



PRAISE FOR THE FOURTH EDITION OF WHAT EVERY SINGER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE BODY

To successfully integrate all of the complex tasks performers are called upon to embody in each moment of performance is a feat of staggering complexity. What is the process involved in coordinating all of the elements of mindfulness while singing, acting, and living a performance before an audience or a filming crew? The solid foundation must begin with the desire to own a complete, rich, and expressive embodiment of the physical self, beginning with the process of creating an accurate and detailed body map.

Michael Chekhov, the nephew of playwright Anton Chekhov and protégé of Konstantin Stanislavski (the father of Method Acting), was powerfully connected to the creation of an embodied acting pedagogy.

As actors and actresses, we must rejoice in the possession of our physical faculties. We must experience joy in the use of our hands, arms, body etc. Without this appreciation and realization of the body and its many possibilities, we cannot perform as artists. Compare the body without life and the body with life. Meditate on this. See how helpless the dead person is, then contrast that with a living person. You should feel a flow of joy because you are alive. Your body will feel full of life. That is what you must give from the stage. Your life. No less. That is art: to give all you have. And what have you? Your life-nothing more. And to give life means to feel life throughout your whole being.

Frequently, we as teachers and performers become focused on one specific task such as modifying a vowel in the higher register to become more acoustically viable and hope to simply “add in the acting later.” Certainly, we must address individual elements specifically, but, as Michael Chekhov stated, a performer must learn to “feel life throughout your whole being.” MaryJean Allen, Melissa Malde, and Kurt-Alexander Zeller give us an extensive, thoughtful, and discovery-filled approach to this journey, guiding us every step of the way. If our body’s internal map is incorrect, both art and the performer will suffer. But when the map is accurate, when we hone our kinesthetic sense and work towards adopting an inclusive awareness, we will thrive, and our performances will be full of life. The performer and the audience will be powerfully transformed, and the joy of living is affirmed.

Beginning with MaryJean Allen's foundational work in Chapters 1 and 2, we learn to inhabit our body as a whole. Through extensive and loving instruction, powerful guided explorations, and wonderfully curated external video links, we learn how our skeletal and muscular systems are the tapestry upon which all performance practices are expressed.

The journey continues with Melissa Malde guiding the reader on a path from breath through resonance. Along the way we are given delightful explorations to conceptualize and embody each aspect of respiration, phonation, and strategies to find timbre and resonance options.

The journey concludes with Kurt-Alexander Zeller leading us through the expressive fields of articulation, gesture, and performance practices. His playful explorations of these principles are fully integrated with the material from the previous chapters highlighting the need for accurate Body Mapping practice at each step.

I am deeply grateful to these three authors for their powerful insights and deeply thoughtful work, and I consider this text to be essential knowledge for all singing performers and pedagogues. I highly recommend it.

Matthew Ellenwood, *Voice and acting teacher at Ellenwood Studios, co-founder Integrated Vocal Pedagogy, and Artistic Director of Terra Mysterium*

***What Every Singer Needs to
Know About the Body***

Fourth Edition

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Introduction

During the 25 years I taught the Alexander Technique and Body Mapping to singers, I witnessed more unnecessary suffering than I care to remember. Singers do not ordinarily suffer the acute physical pain of a poorly moving violinist, flutist, or pianist, although singers suffer more throat pain than is commonly known. Many singing students and choir members do not admit that their throats are hurting, so teachers need to learn to regularly inquire so that throat pain can be addressed. Singers do suffer greatly from a profound disappointment that they can't do what their musical imaginations prompt them to do: frustration because they can't improve their singing, and fear that they will fail to do in performance even what they can do with luck on a good day in the studio. Many singers program what they do not want to sing because they fear they can't manage what they do want to sing. Many singing teachers have given up singing altogether and carry in their souls an abiding grief as a result, not to mention envy. Some teachers elaborately justify why they are no longer singing, claiming to be at peace with it, but joyfully sing again when they are given the information they need to sing well.

Singers' suffering is not from lack of technique. Classical singers, in particular, are awash in technique. Technique is the content of their voice lessons. Technique is what they practice. Technique is what they read about. Technique is what is addressed at their conventions. Technique is what they are hired by their universities to convey to the students. Technique is what they listen for when they judge contests. If technique were the issue, every singer would sing beautifully and often.

No, movement is the reason singers suffer, that is to say, faulty movement, tense movement, movement done without awareness and therefore without discernment. Singers who do not feel the movement of their breathing can't assess whether it is good movement or bad. They have to judge their breathing by what they hear, and hearing offers them no remedy, only the isolated information that something is not as desired. In the practice room, the usual response is to repeat the passage, hoping for a better result. If a better result is achieved in the moment, it cannot be secured because the singer does not know what caused it. Repetition of faulty movement continues and the poor singer finishes the practice session as ignorant and helpless as at the beginning.

To gain mastery, these singers must learn to feel their movement, and constantly evaluate its effectiveness. They must become profoundly acquainted with all the sensations of a fine singer's breath, the movement of the ribs, the movement of the entire cylinder of the abdominal wall, the flowing up and down of the pelvic floor, the coordinated gathering and lengthening of the spine in breathing, and the dynamic "up and over" of the head at the atlanto-occipital joint. They must learn to make all the proper choices about the movements of breathing to get just the air they need and deliver it across the phrase in the most musical and comfortable way. Singers must cultivate the best movement in breathing so that they know instantly how to recover the best movement if they should lose it in performance, just as they would recover intonation.

In order to feel the movement of breathing, singers must learn that they have a sensory mechanism specifically for feeling the movement. The great natural singers know this instinctively, of course. This movement sense is called kinesthesia and it tells us about our moving, our position, and our size. Moment-by-moment kinesthetic awareness is as important for stately oratorio singing as it is for singing while one dances. Singing is movement—pure and simple, nothing else—and it must be conceived and perceived as such so that the best movement may be chosen in the moment.

To breathe well, a singer must have an accurate and adequate body map of the structures and movements of breathing. Any error in the body map will impair the breathing. When a teacher sees impaired breathing, it just makes sense to ask the students about their mapping (their internal representation) of the structures that are not functioning well. If, for instance, a teacher observes inadequate rib movement either on inhalation or on exhalation, the teacher should inquire, “Tell me about ribs. Where are they and how do they work?” It would be usual for the student to put hands on the lower ribs, those that surround the stomach, spleen, and liver, and speak of those. This student has not mapped the upper ribs that surround the lungs. No wonder the upper ribs don’t move well! They are not even in the student’s body map! Another student might tell the teacher with a perfectly straight face that ribs move because the lungs are filling with air, and the teacher will have to question the student as to what imagined miracle of nature is taking place. Another student might have no interest in rib movement at all because he or she has imagined that air goes into the belly. The teacher will not know without inquiring just what error in the body map is dictating that poor movement. Once the error is known, the remedy is at hand. The remedy is learning, in the first instance, that upper ribs exist, in the second that all of the ribs move to increase thoracic circumference so that air comes into the lungs, and in the last that the lungs are not in the belly but in the upper torso.

In order to learn whatever singing technique is being taught, a singing student must have an accurate and adequate body map of the vocal tract. This is something the late, lamented, Pat Berlin (College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati) understood long before she met me, and it was one factor in her success. If she encountered a student with tongue problems, she would hand the student pencil and paper and say, “Draw me a tongue.” She and the student would then compare the drawing with good pictures of the tongue in an anatomy book to discover what misconception about the tongue was compromising the movement of the tongue. Sometimes the error was functional rather than structural, in which case teacher and student would have to keep their detective hats on a little longer and ask some questions. It often turned out that the culprit lay in having mapped the whole tongue as working all the time, rather than just the fibers that take the tongue in this direction or that. The tongue tension makes perfect sense in light of that misconception, but now the remedy is at hand: Send the culprit off into oblivion and absorb the truth of the tongue into the body map so that only the portion of the tongue that needs to be working at any moment is working, and the rest of the tongue is just going along for the ride.

Body Mapping is not technique, but it is the basis for technique; the fertile ground out of which good technique can grow. Some students will come into the studio with perfectly accurate and adequate body maps and no mention will ever need to be taught about the student’s structure, function, or size. However, more students will have inaccurate and inadequate body maps that will constantly frustrate teacher and student alike by producing ineffective movement. A few minutes here and there of attention to mapping the structures of balance, gesture, breathing, accurate and adequate articulation, and resonance, will correct the ground and promote proper growth of technique.

It is a sad fact that singing teachers and choral directors are often at odds about how singers should be singing. Attention to the body map provides common ground as well as the information necessary for singers to adjust appropriately to differing requirements. Singers learn that they can move differently in the choir than in the opera and meet the demands of each art form.

I remember a very frustrated young jazz singer who spoke passionately at a National Association of Teachers of Singing winter workshop about her need for instruction to solve vocal problems. She said she felt she couldn’t go to a classical singer for help because the training would “make her

sound funny,” but she thought no one else would have the information she needed to get her voice healthy and keep it that way. The young woman was in tears. What was she to do? Couldn’t singing teachers learn to teach all singers without imposing their “elite” technique? I submit that any teacher of classical singing can teach a jazz singer how to stay vocally healthy by addressing the body map, especially with regard to accurate and adequate mapping of the vocal tract, and the structures and movement of breathing.

I have the highest regard for the authors of the book you are about to read, both for their artistry and the integrity with which they have learned and imparted the vitally important content of the book. This book is a resource for solving vocal problems and for mastery on the stage and in the studio. Enjoy.

—Barbara Conable

How to Use This Book

When I was a young singer, I had moments of brilliance when music flowed from me to the audience, establishing an effortless connection. I occasionally gave riveting performances. Then I had hours of frustration trying to recreate that sensation. What was I doing wrong? Why was I so inconsistent?

The fact is that I had a natural sense of how to sing. When I lost myself in the music, that innate coordination occasionally took over and I communicated with ease and aplomb. But when I concentrated on fixing things, which was most of the time, I got stuck.

When I began my work in Body Mapping I was able to pinpoint the problem. It was not with my instrument, my musical understanding, my work ethic, or even my technique. It was that I had almost no connection to my body, so that when things were working well I didn't know why, and when things weren't working well, I didn't know how to fix them. I would focus on the problem by isolating it, instead of putting it in the context of my whole body, mind, and spirit. Body Mapping has helped me correct misconceptions about the movements of singing, and has revolutionized my awareness of how habits control that movement.

We have all had the humbling experience of trying to correct a musical habit ingrained during the process of learning a new piece. Here is why those mistakes are so stubborn. When we make a movement by singing a note, rhythm, or word, the neurons in our brain fire and a neural pathway is formed. When we repeat the movement, the pathway is strengthened. The more we repeat the movement, the stronger the pathway becomes. Soon, we have mapped that movement as part of the music. This is great if the movement is one we want to keep. If we want to make a change, we have to dismantle the old pathway (bad habit) and start a new one (good habit). This requires scrutiny, awareness, and repetition.

The same is true of movement that results from an inaccurate body map. Intellectual understanding of the changes necessary to make your body map adequate and accurate may happen quickly. Forming new neural pathways that will change the new map into a habit can often take longer. Once the neural pathways in your brain correspond with an adequate and accurate body map, you will move and sing with integrity and consistency.

Correcting your body map, however, will not qualify you to teach Body Mapping. All three principal authors have studied Body Mapping intensively with Barbara Conable, founder of the Association for Body Mapping Education (ABME), formerly known as Andover Educators. We have incorporated this information into our own performances and have been trained to help others do the same. We are licensed to teach the course *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body*. After reading this book, you may want to deepen your knowledge of Body Mapping or even train to become a member of ABME. If so, we invite you to visit <http://www.bodymap.org> to find a teacher near you.

When I was a junior in college, I finally realized that I would learn more by admitting ignorance than pretending I already knew everything. Reading your own writing for the fourth time, it is easy to assume what you have written is complete and accurate. In preparing this edition, I kept complacency at bay by asking questions. For instance, if the cricoid cartilage is fixed to the top of the trachea, how can the larynx move up and down so much? If muscles always pull and never push, why do singers describe the diaphragm pushing down on the viscera and pushing out on the ribs? Some of the answers to these questions confirmed what I had written. Others led to changes that I hope will further clarify the movements we use in singing.

We learn by questioning. As you approach this book, ask questions. You may have many moments of recognition that affirm what you already know and correspond to the way you move. You may also have those wonderful “aha” moments when you discover something new that makes instant sense and corrects a long-standing problem. On the other hand, you may run into information that is so strange that you think it must be wrong. If that happens, start asking questions: Why do I believe what I believe? Does my instinct correspond to anatomical fact? What do other resources say? Are these authors right? If you think we have made a mistake, contact us!

This book will not give you a technique or method. We hope it will guide your experimentation, discovery, and questioning, whatever your style of singing. You may choose to sit and read it like a textbook. Or you may pore over one page until it makes sense. You may work through a chapter just studying the drawings. You may practice with the book open to one drawing until that image is thoroughly incorporated into your body map. You may watch one of the videos many times until you have embodied that movement. There is no wrong way to use this book except with a closed mind.

—Melissa Malde

Multimedia List



Look for this icon throughout the text, directing you to related materials available on the companion website.

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- Audio 1–2. Experiencing Micromovement
- Audio 1–3. Using Inclusive Awareness with Kinesthesia
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—Melissa Malde

Thank you to my coauthor and good friend, Kurt-Alexander Zeller, who started me on this journey by encouraging me to take Barbara Conable's week-long course in 2000, *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body*. I am grateful to Barbara for creating that amazing 6-hour course, and for training and licensing me to teach it. Barbara, you are an extraordinary person, teacher, author, and poet. Special thanks to my coauthor, Melissa Malde, who was the driving force of all editions of this book. Melissa's tenacity in the pursuit of a goal is both splendid and admirable. I am grateful to my friends, colleagues, and coauthors Melissa Malde and Kurt-Alexander Zeller, who provided their time and valuable writing expertise during the creation of all four editions of this book.

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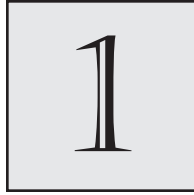
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—MaryJean Allen

It is humbling for an author to contemplate how much of the credit for the book in the reader's hand truly belongs to someone else. I would like to thank Jan Powell, Sarah Hoover, B.D. Stillion, and Kay Hooper for kindling ideas that made their way into this book, as well as Jack Paulus, Amy Likar, Christopher White, Chris Arrell, and Jeff Kayser for providing invaluable technical assistance. I am grateful for the many ways the collective wisdom and indefatigable curiosity of the entire network of Body Mapping Educators have deeply enriched my work, and I especially treasure the keen insight, open enthusiasm, and warm friendship of my co-authors, Melissa Malde and MaryJean Allen. Repeatedly, they have employed all three qualities to help me express what I have to say more clearly and vividly.

I owe still greater debts to the late Ellen Faull, whose example showed me that great teachers teach the individuals in front of them rather than the subject in their heads, and to Barbara Conable, whose perception and generosity of spirit have been transformative: Body Mapping is not only powerful; it's fun. Most of all, I thank all of my teachers and each of my students for everything I have learned from them.

—Kurt-Alexander Zeller



Body Mapping, Kinesthesia, and Inclusive Awareness

MaryJean Allen

THE BIG PICTURE

You are invited to attend a performance of an exceptional singer. She embodies the qualities of an accurate and refined *body map* along with kinesthesia and inclusive awareness. Her tone quality is beautiful and effortless, and she navigates easily throughout her vocal range. Her entire body looks buoyant and flexible as she moves and gestures expressively. Even during the moments that she seems still, we can observe her *micromovement*, which makes her look very graceful. For example, we see a very small movement of her head, or a slight movement with her hand. Her larger gestures look elegant as well. She has efficient breath management, excellent dynamic control, and outstanding musicianship. Her voice effortlessly fills the space. Her spine gathers as she breathes in and lengthens as she sings. She has clear diction, her facial expression is genuine, and her delivery of the music and text is heartfelt and moving. Her poise makes us relax and really enjoy her performance.

THE ESSENTIALS

Body Mapping, kinesthesia, and inclusive awareness are powerful tools that can help you achieve a performance like the singer I just described. In this chapter, each of these tools is explained in detail to help you learn how to move freely and smoothly so that your tone quality and expressiveness will become even better. This book is designed to help singers, voice teachers, vocal coaches, and choral conductors of all musical styles.

Because singing is movement, singers need and deserve training that creates an accurate body map, a fine-tuned kinesthetic sense, and the conscious use of inclusive awareness. Even if you are not naturally coordinated, you can learn how to move with freedom and elegance in singing. If you are a singer who already moves beautifully, you may teach or coach a student who does not. Even the very best singers continue to change and grow.

ORIGIN OF BODY MAPPING

Body Mapping was articulated by William Conable, Alexander Technique teacher and former Professor of Music at The Ohio State University. In 1998, Barbara Conable, Alexander Technique teacher, founded Andover Educators, now known as the Association for Body Mapping Education, a not-for-profit organization that trains and licenses musicians to teach Body Mapping to promote facility and prevent injury. She applied this concept in her six-hour course and accompanying book, *What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body*. Her three decades of teaching demonstrate that the body map has a profound and direct effect on each musician's success.

Barbara Conable's course and her book are informed by the insights of **F. M. Alexander** (the founder of Alexander Technique) as well as other somatic disciplines and current findings in the neuroscience of movement. In her book *How to Learn the Alexander Technique*, Barbara Conable describes the Alexander Technique as follows:

Alexander Technique is a simple and practical method for improving ease and freedom of movement, balance, support, flexibility, and coordination. It enhances performance and is therefore a valued tool for musicians. Practice of the Technique refines and heightens kinesthetic sensitivity, offering the performer a control which is fluid and lively rather than rigid. It provides a means whereby the use of a part—a voice or an arm or a leg—is improved by improving the use of the whole body (1992, p. 1).

Regarding Body Mapping and the neuroscience of movement, in the training manual for the Association for Body Mapping Education, Barbara stated:

Bill Conable and I did not know when he discovered the body map practically (you may read that story in an appendix of *How to Learn the Alexander Technique*) that it was also being named and explored by neuroscientists. I learned about the scientists' work fairly recently. It would have helped us very much during our years of exploration to know about the scientists' work, but we didn't.

So Barbara's development of her Body Mapping course was actually concurrent yet independent of neuroscientific research. Since then, the Association for Body Mapping Education has incorporated that research. This book is based on Barbara Conable's work and her six-hour course. To read an article by William Conable entitled "The Origins and Theory of Body Mapping," go to <http://bodymap.org/main/?cat=34>

To gain a more thorough understanding of the science of Body Mapping, read "The Biological Basis of the Body Map" by the Association for Body Mapping Education's Science Advisor, Dr. Richard T. Nichols <http://bodymap.org/main/?cat=34>. You can also read Dr. Nichols' article in Appendix B of this book, *The Scientific Basis of Body Mapping*.

Due to continued brain and body research, there will be many more discoveries about the brain and its connection to the body. This book is not intended to be the "final word," although it is intended to assimilate the knowledge of the brain and body connection as it applies to singing at this point in time, and combine that knowledge with practical application of Body Mapping concepts so that our readers may benefit from it.

THE DETAILS

The Body Map and Body Mapping

Let's begin with brief definitions of the body map and Body Mapping, kinesthesia, and inclusive awareness. I explain them in detail later in this chapter.

- The body map is your mental representation of your body's structure, size, location, and function.
- Body Mapping is the process of refining, correcting, and embodying individual body maps.
- Kinesthesia is the sense that detects your body in motion. Singers who learn how to perceive their bodies in motion with their kinesthetic sense will clearly discern movement size, position, and quality, which is vital for beautiful, communicative, and healthy singing. Kinesthesia is a fundamental component of Body Mapping.
- Inclusive awareness is conscious, simultaneous organized awareness of your inner and outer experience. Inclusive awareness is also a fundamental component of Body Mapping and includes kinesthesia.

According to Amy Likar, Body Mapping teacher and former president of the Association for Body Mapping Education, your body map is your conception of your body, in whole or part (2008).

Although our brain contains many different maps of our body, such as a map of our jaw, and a map of our ribs, etc., in the Body Mapping process we identify it as one body map. In the training manual for the Association for Body Mapping Education, Barbara Conable explains:

By analogy to the visual maps, which are interdependent to a degree that justifies the singular, visual map, if you had thirty maps of the terrain around your house: a street map, a topographical map, a map of population, a map of rainfall, etc., and they were all bound together, you might very well say as you begin a trip around your neighborhood, 'Do we have the map?'

Next, here is the most important fact about Body Mapping; because your body map governs your movement, you move according to what you believe about your body. For example, if you think only your lowest ribs move during inhalation, you will try to move according to that map, even though all of your ribs are designed to move during inhalation. Thus, the integrity of any movement that you want to make depends on the integrity of the body map that governs it. The process of Body Mapping corrects and refines your body map. When you correct and refine the map of your ribs, your rib movement will be smoother because you will move in the way your body is designed to move, resulting in better breathing and singing.

Here's another benefit of Body Mapping: Singers who bow before an audience can learn to do so healthily yet elegantly. In order to bow and bend forward smoothly and gracefully, your body map needs to reflect its anatomical design. However, some people inaccurately map their waist as a hinge, causing them to bend forward in a manner that can irritate or injure their back. An accurate body map reveals that you are not designed to bend forward from the waist; you are designed to bend forward from the hip joints. Singers who learn to bend forward from their hip joints while they bow will feel and look graceful.

While all musicians can learn to bow in a healthy manner, not all need the same level of body map. The body map needs to reflect the particular requirements of each type of musician. A singer would not need to have a detailed map of the wrist and forearm, as a violinist requires. However, singers need a detailed, accurate map of the musculoskeletal structures of optimal stance, breathing, resonance, articulation, and gesture.

It is vitally important to note that the body map can be effective whether it is conscious or unconscious. This explains why there are excellent singers, instrumentalists, dancers, actors, and athletes who move and perform beautifully but have not consciously mapped their bodies. Although their body map is unconscious, it is still accurate, which is why they move so well.

Your body map began in infancy, developed in childhood, and is changeable throughout your life. Your map is designed to grow and change as your body grows and changes, so your body map is flexible and changeable. This is a wonderful and positive aspect of Body Mapping; your map is always transformable. Even if you have had an unclear or incorrect map for many years, that map can still be enhanced or corrected. When you change your map by correcting and refining it, your movement, and therefore your singing, will improve.

Anatomy Applied to Movement

During the Body Mapping process, it is essential to apply anatomical facts to your movement as you sing. As you learn the anatomical information to correct and refine your body map, your map will change when you translate the anatomical information directly into movement. This book is not purely an anatomy book; rather, it provides anatomical information so that you can create an adequate and accurate body map, and apply it to your movement. You can use your kinesthetic and inclusive awareness to move in ways that produce a healthy and graceful musical performance.

Sometimes, a body map may be corrected instantly, but often it takes multiple interventions to fully correct and refine a body map. Develop your kinesthetic sense and inclusive awareness, your essential mapping tools. Be patient and persistent, continuously experiment and explore, and enjoy the process of Body Mapping. Remember that time taken to correct your body map is always well spent because your body map governs your movement.

If you have an incorrect body map, your movement and your singing will be tense and could even cause injury. If you have an unclear body map, your movement and your singing will be tentative or awkward. When you have a correct and refined body map, and use that along with your kinesthetic and inclusive awareness, your movement and your singing will be fluid, expressive, and healthy.

Elements of Your Body Map

Your body map contains several important and interconnected elements, which include:

- Structure (bone, muscle, tendon, etc.)
- Size
- Location
- Function (movement design and purpose)

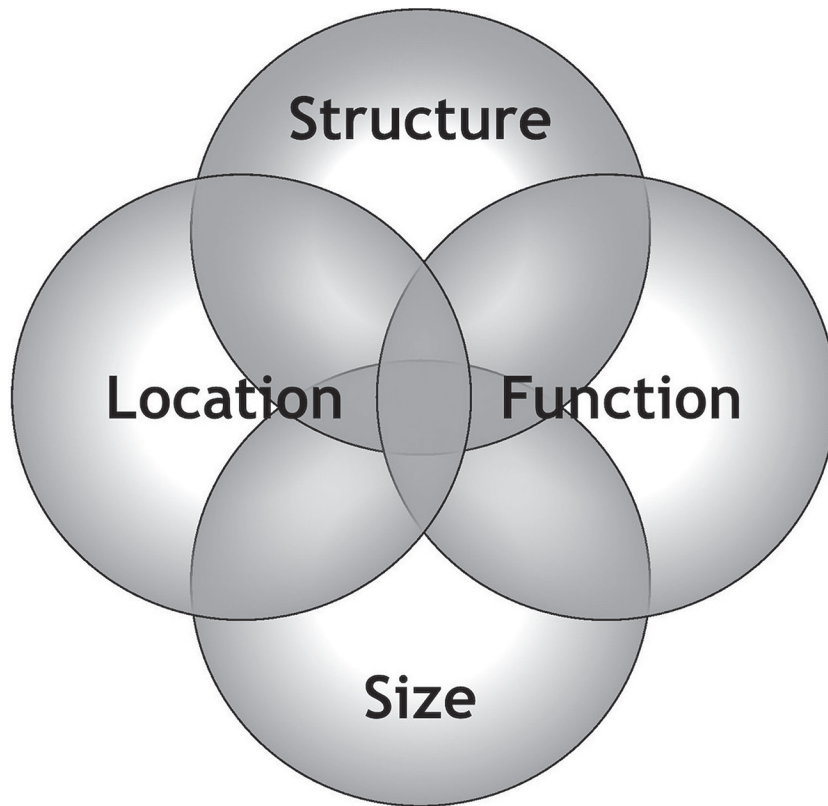


Figure 1-1. *Body Mapping elements. Created by MaryJean Allen.*

In the process of Body Mapping, these elements are of equal importance and can be approached in any order. I designed Figure 1-1 to illustrate the relationship of the four elements of a body map. After you have viewed Figure 1-1, let's look at examples of those mapping elements.

Mapping Size

Not accounting for bodily growth and change can lead to an incorrect map. For example, one of my adolescent male voice students grew six inches during the summer. He also gained some muscle. During a voice lesson the following September, John moved and sang as if he were still his previous size. His body map had not yet “caught up” with his increased height and broader width and depth. He slumped down, and he also moved with his shoulders slightly rounded forward toward his chest. To address the problem, I asked John to go home and have one of his parents help him accurately measure his height, his shoulder width, and his depth from the front of his body to the back of his body. Those measurements helped John to use anatomical facts to correct his body map. But this was only the beginning of the Body Mapping process. I needed to help John transfer those anatomical facts to movement. At his next lesson, I asked John to study himself in a full-length mirror. I stood next to him as he looked in the mirror to give him a frame of reference. With his corrected map, John moved and sang with his actual height, width, and depth. Then I asked John to move again with his *old* body