



# Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction

By Kathryn LaBouff

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## Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction

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From the Foreword by Renee Fleming: "Kathryn LaBouff has developed an approach to singing in the English language which is wonderfully user-friendly, and which has surely saved much wear and tear on my voice. It is a technique that has empowered me with the knowledge and skills to bring a text to life and to be able to negotiate all of the sounds of the language with the least amount of effort. I have found her clever and extremely creative use of substitute consonants or combinations of consonants in creating clear diction utterly delightful because they are surprising and because they work. These techniques have been equally useful when singing in foreign languages. We sopranos are not usually known to have good diction, particularly in our high range. I found that working with Kathryn improved my ability to be understood by an enormous percentile of the audience with much less vocal fatigue than I would have experienced if left to my own devices. I have often told my colleagues enthusiastically of her interesting solutions to the frustrating problems of diction. I am thrilled that her techniques are now in print for all to benefit from them."

In *Singing and Communicating in English*, internationally renowned diction coach Kathryn LaBouff provides singers with an accessible guide to the principles of English diction they need to communicate the text successfully. Her thorough and much sought-after technique clarifies the physiology of speech, emphasizes the studied practice of careful and articulate pronunciation, and focuses on the study of English cadence. Covering aspects of phonetics from vowels to diphthongs to fricatives, the book includes multiple practical exercises in International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcriptions, helpful diagrams, and pronunciation drills, each chosen from the most essential English art song and operatic repertoire. In addition to standard American and British English, a variety of regional dialects and accents are covered in depth. A companion website features a full range of vowel/consonant drills, poems read aloud by the author and by theater and voiceover actor John Keating, as well as an exercise answer key, and publishers' lists to help the singer locate a vast array of English language works for performance.

This book is an invaluable resource for all vocalists (both professional and

aspiring), diction instructors, teachers, and coaches, and choral directors.

VISIT THE COMPANION SITE AT [www.oup.com/us/singinginenglish](http://www.oup.com/us/singinginenglish)

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

*"Singing in English* clearly and expressively is no mean feat. Kathryn LaBouff's methodical and vocally healthy approach to singing in English empowers and frees the singer/actor to deeply communicate while singing in English. She has revolutionized singing in English, and no student or coach should be without this book. This book is a must for all who wish to master the art of singing in English."--Allison Voth, Principal Coach, Opera Institute, Boston University

"In the rehearsal process Kathryn LaBouff is my secret weapon. She has an uncanny ability to take dramatic ideas and unify them with her own technical and diction work for the performer. The result of her collaboration is that the performer can activate and communicate the text like no one else. The diction techniques that she developed are easily accessible in this book, and will help clean up English text delivery in productions around the world. This is a must-have for all directors, coaches, teachers, performers and anyone who champions opera in English." --Francesca Zambello, Director, Artistic Advisor to San Francisco Opera

"Staggeringly high standard of diction. The surest method of converting people to Opera." --*Opera Now*

*"Singing in English* can be one of the most satisfying experiences for a singer. Whilst singers realize considerable skills in a range of European languages, English remains sidelined, expected to look after itself. This book offers guidance to singers for 'singing and communicating,' which then leads to comprehension -- for artist and audience alike. In exploring this rich and varied language, Kathryn LaBouff deals fully with some obvious, and other much less obvious aspects of singing in English. Her book deserves a special place in every singer's library." --Sir Thomas Allen CBE, Kammersänger of the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich

"Offers clear, concise explanations with pertinent examples. The author's vast experience as a diction coach is evident on every page. The linked website augments the text's usefulness. Singers, voice teachers, and coaches will find *Singing and Communicating in English* an excellent resource." --*Journal of Singing*

#### About the Author

**Kathryn LaBouff** teaches English Diction and English Vocal Literature at the Juilliard School of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Curtis Institute of Music. Diction Coach for the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Washington Opera, she has coached and prepared more

than 300 professional opera productions in English.

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