

COTLOW FIELD RESEARCH FUND

Department of Anthropology
The George Washington University
Washington, DC 20052

2007 Project Description Form

Applicant: Lauren Deal

Title of Project: "Doe, a Deer -- A Female Deer: Figurative Language and Vocal Pedagogy in the United States and Argentina"

The Lewis Cotlow Field Research Fund is a GW Anthropology Department fund, established in 1990 as a bequest by the explorer Lewis N. Cotlow to further field work and exploration. All undergraduate or graduate students at The George Washington University are eligible to apply, but preference is given to those in anthropology programs. Funds are to be used for travel, research assistance, and other expenses related to field research.

The deadline for application is the first Friday in March of the year for which support is requested.

I. Personal Information

Name: Lauren Deal

Degree Sought: B.A.

Field of Study: Anthropology

Expected Date of Graduation: December, 2008

Faculty Advisor for This Project: Dr. Dent

Does your proposed project involve the use of a “field language”? If so, state what it is, and note your degree of fluency in speaking or writing.

This study requires the use of Spanish in the context of voice lessons and interviews with Argentine singers. I have studied Spanish for 7 years and feel that my level of fluency will be proficient to not only communicate but also detect and understand figurative language. I have taken numerous classes meant to develop fluency (i.e. Spanish 108 & 109). I have also taken literature classes (Spanish 30, 132), which have introduced me to complicated and non-literal language use in the Spanish language. Also, my research will take place while I am studying in an Argentine university where I will take music theory classes to help familiarize me with the musical lexicon needed for this project.

II. Brief Abstract of the Project

Title of Project: “Doe, a Deer -- A Female Deer: Figurative Language and Vocal Pedagogy in the United States and Argentina”

Amount Requested: 1500

In 100 words or less, clearly state the goals of the proposed research.

In the context of voice lessons, teachers and students rely on figurative language in order to translate sensation into practice, thus perpetuating a vocal lexicon and system of practice that reflects the language and culture of the participants. My proposed study investigates the training of vocal practice by comparing case studies in Washington DC and Buenos Aires, Argentina. This study will contribute to our understanding of the role of language in education and the arts, as well as the anthropology of translation. It will also address the international status of classical music pedagogy, a comparison of the role of cultural identity in “vocal practice” in the United States and Argentina, and the use of figurative language to fill semantic gaps in both English and Spanish.

III. Significance of the Project

Singing relies heavily on understanding the physical processes and sensations that the body experiences as it produces sound. These sensations must then be expressed through language from teacher to student and vice versa in order to be assessed and corrected if necessary. How does this mysterious translation take place? A teacher can easily explain the act of singing as a physiological process. However, instructing a student not to “hold the breath in the throat, but to do so by means of the diaphragm and the intercostal muscle” does not explain how it should feel when done correctly (Miller, 1977, 36). In this way biological language fails to convey the information a singer needs to sing and many teachers must turn to figurative language to express the mechanics of singing in such a way that the student can truly understand and recreate it.

This study of figurative language in the study of voice will contribute primarily to the study of language about music, a field pioneered by Steven Feld. In his 1981 article *Flow Like a Waterfall: The*

Metaphors of Kaluli Musical Theory, Feld asserts that the lexicon used in musical discourse is not made up simply of “words for things” but rather a set of “metaphors interlocking the terms with principles of systematic thought” (Feld, 1981, 23). This study will attempt to derive a lexicon for vocal pedagogy, expanding the existing literature on the use of metaphors to bridge linguistic gaps (Basso & Selby, 1976; Meintjes, 2003; Porcello, 1998) as well as the discussions started by Feld, Fox, Porcello, and Samuels in their discussion of musical discourse (Feld, Fox, Porcello, & Samuels, 2006). It will also begin a discussion in its own right about the voice as an instrument and the creative use of language in the study thereof.

By looking at a cross-cultural comparison of the study of voice, I will accomplish two major goals, which are inextricably intertwined. Linguistically, I will compare the way in which Spanish, a Romance language, and English, a Germanic language with heavy Romance influences, handle figurative language and lexical gaps. Socioculturally, I will compare the way in which Americans and Argentines conceptualize their voices and physical bodies. These connected enterprises will expand upon our thinking about the extent to which language provides human beings with different ways of thinking about the body, and the relationship of the body to external reality (Lutz, 1986).

Argentina provides not only a wealth of opportunity for the study of voice in its numerous conservatories but also a completely unique perspective on identity and music. Argentina has long figured itself as a bastion of high culture that originally disseminated from Europe, and its attention to classical music is no exception. However, Argentina also exhibits distinctly Latin American characteristics, such as an emphasis on local identity in domains of popular culture. Classical music provides an example of how these two distinct identities interact and raises the question: How do Argentinean practitioners of classical singing view their practice as simultaneously national (local) and international? Comparing this with the American case, I will be able to examine the extent to which forms of national consciousness may also affect voice pedagogy. Argentina and the United States have both, at various times, conceived of themselves as somehow marginal to European “sources” of classical music instruction. Comparing the study of voice in DC and Buenos Aires, will reflect the way these cultures, which have drastically different relationships to their colonial past, have adapted European “high culture” to fit their present cultural identities.

IV. Methodology

This study aims to uncover the vocabularies that teachers invoke in order to express the different processes of vocal production by looking at metaphors of control, physiology, and reception (to name a few). In order to do this I will look at such questions as: How do the voice teachers conceive of the process of trying to control the airflow and sound? How do they refer to unseen body parts and express their function? How are the sounds internalized and received by the signing self and others? What different attributes are attributed to sound (color, depth, etc.)? What words do singers use to describe the physical sensations they experience as they sing? When and how do teachers resort to explicit metaphor to correct their students? When is metaphor unconsciously employed?

I will conduct interviews with singers and teachers at various levels of vocal study in which we will discuss the different methods of teaching that they found effective during their studies. The interview process will set the limits of the project by highlighting what methods of teaching are seen as effective by the participants. This is important in understanding what is a successful speech act, that is to say when speech has been used to effectively achieve a purpose, and what is not (Austin, 1962; Rosaldo, 1980).

The primary resource for my research will be audio recordings of voice lessons that I observe and lessons in which I participate. I will transcribe and analyze these lessons by looking for uses of metaphor, simile and other forms of figurative language in order to describe vocal techniques that the teacher wishes to convey to me. Participant observation, an essential part of anthropological research, will allow me to understand the perspective of students in both US and Argentine cultures and allow me to make an informed analysis of the lessons that I observe (Wolcott, 2005; Cohen, 1970). Indeed, given the nature of my interest in the way in which musical language is internalized in the process of learning, gathering a

portion of my data through apprenticeship will be crucial. In addition, observing other singers use language in their lessons will allow me to see how both the student and the teacher use figurative language intentionally and unconsciously.

Domestically, lessons will be observed here on the GW campus, at private studios, and, ideally, at the Kennedy Center. The comparative aspect of this study will take place in Argentina where I hope to study abroad for the fall semester of 2007. I will enroll directly in the Instituto Universitario Nacional de Arte where I will study music theory as part of my academic course work for the semester and also become familiarized with Argentine cultural identity. I will also follow the same research plan that I use here in the United States to conduct interviews and observe lessons both at IUNA and at other conservatories and studios in Buenos Aires.

V. Ethics

The major ethical question that this project raises is that of participant anonymity. Singing is an intensely personal and singers must make themselves incredibly vulnerable in their interpretations of music. For this reason, voice lessons often become much like therapy sessions for the participants. In order to protect the interests of the participants, I will only record lessons of those who give their consent and I will change the name of participants in my presentation and paper. I will also take great care to ensure that the pedagogical techniques of both the students and teachers are not damaged by this project. I will be sure to protect the pedagogical and personal secrets of all the participants that may be revealed in the course of lessons.

VI. Product

The primary product of this research will be a paper to be presented at the Anthropology Department's Cotlow Conference in the spring of 2008. I will also submit this resulting paper to the Society for Linguistic Anthropology's Student Paper Prize competition and attempt to publish my findings. I also hope to use the findings generated by this research as the basis for an Honors Senior Thesis in Anthropology.

VII. Schedule

This project will take place in two parts. The first portion of the research will take place this semester here in DC. I have begun this process by enrolling in voice lessons with a voice teacher trained in both Vocal Performance and Musical Pedagogy. I have also asked numerous voice students for permission to observe their lessons. I have also begun interviews with members of the Washington National Opera's Young Artists Program.

The second portion of this research will take place during the fall semester of 2007 when I will be studying abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina. While abroad my course load will be dedicated to anthropological theory, argentine history and culture, and music theory thus making my academic course load an integral part of my research rather than an added distraction.

During the summer in between I will be attending an ethnographic field school in Guatemala. There I will refine both my Spanish and my methods of conducting such ethnographic research.

VIII. Budget

\$800 – Airfare to Argentina. (Studentuniverse.com/ STATravel.com)

\$500 – Voice Lessons

I will use this portion of my budget to contribute to the cost of voice lessons in Buenos Aires. Thus far I have covered the cost of voice lessons personally and will continue to do so while in DC.

\$200 – research materials and local travel.

This last portion of the budget will cover travel to and from lessons and interviews (e.g. metro and cab fare) and research materials such as recordable media.

Total - \$1500

IX. Staff

None.

X. Outside Support

I have personally funded the bulk of my research costs for the DC portion of this project. I have supplied recording equipment, covered the cost of voice lessons locally and transportation to and from interviews. The majority of the budget that I have proposed will cover costs of my research in Argentina.

XI. Bibliography

Appelbaum, D. (1990). *Voice*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Austin, J. (1962). *How to Do Things With Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Barrows, S. T. (1933). *The Voice: How to Use It*. Boston: Expression Company Publishers.

Basso, K. & Selby, H. (1976). *Meaning in Anthropology*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Burgin, J. C. (1973) *Teaching Singing*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Feld, S. (1981). 'Flow like a Waterfall': The Metaphors of Kaluli Musical Theory." in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 13. 22-47.

Feld, S., Fox, A., Porcello, T. & Samuels, D. (2005). Vocal Anthropology: From the Music of Language to the Language of Song. In A. Duranti (Ed.) *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (pp. 321 – 345). Danvers, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Flemming, Renée. (2004). *The Inner Voice: The Making of a Singer*. New York, NY: Viking.

Hamerstain, O., & Rogers, R. (Writers) (1959). Do-Re-Mi. From *The Sound of Music*. New York: Lunt-Fontanne Theatre.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lutz, C. (1986). Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category. *Cultural Anthropology*, 1(3), 287-309.

Meintjes, L. (2003). *Sound of Africa!: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Miller, R. (1977). *English, French, German and Italian Techniques of Singing: A Study in National Tonal Preferences and How They Relate to Functional Efficiency*. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Morse, R. M. (1996) "The multiverse of Latin American identity c. 1920- c.1970" in *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press p 3- 129

Porcello, T. (1998). "'Tails out': Social Phenomenology and the Ethnographic Representation of Technology in Music-Making" in *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 42, No. 3. (Autumn, 1998), pp. 485-510.

Rosaldo. (1980). "The things we do with words: Ilongot speech acts and speech act theory in philosophy." In *Language in Society* 11: 203-237

Rose, A. (1962). *The Singer and the Voice: Vocal Physiology and Technique for Singers*. New York: St. Martin's Press.