

On Lyrical Phonetics: Morton Manus and the Art of Sung Text

Morton Manus, a pioneering phonetician of the 20th century, dedicated his life's work to exploring the captivating intersection of phonetics and music. His groundbreaking research and methodologies in the field of lyrical phonetics profoundly influenced the understanding of sung text and propelled the development of vocal pedagogy.



On Lyrical Phonetics by Morton Manus

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Lending	: Enabled
Print length	: 157 pages
Screen Reader	: Supported

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Early Life and Career



Manus was born in New York City in 1903. From a young age, he displayed an extraordinary aptitude for languages and music. After graduating from City College of New York, he embarked on a distinguished academic career, earning a doctorate in linguistics from Columbia University.

In the early 1930s, Manus joined the faculty of the Juilliard School, where his passion for music and phonetics converged. He recognized the need for

a systematic approach to the study of sung text, as conventional phonetics primarily focused on spoken language.

Groundbreaking Research

Manus's pioneering research revolutionized the field of lyrical phonetics. He developed innovative methodologies to analyze the acoustic properties of sung vowels and consonants, examining their articulation, duration, and intonation.

One of his most significant contributions was the concept of "lyrical diphthongs." Unlike spoken diphthongs, which involve a gradual transition between two vowels, Manus observed that sung diphthongs often exhibit a distinct "break" or point of rapid change in the vocal tract.

Practical Applications

Manus's research had profound implications for vocal pedagogy and performance. He emphasized the importance of clear and intelligible diction in singing, while also acknowledging the role of expressive variation in conveying musical intent.

He developed practical exercises and techniques to improve singers' pronunciation, breath control, and vocal projection. Manus's methodologies became widely adopted in conservatories and vocal studios around the world.

Legacy and Influence

Morton Manus's legacy extends far beyond his own time. His groundbreaking research in lyrical phonetics established a new paradigm

for the study of sung text. His methodologies continue to be employed by phoneticians, linguists, and vocal pedagogues.

Through his work, Manus fostered a greater understanding of the relationship between language and music. He paved the way for advancements in vocal pedagogy, empowering singers to achieve greater clarity, expressiveness, and artistry in their performances.

Morton Manus was a visionary phonetician whose contributions to the field of lyrical phonetics were transformative. His groundbreaking research, practical methodologies, and enduring legacy have profoundly influenced the way we approach and appreciate sung text. His work continues to inspire and guide generations of musicians, scholars, and those who seek to unlock the power and beauty of the human voice.



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