

Celebrating the Language of Song

It was in 2003 that Nicola-Jane Kemp and Heidi Pegler first approached Faber Music with an exciting proposal for a series of graded songbooks that would help to develop the skills required to sing in a foreign language. In this article, professional singers Nicola-Jane and Heidi talk about how their experience as ABRSM examiners and singing teachers (Nicola-Jane teaches at Clare College, Cambridge and Heidi is Head of Singing at St Paul's Girls' School in London) helped them to create the perfect resource for students and teachers keen to tackle this important area ... to understand the *Language of Song*.

It was whilst musing over a long cup of coffee that we first came up with our proposal for a new series of books called the *Language of Song*. In our varied capacities as performing singers, ABRSM examiners and teachers of singing at St Paul's Girls' School in London, we could see the need for a series of graded books, firstly introducing the concept of singing in a foreign language and then developing the skills required to do this successfully.

We were both familiar with useful publications such as *Lieder Line by Line*, *The Interpretation of French Song* by Bernac and song collections that include some help with phonetic pronunciation and so on, but there seemed to be little around which brought all those strands together in one book. We felt that, as Associated Board examiners, candidates singing in foreign languages often had a very limited idea of how to pronounce the different languages – and even less understanding of the text and drama they are trying to convey.

If we are to produce singers of a high standard in this country, in line with other European countries, we need to try to address the subject of singing in foreign languages at a young age. Although children are learning foreign languages from a younger age, more and more of them are choosing to drop these subjects from the age of fourteen ... and of course, as English becomes increasingly accessible and universally popular, the perceived need for young people to study foreign languages is diminishing. This could have a knock on effect for future singers in this country.

So it was with much trepidation that we devised our own series of songbooks that would aim to bridge this gap and address the situation, at least at some small level. Much of the repertoire chosen will be useful for those taking graded singing exams but will also be useful for singers of any age exploring international song repertoire, right up to university and college level.

There are currently two books being published – *Elementary* and *Intermediate* in High and Low Volumes. The *Elementary* book focuses on

Italian, German and French songs and the *Intermediate* includes Italian, German, French and Spanish. Each language is introduced with a detailed International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) guide, using examples as close as possible to English equivalents and the language that is to be studied. The songs have a literal translation underneath the music, and a separate page of information including a poetic translation, a detailed pronunciation guide using IPA and a short amount of background information on each song.

In addition, each book has an accompanying CD, which includes a poetic reading of the text by our experienced team of consultants who, while being native speakers, are well known for their work in coaching students and professionals to sing in foreign languages. There is also a recording of each of the song accompaniments – played by international pianist John Lenehan – for use in practice sessions.

We hope that these books will inspire and help both students and teachers of singing to explore this wonderful foreign language repertoire confidently and effectively ... and to celebrate the *Language of Song!*

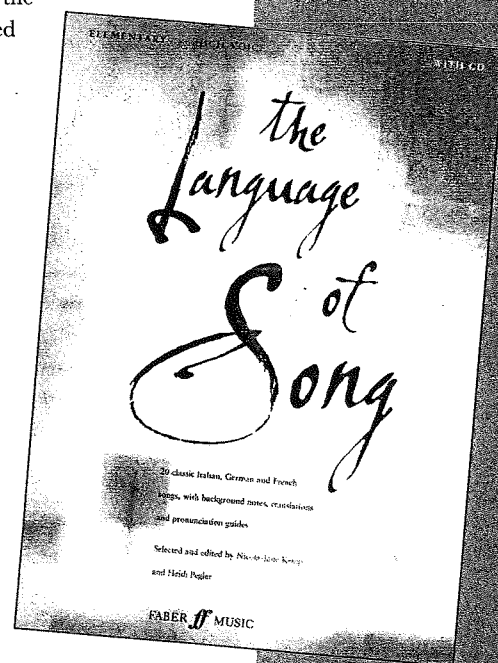
Heidi Pegler and Nicola-Jane Kemp

The *Language of Song* will be published in September 2005.

Both Heidi Pegler and Nicola-Jane Kemp are available to give workshop sessions. These can be tailored to your needs; for example, a session for singing teachers as part of an inset day or a workshop session with a group of young singers and singing teachers.



PICTURE: KEITH SAUNDERS



Language of Song Elementary High Voice
0-571-52345-5
Language of Song Elementary Low Voice
0-571-52346-3
Language of Song Intermediate High Voice
0-571-52348-7
Language of Song Intermediate Low Voice
0-571-52344-7