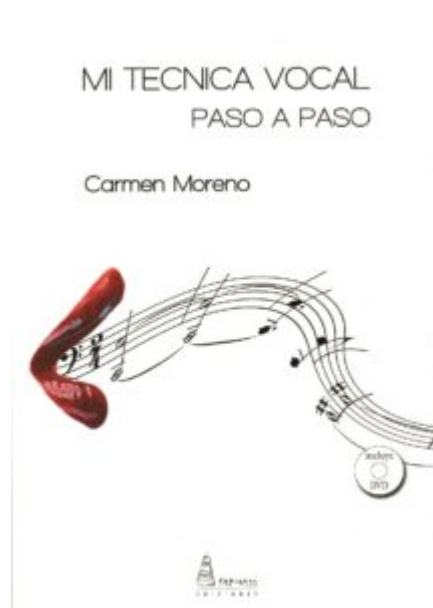


Carmen Moreno: My Vocal Technique Step by Step

Review by Cristian Grases, composer and conductor



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Carmen Moreno was born in Cumaná, Venezuela. She holds a degree in Education and Bioanalysis from the Central University of Venezuela and is Professor of Parasitology in the School of Bioanalysis, Faculty of Medicine at the same university. In addition, Carmen Moreno is a lyric soprano and studied in Venezuela (Cumaná and Caracas) and in Spain (Badalona and Barcelona). She is currently active in her work in vocal education and choral directing, and has actively participated as soloist and director in numerous opera productions. Additionally, she serves as juror in

international choral festivals and competitions.

Moreno gives us specific information regarding vocal technique, its mechanisms, and its involvement in the process of phonation. This monograph is organized into nineteen chapters that refer to a range of topics, with the goal of understanding the proper care and handling of the vocal instrument, while creating a didactic and supporting reference, which is geared, in the words of the author, "towards teachers of singing, students, choral directors and/or professionals with a spirit of inquiry." This book was published by Parnass Ediciones in Barcelona in April of 2012 and consists of 107 pages accompanied by a DVD with pictures, explanations and practical exercises.

In the preface, entitled 'Motivation', Moreno states, among other things, that "the best way to learn any profession in life is to maintain common sense and logic." This simple reflection is based largely on her studies in the area of science and her close relationship with the scientific method, and is a common thread in her narrative and in her description of the vocal mechanism and the art of singing. Additionally, she asserts that her publication has one clear objective: "to offer educational information that is simple, practical, plain and applicable to vocal technique." In support of her detailed descriptions, Moreno offers a wealth of high quality illustrations to assist in the understanding of both the anatomy of the instrument and its operation.

The first chapter provides a detailed description of the breathing process, with all its aspects (ventral, abdominal and clavicular respiration), followed by a second chapter describing, with medical precision, the anatomy of the facial musculature. In the preamble to the book's content, Moreno explains three basic steps to achieving and maintaining total vocal resonance in the nasal bone (vomer). With this specific objective, Moreno presents a third chapter, which describes, step-by-step, the proper movement of the jaw and lips needed

to keep the sound in the right place, and complements it with a fourth chapter devoted to the topic of vocal resonance and the ability of the singer to modify this resonance through the use of the jaw and lips. Chapter five summarizes the ideas of the previous four chapters.

In chapters six, seven and eight, Moreno points out the importance of the vocalization process and the conditions necessary for vocalization to be effective. In addition, she presents three model exercises with a detailed description of each of the steps to follow for a successful and healthy vocalization, enabling the singer to prepare and develop the vocal instrument. These descriptions are supplemented with musical examples, which present the music to be performed by both voice and piano. In the following chapters, nine, ten and eleven, Moreno applies the mechanics of vocalization to the execution of phrases, and describes the process from the point of view of sensations, or in other words, what the singer can or ought to feel, when the process of phonation is correct. She writes as well about the frequency with which vocalizing should be practiced in order properly to develop the instrument.

Chapters twelve and thirteen refer to nomenclature. Moreno identifies vocal tessitura and the appropriate vocal terms for establishing precise and assertive communication. The following two chapters (fourteen and fifteen) discuss the direct application of the technique described in previous chapters to the singing process and to the study of pieces to be performed. Moreno continues with a short chapter devoted to vocal technique in choral singing. Chapters 17 and 18 cover the care of the vocal instrument, at both the physiological and emotional levels. Moreno shares a number of observations and advice based on both medical data and personal experience. The book culminates with Chapter 19, where the author provides observations on vocal production or the physical condition of the singer and offers an explanation regarding solving or

improving each of these states described.

Carmen Moreno presents a work that will certainly be very useful for anyone professionally associated with the art of singing. Her precise and detailed approach to each aspect of the art of singing, and the accompaniment of figures, musical excerpts and videos, offer a useful and easily navigable guide for any professional eager for knowledge and who is interested in improving on his/her particular activity (singer, teacher or director).

Cristian Grases earned his Masters in Choral Conducting under the tutelage of Alberto Grau and María Guinand in Caracas, Venezuela, and his Doctorate in Choral Conducting at the University of Miami. Grases has won awards for his work as a composer and is active as guest conductor, juror, workshop facilitator and educator in North and South America, Europe and Asia. Grases is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM) and leads the committee on Multi-Cultural and Ethnic Affairs of the Western Division of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). Grases currently serves as assistant professor at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles, California. Email: cgrases@gmail.com



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