

Review 2-day Workshop / Master Class Complete Vocal Technique by Cathrine Sadolin

23rd and 24th October 2004, Breda – The Netherlands

by Jeroen Manuhutu

On the 23rd and the 24th of October, I welcomed the Danish voice guru Cathrine Sadolin for the second time in The Netherlands where she would give a workshop and master class for Dutch singing professionals. This time the workshop and master class took place in the concert hall annex auditorium of De Nieuwe Veste, the local music school in Breda. The participants -mainly professional singers and singing teachers- came from all over the country: from Groningen to Maastricht. The participants represented all singing styles: pop, rock, jazz, classical and world music. The ingredients for a “weekend of Sadolin” were there all right. Now it was for Cathrine to convince all the participants who weren’t familiar with her method yet.

On the 6th of May 2004 I received an e-mail from Henrik Kjelin, manager and Cathrine’s partner for life. He asked me if I would like to organize a master class for the second time. It was more over than a year that had passed from the first workshop in the Laktheatre in Leiden that I organized as well. The release of the Dutch translation of Sadolin’s book “Complete Zangtechniek” was a good opportunity to make Holland familiar with Cathrine.

From the moment that the date and place of the workshop were announced, the participants list was growing very fast. More and more people do have Sadolin’s book (the English one as well as the Dutch translation), and this was a good reason for them to experience the Complete Vocal Technique first hand. Because of the large amount of participants, it was decided that this was going to be a 2-day workshop instead of a 1-day workshop. Seven months later, the time was there and I welcomed Cathrine and Henrik on a Saturday morning the 23rd of October in the “Concertzaal” of the Nieuwe Veste in Breda.

After receiving all the participants and a short welcome by myself, Cathrine was there to start. She began explaining the concept of Complete Vocal Technique after she had made an inventory of questions that the participants came up with. Concerning the background of the 105 participants of the first day: 92% of the participants were singers, 57% singing teachers, 13% music teachers, 10% speech therapists, 8% conductors and 2% school teachers. So the questions came from all directions of people who use their voices professionally.

In two hours, the enthusiastic Cathrine Sadolin explained the Complete Vocal Technique in a clear way. A good improvement regarding the previous workshop was the use of a beamer. The many clear diagrams, which are also in the book, formed a good support during her lecture. The diagram of the total concept of the Complete Vocal Technique formed the basis from which Cathrine started every subject. This way the big picture stayed clear, which is also Cathrine's credit by keeping this clear – despite all the different questions that were being asked during her lecture.

First the three basic principles were explained. By the way, the complete concept of the Complete Vocal Technique was already explained in the previous edition of Vocalisten Magazine, so that's the reason of the short overview in this article. Most of the attention went to the basic principle Support, simply because most of the problems start with the lack of that of the wrong use of it. A lot of stories go around on Support, and Sadolin's

concepts of it, gave a lot of vocalists a homecoming feeling. Cathrine explained her three basis principles, and demonstrated with some interactive exercises how support is supposed to feel. After the three basis principles, the four modes were introduced: Neutral, Curbing, Overdrive and Belting, followed by the explanation about how to change the colour of the voice and how to add effects. Not alone did Cathrine explain the vocal modes, she also demonstrated really everything she stands for. She easily added effects like *distortion* to every mode, which made some vocal pedagogues shiver...

Henrik Kjelin's presentation was new this year. After Cathrine's exposé he started a lecture on acoustics regarding the vocal modes and techniques. With this lecture he fulfilled the need of a lot of singers who always want a scientific explanation. Sadolin and Kjelin are in Denmark involved in some scientific research regarding the effect of sound waves to the larynx and pharynx. Until now, a lot of attention went to the behaviour of the separate parts of the larynx like the thyroid, the cricoid, the arytenoids and the vocals folds itself. People like Jo Estill have done some really good work on this subject. The most important argument against this kind of research is that you can never isolate separate parts of the larynx, something that is often suggested.

Kjelin turned a different direction and his lecture again was about the effect of sound waves to the vocal folds itself. For instance by *twanging* the epiglottis a very sharp and edgy sound will manifest. The research by Kjelin and Sadolin is aimed at the effect of that sound to for instance the cords. A link was made by the effect of sound waves that takes place in a speaker of a stereo set. Sadolin and Kjelin have been joined by some big international authorities on audio and acoustics in this research. Though sometimes a bit scientifically and therefore by some people found boring, Kjelin's lecture was a really pleasant supplement to Cathrine's story. Especially because the criticism on the Complete Vocal Technique always exists of the lack of any scientific foundations. That is by the way a ridiculous assumption when you really dive into Sadolin's work.

After the break it was time for the master class. The musical styles amongst all the participants were divided like this: 58% pop/rock, 40% jazz, 32% musical theatre, 30% classical and 12% world music. During the master class all styles were represented and that way Cathrine could really show that here techniques applied to all musical styles. The master class was accompanied again in a stunning way by pianist Jasper Soffers. At the moment he is a member of the famous Dutch Metropole Orchestra. He easily accompanied the singers in all styles: improvised pieces as well as classical songs.

During the master class, Cathrine solved problems right away like: having too little volume, being unable to sing soft, being unable to reach high notes, having a shortage of breath, singing with a too much classical sound for a pop song. In approximately 20 minutes amazing results were achieved. During the master class Cathrine often used the diagram of the vocal modes. Subjects that were often being dealt with were: the proper use of support, the use of twang and the alteration of vowels. As well as the diversity of the singing styles as the variety of problems were very useful in showing the possibilities and the completeness of the Complete Vocal Technique. After a vocalist had sang a song, Cathrine asked what she or he wanted to change about it. After it was determined in what modes the singer sang in, the problem was being tackled in the core.

Even in a one-on-one situation Cathrine knew how to involve the audience by doing interactive exercises. Another strength in Sadolin's approach is that she never shows her own judgement or taste regarding the singer or the piece. That is where she stands for: a strict separation between taste and technique. The trust that you have to have in yourself, was something that Cathrine kept repeating all day long: whenever it hurts you, or you have to cough, the technique is wrong. She emphasised also the difference between the use of (right) muscles and wrong technique. She also didn't talk about singing out of tune. That way she never created an embarrassing situation for the vocalist. In this working situation the ultimate goal was achieved very fast.

During the whole day, Sadolin could answer all the questions with well-founded answers. In a single case, her answers were doubted by some people, but the results in the master class spoke for themselves. With her own demonstration of the techniques, she also makes her techniques very convincing. Because of the big success of the first day, a lot of people still decided to join the second day. During this second day, the approach was about the same. A little more attention went to the master class. On this day I experienced myself how it was to be "taken care of" during a master class. Because I sing a lot in Curbing (Henrik called me *master curber*) we worked a lot on adding more twang and the obedience of the vowels (in certain modes, only a few vowels can be used in the high part of the voice). At the end of the session we worked on *distortion* and before I knew it, I sang a complete distorted tone with ease!

In the conversations that I had afterwards, it appeared that a lot of people were rather shaken by the Complete Vocal Technique. For some of them it was really like an earthquake and they needed some time to process all this new information. Honestly speaking, I can imagine that, because the second time was much more clear to me than the first time I met Cathrine. A lot of participants had to let go of all the knowledge they had, and really had to be open for this complete new method. But the results were there and it actually is impossible to not see that. With comments like: energetic, enthusiastic, positive, fascinating, clear, inspiring, a lot of eye-openers, funny and super master class, it was a very successful weekend.

A lot of teachers use the method Sadolin already in their lessons, and the interest is getting bigger and bigger. I think that this trend can't be stopped and that we are going to hear a lot more about Sadolin in the future.

See: www.completevocaltechnique.com

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