

Mayo Clinic 150th Collection of Stories

O19 More Than a Voice: Opera Star Seeks Help and Healing

Intro: This is a story about determination, perfection and teamwork. The young man you're about to meet is considered one of the best up-and-coming opera voices in the world. He was featured on stages across the globe. But medical issues threatened to destroy his career. He found help at Mayo Clinic.

Video

Audio

TRT 5:00	Singing
Voice of Vivien Williams	When tenor David Lomeli [Dah-veed' Low-meh-lee'] sings, people stop and listen in awed silence.
	Singing
Voice of Vivien Williams	David has graced stages all over the world. Reaching notes only the best of the best can achieve. Rave reviews. Unstoppable.
David Lomeli Opera singer	"I was fearless. I never felt afraid or nervous about it. I loved it. I love it."
Voice of Vivien Williams	But then, in an occasional performance, his pitch started to become just a tiny bit flat. An issue that could end an opera career. An issue that David feared was getting worse.
David Lomeli Opera singer	"It was really hard. I was constantly flat, so I made a deal with the opera company that I would withdraw from the tour. It was the hardest time ever in my life."
Voice of Vivien Williams	But David was determined to overcome this. His search for answers led him to Mayo Clinic.
	"Eee ooo eee ooo eee."
Voice of Vivien Williams	There he met singer and voice expert Dr. Diana Orbelo.
Diana Orbelo, Ph.D. Mayo Clinic Otorhinolaryngology	"He is the consummate professional and has one of the most amazing tenor voices that I have ever, ever heard."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Dr. Orbelo led the multispecialty group that cared for David. Together they

	figured out that David's pitch problem was the result of medical issues: reflux, diagnosed by Dr. David Katzka and a slight middle range hearing deficiency.
Diana Orbelo, Ph.D. Mayo Clinic	"It was technical, it was hearing, it was reflux and everything had to be unlayered."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Thorough examinations by Dr. Orbelo and laryngologist Dr. Dale Ekborn revealed David's vocal cords were stressed, but not damaged.
Diana Orbelo, M.D. Mayo Clinic	"These are a little bit full and puffy. You can see there's a little bit of mucus down here."
Voice of Vivien Williams	David did not need vocal cord surgery. But he did need an operation to stop the reflux that, everyday, was bathing his vocal cords in stomach acid.
C. Daniel Smith, M.D. Mayo Clinic surgeon	"Magnetic sphincter augmentation."
Voice of Vivien Williams To animation	Surgeon Dr. C. Daniel Smith says standard surgery to stop reflux involves small incisions in the abdomen to access the esophagus. The surgeon then mobilizes and wraps part of the stomach around the esophagus to tighten the sphincter muscle and prevent stomach acid from flowing back into the esophagus. The procedure David had is less invasive. Through small incisions, the surgeon doesn't need to dissect the stomach, but instead wraps a bracelet of magnetic beads around the end of the esophagus. This augments the valve and decreases reflux.
C. Daniel Smith, M.D. Mayo Clinic surgeon	"I'm quite happy we were able to help him control his acid reflux, and protect his vocal cords so he could get on with his career."
David Lomeli	"My voice is coming to full bloom again."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Lessons in vocal technique allowed David to learn to hear to his own voice in new ways. It helped him compensate for his very small hearing deficiency.
	Singing
Voice of Vivien Williams	In addition to David's physical health, the experts at Mayo also paid attention to his spirit.
Amit Sood, M.D. Mayo Clinic General Internal Medicine	"What I helped him cultivate was self compassion, self acceptance and self forgiveness."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Dr. Amit Sood taught David mindful meditation to keep him centered

	throughout the process and to reduce stress.
	Singing
Voice of Vivien Williams	David's return to excellence took dedication and hard work.
David Lomeli	"Right now I'm singing the best I ever sang."
Voice of Vivien Williams	A triumph David says he could not have achieved without Dr. Diana Orbelo.
David Lomeli	"She opened her heart and her ability and her everything for me."
Voice of Vivien Williams	And the entire team at Mayo Clinic, who David says gave him exactly the care he needed.
David Lomeli	"Always treated me like I was more than a voice."
Voice of Vivien Williams	More than a voice. A person with a magnificent gift that he shares with audiences across the globe.

Anchor tag:

To learn more about David Lomeli's opera success and career, visit

davidlomeli.com

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