



86 things

you never hear
a singer say

Compiled and edited by Jeremy Fisher

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Sopranos:	4
Countertenors:	6
Tenors:	7
Baritones:	8
Basses:	9
Opera	10
Sopranos again	11
Barbershop	12
Choral	13
More sopranos	14
Pop	15
Yes, you've guessed it	16
Musical Theatre	17
Colleagues	18
And finally	19
About the author	20
Pass it on	20
Find out more	20

Introduction

First, the thanks

Thanks to all of those who contributed to the book – so many of my work colleagues came up with sentences without even pausing for breath. In fact this seems to have struck a chord with an awful lot of people...

So thanks to Kirsty Young and Toni Nunn of Hatstand Opera (<http://www.hatstandopera.co.uk>) mezzo/director and soprano respectively, for a list of things they would absolutely never say.

Thanks also to Phoebe Cave, jazz singer and teacher; Jenna Boyd, Carrie Sutton and SuAnn Garner, West End singers; Meribeth Bunch Dayme, writer and holistic vocal trainer.

And two heads of vocal/music departments at a national Conservatoire and University respectively, who would probably prefer to remain nameless.

Second, the dis-claimer

I love singers. I've worked with singers all my professional life. I married a soprano. Enough said.

Enjoy.
Jeremy

Sopranos:

No spotlight for me, thanks.

So what if I chipped a nail?

Gosh, she's really good!

I love working with mezzos.

Of course I don't mind dying on the floor.

You tend to find me in the kitchen at parties, I'm a bit of a wallflower and terribly shy.

Who needs a bouquet anyway?

Mezzos:

I love working with sopranos.

No, really, I *do* like working with sopranos, they are so musical.

I've never wanted to be a soprano.

Can *I* sing the harmony line?

Tenors are wonderful warm-hearted, intelligent people.

I love singing really high, the higher the better!

Singing the harmony line is so artistically fulfilling.

Countertenors:

It's a totally natural way to sing.

Am I gay? No-one has ever asked me that before!

There's so much great 19th century music for my voice.

Of course I've been castrated!

Tenors:

I'll sing it down the octave.

This wig really suits me.

Conductors always say I'm really musical.

I'd really like to sing that quieter.

That high C in La Bohème is a bit over the top, don't you think?

Don't worry, I've got the dance routine down pat.

Baritones:

I've never wanted to sing top notes.

I'd never use falsetto for a cheap laugh.

Baritones always get the girl because they are so sexy (and tall).

I look really good in brown, again.

Just a half for me.

Gilbert & Sullivan Baritone:

I haven't heard of that version

Basses:

Could you write it a little higher?

I'd give my eye teeth to be a baritone.

I'm never really off the stage in this role.

No, I don't really have any low notes.

It's just one long party every day.

I get really fed up of playing the hero.

Opera

I do believe in singing in the local vernacular, so many people understand English these days

Let's cut the alternative top Cs - there's no evidence that the composer intended them

Oh - you want it senza vibrato? Good, I just love conductors who know what they want

Sopranos again

That was a lovely top note she just sang.

Yes, make me look really ill in La Traviata, it's so flattering.

Rosina in Barber of Seville should really be sung by a mezzo, it sounds better.

It's important I when I sing Mimi that I sound like I've got no voice

Shouldn't I be wearing a sack for Gilda?

I would never have won Operatunity.

Barbershop

Barbershop lead:

Sorry guys, I know everyone else was singing in tune

Barbershop bass:

I don't stay for the afterglow in the bar, I prefer I quiet night in.

Barbershop baritone:

Can we do more sightreading?

Barbershop tenor:

Could we work a little more on balance?

Barbershop lead:

It's just a hobby.

Choral

I never look at my score – I know it so well.

Aren't we ALL using authentic Viennese Latin pronunciation?

Let's not bother with the da capo - I'm sure I can give the audience what they want first time

I think we can do the ad lib. in fairly strict tempo;

My bum doesn't look big in this!

I so much prefer conductors who use the Prout version

I love a slap up meal before I sing.

My choir outfit makes me look slim and sexy.

I do like the sotto voce sections: it's nice to let the audience hear the orchestra

Choral director:

Sorry, we don't have any more vacancies for tenors

More sopranos

Don't worry about me, I'll just stand back here

I think the conductor's wonderful

My understudy is so good, she really must do a performance.

I'm happy for the tenor to take the final bow.

Can I swap lines with the mezzo?

Pop

Singer to studio engineer, recording an intimate ballad:

No, no, that's fine, of course you can turn on all the lights really full and if your family want to come in and watch, that's just great

Singer to sound man at a live gig:

There's far too much of me in the foldback, could you turn me down a little?

Singer to backing vocalists:

Please move forward and come and share the front of the stage with me.

Singer to drummer:

No, play louder, much louder!

Yes, you've guessed it

No, I don't have to show my cleavage.

See, you can have too many sequins.

Lime green is so my colour!

Do you think this necklace is too much?

My publicity picture makes me look too young.

Musical Theatre

Singer to sound engineer:

Please! I can do it without the microphone and the reverb.

Singer to Musical Director:

I'm an alto, can you just give me one note to sing all the way through?

Singer to audition pianist:

Please ignore my instructions and play it exactly how you want to.

Singer to audition panellist:

No, you answer the phone, I'll just wait here.

Singer to audition panellist:

Could you please just focus on your crotch while I sing?

Colleagues

Singer to teacher:

I really like learning new songs from a different repertoire, it's so liberating and educational.

Singer to teacher:

Maybe we could just spend the whole lesson focusing on breathing and not do any singing.

Singer to accompanist:

You take the bow, you did all the work.

Conductor to singer:

How would you like this to go?

Singer to pianist.

We only need to do this once, because I always get it right the first time.

Conductor to singer:

That's a really good idea, I hadn't thought of that.

Pianist to singer:

No, just a cup-a-soup for me.

And finally

Soprano to audience:

I would like to thank my accompanist for rescuing me so many times.

Not that I'm bitter or anything...



About the author

Jeremy Fisher is a performance coach, accompanist, writer, Musical Director and audition expert with 20 years' performing experience in opera and Musical Theatre. He has written over 300 articles and reviews, and co-wrote the book *Successful Singing Auditions* with Gillyanne Kayes. Jeremy is co-owner of the voice training company Vocal Process Ltd.

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