Recordings:


Between the Breaks, 1979, Fogarty's Cove Records, FCM 002.

Northwest Passage, 1980, Fogarty's Cove Music, FCM 004.


From Fresh Water, 1983: to be released shortly by Fogarty's Cove Music.

Books

Stan Rogers: Songs from Fogarty's Cove.
Ottawa: Ottawa Folklore Centre, 1982.

Articles


The finest kind. Come For to Sing, 1983, 9(1), 21.

Open your mouth and close your eyes.  

Sell your song.  *Come for to Sing*, 1983, 9(3).

**Other**

Stan’s first recordings were with RCA Victor. Paul Mills tried to dig out his copies of “Fat Girl Rag” and “Seven Years Along” (the A and B sides of one 45 Stan released) as well as a Christmas novelty song, but couldn’t locate them. Paul attributed the mysterious disappearance of these 45’s to Stan’s desire to have them forgotten.

Stan was very active with the CBC and performed some original work on various radio shows. Included here are: several songs on “The Entertainers” (1973 and 1974), a live concert from University of Western Ontario on “Showcase” (1973), at least four performances on “Touch the Earth” (1975-1979), several performances on “Music Maritimes”, a radio play based on “Harris and the Mare” aired in 1982 on “Nightfall”, several songs about the St. Roche aired on “Sunday Matinee” in 1982, and several songs were performed on “Playhouse” related to Silver Don Cameron’s “The Three Sisters.” This listing is incomplete, but gives you an idea of some of the material that is available. Unfortunately the CBC did not respond to our request for detailed information regarding the availability of these and other performances by Stan.

In addition Stan performed on the CBC album *Best of Touch the Earth* (CBC Merchandising, LM 473, 1980). We also understand that there may be some CBC “Broadcast Recordings” of Stan available but have been unable to obtain details from the Corp.

**The Singers**

I’m a fine one to ask to write an article on the technical aspects of singing in performance. I’ve never had a voice lesson, have only a dim notion of how and why pleasant noises (sometimes) come out of my mouth, and I rarely give the matter much thought beyond noting in passing that “the pipes are in pretty good (or bad) shape tonight.” However, I’ve just spent a contemplative half-hour with a cigarette or two, and I am now ready to share with you the accumulated wisdom therefrom.

The first thing that occurs to me is that if you are interested in having a really fine voice, cigarettes are, if not a definite no-no, certainly not recommended. On the other hand, if you want to sound like me, Satchmo, or Jimmy Durante, at least a pack a day will help. Nothing else, short of a bad throat infection, will give you the proper rasp and gargel or give rise to that desperate struggle for pitch control that I go through every night. People think I put so much emotion into my singing? Hah! I’m just trying to hit the note. Most nights I settle for a series of near misses. But it’s up to you.

I’m also still amazed when I see someone climb up onto a stage and sit down to sing. Especially fat people like me. For one thing, nobody should reasonably expect the kind of breath control required for good voice production with their dinner occupying the space that should be the sole province of their diaphragm. As inexpert as I am on the subject, I am still of the opinion that singing involves moving a fair bit of air around, and that can’t be easy when your bellows is being crushed between your ribcage and your breadbasket. Nor can it help to be curled up around some species of stringed instrument, singing either to your left hand or into the sound hole. If you can’t play and sing at the same time without staring at the instrument, then figure out which of the two you enjoy doing more, and get someone else to do the other bit. In any event,
stand up if it is at all possible, and keep your back and neck straight and your head level, facing the front. This keeps your chest capacity at maximum and your airway wide open.

Years ago, when I was still young and curious about inconsequential matters, I hit upon a few simple experiments which told me whether or not I had good breath control. One was to light a candle, hold it six inches from my mouth, and then take in and exhale a series of deep breaths with my mouth wide open. The object of the exercise was to try to disturb the candle flame as little as possible, and do twenty or more consecutive breaths without passing out from anoxia. It’s as silly a way to kill a few hours as I can think of, and I suggest that you do it in private, lest your loved ones start an earnest search for the butterfly net and the canvas camisole.

Another of these is less alarming to your friends, but potentially more annoying. Take a deep breath, and choosing a note in the most comfortable part of your range, sing “OOOO” very softly, gradually increase the volume while changing to “AHHH” until you are at top volume, and then slowly change back to “OOOO” at your original volume, holding the note as long as possible. You can make a game of this by putting a stopwatch on yourself and making a graph of your times. To get really sophisticated, keep separate graphs for each note in your range, and make a master graph which plots your maximum times against the pitch of each note in your range from lowest to highest. This will give you a visual representation of the “power-curve” of your voice, which is probably meaningless, but will amaze and edify your critics who said that you could never be a serious singer. You may then pitch out the whole works, and drink to forget.

Pitch control I don’t have a clue about. Sing lots of up-and-down scales, and try to end on the same note you started on. I don’t know. It seems to be a case of either you hit it or you don’t, but if you have good breath control then at least uneven diaphragm pressure won’t throw you off, and you’ll be able to hold a note without wandering excessively.

I think that diction is far more important than pitch, anyway. Your average folk audience will be less likely to be listening for little glitches in your voice production if they are being riveted to their seats by the sheer power and brilliance of the lyrics clearly. Clear and correct enunciation of every word is something I always try for first, because there is little sense in my spending hours and days and weeks writing a decent lyric only to mumble it on stage. I very carefully cross all my “t’s”, and if a line ends in a consonant I exaggerate that consonant almost to the point where I’m ashamed of being so “hammy”. The last thing I want to see on the faces of my audience is that “Whadiddy Say?” blank stare that means I’ve muffed a line. I’d be better off back in my hotel room, picking my guitar, or my nose, or even my next career.

This is where we talk about microphone technique. Unless you happen to do all your singing in the shower or even in the living room, sooner or later you will be faced with a sort of blunt thing with a wire coming out of it. Don’t be frightened. It’s your friend. If the person on the controls is not a complete donkey, and you follow a few simple rules, the microphone will give you enormous power, something like jumping into a ’57 Chev V-8 and putting it to the mat.

The first rule is: don’t eat it. It is not food. It’s okay if your lips occasionally brush it, but crisp diction becomes difficult when you have the bit between your teeth, so to speak. Besides which, you don’t want it in your mouth for sanitary reasons. Who knows how many rock-n-roll singers have spat, dribbled and drooled into that thing?

Contrariwise, don’t get too far away. Most microphones in common use today work best at a range of two to ten inches. Any closer and a loud note is liable to produce nasty distortion as the microphone overloads. Any farther away and a soft note is liable to produce feedback as the donkey at the controls turns up the volume in an attempt to capture what you’re not producing much of.

Staying within that two to ten inch zone, and even varying your distance within that zone (close for soft notes, back a bit for loud ones) is known as “working the microphone” and gives you no end of a professional air.

Try to avoid “popping.” This that sound like someone popping a paper bag that occurs when you explode a “t,” “b,” or “p” directly at a mic. I find the best way, apart from trying to find songs which don’t use these letters, is to turn my head just slightly away whenever one comes up. A little practice, and the process will become totally automatic. The sound man will love you for it, and you can do without the huge rubber sponge affair that he will otherwise put on the mic, blocking the audience’s view of half your face. From their point of view this may or may not be desirable, but that’s not a decision you should make for them if you can avoid it.

Finally, use the microphone to increase your dynamic range. The development of a singing “style” always involves the careful use of dynamics, and a proper understanding of mic technique will allow you to go from a whisper to a roar and back again with equal impunity and no loss of clarity from the listener’s standpoint.

I suppose I’ve left a lot out, mostly because I don’t know it. Asking an untrained singer to talk about proper stage vocal technique is like asking a penguin to talk about flying. Sure, he’s a bird, and a successful one at that, but what does he know?