

# Voice Teaching Methods: What Mathilde Marchesi, Turkish Classical Music, and United States Music Conservatories Have In Common

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## Abstract

*The history of vocal pedagogy has greatly informed current teaching practices of Western Classical Music. This paper compares the relationship of the teaching methodologies of the Garcia-Marchesi method, global teaching, with a primary focus on Türkiye and the United States, and the modern elements of teaching in America, particularly group teaching.*

*The modern understanding of current vocal pedagogy and voice science can be traced back to Manuel Garcia II, the father of vocal pedagogy and the inventor of the laryngoscope, and the students he produced as both singers and teachers. A student of Garcia's, Mathilde Marchesi, is also considered as one of the best historical pedagogues. Marchesi had an innovative approach for her studio teaching based on Garcia's training strategies for the voice, but not necessarily following his model of one-on-one lessons. A concert class, an opera class, or a methodology class is what Marchesi offered in her private teaching studio. In these three classes, Marchesi would teach in a group setting and encourage students to write and observe.*

*The model of teaching Marchesi used was not necessarily new from a global perspective of music and teaching. Global voice pedagogy systems, including Turkish Classical Music's system of teaching, called Meşk, also has the master-apprentice relationship with group teaching elements. The elements of group teaching in the Meşk education system are similar to the methodology that Marchesi developed and what was formed in the United States of America through group teaching methods and non-Western classical music scenes.*

## Introduction

The singing teaching prevalent in modern-day voice pedagogy classrooms developed largely due to Mathilde Marchesi. Marchesi, a German-born mezzo-soprano, taught singing in Vienna and Paris in the late nineteenth century. Her methodology of group teaching has been taken and utilized in historical and modern American university and collegiate settings. In Marchesi's method of group teaching, one-on-one lessons were performed in a group setting with each student rotating from taking notes on each other's lessons to then taking a lesson themselves.<sup>1</sup> While this method was unique in content to her, it is not unique in terms of musical practice cross-culturally.<sup>2</sup>

Other world music practices have models of group teaching for instrument and voice.<sup>3</sup> One such place is Türkiye. With its adjacent features to Western classical musical practices, Turkish Classical Music, has a structure in which the education of music models centers more around a master-apprentice relationship, called Meşk. Additionally, there are elements of group teaching for performance practice that are more widely taught in music conservatories as well.<sup>4</sup>

The United States also offers voice teaching methods that are not rooted in Western classical style, but rather carry on traditions from multiple cultures in which group teaching is present.<sup>5</sup> This can be seen in Folk music traditions, and even in modern application of popular culture music where the transmission of music is through group teaching methods.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, I will compare the teaching methodology found in the Marchesi method with that seen in Türkiye and the United States, especially American group teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Neill, *Divas: Mathilde Marchesi and Her Pupils* (Sydney, New South Publishing, 2017), 316.

<sup>2</sup> Yang, Yang, Aaron Carter-Ényí, Nandhakumar Radhakrishnan, Sophie Grimmer, and John Nix, "37 Vocal Music and Pedagogy of Chinese, African, and Indian Genres." Essay. In *The Oxford Handbook of Singing* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 751–67

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 760.

<sup>4</sup> Denise Gill-Gürtan, "Melancholic Modalities: Ottoman Music and the Turkish Nation-State", Chapter 1 in *Melancholic Modalities: Affect, Islam, and Turkish Classical Musicians*. (Oxford University Press, 2017), 26-57.

<sup>5</sup> Yang et al., "Vocal Music and Pedagogy of Chinese, African, and Indian Genres", 765; Lisa Joy DeRosia, "Singing and Learning Together: Strategies for Cultivating Joyful and Inclusive Group Voice Classes", Dissertation, ProQuest LLC, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Yang et al., "Vocal Music and Pedagogy of Chinese, African, and Indian Genres", 765; DeRosia, "Singing and Learning Together", 5.

## Section 1: A Brief History of Classical Vocal Pedagogy

The master-apprentice model of singing education, while having been practiced for centuries, remains prominent today in conservatory music settings. Our current understanding of the model comes from the European guild system of the late Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> The master-apprentice model includes a teacher-centric model that grounds the teacher (master) as the infallible knowledge source in the education of the student (apprentice).<sup>8</sup> This master-apprentice model characterized vocal schools in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and reflected other teaching trends in society.<sup>9</sup>

There was a close relationship between the teacher and student and the student would become integrated into the teacher's life in all aspects. The student would live in the master's home, with the master becoming a pseudo-parent, *in loco parentis*, and learn their craft through this integration into the lifestyle of the artist. In turn, the master had a large responsibility in crafting not just the career of the apprentice, but the knowledge, history, morality, and religious ideology of the student. Likewise, this system of relaying tradition and vocation ultimately was deemed an ordinance from God to be the master of the life of these students.<sup>10</sup>

The tradition of this intense master-student relationship inherited by Marchesi held deep roots in European musical instruction. Italian eighteenth century voice pedagogue and Singing Master of the Imperial Court of Vienna Giambattista Mancini (1714 – 1800), reflected on the experiences of his teacher, fellow Italian Antonio Bernacchi (1685 – 1756) who always:

“undertook his difficult task bravely, willing to study the necessary length of time as the rules of his teacher required. He never missed his daily lesson to avail himself of his teacher's advice. During this time of his study, he not only refused to sing in any of the

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<sup>7</sup> Travis Sherwood, “Evolving the Master-Apprentice Tradition: A Pathway Back to a Student-Centered Pedagogy”, *Journal of Singing*, vol 80, no. 1 (August 15, 2023): 13–22.

<sup>8</sup> Sherwood, “Evolving the Master-Apprentice Tradition”, 13; Brian Manternach, “Master of None: Challenging the Master-Apprentice Model” *Journal of Singing* vol 80, no. 4 (March 2024) 54.

<sup>9</sup> Manternach, “Master of None: Challenging the Master-Apprentice Model”, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Sherwood, “Evolving the Master-Apprentice Tradition”.

churches and theatres but even refused to sing for his most intimate friends. He continued living this way, until his teacher gave him permission to do otherwise, and at that time he startled the world with his art.”<sup>11</sup>

This traditional voice pedagogy model remained based on the students’ respect for and complete reliance on their teachers’ judgment. Today, modern voice professionals continue a reciprocal sense of responsibility for the best interests of their students. Nevertheless, the model that has become more prevalent over the recent two decades has been moving from all-knowing teacher-centric to student-centric and to individualized learning styles.<sup>12</sup> In the modern applicability of this method, the teacher and student have a one-on-one lesson at least once a week with the teacher instructing and guiding the progress of the student. While there is less emphasis on the depth and significance of moral guidance, modern voice professionals retain a duty to their students to do what is best for them.

To gauge further historical understanding of voice teaching models, the next section examines the history of the evolution of these traditional master-student methods, which eventually developed into the Bel Canto method.

### **1.1 Manuel Garcia II: Introduction and Methods**

The modern understanding of current vocal pedagogy and voice science can be traced back to Manuel Garcia II (1805 – 1905). Garcia, who lived and taught in France during the mid nineteenth century, featured prominently as a professor in the prestigious Paris Conservatoire. He is now considered as the father of vocal pedagogy and had great influence both personally and through his students’ later accomplishments. Garcia was first and foremost a legendary Bel Canto teacher and then subsequently the inventor of the laryngoscope.<sup>13</sup> Garcia’s major work, *Traité complet de*

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<sup>11</sup> Giambattista Mancini, *Practical Reflections on the Figurative Art of Singing* (The Gorham Press, 1912); Sherwood, “Evolving the Master-Apprentice Tradition”, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Manternach, “Master of None: Challenging the Master-Apprentice Model”, 448.

<sup>13</sup> James A Stark, *Bel Canto : A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (University of Toronto Press, 1999), 4.

*l'art du chant*, was written between 1840 and 1847. This work became part of the standard literature of voice instruction for many years.<sup>14</sup>

The main theories that Garcia developed were the Theory of Glottal Closure and the Coup de la glotte.<sup>15</sup> While the Coup de la glotte proved to be the most controversial of Garcia's theories, both theories took hold in the voice teaching world.<sup>16</sup> Garcia's work greatly impacted vocal pedagogy history and methods.

## **1.2 Manuel Garcia II and Mathilde Marchesi's Relationship**

During Garcia's Professorship at the Paris Conservatoire (1847 - 1850), he mentored perhaps his most famous student, German mezzo soprano Mathilde Marchesi (1821 – 1913). Although brief, this teacher-student relationship proved to be highly consequential in forming Marchesi's future teaching methods.<sup>17</sup> After her time learning from Garcia and serving as his assistant, Marchesi progressed as teacher in her own right, and went on to host her own private teaching school in Paris, École Marchesi beginning in 1877.<sup>18</sup>

## **Section 2: Mathilde Marchesi and Her Teaching**

The pedagogical methods of the Bel Canto period and the birth of voice science led to a flourishing of classical voice teaching through group methods like that of Mathilde Marchesi.<sup>19</sup> Lisette Sophie Jeannette Mathilde Graumann was born in Frankfurt, Germany on March 24th, 1821.<sup>20</sup> She would later become known as the mezzo soprano Mathilde Graumann until she married Salvatore Marchesi in 1852 at the age of thirty-one, taking his surname Marchesi.<sup>21</sup> Marchesi was a

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<sup>14</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto*, 11

<sup>16</sup> Stark, *Bel Canto*, 12

<sup>17</sup> Berton Coffin, *Historical Vocal Pedagogy Classics* (Scarecrow Press, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Neill, *Divas*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, i.

<sup>20</sup> Neill, *Divas*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Mathilde Marchesi, *Bel Canto: A Theoretical & Practical Vocal Method: Mathilde Marchesi*, (Dover Publications, 1970), ii.

stringent teacher who gave up her performing career in pursuit of teaching. Marchesi worked for several conservatories, including the Paris Conservatory, the Vienna Conservatory, and the Cologne Conservatory.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 1. Mathilde Marchesi <sup>23</sup>

Her methodology primarily consisted of exercise regimens and highly considered scaffolding whose objectives were a healthy progression for her students' voices. By modern standards, Marchesi's disciplined instruction may seem excessive; however, when now considering current science principles regarding general health, Marchesi's recommendations made prescient sense. For instance, she recommended that her students avoid activities late at night, singing too

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<sup>22</sup> Marchesi, *Bel Canto*, ii.

<sup>23</sup> Neill *Divas*, 311.

soon after meals, exposure to excessive heat or cold, and too frequent social events. Marchesi advised against these as she believed they could cause adverse reactions in the singer's body impacting the ability to sing properly.



Figure 2. Mathilde Marchesi and daughter Blanche Marchesi <sup>24</sup>

Marchesi was particular about the placement of the voice and how much the student should be utilizing their voice.<sup>25</sup> Marchesi believed that there was a benefit to her students to sing limited passages a day, consisting of five to ten minutes of slow, long, sustained lines. This was also her intention to safeguard voices from excessive use and to promote the nurture and care of the voice.

She was also a firm believer in her students' understanding of the anatomy of singing and how vowels were the foundation for proper singing.<sup>26</sup> Her step-by-step approach for singing placed

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<sup>24</sup> "Blanche Marchesi, Soprano," Great Singers of The Past, August 19, 2016, <https://greatsingersofthepast.wordpress.com/2012/08/30/marchesi-blanche-soprano/>.

<sup>25</sup> Neill, *Divas*, 310.

<sup>26</sup> Neill, *Divas*, 311.

one obstacle in front of a student at a time. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of not letting a student stop studying with her before they were ready.<sup>27</sup>

Marchesi's group classes were another method for her students to observe singing. Students had time to observe their peers and to listen to the individual instruction that Marchesi would give each singer. Her instruction to one student often applied to the other students who then implemented the lessons into their work as well. Her four different courses were organized so that two were beginning courses for students, with the next level either a concert work class or an opera work class. In these upper-level courses, the student would focus on skills for concert or operatic singing. Marchesi believed that when a student left her instruction that they could excel as an opera singer, a concert singer, or a teacher.<sup>28</sup>

Soprano student Betty Brooke reflected about Marchesi's scheduling of classes and the daily work she expected from her students. Brooke observed that Marchesi was punctual to start the teaching day at nine o'clock in the morning every morning, and that Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings focused on opera work. Students were expected to observe and listen to their peers' singing. In addition to class sessions, students took lessons three times a week, usually on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings.<sup>29</sup>

Singing exercises known as vocalises were foundational for Marchesi in her instruction. She focused on creating vocalises that were sustainable, achievable, and manageable for encouraging each student's progression. These extensive vocal exercises included executing chromatic slurs, diatonic slurs, portamenti, scales for blending of the registers, exercises on two notes, exercises on three notes, chromatic scales, minor scales, flexibility, repeated notes, triplets, arpeggi, and others. All of these Marchesi believed to be important regarding the foundation of the voice and its

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<sup>27</sup> Neill, *Divas*, 312.

<sup>28</sup> Kandie K Kearley, *A Bel Canto Tradition: Women Teachers of Singing during the Golden Age of Opera*, (1998).

<sup>29</sup> Neill, *Divas*, 318.

progression in a healthy and nurturing way.<sup>30</sup>

The care with which Marchesi taught is perhaps no more evident than in her writing about the three registers of the female voice: chest, mid voice, and head voice.<sup>31</sup> Marchesi was insistent regarding this three register model which remained a continual theme in her writing.<sup>32</sup> She wrote that the voice should be trained for months before being given arias or songs so that the registers can be maneuvered more cleanly. This resulted in what she characterized as a silvery quality, which exhibited flexibility and a seemingly effortless character.<sup>33</sup> Marchesi pointed out the potential singing voice flaws created by ignoring her three register model. She theorized that singers who worked on their high ranges while ignoring their chest voice were often left with holes or gaps throughout their registers.<sup>34</sup>

Marchesi's methods focused on practical applications which focused on the singer's progress. Exercises to improve technique and to create longevity in the voice were the prominent factors throughout Marchesi's group classes and one-on-one lessons.<sup>35</sup>

### **Section 3: Türkiye and its Music and Pedagogical Systems**

The country of Türkiye, due to its unique position geographically between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, has experienced many different influences from both the eastern and western worlds. While the complete history of Türkiye is too extensive for this writing, a brief understanding of the Ottoman Empire will help contextualize the music of the country.

The Ottoman Empire existed for close to six hundred years before its dismantlement in 1922

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<sup>30</sup> Mathilde Marchesi, *Ten Singing Lessons, Vol. 1*, (Harper, 1901).

<sup>31</sup> Kearley, *A Bel Canto Tradition*, 62.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Marchesi, *Ten Singing Lessons*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> Kearley, *A Bel Canto Tradition*, 64; Blair, Kirsten A. "The Individual Singing Voice in the Studio and Classroom: An Inclusive eBook Design for Beginning Singers and Their Teachers", Thesis, U.M.I, 2022.

resulting in the new Republic of Türkiye led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>36</sup> During the prime of the Ottoman Empire, its geographical borders expanded as far into modern Europe as Vienna, Austria.<sup>37</sup> In North Africa, it extended as far west as Algiers and as far east as the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>38</sup> Due to the geographical extent, it cannot be defined as one culture. Because of this, the music of the Ottoman Empire was just as culturally expansive and rich in history.

Music education during the Ottoman period and before the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye education systems was based on the Ottoman's elementary-primary schools and *madrasahs*, a pre-Ottoman school that would later be associated with Islamic mosques.<sup>39</sup> Palace and hall music was exclusive to the individual palaces that were scattered around the Ottoman Empire.<sup>40</sup> Religious music was in the mosques and Dervish lodges, which were a musical sect of Islamic practice.<sup>41</sup> There was music for occupational organizations, educational music found in educational settings such as *madrasah* and *enderun*, which were the separate schools set up in sultans' palaces.<sup>42</sup> Lastly, city entertainment music and military music were known as Janissary music.<sup>43</sup> These varied music traditions contributed to the development and sustaining of the *Meşk* system of education.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Philips Price, "Chapter XI: Foundation of the Republic-Constitutional Changes and Dictatorships", essay, in *A History of Turkey: From Empire to Republic*, (Routledge, 2021), 126–34.

<sup>37</sup> "Ottoman Empire." Encyclopædia Britannica, April 29, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ottoman-Empire>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Koray Celenk, "Establishment Aim and Present Situation of the Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey", essay, in *Music and Music Education From Ottoman Empire to Modern Turkey*, (AGP Research, 2016), 54–64; Ihsanoglu Ekmeleddin, "The Madrasahs of the Ottoman Empire", *Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation*, April 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Celenk, "Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey", 56.

<sup>41</sup> Celenk, "Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey", 56; Yücer Hür Mahmut, "Dervish Lodges and Convents in the History of Social Services", *Akademik Platform İslami Araştırmalar Dergisi* 6, no. 1 (April 8, 2022): 19–34.

<sup>42</sup> Celenk, "Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey", 57; "Enderun Tureng". Accessed May 10, 2025. <https://tureng.com/en/turkish-english/enderun>.

<sup>43</sup> Celenk, "Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey", 55.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 56; Denise Gill-Gürtan, "Performing *Meşk*, Narrating History: Legacies of Transmission in Contemporary Turkish Musical Practices." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 3 (December 1, 2011): 615–30.



Figure 3: Map of the Ottoman Empire <sup>45</sup>

### 3.1 Meşk

Meşk is the system in which the master-apprentice relationship developed in Türkiye during the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans considered music to be part of a system that valued instruction from a master to a handpicked apprentice. Meşk is not just about the transmission of music: it is about the teaching of music in an atmosphere where the master can instill into the apprentice not only the education of music but the education of a philosophy of life.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, when it comes to the actual teaching of the music, there is an intentional connection that the master and apprentice must make.

Outside of Enderun and the Dervish lodges, Meşk instruction took place in the private home of the master.<sup>47</sup> The apprentice was expected to go to the master's house daily for lengthy lessons. The years of training expected of a student varied based on the individual apprentice's needs and the

<sup>45</sup> "Ottoman Empire." Encyclopædia Britannica, April 29, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ottoman-Empire>.

<sup>46</sup> Şebnem Özdemir Sozer, "Discovering One's Self through Embodiment of Tradition in Meşk: An Analysis of the Mode of Transmission in Turkish Performative Traditions." *Musicologist* 3, no. 2 (December 31, 2019): 146-64.

<sup>47</sup> Yücer, "Dervish Lodges", 19-34.

type of repertoire being transmitted.<sup>48</sup> Because of this student-centered view, and varying duration, Meşk cannot be considered a standardized pedagogical system with a fixed schedule for completing different levels of training.<sup>49</sup>

The structure of this system consisted of a face-to-face form of education where the student would sit in front of their teacher to understand, assimilate, and interpret what the master did, said, and read.<sup>50</sup> Then the apprentice would mimic this. Oral transmission rather than notation was the primary method for learning music.<sup>51</sup> Meşk functioned not only in one-on-one settings but also could be accomplished in a group setting with the master's other students.<sup>52</sup>

The master-apprentice (*utsa-çırak*) relationship between teacher and student was a long-term learning process.<sup>53</sup> However, this relationship did not start one-on-one, but rather began with a small group of students, usually as children.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, having a talent or an affection for music was not the only factor to determine if a child could qualify to receive training from the master; rather, the potential student's character, manners, and familiarity with the ethics integrated into Meşk were also important considerations.<sup>55</sup>

Before going further, a list of necessary terms needs to be defined.

<i>Makam; usul;</i>	The structure of the music
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<sup>48</sup> Gill-Gürtan, "Performing Meşk, Narrating History", 620.

<sup>49</sup> Sozer, "Discovering One's Self", 151.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 25; Gill-Gürtan, "Performing Meşk, Narrating History", 620.

<sup>51</sup> Celenk, "Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey", 56.

<sup>52</sup> Altintas, "Turkish Art Music Examination of Voice Methods", thesis, Afyon Kocatepe University, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Altintas, "Turkish Art Music Examination of Voice Methods", 620.

<sup>54</sup> Altintas, "Turkish Art Music Examination of Voice Methods", 620.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 620.

<i>taksim</i> and <i>beste/ eser</i>	which are well-known compositions by musicians
<i>aruz</i>	which was a poetic meter
<i>Dizi dövmek</i>	“Beating a line” is the method that a master would teach repertoire to a student.

Figure 4. <sup>56</sup>

Literature, specifically Turkish poetry, was an essential part of the curriculum as well as *taksim* and *beste/ eser*. Other topics of study included other languages, music theory, the history of music, including the history of *makam*, notable composers, significant repertoire, and *aruz*.<sup>57</sup> Meşk was concentrated on a poetic basis of Turkish music and organized the training process accordingly. *Dizi dövmek*, or “beating a line,” was the method through which a master would teach repertoire to a student. Specifically, the master would beat the *usul* in a variety of patterns with their hands on their knees and thighs, and the student would follow on their own body. Because the focus of Meşk was already concentrated on the poetic basis of Turkish music, this method of *dizi dövmek* was effective and ideally suited to the transmission of vocal repertoire. Musical notation and writing down traditional works did however, come into fashion in Türkiye after the transition from the Ottoman Empire into the Republic of Türkiye in 1922.<sup>58</sup> At that time, the use of Western music notation became more common due to the insistence of Atatürk in 1934.<sup>59</sup> Because of this, Western classical

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 620.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 620.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 620.

<sup>59</sup> Price, *Chapter XI: Foundation of the Republic-Constitutional Changes and Dictatorships*, 128.

composers such as Paul Hindemith and Béla Bartók were invited to the Republic of Türkiye to advise the guidance for state music policies.<sup>60</sup> Due to these reforms, modern conservatories in Türkiye still utilize the Western education model with some adaptations to include ideals of historic Turkish music.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.2 Turkish Singer and Pedagogue: Saadet İkesus Altan**

Music education in Türkiye changed at the prompting of the political leadership of the Republic of Türkiye. Atatürk’s drive to bring the newly established republic into the twentieth century and integrate with the Western world encouraged young Turks to go and study in Europe. Mezzo-soprano Saadet İkesus Altan (1916 – 2007) was one of these pioneer Turkish students who traveled to Germany to study and perform.<sup>62</sup> Later known as the “teacher of teachers”, Altan began her formal training with Nurullah Sevket Taskiran at the Musiki Muallim School of Music, which would later become the Ankara Conservatory. Altan would return and serve here as a voice teacher and lecturer in her later career.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Gill-Gürtan, *Performing Meşk, Narrating History*, 620.

<sup>61</sup> Özcan Altıntaş, *Traditional Turkish Art Music Examination Of Voice Methods Applied*, 60., 50.

<sup>62</sup> Ömer Türkmenoğlu, and Hande Yılmaz. “Life of Saadet İkesus Altan and Review of ‘Vocal Education’ Book.” *Journal of World of Turks* 13, no. 1 (April 15, 2021): 273–92.

<sup>63</sup> Musiki Muallim Mektebi, “The sound of the republic”, <https://librarydigitalcollections.ku.edu.tr/en/digital-exhibitions/the-sound-of-the-republic-musiki-muallim-mektebi/>.



Figure 5: Mezzo-Soprano Saadet İkesus Altan<sup>64</sup>

After a 1938 successful performance in front of Atatürk, Altan and a few other young Turks began their studies at the Berlin Conservatory and eventually graduated in 1940.<sup>65</sup> Altan took steps to become part of the German Cultural Office so she could start a performing career, but a refusal due to her ethnic background led her to obtain a position at Duisburg Opera and Frankfurt Opera.<sup>66</sup> In 1940, Altan signed a three-year contract with Duisburg Opera in western Germany, and appeared in her first role there as Maddalena in the opera *Rigoletto*. Other roles she went on to perform at Duisburg Opera were Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* and the title character of *Carmen*.<sup>67</sup> In 1941, Altan was called back to Türkiye, and she made her debut February 13, 1942, in Beethoven's *Fidelio*.<sup>68</sup>

After her return to Türkiye, she began a multifaceted career as a singer, teacher, opera coach,

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 22; 36.

<sup>67</sup> Türkmenoğlu and Yılmaz, *Life of Saadet İkesus Altan and Review*, 278.

<sup>68</sup> Türkmenoğlu and Yılmaz, *Life of Saadet İkesus Altan and Review*, 278.

radio broadcaster, opera director, and libretto translator. In the course of her lifetime, Saadet İkesus Altan translated over fifty operas from their original language into Turkish.



Figure 6: Saadet İkesus Altan<sup>69</sup>

She later published a vocal pedagogy book designed specifically for Turks.<sup>70</sup> This text was widely used by the university systems to teach voice around Türkiye. She created an educational structure for the voice student, which, due to its strong influence, is still in place in many conservatories around Türkiye today.<sup>71</sup> Her pedagogical book has since been combined with her autobiography, *Kara Böcek*. The small book, while not inclusive of all of her pedagogical writings, remains part of some collections today and helps to promote the story and legacy of this famed Turkish pedagogue.

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<sup>69</sup> Saadet İkesus Altan, *Kara Böcek* (Sel Yayıncılık, 2018), 87.

<sup>70</sup> Türkmenoğlu and Yılmaz, *Life of Saadet İkesus Altan and Review*, 278.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

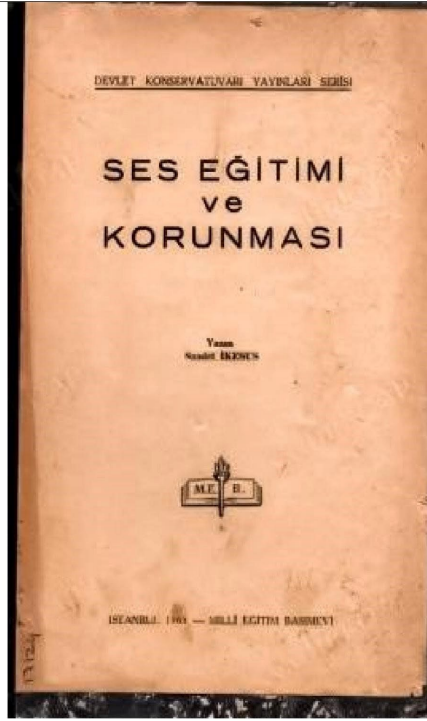


Figure 7: Saadet İkesus Altan’s Pedagogy Book *Voice Education and Protection* <sup>72</sup>

### 3.3 Conservatory Models in Türkiye

The institutes providing professional music education function as conservatories which offer courses of study in music technology, musical sciences, and Turkish music. <sup>73</sup> The creation of these educational institutes began after the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. Saadet İkesus Altan’s profound contribution to this system remains important today. <sup>74</sup> The first school to train music educators was established in Ankara in 1924, and was called Musiki Muallim Mektebi or Music Teacher Training School. <sup>75</sup> However, in 1976, the first Turkish music conservatory opened,

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<sup>72</sup> Altan, *Kara Böcek*, 90.

<sup>73</sup> Celenk, “Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey”, 56.

<sup>74</sup> Altan, *Kara Böcek*. 73.

<sup>75</sup> Aysun Tonya, “In Departments Of Faculties Of Education An Investigation Of The Problems Encountered In Individual Voice Education Lessons According To Teacher And Student.” Thesis, Dokuz Eylül Institute Fine Arts Education, 2008.

which provided music education for music performers.<sup>76</sup>

Subsequently, music education in Türkiye became defined into three parts. The first, general music education, was open to everyone at the primary, secondary, and high school levels. The second focused on amateur or volunteer music education in optional programs for students provided by public training centers or private music courses. Lastly, vocational or professional music education concentrated on students aspiring to pursue a musical career either in education or performance.<sup>77</sup>

The modern Turkish conservatory system mostly resembles the Western classical view of education which includes theory class, aural skills class, voice lessons, instrument lessons, and participation in group classes.<sup>78</sup> However, repertoire in the Türkiye conservatories differs from the standard Western classical model by emphasizing pieces that the ensemble or performer is ready to interpret, not necessarily having been already learned by the ensemble or performer.<sup>79</sup>

The modification of the Meşk system in Türkiye conservatories for repertoire classes places a strong desire on creating a working memory base for each student so they will be able to go without notation efforts.<sup>80</sup> The utilization and integration of *makam* into the higher education system has taken its form in classes such as Turkish Music Solej and Theory, Theory and *Makam* Knowledge, and Turkish Music *Makam* Knowledge. The modern system used to teach these classes integrates western-style study of musical sentence structure, known as the solfege system, with the Turkish *makam* music theory system.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Aslı Yıldırım, “Profesyonel Müzik Eğitiminde Müzik Arşivciliğinin Yeri ve Önemi.” *Akademik Müzik Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3, no. 5 (January 5, 2017): 1–26.

<sup>77</sup> Celenk, “Institutions Giving Professional Music Education in Turkey”, 56; Tonya, *Problems Encountered In Individual Voice Education Lessons*, 34.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>79</sup> Yıldırım, *Profesyonel Müzik Eğitiminde Müzik Arşivciliğinin Yeri ve Önemi*, 11.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Altan was influential in moving the Turkish voice teaching approach toward the Western classical tradition. Altan took her German-based training and created a pedagogical book to suit the Turkish voice. She outlined basic pedagogical knowledge of anatomy, a system for discerning and defining voice types, and procedures for initial voice training using vocalises.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, she utilized the Bel Canto method to train her students with vowels and breathing techniques.<sup>83</sup> Her work thus brought elements of the Western classical music education in the Turkish conservatories.

Meşk was also used to teach Turkish Traditional Folk Music. Since Meşk primarily utilizes face-to-face lesson sessions, certain conservatories began to specialize in this traditional style of music. No formal vocal training was given during these lessons; some scholars have conjectured that the integration of technical studies for voice training could improve the Traditional Folk Music style.<sup>84</sup>

All in all, the conservatory system of music education in Türkiye has developed from the time of Atatürk to the modern era. Progressing from Ottoman music, the teaching practices of Meşk, combined with the utilization of the *makam* system, have helped broaden the educational systems used in the modern conservatory. Stimulated by the integration of classical music into Türkiye conservatories, the new wider educational model melds elements of both the different genres of Turkish traditions and the classical music world.

#### **Section 4: United States Teaching Models**

The United States has a long and complex history of vocal music. In the modern academic settings in universities and conservatories, there has been a development of group teaching methods for teaching the individual voice in a group setting.<sup>85</sup> Originally, cathedral choir schools, elementary

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<sup>82</sup> Temiz And Yilmaz, *The Place and Importance of Digital Literacy in Music Education*, 1123–1135.

<sup>83</sup> Özcan Altıntaş, *Traditional Turkish Art Music Examination Of Voice Methods Applied*, 60, 1131; Altan, *Kara Böcek*. 61.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>85</sup> DeRosia, “Singing and Learning Together”, 20.

education, religious organizations, and churches were the core foundations in which pedagogy was developed. However, in the early twentieth century, there was a development in the U.S. of early class voice books outside of these settings.<sup>86</sup>

This early class voice instruction highlights the importance of Bel Canto singing over other styles of singing, which were considered unrefined.<sup>87</sup> The goal of the ‘Voice Culture’ movement in the United States was to create a standard of elocution and singing that would present the cultural and socio-economic achievements of the country through a colonial lens. Due to this usage of Bel Canto technique as being the “right” form of singing, it perpetuated classism into vocal teaching. Multi-genre teaching in voice studios and voice class settings is counteracting that trend in the conservatory and university settings. As the twentieth century progressed, increasing implementation of the methods of Garcia II and Marchesi have been used in the progressive literature of voice group teaching books to promote health of the voice rather than to promote classical elitism.

One of the influential manuals used to teach class voice through the twentieth century included Richard Rosewall’s *Handbook of Singing: A Guide to Vocal Development for the Beginning Student and the Teacher in Training*. Published in 1961, Rosewall’s book outlines fundamental structure and physiology that is relevant to other genres.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, *Steps to Singing for Voice Classes* by Royal Stanton, published in 1971, outlines the advantage of class voice methods that allow beginning students to prosper in an encouraging and supportive classroom environment.<sup>89</sup> *The Basics of Singing* by Jan Schmidt published in 1984, *Adventures in Singing* by Clifton Ware published in 1995, *The Singing Book* by Merideth Bunch and Cynthia Vaughn

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 20; D. A. Clippinger, *The Clippinger Class-Method of Voice Culture*, (Lyon & Healy, Inc, 1933).

<sup>87</sup> DeRosia, “Singing and Learning Together”, 20.

<sup>88</sup> Richard B. Rosewall, *Handbook Of Singing A Guide To Vocal Development For The Beginning Student And The Teacher-In-Training By Richard B. Rosewall*, (Dickerson Press, 1984).

<sup>89</sup> Stanton, Royal. *Steps To Singing For Voice Classes* (Wadsworth Pub. Co, 1976).

published in 2000 and revised in 2024, and *Class Voice: Fundamental Skills for Lifelong Singing* by Brenda Smith and Ronald Burrichter published in 2023 are all examples of books that employ the fundamentals of the Bel Canto singing practice but place it in a pedagogical light that services the individual voice without “othering” and alienating students who are interested in repertoire outside of Western Classical music.<sup>90</sup>

One of these previously mentioned titles is that of Clifton Ware’s *Adventures in Singing*, published in 1995 and revised in 2008. It is an expansive and semi-comprehensive book aimed at the singing teacher. In his preface, Ware states,

“*Adventures in Singing*... although intended primarily for beginning voice students, these materials will be useful to anyone interested in learning about the singing process... [and] the major features and advantages of the text are (1) methodological voice building techniques... (2) foundational preparations... (3) self-assessment questions... The subject matter is systematically presented, beginning with the preparation of the mind and body... and continuing with the discussion of vocal skills, such as breath management, vocal fold vibrations, resonance, diction, coordination, and performance.”<sup>91</sup>

Ware’s comprehensive view of teaching the singing voice promotes a stronger guide for the teacher. Ware’s crafting of his text emphasizes the building of a student’s mindset as the foundation of the vocal journey. This is designed to set the student up for better results, not just vocally, but physically and mentally. This specificity in his methodology allowed for the development of the individual voice in the group setting with informed principles of voice teaching and voice science.

#### **4.1 Conservatory Teaching Models**

While group voice teaching has been integrated into some conservatory and smaller university models, the prevailing model across large music programs in the United States is the

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<sup>90</sup> DeRosia, “Singing and Learning Together”, 20; Jan Schmidt and Heidi Counsell Schmidt, *Basics Of Singing*, (Schirmer Books, 2008); Clifton Ware, *Adventures In Singing: A Process For Exploring, Discovering, And Developing Vocal Potential*, (McGraw-Hill, 2008); Cynthia Vaughn, Meribeth Dayme, and Matthew Hoch, *The Singing Book* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2024).

<sup>91</sup> Ware, *Adventures In Singing*, vi.

teacher-student model of one-on-one teaching.<sup>92</sup> This framework still present in the modern U.S. conservatory was inherited from a European pedagogical philosophy.<sup>93</sup> Teacher-student relationships are moving away from the teacher-centric model and toward the student-centric model. There is some resistance to change from larger conservatories, but also in response, there are more scholars, like Ware, who work on a smaller scale that are cultivating student-centric models that aid in changing this standard.

#### **4.2 The Use of Group Voice Teaching Models Today in the U.S.**

Today, group teaching models have been promoted by associations like the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS). This group recognizes Clifton Ware as a standout contributor and pioneer in the group teaching world.<sup>94</sup> Ware’s contribution to group teaching has inspired other teachers, and in collaboration with Ware, there has been a development through NATS to have a Group-Voice Pedagogy Affinity Group.<sup>95</sup>

As described on the NATS website, “An affinity group is a voluntary member resource group within NATS that enables members to meet together and build connections based on shared characteristics or interests.”<sup>96</sup> These groups enable and foster collaboration through a variety of subjects and group types. Currently, the Group-Voice Pedagogy Affinity Group is led by Clifton Ware and Amelia Rollings-Bigler. Dr. Rollings-Bigler is an associate professor of voice and pedagogy at Coastal Carolina University. Rollings-Bigler has also contributed to conversations

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<sup>92</sup> Travis Sherwood, “Evolving the Master-Apprentice Tradition: A Pathway Back to a Student-Centered Pedagogy”, *Journal of Singing* 80, no. 1 (August 15, 2023): 13–22; Katharine DeBoer, “Smart Strategies for Small Departments: Class Voice for Freshman Voice Majors.” *Journal of Singing* 68, no. 3 (January 2012).

<sup>93</sup> Christopher J. Smith, “The Anti-Colonial Conservatory.” *Navigating Stylistic Boundaries in the Music History Classroom*, March 18, 2024, 197–220.

<sup>94</sup> National Association of Teachers of Singing. Accessed May 8, 2025. <https://www.nats.org/affinitygroups.html>.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

about the future for comprehensive group voice pedagogy.<sup>97</sup> For many voice teachers and pedagogues, this prioritizes inclusivity in voice teaching which is increasingly important now and for the future. Without the innovation of pedagogues like Marchesi, models of singing education may have still emulated the restrictive master-apprentice relationship.<sup>98</sup> Progress toward more inclusive practices of voice teaching also enables group pedagogical methods to integrate other genres like Classic Rock, Pop, Jazz and many others.<sup>99</sup>

### Section 5: Comparison of Models Presented in this Paper

The comparison of models will revolve around the following schools of thought: Garcia II & Marchesi, Meşk, and U.S.

	Garcia II & Marchesi	Meşk & Other Cultures	U.S. Methods
Group Teaching Model	Garcia’s voice science was the foundational model for Marchesi’s teaching and her eventual group teaching methods.	Group teaching in Meşk and other non-Western Classical music traditions is usually reserved for beginners or for training teachers to teach beginning students under the supervision of their teacher.	Group teaching methods developed heavily in the U.S. under the guidance of key pedagogues such as Dr. Clifton Ware, and are now being carried forward by Dr. Amelia Rollings-Bigler.

<sup>97</sup> Bigler Rollings, Katherine Osborne, Chadley Ballantyne, Brian Horne, Kimberly James, Brian Manternach, Yvonne Redman, and Melissa Treinkman, “Voice Pedagogy for the 21st Century: The Summation of Two Summits.” *Journal of Singing* 78, no. 1 (August 24, 2021): 11–28.

<sup>98</sup> Sherwood, “Evolving the Master-Apprentice Tradition”, 20.

<sup>99</sup> DeRosia, “Singing and Learning Together”, 20; Solomon Adeboye Babalola, *The Content And Form Of Yoruba Ijala* (University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1963).

<p>Master-Apprentice Model</p>	<p>Garcia heavily promoted this teaching style due to the Italian tradition he trained in. Marchesi, while starting as a one-on-one teacher did integrate her ideas to encompass both group teaching and one-on-one instruction.</p>	<p>The most common model seen even today in the Meşk tradition. The Master-Apprentice model was a way of transmitting music that was not written down and intentionally transmitted through oral tradition.</p>	<p>Still widely used through private instruction across the U.S. as well as through formal institutions like universities, conservatories, and private teaching facilities for communities. This model is moving away from teacher-centric and toward student-centric models of teaching.</p>
<p>Lifestyle of Students</p>	<p>Marchesi had a strong regimen for her</p>	<p>Historically, for Meşk, the lifestyle of the student was integrated into the</p>	<p>General recommendations are made by voice teachers to students,</p>

	<p>students to follow. This included meal plans, exercise regimen, in addition to the standard vocal warm-ups and practice sessions.</p>	<p>home of the master. The master became the most important person in the student's life, above family. Because of this, the stewardship that the master had to the student was to be not only the physical provider for them but the spiritual one as well, as it is considered that the transmission of meşk is not just that of music, but it is spiritual.</p>	<p>but usually they are not less strict than the other two models. This could be in part due to the U.S. attitude of independence of oneself and the student-centric model that the U.S. is shifting towards.</p>
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<p>Conservatory</p>	<p>Marchesi taught at several conservatories and developed teaching systems there to benefit her students. While it is not clear the exact systems she put into place, it was focused on the students' education and development through classroom instruction and private teaching.</p>	<p>The university and conservatory system set up in Türkiye has integrated Western Classical teaching models due to the expansion of Western ideas by Atatürk. However, Meşk is still taught in Traditional Turkish Music in the university setting with an emphasis on oral tradition, however, there has also been notation developed to aid in this education.</p>	<p>Teacher-student model of private lessons is still widely used, especially among some of the top programs in the country. However, at some smaller programs or lesser-known ones, group voice teaching is being utilized and developed to help the individual singer in a group setting.</p>
<p>Genre</p>	<p>Both Garcia and Marchesi only taught the Bel Canto tradition of singing.</p>	<p>Meşk is usually utilized to teach Traditional Turkish Music or Folk Music. In the conservatories in Türkiye, there is also Western Classical voice that is taught through methods adjacent to Bel Canto.</p>	<p>All genres of music are studied in this system. Usually, at some of the more well-known institutions across the U.S., it is only classical degrees with some musical theater training, but not all. There has been a surge in the last decade to integrate not just musical theater into curricula but also contemporary music, commercial music, jazz, and other genres that have not been previously taught at institutions.</p>

Figure 8. Table of Comparison of Models

The Garcia and Marchesi method was the foundation of voice science that we have today.<sup>100</sup> Marchesi took Garcia's methods of teaching and crafted her model for teaching treble voices.<sup>101</sup> Through this new model, Marchesi was able to create a vocal educational environment that was well-rounded for the individual pursuits of the singer. The work of Garcia and Marchesi took the progression of the singing teacher and the relationship and education of the student to a new level.

The Meşk system of music and the development of conservatories in Türkiye presented a clear integration of Western classical music into the culture, but also included the cultural practices of the master-apprentice relationship that had flourished for centuries under the Ottoman Empire. These methods include group teaching methods as well as similarities to one-on-one methods of oral transmission of teaching.

The U.S. methods for group voice teaching have been crafted and developed extensively in the U.S. for decades. From the 1970s to the present day, there has been extensive development on group teaching methods in universities, independent voice teachers, and official organizations.

As developmental scientists have considered the development of educational systems in the modern era, the modern voice pedagogue has also considered different learning styles of students.<sup>102</sup> Moving toward this student-centric model allows for further development of group teaching research and application in addition to aiding the private one-on-one lesson method.

Even though the vast geography of teaching models present can seem daunting, threads of similarity among the groups appear. The groups examined in this paper represent only a small sample of the vast global vocal teaching methodologies.

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<sup>100</sup> Stark, *A History of Vocal Pedagogy*, 4.

<sup>101</sup> Neill, *Divas*, 314.

<sup>102</sup> Lynn Holding, *The Musician's Mind: Teaching, Learning, And Performance In The Age Of Brain Science*, (Findaway World, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

This paper represents a non-comprehensive look at voice teaching models across different continents by comparing master-apprentice models to the present-day models ranging from teacher-student to group voice.

Comparing the models including the Bel Canto tradition, Türkiye's Meşk, and the U.S. group teaching literature shows how trends in musical education and methodology have transmitted across cultures and developed. These transitions are highlighted in the important historical record of pedagogical literature provided by the writings of influential pedagogues like Mathilde Marchesi and Saadet Ikesus Altan.

Marchesi and Altan are two historical pedagogical figures that shaped the methodological and educational models of their countries. Their contribution to voice teaching methods have influenced modern teaching practices across the globe. Finally, the United States' contribution to the voice teaching field has accelerated from the mid twentieth century to the modern day. Through the efforts of modern pedagogues like Clifton Ware and Amelia Rollings-Bigler, group teaching methods have continually developed to aid the student in their vocal journey. This shift from one-on-one teaching models to group teaching and student centric ideas has the potential to create more independent and creative artists.