

Book review: “*The Ultimate Vocal Voyage*” – Daniel Zangger Borch

I bought a copy of “*The Ultimate Vocal Voyage*” at the recent BVA “*Rock and Pop*” day at the Royal Academy of Music in London where both the author, Daniel Zangger Borch, and I were presenters. Being already an avid supporter of Daniel’s general approach to contemporary vocal pedagogy and as a fellow specialist in the same field, I pored over his book with relish and it turned out to be a thoroughly engaging read.

Books in contemporary voice have gained in popularity since the 90’s, growing steadily in number to the present day where the products of the relatively few leading, reputable coaches are somewhat difficult to discern amongst the array of vastly variable fare on offer in the marketplace. In an area where there is currently, regrettably, no regulation it is difficult for people interested in this field to know which resources on offer deserve purchasing and which ones don’t. In my opinion, this particular book will not disappoint.

It is a comprehensive journey through industry-relevant contemporary vocal exercises, many of them variations on vocal ‘hooks’ from classic hit songs, covering style-generic technical areas, e.g. warming up, cooling down, breathing, range, registers, vibrato, resonance, articulation etc, in addition to exercises specific to the musical needs of the rock, pop and soul singers that the book is written for, e.g. rhythmic exercises, vocal ‘riffing’ and discussion of vocal distortion etc.

Further into the book the author allows the reader to benefit from his years of performing experience by giving credible, ‘real world’ advice about the interpretation of different styles and the realities of the gigging life, including useful information about microphones and mic technique, sound systems etc. He also uses terminology and concepts that contemporary singers relate to, e.g. comparing the larynx and vocal tract to a stereo’s graphic equaliser. His years as a top level performer are nowhere more apparent than in the quality of the delivery of the male vocal parts on the accompanying CD and the exercises being backed by his very competent, groove-based keyboard playing. The female parts are sung by his wife, Sara, who is also a tasteful singer in her own right.

His time spent absorbing the latest vocal research is evident throughout the book, but is most obvious in his provision of accurate vocal health advice combined with accessible vocal anatomy and practical information concerning voice disorders which singers would benefit from knowing about, although some other conditions such as vocal fold cysts and granuloma curiously are not covered. The diagrams are generally well-designed and relatively easy to interpret; my only concern being that some of those illustrating the vocal folds are not adequately labelled thereby relying on the assumed physiological knowledge of the reader.

Although translated from his native Swedish and as a result is unsurprisingly beset with some grammatical and spelling errors (which he assures me will be fixed in the next print run), this book is user-friendly for an English-speaking

readership and very relevant to the intended audience. It is a suitable size, attractively presented, professionally written, logically structured, and it is clear that he has a passion for the subject matter.

Having invested in many of the books available in this particular field over the years, it is a pleasure to be able to unreservedly recommend this book to singers of these styles, private teachers who teach these styles, and institutions where these styles are covered – a 'must have' core text for the contemporary vocalist.

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