Teaching Lucas:
A Trans Student’s Vocal Journey from Soprano to Tenor
INTRODUCTION

- The research is based on a chronicle of more than a year of voice lessons and voice changes experienced by a female to male (FtM or AFAB) trans student after testosterone therapy.

- This is a summary of the data of the vocal changes based on a review of audio recordings of the lessons beginning with the initial testosterone injections and going for 18 plus months after.
Teaching Transgender Students
Special Considerations

- Pronouns matter. If you are not certain, ask the individual which pronoun they use for themselves. The use of the correct pronoun shows respect and support and offers a much needed confirmation of their personhood.

- Male to Female (MtF or AMAB) trans students are a different pedagogical challenge. Once the voice has gone through adolescence, there is no hormone therapy that will reverse this process. These individuals may choose to feminize the voice in both speech and singing. Many times a speech therapist may be needed to accomplish this change because fundamental frequency and resonance changes will likely be necessary.

- Music educators should be advocates for our trans students and make the studio and music classes/rehearsals safe spaces. Choose labels that are gender neutral. Use sensitivity in any class that involves gender specific concert attire or accommodations for limited or changing vocal range.
Pitch Labels
Range and Characteristics of Lucas’ Pre T soprano

- Soprano quality - Bb$_3$ to Eb$_6$
  (flute above C#$_6$)
- Full Chest voice - E$_3$ to C#$_4$
  (weak below G$_3$)
- Primo passaggio mix weak from Bb$_3$ to E$_4$
- Secondo passaggio Eb$_5$ to G$_5$
Laryngeal images Pre T
Laryngeal images after 1 year
Audio files of speech changes
Lessons After T - Months 1-2

- Soprano quality remained largely unchanged until weeks 7-8.
- Weeks 7 & 8 - The speaking voice was noticeably lower. The singing voice quality changed rapidly from mezzo soprano to a tenor in these two weeks.
- By the end of month 2, the chest voice was present from C₃ and was able to turn over with vowel modification to Ab₄.
Lessons after T - Months 3-6

- Tenor quality became more reliable. The head/falsetto voice was weak and this range was extremely limited.
- Repertoire choices were limited in range from $D_3$ to $G_4$. Modification of most vowels was necessary at $Eb_4$.
- The choral assignment to the tenor section was a good choice because the alto range was difficult with unreliable head/falsetto notes.
Soprano/Tenor comparison after 6 months
Lessons after T - Months 7-12

- The tenor quality continued to improve and gained reliable range from B$_2$ to Ab$_4$.
- The head/falsetto became more reliable and developed a mezzo soprano range with a countertenor timbre.
- Tenor quality and tone realized by the end of the first year.
Soprano/Tenor Comparison after 18 months
Countertenor after two years
Conclusions - Range and Quality changes

- The chest voice range increased and the soprano range was drastically diminished. Falsetto/head production was unavailable for a while, but is a viable option in limited range. Tenor production was the preferred timbre through year two. Voice dysphoria then motivated more work as a countertenor.

- After a year and a half with testosterone, the singing voice seemed to be somewhat settled and may be trained like any tenor. There may need to be minor acoustic adjustments due to higher than average formant frequencies.

- If an F2M trans singer had a lower range before testosterone, you might expect the result to be a high baritone voice.
Lucas’s Ranges

Pre T Soprano Range

Counter Tenor Range

Tenor Range

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
    & D4 & E4 & F4 & G4 & A4 & B4 \\
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
    & C5 & D5 & E5 & F5 \\
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
    & G5 & A5 & B5 & C6 \\
\end{array} \]

\[ \begin{array}{ccccccc}
    & A2 & C3 & E3 & G3 & B3 & C4 \\
\end{array} \]
Selected Resources

Teaching Transgender Students

Lorraine Sims

The 2008 NATS National Conference in Chicago included a session titled "Caffeine and Conversation for the Teachers of Transgender Students." Presented by Nancy Sue and the author, the session was well received by teachers from various parts of the country.

Because gender terminology may be unfamiliar to everyone, it seems a logical place to begin. Transgender individuals are diverse in many ways, and attempts to categorize them may fail. However, the basic terms include the terms transgender and non-binary. These terms refer to a perspective on gender and do not mean that an individual is a person with two genders or gender identities. Transgender refers to an individual who identifies as female or male but not with the assigned gender. Non-binary refers to a gender identity that does not fall within traditional masculine or feminine gender norms. A female-to-male transgender individual may prefer to use the pronouns he/him. Non-binary individuals may prefer to use the pronouns they/them.

Some transgender individuals may not identify with a specific gender designation and may say they see gender fluid and prefer the pronouns they/them. Other terms like third gender or gender queer may also be used. These terms are often used to describe individuals who do not identify with or are not comfortable with the traditional gender binary.

In any case, the call to return to music was strong, and he had become a student of one of my doctoral teaching assistants. It was during this time that I realized an email.

Dr. Sims,

It’s done. I want you to know that you are a fantastic supervisor. I feel so much more comfortable with this new role and I am grateful for your guidance. Thank you for all that you have done for me.

Lucia

The other student, Malika, was my first transgender student, not female to male (FTM) in Lucas, but male to female (MFT). For a voice teacher those
Contact and Acknowledgements

- Loraine Sims, DMA
  - she/her/hers
- Associate Professor, Edith Killgore Kirkpatrick Professor of Voice
- Voice Studies Division Chair and Vocal Area Coordinator
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