

As a classical singer, I feel immensely fortunate to be able to say that my work constitutes both my hobby and my passion. Opera, with all of its humanity and larger-than life drama, is for me the life-force which drives that passion. The immense joy of being onstage night after night, working with all of my heart to give the gift of my body, soul, and artistry to the people before me is a gift I feel blessed to be able to experience as a tenor of Opera and classical music. To have the privilege of doing so in collaboration with a myriad of fellow singers, conductors, and directors for whom I feel a great esteem, admiration, and affection only adds to the beauty of this experience. For me, to sing is to devote one's self to sharing a gift with the world which demands nothing less than the most profound dedication, enthusiasm, and sincerity an artist can offer.

I have been blessed to fall under the tutelage of hearts and minds whose teachings have impressed upon me continually the importance of sharing one's gifts as a singer with a profound sense of dedication and joy present in each act of performing and giving back to the community. My voice teacher, Dr. Diana Allan, is a woman who remembers having known Mr. George Cortes not only as a great tenor and friend but as an embodiment of these aforementioned qualities. She describes with much enthusiasm how he had a voice with such ring to it that she was certain it would nearly pierce her ear-drums with its beautiful quality whenever she would share the stage with him during one of their many collaborations. It was within the walls of the San Pedro Playhouse, when the San Antonio Opera (known then as the "San Antonio Pocket Opera") first began its long journey toward becoming the fast-growing and prestigious house it is today that Dr. Allan sang in the first of many engagements alongside Mr. Cortes as a lead in Mozart's *L'Impresario*. She also had the privilege of performing alongside him as a member of the classical and operatic music quartet *Class Act*. These experiences, along with the countless other times she was fortunate enough to have sung with him, led her to share with me and many others how to have known and sung with him is to have known

and sung opposite a not only a great artist, but a great friend and person as well. By impressing upon me the warmth of friendship, the sincere and dedicated artistry, and the palpable joy with which Mr. Cortes approached the task of singing, I am reminded once more of the qualities to which I must continually aspire as a classical tenor and opera singer.

To aspire to a career in opera is to cultivate a "fire in the belly" from which springs a love of even the most seemingly mundane and monotonous aspects of music-making. From lonely afternoons spent almost entirely at the piano and in the practice room, to repeating a simple gesture or phrase literally hundreds of times before it becomes second-nature, to attending hour-long rehearsals which can stretch well into the night, to living for weeks out of a suitcase, to long hours spent memorizing dialogue and music even while riding home on the subway in a city far from home, the "fire in the belly" I and so many others have come to feel burning within is one which regards all of these things as parts of a journey which are to be cherished and eagerly under-taken. Through many successes, frustrations, uncertainties, and triumphs I have come to ever more fully love and appreciate the art of singing and all that the hard work it entails. With my art I hope to be able to give glory to the beauty and emotional breadth of the world around me, placing my own self at the service of the music and drama of the great master composers and librettists, and giving back to the myriads of audiences, teachers, and fellow artists without whose perennial love for the arts there would be no paths left to take for a young artist like myself.

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