

**KELSEY GRIGGS' SENIOR RECITAL**

**HONORS THESIS**

**PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MUSIC**

**IN THE MUSIC AND DANCE DEPARTMENT  
AT SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

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**SALEM STATE HONORS PROGRAM  
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## **Abstract**

The Music Department at Salem State University works hard to foster students into well-rounded musicians by the time they graduate. To showcase this, we are asked to complete an artistic project in the spring semester of our senior year. I chose to present a recital of thirty minutes of music alongside my friend and colleague Samantha Mansfield on April 10, 2017. I performed fifteen pieces of music, two of which were duets with my recital partner and one of which was a trio with my recital partner and one of our other senior music majors. Several of my pieces were an exploration into the world of atonal music, or music lacking a tonal center. Accompanying the performance was a program note for each of the pieces I performed with a background on each composer, a bio, and, for honors' thesis purposes, a reflection of how it went and a guide to practicing music.

## Table of Contents

Complete Program.....	4
Program Notes.....	6
Works Cited for Program Notes.....	11
Bio.....	13
Reflection.....	14
A Guide to Practicing Music.....	16

## Complete Program

Grüss.....Mendelssohn, F.  
*Kelsey Griggs and Samantha Mansfield*

Widmung.....Schumann, R.  
Du Bist Wie Eine  
Blume.....Schumann, R.  
*Kelsey Griggs*

An Chloe.....Mozart, W. A.  
An die Musik.....Schubert, F.  
*Samantha Mansfield*

Crucifixion.....Barber, S.  
Sure on This Shining Night.....Barber, S.  
Recuerdo.....Wheeler, S.  
*Kelsey Griggs*

How Beautiful are the Feet.....Handel, G. F.  
O Sleep, Why Dost Thou Leave Me.....Handel, G. F.  
*Samantha Mansfield*

Three Little Maids From School Are We from *The Mikado*.....Gilbert, W. S. and  
Sullivan, A.  
*Kathryn Antonsson, Kelsey Griggs, and Samantha Mansfield*

Why do they shut me out of Heaven?.....Copland, A.  
Heart, we will forget him.....Copland, A.  
Laurie's Song from *The Tender Land*.....Copland, A.  
*Kelsey Griggs*

Sorry Her Lot from *H.M.S. Pinafore*.....Gilbert, W. S. and Sullivan, A.  
The Hours Creep on A-Pace from *H.M.S. Pinafore*.....Gilbert, W. S. and Sullivan, A.

*Samantha Mansfield*

My Romance.....Rodgers, R./ Hart, L.  
*Kelsey Griggs*

Come Ready and See Me.....Hundley, R.  
*Samantha Mansfield*

Che Fiero Costume.....Legrenzi, G.  
Come raggio di sol.....Caldara, A.  
Quella fiamma che m'accende.....Marcello, B.  
*Kelsey Griggs*

Il Fervido Desiderio.....Bellini, V.  
Un moto di gioia.....Mozart, W. A.  
*Samantha Mansfield*

Via, resti servita, madama brillante from *The Marriage of Figaro*.....Mozart, W. A.  
*Kelsey Griggs and Samantha Mansfield*

## Program Notes

### Grüss

**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)** pursued a career in music from a very young age and made his public concert debut at the age of nine when he participated in a chamber music concert. At the age of seventeen, he composed an overture for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that turned out to be so successful that he ended up returning to the subject again later in his life and completed a suite of pieces to be used alongside the play.<sup>1</sup>

As was typical with Romantic Era composers, Mendelssohn responded to nature with his music. *Grüss* (Greeting) is part of a collection of two-part songs, many of which respond to nature in some way. The lyrics of *Grüss* use nature to call a greeting to someone, or maybe something. This piece has many harmonies in thirds and uses contrary motion to create a feeling of springtime.

### Widmung and Du Bist Wie Eine Blume

**Robert Schumann (1810-1856)** was a Romantic Era German composer who left a career in law to become a virtuoso pianist. However, after a hand injury, he decided to focus his musical talents on composing with the urging of his wife Clara. Schumann wrote exclusively for the piano until 1840 but also wrote pieces for piano and orchestra, lieder (art songs for piano and voice), four symphonies, one opera, and other choral, orchestral, and chamber works.<sup>2</sup>

“Widmung” and “Du Bist Wie Eine Blume” are both a part of Schumann’s twenty-six piece song cycle *Myrthen* (Myrtles). He appropriately named the cycle for the flowers that were generally used in wedding ceremonies because it was a wedding gift from him to his wife Clara. “Widmung” (“Dedication”) is the first piece of the song cycle. The music, coupled with Friedrich Rückert’s poetry expresses his deepest emotions of love for Clara. In “Du Bist Wie Eine Blume” (“You Are Like A Flower”), Schumann compares his bride to a flower, calling her sweet, fair, and pure. Both of these pieces are representative of the Romantic Era with their lilting melodies and rich harmonies all to represent the love he felt for his bride.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Felix Mendelssohn Biography,” Biography.com, Last modified September 13, 2016, <http://www.biography.com/people/felix-mendelssohn-40373#>.

<sup>2</sup> “Robert Schumann,” *Wikipedia*, accessed 2 March 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Schumann](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Schumann).

<sup>3</sup> Gailey, Merideth, “Widmung (‘Du meine Seele du meine Hertz’), song for voice and piano,” *Allmusic*.

## **The Crucifixion and Sure on This Shining Night**

Samuel Barber (1910-1981) was an American composer from Pennsylvania. He wrote his first piece at the age of seven and attempted his first opera, *The Rose Tree*, at the age of ten. His opera *Vanessa*, composed from 1956-57, won him a Pulitzer Prize in music in 1958. Over his career as a composer, he also won the American *Prix de Rome*, another Pulitzer Prize, and the election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Barber's music does not lean toward any certain 20<sup>th</sup> century style. Instead, his works are very melodically focused. His structures are often complicated and his harmonies are dissonant as is with other artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but there is always a distinct melody that fits nicely into the music sticks with the listener.<sup>4</sup>

"The Crucifixion" is part of a song cycle called *The Hermit Songs*. Each of the ten songs in the cycle deals with a different sentiment, from religion to the obscene, and each of the texts are translations of poems written by Irish monks and scholars from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. "The Crucifixion" specifically deals with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Barber uses the dissonance in the piano part to portray the anguish of the speaker.<sup>5</sup>

"Sure On This Shining Night" is a text from the famous poem by James Agee. Barber's setting is characterized by long lyrical lines and the voice and piano lines seem to mimic each other throughout the piece.<sup>6</sup>

## **Recuerdo**

Scott Wheeler (1952- ) is an American composer and conductor in the Boston area whose operas have been commissioned by the Boston Lyric Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Washington National Opera, and the Guggenheim Foundation. In 2014, he received the Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and he currently teaches musical theatre at Emerson College in Boston.<sup>7</sup>

"Recuerdo" ("Memory") is the second in a five-piece song cycle using poems written by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950). Her five poems express different ways in which we "waste the night in wanting". The dream-like contrast in pitches in the accompaniment along with the poetry gives the listener the feeling of yearning and nostalgia for that night spent going back and forth on the ferry with a loved one. The

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<sup>4</sup> Schwartz, Steve, "Samuel Barber," Classical Net, Last modified 2017, <http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/barber.php>.

<sup>5</sup> Staff, Rovi, "Hermit Songs, for voice and piano, Op. 29," Allmusic.com, Last modified 2017, <http://www.allmusic.com/composition/hermit-songs-for-voice-piano-op-29-mc0002359792>.

<sup>6</sup> "Sure on This Shining Night," The Library of Congress, Last modified December 10, 2014, <http://memory.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.natlib.ihas.200182573/default.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Wheeler, Scott, "Scott Wheeler Biography," Scottwheeler.org, Last modified 2017, <http://www.scottwheeler.org/>.

rhythms given to the singer are very imitative of speech giving the performer the chance to tell a story.<sup>8</sup>

### **Why do they shut me out of Heaven?, Heart, we will forget him, and Laurie's Song from *The Tender Land***

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) was an American composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He incorporated musical genres such as jazz and folk into his compositions and was a big proponent of innovation in classical composition. He believed that classical music could be as popular as jazz in America. Copland is most known for composing music that characterizes the sound of the Midwest and composing the scores for movies such as *Of Mice and Men*, *Our Town*, and *The Heiress*. He won the Pulitzer Prize for one of his most famous compositions, *Appalachian Spring*, which was written to accompany a ballet and was choreographed by Martha Graham. He also composed the music for Agnes de Mille's ballet *Rodeo*.<sup>9</sup>

"Why do they shut me out of Heaven?" and "Heart, we will forget him" are both from a collection of 12 songs composed using poems of Emily Dickenson. These two particular songs explore religion and love, respectively. The complicated, dissonant harmonies, and jagged melodic lines of "Why do they shut me out of Heaven?" are representative of the experimental style of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and reflect the confusion and hurt feelings of the singer. The rise and fall of the accompaniment in "Heart, we will forget him" coupled with the smooth, connected melody seems to emulate the indecision the singer feels.<sup>10</sup>

"Laurie's Song" is an aria from the American Opera *The Tender Land*. The character in the aria is a high school senior living in the Midwest at the time of her graduation. This piece is a coming of age song of hope and fear for the future. Laurie wonders how the world could be so wide when all she has known is her own back yard.<sup>11</sup>

### **My Romance**

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<sup>8</sup> Wheeler, Scott, "Wasting the Night: songs," Naxos.com, Accessed February 31, 2017, [https://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs\\_reviews.asp?item\\_code=8.559658&catNum=559658&filetype>About%20this%20Recording&language=English](https://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs_reviews.asp?item_code=8.559658&catNum=559658&filetype>About%20this%20Recording&language=English).

<sup>9</sup> Copland, Aaron, "Aaron Copland: A Self Portrait," Pbs.org, Last modified July 11, 2005, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/aaron-copland-about-the-composer/475/>.

<sup>10</sup> Wise, Brian, "Poems (8) of Emily Dickinson for voice and orchestra (arr. from 12 Poems of Emily Dickinson)," Allmusic.com. Last modified 2017, <http://www.allmusic.com/composition/poems-8-of-emily-dickinson-for-voice-orchestra-arr-from-12-poems-of-emily-dickinson-mc0002358274>.

<sup>11</sup> "The Tender Land," Wikipedia.com, Last Modified March 12, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Tender\\_Land](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tender_Land).

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) and Lorenz Hart (1895-1943) met in 1919 in college when they were asked to write an amateur theatre club show. They produced their first successful Broadway musical in 1925 titled *The Garrick Gaieties*. They quickly became one of the most popular songwriting teams in America and from 1925 to 1931 they had fifteen scores featured on Broadway.<sup>12</sup>

“My Romance” was written for Billy Rose’s musical *Jumbo*, a musical about a circus with Jumbo the elephant as the main attraction. Doris Day sang the song in the original film adaptation in 1962. The jazz chords used create a rich sound that represents the romance that the singer is describing.<sup>13</sup>

### **Che Fiero Costume**

Giovanni Legrenzi (1626-1690) was an Italian composer of the Baroque era. His music was on par with the music of the end of the Baroque era with accompaniment that could be a stand-alone part and improvised melodies from the performers. The sacred music, operas, and chamber music he composed were all of equal quality and his sacred compositions in particular show his talents for polyphonic, or multi-melodic, music. Bach used themes from Legrenzi’s compositions in his *Fugue in C minor* for organ.<sup>14</sup>

The acrobatic melodies in “Che Fiero Costume” represent the frustration the performer feels with Cupid for making her fall in love. The long and ornamented lines of the piece are characteristic of the Baroque era.

### **Comme Raggio Di Sol**

Antonio Caldara (1670-1736) was also an Italian Baroque composer. Caldara started learning music at a young age and was known as a cellist by 1689. His operas were performed in Venice by 1690. He is known most for his compositions for voice, especially his operas. His music is characterized by attention to detail in composition and dramatic effect.<sup>15</sup>

The driving accompaniment in “Come Raggio Di Sol” is contrasted by the long and smooth phrases in the voice, which represents the desperation the singer feels under her

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<sup>12</sup> “Rodgers and Hart,” Wikipedia. Accessed March 1, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodgers\\_and\\_Hart](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodgers_and_Hart).

<sup>13</sup> “Billy Rose’s Jumbo,” Wikipedia, Accessed March 1, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy\\_Rose%27s\\_Jumbo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Rose%27s_Jumbo).

<sup>14</sup> “Giovanni Legrenzi.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Last modified March 22, 2007. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Giovanni-Legrenzi>.

<sup>15</sup> Oren, Aryeh, “Antonio Caldara,” Bach Cantatas Website, Last modified October 2008, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Lib/Caldara-Antonio.htm>.

calm exterior. The melodies for the voice part are occasionally chromatic, giving the listener a bit of unease.

### **Quella Fiamma che m'Accende**

Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739), who was an Italian composer, was also employed in the Venetian Republic as a magistrate from 1708 to 1728 and also served as a member of the Council of Forty (part of Venice's central government). 18<sup>th</sup> century historians title him as a "dilettante" or an aristocrat who also pursued music.<sup>16</sup>

The angular lines in the vocal part, paired with the fierce poetry represent the sound of fire licking up into the air. The texture of the lines tends to get more and more thick and complicated as each phrase goes on.

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<sup>16</sup> Oren, Aryeh, "Benedetto Marcello," Bach Cantatas Website, Last modified November 2008, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Lib/Marcello-Benedetto.htm>.

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## Bio

Kelsey Griggs is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music with a minor in French at Salem State University. Her passion for music and performance has led her to perform in choirs and on stages across the state of Massachusetts.

Griggs has been a singer for as long as she can remember. Her first instruction in music came when she joined her church's choir at the age of six. Since then, music has always been a part of her daily life. Throughout her career as a singer, she has been involved in many choirs and musical theatre performances. Her most noted roles in musical theatre were Jo March from *Little Women the Musical*, Susie Ward from *Babes in Arms*, Ann "Anytime Annie" Reilly from *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*, and Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre from *The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. She started studying voice privately with Grace Morrison at the age of 15 and has performed in the All Cape Music Festival as part of the Treble Choir. Griggs has been a part of the University Chorus and the Chamber Singers at Salem State University and has also performed with the Newburyport Choral Society.

Currently, Griggs studies voice at Salem State University under the direction of Dr. Randy McGee and Dr. Beverly Soll and is part of Salem State University's Commonwealth Honors' Program. She still performs as part of the Chamber Singers and has since joined the University Chamber Orchestra on trumpet. She works in the Music and Dance Department's Music Resource Center, cataloguing music, books, CDs, DVDs, and archives. She is the founder of and is currently participating in the Music and Dance Department's First Year Peer Mentoring Program, which works to help first year music majors feel more comfortable in and knowledgeable about our department.

Griggs is still waiting for her next musical opportunity and intends to perform in community choirs and opera in the future. She is always looking for new ways to further her education and experience in music and hopes to continue to perform for as long as she can. She hopes to someday pursue a master's degree.

## Reflection

April 20, 2017

It's been ten days since the generally wonderful experience of my senior voice recital. Immediately after it was over, I wished I could start all over again. It was truly rewarding to immerse myself so greatly into the pieces of music I chose for my recital. Each piece is more a part of me than I ever thought it would be. But I definitely learned how much work putting on a recital is. Really, I had no idea before this experience how stressful it could be and I shared my recital with one other person, which can only complicate things more.

First, I should say, I did a half recital, which means that technically I was responsible for presenting thirty minutes of music. The entire recital was about an hour long and my friend Samantha presented the other thirty minutes. The music had to be at least eighty percent classical in nature and we had to figure out our own practice schedules with our accompanist, Dr. Beverly Soll. Figuring out how to find time with our accompanist was probably one of the hardest things to coordinate. Dr. Soll was not hired simply to be the accompanist for our recital. She is also the accompanist for any other senior voice recitals, the 3-4 open recitals every semester, juries at the end of the semester, she teaches several classes, and is a general free-lance musician. Then, add our schedules into the mix and you've got one of the most frustrating things about music: no one has a regular (or sane) schedule. However, Dr. Soll is one of the good ones. She definitely figured out how to give us as much time as any of us needed, even though it was difficult to figure out when exactly those times would be.

Not only did we have to find our own times to rehearse, we also had to communicate with the person who sets the schedule for the recital hall and our voice teacher (thankfully, the two of us have the same one) to figure out when we could all be in the same room together to rehearse in the recital hall. Let's just say I may have sweat a bit trying to communicate with everyone at once.

Practicing these pieces seemed to come easy to me because I had a genuine affinity for all of them. Even when I wasn't practicing them, I was thinking through them, which can sometimes be just as good.

I think if I could change anything, it would have been my organization. I should have been using my calendar to keep track of what assignments were due when so I could stay on top of my schoolwork. I still managed to finish all of it, but there were some nights spent watching Netflix that I could have used to get certain assignments out of the way.

As a whole, I think this process went really well, considering that it's the first recital I have ever personally put together. I had a wonderful recital partner, who I am lucky to call a friend, fantastic faculty in the Music and Dance department to answer any questions I may have had, and lots of support from everyone I knew. It did make me much more stressed than I normally am at this point in the semester, but it was totally worth it and I want to go back in time and do it again! It feels like I've made it over some large hump. I personally have never done so much solo repertoire in one night and now I feel like I can do anything.

# A Guide to Practicing Music

## By Kelsey Griggs

In most cases, practicing is what makes a musician. There are very few examples of musicians who had such a natural talent that they never had to practice ever. Most humans do not get better at anything until they practice it. Musical practice is a good habit for musicians to get into doing every day. For a lot of musicians, especially student musicians, this is not a reality because life gets busy. But it is still a good habit to practice as much as you can and with as much focus as you can.

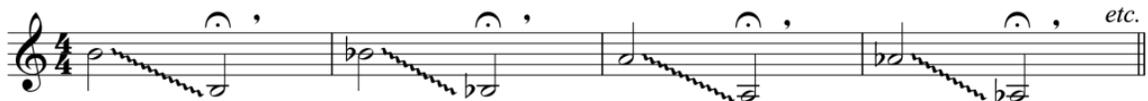
People who have never studied music probably do not know exactly what I mean when I say, “practice” and probably think it means just playing or singing through the pieces of music you are working on. However, that is not always the case. Some parts of practicing do not even necessarily require you to play your instrument. However, there are two things that every practice time should have: a warm-up and practicing of repertoire, both of which may take many different forms.

**Warm-up:** It doesn't matter what instrument you play, each practice session, or any time you use your instrument, should start with a warm-up. For vocalists, it is particularly important because their instrument is part of their body. A good warm-up should make you feel warm and loose and ready to play or sing music in a healthy way. Warm-ups take a different form for every instrument. For example, I know many pianists warm-up by playing scales and most run their hands under warm water or use hand warmers to keep their fingers warm and loose. A warm-up could take anywhere from 5 minutes to 30 minutes depending on how you are feeling that day or what instrument you play. This is a *really* important part of practicing. Some people skip this step and go right to trying to sing or play and that is how people injure themselves. It is a good idea to warm-up every day even if you do not have the time to practice your repertoire.

A good vocal warm-up should allow you to breath correctly (using your abdominal muscles and your diaphragm, not your chest) and find the right placement for your voice (for most singers, a very forward placement with a raised soft palette that does not feel like you are swallowing your pitches).

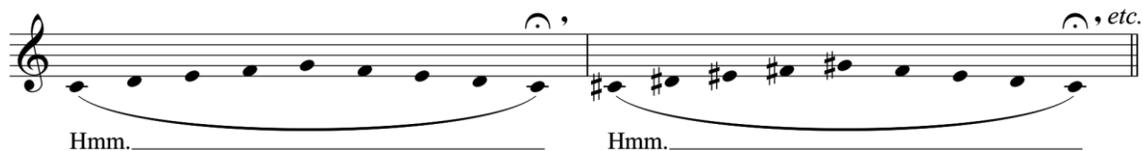
### Examples of Vocal warm-ups:

**Lip trill:** Lips together, teeth apart, moving pitched air through the lips and allowing them to vibrate. This exercise helps with breath support, and brings the singer's voice forward to sound more resonant. This particular example asks the singer to start on a B and slide their voice down an entire octave. The exercise, as is with most warm-ups, moves by half steps each time.



Ackerman, Dianne Spoto, "6 Vocal Warm-ups," Intunemonthly.com, Last modified April 2015, <http://www.intunemonthly.com/6-vocal-warmups/>.

**Humming:** Similarly to the lip trill, during humming, the lips are together and teeth apart. But for this exercise, the pitched sound only resonates within your nasal cavity (one of the resonant spaces in your head) and does not come out of your mouth. The sound does not have to be very loud to help you warm-up. This might seem counter intuitive, but humming allows the singer to find the bright resonant tone that comes with a nasal sound. This also helps with breath support. This example takes the first five notes of every major scale and asks the singer to sing each note up and then come back down. This is a typical range for a warm-up and can be used with other things like open vowels and lip trills. In the second measure, the last four notes do not have a sharp sign (#) next to them because in music, if a note is labeled as sharp or flat (*b*) at the beginning of a measure, it does not need to be restated if the note is re-struck within the same measure. Therefore, the very last pitch of the example is the same as the first pitch of that measure but is not the same as the very first pitch of the exercise. The same is true for the third and fourth measures of the next example.



Ackerman, Dianne Spoto, "6 Vocal Warm-ups," Intunemonthly.com, Last modified April 2015, <http://www.intunemonthly.com/6-vocal-warmups/>.

**Haw-Haw:** For this, the jaw should be hanging low and loose and should not move from note to note, tongue is flat and touching the back part of the bottom row of your teeth. Many people make their mouth opening bigger as the notes become higher, it is important to learn how to stop doing this as it may cause jaw tension. Each note should be short and separated from the rest (the small dots underneath each note means staccato, or short and separated) until the very last one, which is held a bit longer. This exercise, though it seems silly, is helpful for pitch accuracy. Each note is very short and fast so you must be accurate in your attack of each note. This does not give the singer the opportunity for sliding to the pitch from different pitch. It is also helpful in

breath support, as you must use your abdominals to start and stop each individual pitch in the exercise.

Haw, haw.

Haw, haw.

*etc.*

Ackerman, Dianne Spoto, "6 Vocal Warm-ups," Intunemonthly.com, Last modified April 2015, <http://www.intunemonthly.com/6-vocal-warmups/>.

**Practicing repertoire:** The body of practicing can take many forms. The person may be looking at a piece for the first time and may try to sight-read it, singers may leave out the words and sing just the pitches, they may separate the rhythm from the melody, or they may have the piece mostly learned and try to play or sing the whole way through with rhythmic and pitch accuracy.

**Sight-Reading:** This is an important part of learning any musical instrument. Sight-reading is looking at a piece of music for the first time and being able to play or sing it just by reading the notes off the page in rhythm. Most instruments do not need a starting pitch, as they have certain hand positions that make the sound they are aiming for (for some, this seems easier, but it is still difficult if you do not have the hand positions memorized or the finger dexterity to handle faster portions of the music). However, with singing, usually a starting pitch is needed because the voice sings all pitches just by moving muscles inside the body. Only a person with perfect pitch or a person who has sang that one particular note so much that they have the muscle memory would be able to tell if they are singing the right note without the help of a pitch from a piano. It is always good to sight-read new pieces to help train your ear for the future. If you are singing in a group, the ability to sight-read makes the process of learning a choral or multi-part piece much easier, faster, and more accurate. Things that help sight-reading are being able to sing major scales and all forms of the minor scales, arpeggios (chords sung or played one note at a time from the bottom note to the top and back), and common intervals that appear in music. It will also help to know and be able to sing common rhythmic structures that appear in certain time signatures. It is always a good idea to try to sing an unknown passage *before* you play it to work on training your ear.

**Isolating pitch:** Some singers find the words of their piece to be distracting them from actually learning the pitches in the piece. It can be useful to sing the piece you're learning just on a syllable like "la" or "da" or whatever combination

of consonant and vowel you find most comfortable to sing. This may be in tempo (at the right speed) and in rhythm (with the correct duration of each pitch in the time signature) or it could be slowed down immensely or not in rhythm whatsoever. It is sometimes easier to separate the pitches from everything else so you can focus on knowing what they are supposed to sound like. If you are going to separate the pitches from the tempo or rhythm, it is always a good idea to sing them again with the right tempo and rhythm once you feel comfortable with them so you do not accidentally learn the tempo and rhythm wrong.

**Isolating rhythm:** Many musicians find it very helpful to isolate just the rhythm of their piece without any pitch to it. Singers may, again, chose to do this with the words or without on a syllable like “ta” or “da”. There is a system of syllables that are used for rhythmic reading called the Takadimi Method, but most musicians chose not to use it and find “ta” or “da” just as effective. For rhythmic reading, it helps if the musician can tap the big beats of each measure somewhere with their body. For example in a 4/4 time signature, there are four quarter notes in each measure. So, the musician’s constant beat is the quarter notes of the measure, which will help to keep track of where you are, especially in syncopated measures (measures with rhythms that do not fall on the main beats).

**Fine tuning a finished product:** When a musician is nearing a place where they can play or sing their piece with general proficiency, they may decide to practice it by trying to perform it in tempo, in rhythm, and with pitch accuracy. There are many reasons for this. It may be that the person just wants to refresh their memory of the piece, that they have a few troubling passages in the music and they want to see if they can muscle through it, that they have been practicing the piece in chunks and want to see if they can connect them, or that they want to add in more elements of style based on the content of a piece’s poem and/or based on the time period it was written in.

Practicing is a very important part of being a musician and the more time you spend practicing, the better musician you will be. However, the time you spend practicing should be productive or your piece will never go anywhere. You should never just be singing or playing all the way through a piece during practice time without first breaking things down that you are having trouble with. If you are able to play or sing through a piece with accuracy the first time and all the time, that is wonderful, you are probably a very proficient sight-reader, but if there are spots in your piece that you continuously have trouble with, you should be isolating those passages so that you can get them in the context of the entire piece.