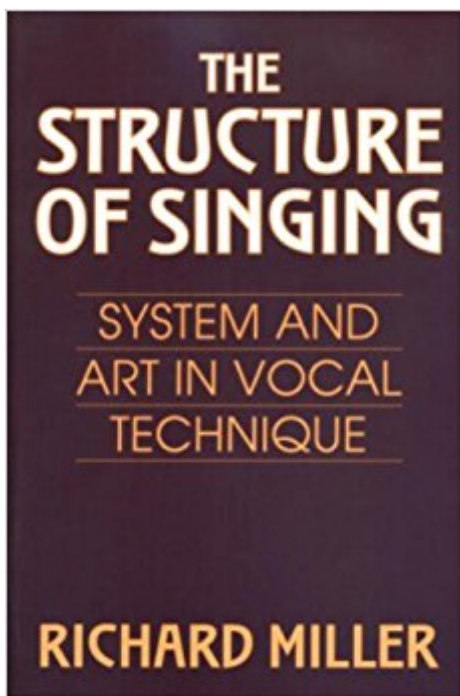


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# The Structure Of Singing: System And Art In Vocal Technique



## Synopsis

Combining the physical, technical, and artistic aspects of singing, the author applies current findings in medicine, acoustics, phonetics, and speech therapy to the singer's needs. The text demonstrates the scientific basis of exercises and vocalises, covering all major areas of vocal technique.

## Book Information

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This book is often cited as one of the top, scholarly books in the field, and justly so. I notice that in

recent years, the price of this book has rocketed upward; apparently the public has figured out the value of this excellent work. Note that this is not a popular "Learn to sing in 4 weeks" type of book. THE STRUCTURE OF SINGING is a scholarly work that takes time to read; it is not a simple read, and do not buy if you want a book of "shortcuts" to singing. I did read through the entire book one time; however, I think most readers will find it more helpful to use this book more as a reference book--not a "read cover to cover" type of treatise. For example, the first sections of the book cover a lot on anatomy and musculature; these sections will be especially difficult for those not familiar with the terminology. Miller points out numerous times, however, that singers cannot directly control the voice--it often comes down to learning a particular sensation. The author expresses impatience with voice teachers who suggest feats that are not physically possible to perform. Miller definitely preaches for more precise terminology. Oddly enough, even though I am a low-voiced singer, I find this book oftentimes more helpful than Miller's book specifically for basses and baritones: *Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices*. It seems like there is some overlapping material, and this book is by far the more complete of the two. For me, the highlight of this book is Miller's discussion on registers, Chapter 9, "Unifying the Registers of Males Voices." Of all the vocal science books I have read, I think Miller's treatment of the various registers is the most solid. He spends a lot of time discussing terminology, and the "Passaggio," or passage from one register to another. Especially helpful is the chart on p 117 showing the break points for different voices. There are tons of good exercises, usually separated by voice type. Miller has exercises for middle voice, head voice, chest voice, and almost any other type of exercise you can imagine. I was especially comforted by this statement from Miller, directed to us basso's (p 128): "The more robust the instrument (with the greater probability of professional potential), the more problematic is entry into middle voice." Well, that is nice to hear--especially for us basses who have a dickens of a time learning head voice. Miller seems to be saying that us dunderheads (who have trouble singing Middle C) must be future stars! Yea!

Seriously, THE STRUCTURE OF SINGING is an extraordinarily complete book, with a huge scope, and much depth. Just a scan of the Bibliography will tell the reader the huge amount of research that went into this book. The index is very complete as well. Don't get this book unless you are willing to spend time in serious study.

A Review by Chris Lawson

For those low-voiced males who struggle with the upper range, I would recommend reading this hundred-year old classic. It is a real gem: *The Head Voice and Other Problems* Practical Talks on Singing. For another, more lighted, personal approach, recommend the books by Karin Wettig; for example, *Singing like Callas and Caruso: Belcanto Voice and Body Training*. For those who really like the scientific treatment, see the classic

books by Johann Sundberg, especially, *The Science of the Singing Voice*. For those singers who are really gluttons for punishment, and have heard of the mysterious, "Vowel Chart," well, you need to buy these books by Berton Coffin: *Coffin's Overtones of Bel Canto* and *Coffin's Sounds of Singing: Principles and Applications of Vocal Techniques with Chromatic Vowel Chart*. Note: I purchased this book, and no one requested I write this review

This is a phenomenal book! I am a deep-diver in different topics, meaning I read a lot of technical books in various fields. This one is among the best books I have ever come across in my life. I do not have enough words to express how good this book is. BTW, I am no way related to the author and in general somewhat tough on vendors. When you read how to pronounce a vowel that you have been pronouncing wrong for the last 30 years, you know the book is adding some value to your life:-). If you want to use your vocal instrument effectively - does not have to be singing, it could be oration, sales presentation or just normal talking, simply put, if you want to sound nice, read this book thoroughly and practice the instructions. Sometimes you will see someone sounding really nice, but that person cannot teach another person how sound similarly nice. But since this book explains how and why one sounds good, you will even be able to teach others how to sound good. I have benefited a lot! I highly recommend this book to everyone. If you can't understand the things in the first read, keep reading it over and over - you will eventually get it. And once you get it, it's a pure bliss.

I read this book 14 years ago as an undergraduate vocal performance major and struggled to understand nearly all of it. Reading it today, however, with many more years of experience both singing and teaching voice, I realize how truly brilliant this work is! It communicates with detail, specificity, and relative simplicity concepts that the majority of voice teachers struggle to articulate in a useful way. It is an invaluable resource for teachers and/or singers of intermediate and advanced skill, but I **WOULD DEFINITELY NOT RECOMMEND IT TO THE BEGINNING SINGER**. While Miller's explanations of vocal functions could be intellectually understood by someone of any skill level (as long as they have the determination to keep reading), they can really only be practically applicable for someone who is already very sensitized to the physical sensations experienced while singing.

If you want to learn how to sing - and add a few new words to your vocabulary, get this book. To those reviewers who find fault with Mr. Miller's fancy words: Grow up and get yourself a freakin'

thesaurus and/or a dictionary. This book is full of info on singing, from breathing to forming vowels to taking care of the voice. Lots of exercises. I've read other books on singing, but this book is better than any of them. If this book doesn't make you a better singer, then it might be time to think about taking up mime instead. So, do yourself a favor - buy this book.

A lot of these reviews (both positive and negative) state that Miller's use of physiological terms might make it inappropriate for the beginning voice student because he or she might not be familiar with these terms. Well, how else would the beginning student gain familiarity with the physiological terms relevant to singing if not from a book about singing? If you're a serious vocal student, you should make close study of this book. It's extremely clear and precise BECAUSE it uses specific words that have specific meanings. If it's difficult for you to understand what he's saying, it's because you lack knowledge, and you should be eager to work hard to acquire this knowledge. Here's a tip that applies not only to this book, but to ALL reading: when you come across a term that is unfamiliar, grab a dictionary, Google or Wikipedia it (or whatever definition-delivery system you might be using in the future when you read this review). Don't criticize the author for making you learn stuff that you didn't already know. That's what good books do. My criticisms of this book: 1. It's great, but a little pricey, isn't it? 2. Some of the illustrations look like bad photocopies of anatomical atlases, and are therefore a little blurry and difficult to read.

Simply one of the best books ever written regarding vocal technique.

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