

# Finzi Scholarship Report

*Residency with Professor Ken Bozeman*



*Lawrence University Conservatory of Music, Appleton,  
Wisconsin*

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ken and Joanne Bozeman, for the considerable progress Ken helped me to make during our work, and for their kindness and companionship throughout my stay. There could not have been a warmer welcome for a lone English singer far from home in the heart of a Wisconsin winter!

~

I would also like to thank once again the Finzi Trust for awarding me a scholarship grant to make this residency possible. I would particularly like to thank the Trust for their understanding and encouragement in allowing me to alter my original project proposal.

# 1. Preliminary Remarks

## *1.1 Scholarship Project Proposal*

In early 2019, I applied to the Finzi Trust for a scholarship grant to undertake a series of consultation lessons with pianists at The Juilliard School, New York and the Paris National Conservatoire, which I was subsequently awarded. At the time, I was a recent graduate in Music from Cambridge where I had identified primarily as a pianist, and I was active as an accompanist and teacher. In order to achieve my ambition of becoming a pianist, both collaborative and soloist, at the higher levels, I knew that I needed a drastic step change in my practice, and that this sort of project could help me achieve that.

At the same time, however, I was also pursuing a career as a singer in the choir of Norwich Cathedral, having begun to study singing seriously towards the end of my degree. Each successive singing teacher had strongly encouraged me to pursue my voice further and further, and as my voice matured and my familiarity with the repertoire deepened, singing became more and more of a focus.

As I went about making preliminary arrangements for my project as a pianist, I began to feel an increasing sense that whilst such an undertaking still represented a wonderful musical opportunity, it no longer served what had become my overwhelming musical passion: singing. Nonetheless, I knew that working with world-class pianists, many of whom had had distinguished careers collaborating with singers, would offer insight and inspiration far beyond the solely technical, and so I continued making arrangements for the project.

In July of that year, I broke my wrist in a sporting accident, necessitating six weeks' wearing of plaster cast and subsequent physiotherapy. Aside from the practical implications of such an injury, it also offered me clarity on what was then a confused issue of my dual identity as a pianist and singer. In the limbo hours spanning the moment of the break to the definitive X-ray results, I found

myself taking solace in the fact that at least I could now do more singing. I decided there and then to re-orientate my musical life to focus on my voice, and I began to think about the possibilities of a re-imagined Finzi Scholarship centred on singing.

The Finzi Trust were incredibly supportive and understanding of my circumstances. Following their initial willingness to allow a change to my scholarship, I set about planning a project that would have deep and far-reaching impact on my singing career.

I decided to study with Professor Ken Bozeman for a number of reasons. I had watched his masterclasses with singers, read his book *Practical Vocal Acoustics*, and knew of his own performance career as a tenor. I hoped that Ken's incisive and expert knowledge of the acoustics involved in the singing voice would help me with many issues I struggled with: navigating the passagio and relatedly vowel migration; vibrato production; foreign language diction.

By October, the Trust had approved my revised proposal, Professor Bozeman and I had agreed a provisional course of study and I had booked my flights to his hometown of Appleton, Wisconsin for February the following year!

## *1.2 Project Itinerary and Structure of Report*

The structure of the project was a simple one: a series of lessons and vocal coaching sessions combined with discussions about vocal acoustics and their pedagogical applications. All of these sessions were filmed so as to create a permanent record of our work together and a point of reference for further independent practice. Despite an initial agreement of twelve hours of formal tuition during the course of the residency, albeit with the promise of extra time to be given over for discussion, we ended up working for nearly triple that, quickly falling into a daily routine of one ninety-minute session in both the morning and the afternoon. This routine is reflected in the structure of this report: it is a chronological account of each day of the residency, giving a sense of the rapid cumulative progress to which our intensive daily study gave rise.

## 2. The Residency

### 2.1 Monday 10th February

My residency began as all good singing lessons should: not with a stretch or a siren, but a station-wide shutdown at Paddington, London due to a ‘trespass incident.’ Having spent much of the previous afternoon travelling back from a weekend’s singing at Hampton Court Palace, I boarded a delayed and redirected connection to the airport with a less than chipper disposition. Spirits lifted however by that curious camaraderie that emerges from the otherwise dour British psyche in the face of ailing public transport, I arrived at the airport in good enough time and excited as ever to begin my project.

As I travelled through and between the day’s four airports Heathrow, Montréal, Chicago and Appleton, I thought about the twelve days ahead of me. I was looking forward to a more intensive period of vocal study than I had ever undertaken before. Professor Bozeman and I had discussed in advance certain areas to work on: navigating the passagio, vibrato production, and vocal classification or *Fach*, but I knew that his expertise in almost every part of the vocal apparatus would take our work beyond these issues. I was enthusiastic to learn about the acoustic principles of vowel migration, formant tuning and vocal tract pressures which would underpin our work, so that I could understand the technique I was applying. And I was particularly looking forward to bringing all this to bear on a wide range of repertoire, both in terms of genre and language, including Vaughan Williams’s *Songs of Travel*, Poulenc’s *Le Bestiaire*, Bach’s *Magnificat* and *St. Matthew Passion*, and operatic and oratorio arias from Mozart and Schumann.

Professor Bozeman collected me from the quaint and unassuming Appleton arrivals lounge — I had walked less than one hundred steps between plane door and taxi rank — shortly before 9pm local time and drove me through downtown Appleton to the university guesthouse, situated in the heart of Lawrence campus. Rapidly approaching my twenty-fourth consecutive conscious hour,

I felt there was time only for a short welcome drink at Ken's house, happily just one block away from where I was staying. After chatting generally about my journey, singing experience in the UK and in particular at Norwich Cathedral, talk turned as it is so often prone to do in the later hours to the acoustic phenomena of the vocal tract. Ken used a MADDE synthesiser programme to demonstrate the absolute spectral tone colour of vowels and aural effect of a sung note passing through a vocal tract formant. After soaking up as much, we parted ways and agreed to meet again the following morning at a time to be decided by jet lag.

## *2.2 Tuesday 11th February*

Having woken at an earlier than satisfactory hour, I set off to follow my nose around Appleton towards breakfast. I quickly learned that a duck down coat over a thermal is all well and good but counts for little if one ventures into -10C in olive chinos, and so my morning walk was curtailed and I ended up in the Lawrence library to set up WiFi credentials for the duration of my trip. Following this, I had a suitably reviving all you can eat continental breakfast in the campus centre before heading over to Ken's house for our first lesson.

We took a spectrograph of my sung 'ah' vowel in mid-range using VoceVista software. This allowed me to see all the harmonics which my voice resonated, where those resonances peaked in clusters, and the absolute pitches of these resonances. Ken isolated these resonant peaks and played them back, demonstrating the concept of 'over-' and 'under-' vowel. The first resonance cluster had a muffled quality, and the discernible vowel sound was more of an O, whereas the higher ones had more buzz and ring, and carried the target vowel A.

We then worked on the 'chiaroscuro' whisper. Borrowed from Baroque painting, the term literally means light and dark. By whispering different vowels, one can experiment with placement to maximise both upper and lower components; target/percept vowel and complementary vowel. Ken was so adept at this practice that he could produce the entire absolute spectral tone colour for all his cardinal vowels: that is to say that one could hear a series of high pitches resonating within his vocal tract as he formed vowels and whispered over them.

There were a number of helpful tips to maximise the effect of this technique: imagine that you are whispering the lowest pitch of your range; begin the whispered vowel with a mild glottal stop to ‘seat’ the voice.

With this preliminary work out of the way, we got round to singing one of the pieces I had brought: ‘Bright is the ring of words’ from Vaughan Williams’s cycle *Songs of Travel*. I was slightly dismayed to find travel and accompanying jet lag had had more of an effect on my voice than I would have liked, tiring and drying it, but nonetheless we got through the song with some things to enjoy and some things to work on.

Immediately apparent from singing in Ken’s studio under the supervision of mirrors, microphones and cameras was that I over-articulated my mouth when singing to the point of modifying vowels and impeding resonance. My larynx also tended to rise, resulting in or at least exacerbating the tiredness I was feeling from jet lag. Before taking another pass at the song, Ken gave me a smorgasbord of exercises and techniques to help the situation: an onset exercise by great American pedagogue Richard Miller designed to activate the core and intercostal muscles; onset exercises involving the chiaroscuro whisper; laryngeal massages; body mapping to reconceptualise the shape and origin of the tongue. The lesson finished with further work on smaller sections of the Vaughan Williams song, and we agreed that this piece could form a useful ‘before and after’ specimen to measure the progress of the residency.

Later that day, Ken kindly offered to drive me to a grocery store — what seemed walkable to a Northern Brit would I’m told have been madness in Wisconsin — to stock up on provisions for the trip. After a some lunch and a nap, Ken and I met again, this time to talk through the fundamentals of vocal acoustics in a mock interview format, the main points of which I detail below:

- Contraction of the intercostal muscles has three times the leverage (potential to change lung volume) of the abdominals, so you must not allow your ribs or chest to collapse when singing, or you risk putting unhealthy pressure on the larynx.
- Apoggio breathing is the antagonism between the oppositional muscles involved in breathing. As you inhale, the diaphragm moves downwards, displacing the viscera beneath it. The abdominal muscles provide resistance to

this displacement, resulting in the pulling upwards and outwards of the rib cage.

- Breathing should be motivated by positive affect, in that this will naturally coordinate good breathing processes. Expressive affect also tends to accomplish good vocal cord adduction/closure.
- Glottal plosives (stops) can be done healthily, and indeed can have beneficial impacts, if gentle, like the sound native English speakers will naturally make between the words of phrases like ‘inner ear’ and ‘every orange’.
- The voice can make any sound provided that the trans-glottal pressure differential is comfortable — that is to say the relationship between the pressure below the glottis and the pressure above it. Sub-glottic pressure is generated by air pressure from the lungs into the larynx. The convergent resonator strategy (imagine an inverse megaphone shape) can raise the pressure in the vocal tract, allowing for the larynx to take more pressure from the lungs whilst pushing back against the air pressure coming up. The image or metaphor equivalent in most singing teaching is the Italian phrase “*inhalare la voce*” or rebound off the hard palate.
- Good *chiaroscuro* vowels, which have balanced percept and complementary vowel sounds, generally create a vocal tract shape that makes for good transglottal pressure.
- A glugged ‘gee’ sound will close the glottis and help create reverse pressure in the tract.
- The Estill Voice Training method involves the micromanagement of laryngeal registration. Students practise lots of different configurations of the larynx for different sounds. It is now looked upon much more favourably than in the past, as it is understood to be very kinaesthetic.
- Tube length determines the overall length of timbre. Lateral dimensions have some effect, but it is almost all determined by vertical length, because this is the sound’s direction of travel from larynx to mouth.
- Quality and composition of laryngeal tissue and vocalis muscle also determine timbre.
- The robustness of the vocal chords determine how much pressure they can manage. A heldentenor should be able to take a lot of pressure, heldentenor is have a baritonal tube length and laryngeal muscular composition but they have the range of a tenor.
- Range is determined by the elasticity and coordination of the vocal folds.



- Lip training provides downstream resistance to make it more comfortable for the larynx to explore range. This can be done on any fricative continuum. It is a good idea to siren on these to gradually increase stretch of the vocal chords.
- Migrate the nasal ‘toddler complaint’ whilst sirening pitch. This allows you to track the pitch with an affective journey. Different points of the laryngeal registration scale will be better motivated by different affects. A good one for bass-baritones is low range, smugness; mid- to high range just before and just after falsetto break, uncertainty; high falsetto range, pathetic childish tantrum.
- Acoustic registers refer to closed or open voice, and turning over/covering means making the transition, through the *passaggio*, from open to closed.
- Migration of vowels is fluid, and doesn’t snap over from open to closed at an exact pitch (although you will come to know the rough location of a turn for a given vowel in your own voice).
- Good ‘cover’, migration or turn is letting the harmonics of your sung pitch pass through the formant without altering any shapes within the tract.

Later that evening, I observed a Lawrence faculty rehearsal of *The Marriage of Figaro*, showcasing some wonderful student voices, in particular the Contessa.

### *2.3 Wednesday 12th February*

Rested and somewhat more accustomed to Wisconsin time and temperature, Wednesday started more promptly with a 9.30am lesson immediately after breakfast.

We decided to dive straight into migration of the cardinal English vowels through the *passaggio*, when passive migration is not sufficient and active modification is required, and how to access fluid laryngeal registration to assist the upper range of the voice.

This time, Ken introduced me to some new warm-up exercises, including using affective expression to track a siren of pitch through the voice and imagining the onset of breath coming ‘from the bowels’. We also talked about the idea of a capital C superimposed onto a profile of the skull — so that the top part of the arc of the C is at the forehead and the bottom at the jaw, with the rounded body

looping round the back of the head. This represents the direction of travel for the sensation one feels as vowels migrate when singing.

Working through vowel migrations, we found that posture, from the pelvis right up to the neck, is crucial to allow the migration to happen freely. I also needed to allow a vowel to begin its migration as soon as I started to ascend in pitch. A good example of completely dynamic laryngeal registration, which allows for easy and free migration, is the voice of a 50s era British comedic actor! Other little tweaks included slightly raising the head for better projection, and using a ‘j-glide’ periodically when working on the same vowel to prevent tongue tension creeping in.

In the later part of the lesson, we returned to work on the Vaughan Williams song ‘Bright is the ring of words’. Simple mirror singing to watch my mouth — the lips should only be really active on rounded vowels — and ensure my lip aperture and jaw movement were no different to how they would be in speech. We worked on phrases in a step-by-step manner: I would first speak the text, with all the inflection of orated poetry; then chiaroscuro whisper each word, balancing the under- and over-vowel, taking care to elide the consonants smoothly into the vowel; then singing selected words/syllables at pitch to ensure the onset was vibrant and full and the vowels were behaving; before finally singing the line of the phrase.

Over lunchtime, I went to a practice room at the conservatory and played and sung through some other repertoire I had brought with me. Later that afternoon, we met up for a chat about the acoustics underpinning the vowel of migration we had been doing in practice that morning. The range of formants locations in adult voices is about a perfect forth across all voice types from the deepest base through the highest soprano. In my voice, the first formant pitches of the cardinal vowels range roughly from D4 to D5, and a vowel will move from open to closed timbre when the second harmonic crosses over the first formant. I then got to observe a lesson with a student at Lawrence university he was not studying music — it was interesting from a pedagogical point of view to watch Ken’s approach in distilling the same principles into more manageable concepts and exercises for a less mature voice.

Due to a last minute drop-out, I was kindly invited to take up a ticket to the Moscow Festival Ballet at the Fox Performing Arts Centre in the evening! Ken and Joanne's dance class had booked a private box, replete with pre-ballet drinks and ordeuves.

#### *2.4 Thursday 13th February*

Ken had another lesson with a Lawrence student this morning, which I was able to observe. I found that I was beginning to get a sense of the diagnostic element of vocal pedagogy, including assumptions based on spoken range and timbre: I was pleased to find out that my guess that this singer would be a higher baritone was borne out by his initial vocalising.

We moved straight from this lesson observation to our own work, which today was to focus on Poulenc's *Le Bestiaire*, French vowels and consonants, and achieving a greater 'vibrant singleness of pitch'.

As a preliminary to vocalising on French vowels, we worked on English cardinal vowels through the lens of 'target/percept-complementary' vowel, as this would form the method of finding the correct French sounds. Rather than thinking of an 'ah' vowel singularly as an 'ah', it is better to think of it as a mixture of 'oo' and 'ee', and motivated by an appropriate affect. In addition to this, try to form the vowel entirely inside the mouth, with minimal involvement of the lip aperture (rounded vowels will necessitate a certain degree of this.) Similarly, the jaw should be completely relaxed rather than muscularly opened.

With the French vowel in '*dans*', the vowel should feel like a warm-hearted 'ah' with 'uh' as the so-called under-vowel. There should be a sensation of height inside the mouth. For the vowel in '*son*', there should be a sensation of a narrow tube throughout the front-back axis of the mouth, and a forwards direction of travel as one thinks 'oh' to 'on', as if the vowel were tracing the arc of the soft palate up to the mask.

We also worked on pairing French nasals with their non-nasal rhymes to compare sensations and match the correct sounds *le* (non-) and *l'un* (nasal)

should rhyme closely; lan (nasal) and l'or (non) should rhyme closely. French vowels, unlike English, can also have more vertical, oblong rounding at the lips.

Mid-afternoon, I went to one of the conservatory practice rooms, and found that my sensation of vowel migration was somewhat dependent on Ken being there to approve it, and even upon the acoustic feedback of the room. Determined not to let the progress we had made that morning slip, I returned for a session that evening with Ken.

To find the French nasal 'ah', we began with an English 'ah'. We then gradually coloured it with 'uh', and made it taller. We made sure not to clamp or tense at the mouth, and had a notion of 'one tubular cavity' from the back of the throat to the opening of the mouth to keep the vowel sound concentrated. As these vowels migrate, they need a sweet lyric tone. This is easily achieved with the matching affect, something akin to sincere empathy. You can also model the migrations an octave lower, because higher harmonics will be turning over the same formant location and you will still get a less pronounced sensation. Crucially, a migration should have both upward and downward sensation — to avoid high pitches losing robustness or depth — and a good way to encourage the downward, grounding sensation is to stroke the larynx down to the sternal notch.

### *2.5 Friday 14th February*

Jussi Bjorling's and Robert Merrill's seminal, unrivalled recording of the famous 'pearl fishers' duet from *Les Pêcheurs des Perles* began today's sessions. Bjorling's silver tenor with Merrill's oaken warmth was a sublime and inspiring start to a day's singing.

Following this, we got to work on 'Quia fecit mihi magna' from Bach's Magnificat. We isolated individual words and their component vowels in various exercises to practise correct migration through Bach's extended coloratura runs. The 'ee' vowel of 'quia' presented some difficulty, so we practised this extensively. Firstly, in middle voice, on a pattern (in scale degrees) that went: 5-6-7-6-5-4-3-2-1. We also 'glugged' 'g' consonants to encourage the correct placement for a turned-over 'e' vowel. Remembering to allow the downwards

aspect of the migration was key to retaining a full, rounded sound. The ‘o’ of ‘potens’ needed freedom to migrate immediately, in contrast to my instinct to grip in order to keep its sound.

Later that evening, Ken and Joanne treated me to dinner at their local ‘fish fry’. Appleton has a strong German Lutheran heritage, due to its founding by settlers travelling on the Fox river, and as such fish is a traditional Friday delicacy. Coupled with its proximity to one of the Great Lakes, Friday fish fries are a local specialism not to be missed!

## *2.6 Saturday 15th February*

Today’s work was to focus, from a technical point of view, principally on vibrato, exploring the sensations of a singularly vibrant tone, and in terms of repertoire on ‘Mache dich’ from Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, and its accompanying recitative.

We first measured my rate of vibrato using Ken’s VoceVista software, which turned out to be roughly 5.8. The numerical value refers to the number of times per second that the vocal tone will undulate either side of the fundamental pitch. Famous American vocal pedagogue Richard Miller opined that a rate between 5 and 7 is optimal, although deviation either side is perfectly acceptable as long as the voice functions well.

We discussed the formation of vibrato, its effect on the capabilities of the voice, particularly in terms of agility when navigating runs, and its influence on the perception of timbre and tone. Vibrato should occur naturally in a well-supported and unrestricted vocal tone, and any attempt to artificially create or alter it will most likely result in tension or inflammation. Its rate largely determines the speed at which a singer is able to execute coloratura runs, *ceteris paribus*, because an easy, legato change of pitch simply follows on from a single vibrato cycle. This is why heavier voices (thicker laryngeal muscle) with lower ranges (less cord flexibility) are less able to execute florid coloratura, and indeed standard repertoire rarely asks this of them.

To improve the efficiency of my natural vibrato, we practised onset exercises which focused on engaging the breath support and allowing scree vibration on a singular pitch from the very beginning of the tone. We encouraged the vibrancy throughout every change of pitch, regardless of how small and how fast.

In the recitative preceding the aria ‘Mache dich’, we found that a lot of work was needed on German vowels, particularly involving the lips, and lending more emphasis to consonants than one would in English. There is a considerable amount of lip rounding for German mixed vowels, as if ‘one is narrowing the lips so much so as to deliberately occlude a lip reader from discerning anything other than an ‘oo’. O is an ‘ee’ inside rounded lips; whereas oe is an ‘e’ inside rounded lips. We began to use the term ‘darkly frontal’ to describe their quality: there should be sensation in the mask, because the lip aperture and jaw are working hard to form the right shape, but the quality should come from the back (hence the darkness), because the vowel should be like a narrow bore or tube right inside the mouth.

Following the work on Bach, we quickly went through some exercises in an anthology of vocalises I had brought with me by British pedagogue George Dodds. I had until then been using them regularly in my own practice, and I wanted to have Ken’s input on them.

### *2.7 Sunday 16th February*

Ken and Joanne had let me know the previous evening that they would be involved with their church’s service and hospitality events this morning and that I would be welcome to come along. Seeing an opportunity for the first morning of the trip so far for private consolidation, and not quite knowing what to expect from an Episcopalian service as a musician in a British Anglican Cathedral, I decided to use the time in a conservatory practice room.

I headed over to their church once finished — Appleton’s compact liberal arts campus geography making this a short walk — where I met some of their congregation over a coffee. We then headed back to Ken’s studio for a midday lesson.

We revisited many of the cardinal English vowels and their migrations through the passagio, since I had had a few problems in the practice room that morning. We reiterated that a sustained effort to create an upward arc in terms of affective sensation will help the soft palate to remain raised, and the migration to happen where it wants to. We also began work on another song, 'The Infinite Shining Heavens' from Vaughan Williams's cycle *Songs of Travel*. It seemed here that once vowels were remarried to words, some of our careful work came undone so we returned to the 'landmark pitching' approach, whereby we would isolate individual words or even syllables from a phrase and sing them in a sort of angular succession, with correct placement. We also worked on sustaining the emotional, and thus bodily energetic, arc through the longer, more sustained note lengths and phrases in this song.

Later that evening, we met for a second lesson to focus on 'mini migrations'. This involves working in the lower range and modelling the sensations of vowels turning over due to acoustic phenomena of the vocal tract. Essentially, wherever a given vowel would turn over, there is a 'small' turn a fifth below, and a 'mini' turn an octave below, because of the series of upper partials and resonances that accompany any sung pitch. It is therefore a useful way to practise migrations that might otherwise risk spending a lot of vocally taxing time in the upper range of the voice.

Following the lesson, Joanne kindly invited me to stay for a portion of her delicious homemade chilli, accompanied by a hitherto undiscovered delight of butter-fried sprouts. We chatted aimlessly about famous singers, including Ken's college roommate Robert Svenson, who appeared on a recording I played of the Schumann aria I planned to bring along the next day.

## ***2.8 Monday 18th February***

We began work with 'Jetzt sank des Abend goldner schein' from Schumann's under-performed oratorio *Das Paradies und die Peri*. This aria calls for a sweet, lyrical tone, with talk of Lebanese roses and honey bees, and as such we worked a lot on allowing easy migration and really focusing on a heartfelt affective placement. The rounded vowels also required more commitment at the lips — something I was initially reluctant to do — so that there is a visible rounding,

like a vertical oblong. This too helped lend a sweetness of tone. We then moved on to the Poulenc songs from *Le Bestiaire*, where Ken introduced the concept of ‘grace note vowels’. In other words, fine tuning the French vowels by imagining and indeed forming a fleeting, complementary vowel before quickly moving to the intended vowel. For example, on ‘suis’ of ‘Je suis’, a quick ‘su’ before the ‘i’ vowel.

Later on in the evening, I headed round just to talk about singing, but, perhaps prompted by musing that with only two full teaching days left the residency was nearly over(!), we ended up having an impromptu session just to solidify work on rounded vowels from earlier on. To sustain the vowel identity of these rounded vowel as we get higher in the range, Ken gave a short list of things to think about: keeping it ‘darkly frontal’, a phrase designed to keep both space and ring; imaging a narrowing, like an arrowhead, moving along the soft palate towards the mouth. We then quickly talked about the very lower ranges of my voice. Ken gave the slightly bemused caveat — he has been asked about range by curious younger singers many times before — that although my voice will certainly grow in range and power, it is anything but certain exactly how, and in what direction! For the low range, he suggested that merely maintaining it with freedom — having in your mind’s ear perhaps the ease of true basses Kurt Moll or Martti Talvela — would suffice for now.

## *2.9 Tuesday 19th February*

As this was to be our last day of work together owing to Ken’s departure early the next day for a vocal conference elsewhere in the States, we decided that the best use of our now-routine two daily sessions would be to record the best attempts I could at the key exercises and repertoire we had been working on.

I have reviewed these particular recordings several times since I have been back in the UK and have found them incredibly useful. I was also delighted to hear the results of our ‘experiment’ alluded to at the beginning of this report: the recordings of ‘Bright is the ring of words’ from the first and last days of our work together are barely comparable and my improvement is obvious.



### 3. Goodbye, and looking to the future

Later that evening, Ken and Joanne took me out to dinner at a lovely riverside restaurant along with their good friend and part-time Appleton co-resident Dale Duesing. Aside from the lovely food and drink, it was great to hear Dale's tales from his lengthy and highly prestigious international opera career as a baritone. Once back from the restaurant, Ken and I had a nightcap before saying goodbye ahead of his early flight the next day.

Over the course of my remaining thirty-six or so hours in Appleton, Joanne took charge of me and made sure I was well-looked after! We went on a road trip to a Wisconsin cheese factory, where I sampled the local delicacy cheese curds; we had a singing session, from which I learned the exercises for the tongue which now form the second part, after breathing exercises, of my daily warm-up; and I was treated to a ticket to a jazz concert at the Trout Museum of Art featuring trombonist and Lawrence faculty member Tim Albright — a fantastic concert, including the premieres of a couple of his own tunes, which rounded off the trip wonderfully.

As I write these closing remarks in May 2020, Ken and I have already had two further virtual lessons, working on some delightful Mahler and Korngold, and it has been apparent that our work together in Appleton has not only remained in place but allowed me to take things further independently. Our first subsequent lessons were always likely to be remote, even without the emergence of national lockdowns amidst a global pandemic, so in that sense, our singing lessons have seemed one of the more normal aspects of recent times! The global crisis has of course however put future travel plans into confusion, and the meet-up that Ken, Joanne and I had tentatively planned in the UK in September seems unlikely to happen. Despite this, I remain optimistic that we can meet again soon, perhaps in Oxford where Ken has professional connections and I have recently been appointed clerk in Magdalen choir, and in the meantime there will be music to keep us all going.

Likewise, my ongoing tuition with Patricia Rozario, which the Trust has also supported, has been somewhat interrupted by this pandemic, but we too are finding ways to sing together online — including the day after tomorrow as I write, in fact — and maintain some progress. In addition to her solid grounding in technique, Patricia has been most helpful this year in advising me, based on her knowledge and experience as a staff member, how to best go about preparing for conservatoire audition season this coming winter.

## Biography

---

James Watkins is a baritone, vocal coach and accompanist based in Oxford, UK. He has recently been appointed to sing as a stipendiary clerk in the choir of Magdalen College, Oxford, following two years at Norwich Cathedral. James currently enjoys a varied portfolio of work outside of his regular choir duties including solo work, small ensemble singing and teaching.

James studied at Downing College, Cambridge, from where he graduated top of his year with a starred-first class honours degree in Music, and he currently studies singing with Patricia Rozario OBE and Ken Bozeman. He was a member of the 2019-20 cohort of The Sixteen's young artist programme Genesis Sixteen, and in the same year held a scholarship from The Finzi Trust to advance his singing studies during a residency at Lawrence Conservatory, WI, USA.

James hopes to begin studying for a Master's degree in voice at conservatoire in 2021.