

# HOW TO SING

Lilli Lehmann

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

RICHARD ALDRICH

NEW REVISED AND SUPPLEMENTED EDITION

TRANSLATED BY

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## Preface to the Third Revised Edition

IT were well if pupils, yes and professional singers, too, were conscious of just one thing, that the singing tone is to be found in the resonance of one's own body, in the chest and head resonances, and not in the auditorium into which the singer strives solely to project his breath to produce big tones.

Our body is simultaneously the instrument and the resonance box upon which we have to learn to play. Our muscles are the strings which we must learn to tune, tighten and loosen, one to the other, and our soul is the director of our art.

As the pipes of an organ, through their form and air pressure, give that instrument the possibility of endless variations in tone, range, and means of expression, so we, too, must create for our tones and ranges living forms with our vocal organs and resonances.

As a clock is wound to set all parts of the work in action, so we singers must put together all our coöperative organs and muscles into a well-joined instrument, set it in action, and keep it in activity.

In the shortest song, the shortest phrase, we have to remake our instrument a thousand times over and keep it going, for the slightest inattention or the slightest injury to the form—which is apt to happen in the pronunciation—is liable to mutilate the artistically set instrument or its tone coloring.

Our vocal art is a marvel just as our instrument is one, and a beautiful human voice which is so blessed as to be able to give forth that which stirs our hearts is an incomparable, glorious marvel. We singers are in duty bound to become closely acquainted with this instrument in order to serve humanity with an ideal art.

LILLI LEHMANN.

GRUNEWALD, January, 1922.

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## Publisher's Note

THE GREAT German soprano Lilli Lehmann, born in Würzburg in 1848, made her operatic debut in Prague in 1865. She took part in the first complete cycle of Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*, at Bayreuth in 1876. In 1880 she made her London debut, singing the role of Violetta, and in 1882 Vienna heard her for the first time. After a fruitful career at the Berlin Opera she went to New York and in the winter of 1885 she made her debut at the Metropolitan as Carmen. During her first season at the Metropolitan her roles included Bertha (*Le Prophète*), Marguerite (*Faust*), Irene (*Rienzi*) and Venus (*Tannhäuser*). Lehmann's astonishingly broad repertoire extended from light coloratura roles of Bellini and Offenbach to the dramatic roles—particularly those of Wagner—for which she was universally admired. Toward the end of her career she was closely associated with the Salzburg Festival, achieving many successes there and eventually serving as the Festival's artistic director. She continued to appear in recital until 1920 when she retired from a triumphant fifty-five year career. She died in 1929.

Lilli Lehmann began her teaching activities in 1891 and counted among her many notable students the Swedish-American mezzo-soprano Olive Fremstad and the American soprano Geraldine Farrar. Lehmann's own extraordinary repertoire (over one hundred seventy roles), her superb technical mastery and psychological understanding of roles ranging from Wagner and Mozart to Donizetti and Verdi, and the sheer length of her career, testify to the validity of her philosophy and practices as set forth in the present volume.

MOTTO: Acquiring artistic technique is always associated with exaggerations, for isn't it necessary to make others hear, see, and understand, in spacious halls, the singer's own fine feeling for something? The finer the feeling, the more complicated it is. Artistic technique must acquire the harmony of the beautiful through the æstheticism of the soul, and may through it only become—apparently—natural again.

## My Purpose

MY purpose is to discuss simply, practically, and in a comprehensible manner such sensations known in singing as singing "open," "covered," "dark," "nasal," "in the head" or "in the neck," "forward" or "back," and particularly my own sensations based on a thorough and precise knowledge. These expressions correspond to our sensations in singing; but they are unintelligible as long as the causes of those sensations are unknown, and each one has a different idea of their meaning. Many singers try their whole lives long to produce them and never succeed. This happens because science understands too little of singing, the singer too little of science. I mean that the physiological explanations of the highly complicated processes of singing are not plainly enough put for the singer, who must depend on his vocal sensations. Scientific men are not at all agreed as to the exact functions of the several organs, and the fewest singers are informed on the subject. Every serious artist has a sincere desire to help others reach the goal—the goal toward which all singers are striving: to sing well and beautifully.

The true art of song has always been possessed and will always be