



## cover story

### Dramatic Voice, Lyrical Life: A Talk with Bass-Baritone Greer Grimsley

In a multi-decade career that has spanned genres from Mozart to Wagner, bass-baritone Greer Grimsley has sung in opera houses the world over. Long admired for his acting chops, he is now known as one of the foremost Wagnerian singers of the day. In this *Classical Singer* exclusive, he shares how he projects to the back of the large San Francisco Opera hall, how he makes family life work with a wife and daughter who are also singers, and why he considers singing a spiritual thing.  
*by Lisa Houston*

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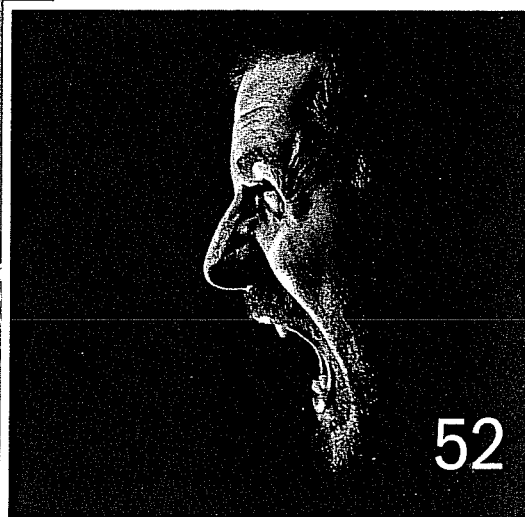




photo by Andrew Werner

# Will & Anthony Nunziata

## Entertainers, Entrepreneurs, Educators

BY PETER THORESEN

*Twin brothers are leading careers as both duo and solo singers. Find out how they started performing together and how their business savvy is paying big dividends for themselves and the students they work with in their original outreach program.*

**T**win brothers Will and Anthony Nunziata rose quickly to prominence in New York and beyond after a chance audition at Boston College led to a thrilling casting choice, placing one twin as Jesus and the other as Judas (talk about the potential for familial conflict!). Not long after, they began performing regularly as a duo at Michael Feinstein's nightclub in Manhattan and embarked on a successful and ongoing touring career, including engagements with the country's most respected pops orchestras and top performing arts centers. In high demand as an entertainment duo, the *Wall Street*

*Journal* has described the pair as being "blessed with strong voices and leading-man looks" and "exuberant and upbeat."

Will and Anthony pursue a seemingly endless array of personal endeavors outside of their work as a duo, and at the end of 2013 the brothers were heavily involved in personal projects. Will was able to schedule an interview for *Classical Singer* between meetings for an upcoming directorial project with a Broadway luminary and, during his interview, was receiving progress report texts from Anthony who was engrossed in the recording and editing of his single version of "The Lord's Prayer," which was released just prior

to Thanksgiving 2013. Because of tight scheduling and the fascination that so many of us share about twins and the connections we perceive them to share, the opportunity to interview Will and Anthony separately, but with some identical questions, proved too tempting.

Over the course of two chilly November days in 2013, I sat down separately with the twin brothers to discuss numerous aspects of their careers, lives, and their shared mission to support upcoming generations of musicians. Amid the noisy din of Vynl restaurant, a crowded fixture of New York's Hell's Kitchen neighborhood, I asked Will and Anthony to begin with background information on their

musical and stage training. Both Will and Anthony share their story with candor and humility, giving frequent credit to their parents, Joe and Fran Nunziata.

"My training began when I was 3," says Will. "And I guess it first came from my dad. My dad taught my brother and me our first two-part harmony when we were still in our crib (we have video of it). My parents would sneak in with the video camera and we would be sustained-baby-talking to one another, and they'd catch us doing that. We were harmonizing from a very early age in a very weird way.

"And then as I got older, my training came not so much from voice teachers, but from musical directors," he continues. "A woman by the name of Debbie Myers, who was our musical director from when we were in elementary school until we were in high school, became such a deep mentor of ours because she would always take us aside and work extra hard with us."

Like Will, Anthony also credits Myers as well as Jean Danton (their shared voice teacher at Boston College) with key elements of their individual training. Both brothers make mention of Broadway and entertainment icons from Mario Lanza and Tony Bennett to Mandy Patinkin, Patti LuPone, and Audra McDonald. At a recent Tony Awards party, after Audra McDonald described to him what a hoot Will had

been when he stepped in for her in rehearsals, Anthony called upon her for friendly, professional advice.

"She said, 'Be you,'" says Anthony.

Those two simple words meant a lot. "Here's someone who studied at Juilliard," Anthony continues. "I look at Audra McDonald, the most vulnerable and emotionally available singing actress I have ever seen. I don't think it matters if someone is too classical or too Broadway. She's Audra McDonald and she said, 'Be you.' I feel blessed that I have a little gift to sing. My goal is to share that gift with other people and make people happy."

Praised for how they "play off each other in a way that Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra bounced off one another in those irreverent Rat-Pack days of another era" (*Theater Scene Magazine*), the Nunziata brothers equally praise and recommend the process of "yes, and-ing"—a central philosophy of improv comedy and training which encourages and allows collaborators to create freely and safely. Will and Anthony have spent time training with the Upright Citizens Brigade (a sketch/improv troupe and training ground) in New York.

"It allowed me the opportunity to really get comfortable in my own skin and to realize that onstage sometimes things aren't going to go as planned," Will says of his training with Brigade. "Instead of fighting against something

that might go wrong, you just 'yes, and' it. That foundation has really helped Anthony and me, so that when things go off track—say, an audience member says something or we skip a song—the improv training taught me to 'yes, and' situations and, furthermore, helped me to 'yes, and' life in a business that most of the time will say 'no.'"

The brothers have certainly used the "yes, and" method to their advantage by saying yes to their own projects, leading others in the business to do the same. At the center of this is their shared belief in what they refer to as the "CEO You" mindset.

"When Anthony and I graduated college, we auditioned for the musical *South Pacific*, the revival, and we had a call back," says Will. "We did well, but we didn't get it. We looked at each other and we realized that we had to create our own destiny—we can't wait for the next revival of *The Boys from Syracuse* or a revival of *The Secret Garden*—so we basically put together our own show and we put it up at the Laurie Beechman Theatre."

And then things really got interesting. "It just so happened that the entertainment director of Michael Feinstein's nightclub was there with a guy from the William Morris Agency who's become a godfather to us in the business," Will recounts, "and it was then that we realized that we just have to keep creating our own destiny—creating

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our own opportunities, *and from that* things will eventually come.”

When the two have an idea for a new project, passion plays a big part in coming together in the execution. “In terms of when we work together, if we both want to do something, and we’re instinctually on the same page—meaning that we both think that it’s going to work, or we both think that it makes sense for us or it feels right—then we’ll do whatever it takes,” Anthony says. “If we’re passionate about it, we’re going to get it done. Then things like feasibility and the cost of course come into play.”

When asked about their definition of a musical entrepreneur, the brothers’ answers are unsurprisingly similar, but with different nuances.

“A musical entrepreneur is someone who looks at his or herself like a little business,” says Will. And on a different day in a different interview, Anthony answers the same question almost identically, “A musical entrepreneur is someone who looks at his or herself as a business,” and then adds, “the CEO You mantra. It’s someone who sees what they do as something that is not only artistically fulfilling—which is most important—but also fulfills a need. From the marketing perspective, people buy things that fulfill a need and, in the bigger market place, as my dad always asks, what’s your USP? What’s your unique selling proposition? I know what mine is with my brother. And then I know what it is as just Anthony. A musical entrepreneur understands what

their talent is and why they do what they do.”

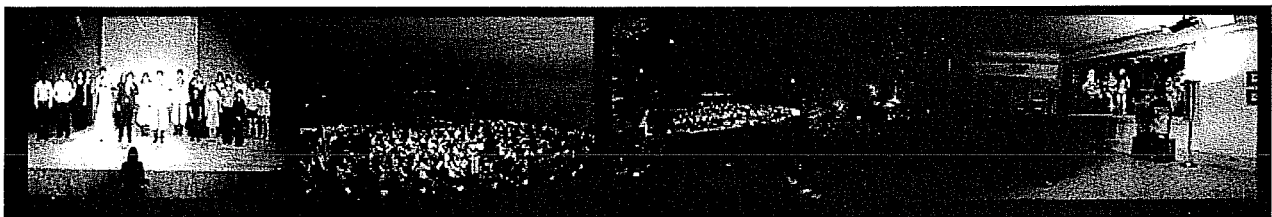
Will further explains this CEO You mindset. “With the CEO You mindset, make everything you do a part of your brand: how you talk to people, how you respond to e-mails, how you dress, how you present yourself at meetings, how you present yourself at auditions, how you present yourself at the bank, how you present yourself at your day job. When you’re showing your best self off at all times, you start to habitually change your mindset so that when you do get that Broadway shot or that big meeting, you don’t even have to try because you’ve already trained yourself to do it naturally.”

The brothers have also expanded this CEO You mindset into an outreach program. “One of the things that we’re proudest of in our careers is something called the Will & Anthony Arts in Education Outreach Initiative, where in addition to performing in cities, we go into high schools and give masterclasses to kids,” explains Will. “We do a masterclass that we especially enjoy doing with the older kids who are about to enter the real world called *The CEO You!* because we realize that, as a performer, oftentimes people forget that its show *business*: how do you brand yourself as a viable product, as a viable person to hire?”

Will has been surprised at certain attitudes these students have about the audition process—attitudes he and

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Anthony try and change. "I think it's a preconceived notion that a lot of these kids have who are looking to go into musical theatre," Will says. "I think a lot of them forget that the people behind the table actually want you to succeed. They want you to come in and be right for the part.

"I think there might be sometimes a preconceived notion that kids have to come into an audition room in a certain way," Will continues. His solution harkens back to those words of wisdom from Audra McDonald. "What I've realized, as both a performer and a director, is that the most beautiful thing that you can do when coming into a room isn't to be a second-rate version of someone else, but be a first-rate version of yourself. And that's sometimes hard for people to imagine because a lot of them are coming in with songs that have been made famous by certain actors and actresses and they feel that

they almost have to emulate, imitate, have the essence of [that person] when actually their own truth and their own connection to the material is far more interesting. And so it's one thing that I personally love to impart right away when we do these classes."

Being your best self, however, also adds an element of pressure. "As artists, at any level of success there's always an element of insecurity because one is always looking to be the best version of his or herself at all times," say Anthony. "It's a lot of pressure. Especially when you're self-analyzing yourself."

When it comes to advice, both professional and personal, for emerging performance duos, regardless of DNA similarities, Anthony boils it down to one word: "Respect. Respect each other's opinions. Let one person talk fully about their idea. Take it in and then map it out. Look first at what

you both agree upon, and from there, go about it in a way that works for you."

Will and Anthony Nunziata have certainly found a way to make things work for themselves and for the students they work with.

*To learn more about the brothers, their recordings, and upcoming performance and outreach engagements, visit [www.willandanthony.com](http://www.willandanthony.com).*

*Peter Thoresen is a Manhattan-based voice teacher, countertenor, and arts consultant. A regular contributor to the Auditions Plus blog, he previously served as business manager to opera legend Thomas Hampson and also served on the faculty of the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, leading Project Jumpstart, a music entrepreneurship program. For more information, visit [www.peterthoresen.com](http://www.peterthoresen.com). ©*

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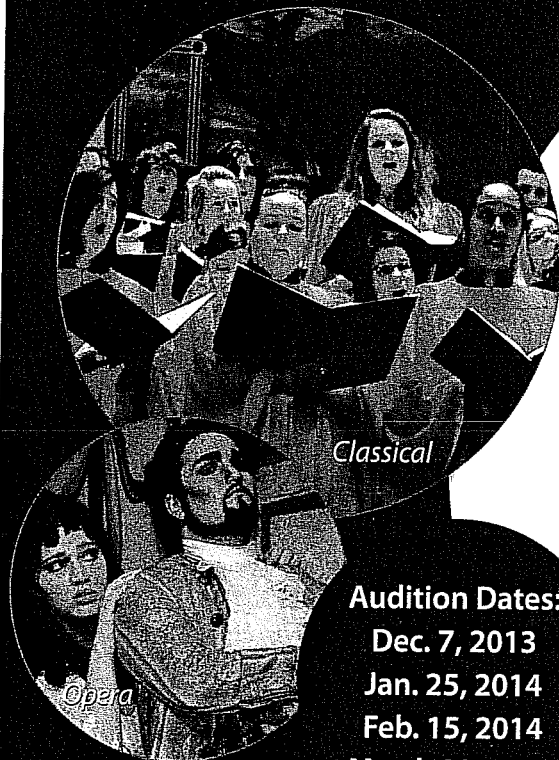
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