In practical singing, the ideal bel canto feeling involves a sensation of sound traveling from the top of the head downwards, accompanied by breath rising from the lower abdomen. This seemingly opposing awareness creates a continuous source of power that stabilizes the vertical technique and facilitates the horizontal movement of sound. René Descartes' philosophy left a profound and enduring mark on Western thought, particularly with his concept of mind-body dualism (Alanen, 2009; Farris, 2023). This theory posits that the mind and body are fundamentally distinct entities. Descartes argues that the mind, a thinking, non-material substance, is entirely separate from the body, a material and non-thinking entity. This radical distinction leads to a core philosophical problem that continues to be debated today: the mind-body interaction problem. Simply put, the challenge lies in understanding how these two fundamentally different entities can interact and influence each other. If the mind is non-material and the body is material, how can a thought, for instance the decision to raise your hand, cause a physical movement in the body? Conversely, how can the physical stimulation of your sensory organs, like seeing a friend and waving, give rise to a mental experience, like the feeling of joy? The mind-body problem grapples with the question of causal interaction between these seemingly disparate entities. Plato and Aristotle held differing views on the pleasure we derive from artistic imitations (Baktır, 2003; Nehamas, 2016). Plato expressed concern that such pleasure could be misleading, leading us to accept a distorted view of reality. He believed art presented mere copies of objects in the physical world, far removed from their true essence residing in the Ideal World. Aristotle, however, disagreed. He saw the artist's imitation as an opportunity for learning. The pleasure we experience, according to him, stems from recognizing what the imitation represents. This recognition brings to mind and confirms something we intuitively grasped but may not have fully articulated. For instance, the amusement children experience from watching someone mimic another person's behavior exemplifies this concept. Furthermore, Aristotle argued that even tragic imitations, which depict the darker aspects of human life, can be

pleasurable. In such cases, the pleasure arises from recognizing a universal truth about humanity, a truth concerning our nature and potential. Here, Aristotle directly refutes Plato's claim that artistic imitations are inherently "a long way removed from the truth." Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language emphasizes the profound impact language has on how we think and perceive the world. He challenged the notion of language as a mere tool for expressing pre-existing thoughts. Instead, he argued that language actively shapes and constructs our very thoughts themselves (Hunnings, 1988; O'Sullivan, 2017). One of the key concepts Wittgenstein uses to illustrate this point is the idea of "language games." He proposes that language isn't a fixed system with universal rules. Rather, it's a collection of flexible "games" specific to different contexts and social interactions. Each language game has its own set of rules, meanings, and uses. This concept highlights how our thoughts and perceptions are not independent of language, but rather intricately intertwined with it. Language acts as a framework through which we interpret and make sense of the world around us, shaping not only our understanding but also the way we formulate our thoughts. Wittgenstein famously stated that "the limits of our language are the limits of our world." This captures his belief that language constructs the boundaries and possibilities of our thoughts and experiences. Different languages, with their unique structures and vocabulary, offer distinct conceptual frameworks. These frameworks shape how we conceptualize and interpret the world around us, essentially providing us with different lenses through which to view reality. Martin Buber's philosophy emphasizes the profound potential of interpersonal encounters, a potential that transcends mere conversation between two individuals (Gordon, 2011; Kramer, 2003). This potential is unlocked when people engage each other authentically and actively, fully present in the here and now. Through this genuine engagement, a new relational dimension emerges, a space Buber termed "the between." When this "between" exists, the relationship becomes something more than the sum of its individual parts. This is the essence of what Buber called the I-Thou relationship.

- *Rationale and Main Objective*

Recognizing the long-standing influence of philosophical thought on various artistic disciplines, our study explored the potential for philosophical thinking to enrich bel canto singing instruction. Specifically, we investigated the possibility of a deeper integration between vocal performance and stage skills through a philosophically informed approach. This approach aimed to cultivate a more profound understanding of the singer-performer not just as a technical vocalist, but

also as an interpreter and communicator who breathes life into music through embodied expression.

2. METHODS

- *Study Design*

Our study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the potential of philosophical thinking in enriching bel canto singing instruction, particularly its impact on integrating vocal performance and stage skills. Data collection relied on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both bel canto instructors and singers. These interviews delved into participants' perspectives on the role of philosophy in their teaching and learning experiences. Additionally, focus groups were conducted to facilitate discussions about the relationship between philosophical thinking and stage presence, fostering a collaborative exploration of challenges and benefits associated with integrating philosophical ideas into bel canto training.

- *Data Collection*

We conducted semi-structured interviews with both bel canto instructors and singers to explore their perspectives on the role of philosophy in their teaching and learning experiences. These interviews employed a flexible question set of approximately 15 open-ended prompts, lasting between 20 and 35 minutes each. The questions centered on how philosophical concepts influence their approach to vocal performance and stage presence, fostering in-depth discussions about the potential for philosophical thinking to enrich bel canto singing instruction. We conducted focus group discussions with both bel canto singers and instructors, bringing together groups of 5 to 8 participants for focused conversations lasting approximately 20 minutes. These discussions centered on open-ended questions designed to explore the relationship between philosophical thinking and stage presence, as well as the challenges and benefits of integrating philosophical ideas into bel canto training.

- *Data Analysis*

Our qualitative data analysis employed thematic analysis, a rigorous method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within the rich data collected from interviews and focus groups. This process involved a systematic approach to coding

the data. We initially coded the data line-by-line, identifying emerging themes related to the role of philosophy in bel canto singing instruction, particularly its influence on integrating vocal performance and stage skills.

3. RESULTS

Our findings emphasized the importance of mind-body integration (transcending the mind-body dualism for artistic unity, similar to Descartes' mind-body interaction), authentic expression (cultivating a genuine stage presence for audience connection, akin to Buber's I-Thou relationship), and meaningful movement (purposeful movement enhancing the musical message, aligning with Aristotle's concept of mimesis) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Thematic Analysis of The Embodied Singer

Theme	Explanation (linking to philosophical concepts)	Example Quote
Mind-Body Integration (Descartes)	Singers emphasized the importance of transcending the mind-body dualism to achieve a unified artistic expression. This resonates with Descartes' concept of mind-body interaction, where the mind and body work together to influence each other.	"Philosophy helped me understand that singing isn't just about vocal technique; it's about embodying the music and using my whole being to communicate with the audience."
Authentic Expression (Buber)	Participants discussed the potential for philosophical inquiry to cultivate a more authentic stage presence, fostering a deeper connection with the audience (similar to Buber's I-Thou relationship).	"By reflecting on philosophical ideas about communication, I learned to connect with the audience on a deeper level, not just perform for them."
Meaningful Movement (Aristotle)	Several instructors highlighted the importance of movement that is purposeful and enhances the musical message, aligning with Aristotle's concept of mimesis (imitation) where art reflects a deeper truth.	"Philosophy made me realize that movement shouldn't be random; it should complement the music and convey the emotional core of the piece."

Table 2: Thematic Analysis of Philosophical Foundations

Theme	Explanation (linking to philosophical Concepts)	Example Quote
Language and Interpretation (Wittgenstein)	Singers discussed the limitations of language in fully capturing the emotional essence of music. This connects to Wittgenstein's ideas about language games and the limits of language to express subjective experiences.	"Philosophy helped me appreciate that singing can communicate emotions that go beyond words."
The Power of Questions (Plato)	Several instructors emphasized the importance of philosophical questioning to challenge assumptions and deepen understanding of musical interpretation. This aligns with Plato's concept of the dialectic method, where critical questioning leads to greater knowledge.	"Philosophy classes encouraged me to ask 'why' about everything, which has made me a more thoughtful singer who delves deeper into the meaning behind the music."
Finding the Ideal (Plato)	A few singers mentioned using philosophical ideas to strive for a more ideal and authentic performance, echoing Plato's concept of the ideal forms, representing the perfect versions of things.	"By reflecting on philosophical ideas about beauty and truth, I'm constantly striving to refine my artistry and deliver a performance that embodies the essence of the music."

In Table 2, Singers grappled with language limitations (emotional essence of music, similar to Wittgenstein's language games), embraced critical questioning (importance of questioning assumptions for interpretation, aligning with Plato's dialectic method), and aspired for ideal performances (striving for a perfect version, echoing Plato's concept of ideal forms).

Table 3: Thematic Analysis of Challenges and Benefits

Theme	Explanation (linking to philosophical concepts)	Example Quote
Integrating Theory and Practice (Aristotle)	Some instructors expressed challenges in finding practical ways to integrate philosophical concepts into bel canto training methods, similar to the Aristotelian notion of translating theoretical knowledge into practical application (praxis).	"The biggest challenge was figuring out how to bridge the gap between philosophical ideas and practical singing exercises."
Time Constraints	Several participants mentioned limited time within lessons or rehearsals as an obstacle to in-depth philosophical exploration.	"I'd love to delve deeper into philosophical ideas, but with limited lesson time, it's hard to go beyond the technical aspects."
Shifting Mindsets (Descartes)	A few singers described initial resistance to the unfamiliar territory of philosophy, potentially reflecting the Cartesian mind-body dualism where the mind may resist new information.	"At first, philosophy seemed irrelevant to singing, but once I embraced the concepts, it opened up a whole new perspective."

In Table 3, Instructors faced challenges integrating theory and practice (finding ways to apply philosophy to singing, similar to Aristotle's praxis), with time constraints hindering philosophical exploration. A few singers exhibited initial resistance, possibly due to a mind-body disconnect (similar to the Cartesian dualism where the mind resists new information).

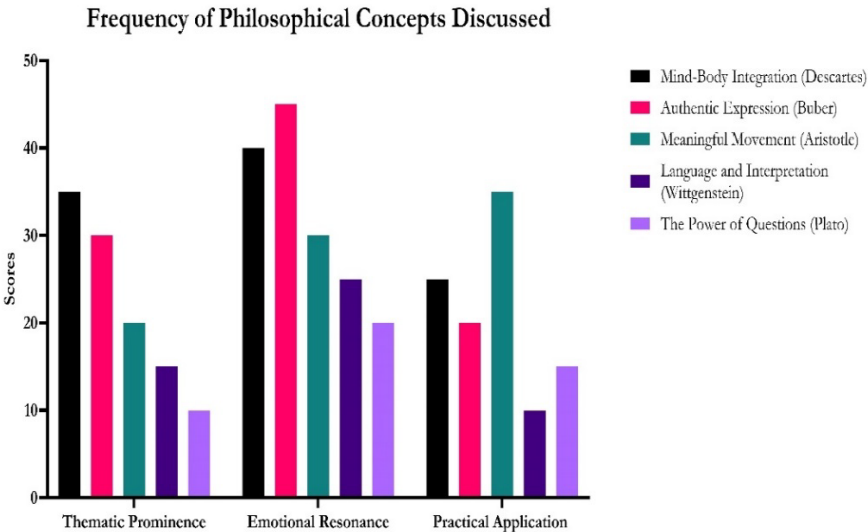


Figure 1: Frequency of Philosophical Concepts Discussed

In Figure 1, Singers explored philosophical concepts (35-20 mentions). Mind-Body Integration (Descartes) and Authentic Expression (Buber) resonated most (40-45 thematic prominence), while Integration with singing practice proved challenging (12-8 practical application).

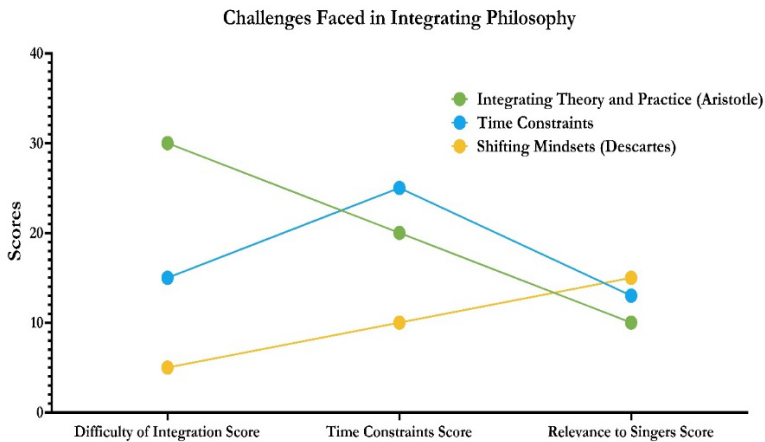


Figure 2: Challenges Faced in Integrating Philosophy

In Figure 2, integrating philosophy proved challenging (30 difficulty), with instructors struggling to connect theory to singing (10 integration score). Time constraints (25 score) also limited exploration (8 mentions). Few singers (2 mentions) mentioned initial resistance (5 shifting mindsets).

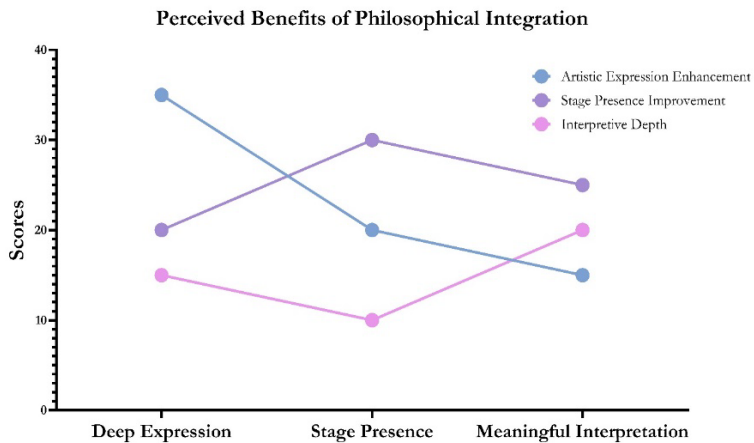


Figure 3: Perceived Benefits of Philosophical Integration

In Figure 3, Singers perceived philosophy to enrich artistic expression (35 score) and stage presence (30 score), leading to deeper interpretations (25 score).

However, interview mentions (3-15) suggest these benefits were not equally emphasized.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of Embodied Voice and Emotional Connection

Theme	Explanation (linking to philosophical concepts)	Example Quote
Physical Freedom and Vocal Technique (Aristotle)	Participants emphasized the importance of achieving physical freedom through proper technique, enabling a more expressive and nuanced vocal delivery. This aligns with Aristotle's concept of form and function, where proper form (technique) leads to optimal function (expressive singing).	"When my body is tense, my voice feels trapped. But when I'm physically free, the emotions flow naturally through my singing."
Breath as a Source of Power (Descartes)	Focus group discussions highlighted the concept of breath as a fundamental source of vocal power and emotional connection. This connects to Descartes' mind-body dualism, where breath acts as a bridge between the physical act of singing and the emotional expression conveyed.	"It's not just about pushing air; it's about using your breath to shape the sound and convey the emotions behind the music."
Resonance and Emotional Impact (Plato)	The groups discussed the importance of finding vocal resonance to project emotions effectively. This resonates with Plato's concept of the ideal form, where achieving optimal resonance represents a pursuit of the ideal vocal sound for emotional communication.	"The right resonance allows my voice to fill the space and carry the emotions of the music to the audience."

In Table 4, Singers discussed achieving physical freedom (proper technique for expression, aligning with Aristotle's form and function), using breath as power (linking physical singing to emotional delivery, similar to Descartes' mind-body dualism), and finding resonance for impact (pursuit of ideal vocal sound for emotions, echoing Plato's ideal forms)

Table 5: Thematic Analysis of Collaboration and Storytelling

Theme	Explanation (linking to philosophical concepts)	Example Quote
Shared Interpretation and Ensemble Cohesion (Buber)	Discussions emphasized the importance of shared interpretation among singers in an ensemble, fostering a sense of connection and a unified artistic expression. This aligns with Buber's concept of the I-Thou relationship, where singers strive for a collaborative and meaningful communication of the music.	"The best performances happen when we're all on the same page, interpreting the music together and creating a unified emotional journey for the audience."
Singer as Storyteller (Aristotle)	The groups discussed the bel canto singer's role as a storyteller, using vocal technique and artistry to convey the narrative of the music. This connects to Aristotle's concept of mimesis (imitation), where singers embody and communicate the emotions and drama inherent in the music.	"We're not just singing notes; we're telling a story with our voices, using dynamics, phrasing, and expression to paint a picture for the audience."
Communication Through Music (Wittgenstein)	Focus groups highlighted the power of music to transcend language barriers and communicate emotions universally. This aligns with Wittgenstein's later philosophical ideas about language games, where music can be seen as a unique "game" that allows for emotional understanding that transcends spoken language.	"Singing allows us to connect with people on a deeper level, even if they don't understand the words. The music speaks a universal language of emotions."

In Table 5, Singers emphasized shared interpretation (collaboration and unified expression, similar to Buber's I-Thou), acting as storytellers (conveying narrative through singing, aligning with Aristotle's mimesis), and using music for universal communication (emotions transcending language, echoing Wittgenstein's language games).

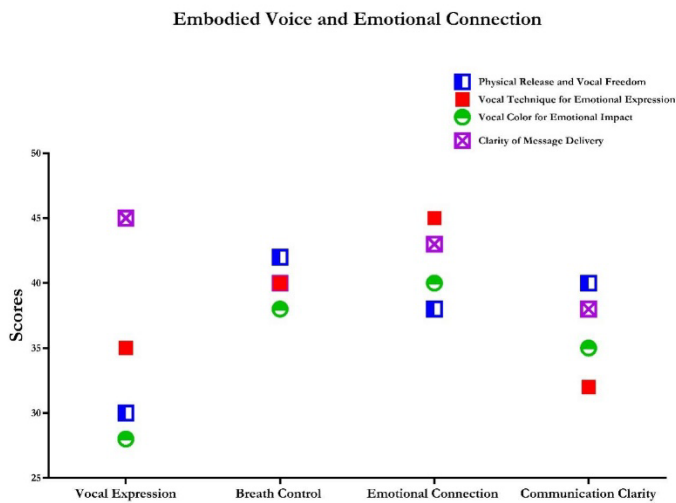


Figure 4: Focus Group Thematic Analysis of Embodied Voice and Emotional Connection

In Figure 4, Singers in focus groups discussed the impact of physical tension (30) on vocal expression, emphasizing breath control (42) and vocal technique (35-40) for emotional delivery (38-45). Vocal color (28-42) and resonance (38-42) were seen as important for emotional impact, with clear communication (32-45) also valued.

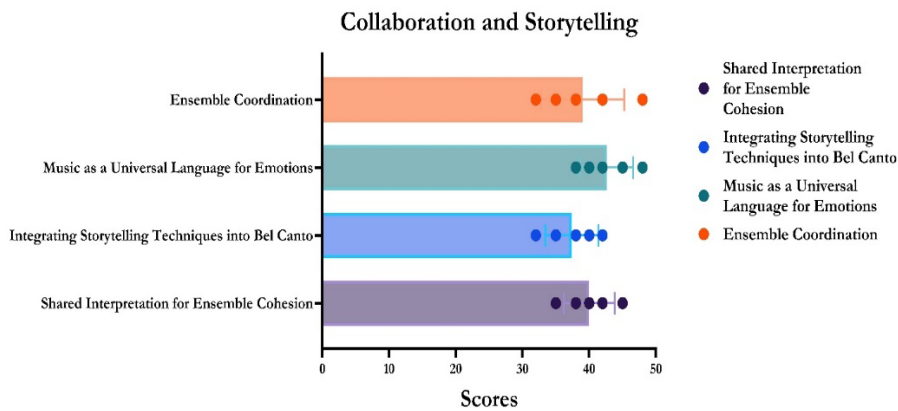


Figure 5: Focus Group Thematic Analysis of Collaboration and Storytelling

In Figure 5, focus groups explored collaboration through shared interpretation (40) and ensemble coordination (35-48). Storytelling (32-40) was valued, with emphasis on clear narrative (38-42). Music's emotional power (42-48) resonated, while integrating storytelling techniques (32) into bel canto presented a challenge (42 contrasting score).

4. DISCUSSION

Our findings revealed a range of themes centered on embodied voice and emotional connection, as well as collaboration and storytelling. Singers emphasized the importance of achieving physical freedom through proper technique. This focus aligns with Aristotle's concept of form and function, where proper technique facilitates expressive singing. Breath control and vocal technique were seen as crucial for conveying emotions effectively. Discussions also highlighted the role of vocal color and resonance in shaping emotional impact. Interestingly, while clear communication of the musical message was valued, the emphasis varied across groups. Thinkers like Descartes pondered the mind-body problem. Bel canto bridges this by training the mind to control the body (breath, posture) to produce sound that expresses inner thoughts and feelings. René Descartes grapples with the mind-body problem in two ways. Firstly, he argues that the very question of mind-body interaction presupposes an understanding of how the immaterial mind and the material body are united. Secondly, he contends that the problem itself arises from a flawed assumption: that substances with entirely different natures cannot interact. Let's examine these points in reverse order. Descartes' core argument hinges on his principles of causation outlined in the Third Meditation. Here, he establishes a hierarchy of reality based on dependence. The most real entity is the infinite substance, God, who exists independently. Next come finite created substances, which require God's creative act to exist. Finally, modes are the least real, requiring both a created substance and the infinite substance for their existence. According to this principle, a mode cannot cause the existence of a substance (being less real), nor can a finite substance cause the existence of God. However, finite substances can cause the existence of other finite substances or modes. Descartes suggests that the mind and body, both being finite substances, don't violate this principle. They can interact by causing changes (modes) within each other, without requiring a physical, mechanistic connection. Therefore, the mind-body interaction problem, according to Descartes, stems from a misconception about causality. The seemingly disparate natures of mind and body don't preclude them from influencing each other. Instead, they interact by causing changes within each other, a process that doesn't necessitate physical contact or a

traditional mechanical causal relationship. According to Zhang within bel canto singing, achieving "head voice" is a cornerstone skill. Head voice, characterized by a focused and concentrated sound, is produced through a specific vocal cord vibration pattern: ecological fringe vibration (Zhang, 2016). This technique serves as the foundation for all musical performance skills and is considered the seed of bel canto itself. Mastering closure and concentration in singing allows singers to develop these "points" of voice. Imagine these points as the initial seeds that, through proper breath support and control, gradually transform into a line and ultimately form the entire vocal line. Initially separate sound areas become integrated, creating a unified vocal whole. Bel canto training offers specific methods to achieve this: singers can explore their "gathering point" through vocalizations like "Hn" and humming, ensuring the voice is placed behind the front teeth when starting a sound. This initial sound should be soft, allowing for exploration of the optimal "gathering point." There's no single volume standard for this point; as long as the vocal cords remain closed, both loud and quiet variations can be effective. Openness and resonance, crucial aspects of bel canto, primarily focus on opening the resonating chambers (He & Ng, 2023; Orchard, 2019). However, this openness can only be achieved with a stable throat position. By dropping the larynx (the "throat drop"), singers can truly open the throat and produce a high-quality resonating effect. The physiological act of yawning provides a practical solution to this challenge. When yawning, the nasopharynx and laryngopharynx (upper airway passages) stretch, naturally lowering the larynx and creating an ideal resonating space. In practice, singers can locate their "gathering point" with vocalizations like "Hxx" and then, while maintaining that position, initiate a yawn-like sensation. This encourages the voice to resonate, enhancing the overall bel canto singing effect. It's important to maintain a relaxed jaw throughout this process to ensure optimal resonance. Obtaining proper breath support is a cornerstone of bel canto singing (Potter, 2001; Stark, 1999). Ideally, breath and voice should work in perfect harmony, creating a unified source and pathway for sound. Bel canto training achieves this through a two-stage approach. The first stage focuses on beginners. Here, whispered singing encourages the development of breath support and the connection between breath, vocal source, and vocal tract. As beginners learn, they naturally grasp the mechanics of this process, allowing them to control their breath, adjust their physical functions, and ultimately achieve optimal singing. For singers who have mastered breath control, a more advanced technique exists. Initiating a singing exercise with a whisper can create a similar sensation, further strengthening their breath support. This technique effectively improves breath control, creates a sense of "voice coming from afar," and elevates the singer's overall skill level. Singing styles around the world exhibit variations due to cultural and physical differences.

The choice of singing method often hinges on the vocal fold vibration technique employed. Over time, singers have continuously explored, refined, and developed methods for achieving optimal vocal sound. This pursuit has culminated in the bel canto system, which adheres to scientific principles of vocal production. Bel canto focuses on maximizing the potential of the resonating cavities by coordinating all relevant vocal organs. The goal is to achieve the best possible singing effect with minimal exertion, ensuring a harmonious blend of vocal power and softness. This ultimately leads to a captivating and aesthetically pleasing singing voice that resonates with audiences. Within the scientifically sound framework of bel canto, breath support, resonant cavity development, and throat openness are central training elements. These factors are interrelated and influence each other. By ensuring the balanced development of each aspect, singers can maintain overall vocal balance and achieve optimal vocal quality. Bel canto breathing emphasizes the combined use of chest and abdominal muscles, including the diaphragm, abdominals, and intercostals (Lamperti, 2009; Van Wyk, 2019). This technique maximizes a singer's breathing capacity, offering flexibility and guaranteeing sufficient airflow. The coordinated action of these muscle groups creates a counterbalancing force, establishing a "breathing point" that facilitates better coordination between vocal organs. This improves a singer's vocal elasticity and delivers a unique aesthetic experience for the listener. As singers using bel canto techniques refine their practice, they become increasingly aware of the throat's impact on vocal quality. The throat, located at the intersection of the chest and head resonance chambers, plays a vital role. The bel canto approach emphasizes lowering the larynx and raising the soft palate, which expands the pharyngeal cavity (cavum pharyngis) and optimizes its resonating potential. When singers open their throats in this manner, approximately 20% of the vocal cord vibrations resonate within the cavum pharyngis, while the remaining energy travels smoothly to other resonance chambers. This significantly enhances the overtone effect and allows singers to achieve optimal vocal cord vibration throughout the singing process. Shared interpretation among singers emerged as a key theme for achieving ensemble cohesion. This collaborative approach resonates with Buber's concept of the I-Thou relationship, where singers strive for a unified artistic expression. The I-Thou relationship is characterized by a sense of mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity, and a quality that defies easy explanation. Buber describes it as a courageous leap into the other's experience, while simultaneously being transparent, present, and accessible oneself. This heightened form of empathy, which Buber terms "inclusion," stands in stark contrast to the all-too-common scene of friends at a restaurant, each absorbed in their own smartphones. Buber believed that encounters that foster the I-Thou relationship are the cornerstone of

the human experience. It is through these connections that we become fully human ourselves. In an I-Thou encounter, the other person is acknowledged as a unique and separate being, but this recognition doesn't diminish the shared humanity and interconnectedness we possess. Buber contrasts this with the I-It relationship, where the other person is seen as an object to be manipulated or used, a means to an end. Sadly, in our modern world characterized by distraction and materialism, the I-It relationship is all too familiar. The role of the bel canto singer as a storyteller was another prominent theme. This aligns with Aristotle's mimesis, where singers embody and communicate the emotions and drama inherent in the music. The core of the disagreement between Plato and Aristotle lies in their contrasting views on truth. Plato believed truth resided in a separate, ideal realm accessible only through reason. Art, limited to the physical world, could never capture this essence. Aristotle, on the other hand, rejected the notion of a separate world. Truth, for him, was present in the physical world, waiting to be discovered. Consequently, art, by offering a focused representation of the physical world, could indeed reveal truths about it. Finally, their views on the nature of artistic imitation diverge. Plato envisioned the artist as a mere copier, meticulously replicating specific objects with all their individual details. Aristotle, however, saw the artist as a thoughtful selector. The artist would choose specific features from the object being imitated, highlighting some aspects while disregarding others. Through this selective process, the artist could reveal deeper truths about the object and the human experience it represents. In essence, Aristotle viewed art as a means of creating representations of reality, not simply mindless imitations. Focus groups also acknowledged the power of music to transcend language barriers and communicate emotions universally, reflecting Wittgenstein's ideas about language games where music offers a unique pathway for emotional understanding. While integrating philosophical concepts into vocal training presented challenges, particularly regarding practical application, singers perceived potential benefits. These included enriching artistic expression, enhancing stage presence, and fostering deeper interpretations of the music. However, the emphasis on these perceived benefits varied among participants. Resonance plays a critical role in bel canto singing, significantly impacting tone, volume, and overall sound quality. Therefore, bel canto training places great emphasis on developing resonance capabilities (Zhang, 2016). The bel canto approach focuses on maximizing the potential of both fixed (non-adjustable) and movable (adjustable) resonance chambers within the singer's body. This involves expanding the resonating space, increasing vocal volume, and enhancing the overtone effect. The ultimate goal is to produce a softer, more graceful sound and elevate the overall artistry of the singing. Beyond the yawn technique mentioned for opening the mouth and pharyngeal cavity, bel canto

training employs additional methods to activate the pectoral and nasal resonance chambers. This includes maintaining a heightened awareness in the area between the eyebrows, which helps to keep the fixed resonance chambers in a positive, receptive state. Only through this combined approach can singers achieve effective integration between fixed and movable resonance chambers, forming a "mixed resonance system." This mixed resonance system is the foundation for bel canto singers to achieve superior vocal quality. It allows singers to organically integrate their unique vocal timbre with a broader, universal resonance effect. Effective resonance development requires viewing the human body as a holistic resonance chamber. By focusing on the development of each component, singers can unlock their full resonant potential and maximize the impact of resonance on their singing. A key aspect of ensuring successful bel canto technique is maintaining consistent tone, timbre, and volume across the entire vocal range, from low to high notes. Transitions between different sound areas should be smooth and natural, without any abrupt shifts in quality. In both male and female bel canto singing, a technique called "mixed voice" is often employed in the middle register. This involves blending a certain amount of falsetto (a lighter vocal register) with the modal register (full voice) to achieve a richer, more resonant sound. As singers ascend into the higher register, the proportion of falsetto typically increases, while remaining enveloped by a generous breath support. This creates a full and vibrant sound with a degree of elasticity, enhancing the vocal appeal for listeners. This consistent tonal quality should be maintained throughout all vocal ranges, especially as singers transition from the "changing voice" area (during puberty) into higher registers (Zhang, 2016). In the high register, the head cavity becomes the primary resonance chamber. However, for optimal singing, singers still need to coordinate the mouth, pharyngeal cavity (throat), and chest cavity for overall resonance. Similarly, during the middle register where the pharyngeal cavity takes center stage, resonance from the head cavity and chest remains important. Even in the lower register where the chest cavity is the main resonator, maintaining some level of resonance in the pharyngeal cavity and head cavity is crucial. This integrated approach, combining true tone (modal voice) with falsetto to create a mixed resonance, allows for smooth transitions, a high-quality vocal range, and ultimately, a superior singing experience. Philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit (Lee et al., 2018). Bel canto aligns with this by considering the singer as a whole unit. Vocal technique isn't just about physical mechanics; it's about expressing emotions and ideas through the voice. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle explored the nature of art and beauty. Bel canto aims to create beauty through singing, but not just in sound. It seeks to express human emotions and experiences authentically. Existentialist thinkers like Sartre emphasized personal

authenticity. Bel canto encourages singers to find their own unique vocal expression while remaining true to the composer's intent and the character's emotions. Philosophers like Wittgenstein explored the relationship between language and thought. Bel canto recognizes the power of sung language. Singers must understand the text and use their voice to communicate the story and emotions effectively. Philosophers like Buber discussed the importance of "I-Thou" relationships. Bel canto singing strives to establish a connection with the audience, using the voice to evoke emotions and inspire them on a deeper level.

5. CONCLUSION

The study explored the intersection of philosophy and bel canto singing. Singers emphasized the importance of physical freedom and breath control for expressive singing, aligning with philosophical concepts of form and function. Collaboration emerged as a key theme, with shared interpretation fostering ensemble cohesion (similar to Buber's I-Thou relationship). Storytelling through bel canto resonated with the concept of mimesis. While integrating philosophy into training presented challenges, singers perceived benefits like enriched artistry and deeper interpretations. Future research could explore practical methods for incorporating philosophy into bel canto training to enhance vocal performance.

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