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An evaluation of the instructional practices in voice teaching at Australian performing art institutions

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**An evaluation of the instructional practices in voice
teaching at Australian performing art institutions**

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Master of Arts (Creative Arts)

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March 2012

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the practices and techniques of vocal training for student actors at a tertiary level, through a survey of experienced voice practitioners in Australian performing arts schools, appropriate texts, consideration of contexts and my own professional experience. Vocal instruction starts with the basic training of 'the instrument' or the vocal capabilities of the body. Following this or concurrent with its teaching, more specific forms of training are addressed. This research project used qualitative research methods to compile a detailed description of the voice teaching practices currently used in Australia. It comprises two parts, namely, a documented analysis of vocal training for acting and a series of interviews with professional voice trainers at performing arts institutions in Australia. The analysis attempted to discern and clarify patterns and themes in vocal training and detail possible similarities/differences with overseas models of teaching identified by the analysis of American and British texts in current use.

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or
- iii. contain any defamatory material;

20th March 2012

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Introduction

One of the components of his/her chosen profession that a student actor must first comprehend during their training is the use of his/her voice and all that that entails. Their voices will become a major mainstay of their working lives and will undergo rigorous use during the course of their careers and, therefore, a comprehensive education in the use and misuse of voice is essential.

The purpose of this study was to document current approaches and models of voice teaching for students in professional acting courses throughout Australia.

The main research areas to be examined are:

- how do the main components of training voice in Australia comply with or vary from the established voice training literature used in other parts of the world,
- what major issues or problems do the teachers face during the course of the training; and
- what, if any, are the special needs of Australians in terms of voice training?

In order to facilitate the comparisons, I identified a number of texts that are used extensively in acting institutions across the world and in Australia to help and guide the student during the training of his/her voice. The most commonly used of these texts are Cicely Berry's *Voice and the Actor*, Patsy Rodenburg's *The Right to Speak* and Kristen Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice*. It is worth noting here that, whilst they are incorporated into actor training programs, these texts are not all solely aimed at actors. For example, Rodenburg talks about voice work being for everyone. She states that her book is not only aimed at the professional speaker but anyone who communicates in the world (Rodenburg, 1992). I further identified numerous other texts that are not so commonly used in current actor training programs but are still valuable resources for both student and staff alike and these include Evangeline Machlin's *Speech for the Stage*, Michael McCallion's *The Voice Book*, Meribeth Bunch-Dayme's *The Performer's Voice* and Nigel Rideout's *Training the Actor's Voice* (intended more as a guide for the voice teacher than the student actor).

Whilst voice training in the many English-speaking acting schools across the world is often based on one or several of these texts, it is important to note that the

teaching includes and relies upon the unique and vast experiences of the teaching staff. This experience by definition varies markedly due to the various speciality paths that can be taken by voice professionals. For example, specialities such as accent/dialect coaching, film and television work, Shakespeare and verse coaching, therapeutic/diagnostic approaches and radio and singing indicate something of the range of skills involved in vocal education. Consequently, the methods of training will be varied also.

It is also important to understand that whilst labelled 'voice classes' on the school's timetable, vocal teaching actually encompasses so much more than merely vocal exercises. The process may include both major physical and mental changes for the student, for example, the modifying of old or poor habitual behaviours both spoken and physical which can sometimes be very confronting. Such responses, in turn, can create issues for the teaching staff to resolve.

Methodology

Ten professional tertiary voice teachers were selected and asked to participate in this study. In order to gain a purposeful survey of the larger picture, they were selected based on their geographic location, years of experience, gender and connections to selected significant acting training institutions right across Australia. Their locations were specifically in New South Wales, Victoria & Western Australia. Formal letters of introduction and request for participation were sent out along with a document of agreement for them to sign. The number of participants was finalised at eight after two negative responses. Interview dates were then agreed upon after consultation with each participant.

Although the interviews were systematic in the initial questions, it is important not to overlook the distinctiveness and backgrounds of the individuals being interviewed. Therefore there was flexibility for more probing and in depth open-ended questioning where required. This gave me the opportunity to address issues within the exchanges that may have not been foreseen.

The questions were formulated into three sections;

- Beginnings, Basics and Syllabus.
- Techniques and Training.
- Expectations.

Each section consisted of between eight and twelve questions and the interviews lasted approximately one hour on average. As a part of the interview process, each participant was asked to provide demographic information such as age range, sex, and ethnicity and, in addition, was asked the following questions about their training and work history:

Tell me about your background in voice, your training and who are your influences?

What years/ levels do you teach?

What is your current status in this institution?

(See Appendix 1 for full list of questions)

The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed after all eight were concluded.

The analysis of the interview transcripts which was conducted using NVivo 9, which clarified patterns and themes across all the interviews and from this emerged three headings for the study.

- The Training
- The Teacher
- Australian Voice

Therefore, the discussion is presented in chapters with the following order:

- A brief history of voice education
- What is the voice?
- The training
- The teacher
- Australian voice
- Conclusions and recommendations

Within these chapters the patterns and themes that emerged from the interviews are interwoven with observations from the vocal literature which helps to demonstrate the similarities and differences between the generalised situation and Australia.

A Brief History of Voice Education

All delivery is concerned with two different things, namely voice and gesture, of which the one appeals to the eye and the other to the ear, the two senses by which all emotion reaches the soul. But the voice has the first claim on our attentions, since even the gesture is adapted to suit it

Quintilian - Institutio Oratoria 11.3.14

As a background to contextualise pedagogical approaches and ideas about vocal requirements for the actor, I first needed to look at the history of the spoken voice in performance.

In her book, *Voice in Modern Theatre*, Jacqueline Martin suggests that for us to make some sense of the way actors have spoken on the stage we must first look at rhetoric. She says that;

This is a practical art based on concrete advice and rules together with a general theory about what really happens in the process of speech and how people react generally to different means of expression, intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally (Martin, 1991, p. 1).

Martin explains that there are five parts to classical rhetoric: *inventio* – analysis and organization of the argument; *dispositio* – arranging the argument according to certain principles; *elecutio* - finding a suitable verbal form to present your argument in; *memoria* – committing it to memory and finally *actio/pronunciato* – presentation to an audience so it has maximum effect. Martin goes onto say that there is no real puzzle as to why rhetoric and the art of oratory reached high standards in ancient Greece: "Reading and writing were difficult and unnatural, Greek society relied on oral expression". (Martin, 1991, p. 1)

She further states that rhetoric played a major role in education. Boys, who had completed a basic education in reading, writing music and gymnastics for example, were sent to the school of the rhetorician where they received training and exercises in public speaking. "It was the sign of intelligence aimed at producing clarity, vigour and beauty in a society where it was generally accepted that speech was a sign of wisdom". (Martin, 1991, p. 1)

The ground rules for speech on the stage can be traced back to around 400BC and Aristotle. Martin notes that Aristotle's book, *Poetics and Rhetoric*, "laid the foundations for defining the form and functions of tragedy in the theatre". (Martin, 1991, p. 2) It was Aristotle's belief that the correct or fitting vocal technique for the actor finds its origins in rhetoric's *actio*, where the voice, facial movements, body language and stance should be in accord with the written word and therefore should enhance and delineate its substance and nature, rather than the more over the top *elecutio*.

During the Roman Empire, the best known influence on oratory is Quintilian (AD35 -97). He was appointed professor of oratory by the government of the day and much of his early work was attempting to work against the more declamatory style which had thrived during the first century.

His *De Institutione Oratoria* comprises of twelve books dedicated to ancient rhetoric, its principles and modes of vocal delivery. In these he created a course designed for the teaching of the orator, taking them from the beginning to the end of their careers. He stressed the importance of fitting the delivery to the text, stressing the value of vocal diversity, but was wary of neglecting the adaptation of the voice to suit the character of the range of topics and atmospheres that the texts demanded.

[Appropriate delivery] obviously lies in the adaptation of the delivery to the subjects on which we are speaking. This quality is, in the main, supplied by the emotions themselves, and the voice will ring as passion strikes its chords. But there is a difference between true emotion on the one hand, and false and fictitious emotion on the other. The former breaks out naturally, as in the case of grief, anger or indignation, but lacks art, and therefore requires to be formed by methodical training. The latter, on the other hand, does imply art, but lacks the sincerity of nature: consequently in such cases the main thing is to excite the appropriate feeling in oneself, to form a mental picture of the facts, and to exhibit an emotion that cannot be distinguished from the truth. The voice, which is the intermediary between ourselves and our hearers, will then produce precisely the same emotion in the judge that we have put into it. For it is the index of the mind, and is capable of expressing all its varieties of feeling. (Butler, 1920)

Rhetoric almost died with the collapse of civic life in Rome. The beginning of Christianity brought with it both a cautionary stance on rhetoric, in that it could be

used to mislead, but equally recognition of its power when used in preaching. One of the great exponents of rhetoric in the Christian age was St Augustine (AD354-430). Augustine stated that "Rhetoric is neither good nor bad in itself, but can be used to effectively defend both what is true and what is false". (Augnet, 2010) He further said that "the orator must formulate his speech in such a way as to instruct the audience, hold their attention, and to win". (Augnet, 2010)

Martin notes that St Augustine considered the orator's main duties were to teach, to delight and to move and that the Christian preacher was to use such eloquence to convert and sustain faith in the Christian life. (Martin, 1991) She further states that these principles were then taken up in the sixth century by monastic schools and led eventually to the establishment of the great cathedral schools in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

From the tenth to the thirteenth century, forms of liturgical drama played an important part in churches activities, with much of the vocal delivery consisting of chanting. At this time only members of the clergy were selected to play characters represented in scripture readings. This practice was expanded by the 14th century when scene-cycles known as mystery plays were performed, covering the whole range of Biblical stories. They grew into large affairs with scenery, costumes and big casts and became so popular that they moved into wider secular spaces, with simpler texts and translations. Each of the craft guilds in the local area were responsible for staging a particular Biblical episode and each guild built its own portable stage and supplied script and actors. Martin states that, at the time, "It appears that in acting voice seems to have been valued above all else". (Martin, 1991, p. 6)

Rhetoric probably had a profound effect on the Elizabethan actor also as, during the sixteenth century; the works of Cicero and Quintilian were among the earliest manuscripts to be printed by the newly invented printing press. Martin states that "Elizabethan voices were trained for declamation and for health, *actio* had a revival". (Martin, 1991, p. 7) The sheer volume and accessibility of the printed texts had a profound and lasting effect on voice education. Voices were taught for public speaking and wellbeing. (Martin, 1991)

During the Restoration period in England (1660 – 1700), much was still made of the declamatory style in the theatre, prominent exponents of which included the actor Thomas Betterton who was much lauded for his skills in declamation and

whose repertoire included a large number of the great Shakespearean roles including King Lear. The voice during this era was considered paramount.

Audiences had been conquered by sheer vocal quality, irrespective of the real need of the line. Actors had a special way of sounding their words and novices had to learn how to handle the full musical cadence of their speaking voices. (Martin, 1991, p. 8)

The movement away from the declamatory style began during 1700s and carried on into the 1800s. Martin suggests that

by 1750 the strict conventions of gesture and declamation were broken in France and England ... staging was supported by more realism in acting styles, which included attempts to portray everyday feelings, by means other than a relentless grandeur of sound. (Martin, 1991, p. 9)

Actors like Charles Macklin began to make the change. Macklin at the Drury Lane Theatre encouraged younger actors to speak the text as they would in everyday life.

At around this time, books began to appear that separated acting from oratory. Some of the earliest elocution books date back to 1762, for example Thomas Sheridan's *Lectures on Elocution* and John Walker's *Elements of Elocution* published in 1781. These books provide instruction on skills such as breath control, pronunciation and articulation.

The struggle between the declamatory style and a more realistic way of speaking continued to the end of the 1800s. Martin claims that "with the advent of naturalism in the theatre a general deterioration in elocution was the result". (Martin, 1991, p. 9)

In Europe in 1884, a Frenchman named François Delsarte, who had trained as a singer at the Paris Conservatoire but due to faulty instruction had damaged his voice beyond repair, set about and developed a System of Oratory. Martin says of Delsarte that "in an effort to analyse human emotions and spiritual states and determine how they were outwardly expressed, subdivided the body and outlined rules for using each part". (Martin, 1991, p. 9) Delsarte saw art as a glorification of

nature. He thought that art was divine and that there was an underlying accord, connection and interdependence among all the arts. (Bahn, 1970)

Whilst his system was based on the old rhetorical principles, unlike the traditional concepts, Delsarte relegated language to the weakest position behind thought and gesture. He never wrote down any of the principles of his work, but his methods, passed on by his students and followers, were to become popular (particularly in America) during the late 19th century, and also had an influence on the dance world through the likes of Isadora Duncan. Martin points out that that this system dominated actor training for much of the late 19th century and early in to the 20th century. (Martin, 1991)

Much of the spoken voice training in England was influenced by the mores of the day. In *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw's character, Henry Higgins, demanded that Eliza Doolittle copy his speech patterns and tone to the letter in order for her to appear to be from a different class and educated, with no mention of how to approach it technically. Nigel Rideout, in *Training the Actor's Voice* suggests that, "early acting training in England and Europe was taught this way: not only carbon copying the vowel sounds of the teacher's voice but the inflective patterning of every piece of text". (Rideout, 2009, p. xv)

The first schools dedicated to the training of actors in England were the Academy of Dramatic Art established by Herbert Beerbohm Tree in 1904 and the Central School of Speech and Drama established in 1906, whose first principal was Elsie Fogarty. Rideout states that;

Elsie Fogarty was the founding principal of The Central School of Speech & Drama in 1906 and led the way in the 20th century with her teaching and subsequent bibles on voice production, speech training, stammering, rhythm and verse speaking. (Rideout, 2009, p. xv)

Fogarty developed a new approach to voice training that was based on the precise physical workings of the voice. (Linklater, 1976) This may be as a result of the influence of both the Delsarte approach and the in-vogue 'Physical Culture' movement, a fascination with health and strength regimes which had developed in the 19th century.

Similarly another pioneer was Iris Warren who, in the 1930s, continued and furthered this work by adding a psychological understanding to the physiological approaches. She began wrestling with the most frequent problem facing actors, that of straining the voice when dealing with intense feelings and passion. Linklater states that Warren's work, whilst still encompassing the long established vocal exercises, altered the training from "external physical controls to internal, psychological ones". (Linklater, 1976, p. 3)

Many of the principles espoused by both these women are acknowledged as an influence by the writers and teachers of the major voice texts today. These include Kristen Linklater, who was inspired and taught by Iris Warren at The London Academy of Performing Arts (LAMDA) and who went on to do extensive innovative work in the field; Cicely Berry, who was inspired by Elsie Fogarty, has written many books on the subject of voice and has taught at The Central School and is voice director at The Royal Shakespeare Company; and, more recently, Pasty Rodenberg, who also comes from The Central School of Speech and Drama, and became a leading figure in voice work teaching at both Guildhall School and coaching at The Royal National Theatre, also writing many influential texts. (Rideout, 2009)

Today voice training forms a major part of undergraduate actor training programs around the world.

Rhetoric and declamatory vocal styling remained part of vocal training for many centuries and it is only in recent times that the switch towards a naturalistic approach, combined with a more physical and technical approach, meant that the pure art of rhetoric so prevalent in Greece and then in Rome fell out of use. However it must be noted that rhetoric to some extent still remains part of our everyday lives, for example in politics and advertising particularly, where we still see examples of the powerful use of voice and gesture to make people want or need something.

What is the Voice?

Definition: Voice

Etymology: Origin: 1250–1300; Middle English (n.) French *voiz, voice*, Latin *vōcem*, akin to *vocāre* to call, Sanskrit *vakti* (he) speaks ("Online Etymology Dictionary ", 2007)

Voice (or vocalization) is the basic sound made by human beings and other vertebrates when the air from the lungs passes over the vocal folds (cords¹) which are housed in the larynx. Such sounds include, dogs barking or growling, cows mooing, cats meowing and, in humans, laughing, singing, and crying and the most basic of all, babies burbling. It is not to be confused with speech. Speech is a gradual learned process that occurs in humans. Speech is formed by finely coordinated muscle movements in the head, neck, chest and abdomen and these movements change and shape the basic sounds produced by voice. Linklater in fact states that voice does not necessarily refer to speech. Speech, according to Linklater (1976), lies at the end of the vocal chain; voice is in the middle after breath.

All of the texts I have reviewed for this study give very similar descriptions of the mechanisms required for vocalization in terms of speech and the processes involved. Here is a brief discussion of those descriptions.

In his book, *Voice and Speech in the Theatre*, J. Clifford Turner describes how a human being achieves vocalization, by likening the process to that achieved by a musical instrument. In order to form sound (voice), Turner states that three things need to exist. The first is something he terms the Excitor, the essential power required for making sound. In terms of musical instruments this is, for example the arm movements of the violinist or the drummer and in the human body this then equates to the breath. The second component he terms the Vibrator, which is any part of an instrument's body that withstands the force of or to which the energy of the Excitor passes through, for example the violin strings or the skin of the drum in terms of the musical instrument and, in the human body, the vocal cords or larynx. The final components are the Resonator(s) or that part of the instrument which

¹ Spelling – can be cords or chords. Cords will be used in this discussion.

amplifies the sound created by the Excitor and Vibrator. The wooden frame and sound box of the violin or, in the case of human, the pharynx, the mouth and the nose generates this amplification.

Cicely Berry in *Voice and the Actor* uses a similar analogy. Suggesting that there are two factors which make up vocalization and once again using the example of a violin when relating it to the human voice. With the violin, the bow strikes the strings which vibrate; the vibrations in their turn resonate and are amplified by the wooden case of the violin thus creating the required sound.

To make a sound two factors are needed, something that strikes and something that is struck and which resists the impact to a greater or lesser degree and vibrates accordingly.....With the voice breath is the initial impulse, which strikes against the vocal cords in the larynx, which have come together, and makes them vibrate. This sets up sound waves which can then be resonated in the chest, the pharynx, or hollow spaces above the larynx, in the mouth and nose and bones of the face, and the hollow spaces in the head (sinuses). (Berry, 1973, p. 9)

In *Freeing the Natural Voice*, Linklater describes how the voice works by suggesting six stages:

- i. There is an impulse in the motor cortex of the brain.
- ii. The impulse stimulates the breath to enter and leave the body.
- iii. The breath makes contact with the vocal folds creating oscillations.
- iv. The oscillations create vibrations in the breath stream.
- v. The vibrations are amplified by resonators
- vi. The resultant sound is articulated by the lips and at the tongue to form words. (Linklater, 1976, p. 9)

Machlin uses the analogy of a machine to describe the way the vocal tract produces sound. She states that the 'machine' is made up of several mechanisms (See Figure 1). The power mechanism, which comprises the diaphragm, lungs and trachea; the vibrating mechanism, consisting of the vocal chords within the larynx;

the resonating and articulating mechanisms, made up of throat, mouth, nose with lips and tongue within these; and the feedback and control mechanisms, containing the ear, the brain and the connecting nervous systems. All these mechanisms function simultaneously to produce vocalization. (Machlin, 1980) She further states that the primary function of the vocal tract as a whole is for breathing and eating and that these are instinctive processes, whilst speech is an acquired or cultivated function.

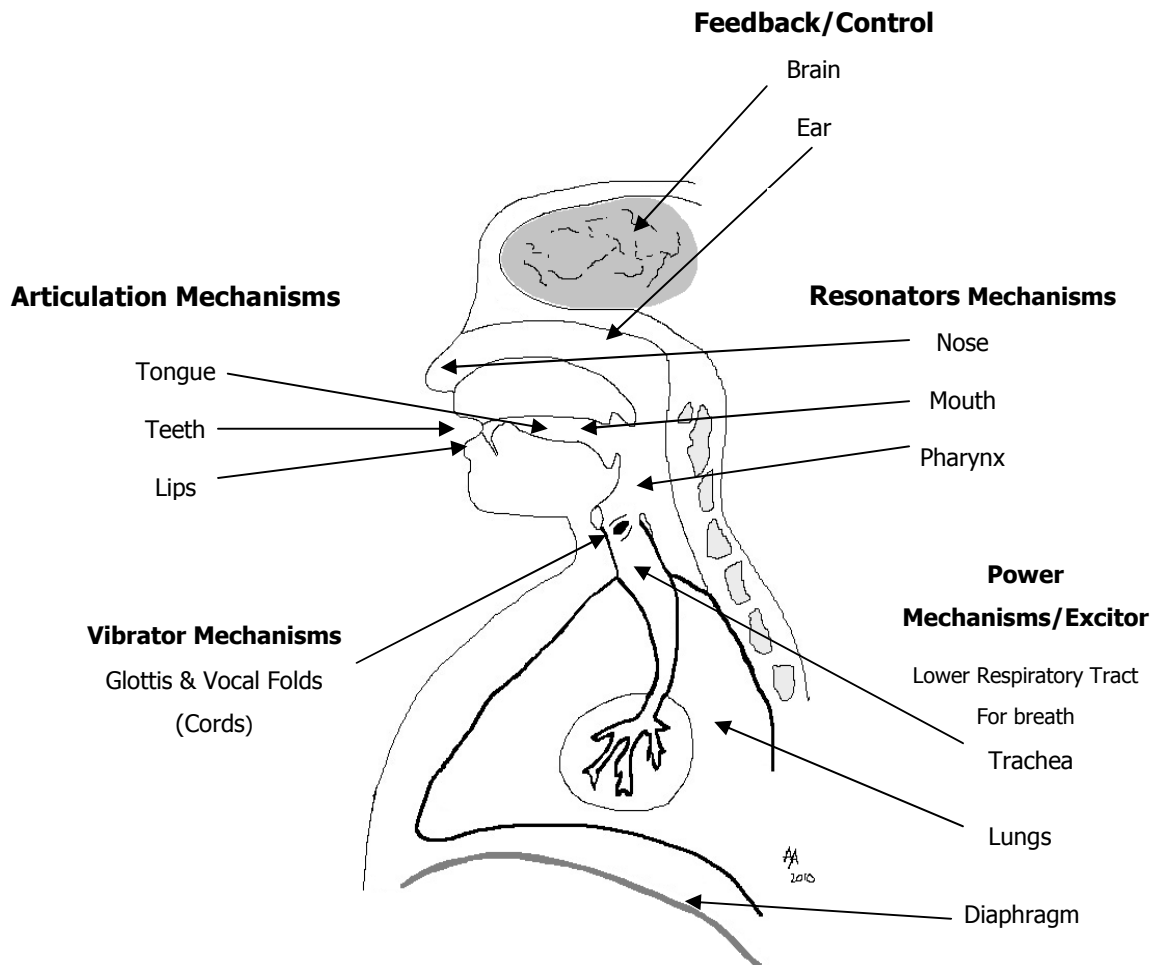


Figure 1 - The Voice Mechanisms

(Based on a drawing by Evangeline Machlin in *Speech for the Stage*)

The issue of a 'good voice'

How then do we determine what makes a good voice? Is it one that is pleasant to listen to, strident, or clear? Does a good voice have social connotations; is it one that is socially acceptable? And then what is a bad voice? Does it mean a voice that is irritating, croaky, husky, or squeaky? And consequently do these negative

values point to social class or race? Can these questions be answered fairly? The perceptions about what we sound like and how others hear us are subjective and personal, so that what I may hear or think will differ from the next person. This fact most certainly has connotations for the voice teacher and the student especially when there is more than one teacher on a drama campus.

The following descriptors are to be found about the concept of good and bad voices in several of the currently used texts in drama schools. Rodenburg in *The Right to Speak* suggests that a good voice is one that is effortless and does not distract the listener from the words being communicated. She says that “[o]ur voice, whenever we use it, should set out to match, organically and emotionally, whatever material we say and not be disconnected from it”. (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 16)

She further states that “I have never heard a ‘bad voice’ ... It is not the voice that is bad but just the bad habits that suppress its freedom”. (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 14) Linklater in *Freeing the Natural Voice* suggests much the same as Rodenburg, “The natural voice is transparent ... the *person* is heard, not the person’s voice” (Linklater, 1976, p. 2), whilst Berry, in *Voice and the Actor*, talks about the individuality of a person’s voice, observing that “the voice is absolutely personal to the individual”. (Berry, 1973, p. 12)

As the majority of the reviewed literature is primarily aimed at actors, it is also important to note here what the authors consider a good voice in terms of the actor. Berry first talks about not separating the voice and the spoken word when she states that “You cannot divorce voice from communication”. (Berry, 1973, p. 13) She then further states, in relation to actors having an apprehension of their natural sound, that

I think one of greatest fears of the actor is that of not being interesting when you get to the point which says ‘this is me; it will change, and perhaps improve, but this is me at this moment’ then the actor’s voice will become open. (Berry, 1973, p. 14)

And Rodenburg states that, “A properly rooted and balanced voice is, I believe fundamental to the process of acting”. (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 27)

So it would appear from the recognised texts at least, that there is no firm definition of what a good voice might be. For the most part, the descriptions are imprecise and bear out the notion that the issue is one of personal taste. As foundation to the rest of this study, I wanted to determine if Australian voice teachers had any differing opinions on the subject. In the course of the interviews for this study, I asked all of the participants what they considered a 'good' voice was in terms of the actor and, more importantly, how such a determination might apply to interactions with their students.

Study Results

It was noted that almost everyone has the potential for a good voice and that the voice is a personal thing.

Almost everybody (99% of the population) has potential for good voice and it's simply a voice that's not blocked, psychologically or physically in any way and once you've freed that you've got a good voice, it's interesting to listen to. (D)

Well the voice is the person, you can't divide the two. (B)

However in terms of giving a descriptor of what they thought was a 'good voice,' many of the participants found it difficult and too subjective a concept to describe and were hesitant to quantify the voice in such a way. Three participants however were willing to try to give a definition.

It has a sound that can enter an audience's body. (A)

A sense of vulnerability, a quality of danger, a quality of courage, humility and a sense of humour in it. (A)

I think a good voice is one that is well placed, it has got a balanced resonance to it, not too gravely, not too nasal, it has good clarity; there is very good and strong breath behind it. (F)

Absolutely unfettered. It will just fly all over the place. (C)

So it's got the full gamut like a dog barking, or a cat meowing, aesthetics don't come into it. (C)

They also went on to clarify and concur with the literature, in that a good voice is one you don't hear at all and that it should not interfere or impede what the actor is trying to communicate.

It will be transparent, and we'll just hear the text. (C)

A good voice is one that is invisible that I don't notice. (C)

I think if I'm hearing speech which is sounding very formal and proper then that is very bad. (F)

So I think if you hear the voice and you don't hear the text you don't hear the writer or the character, then it's not a good voice. (C)

Of the other participants, one stated that they found the term 'good voice' too judgemental and would prefer not to use it at all.

I don't say "this is a good voice." I tend to use terms that aren't measuring their success when I'm talking about anyone. Even looking at different accents, I'll say let's not judge it, let's observe it. So it's not how is this voice better than that voice, it's how is it different? Right throughout my work I'm always speaking in those terms rather than in judgemental terms, just observational terms so that everyone gets a sense that this is just adding different strings to my bow rather than this is all pushing me towards the sort of person I'm not sure I want to become. (H)

They further suggested that the term 'good voice' may become a very negative and damaging label and should be avoided.

A lot of directors have an idea of what is a good voice as opposed to a bad voice, and what irritates me is that generally for women it is that a low voice is a good voice and anything else is wrong. I get that a lot, and I find that extraordinary and damaging. I've had a number of students who have come through who have received comments from an acting teacher about, you've got to get your voice down; you won't work in the industry with a voice like that. It absolutely infuriates me, because they actually do vocal damage by listening to an acting note. (H)

They went on to suggest that observational terms should be used instead when dealing with a student's vocal technique so that the student receives a more positive sense about their newly learned skills.

That this is just adding different strings to my bow rather than this all pushing me toward the sort of person I'm not sure I want to become. (H)

A further issue arising out of this question is how the teachers deal with the ramifications of a student's perception of what a good voice is?

I want them to have a voice that is embodied; I don't want them to have a voice that they think they should have. (G)

It was commented on that a lot of girls come in with voices that are not connected to their individuality. They don't have a sense of how. Their voice is not theirs and that's what I'm interested in finding and it doesn't always have to be a beautiful voice. In fact I think I'd steer away from a beautiful voice. (G)

One further comment to come from this question was as follows:

A good voice is a voice which is owned and I don't think we know how to own our voices. (G)

Perception and ownership of voice

This then raises another important point and an issue that teachers have to face. How do voice teachers go about developing the student's perception and ownership of his/her own voice without seemingly interfering with each individual's natural sound or personality and how do they assuage any doubts the students may have about this matter?

It is part of the nature of being a human to make assumptions about people when we first meet them. The assumptions we make, good or bad, might include ethnic origins, social and educational background, and perhaps even wealth. We often base these assumptions on how a person looks, how they dress but often and,

more importantly, on how they speak. Not so many years ago in Australia, it was felt that to communicate effectively especially in the media (radio and television) and indeed in the theatre, actors and news presenters had to have an Anglicized sound or accent because it was perceived to be clearer and more cultured, having more gravitas and a sense of importance. In an article entitled "*The Filthy American Twang: Elocution, the Advent of American 'Talkies,' and Australian Cultural Identity*", Professor Joy Damousi of the University of Melbourne, talking about the Australian vocal identity, states that when radio came to Australia "[t]here were discussions about the quality of voice and correct enunciation, but there was never any question that Australian radio would promote an English sound". (Damousi, 2007, p. 410)

Similarly on the website *Convict Creations*, this suggestion was made: "[u]ntil the 1970s, people with Australian accents were not allowed to be newsreaders on the state-controlled ABC. Instead, ABC newsreaders had to speak with a British accent"². ("Convict Creations," 2000)

We dismissed the natural Australian sound as ineffective and unattractive. This thankfully has become mostly a thing of the past. The Australian accent is now heard through films and, in particular, television with programs such as *Home and Away* and *Neighbours* proving to be hugely popular with the overseas market and making no apologies for the Australian accents.

So whilst it is a given that actors sometimes have to change or modify their natural voices to suit various roles, this being done in terms of perhaps pitch, accent or dialect, it is important for the young actor embarking on his/her training to first understand his/her own voice and for the teachers to facilitate and develop this understanding. Giving the students a chance to recognise and expand their own sound first, is an important basis for future work.

In researching the literature on voice teaching, I found many comments and opinions on this thorny issue. Rodenburg says that "[a]s soon as we open our mouths and speak we are judged. Instant assumptions are made about us by others; about our intelligence, our background, class, race, our education, abilities and ultimately our power". (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 4) She goes onto to say "It seems to me particularly demeaning and criminal for instance to tell anyone that

² Convict Creation is a privately hosted website which draws on and collates articles from other forms of media.

their mother sound or accent is not good enough to speak the great texts". (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 5) Berry observes that, in teaching students, "You must always build on the vitality which is their own voice". (Berry, 1973, p. 15) Berry further states that "A corrective attitude to voice reduces the actor to using it 'right' ". (Berry, 1973, p. 15)

Such correctives may cause many a young actor to balk at voice training harbouring the fear that it changes his or her sense of self in some way; "Quite understandably they do not want something so personal interfered with and sounding well produced; they distrust it for they fear their individuality will be lost". (Berry, 1973, p. 15) Similarly, Rideout says "Students must be encouraged to develop their own voices". (Rideout, 2009, p. xiii)

In an article from the Voice and Speech Review, a publication compiled by the Voice and Speech Trainers Association of America, speech teacher Marion Hampton had this to say: "Our charge, as teachers of voice and speech, and purveyors of whatever standards of thought and diction we embrace, is to remember that every human being is unique and to be just as unique as s/he is". (Hampton, 2000)

Study Results

In terms of this study I asked two questions with respect to this issue. As a teacher, how do you balance refining a student's vocal quality and maintaining his/her personality or class? And, secondly, how do you alleviate any apprehension the student may have?

In answer to the first question the general feeling concurred with the literature; that it is wrong to try and change or de-personalise a student's voice.

It's almost sinful. (D)

It's almost sinful to try to iron out someone's personality. I think you'd be on a false mission. (F)

Also, it was generally felt that it is not the job of the voice teacher to try and make a student sound like someone else, their own voice is the important thing and therefore making the most of that attribute is the imperative

The policy is mainly to teach them to respect the accent they've got. (F)

Their natural voice will be free, that's what we are looking at. (C)

In first year, it's not imposing some sort of standard, or speaking RP [Received Pronunciation] or anything like that, it is simply to free the human instrument so the student finds the richest and most flexible voice they've got in them. (D)

Here is a person who wants to be an actor. I'm interested in allowing them to find the bigness, the fullness of that, the integrity, the authenticity of what that is, rather than making them sound like someone else. (G)

One participant also stated that where a student may have some form of speech difficulty, it was more important to make them aware of it rather than force them to change it or fix it.

Even if people present with speech difficulties (we do have kids with speech difficulties) I'm actually not so interested in pointing that out to them, I know some people will say well that person has a lisp, what are you going to do about it? And I think well they've got a lisp, and there are actors who work with lisps. I'm much more interested in whether they are aware of having this lisp, is it appropriate for them to have that lisp at this time so do they want to get rid of their lisp, is it going to inhibit them? (G)

In answers to the second question, dealing with a student's apprehension about what the training will do to their 'natural' voice, a note worthy point was highlighted in terms of a student's confidence and attitude to learning. Many students in Australia have travelled from out of state and indeed across the whole continent to attend their studies at a drama school. This may mean that they do not return to their home environments for many months, during which time many changes may have occurred in the student as they learn their craft. This of course includes voice. It was noted that a student can have some difficulties when

returning home for the first time and they can often find themselves ridiculed by friends and family for the perceived changes in their voices, i.e. vowels and consonants more pronounced and clear.

One actor came in with a very broad Australian accent and he worked his behind off, and by the time he went back at the end of first year, his vowels had opened up not through my encouragement but just through giving him different vocal options he was sounding a bit different, he was putting more investment into the clarity of the speech and was getting some pretty harsh comment for it at home, so it became quite a thing. (H)

A suggestion for helping the students to overcome this issue was to encourage them and to point out that;

This is my professional voice it's not different from the truth of who I am. (H)

However it was also suggested that whilst students may have a fear of losing their personality and their own voice, they should, as actors, always be open to change and need to be encouraged to expand the creative choices within their voice work.

As an actor you've got to be a chameleon you've got to be ready to flick, that is the whole point, it's why you come here, or any institution anywhere. (B)

You have to always be mindful of who you're teaching in terms of people's cultural heritage and their background. (E)

You say now remember this is not about changing your personality; remember this is not about changing your accent. (A)

And the students need to be reassured that they will not be measured by their voice alone.

That was, how a person's accent can be considered by them, and the public, a judgement of their social and intellectual worth. (H)

Conclusion

Can we really say what a good voice is or isn't? It is ultimately a matter of taste and opinion, rather than fact. In terms of training an actor, the teacher should be careful to avoid such terms and work to enhance the natural sound of a student instead of imposing some artificial approximation of what they or others perceive as good. This matter is therefore a delicate balancing act for the voice teacher to deal with. On the one hand, they have to correct and manage the various speech problems which may present themselves whilst, on the other hand, they must endeavour to help keep the unique personality of the student which is imbued in their voice and somehow give the students the vocal ability and dexterity necessary for their career where they are called upon to become someone else.

The Training

Our voices are unique to us; they are part of who we are. The unique sound of our voice helps identify us and our individuality. The voice is the actor's chief asset.

When the technical equipment of the actor is considered, voice and speech are of paramount importance. The actor's art, it is true, consists of much more than the delivery of lines, but take away the element of voice and very little is left. (Turner, 2007, p. 1)

A strong, clear, flexible, and compelling voice is both an asset in itself and a necessity for acting or for projected speech of any kind. Such speech has special attributes which set it apart from the speech of the man in the street—depth and fullness of resonance, brilliance of articulation, impeccable pronunciation, infinite flexibility and tireless power. (Machlin, 1980, p. 27)

Both the analysis of the literature and the interviews suggest that the two fundamental building blocks for voice training and, therefore, the starting point from which vocal training is conducted are breathing and the body's alignment. If you get the body's alignment right it will, in turn, help support the breath and inform the voice. Also identified were the further fundamentals of resonance, articulation and range. As adjuncts to all of these main components were vocal health, anatomy, and specialist body alignment training. However it became clear that a student's habitual behaviours both verbal and physical have a relationship to all the basic building blocks and teachers have to be able to identify these in order to help unlock the breath and modify the alignment and, which in turn, will then have an effect on the other elements. (See Figure 2)

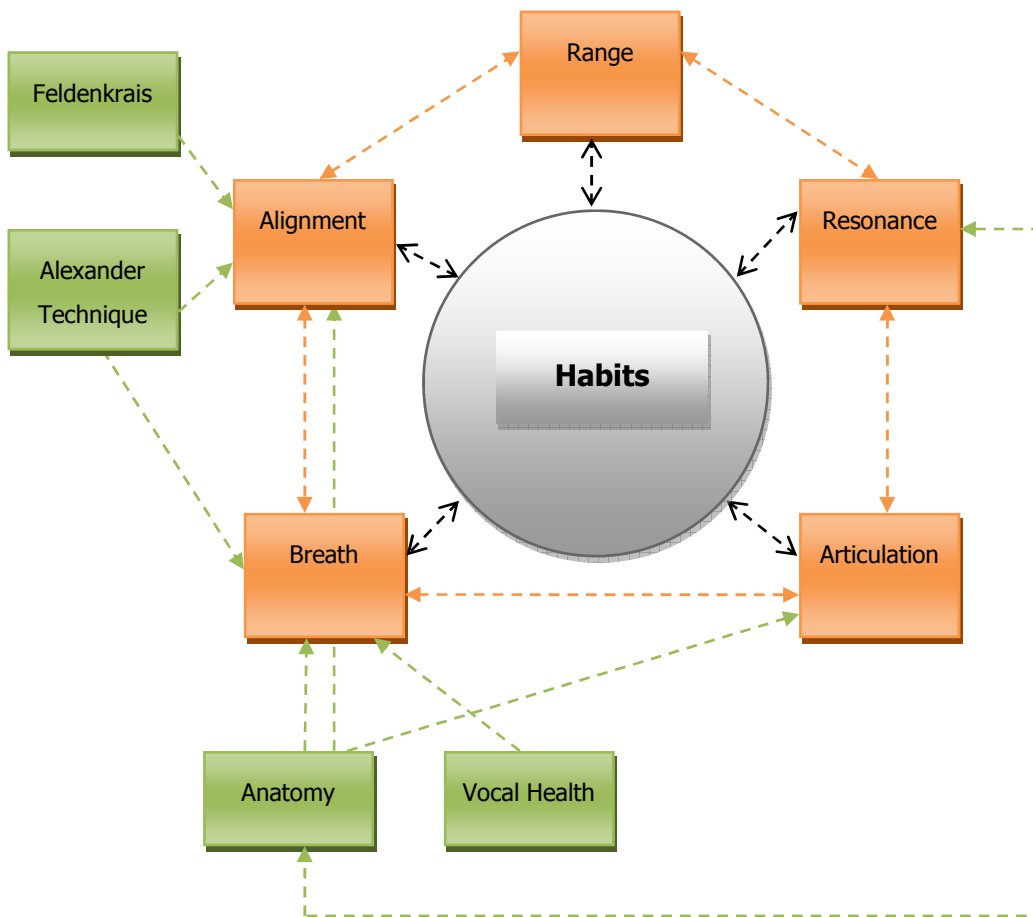


Figure 2- The Basics Elements of Voice Teaching

Habits

An automatic pattern of behaviour in reaction to a specific situation; may be inherited or acquired through frequent repetition.

(Wordnetweb)

All of us have habitual holding patterns and behaviours. Habitual behaviours, for the most part, go unnoticed because we do not spend or have enough time to conduct a continuous self analysis when executing day to day actions. These habits may include learned behaviours developed in childhood like speech, accent and breath-patterning passed on from parents.

As children you learn to speak unconsciously, because of your needs and because you are influenced by the sounds you hear spoken around you. It is an imitative process, so that you

start to talk roughly in the same way as the family, or unit in which you grow up. (Berry, 1973, p. 7)

They may also include poor eating and dietary habits, which stem from the home environment or a busy working life.

Physical habits, like poor posture may arise from slumping overlong in front of a computer or television set, or lifestyle choices, for example working out in the gym may result in an overdevelopment of torso and neck muscle which may have a deleterious effect on breath and alignment. Habits developed within a social context such as frequenting parties and bars may include drinking and smoking both of which have been proven to have a negative effect on health and speech habits. Sometimes the voice is adapted to conform to the norm of the group, talking too fast for example is common especially in juvenile years where young people can develop a form of shorthand speech or 'playground speak'.

Linklater states:

Habits are a necessary part of being able to function: Many are helpful (how to tie shoelace or use a knife and fork), and some are chosen consciously (what route to take to work every day, a shower in the morning or a bath at night), but most mental and emotional habits ("I never cry", "I always think that ...", "I can't sing," "I always cry when they play the national anthem") are formed unconsciously and by people other than oneself, in childhood. (Linklater, 1976, p. 11)

She adds that these learned habits impede our natural reflexive behaviour.

So much human behaviour is controlled by habits conditioned in childhood by arbitrary influences such as parents (or lack of them), teachers , peers or fellow gang members, movie stars, pop stars, that if we come to a point in our lives where we want to access the primitive sources of laughter, sorrow, anger, joy (as an actor must) they may seem to have been civilized or brutalized out of us. (Linklater, 1976, p. 11)

McCallion talks about habits in terms of use and suggests that "some of the habits of use we acquire may stop us from making efficient physical responses to quite ordinary stimuli". (McCallion, 1989, p. 4) He goes on to say:

Our habitual responses are part of the behavioural pattern by which we know our self, and we're always loath to interfere with whatever our established sense of self is; perhaps if we do that we won't any longer be that self. (McCallion, 1989, p. 8)

Rodenburg dedicates four chapters to the subject of habits. She makes an observation on how the natural voice we are born with can be affected by life and learned habits in a negative fashion.

Life and our subsequent experiences should ideally enrich and broaden the natural voice, transforming it into a powerful instrument of self expression. But life batters and restricts us in such ways that most of us settle into what I term an habitual voice: voice encrusted with restrictive tendencies. (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 19)

She further admits in her other book, *The Actor Speaks*, that letting go of habits is a very difficult thing to accomplish: "letting habits go takes courage and can be uncomfortable, largely because you feel vulnerable without them". (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 11)

Some actors are more willing than others to let go of habits.

In terms of this study only half of the study's participants made reference to habits in terms of the training. Whilst this may appear significant, I believe this may be simply as a result of an omission on the day of the interview.

Study Results

The first thing noted was that students come into an acting school environment with a variety of learned behaviours (habits) and may find the act of modifying these habits confronting and therefore resist the necessary changes.

So very, very much about habits, and they hate it because it is confronting for them particularly at first year level they just really resist it. (G)

Those students with those habits and convincing them they don't have to have them. (G)

These habits in turn will then impede a student's progress.

Those habits will often get in the way of you being able to express yourself clearly. (G)

Habits can interfere with who you are as a performer and as a person. (G)

It was however also importantly suggested by one participant that bad habits cannot be eradicated and that a teacher should not try to do so.

If a person has developed a faulty postural pattern they simply do not have the pattern encoded in their nervous system to stand properly and any attempt to do so will simply result in them standing badly in a different way. The idea that by an act of will they can stand correctly is simply derision. (E)

Another participant, however, suggested that giving the student the choice to make the changes themselves by asking them to prioritise their lives can be a valuable means of habitual behaviour modification.

So I always approach it in terms of well you need to figure out what your priorities are, and if your priorities right now are to party, then come back to me when your priorities are a bit different and I'll tell you how to actually achieve a professional voice. (H)

So whilst not unanimously acknowledged as an issue by the participants of this study, it is evidently important that the vocal and physical habitual behaviours of

students be identified early, addressed with the student and then continuously monitored throughout their training in anticipation of having a positive effect on the other components of the students vocal education. Foremost among these components are breath and alignment.

Breath and Alignment

When the impulse to speak occurs, whether spontaneously or consciously, the first thing the body does is prepare itself to inhale.

(LaLonde Hanson, 1997, p. 36)

The main physiological purpose of breathing is to provide the body with oxygen on the inhale and to carry away the carbon dioxide on the exhale. The act of breathing in its simplest terms is a subconscious mechanism to keep the body alive. Meribeth Bunch Dayme in *The Performers Voice* gives an uncomplicated description of basic, passive breathing:

The physiological need for oxygen is monitored by the brain, which sends a message to the diaphragm.

The diaphragm contracts (moves down), thus enlarging the area in the chest that includes the highly mobile lower ribs (creating expansion in the abdomen if it is not held tightly).

The enlargement of the chest stretches the elastic tissues of the lungs and trachea; the ensuing vacuum-like situation creates an air pressure lower than that of the surrounding atmosphere, and air is drawn inward.

During expiration the diaphragm returns to a relaxed position, and the stretched elastic tissues and rib cage return to a pre-inspiration state. (Dayme, 2005, p. 34)

She suggests that all other patterns of breathing, for example whilst exercising or singing are “[v]ersions of passive respiration with more muscle added, according to the activity.” (Dayme 2005, 34)

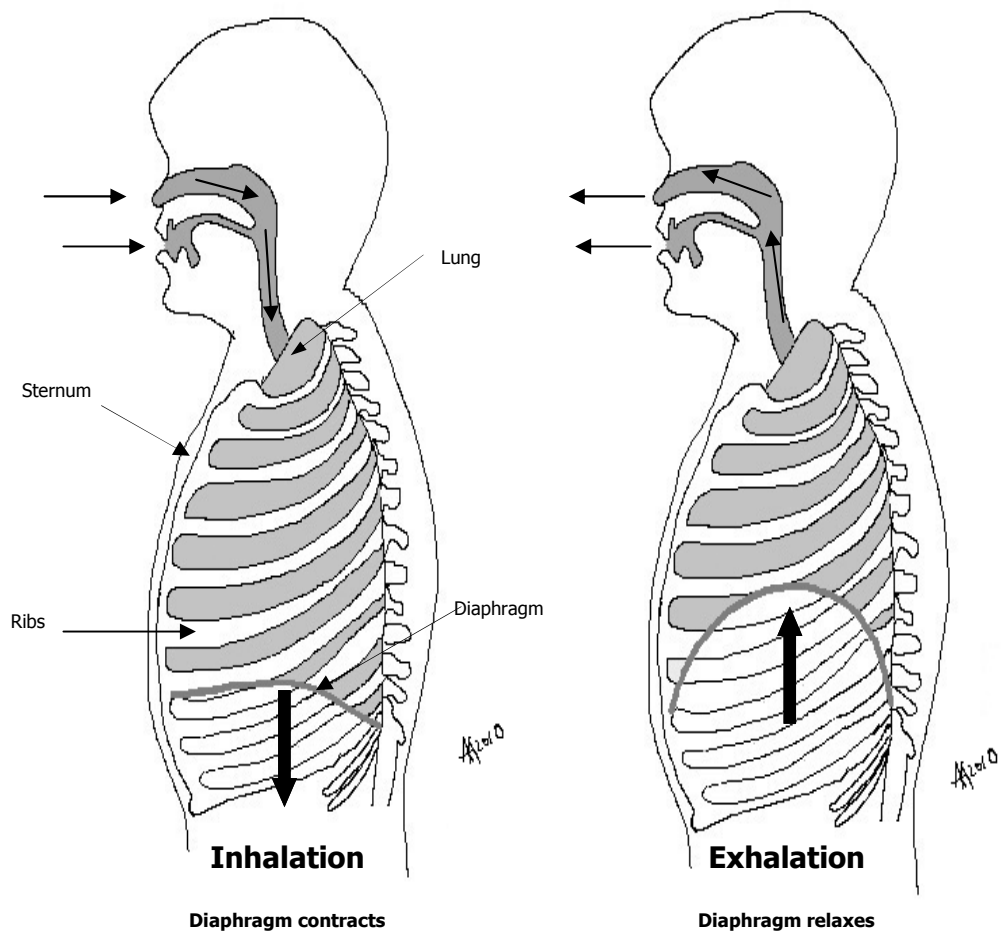


Figure 3 - The Breathing Mechanisms

(Based on a drawing by MB Dayme in The Performers Voice)

The act of breathing, as has been previously stated, is also the necessary impetus for producing sound or voice and our breathing mechanisms in turn can be directly affected and be seriously impaired by incorrect or in-efficient alignment or posture.

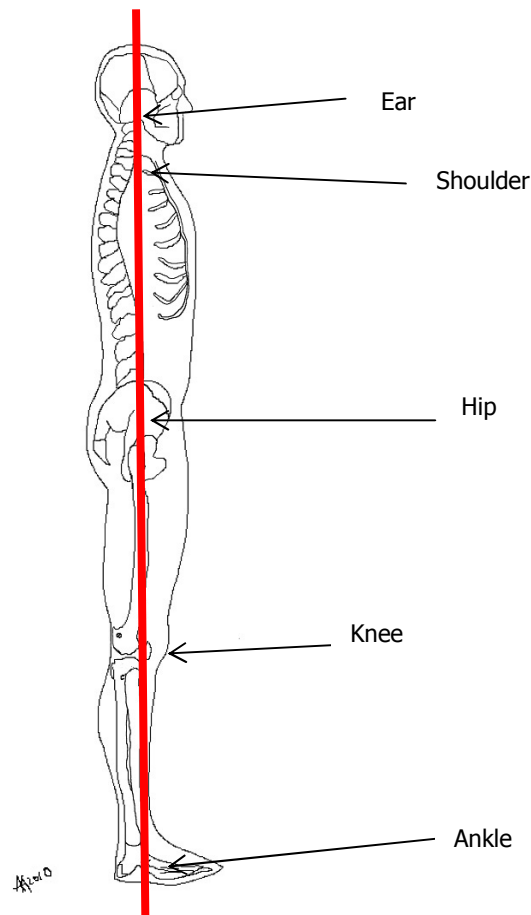


Figure 4 - Ideal Alignment

Arthur Lessac in his book, *The Use and Training of the Human Voice*, states that “Nothing is more important to good body condition than correct breathing and correct posture”. (Lessac, 1967, p. 24) He suggests that posture is a matter of conditioning, a learned trait. He goes on to say that

Although very few people breathe correctly while standing upright, no one can breathe incorrectly while bending over, squatting, kneeling, crouching, jumping, sitting forward or lying on his back. In these positions, the muscles fall naturally into the relationships and counteract faulty conditioning, allowing the body to breathe as it wants to breathe. (Lessac, 1967, p. 24)

He further suggests that the student should inhale and exhale in a variety of these positions and observe the physical sensations occurring and then try to recreate

them standing upright. His text book provides instructions for a series of relaxation, stretching, breathing and strengthening exercises: lying flat on your back (supine) and standing upright, all the while examining breathing and memorising the experience. He then moves onto relaxation and breathing in other positions the body may find itself in, including being bent over, jumping, crouching and sitting. The goal is to keep breathing as naturally and as freely as possible (Lessac, 1967, pp. 31-42). His training relies on the student developing a memory of the sensations they feel whilst breathing in various activities and postures.

Berry states that "with the voice, you depend on the breath to start the sound - not too little for that would make the attack glottal and the tone hard, but right and clean and using all the breath to make sound". (Berry, 1973, p. 19). On alignment, she suggests that "If your back is not as straight as possible the ribs cannot open properly, there is little possibility of movement at the bottom of the ribcage".(Berry, 1973, p. 20) Whilst the base of the back may be free from tension and in a good position, if the shoulders are too far forward, the head has to re-compensate, and pull back to regain balance, which, in turn, will lead to the resonating spaces in the neck being squashed. Berry claims that

[O]ne tension leads to another. Tension in the small of the back makes you feel tension in the shoulders, for example, while tension in the back of the neck leads to tension in the front of the neck where the larynx or voice box is, an area where it is particularly bad to have tension because then you can so easily strain the voice. (Berry, 1973, p. 20)

She further observes that all these tensions impact on the jaw which in turn leads to a tension of the tongue and palate. Her exercises, like Lessac's, begin by lying in the supine position on the floor and going through a series of relaxation exercises. These are largely image-based and are for the purpose of disciplining the muscle control and muscle sensation whilst compelling a relaxed state and free natural breathing. She too places a reliance on the students memorising these feelings and sensations.

Similarly Rodenburg has much to say about the importance of breathing and alignment in voice training. She considers breath to be the "most dramatic part of voice work". (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 148) and points out that,

[b]reathing is the first and the last thing we do. Every thought, emotion and physical action is first accomplished and embodied in the breath and our most traumatic life experiences – grief, rage, joy and sexual contact - are held in breath patterns. (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 142)

The body should be free of tension in order to achieve maximum breath control. Rodenburg devotes a substantial section of her book to breath and posture and considers in detail the natural stance, working from the head to the feet, important to voice work. She goes into much detail on the natural well balanced stance. This is accompanied by a large section of detailed exercises to aid the student with these issues. One suggestion she makes is that the student should work through them systematically and thoroughly, then perhaps he/she should pick out individual exercises that solve specific problems.

Linklater states that "You will find that the efficiency of the vocal apparatus depends on the alignment of the body and the economy with which it functions". (Linklater, 1976, p. 20) She suggests that when the spine is not functioning properly the support for the body is reduced and that muscles intended for other use must therefore take over and diminishing the body's ability to function correctly. For Linklater "the first step, then, in freeing the voice, is getting acquainted with your spine". (Linklater, 1976, p. 20)

Meribeth Bunch Dayme, in *The Performers Voice*, considers the importance of alignment and "modeling (sic) good physical alignment and balance can hardly be overstated. Resolution of problems of alignment bad posture can lead to startling improvement in voice production". (Dayme, 2005, p. 24)

Study Results

Without exception the participants in this study placed breath control and the act of breathing as the starting point for a student's vocal training in tandem with alignment.

To get the breathing right is foundation number one. (D)

Alignment and breath, and I don't think you could have one without the other; they are absolutely integral to each other. (H)

If the physicality is not right the breath won't be right and therefore the voice. (B)

Breath and alignment they are the key concepts that I start to explore in those first few weeks. If we do nothing else but that, I want them to have a clear understanding of what I mean by those two terms. (H)

In order to initiate students into the voice class environment and as a starting point for an initial voice class, it is suggested in both the literature and the results of this survey that simple group game playing is (1) a good way of breaking the ice with new students and (2) more importantly this activity gives the teacher a chance to observe the students in both in their breathing and their physical attributes without them feeling too exposed or under the microscope. Likewise, the student is also given the chance to start to observe the same things in themselves, something they may never have done before.

We start to play a series of very, very simple games, observation sort of games. Like walking briskly around the room just observing their own breath whilst they're walking quickly. (D)

So we play a game first, then they write down the details about the other person, simple things, and then they talk about the other person, so at that point I'm listening to them speak, I'm taking down the information about the other person and what I am actually listening for is them, (the speaker), it's covert to be truthful. I take notes on anything I hear in the first round like any speech problems, any placement; it's just a first impression, a sketch of that person. (B)

It was noted by one participant in the research that it is important to not only do this form of work but, more importantly, that the students have a firm grasp of why you are asking them to do it. Initial resistance from students is commonplace and giving them good solid reasons why something is being done is a way to break said resistance down.

My work on alignment and breathing is not just to stick them in semi-supine and hope for the best, but to give them an understanding of what I am doing and why I'm doing it. (H)

The act of breathing freely and correctly can remain a mystery to a student for some time and many find that it is the biggest obstacle to overcome in terms of the overall actor training program.

It terms of teaching and perfecting alignment, it emerged that all the teachers in this study had been influenced by or at least have had experience of either Alexander or Feldenkrais Technique or both during their working lives. Both these techniques are associated with the prevalent problem of habitual bodily misuse.

There are many misconceptions about the Alexander Technique. It is not a system of exercises, or a relaxation technique, or a method of vocal or instrumental training. Simply, it is a re-education of habitual movement patterns so the body is used efficiently with the least amount of wear and tear. (Mayers & Babits, 1987, p. 51)

These techniques are often included as part of the curriculum in many drama training institutions around the world, used as tools to help students achieve a better understanding and use of their bodies by assisting in the learning or re-learning of optimum alignment. In order to understand these techniques better what follows is a brief outline of the pertinent histories of their creators and outlines of the techniques themselves.

Alexander Technique

Every man, woman and child holds the possibility of physical perfection; it rests with each of us to attain it by personal understanding and effort.

(F. Matthias Alexander)

Francis Matthias Alexander was born in Tasmania, Australia in 1869. As a child, he suffered from respiratory problems. He had a passion for reading and reciting Shakespeare which, in later life, he turned into a successful speaking career in Victoria. However his success was soon overshadowed, by persistent hoarseness brought on by his performing. His visits to the doctor resulted in being told to rest and gargle with salt water. This solution did not work. At this time, he made a conscious decision to see if he could find out for himself what the problem was. He had concluded that it was actually something he was doing whilst performing that was causing the problem. He bought himself a mirror and watched himself reciting and to his astonishment he discovered that in his efforts to project his voice into the large spaces of the theatres he was contorting his body which, in turn, was affecting his breathing. He saw that when he spoke he pulled his head back, pushed his larynx down towards his chest and sucked in air noisily.

He soon drew a connection between this 'misuse' of himself and the failure of his voice which led to his assertion that the way we use ourselves, directly affects our functioning. (Meredith, <http://www.ate.org.au>)

When he set about trying to change the observed behaviours this became difficult. He realised that his sense of feeling was faulty and unreliable. It took him ten years to re-learn how to change these patterns. In the beginning, he did not speak, he just carried out very simple tasks like raising his arm and, by paying attention to this act, he could detach himself from the habitual or learned behaviour associated with that movement. Through experimentation, he discovered that the two vital principles which would become the basis of his technique. Firstly, our ideas about actions influence our performance of the action. He found that he could stop the tightening that pulled his head back and this, in turn, would stop the other actions that inhibited his speech. He quickly recognised

the connection between head-neck-trunk; he labelled this The Primary Control. Secondly, he observed that any action has a beginning, middle and end. He had always been predisposed to put his energies into the beginning of action in order to achieve the end.

Once he learned to inhibit his initial habitual response and delay the desire to achieve a result, he could set about directing his energy consciously by keeping the whole of the action in mind. (Meredith, <http://www.ate.org.au>)

He labelled this process Direction. It took him time to learn to inhibit and direct, at the same time, apply that altered perspective to all his activities. However eventually his voice was restored and the respiratory complaints that had been with him all his life disappeared.

He was persuaded to go to London to present his findings to the medical fraternity there. In 1910, Alexander published his first book, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*. He was consulted by many of the leading arts practitioners of the day, men like George Bernard Shaw and Aldous Huxley. In 1931, after having written a second book, he established a teacher training programme in his technique in London. Before his death in 1955, he wrote two more books and consulted widely on the technique.

The Feldenkrais Method

Movement is life. Life is a process. Improve the quality of the process and you improve the quality of life itself.
(Moshe Feldenkrais)

Moshe Feldenkrais was born in the Ukraine in 1904. In 1918 at the age of 14, he left his family and moved to Palestine where he worked as labourer before gaining his high school diploma in 1925. During his time there, he developed a lifelong passion for Martial Arts but also suffered a debilitating knee injury whilst playing soccer which would trouble him all his life. During the 1930s, he travelled to France where, after graduating, he worked in the areas of nuclear fission,

magnetics and ultra sound. In 1940, he escaped to London just as the Germans arrived in Paris. He worked for the British Admiralty in Scotland between 1940 and 1945, conducting anti-submarine research. In 1942, he published a self-defence manual called *Practical Unarmed Combat and Judo*. It was at about this time that he began developing his method by working on the rehabilitation of his knee injury which had been exacerbated by his time on submarine decks and during his escape from France. His method involves systematic but judicious movements to re-order and enhance posture, improve flexibility, and generally strengthen and co-ordinate the human body. The method takes two forms; Functional Integration, a one-on-one form, where the practitioner gently guides the participant through a hands-on approach, and Awareness through Movement, where the participant (or group) is led through activities using verbal commands. Movement is explored with the goal of learning to move more comfortably. The participants execute the instructions at their own pace.

After moving to Israel in the early 1950s, he was eventually able to sustain a total living by teaching his method. During the 1970s, he developed Feldenkrais teacher training programs in the United States of America and published further books. A four year training program was set up in 1980 in Massachusetts which he taught for the first two summers, but after falling ill in 1981, he gave up teaching publicly and died in 1984.

Study Results

As previously noted the participants of this study have all had experience of both the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method and the general consensus points to the positive value of these programs and the contribution they can make to voice training in terms of physical habits which may affect alignment.

Alexander is the kind of resources which are (sic) required to change peoples habit. (E)

So that's where for me the Alexander technique is quite interesting in that, once you find your balance and co-ordination then you can actually find yourself. (G)

You can't get good voice with somebody sitting down (like I'm doing now, bent over, my lower ribs can't breathe, and with my head forward I can feel a lot of tension there) so physically, then again we do all of that in voice classes too, the movement work backs it up and the Alexander

work in particular backs it up and helps to free all of those issues as well. They're all integrated.

(D)

Alexander class training is essentially dealing with your own habits and then you deal a little about how things work, like arms, legs and necks work, how those things actually function. (E)

In terms of one method being preferred above the other, it has to be said that the Alexander Technique was strongly favoured by the majority of the participants. However, in examining two of the research participants, the matter of preference appears less to do with the techniques themselves than with the particular encounters of the teachers with these programs.

I did Feldenkrais when I worked in North America and I could never understand a word they were talking about, what I was doing with my ankle wrapped around the back of my neck. It just didn't make any sense to me whatsoever; I went back to Alexander with a great deal of relish as at least I could feel the difference that was making. Yes I find that Feldenkrais can be a little bit tricky (sic), but Alexander seems more straight forward and direct, other people love Feldenkrais. (D)

So I teach physical awareness first, and I've tried all manner of things to teach that and one of the best ways I've found apart from the exercises that I've gleaned over the ages, is Feldenkrais, I've taught Alexander and got Alexander teachers in, but I prefer the Feldenkrais stuff. In the end I leaned very heavily on Feldenkrais work in order to teach physical awareness.

(C)

It was felt that the movement programs should flow and complement the voice programs and that the Alexander Technique was a useful tool in this regard.

The movement course generally should feed into the voice, because if their physicality isn't very good it's not going to help their voice either. So that's why Alexander compliments. (D)

I'd bring the Alexander teacher into the Voice class which we found very successful. (A)

Because my teaching is really influenced by an Alexander technique teacher, I am constantly referring back to awareness all the time in getting them to think consciously about what and why they do something. (G)

So I wanted to do Alexander to help people function better. I've noticed since doing that my own voice is better, without paying too much attention to voice. (E)

However it was further pointed out than many training institutions no longer have Alexander technique offered as part of their training, because of the extra costs involved to employ sessional staff for one – on - one classes.

I think that's why we don't have Alexander technique in training institutions anymore because it's costly. (G)

I think to have Alexander technique in the course would be fantastic and there just isn't the money for it. There isn't the money for sessional teaching. (H)

Having recognised the balance between breathing and the body's alignment as the major fundamental components of a student actor's vocal training it was also identified as important for students to understand something about their own vocal and physical health in order to maintain and understand that balance.

Vocal and Physical Health

The good qualities of the voice, like everything else, are improved by training and impaired by neglect.

Quintilian - Institutio Oratoria 11.3.19

Like any piece of machinery, the voice needs regular maintenance and care. If we fail to maintain it, it becomes unstable, damaged and then unusable. An actor in their daily and working life faces many issues that conspire to harm the voice in some way. Some of these factors are external and may be beyond the performer's control, but many are behavioural or physical and are, thus, avoidable or at least effectively manageable. I felt it important to ascertain from the teachers in this study how important they considered tuition on vocal health to be. But before considering their answers, below is a brief discussion based on my research of the literature, looking at some of the factors that may impinge on a student's vocal health.

Smoking - There has been much research done on the effects of smoking in recent years, including passive smoking. Sataloff suggests that the harmful effects of smoke on the membranes of the vocal tract are very evident. It can cause a redness or inflammation and swelling. He suggests that "both the smoke of and heat of the cigarette appear to be important." (Sataloff, 1991, p. 80)

In *Bodymind & Voice*, Leon Thurman et al state that,

Tobacco smoke is the most common pernicious inhalable substance. It can adversely affect your entire respiratory tract from molecular and cellular levels on up to basic laryngeal and lung functions. (Thurman, 2000, pp. Vol 3, 546)

Rodenburg asserts that smoking will eventually harm the voice and, in particular, the breathing. "Breath capacity suffers first". (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 289) Some fine actors with good voices manage to get away with smoking for years, but she believes it eventually starts to show. Similarly Dayme states the strong message for voice professional is simply, "Don't smoke". (Dayme, 2005, p. 199)

Caffeine & Alcohol

The mucous membranes of the vocal chords need to remain hydrated in order to function properly. The best way to do this is to drink plenty of water daily. Both caffeine and alcohol have a drying and therefore negative effect on the voice. Whilst none of the texts say stop, all advocate moderation. Rodenburg has strong reservations about alcohol and its masking effect

Alcohol may relax you enough to take the pressure off with a habit of the voice, it may leave you free physically, but then it adds a problem. I am anxious about any substance that prevents a speaker from feeling pain in the voice. The pain alerts us and alcohol dulls the early alert system. (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 289)

Sataloff similarly says that "intoxication results in incoordination(sic) and decreased awareness, which undermines vocal disciplines designed to optimise and protect the voice". (Sataloff, 1991, p. 80)

Loud environments (pubs, parties, clubs etc)

We have all been to pubs clubs and parties, where due to the nature of these environments, we find ourselves using above average vocal force to make ourselves heard. We yell and misuse our voices. How many times do we wake up the following morning feeling hoarse? The advice is that, as performers, we should try and avoid these situations as much as possible. Shouting to make ourselves heard will ultimately cause damage to the vocal cords. However, as performers, we encounter many examples of loud (or adverse) environments and the task of avoiding them becomes impossible. Sataloff mentions the following,

Backstage greetings after a lengthy performance can be particularly devastating ... the environment is often dusty and dry and there is generally a noisy crowd. Similar conditions prevail at post performance parties, where smoking and alcohol worsen matters. (Sataloff, 1991, p. 76)

Drugs

We use a variety of over the counter drugs which may, whether we realise it or not, have an adverse affect on the voice. For instance, antihistamines prescribed to treat allergies such as hay fever "may result in decreased vocal cord lubrication, increased throat clearing, and irritability leading to frequent coughing". (Sataloff, 1991, p. 80) Such medications should be used in moderation and in conjunction with plenty of water. Similarly analgesic medication such as aspirin and ibuprofen can cause haemorrhaging in the vocal folds. The use of over-the-counter local anaesthetic sprays for the throat is also discouraged as this may mask the effects of any damage that might be occurring, as for example pushing the voice to counteract perceived symptoms of cold or flu. There is also evidence to suggest that many performers use illicit drugs such as cocaine or marijuana. "Marijuana produces a particularly irritating, unfiltered smoke, which is inhaled directly, causing considerable mucosal response".. (Sataloff, 1991, p. 80) It acts as an irritant to the mucus membranes of the vocal tract. Similarly cocaine "can be very irritating to the nasal mucosa causing marked vasoconstriction, and may alter the sensorium, resulting in decreased voice control and a tendency towards vocal abuse". (Sataloff, 1991, p. 81) In other words, such drugs cause a constriction of

the blood vessels and tend to alter the brain area which is used in sensory perception.

Female Health Issues

As Sataloff observes, vocal function can also be diminished during the normal menstrual cycle.

Although vocal changes associated with the normal menstrual cycle may be difficult to quantify with current experimental techniques, there is no question that they occur. Most of the ill effects are seen in the immediate premenstrual period. (Sataloff, 1991, p. 201)

The reduction of oestrogen levels during the pre-menstrual cycle may result in a

[d]ilation of nasal, vocal tract, and vocal fold blood vessels, swelling of vocal fold connective tissues, and water retention. Perceived hoarse and rough voice qualities can occur along with a reduction in the average pitch area during speech. (Thurman, 2000, pp. Vol. 3, 558)

Some medications may be taken to reduce swelling but female performers should be aware that the same medications taken in excess can cause haemorrhaging in the vocal folds, particularly the non-steroidal variety like aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen. (Thurman, 2000, p. 560) Dayme suggests that it is better to vocalise gently during the pre-menstrual period, which of course is not always possible. In the world of the European opera houses, 'grace days' off are given so that female singers can avoid this issue. One must also take into account the use of the birth control pill which contains progesterone. Its use "may deleteriously alter voice range and character". (Sataloff, 1991, p. 202) Many female performers may never take their monthly cycle into consideration.

Food

Mucus build-up in the vocal tract, which in turn can lead to excessive throat clearing and then damage, can be a result of too much dairy intake, such as cheese and milk. Whilst no one advocates cutting these products from a day-to-

day diet, professionals who rely on the quality of their voices, are advised to moderate the intake of these foods. Chocolate may also have the same effect as dairy products. Highly spiced foods can irritate the membranes of the vocal tract.

Physical factors/Illness

Performing is much like athletic activity. "Failure to exercise to maintain good abdominal muscle tone and respiratory endurance is particularly harmful". (Sataloff, 1991, p. 71) Therefore taking care of physical health is vital to vocal health. Regular exercise and, more importantly, regular sleep are paramount. Viral infections like colds and influenzas will have an adverse affect on the mechanisms of voice. Again care should be taken when using medications to counter the effects of these illnesses. Acid reflux is another common problem. It may be associated with spicy food but it can also occur when food is eaten late at night resulting in sleep on a full stomach. This is particularly common with performers who tend not to eat before performances but afterwards, which is usually late at night. The common symptoms of acid reflux may be;

[a] bitter taste and halitosis upon awakening in the morning, a dry or coated mouth, often a scratchy sore throat or a feeling of a lump in the throat. (Sataloff, 1991, p. 78)

Study Results

It was generally agreed by the participants that at least some coverage of the issues entailed in a student's vocal health should be a very important part of the training process, but that it is often an issue that students have some degree of difficulty grasping or indeed believing. It was suggested by some that it is better if an outside health professional like a speech pathologist or medical practitioner is brought in to talk in very technical and sometimes in almost fear provoking terms on the subject.

I thought it would be better coming from an outside person, a clinical person, as opposed to an artistic person. (A)

Give hideously frightening talks about smoking and all those things. (E)

Tell horror stories aimed deliberately to scare the living daylights out of them. (C)

Another participant preferred a more subtle manner of prevention.

Rather than preventative stuff, I think the most interesting thing is to actually be there, (they know it) at the moment their voice breaks down, and say let's talk about why this happened! (H)

It was however also suggested that no matter how much you remind and instruct a student on their vocal health needs, they may not always listen and a teacher has to be cautious of the students viewing advice as quick fix options. The students must ultimately take responsibility for their own vocal health and welfare.

A month later it's like blowing in the wind. (F)

Nothing you say in first year is going to stop the people who are going to do it anyway, you can't do anything. (H)

I always approach it in terms of well you need to figure out what your priorities are, and if your priorities right now are to party, then come back to me when your priorities are a bit different and I'll tell you how to actually achieve a professional voice. (H)

Remove that feeling that you are the person they turn to. (H)

They are young, as my mother says; you can lead a horse to water. You can try, offer information so that when they come to need it, they know what to do. Which is what we are talking to them about all the time, how to look after their voice, especially when they are doing shows, we monitor them very closely. (B)

If they can't keep their voice alive and fit and vital they're not going to have a career, it's going to be very frustrating, very sad for them, it is absolutely vital, and vital they understand that for themselves they can't have somebody else again telling them what to do, they need to understand it for themselves. (B)

Habitual behaviour like smoking or drinking is very hard to overcome, with peer pressure usually stronger than the teaching staff, prompting one participant to say

You never get invited to parties!!! (H)

The complex issue of possible mental health problems was raised by the same participant.

In a course like this, if people are going to have mental health issues they will generally arise during the period of their life when they are here, so those early twenties there are serious mental health issues which come up and people don't know how to cope with that. When you are in an environment where you are prompting people to invest further in their own emotional intelligence it can uncover some really tricky things and to find a way (this is what I really love about poetry and text) to explore that through other people's voices, to say this is the size of this person's despair, or this person's love or confusion about life, it can then help people have a measure, because I think then that a student, a person when they feel an emotion and you don't know the depth of it, you don't know how low it goes, you don't have the vocabulary for exploring that then it's deeply frightening. (H)

Anatomy

Closely associated to vocal health and as an important support for all voice learning is the study of anatomy. After reviewing the literature, I was interested to elicit from the eight participants how important they feel the study of anatomy by their students might be?

The past and present literature has varying degrees of instruction on the subject. Of the main texts referenced in this study several of them have very little in the way of anatomical details to illustrate their teaching methods. Nor do they always use anatomical language when describing the technical/physical details of voice.

For example, Rodenburg uses no diagrams or drawings. She describes the mechanics of the muscles, the anatomical parts required and the physiological responses involved in voice in simple, non-scientific but easy to understand language. For example, she refers to the Larynx "[as] that knotty chain of bone and cartilage situated midway down the neck". (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 94) Linklater describes the mechanisms and actions in a non scientific fashion also. She states that "I shall not be using exact scientific terminology. I have chosen to describe the voice metaphorically, analogically and by its perceivable features". (Linklater, 1976, p. 7) She does however make use of some rudimentary line drawings to illustrate certain points, such as, the processes of inhalation and exhalation.

Berry has diagrams of the resonating spaces, the ribs, some basic tongue and soft palate drawings and floor alignment positioning. None of them have great anatomical detail and tend to concur with Linklater's approach to instruction.

Of the less commonly used texts, Turner has very simple drawings to describe breathing such as the ribs and diaphragm, the resonators and placement of vowels and consonants but nothing about the anatomical structure. McCallion has simple line drawing to explain good alignment and body use, but he has a fairly detailed diagram of the speech organs, the vocal tract, the ribcage, the larynx and the sinuses and Machlin has very clear diagrams describing the lungs, the diaphragm, the vocal tract and the larynx. She suggests that the study of the diagrams in tandem with feeling the parts of the body in use is a useful tool for the student to both help cement the learning process and teach control of the various parts of the body involved in voice production. She talks in clear anatomical language when describing the speech mechanisms.

However Meribeth Bunch Dayme has by far the most detailed of analysis of the anatomical workings of the voice in her book, *The Performer's Voice*. She has divided the book into three sections. The first section is called "Making sense of Vocal Mechanics." In this section, she has detailed anatomical diagrams including the full skeleton, the ribs, the larynx and the pharynx with notation describing each muscle and working part. She considers the whole body as an instrument not just those parts specifically assigned in the production of voice. She is of the opinion that a student actor should have a good working knowledge of their own anatomy and become familiar with the names of the bones and muscles in the body and what affect each of them has on another, particularly in relation to the voice.

Study Results

As part of the questionnaire used in this study, I asked how detailed should the study of the physiological workings of the voice be? The answers comprise both why they think it should be taught and in what detail and, more interestingly, how they go about it.

Why?

The general consensus was that as a professional actor you need to have knowledge of the workings of your own body

I think it should be offered because every student has a goal that is different. (B)

I believe it is essential. I believe that it's essential for me to know what's going on, because I don't want to bullshit and then I would choose to teach half truths. (C)

I think it is actually quite important, you are professional, if you are going to use your body as your tool then you've got to know how it runs as much as possible because without getting into the psychology of the characters and of ourselves, you can't know that exactly of course but you do have to know something. (B)

To give them a real sense of basic anatomy, where and how they organise themselves and how they are organised, so looking at where joints are, and how the head sits on the neck. (G)

How much and to what level of knowledge is necessary for a student to acquire was not so clear cut. A number said a good basic knowledge was sufficient, whilst others thought a more thorough approach was necessary.

I think they have to have a good basic knowledge of physiology, definitely because it is a reference point for the work, they have to know about the physiology of breath, the aspects of resonance, the articulators, how the voice works with the larynx. (F)

I do think it necessary for them to have an accurate body map, and a lot of problems that I come up against, are kids who don't know they have a knee, ankle or hip joint that bends or they don't know the spine has curves in it, all those things!! Or they don't know where their ribs are and that the movement of the ribs is at the back which is a huge Oh, for them, you suddenly see all their ribs becoming more comfortable for breathing, so it's allowing them to have that picture of themselves, what they do. (G)

I think it should be covered with a fair degree of accuracy and detail but don't think it's useful for actors to know all of the different muscles for example in and around the larynx..... but to understand the difference between the muscles of inhalation and the muscles of exhalation, to know what you are doing when you are working from your transversus muscle as opposed to working from your external intercostal muscle. (H)

A suggestion was made by one participant that perhaps a too scientific approach to anatomy teaching is not necessary because

Generally actors are not terribly good at being blinded by science. (D)

How do they teach it?

It was generally agreed that you need different approaches for different students. Not everybody learns in the same way and nor do they necessarily respond to very technical or scientific presentations. Imagery can sometimes be more useful.

I will say to them, what I am about to say to you isn't biologically accurate, but that's like saying let's pull a car engine apart let's have a look at the pistons, do they work independently? No they don't, is the diaphragm simply a domed muscle? No that's actually not what it is, there's tendons on it, but for our purposes, most people call it a muscle, and this image works well. So I move in and out of images and if they are not anatomically accurate I want to know they're not, and I won't bullshit. (C)

Sometimes a more pictorial approach is necessary.

I would take them through some pictures of the anatomy, structure and things like that, and I often say this is what it is all about, but I won't mention any of this ever again, but you know that everything we do is based on a solid understanding of the workings of the human anatomy. (D)

The way the vocal chords have been opened and closed and things, and you can show it on screen, on videos and things like that. (A)

I always have the charts with me, and I say, now what you've just done on the floor for the last hour and a half was working on this, and I point to the ribs and we talk generally, and then I say put your fingers on there and feel it, and they work with partners, so they start physically discovering what they see on the charts. (A)

I would introduce anatomy with a skeleton, just an idea of where the larynx fits, and that's the kind of thing. (E)

And sometimes a more brutal approach may be taken.

I said "I've organised for you to come to the hospital and have a look at all the corpses, fiddle around with their anatomy and you are to behave yourselves". So they sat there. "So this is a diaphragm – yes feel it", and they behaved superbly. One of them had to lie down on the floor just for a few minutes then they got back and vomited and passed out, two of them couldn't

come in for two days, they were utterly traumatised, however, I believe it is essential.(C)

Above all, it is essential to impart this knowledge in such a fashion that the students not only see the physiological mechanisms but feel them too.

[b]ut the way we transmit it to the students must be in a very organic way that they can feel the changes. (D)

I asked the question about anatomy and physical health based on my own experiences as a trainee performer. During my own training, we had little or no education re the physical workings of our voice or indeed our whole body. Some brief explanations were given of the working parts which effect and control the voice but I would state that most of my knowledge was gained long after my formal tuition was completed. It appears however from the responses given in this study and indeed the literature that this is no longer the case.

I believe that a sound working knowledge of one's own anatomy and, in particular, of those parts that may have direct relationship to your career/working life is vital. Whilst I also believe that to be made aware of the physical effects of drugs or smoking or shouting or food stuffs is a necessary part of the training, in the end, you can only "lead a horse to water you can't make it drink!"

The next major area of vocal training to consider is resonance.

Resonance

The old definition of a *beautiful voice* was one that emanated a fully balanced resonant sound

(Rodenburg, 1992, p. 221)

The literature talks a great deal about resonance and its achievement.

Machlin gives this definition.

The Latin word *sono* means “I sound”. The word *re-sono* means “I sound again”. Resonance is the sounding again in the chambers of the mouth, throat or nose, elements of the tone that began in the larynx when the vocal chords started to vibrate. sounding off the cavities of the mouth, throat and nose (Machlin, 1980, pp. 1966, 1968).

LK Wells in *The Articulate Voice* gives a similar definition.

Resonance is the process of amplifying and modifying the fundamental vibrated sound that originated in the larynx (Wells, 2004, p. 22).

The areas used for resonance (resonators) include the chest, lower throat (pharynx), back wall of the throat, soft palate, the teeth, the jawbone, the hard palate, sinuses, cheekbones, nose and skull. Our upper body and skull area are akin to the sounding board of a musical instrument, like that of a guitar or violin.

The sound from the larynx (which in itself is quite small and therefore does not produce much amplification), travels up the pharynx, a tube of 4-6 inches which extends from just above the larynx (voice box) passed the back of the mouth into the nasal area. When the sound travels up the pharynx it reaches the soft palate (part of the roof of the mouth) and can then go into either the nasal or oral cavity or both. Upon reaching the soft palate, the sound passes by the tip of the soft palate which is called the uvula. Upon inspection, the uvula looks like a small punching bag. This projection acts as a form of valve, channelling the sound into one cavity or the other; oral or nasal (see Figure 5).

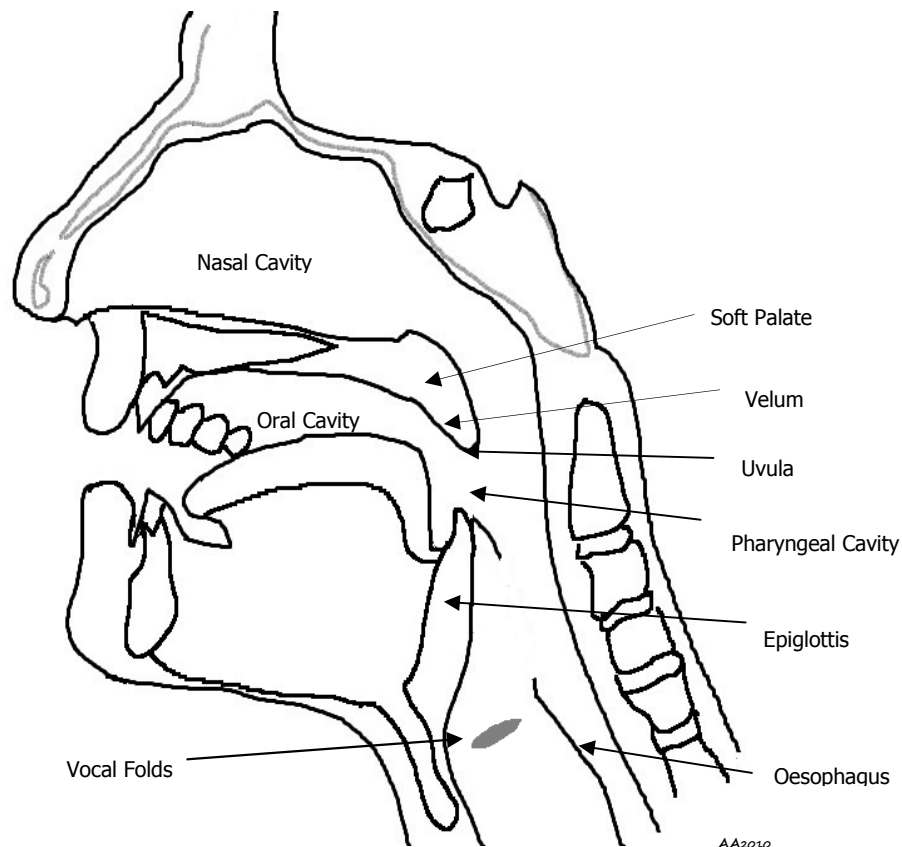


Figure 5 – The Resonators

(Based on a drawing by LK Wells in *The Articulate Voice -an Introduction to voice and diction*)

In describing resonance, Evangeline Machlin uses the example of a vase partly filled with water ringing out when a note on the piano is played:

The empty part of the vase is an open-end tube of the right length to amplify one frequency among the many in the mixed tone that we call middle C. The wavelength of this frequency fits into that particular space, so that all the air in the space begins to resound the same frequency. (Machlin, 1980, p. 70)

She likens the mouth to an open-end tube.

As such it is the resonator for the open sounds of your speech, the vowels & diphthongs. They are all oral, sounded in the mouth(Machlin, 1980, p. 71).

She contends that the mouth can alter and amplify the resonance of the vowels because it can vary its shape. For example, the 'ee' sound is high-pitched, meaning it needs smaller spaces for its wavelength. An analogy for this action are the pipes of an organ, the shorter the pipe the higher the sound. Accordingly, the 'ee' is resonated at the front of the mouth with the tongue raised and the teeth closed.

The nose is a resonating cavity that cannot alter its shape, however, it is important as the place of resonance for the consonants of N, M & NG. Machlin further suggests that the lips play some part, acting as another chamber between throat and mouth. Additionally, lip shaping can influence resonance. Total sections of the body may feel resonance and even augment it.

It is very possible that every bone in the body resonates some part or other of the sounds of strong speech, helping to give them power and beauty (Machlin, 1980, p. 73).

Rodenburg suggests that the more we can use our resonators, the easier speech will become, thereby cutting back effort and tension. She notes that "It's a bit like giving the voice a chance to echo rather than pumping it for power". (Rodenburg, 1992, p. 220)

Her main focus for resonance involves two specific areas:

- I. To wake up the underused resonators and play with them so that you can familiarise yourself with the sound possibilities.
- II. To learn how to balance and focus these sounds.

(Rodenburg, 1992, p. 221)

She details a series of exercises to help achieve these goals, which include humming into the head and nasal cavity whilst maintaining relaxed and supported breathing.

Berry identifies and talks in some detail about the resonating cavities of the body, relating resonance to breath and alignment.

There is enormous potential for resonance or amplification of your primary note. The bones themselves can be part of this amplification, and you can even feel vibration down to the base of your spine and in the stomach. Whether you use this resonance or not depends on the breath and complete freedom, or relaxation - good posture, in fact. (Berry, 1973, p. 20)

Dayme dedicates an entire chapter to resonance and vocal quality, detailing the tensions in the body that can affect vocal quality and suggesting exercises to overcome some of these tensions.

When posture, physical balance, good breath and vocal coordination, an alive face and eyes and an active imagination are present, there is every chance that the vocal tract and pharynx will function efficiently and allow optimal vocal quality in any performer. (Dayme, 2005, p. 83)

When we talk in terms of a resonant performer's voice in historical terms at least, it brings to my mind Laurence Olivier or Orson Wells or in more modern Australian terms Geoffrey Rush or Cate Blanchett. Resonance is that almost intangible sound or quality that they possess that engenders in us the listener, an emotional or, indeed, physical response and makes us want to listen. Resonance also has the implication that you will or can be heard, both of which are huge assets to an actor throughout their careers.

Study Results

Despite the substantial amount written in the current texts on the subject of resonance, very little was said in depth about resonance by any of the participants in the study. The following responses came as a direct result of the question; what do you consider are the main components of teaching voice to actors?

[t]he speech elements ... that would incorporate the articulation and the resonance. (A)

Vibration, then resonance. (B)

Then I'll begin playing with sound and begin allowing them to notice the connexion between breath and sound, and then we look at tone, resonance. (G)

Two further responses help bear out the assertions made in the literature,

specifically in relation to the use of the whole body in terms of resonance and the need for controlled breath and alignment to help support resonance and other speech elements.

When you speak your whole body should be able to feel resonance, vibration in your toes, your fingertips when you speak. So the whole of the body should be in the sound, not just little areas. (C)

Right throughout the three years breath and alignment come back, and if any problems come up particularly as soon as you change your alignment, your vocal tone changes, resonance changes, your tongue, jaw, palate position changes and that will change the shape and the nature of the vocal tract. (H)

I think it noteworthy that so very little was said by the participants of the study about resonance when this attribute is clearly a major factor in voice production in terms of the literature. This absence of comment may be as a result of the question asked re: the component of voice teaching being too broad or vague or as in the case of habits just an omission on the part of the participants when asked to give answers to previously unseen and or heard questions.

The next major element identified as associated with voice training is articulation.

Articulation

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.

(Shakespeare, 1963 Hamlet - Act 2, Scene II)

Machlin states that "Hamlet's advice to the players is as apt for actors now as it was then. Speech on stage must be pronounced "trippingly on the tongue", that is, deftly, rapidly, easily". (Machlin, 1980, p. 89)

The etymology of articulation is derived from *articulatus*, "to separate (meat) into joints," also "to utter distinctly," and *from articulatus*, *Articulate (v.)* in the sense of "divide (vocal sounds) into distinct and significant parts" and phonation: Greek phone = sound or voice; hence, the production of either. ("Online Etymology Dictionary ", 2007)

There are eight general areas of the facial/skull region used for articulation (see Figure 6):

The two lips;

The front of the tongue;

The middle of the tongue;

The back of the tongue;

The upper gum ridge (Alveolar Ridge);

The roof of the mouth;

The back of the hard palate;

Articulation can be manipulated by any one of the articulators. For example, the jaw may be raised or lowered and manipulated, the tongue raised or flattened to constrict the sound and the lips compressed or rounded to change the shape or quality of the sound.

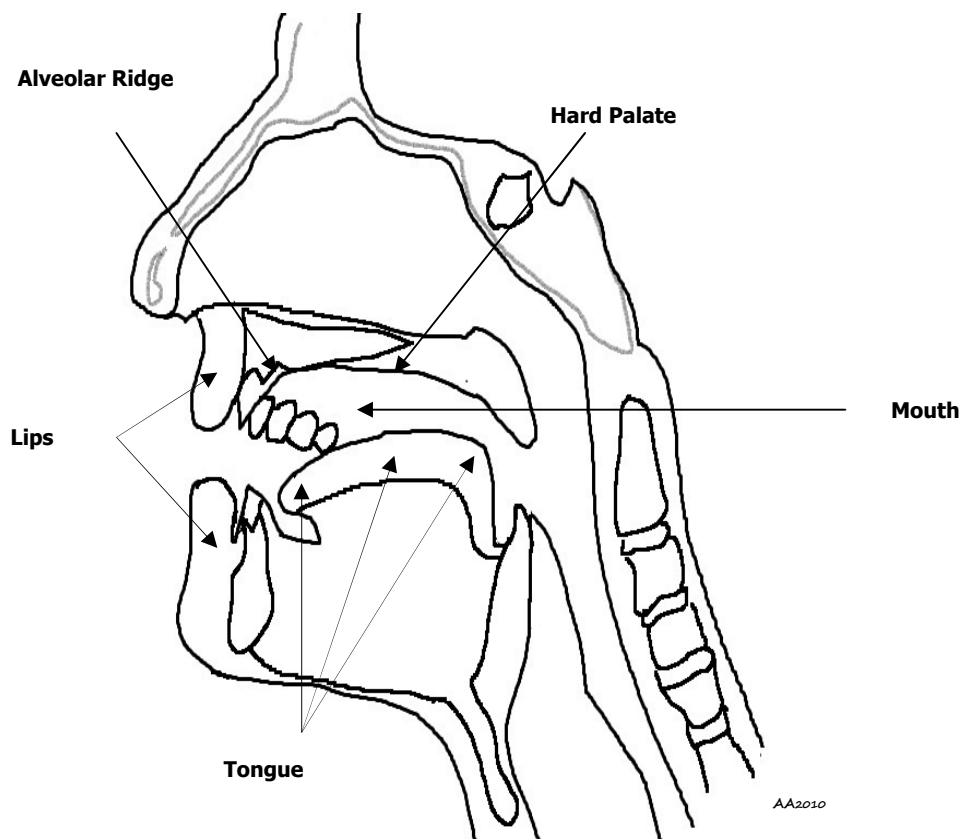


Figure 6 – The Articulators

(Based on a drawing by LK Wells in *The Articulate Voice -an Introduction to voice and diction*)

Linklater describes articulation as 'jointed-ness'; and the sound being articulated as 'jointed' or having 'joints'

to describe the process by which vibrations flowing out through the mouth are cut up into words and become speech. (Linklater, 1976, p. 144)

She also emphasises that

[c]ommunication through speech not only involves a speaker but a hearer. If, what is said is incomprehensible however much it may satisfy the speaker to say it, it fails as communication. (Linklater, 1976, p. 145)

She adds that with

[a]gile lips and tongue, free from the constrictions of habit, the one criterion for clear speaking is clear thinking. (Linklater, 1976, p. 146)

She advocates freedom from tension by limbering up the articulating surfaces including the tongue and the lips. Her series of exercises involve stretching, followed by the creation of and emphasis on vowel sounds, providing actions through which individuals can note the changing patterns of sensory experience.

Machlin highlights the deft rapid movements of the articulators, noting the importance of their accuracy as well as their agility. Articulation is, in her terms, a cutting action,

[t]ongue, lips jaw and soft palate articulate with one another, cutting up your vibrating air stream and shaping it into speech sounds. (Machlin, 1980, p. 89)

The mobile parts of the mouth; the jaw, lips and soft palate move within the immobile parts; and the teeth, gums and hard palate create the shapes in the mouth in order for each sound to be distinctive.

She places much emphasis on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), an alphabet consistent with the sounds of speech used to spell out speech/sound with something called phonetic transcription. This alphabet uses one symbol for each sound element known as a phoneme. She advocates that all students should learn this alphabet and use it as a tool in perfecting speech and in assisting with accent work. Many pages of exercises are included to perfect IPA and the use of speeches, complex poems and 'tongue twisters' that are employed for articulation exercises.

Dayme states that

[w]ords are what differentiate vocal artists from other kinds of performers such as instrumentalists or mime artists. The need for clarity and clear enunciation of the verbal message is unquestioned. (Dayme, 2005, p. 84)

At the same time Dayme makes it clear that, although articulation is an important factor in vocal production, a performer should never allow it to dominate the total communication.

Study Results

As in the case of resonance, whilst much is spoken of in the literature the subject of articulation was only raised briefly by the participants when responding to the question about the components of voice teaching and their importance. Out of the eight teachers interviewed only five included articulation in their list of specific teaching areas. This again, I feel, is as a result of a non specific questions being asked re the components identified in the literature. Of those five, all agreed that articulation came high up the list of priorities in terms of the order of teaching. One participant only commented in some detail on articulation and its importance.

I personally think that articulation is incredibly important, that understanding and I don't just mean clarity of speech, but if you don't have an understanding of your own vocal placement, or you don't have a lust for language, or you don't understand what you are saying then you won't be able to control resonance. That understanding of the spaces in the vocal tract and how they can be used, manipulated and shaped to create different sensations, both for the listener and for the speaker – I consider that articulation. It's not elocution, but it is articulation, to feel, an understanding of how the tongue moves in the mouth with regards to speech and expression that's from the articulation, not just a dry thing but actually the pleasure of speaking with passion for the actors' speech and the actors listening. (H)

The final major component identified is range.

Range

Range is the natural expression of feeling in the voice. The more we feel, expressively, the greater the movement of notes in the voice.

(Rodenburg, 1992, p. 215)

According to Rodenburg, the normal western speaker will use three to five diverse notes during the course of day to day speaking. However any speaker who needs to use their voice for purposes of communication (including emotional texts), an actor for example, needs to have at least two to three octaves available for use in their vocal range. She links vocal range to feelings and says that "as our feelings change and are so moved, so should our vocal range".(Rodenburg, 1992, p. 215) Her advocacy aims for stretching an actor's range as long as it is linked to genuine feelings.

Linklater believes that a good vocal range is innate in all of us. She says that:

Everyone possesses a voice capable of expressing, through a two- to-four octave pitch range whatever gamut of emotion, complexity of mood and subtlety of thought he or she experiences.
(Linklater, 1976, p. 1)

Berry, like Rodenburg, feels that people do not use their available vocal range to its fullest extent.

Most people are very dull in the amount of range they use, partly because of a feeling that it is false to use too much (a question of habit and appropriateness) and perhaps because they feel that the upper notes are not as good.(Berry, 1973, p. 78)

Range tends to emerge when an individual is involved with what they are saying (engaging emotion).

When you listen to people talking who are involved with what they are saying you notice what extraordinary inflections they use which seem quite appropriate.(Berry, 1973, p. 78)

She further points out that when it comes to the reading of printed text, the freedom of range can disappear altogether. By this, I assume she means a common tendency for a speaker to become monotone when sight reading, either because of nerves, poor reading skills or at least because they are concentrating on what they are reading and not on their sound.

Study Results

In terms of this study, range was commented on in several contexts. The first was as part of and in relation to the overall training program.

Get as much colour and range in the speaking voice (D)

You can talk about range as well which is something some people have to learn, the range in the speaking voice (D)

After that we would probably do a little bit of work on opening up the pitch range, and that's often done with connecting things like jaw release, some resonating through the nose and going through feeling the pitch through the body. (F)

It was also suggested that that a full vocal range is directly linked to breath control.

You can't get the full harmonic range of the voice without the breath to support it,(B)

A good vocal range is an imperative for work on text.

To serve the text will cause you to speak with clarity and energy and range and colour that causes you to be easy to listen to. (H)

They should have a flexible use of their vocal range which is integrated within text (H)

And finally, range was raised in terms of the Australian voice. It was suggested by two of the participants that Australians do not use as great a vocal range as our European or English counterparts do which can be problematic.

Range is an issue. Because we do tend to not use range as dynamically as say the English or European, because our everyday speech isn't varied as much. (B)

I think the Australian sound can be really nice if it is an open sound, if we can develop range, resonance and freedom in our voices, then it doesn't matter what kind of voice you have. I think of our politicians, and the media, (e.g. newsreaders) and they are the real ocker monotone voice (I listen to Julia Gillard, and I go – oh, that voice) (G)

Range relating to vocal sound has many dictionary definitions. One is "the extent of pitch covered by a melody or lying within the capacity of a voice or instrument".(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary) Another is simply "to wander freely; roam".(Farlex, - The Free Dictionary) The first is perhaps the more technical of the two definitions, whereas the second, I think, illustrates best what both the literature and the vocal teachers are trying to describe. An actor needs to be able to roam vocally and not be constrained or contained in any way. However one participant of this study uses the word 'colour' in the same phrase as range. This word colour may be explained in terms of the voice having variety or vividness or, conversely, where necessary a distinct absence of 'colour' may be needed depending on the role, the accent needed and style of play. For example, it may be necessary and beneficial to restrict range and colour when playing in a Pinter play where sometimes restraint of emotions are required. And it may equally be necessary to run the whole gamut of range and colour for a Shakespearian role.

Order of the Training

Having identified the major elements of voice training, I also wanted ascertain in what order these elements were taught and, indeed, find out if there was a particular order employed by each of the participants. It has already been stated that breath and alignment are the starting points but what about the other elements?

The thinking first. Then I do alignment, and that would be some floor work, you can't start if the skeletons, - the frame is out of kilter. Then I would go into breath work, all the time feeding back in the thought and alignment, and then vibration, then resonance and articulation. (B)

The main components of teaching voice include the physical aspect of the voice which includes getting the body into a fit state to house the voice. So that means integrating what you do with

all the other departments, particularly movement so that you are all in agreement about how you get the body fit to house the voice, that's the physical side of it; added to that would be the technical instruction that goes along with that physical side, the specifics of the physiological side of the voice. Then next to that would be examining the detailed speech elements of the voice. Then other elements like the phonetics, the structure of phonetics which is very important, the accents, the dialects, the verse speaking. (A)

I basically start off with a physical release, part of connecting with breath, dropping that down into the body. I'd then probably move into an area of what I call opening up the channel, opening up the breath/voice channel, so that would entail releasing all of the upper body particularly in detail like working on the articulators, opening up the throat but all the time staying connecting with breath. Then moving into sounding and resonating and then at the very end, probably some work on articulation. (F)

Number one is absolutely how they use themselves. Then working that breath - connecting breath to sound and then working with resonance opening up their resonating chambers. Then bringing word and language in after they start to feel more comfortable within themselves. Articulation is huge at that point, so articulation comes when I bring in resonance and word. (G)

So the components I think important are, alignment and breath (my new twins) although I think alignment is first, resonance, articulation, range work, I think that listening skills is a huge part. (H)

It should also be noted that other adjunct subjects to the basic elements of voice training programs were identified by the participants of this study. They included text poetry, Shakespeare, phonetics, accents and dialects and singing, all of which rely to some degree on the basic elements having been taught previously or simultaneously. None of these elements were commented on in any great detail except for singing which had specific questions asked about its inclusion in the training.

Singing

You don't sing to feel better. You sing 'cause that's a way of understanding life.

(Wilson, 1981)

The singing voice and the speaking voice both originate from the same place in the body; the larynx. So should they be considered totally different and alien to each other?

Of the major texts of voice for actors, only two really mention singing as part of their theory and both generally have a positive attitude to singing in terms of overall training. Berry in *Voice and the Actor* says:

Singing, of course, is an excellent way to stretch the voice. It strengthens the breathing and makes you find and use resonances in the chest and head. (Berry, 1973, p. 15)

Rodenburg in *The Actor Speaks* makes a statement that supports singing in principle as part of the training.

In principle, the spoken voice is the same voice, with slightly different energy, as the singing voice and vice versa. However what is true in theory can be troublesome in practice. (Rodenburg, 1997, p. 137)

This second part of this comment is very similar to some observations made by a couple of the participants in this study. I believe that they perceive the training for both kinds of vocal activity to be separate entities and that perhaps one can interfere with the other, particularly in terms of terminology and approaches to teaching.

The questions asked about the inclusion of singing within actor training as part of this survey were:

- I. If you incorporate singing in your training programme, does singing tuition have a place within a voice training course for actors?
- II. What are the benefits or negatives of singing training?

The answers highlighted a significant difference of opinion among the participants.

Five of the participants stated that they were considerably positive about the inclusion of singing as a part of the overall spoken voice tuition. Comments included:

Depending on how it's taught, but yes I do. (E)

I consider singing incredibly important. (H)

Issues raised included the argument that the speaking voice and the singing voice are really no different from each other. Of the five positive responses to singing, two were of the very firm opinion that there is really no difference between the speaking and the singing voice and that they should not be considered separate as they are fundamentally dependent on the same instrument.

I think the singing voices and speaking voices are fundamentally the same thing it is no different. (G)

I think the way we look at the singing and the speaking voice that is where the problems are. The voice is the voice, if it can sing, it can speak, and if it can speak it can sing, but we separate them. (G)

Of course, absolutely, Oh yes. You never have them separate. Same as the spoken word is necessary in a singing program. And it didn't used to be. (B)

The other three qualified their judgement by suggesting that it is important that the singing and spoken voice tuition are linked to gain a better understanding of overall voice production.

I link the Voice and singing all the time as a concept, not to be a singer, but to understand their

voice as a musical instrument as opposed to separating the two ideas. (A)

We separate them and students learn to separate them and the problem comes with the singing and the voice teacher, we realise we are working with the same thing. You've got to be on the same wave length. The difference between speaking and singing is that you probably need more air to sing. A voice is a voice is a voice. We separate everything; we don't work as a whole. My passion is that I want to bring them back to the whole. No difference speaking/singing – just more air! (G)

I think that expression of text through music is a particular skill and something which enriches people's expression of text outside music.(H)

Two participants had very strong views on the negative aspects of singing's effect on the speaking voice. They consider the two voices to be very different and go so far as to say that the singing teaching has a detrimental effect on what they are trying to teach.

It more often than not messes with what I am teaching. It's extremely different, and unless you have a singing teacher that you're in tune with, it can be very difficult. Singing is so different from speaking, you know there is a sustained note, which we never do in speech, the thing that's worked, (when I've worked with a singing teacher) is that anything to do with control or sustaining if you can get someone to sustain a thought or an emotion I'm teaching the opposite to that in speech. I'm teaching - get off it, get off it, move on, get rid of that thought, get rid of it, get rid of it, don't hold anything. So singing is not a natural act. A lot of people say speech is not either, but it seems to be a little more natural. (C)

There is a difference in teaching and methodology quite often between the singing teacher and the voice teacher. Despite the fact that you read and hear a great deal there's no difference between singing and speaking, I believe fundamentally there is a huge difference, and the fact remains there are a lot of very good singers, who have these wonderful singing voices, but you only have to go to the Opera and see the Magic Flute or Die Fledermaus and the moment they start to speak it is an embarrassment. (D)

The difficulty is when singing teachers take the view that only they know what to do, and some can be a bit painful if they believe their way is the only way. A lot of people who sing very well are very poor speakers. (D)

A third response is neither wholly positive nor negative. Only one participant posed this response, reserving their judgment on singing being beneficial. Whilst they agree it has some positive effect, the emphasis was on singing not being at the expense of the spoken voice training.

It can liberate the voice, particularly in terms of range (opening it up), and breath it can - but it is also possible that even with very good teaching they will be pushing and straining, I see and hear this quite often. I think that singing cannot be at the expense of spoken voice training. It is not the same thing. It is opening up the instrument but it cannot be at the expense of the time spent on the other. The same instrument used in a different way. (F)

I asked these questions about singing because I believe, based on my own education in Music Theatre, that singing training can have beneficial outcomes in terms of both the vocal and listening skills of an actor. I believe that during my time as a student music theatre actor, I gained many benefits from having both singing and spoken vocal training and that one supported and improved the other.

It must be noted here that I am not aware of exactly how many of the teachers questioned in this study have actually had any singing training or are indeed singers. This may or may not be an important factor governing many of the more negative answers. However in terms of singing training being beneficial to a whole vocal programme it is apparent from these answers given that on the whole it is regarded as a positive.

Conclusion

As can be seen from this discussion it was agreed by all eight participants of this study that the voice training programs are made up of five major elements. To recap they are breath, alignment, resonance, articulation and range and they are all linked to a sixth factor, habits.

One would assume that breathing is the most natural thing in the world. We are born doing it. Yet the trainee actor has to deal with a major re-think of how to breathe and then modify this most natural of acts as part of achieving the best possible vocal technique they can for their chosen profession. Similarly something

as simple as standing up straight and naturally, an act we again 'should' learn in childhood, needs to be re-learnt and adapted.

The interconnected nature of these elements is an important factor to consider and one that students have to grasp early in their training. This interconnectedness means that an individual cannot breathe freely if his/her alignment is not consciously balanced. Without the support of breath and optimum alignment, the power to utilise resonance to its maximum will not be available. Similarly without optimum alignment, tensions which impede articulation can occur and range will certainly be affected by poor breath control. As discussed, habits can interfere with the efficient working of all of these elements.

What order these elements are taught in appears to be important too and relates directly to their interconnected nature. Breath and alignment are joint first in the teaching structure, because without them nothing else works. It appears from the respondents that resonance is followed by articulation, followed by range which, in turn, feed into the other elements of voice training including text work and accent and dialect.

The Teacher

This survey was undertaken to ascertain the perspectives of Australian teachers of voice within professional acting schools on a range of issues relating to their subject. To this end, several questions within the interview structure were used to determine what teachers felt about the place and assimilation of voice teaching in the overall drama training program? Issues identified in relation to this topic include interdisciplinary relationships, varying terminologies and the blurring of boundaries and timetabling. Additionally, the teachers were questioned about the challenges they face daily and, in the longer term perspective, across the year by year progress of the students. Their answers included the different media in and with which actors have to be able to work, students' perceptions, skills and behaviours, how society and heritage may impinge on voice and gender issues. Finally and significantly, the participants were asked about their expectations of student attainments, appropriate means of assessment and how they perceive their goals as professional/vocational educators? What follows are the main points arising from the process.

Assimilation

It is a given that voice forms a major part of an actor's 'toolbox'. The teaching of voice forms a significant part of actor training programs in drama schools in Australia and around the world. Where voice training is positioned within a teaching program, its overall assimilation in relation to other technical and artistic developments is an important issue. By assimilation, I mean that voice instruction should feed into and be linked to every other discipline within the course rather than stand as an isolated performance skill which somehow adds value to the general shaping of an actor. As previously noted, the research identified a number of key subject areas within voice teaching such as breathing, alignment, range, resonance, articulation, singing and language. All of these features, in their turn, have a direct association with the acting and movement components of the course. For example, stage combat (fencing or hand to hand fight skills) taught for use in many theatrical forms requires balance, alignment and more often than not the ability to deliver lines whilst fighting. This conjunction of two forms of expertise is the case for Mercutio in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The following interview comment illustrates this point even though it relates to training within a theatre company and not in a training institute.

The whole focus was teaching acting (and all the other things, even fight) beautifully aligned with the voice, so in other words, the text work, the fight work, everything fed into the voice so the whole thing was an enormously powerful thrust forward. (C)

This approach implies that voice is at the centre of the training with all other disciplines feeding off and into its development. Similarly Feldenkrais and Alexander Techniques (as previously noted) are taught at many schools as part of their movement program and used as teaching strategies to achieve the alignment and body awareness required for optimum voice production and delivery. However, the assimilation of voice is not always as straightforward or even logical as one may think, as is indicated by the number of issues that were raised in the interviews.

One point of tension arises from the intervention into teaching processes of outside practitioners. For example, professional directors, who are brought in to the training environment in order to give students different contextual experiences and knowledge, but who perhaps do not consider the complex intermesh of disciplines that constitute an actor's training and/or fail to give consideration to the skill levels of the students (in other words sometimes asking too much of them). There is also a tendency to undervalue voice cover (coaching) within the production structure. It also appears that there are tensions in the consideration of blurred boundaries between disciplines such as those between voice, acting, movement and the subsequent, relationships between multiple staff and their use of terminologies and timetabling.

Interdisciplinary Relationships

The relationships to and understanding of voice training by all the disciplines within or outside a training program was noted by several of the participants in the study as not always being easy and, whilst no-one suggested major problems with integration, many of them pointed out that voice teaching tends to suffer when other disciplines fight for their corners in the tight pressures of timetabling. A point raised was the non-existence of, or reticence by other disciplines to have joint classes. For example, movement or Alexander Technique classes combined with voice classes could be of immense benefit to students' in terms of understanding the physical connections to their voices but this integration rarely, if ever, happens.

It worked OK for quite a while. The movement people I think didn't really like it very much; they felt too much time was being taken out of what they wanted to do with the movement process.

(D)

No joint classes in practice. We are acutely aware of it, even if there may not be an actual programme that unites all those sorts of issues, and we have quite intense discussions at the end of term, about the Alexander technique, the Alexander teachers, the Movement teachers there, the Voice teachers there, and we all talk about the students problems in relation to those specific areas and how they inter-relate and so there is a fair amount of awareness of that, even if in practice there are no joint classes. (D)

This espoused ideal may be an impossible goal because of the ever present budgetary limitation within most drama institutions.

Further to this issue was the lack of understanding of the usage of voice within productions by technical departments.

When it becomes an issue it is usually in those productions where the set, the design is working against the actors and they can't use their voices effectively. (G)

Examples of this incompatibility include external open air productions where an actor's voice has to contend not only with the elements such as wind, but also with a lack of acoustic assistance that can be provided within the more traditional three-sided closed stage and set pieces. Additionally, the common use of the raked stage can be problematic (several of the more recent large scale musical theatre productions and indeed some theatre productions have used raked environments). For example, the Sydney Theatre Company's production of *Dead White Males* and, in London, the musical *Whistle Down The Wind* have had, according to anecdotal accounts, a detrimental effect on the body's alignment and therefore on vocal ability when the actor is forced to compensate for the raked angle by standing in an unnatural position in order to maintain balance. Many spinal and alignment injuries and issues have resulted from this type of stage.

Furthermore, there is an apparent lack of understanding or fear of voice by outside practitioners, in particular again the professional directors who are brought in for student productions.

You get a guest director who is not used to it, they feel threatened by a voice person...it's not perfect, they don't know how to use the voice person at all. The staff directors and people who direct here regularly are extremely aware of how important that is and usually there are no problems. (D)

I've worked with some very distinguished directors here, but I've worked with one or two who you can tell have never worked with a voice coach, ever, and I think they are threatened by it. One man for the first time ever, he said he thought that the movement coach and myself were giving the students conflicting messages which was just a load of baloney. I don't think he had worked with coaches. (F)

Whilst in-house directors are aware of the position and importance of the voice teacher, his or her status can sometimes cause problems with outsiders who come with different perceptions or misconceptions of voice training, either from lack of experience or from their own negative or possibly uniformed personal experiences with voice which thus diminishes vocal importance in their eyes.

You're always dealing with people's perceptions and understanding of what they think voice is, and generally speaking the directors who have been to acting school, their own hideous experiences of what voice classes were. (E)

Training institutions are, after all, for the education of the students and this can sometimes be overlooked or forgotten by external directors who only have their own artistic visions in mind and not the well-being or training of the student. For example, when students are asked to push their voices beyond their level of training and expertise, this might include shouting or screaming.

It is hard for them to see it is a training institution; it's not about fulfilling someone's vision. Often what directors want young people to do, it is impossible for them to do, they're not old enough to do it, their voices are still developing. (E)

Blurring the Boundaries

The participants in the study were all acutely aware of difficulties generated when boundaries were over-stepped in terms of teaching. Encroaching on another teacher's subject is considered unethical and participants stressed the need to give careful consideration to other disciplines when teaching voice to avoid tensions. Yet, they all felt that, because voice is so directly connected to every other part of the training, crossing over into another discipline is often unavoidable and, for the most part, cannot and should not be avoided.

I don't peddle my wares as an acting teacher, but I am conscious in every class, that I am training actors, so I give people acting references right throughout the work. (H)

When I'm writing, reports so many of my comments cross over acting, movement and voice all the time, and you always feel guilty that you are treading on other people's toes. (A)

Well you just can't help it because the whole thing is the whole thing all the time isn't it? It is very hard to compartmentalise one subject, without referring it to everything else because it doesn't stand alone. It shouldn't in a way, but you have to be very careful how you do integrate. (A)

I always teach voice directly connected to the plays that they are doing and the text work that they do with me but definitely to the plays that they are doing, and to the plays that they see when they go out into the world. (C)

A further consideration is the apparent misconception surrounding or misunderstanding of the skill sets needed for voice teaching. It was noted by one participant this often occurs when employers are placing advertisements for staff.

And what astonishes me is when you see for example, the other day an advertisement for a Voice and Movement teacher! That comes up all the time and you think well it's an incredibly rare bird that is expert in both of those things. (H)

Multiple Staff and Terminologies

In many of the schools, there is more than one voice teacher employed and the issue of the working relationships between teachers arises, together with problems

of shared or different terminologies for both the staff and the students. Trust and a willingness to accept other people's theories and opinions were important issues raised by the study's participants.

The issue of trust is huge, it is really important. I have worked only once with somebody who actually I didn't trust, because I knew that they were contradicting, or 'white anting'. But you've got to talk about that because in my experience once you've talked about it, you say that's a relief, its semantics. All the time I say to students, if there is anything that seems contradictory in any of your singing classes, just bring it up straight away. (B)

It was further noted just how important it is to point out to students the differences in terminologies that may be used by other voice teachers and work through any confusion they may have with the differences.

I am now fully aware (and have been for many years) of all the different terminologies people use all over the world, and I pre-empt everything when I introduce it to students, by saying "I call it this, but in America they call it that, and in Dublin they call it this and in Wagga, Wagga, they call it something else. (A)

So what starts to happen is that they start taking the Voice class into the Singing class, and the Singing class into the Voice class, saying "is this like I do with singing or vice versa", and you say, "yes that's it that's the same". It's challenging, because you've got to be able to take it. (B)

An example of differences in terminology (and one which was noted during the course of the interviews) concerns the act of breathing and the ways in which activity might be described and tutored. One staff member may instruct a student to 'take a breath', another may say 'allow the breath,' whilst a third may only concentrate and emphasise the act of exhalation.

Similarly, there is the importance of talking about any issue arising from the use of different terminologies with your fellow staff members and the acceptance of their opinions and their differences.

Often teachers become defensive of their own terminology and territory because everyone's worried about getting a question you can't answer, intimidated by that moment when you think ooh, I don't know. Also what I think people can become competitive about is - this person is better at teaching this than I am, all these sorts of things can come up - but if you can actually say, "this is a particularly interesting way of looking at it", the very first moment it is mentioned. (H)

Timetabling

Timetabling was less commented on but is significant when threatening the time allocation to voice teaching. Most full time acting courses have a 30-40 hour a week timetable associated with their instruction and within this timetable many subjects need to be covered, for example, acting, movement, and performance practice. It was noted that the amount of time given to voice within the individual programs is not always equitable.

So I'm realising that isn't a very useful structure, because what voice tends to be is an adjunct to acting, (a poor cousin). (G)

You should have Voice five days a week plus the other things in the same way that you have movement five days a week; you should be toning the body. (A)

My god, this has got to be the subject with the highest priority. (C)

But conversely, it seems that on other courses whilst time allocation used to be an issue, tensions now appear to be resolved.

When I first started here there wasn't really any Voice. So now there is as much as acting almost. (not quite, but an hour less in first and second year, and an hour less in third year. (B)

Conclusion

It can therefore be concluded that the assimilation of voice (and all that it entails) into the whole training package is important. Given the importance of an actor's voice for his or her career, the position of the training of the voice within the total structure of an acting course should be central and have a direct bearing on all the other disciplines. We can further conclude from the comments and issues

identified by the study's participants that this is a reasonable assumption to make. Issues include, the problems faced with other departments and disciplines that are fighting for their own position within the institution, time and standing within the course, which includes the apparent lack of joint classes. This is exacerbated by the restrictions and structure of the timetable which will often place un-equal emphasis on different disciplines. Furthermore, an identified lack of understanding, (either from fear or from a lack of education) particularly on the part of outside teachers or directors, about the need for voice training and its place and importance in the training program can occur as can a lack of communication between departments and individual staff within the institution in terms of acceptance of teaching practices and use of terminology.

Challenges

Voice teachers like all educators face many challenges within their daily, weekly and yearly teaching lives. Whilst some of the challenges would be common to any pedagogical role, some are unique to the training of actors. The most common challenges identified by the participants of this study include the lack of time for both themselves and students in terms of both the allotted number of hours for classes and the amount and use of the time students have to practice their vocal studies. Different perceptions about vocalising, which a student may have accrued prior to embarking on a course which includes apprehensions about the usage of heightened language and inaccuracies in detecting the sound of their own voices, present obstacles to surmount in voice training. Additionally, the many different media in which actors work and, therefore, the styles of teaching required for the different media and their effect on voice constitute a further challenge, as do students' use of language and their listening abilities. Some participants raised the lack of vocal role models available to students both within and outside the institution (see gender issues) and gender perceptions both in teaching and in the students themselves as issues to be addressed.

Time

As discussed in the previous section, the amount of time allocated to the teaching of voice within the timetable was identified as an issue by some of the teachers. Furthermore, time also featured as a concern in relation to the students themselves, in terms of the overwhelming demands placed on students, including other class workloads and the fact that most have to work to pay rent and everyday living expenses, so that practice is often overlooked or just not diligently completed. Observations referred to the difficulties encountered in trying to instil students with the need for constant practice to perfect their art.

If you don't practice then you're not going to make any advancement you have to actually work it into your body. (B)

It was noted that students often have difficulty finding time to practice, which is exacerbated by an inability to work autonomously.

It is generally difficult for them in a course that does nine to six [o'clock] to find the time to do that. The ones that do it, you can see the change. It's most difficult for the younger ones because they don't understand their own power they haven't taken hold of themselves; they're still wanting to be told a lot and supported. (B)

The lack of drive or commitment to maintain their established work regime during their holidays is perceived as another inhibitor to learning.

For the first time in their life they have done a year of solid classes, then stop ... the voice will forget after three days-... you have got to keep going. Now the ballet they keep going through holidays, they can't stop, but actors think oh, they can have holidays now for ten weeks – fatal - that is a big problem with training anyway, that actors stop, musical theatre don't stop, but actors do and they go right back, they come back into second year, and they have forgotten everything. (A)

Also in terms of time and perhaps converse to other comments, it was noted that sometimes the teaching can appear to be rushed and that can also have a detrimental effect on the students.

The time factor and I think another problem is they try to get acting students to act too quickly. They should be doing that later, they should be doing the physical stuff first. So in a way you would almost say why can't we just have a term before they start the training of just getting themselves ready, and not do anything about acting at all, or text, just get themselves ready. I'd love to do that. (A)

Student Perceptions

Dealing with a student's perceptions and fears of what is required in terms of vocal abilities, coupled with how an individual perceives him/herself vocally according to prior knowledge and skills brought into the course, was identified as a major challenge by all the participants in this study. Specifics raised centred on students' distrust of heightened or classical texts due either to lack of experience or exposure to such language, and students' preconceptions of vocal styles based on modern televisual and film examples with very little exposure to live theatre (this includes achieving the vocal expansiveness required for the theatre). Identifying and allaying fears the student may have regarding voice in terms of their training, possibly quashing a perceived natural ability and having to change students' impressions of what voice training encompasses, present other challenges faced by teachers in their day-to-day activities.

Heightened Language

Students at drama schools study and perform both modern and classical plays as a major part of their training. Whilst some plays, both contemporary and classical, call for a more naturalistic approach to the language, there are similar numbers that introduce a more extreme form of the spoken word in order to, for example, lend a more formal tone to the speech. The speech of the Elizabethan Era and the works of Shakespeare require one style of heightened language. An illustration of this is Hamlet in Act 1 Scene 2: "O that this too, too sullied flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into dew Or that the everlasting has not fixed his canon 'gainst self-slaughter." (Shakespeare, 1963, p. 44) Similarly in a more contemporary text, like that of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, written in 1953, Miller uses the language of the puritans of the seventeenth century to emphasise the drama. "Now hear me, and beguile yourselves no more. I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement.....postponement now speaks a floundering on my part;" (Miller, 1953, p. 113). Students are not exposed to this kind of language patterning in the normal course of their lives today and it was noted by several teachers that students often find this style of language hard to grasp. Comments included:

They find heightened language strange. (F)

The thing with classical texts they can often be a bit scary (apart from the fact that students haven't had much experience with classical text) they can also get quite scared at the size they have to go with, the degree of muscularity on it to pull it off in a space, whereas naturalistic they are often more comfortable with. (F)

They are working with language that they have never worked with before and they don't feel comfortable with it. (G)

many of our students have never seen live theatre, they don't have any measure of that, they haven't connected with someone having a large emotional experience in a performative setting, and that is a huge problem, because of that mistrust, Shakespeare for example will always feel beyond them because they don't actually allow themselves to lift to the place where their love is so great (or their desire or hatred), that it spills out into that kind of heightened verse. (H)

And it was further suggested that in fact no matter in what or where you are performing, the act of performing already places the individual in a heightened state and therefore an actor requires much more vocal dexterity.

The moment you are performing, and that includes performing in film and television you are working with heightened reality which should be more interesting vocally. (H)

The fear or reticence of a student's handling of heightened language can then be directly linked into their perceptions of the size of his/her voice and the range of vocal abilities required to achieve live performance.

Language and Listening

The general consensus of the participants of this study is that many students display very poor language and listening skills when they arrive at the training institute. It was suggested that perhaps this might be a direct result of poor English teaching in high school or before.

You have to undo five years generally of bad English teaching, so that is one of the toughest things that I do, and the most rewarding. (H)

It was further suggested that many students have no understating of the common use of English grammar, syntax and emphasis.

Because our language skills are so poor we don't understand how verbs work, or what nouns are or what adjectives are, or this word is actually qualifying that word: we just say the words and are taught to read without meaning. We just say that word is right and that word is right but not as a thing that advances meaning. We can't even tell the difference between – "I told you to go away" and "I told you to go, - away". People generally can't hear the difference only that one is more angry. The other thing I think people are emphasising personal pronouns; a lot of American television has impacted on the way we speak. (E)

Also indentified was the difficulty of getting students to articulate clearly their feelings and emotions and using language in a more overt manner in preparation for the use of text in the theatrical sense.

Often or not language skills are so poor. You don't need to train in voice if you are not using language. Our language base is just so functional – like – what are you doing now, I'm going here, can you do this, or that. I always ask a lot of questions in class to get them speaking so they begin to articulate these things they feel are impossible to articulate. (E)

They are very reluctant sometimes to go to the next level of extravagance in the language. (B)

Language is a big thing, they don't know how to address language, they don't know how language works. (G)

On the issue of listening skills, it was noted that people on whole do not listen to each other enough and that students' attention spans are getting shorter and shorter. This may be in part due to the technological age they were born in to where DVD recorders or hard drive recorders are built into television sets, which allows students to fast forward or pause a program when they get bored or distracted.

I don't think we listen to each other enough, I don't think they get trained in listening. I've worked in schools for a number of years, my whole teaching life I've taught speech and voice in

schools as well, and one of the things I was conscious of, was that sense that the attention span becomes less and less and less and you have to keep shifting to do something else to keep the attention of these kids. So it is really hard and I think we are shifting into a whole new way of learning at the expense of our voices. (G)

Listening to and hearing it. I don't think we listen enough....they're just not used to listening.(E).

Finally it was noted that how imperative good listening skills are for an actor and that they will translate into all areas of their performance work including acting and singing and.

I think people's listening skills; their sense of timing, rhythm translates into other parts of their work. (H)

Perceptions of Size

Many students have a fear of the vocal sound they make. They arrive at drama school with no real conception of how vocally expansive they have to be for live performance, in other words, how much sound and tone they need in order to communicate effectively and they will also often have a misconception of the way other people see and hear them.

I reckon we are afraid of our voices. (G)

But it is very hard to get them to have the capacity for a big concept. (C)

It was noted that this notion of largeness includes a student's physical profile as well and that the task of getting the student to perceive themselves the way an audience does, from all sides, presents a further challenge alongside the vocal one.

What I'm noticing is that students work very much along the two dimensional scale, as that's what they are used to seeing. Film, video, television and working on a computer screen so they are very much used to that two dimensional kind of world. That's how they present themselves, two dimensionally so they think from the front, and very little about sides, backs and things. (G)

However in trying to change a student's perception of size and the language a further challenge is identified, that of a student's sense of self and instinct in being challenged by the new concepts introduced. How a teacher acknowledges these fears and helps students cope with them becomes a crucial pedagogical skill.

Perceptions of Personality and Instinct

It was pointed out that there can be some difficulty in trying to convince students that making vocal changes does not change who they are and that it will not impinge on their personality.

Now remember this is not about changing your personality, remember this is not about changing your accent, this is about the philosophy that a bad sound is a bad sound, is a bad sound anywhere in the world. (A)

[h]ow a person's accent can be considered by them, and the public, [can be perceived as] a judgement of their social and intellectual worth. (H)

Further it was pointed out that many students have a fear that any training and technique might encroach on and, in turn, change their perceived natural instincts as performers, which of course may not be instinctive at all but something learned from the previously mentioned two dimensional learning environments they are used to.

I have some students here who are a little bit nervous, they are often quite gifted instinctively as actors, but they are nervous of technique. (F)

Some of them have a little bit of nervousness, that if they think technically it's a contradiction to their instinct. (F)

There is a real need for voice teachers to find a way to overcome a student's hesitations and misconceptions and persuade his/her that the vocal refinements

and adjustments being taught will in fact enhance unique vocal qualities and instincts.

Perceptions of Learning and Voice

Some students can have a confused perception of what the teacher requires, trying hard to please without actually putting in the work or just wanting to get it right with a quick fix. Very often this may have come from high school learning where so much is done by rote and certain goals must be attained no matter what. This evasion of a trial and error discovery process either arises from the secondary schools' point of view where they need to cover curriculum in limited time or from an acquired cultural style in the students themselves.

They want to get it right all the time and that is the hardest thing to teach them, that it doesn't have to be right, or perfect. Some of those kids today want to meet a criterion, they want to pass it – as long as I pass, I don't care! (G)

They are not always used to contradiction and/or inconclusive feedback. Students who arrive with some prior knowledge and experience of voice from high school or private tuition, for example, which is often contradicted in the tertiary environment, may find this very difficult to accept and when you add a lack of vocal role models it becomes even harder.

It can be very challenging the first time you challenge these kids and say "actually, why don't you try it this way?" and they say "my teacher has always said it is that way." (G)

They often don't get that experience at school where they debate a lot, they do drama at school, it's not like they don't speak, but they don't know how to speak a piece of text, they don't know how to interpret a piece of language. (G)

Other Media

The challenge and ramifications of effectively teaching vocal techniques to cover all the different mediums that an actor will be asked to employ is the next issue to consider. These mediums include, stage, film, television, radio and the internet,

some or all of which include the microphone. Added to this diversity is the effect that other technologies like mobile phones, computers and the use of SMS have had on language and learning skills.

I specifically asked the participants how film and television (which includes microphone use) have affected vocal training and how much emphasis is placed on the difference between these modes and live theatre? Answers raised several issues that need to be considered. For example, how in one participant's opinion a student's research skills are actually diminished by the internet, how the mediums of television and film may have had an impact on the way language and speech is perceived and the reality that most graduating students will not work in the theatre at all but will go straight to film and television and what this does, if anything, to the voice training.

Training for Film and Television

The first issue to consider is where the student will ultimately gain employment. A common response was that most students would most likely not find work in live theatre but on television, film or other electronic mediums.

I think it's extremely interesting because in Australia anyway most of the work our actors are going to get is on film and television. We train them for the stage, but that's a fantasy, they're going to be on soaps and things. (C)

This perception may be as a result of long term experiences on the part of the participant and be purely anecdotal. The reality of this statement would be hard to prove without a long term study

Are the vocal techniques they learn the same for stage and film? Responses included an indication that the same technique should be able to be adapted to both the theatre and film-based media. An actor should be able to move freely from one medium to the other.

But look at the great actors Ian McKellen, Judi Dench all those English actors, they move across and are not over theatrical on film and television they can do the work. Judi Dench and Maggie

Smith they can just shift from one area to the other without any fear that they are being over theatrical in film and microphone work (D)

All I can hope is the technique they are trained with here, the training for a classical actor, can fairly securely and comfortably be adapted for just about everything. It does need adapting. I think as long as they are on support and not tensing and they are working on a script in their own time of making it live so that when they come into the studio in front of the camera it just snaps comfortably into place (F)

A further response makes that point that there are separate courses to learn techniques for film and television which exclude the techniques taught at a drama school including voice training.

There are courses where people learn about film acting, but they don't really learn how to act They learn how to handle the media [but] they don't really learn how to act, but just how to act for film, so it seems to me that after you've done a basic theatre acting course that teaches you how to act it teaches you how to extract the absolute most from a script, it teaches you emotion, character building all the basic Stanislavsky or whoever else that you may follow, you're taught all of that in a theatre course. Then on top of that if you really want to specialise in television or film there are plenty of courses around you can do just three or six months work in that sort of area. (D)

The Microphone

In the past, the use of the microphone in theatre was barely part of the theatrical experience at all: voices had to be strong enough and clear enough to reach audiences in theatrical spaces.

When I first started Voice work it was like, you never used a microphone, the voice should be strong enough, it was really bad form to use a mike, a sign of weakness almost, this was 15 years ago (B)

In a recent article for the Wall Street Journal by Ellen Gameran, acclaimed Broadway producer Emanuel Azenberg states that with the use of microphones in live theatre

[y]ou lose quality, you lose intimacy, you lose the reality of theater (Ellen, 2009)

However the use of microphones and amplification has become more prevalent in the past few decades. In the 1960s and 70s with the advent of rock musicals such as *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, it was necessary for the performers to use handheld microphones in order that their voices could be heard over amplified and electronically produced music which in turn led to, during the 1980s, the advent of the body microphones (a radio microphone and pack being concealed on the body and hidden inconspicuously under the hairline or on clothing) with musicals such as *Les Misérables* and *The Phantom of the Opera*. The “legitimate theatre” held onto the no mike policy, relying only on minimal directional microphones on the side and front of the stages. However in more recent times, body microphones have become more prevalent in this field as well.

Several of the participants in the study disliked the use of the microphone for live theatre and what it does to the voice and the user. For example, amplification gives a false sense of your own sound and size and, in turn, a lack of trust in your abilities.

I think the microphone has given us a real skewed sense of what our voices are, we don't trust them anymore, that everything has to be a really well produced sound, so I think we are caught up in this idea that we have to have this big, multi-faceted sort of sound from each angle. We don't trust our sound anymore and I think that's why we don't have voices. (G)

Another participant pointed out that, in order to effectively use and in turn manipulate a microphone, an actor must first have a sound working knowledge of his or her own voice.

So the more knowledge the performer has of their own voice, the more effectively and efficiently they can use the microphone. (B)

One participant went so far as to suggest that

The moment we start to mike, it's the end of the actor really. (D)

The effect of other mediums on our perception of language, voice and acting can be crucial. It is interesting to note that almost all the participants in the study commented on and were critical of the negative impact that film, television and the internet have had on the spoken voice in terms of both poor role modelling and vocal quality and articulation, coupled with the perceptions of the vocal demands or lack thereof placed on the actor in the work environment. Australian films and filmmakers came in for some particular criticism.

I think there are certainly some technique differences that you need to know between the different media, you obviously don't need to reach out quite so much with the microphone, and with film and television work, but I do personally think there is a tremendous amount of really bad vocal work in so many films, Australian films in particular may I say, and a lot of directors don't respect the actor, and if they know they've had an acting training as well, they'll do their best to undermine that. I think this is very bad, a lot of film directors are not trained very well in how to handle an actor, and they don't really respect acting, not all, but a lot of them don't. You get a lot of really mumbled, muffled work in film and television and it's usually (after watching directors) the fault of the director who feels threatened by the theatre trained actor. (D)

They watch a lot of films and a lot of television, but that is different speaking than theatre, and what happens is that there's no demands made of those actors speaking in film and TV, and because there are no demands made of them in terms of their training, they don't need to do any. So it has impacted negatively. (E)

Further to this it was noted that the small compact nature of the televisual performance impacts on a student's capacity to be bigger for theatre and may have a direct effect on connection with both the audience and their fellow actors in the live medium.

We see televisual images all the time and I don't think the modern student goes anywhere near that, the hardest thing now is to get them to be bigger. (A)

They are used to connecting through the medium of camera; they don't connect quite as strongly with the other actor. (B)

Whereas you see a film, it doesn't really matter that much. Sometimes you don't even listen to what they're saying; it is such a visual world. It is amazing to me that you can have a relationship with someone without hearing the sound of their voice (on line) incredible! (E)

And one participant was of the opinion that the internet has in some way had a detrimental effect on learning and research skills: in terms of diminishing the amount of reading and writing in which students engage.

Today the world of e-mails, computers, and internet access and everything, the ways students are brought up to learn is so different. It is so easy for them to flick on a computer, and get information without actually going to a library and searching through books and sitting and opening them and reading them and writing things down and doing all the hard yards that we used to do, they just want it so easily, so it is harder to encourage them isn't it today? (A)

Gender in Teaching

In the performing arts, there is still a widespread perception held that there are more employment opportunities for male actors than females, in both live theatre and film and television. Statistically though in Australia, this is difficult to back up as no specific data collection relevant to this issue appears to have been conducted.

However I thought it was important to ascertain from the participants of this study their opinions and any concerns relating to any gender inequalities or issues which they may have encountered in the teaching environment.

In the course of the interviews, there were four questions posed. The first related to a major issue identified through both the research prior to the selection of the candidates and then talking with them which suggests that there appear to be more female voice teachers than male and that the majority of text books written

on the subject of voice have female authors. The question then, was why did participants think there are more female voice teachers than men and is this situation seen as an issue in the actor training environment? The second question related to the gender split in the classroom and just what that split is. The third issue questioned whether it mattered which gender teaches which gender and whether, lastly, there are there are any differences in the way voice is taught to male students as opposed to female students?

In terms of this study as previously noted, it was agreed that the participants would remain anonymous; however I think it important to note the fact that the gender split was half and half.

More Female Teachers Than Male

Statistics for male versus female teacher numbers are regularly collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In 2006, across all Australian schools the results were as follows 80,556 male teachers and 189,582 female teachers. ("Australian Bureau of Statistics,")

In a further 2009 statistical analysis conducted by The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations of full and part time teaching staff at tertiary institutions in Australia, 45.4% were males and 54.6 were female. These results are not specific however to one type of course but cover all tertiary education institutions in Australia. (DEEWR, 2010)

When asked the question on the subject of there being more female than male teachers within voice teaching, general comments made in reply included;

But it is often a bit of a female dominated area. (D)

My theory on it is, there are probably more females teaching everywhere, high schools, primary schools. (E)

There aren't many men [teaching voice] in Australia, I don't know, but probably not more than five or six who make a living out of it. (F)

Even all the famous dialect coaches are women around the world too, that's interesting. All the great books have been written by Cicely Berry, Patsy Rotenberg Kristin Linklater, all women, I don't know why it is? (A)

There are more female dance teachers, there are more female teachers, there are more female doctors. (A)

There was, however, a very strong general consensus among the participants that one of the reasons that there are more female teachers than male is that voice teaching tends to be perceived as having a nurturing component which generally women handle better than men.

I think it can matter in the perception of the subject, sometimes it can be perceived as being a bit mothering, I don't know. (F)

It does tend to be a female thing, maybe it is about nurturing, nurturing the whole person I don't know if women do that better, but it is what women are expected to do. So maybe it is a gender thing. (G)

It's seen as a nurturing, dinosaur, wafty kind of thing to do. (C)

I think it was Kristin Linklater that said it – she said it is not a coincidence that it is predominantly women in the field, because there is an aspect that is about nurturing and growth, that's what women have traditionally been good at. (F)

I think that kind of nurturing, is something women are more satisfied by I would say, they like to look after people and they like to help people develop, then if that is nurturing, then yes I would say that is rather more feminine (rather than female) a more feminine trait, it doesn't have to come from a female. (H).

A concern was raised about whether the emphasis on the nurturing role and the greater number of women teachers might have negative effects in terms of role modelling.

So I think that is a problem – that whole thing of role model for young men, here they are being taught again by more women, more “motherly” women. (G)

A further concern that arose from this question was the issue of status and the perception that the job is one with less authority than say directing and therefore perhaps not so attractive to men.

Voice doesn't pay very well and it's not a very well respected profession. In the theatre how many theatre companies do you know who have a resident voice teacher? And most directors don't bring them in, it's seen as something you do if you couldn't succeed as an actor. So there is a real status problem there for males, money and status. (C)

If there are gender politics happening elsewhere in a department, if an opinion is dismissed, because it comes from a woman, that's an issue and can be an issue for the value of the voice training within the course as a whole. If there were strong male voices as head of department or artistic director who have issues with female opinions, which has happened (I've worked in places where that's been an issue) then voice can become devalued in the program as a whole because it is being championed by a woman. So I think that can be an issue at times. (H)

And it's a service industry and that's not generally an attractive proposition to most men. So I think sexism has a lot to do with it. (E)

Class Gender Split

When the participants were asked what the optimum split of genders in class should be the general consensus was that the ideal should be equal number of students of each gender.

I think it is better if it is a good mix generally. (F)

Fifty, fifty. (E)

Half and half. (B)

In turn, these opinions were qualified by a number of further more detailed comments. An equal number of males and females is an idealised situation which does not necessarily reflect the actuality that more girls tend to audition for the courses which then makes it sometimes impossible to achieve a 50/50 split

Wouldn't it be great if it was half and half but it's not and we bolster numbers, we don't have enough men....so oh wouldn't it be lovely if we had ten boys and ten girls, it just doesn't work. Boys get snapped up elsewhere because boys are like hen's teeth. (G)

But it was also noted that it can sometimes be useful having an imbalance of the male/female ratio because male voices tend to dominate a group and can in fact overpower the female voices.

Obviously the more women that are present the more balance there is, the better it looks, the better it's going to sound and the girls are not going to feel quite so put under by booming male voices, not that all males voices are booming or deep either, but there is a certain sound level that the male voice makes that can swamp the girls unless you're very careful as a teacher about that. (D).

Another response went further suggesting that having a complete gender split in the classroom on occasion was often extremely beneficial to both the students and staff.

Having a complete division of genders was also seen as a useful teaching strategy, in the early days of getting people to work with the ideas of heightened emotion and heightened text and passion I found it really effective to divide by gender. In first year there is so much argy-bargy about ranking through the year and who's top dog, and sometimes the men can really dominate that, the wise cracking guys at the back of the class (not literally) can overcrowd the other voices. So to get people to express themselves individually it is sometimes a gender issue. (H)

One participant found gender separation useful in terms of their music theatre course with particular reference to the male and female voice having very different ranges which can be more evident whilst singing.

I think sometimes, particularly with the musical theatre. I quite liked having the boys and the girls separately, because their singing did push their voices into different ranges, and also we're trying to match the speaking and the singing voices at that point, and it was easier to do them separately in certain areas, and in other areas I think for other types of classes, they should be mixed. (A)

Another issue raised was that where a gender split is not achievable, it is imperative for the teacher to explain the physiological differences and encourage the women to use vocal power in their own terms.

If however a complete gender split is not possible and you do have a mixed class it is important to give an explanation of the physiological differences to allay any fears that the female students might have in terms of size, volume and power. If you have got a mixed class, you have to explain to them and I say to them “look, the length of your vocal chords are different in male and female that is a fact, but it doesn’t stop you having the power on stage of a man, if you are worried about some of the work we are doing, you think oh do you want me to sound like that, because I can’t sound like that because I don’t have that deep voice and deep resonance” Once they understand that they can actually come to terms with the fact that women have as much power as men, then it doesn’t become an issue mixing them up. (A)

Does it Matter Who Teaches Who?

In the early part of the 20th century when names like Clifford Turner were foremost in the field of voice teaching, male teachers only taught males and female teachers taught females. In the forward of Turner’s *Voice and Speech in the Theatre*, Masters Degree voice student Samantha Mesagno is quoted as saying;

Clifford only taught men (apparently that was the normal approach in those days); men taught men and women taught women. The reason it seems was so that the men had a good masculine voice to tune to in their teacher. Likewise for the women teaching women, it was felt that women had a very different feminine quality in their voice, with more inflections and registers and being much lighter in diction. (Turner, 2007, p. P x)

This complete separation of the genders is not prevalent in teaching today as the responses by the participants reflects, but it was felt that it is ultimately important to have both sexes teaching in terms of role modelling.

No, I don’t think so, but... We do need a male; I don’t think it has to be, but just to have that other voice, that other model around. (B)

I think not, however, I think it is lovely for the males to have a male voice around all the time. (C)

No I think it is really important to have different vocal role models in an actor's life. I think it is extremely important that in terms of clarity of speech connexion to expression, passion for language, I think it is extremely important for actors to have vocal role models and I do think that is important in terms of gender. It doesn't have to come from their voice teacher who is a facilitator, but if there is no one around who has a strong male voice (with students using television as their reference point these days), there aren't a lot of strong professional theatrical voices around and that is a problem I think. It doesn't have to come from their voice teacher but there should be someone, somewhere. I don't think it is a gender specific issue. It's like parenting, it doesn't have to come from the parent, but it's important there are good role models around. (H)

However it was also felt that same gender teaching could have its benefits in terms of the students being able to relate to the teacher in the case of problems or personal issues.

Some people find it more comfortable to talk to a male, while some people prefer to work with a female. (E)

I think men can teach women, and women can teach men, I don't have an issue. Sometimes if there are personal issues that people come to the course with, and some teachers push buttons and it's those kids who don't really last actually, because, they come for the wrong reasons. That's as you work with people you find out. (G)

In particular we've had this thing that Australian men don't like being taught Movement by women, because they feel attacked physically. They feel very naked, trying to move in front of a woman, they feel embarrassed and they find it much easier to have a male..... For all the movement they have done in their life, it has been with men hasn't it at school games and sports, so they can relate to that... Voice is a new area to them, singing's a new area, and I think singing particularly, men quite like having women, because it gets more personal, and more of a "mother figure" for them, and they seem to relish that. So movement and certain voice, the physical voice I think they prefer to work with a man. The technical thing like poetry and phonetics, they are quite happy to deal with a woman, because their bodies aren't being exposed. I think that's all it is. (A)

Is there a difference in the teaching of the two sexes?

Some of the participants noted that fundamentally the teaching is the same for both sexes: an actor is an actor and a voice is a voice no matter what the gender.

On the whole the approach would be the same, though there may be specific problems relating to gender. (F)

No I don't really; I think what matters is that the person is authentic and respectful of individuality. (F)

From an acting perspective I'm not teaching male and female voices as such, but I'm teaching the voice that the student has. (G)

And some stated that they would approach the male and the female voice differently but only in terms of imagery and vocal emotion.

I do have different approaches with men to women, and men's ability to play passion without playing aggression; women's ability to play passion without playing weakness or becoming overly emotional. (H)

I do use different terminology and slightly different physical images because you are working against different habits. (H)

Conclusions

The act of teaching is, in itself, is a challenge. A teacher is challenged to create the right approach and presentation of their subject that will reach and inform all of their students and a student is challenged to ingest and understand the subject matter presented. There are four specific areas of challenge identified in this study and they are time, student perceptions, gender and other media. Whilst in the analysis they have been dealt with under separate headings I feel that in fact they all overlap each other. (See Figure 7 diagram)

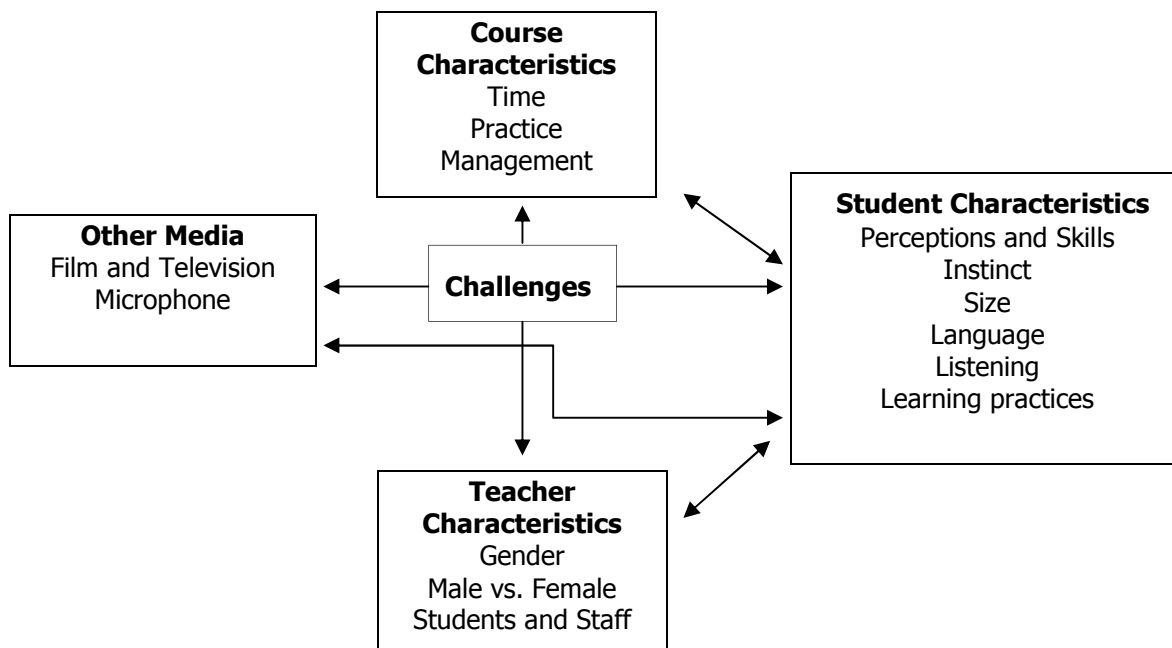


Figure 7 – The Challenges of Teaching

Course Characteristics

Time, in terms of the amount given to the actual teaching within the school’s timetable, was discussed previously in that it is a huge challenge to the teachers fitting in their prepared lesson structures. However time management for and by the students was seen as major challenge also. It was the general consensus that students find it difficult to perfect their learning and their skills away from the classroom due to the lack of time available to them beyond school hours, which for most full time courses are a 9am – 6pm day, five days a week.

Most students have to find time beyond their prescribed daily study hours to have a job in order to meet rent, food and in some cases tuition expenses. If you add in other social influences and activities, i.e. friends and family, it may leave very little time for practice of technique. Couple this with a student’s learning abilities, prior skills and drive, and practice and precision may falter further. Many of the students in the acting courses have come fresh from their senior secondary school environment where learning can be a “spoon-fed” process, an environment that is often characterised by lower levels of student independence. Therefore managing their time efficiently may be something the students have never had to deal with

and therefore practice and honing of skills in a regular disciplined way does not come easily to them.

Student Characteristics

Dealing with student perceptions about what the voice and voice training is and the respective ramifications were a further challenge identified. This was particularly significant in light of the poor language and listening skills typically exhibited by the students. The language involved in a play script is often very different from what is used in everyday life. Therefore the vocal dexterity needed to make someone else's words yours and in turn understood by an audience is a challenge faced by all actors. Young student actors often come to an institution without any exposure to this heightened language or for that matter very little experience of speaking aloud. The use of heightened language in the more classical repertoire can often be confusing and daunting. Today we do not speak in what may be perceived by the students as a "flowery" or "over the top" style. We have in fact if anything reduced speech and language and in turn listening. With the advent of the internet and applications like Facebook, more and more of us write to communicate rather than speak and when we write, we write in initials or very short sentences. The same can also be said for the mobile phone and SMS. Shortened words are used, often leaving out vowels for ease of sending and brevity.

This complete integration into our lives of computers and mobile phones appears to have a direct relationship to the identified issue of size required for performance and self perception by the students and the apparent inability of students being able to perceive themselves in a three dimensional manner. The stage is a three dimensional forum, the movies (until very recently) are a two dimensional medium as is television. Other three dimensional activities such as going to the library to get a book, writing letters and interacting with people in a face to face manner have diminished with the convenience and simplicity of conversing on the mobile phone, e-mail, messaging and research which involves accessing. The impact of screen culture may have unintended ramifications such as the flattening of three-dimensional vocal qualities.

Other Media

What have the effects been of newer or different performance mediums had on vocal training? One question asked was; are the vocal techniques taught suitable to cover all the different mediums the students will find themselves employed in? The general answer was yes, a good solid vocal technique should be suitable for all the areas of performing arts. But this point of view came with certain reservations and concerns. Perhaps the major one of these was the fact that whilst we are in practice training actors for the live theatre the truth is that they are more likely find to find employment outside of this medium in film and television. The questions that can be raised from this are: is this move away from employment in live theatre as a result of a diminishing amount of live theatre produced in Australia and/or is this as a direct result of the theatre subscribing public also diminishing, preferring more electronic forms of entertainment?

Another concern raised was about the size of voice required for the stage as opposed to film and television, which has a direct bearing on the issue surrounding student's perceptions of size and themselves. Film and television are generally more naturalistic communication environments where the perception is that one does not need to project or have perfect support because microphones are used to amplify and fill out the natural voice. Whilst there is a liberal use of the microphone in film, television and music theatre and whilst it allows for more naturalistic speech patterns in these art forms, it was felt that it was not appropriate for the dramatic theatre medium and indeed gives actors a false sense of their voices. In addition, due to the perceived lack of good role models in these mediums in terms of speech, it was generally felt that film and television mediums can have a detrimental effect on the perceptions of voice and therefore on vocal training in terms both of the expectations students bring with them into the course and in terms of those mediums supplanting the theatre careers towards which courses are designed.

Teacher Characteristics

The final challenge identified was that of how gender relates to teaching from both the teachers' and the students' perspectives. It was generally agreed that there is no difference fundamentally between teaching the male and female voice apart from physical images and terms relating to gender. There was consensus on the fact that there are more female than male voice teachers in Australia. As to why

this is so, it emerged that most of the participants felt that voice is perceived as having a nurturing nature which is historically perceived as something women do more successfully and/or that is a more feminine trait at least. Added to this, it is suggested that the profession of voice teaching is not always highly regarded or well remunerated which results in fewer men choosing that profession as a career. This can then have real ramifications in terms of role modelling for the students when you consider the question of who teaches whom. Whilst overall it was felt that there were really no serious issues with who taught whom, it was considered important for the male students to at least have the example or role model of a male voice accessible to them whilst training and that the ideal situation would be to have both male and female voice teaching practitioners on staff. As the latter is not always possible for reasons already stated, it can become a challenge in the classroom setting. In addition, a further point to consider is that of the emotional side of the students. They may feel more comfortable with talking to someone of their own gender and perhaps less exposed in that situation. Given that they are generally very young and are perhaps not used to such self-exposure, it can sometimes be more beneficial or easier for them to talk to a same sex teacher.

Expectations and Assessments

An important part of any training program in any sphere is the assessment processes undertaken by the students and the expectations about their progression through the course placed upon them by the teaching staff. The training courses for actors in Australia are generally over a three year period, with some exceptions in the case of part-time courses. They usually take the form of a Bachelor of Arts (Acting) or an Advanced Diploma (Performing Arts or Acting). However unlike most university degrees or diplomas, acting students do not have to complete a great deal of written work in order to pass the units within their courses. Most of the monitoring and assessment of students in an acting course are undertaken as practical tasks and are of a cumulative nature throughout their programme of study. This is particularly true of the voice component. Assessment can take the form of video and audio recording of their work, pre and during their training, practical tasks to which the students are assigned, and most of all performance-based evaluation. Sitting in judgement are the voice teachers whose experience and knowledge form the basis for their opinions and assessment. The assessment

process is therefore highly subjective. One participant in the study made a comment which helps illustrate this intrinsic difficulty.

How can you give marks for acting? (D)

However before considering the assessment process, I wanted to ascertain from the participants in this study what they felt were their expectations of student achievements both on a year-to-year basis and in their overall observations across the course. Their answers included the need to impress upon the students an understanding of the importance of voice both within the training program and for the profession, plus specific measurements for a year-by-year break-down of progress and considerations of the time frames involved.

The Importance of voice

It was suggested by several participants that instilling the importance of voice training into a student is perhaps the primary responsibility of the teacher. Understanding vocal importance will facilitate and speed up students' learning. Such awareness also starts them on the path towards maintaining a professional attitude to their voices.

To understand that voice matters. I would want them to know how it works and why it's important to be able to warm themselves up, to be able to make adjustments in performance (C)

In the process of instilling vocal importance, the teacher should avoid preaching and using a dictatorial manner.

I really try to resist becoming school maamy about it because the whole process then becomes about whether or not they are meeting your approval, you as an individual and you as a lecturer within a training institution, so I try to instil in them the sense of professionalism and part of their training is getting them to grow up. (H)

There is also the expectation that the student's ability to integrate effectively into the larger group is likewise important as this ability will prepare students for the theatre company structures in which they will invariably find themselves in their future professional working environment. Similarly, their commitment in terms of attendance should also be closely monitored.

Evaluating their attendance, how they integrate into the class, how they react, how they respond; all of those things are being evaluated. (G)

In terms of the year-by-year break-downs of expected developments of their students, several of the participants talked about the mechanics and mechanisms needed for optimal vocal productions. Cumulative evaluations depend on a student's ability to put principles in action through the spoken word in poetry and text. Students also need to develop physical awareness of themselves and their vocal mechanisms fairly early on in their training. However it was also pointed out that, whilst the teacher may expect certain skills to be attained at the end of every year, not all students learn at the same pace and therefore one cannot be too rigid in those expectations and different time frames may apply across the student cohort.

Procedures and Components of Voice

As previously noted, most of the current texts commonly used in acting training schools across Australia have chapters dealing with the basic stages and components of voice instruction, including the mechanics by which it is taught. Whilst the texts do not specify training segmentation, the participants in this study were asked to be specific where they could about their expectations on each year's progress. It was found that they concurred with most of the literature in terms of these mechanics, adding some stage markers. Such mechanisms include breathing, alignment and resonance which also encompass flexibility in terms of range.

[At the end of first year] you expect them to be naturally, organically breathing much deeper; you expect more of the body to be involved in the sound. All the resonators being free and open,

and as a result of the resonators being free and open and being used, everything starts to vibrate. (D)

There shouldn't be anything happening vocally that distracts an audience from the content of what someone is saying, rather than how someone is saying it. They should be flexible in terms of their alignment, they should understand what efficient alignment is, and how to achieve it, how to incorporate it in characterisation. They should have a flexible use of their vocal range which is integrated within text, so it's not just about being melodic, but you are incorporating that into your ability to better tell a story. They should have understanding of their vocal mechanisms, so they should understand how to achieve efficient, consistent breath support. They should have an investment in language and be improving (although not at professional level sight reading), but they should be working on their sight reading. (H)

I'd expect them to have a clear understanding of their own pattern, physical and vocal, but that's a lifelong curiosity. I'd expect them to have a basic understanding of phonetics ... to be able to sight read competently, not necessarily as well as at the end of 3 years ... to have a far greater knowledge of text, that's crucial; ... understand how to keep their voice healthy [and] a basic understanding of support. I'd expect them to understand what constriction is, what it does. They may not be able to totally address it, but they should know what it does, and I'd have expected them to sometime in the first year to have experienced a free voice, not necessarily continued, but at least have had experience of it and be able to take that onto text. (B)

The end of second year ... they should have a professional level of vocal use, so their voice should be healthy, powerful and flexible ... have really confident text use ... understand how to work with and learn a new accent or dialect and ... understand how to take a piece of direction and apply their own vocal understanding to achieving a particular creative goal. Then at the end of third year they should be a professional actor, which is hard because they often go back rather than going forward at the end of third year. (H)

Yes, second year goes into more much more intricate and challenging text, in poetry and accent and dialect. It goes into a lot more vocal stamina, vocal fitness, vocal dynamic, that is why in the first year everything needs to be covered and they need a solid knowledge. (B)

Some of the participants also explained their expectations not in terms of actual activities but in a more holistic manner.

I became more interested in how can we open those voices up and get more freedom, more range how can they make the text more compelling? So I'm still trying to find ways to do it. (D)

But there is an ease with which people can speak and a wholeness in their voice and that's what I am looking for. A wholeness, with ease. (E)

Here is a person who wants to be an actor. I'm interested in allowing them to find the bigness, the fullness of that, the integrity, the authenticity of what that is, rather than making them sound like someone else. (G)

I want them to have a voice which is embodied; ... A lot of girls come on voices which are not connected to them, speaking text and their voice is all over the place, they don't have that sense of how. It's not theirs. That's what I'm interested in finding and it doesn't have to be always a beautiful voice. In fact I think I'd steer away from the beautiful voice. (G)

Physical Awareness

It was noted that a further part of the learning process involved students' physical awareness of their voices and the mechanisms for vocal wellbeing. Understanding the underlying physical feelings and motor skills required for optimum vocal production is fundamental for those wishing to pursue an acting career.

they [should be] aware they have that support on the whole of their instrument, and to achieve that all the other things we were talking about freedom of passageway, the flow of the breath, alignment, posture, neck, freedom of the jaw are all working to allow that to happen. (D)

They should understand the purpose of the work, understand why they warm up and what they need to do to warm their own voice up, how to create a flexible, responsive vocal instrument, even if they can't yet do it, and are still exploring the inner regions of their vocal potential that's ok. (H)

That's why it is concerning when some people just can't get it together in the first semester, not just the voice work but how to understand, how to work, for they'll have missed that first part of the physical knowledge of knowing it in their bodies, they've got to know it in their body. (B)

Time Frames and Making Progress

The time-frame issue involved progressions from simple to more complex tasks, with students absorbing the basics in the first year of their training. However, this observation is coupled with the notion that not all students learn at the same pace and, therefore, a teacher must accept such variations and find ways to help the

student move through their training effectively.

The biggest problem is that students don't get through the basic problems in the first year and that then becomes a huge burden on their back for the rest of the training. So if they can get the basics of the body-mind-voice connection right at the end of the first year, then at least you can start refining them in the second year. But if you keep having to give the same notes in the second year ... That's the burden. So the expectation is huge at the end of the first year to get those basics right. (A)

Of course there are bench-marks: they need to have learnt things, they need to have committed stuff to memory, they need to have worked through a certain series of things, but whether they all end first year at the same place, it is never going to happen and I've seen students suddenly in third year GET it, suddenly blossom. Some [may] never get it and students who get it in the first class, and they work it and progress it. I think everyone is in a different space because everyone has a different kind of structure and they are all constructed in a different way, so there is no way they can all be at the same point. (G)

Anybody who comes to an acting school who is not at a different place at the end of first year, than they were at the beginning, everybody, every single student and it's whether or not they can go fast enough to get to where they need to be at the end of the year. (E)

So first year it's a measurement against who they were when they came in and that's positive and negative. If someone comes in with a great voice and doesn't grow, why are they here? So I evaluate that too. Then in second year and again into third, it's measuring against what I consider to be industry standards which are often higher than industry standards. (H)

The end of the second year, I'm not so fussed because if they have done it in the first year, the second and third year should go together more, because sometimes their emotional journey doesn't happen until the end of the third year. I don't mind about that. (A)

Assessments

As previously stated, the assessment process for actor training is largely a practical one and of an ongoing nature, both in the classroom and in performance, involving cumulative feedback frequently through end-of-semester one-on-one interviews. In many ways, this process reflects the use of performance and rehearsal notes given by the director during a run of a play, a process which they will encounter throughout their professional lives. What is said one day is applied the following

and any problems are nipped in the bud. This point is borne out by the following statements from several of the study's participants;

Some people like oral feedback, some like to read it, some people like to watch it. (B)

If we feel there are problems, students are advised of them there and then, we don't just wait until the end of term. (D)

At the end of every term whenever they get a report, it should never be a surprise to them, it should always be things they already know and it's just putting it on paper. If you write surprises, to them at the end of the term, you are not being a good teacher, because you should have told them those things during the year. (A).

But how and what does the assessment of students comprise of in real terms?

Pre-assessment of students was the first thing highlighted in the analysis as an important part of the process. This is usually done when a student first arrives at the institution and may include written notes and both visual and audio recordings. They may be used at a later date for the evaluation of a student's progress and as a learning tool for the student.

At the beginning the year with the first years their movement and their voices are recorded and at the end of that year we'll have a look at them again and see what has changed. (D)

X records them at the start of the course, but that hasn't been used as an assessment tool really, it's an interesting little thing for them to note for themselves. (H)

You evaluate what they come in with, you evaluate how they engage with the work, how they understand the principles behind the work and can apply it autonomously....So first year it's a measurement against who they were when they came in. (H)

I videotape them as part of the verse and speech assessment they do mid way through second year, and although they aren't comparing it with an earlier recording, I have found that letting the students see and hear their work in that particular kind of assessment is really useful, it can really accelerate the learning, or the assimilation of notes. If I had the time, I'd do more video and audio taping and give them feedback, but there is just so much to cover. (H)

The first thing I would do in a Voice class is tape them, if the audition process has been done correctly, you already should have documentation on their vocal problems. Then you'd tape

them reading non dramatic text it's very important they don't perform on the tape, they just read non-dramatic text. You keep that as a document, which you add to maybe twice in the year, I would always video a piece of text work, that they have been working on, and then sit down with them and play it back, and look at it quite objectively, because they need to learn to do that and you say "can you see what you are doing with your ribs there, can you see what you did with your chin, can you see what you did etc?" all the little basic things, and you don't let them listen to or watch on their own, you must always feed it through, and be quite cool and calculating about it, so that is my evaluation apart from anything I write, which is only confirmation of what I have said or what I've seen or heard, that is all the writing's about. (A)

Evaluation and monitoring a series of specific tasks and exercises was also considered valuable. These tasks include the construction by the student of a vocal warm up for themselves and others.

We might be looking at, for example, construct a fifteen minute warm up, what would that consist of? What would you need to look at? They would then go and research that, write it down and then present it, as a way of starting to think about it, an ongoing evaluation. (G)

The teachers also require students to keep a journal record of their learning activities for assessment. These journals are specifically tailored to record the students' notes and observations from all their voice classes.

For me, I set up a whole series of little tasks they have to achieve through the year, so that is part of the evaluation process. A lot of reflective responses from kids in journals, or particularly reflections that I have asked them to provide for me. (G)

First year they keep journals ... For some people that is really useful, I would say that is more trouble than it's worth, because people can manufacture a journal and not use it at all. There are some people ... for whom giving them the option is useful, and gets them to do something they wouldn't have done and they find valuable long term. (H)

In first year they make a study of Patsy Rodenburg, her first book, *The Right to Speak*, the second year they have to do a critique of a voice and acting text. It can't include the one they've done in the first year. First year they all do the one book. Second year they have a list of ones we recommend, and they have to relate it to their practise as an actor. (F)

Conclusion

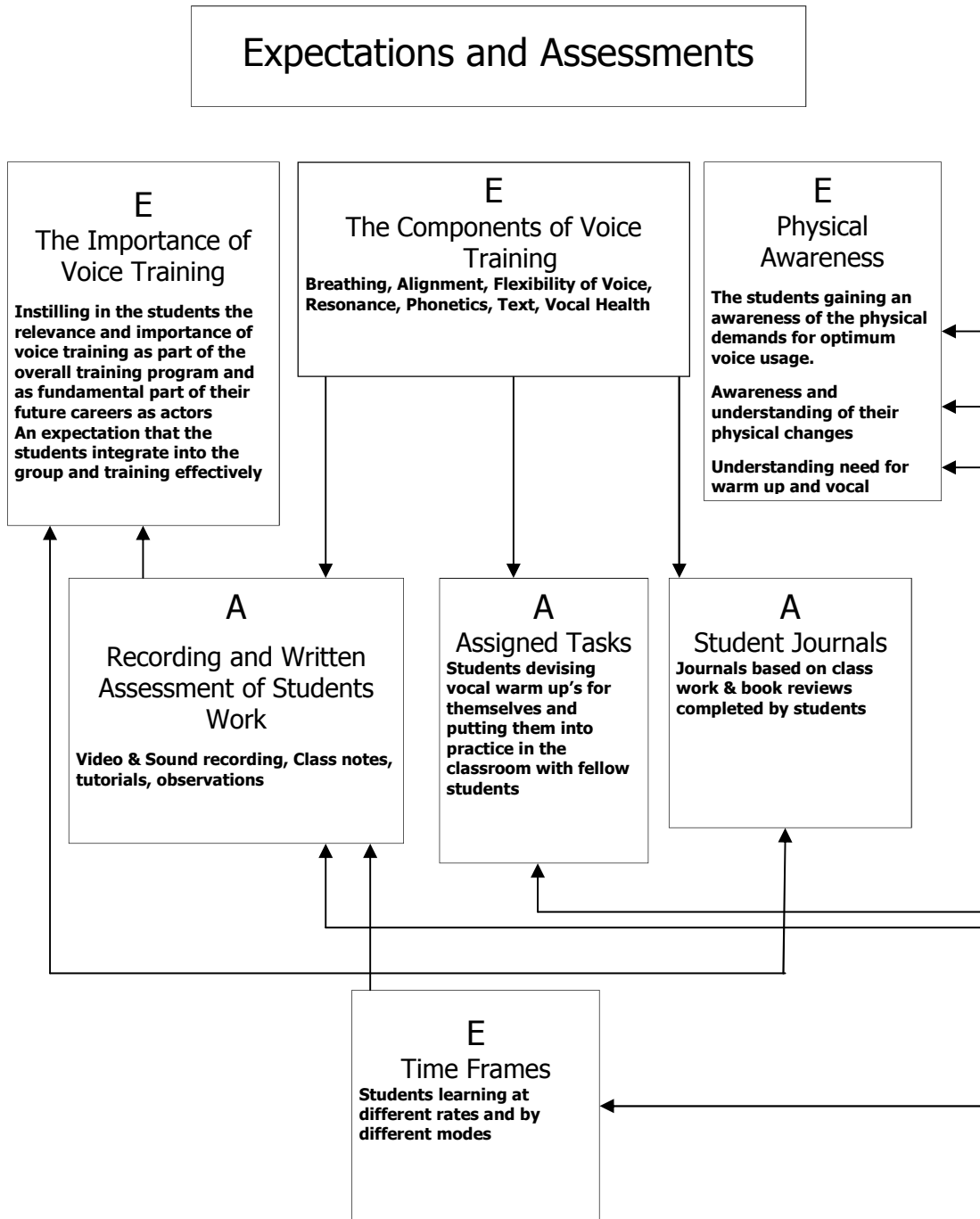


Figure 8 – The Relationship of Expectations and Assessments

In terms of teacher expectations and the assessment process of students, the expectations identified inform and shape the assessment process and vice versa.

It was noted by several of the participants that, first and foremost, students must gain an understanding of the relevance and position of vocal training within the whole acting program. This understanding will hopefully encourage a student's passion about and commitment to good vocal practices throughout their professional working lives as actors, which is coupled with the expectation that students integrate effectively into the teaching group and training program as a precursor to professional theatre company life and rigours.

These expectations can be assessed by the teachers noting both their participatory levels and speed of understanding of the work. Other teacher expectations include a grasp of the prescribed components of breath control and alignment. A number of the participants took video or sound recordings of the students at work both before starting tuition and during the training in order to monitor progress. It is also important to take into consideration the notion of time. Some students may take the whole three years of their course to achieve what others do in one year and some are good at visual and pictorial style learning, whilst others need a more oral approach. The rate and means of learning must be considered in the assessment process where students must be assessed individually. Likewise physical awareness can be both observed in class and through the use of practical tasks like self devised warm ups.

A general observation to be made about the assessment procedures described here by the all the participants, is that there was no inclusion or mention anywhere in this study of any scientific or controlled measurement exercises involved in the training of the voice. This may be as a result the present training environment where funding and time is in short supply.

Australian Voice

Australian English is a fundamental symbol of the Australian identity and the accent is probably the most recognisable element of this regional dialect of the English language.

("Macquarie University - Department of Linguistics - Australian Voices,")

Australia is considered one of the most isolated countries in the world. Its stretches some three thousand miles coast to coast and geographically is several hours flying time from its nearest neighbours. This isolation has undoubtedly had an effect on the performing arts over the years, in terms of speed of or lack of exposure to new and different arts forms in the English-speaking world, to the great and legendary performers and to cutting edge training, which was only to be found with the establishment of formal training institutions for actors in Australia such as NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art) and WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts) in 1958 and 1980 respectively, making them much younger than both their US and British counterparts. For example The London Academy of Performing Arts (LAMDA) established in 1861 and The Juilliard School in New York was established in 1926

Are the needs of and issues faced by Australian teachers of voice any different or greater than their pedagogical counterparts in the rest the world?

As part of this survey, I asked three questions specifically relating to the Australian voice and its teaching. They were:

- I. What do you consider are the unique vocal needs of the Australian performer?
- II. Do you consider that voice training is given enough priority in Australia?
- III. What areas of voice are under taught in Australia due to time constraints and money or neglected completely?

Study Results

The answers provided to these questions fall into two areas and bring into focus several areas for examination. The first and most commented on response relates to the 'Australian sound' and includes comments related to its sounds and perceptions, and the subsequent misconceptions about voice training in Australia,

the nurturance of Australian vocal abilities and the lack of role models available to students particularly in the public sphere.

The Sound

Australia's overall ethnicity is very varied. The original inhabitants of Australia were (and are) Aboriginal Australians. The first white inhabitants (made up of settlers and convicts), came to Australia in 1787 and were of British origin which included the English and the Irish. From then until Federation in 1902, immigration was confined to people of British origin although the gold rushes of the 1800 drew migrants from many other countries including China. Post World War II Australia saw a vigorous programme of immigration instigated with migrants now arriving from other parts of the world. The White Australia Policy prohibited non-European migration up until the mid 1970s but, when it was abolished, a significant rise in non-European migration occurred.

In a survey of Australia's population in 1999, 13.2 million people out of a total of 18.9 million were of Anglo-Celtic origin. (Price, p. 12)

Australia's unique accent came about as a consequence of, firstly, settlement and isolation and then, secondly, the vast migration which together many dialects and sounds. Today's 'Aussie' sound is a derivative of this mix of ethnic origins, including late influences from Indigenous Australians. The accent varies from state to state and from urban to rural Australia

The Australian sound or accent can be quite broad and is often perceived by listeners as lazy and inarticulate. Jokes are often made with reference to this characteristic, for example Australians not opening their mouths too wide when they speak in order to stop flies getting in.

Much has already been discussed in a previous section of this paper in terms of our acceptance of a student's natural sound/voice and about not changing it. However the participants of this study also talked in more detail about the actual sound and qualities of the Australian voice, highlighting both negative and positive aspects. For example, one participant commented on the propensity that Australians have to place their voice too high and for breathing ineffectually.

With the Australian voice we do have a tendency to place the voice a bit high, the male voice in

particular, the girls as can be a little bit heady and that comes from shallow breathing, we breathe fairly shallowly and our sentences are fairly short. (D)

Two participants made the observation about the flatness of the Australian sound and the rising intonation particularly at the end of sentences which in their opinion has a deleterious effect on the spoken word.

The flatness is another thing which should be mentioned in the speech, and the rising intonation at the end. (D)

We have a high rising terminal particularly in the classical text it can take out some of the energy of the text, in fact most of it, we are dying off at the end of a phrase, not committing to the end of the line. (B)

Other points raised in terms of quality were that, whilst perceived as a rough sound the Australian accent is actually well shaped, however it has become blurred and the sound is often negatively thought of as very nasal which, surprisingly, can sometimes have positive benefits. Although these were not explained one can surmise that the positives relate directly to resonance.

Australians have that rough open but well shaped sound, now of course it has just got very fuzzy and unclear, and it's just badly supported. (A)

Sometimes there is a sort of predominance of nasality, again that is not necessarily to do with the accent but it tends to occur, the predominance of nasality is a useful one. (B)

A potential for a sense of freedom in the Australian voice was also noted by two participants. It was observed that this sense of cultural open-ness which Australians exhibit can be reflected in their voices if speakers are uninhibited and supported.

I think the biggest thing is to find freedom so the voice can be embodied and I think Australian voices can get that, and I think as soon as we get out of that sense that we are a slave to the Australian sound, I think the Australian sound can be really nice if it is an open sound, if we can

develop range, resonance and freedom in our voices, then it doesn't matter what kind of voice you have. (G)

I think there is a lovely open free accessibility, emotionally physically and vocally in Australian culture that I absolutely love, if it's well shaped. (A)

Text and the Australian sound were also highlighted as an issue in terms of how Australians approach both their own writing and more classic texts. Firstly, it was suggested that some Australian actors find the home-grown writing just as hard as the classics and, in fact, respond not with their native sound but with a heightened fake version of it. Secondly, it was suggested that the broad Australian sound may make the speaking of the classics like Shakespeare, much harder.

I'm amazed a lot of Australians don't like their own material any more, I think a lot of Australians now when they come to Australian material start to put on what they think is an Australian accent and it doesn't seem very real anymore. (A)

And

With the broader kind of accent, speaking Shakespeare is harder for them. (E)

As has been previously noted, changing the voice for the sake of aesthetics is a negative action and this was agreed by all the participants in this study. In terms of Australia, it was pointed out by one teacher that there are often misconceptions about voice training and in particular that the training institutions are trying to make their students sound like something they are not, taking away their 'Australianness' by forcing them to change to sound more closely resembling the English for example.

They're often called to speak like the English or something like that. Australia is paranoid about that there is never any attempt here to make people speak RP or anything like that. There is certainly an attempt to open up the vowels and to get every vowel as different from each other as you can possibly get and get as much colour and range in the speaking voice, but basically it's to free the instrument from tension to first of all find your own voice what is your own voice, then set about expanding it, so it has good pitch range, good change of pace and they can do

accents and all that sort of thing if they want to, but to say we run the school deliberately to try to make speech patterns like something else, is fundamentally untrue. (D)

I think this an interesting comment. It has a sense of being defensive. This most likely stems from some personal experiences or criticisms levelled at the participant as well as the training in general, and I think adds to the previously expressed sense that voice training is both misunderstood and undervalued.

Ability

Whilst the overall abilities, good or bad, of Australians to speak was never called into question by any of the participants in the study, a particular issue was highlighted by one participant and this was a lack of flexibility and accuracy in terms of speech that Australians seem to have, coupled with poor tongue muscularity.

I think practically in terms of overall vocal use, for Australians back of tongue muscularity is a real issue, soft palate resonance control is also a real issue for Australians for some people tip of tongue agility and precision is a real issue. Specificity of placement depending on the text demands is something Australians under estimate. So to have the flexibility, even if they are doing it in an Australian accent, to be able to work a piece of "Shaw" for example is something Australian mouths just aren't used to doing (H)

This tendency may be a result of cultural mores. The image of the 'laid-back, tough she'll be right Aussie' contrives to a perceived laziness in the sound and, perhaps, Australians do not find it easy to show their more vulnerable side.

The Australian culture is generally hesitant to embrace. I think you need to work against that laconic desire for ease, that excessive elision that comes from the searching for common ground. Australians tend to not play high status, to not actually go for rich dynamic choices, but to be more casual and unplayed in terms of their all kinds of energy but also vocal energy, and that's a particular Australian issue. (H)

For some people, I don't think it is right across Australian culture, some people are (just for one

reason or another, and sometimes some very difficult and confronting reasons) not prepared to show that part of themselves, to be that (what they consider) vulnerable. (H)

There is a bit of a cultural cringe, and I don't think we realise we're as good as we are. (E)

Also the Australian thing of pulling the sound back and you don't let anyone know what you're thinking or feeling really, so you pull everything back. (D)

Poor Role Models

The lack of good vocal role models accessible to young actors particularly in the public sphere was also seen as a problem for voice teaching in Australia. These role models include politicians and media personalities.

I think of our politicians, and the media, (e.g. newsreaders) and they are the real ocker monotone voice (I listen to Julia Gillard, and I go – oh, that voice) (G)

I think that is what we (Australians) do; we dumb it down to the lowest common denominator. Kevin Rudd doesn't, John Howard did it much more. (G)

Politicians! it has to start with public figures, I think a lot of our public figures are brilliant, some are fantastic, but others who don't use language, they simplify things as they think it will help people understand, because they are using this sort of baby language, but the public want more language, they're hearing it, they're reading it . I always say to the actors you are the custodians of the language, you've got to keep it alive. (B)

These comments are particularly interesting because they seem to contradict the previously stated and held notion that there is no right or wrong voice. They suggest a form of cultural prejudice, the 'Cultural Cringe' that Australia was and perhaps still is perceived to have. This term was coined in a paper written by AA Phillips a Melbourne critic and social observer in 1950. In it he suggested that the public assumed that anything produced locally by actors, musicians, artists, dramatists and writers was in the public's view deficient in some way when compared to works of their British and American counterparts. This carried over into other public spheres including politics, where indeed, Australian politicians sounded more British than Australian. But why now should this be the case? Should we not recognize that the Australian accent is unique with many variations?

The second area to arise from the questions brings into focus the perceived needs for voice and for voice training in Australia. The major issues highlighted here by several of the participants, were the lack of funding and investment in voice, not only for the training of voice, which includes better staffing levels, but for the encouragement of Australian play writing and post training professional development for actors, the isolation which exacerbates the lack of a student's exposure to the classic texts and performances and the position and status of voice teachers in Australia.

Money for Australian Writing

One participant considered that an essential for voice training in Australia is the need for more money being invested in 'home-grown' play writing. Plays and writing that deals with Australian issues using Australian 'voices'.

There needs to be an enormous sum of money spent on developing writers, so we can start writing about issues that are concerning us! Good quality writing. It breaks my heart to have to train people on those Irish plays and British plays and American plays and that I think is the biggest thing. There is no point in having a voice unless it is to speak with or for something. I think the 'for', has to come first. There needs to be text on which we can speak, money needs to be spent on writing (E)

Money and Staffing

Secondly, more money is needed to address staffing levels and resources. The ability for institutions to be able to employ sessional or part time voice staff with specialist areas of expertise was seen as a major asset to vocal training and it is not always possible due to budget constraints. This shortfall is highlighted with an instance of lack of funding resulting in delays in establishing a full time voice teaching post within an institution.

But to actually have different voices coming in working in different ways would be incredibly valuable. So to bring in the best teacher, the best phonetics teacher, the best anatomy teacher and the best accent teacher would be wonderful and to have that different sort of stimulus in a

perfect world it would be fantastic and it would free up a time for the full time staff to be doing other things. (H)

But there is no money for sessional people, so something's got to give.(H)

Basically it has taken seven years for head of school to fight for a full time position, so it is not something which has automatically been given. (G)

There is not enough one on one this is not a good thing, in an ideal world the students would have access to a lot more individual coaching when needed. (F)

Money for Professional Development

Funding for professional development of actors beyond the training institutions, and within professional theatre companies was also seen as a major need for the future of Australian theatre.

I think the people who have the money, the people who fund the Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company and Black Swan have no voice and movement teachers on staff. They get them in for projects. But that wouldn't happen in the United States or in London they would have people on staff, so there are those kinds of issues as well, there is not the support for training and professional development once you are out of the training in Australia, so I think that needs to happen. (E)

More money needs to be spent in supporting actor's professional development once they leave an acting school, if indeed they ever went. (E)

I think it's sinful that the professional acting companies do not have a proper voice and speech teacher. It's ignorance, thinking that people can go straight out of school and then just perform everything, and knowing how itinerant the profession is – they may leave school and not come into a job until three years after they have left - they might have done bits and pieces, but they need support. (F)

Classical Texts and Exposure to Them

A lack of exposure to the great classic texts and theatrical experiences was also highlighted as an issue pertinent to Australia students, although no explanation as to why there is a lack of exposure was proffered.

I think they generally need experience and exposure to classical text because it is going to give them (they may not have much to do with it later on) the experience to open up their voices in terms of muscularity and range which they would be missing drastically if they didn't have. (F)

I think that lack of exposure to theatrical experiences is a huge problem in teaching Australian actors that people have never seen good Shakespeare or never heard a male voice for example that is resonant, clear and not broad. (H)

Voice Teachers Position and Status

And finally, whilst the perception of the role of the voice teacher has been previously discussed, a further single comment was made with more emphasis in terms of its relevance within Australia. It also sums up much of what has been previously stated in this section.

I don't think directors are used to working with voice teachers in Australia, because (a) there's not enough voice teachers, and (b) the culture isn't there and the money isn't there and the fact that you've even got a voice teacher attached to a theatre company at all...well there might be two - it is nonexistent. (G)

Conclusion

I think the biggest difference highlighted between Australia and the rest of the world is the effects of our isolation and geographic dimensions. One of these effects can be seen in the comments concerning students' exposure to classic theatrical experiences. Whilst there is no doubt that our access to worldwide performing arts is much greater than it was, with the internet (You Tube) and better modes of travel, we are still to some degree culturally remote. Although in recent years, we have had many visits from overseas from both the RSC and similar classical companies, and most state theatres mount classic works on a regular basis, we still only have one full time Australian company performing the works of Shakespeare (Bell Shakespeare founded in 1990) and, although they are a national touring company, the tyranny of distance involved in travelling coast to coast means that some cities like Perth only see one production in a year (if that) as opposed to Melbourne and Sydney having three productions. Many more remote

cities have to wait for annual or bi-annual Arts festivals to have exposure to much of this work.

The knock-on effect of this non-exposure to classic texts and theatre has many layers. Whilst students may have been exposed to the written form of the classics in high school, they often enter drama institutions having actually never seen any major works. They have not been exposed to the kind of language and emotions required for such pieces and have to start from scratch so to speak. Similarly this can be also be related to role modelling. Hearing well crafted voices for theatre is also important for the young actor.

Machlin's instruction is to "[a]tend the legitimate theatre as much as possible."

The speech of actors in movies, on television and increasingly on records and retakes has been so much regulated in electronic reproduction that it is less valuable for you than actors live speech. (Machlin, 1980, p. 3)

The issue of money invested in the arts in Australia was the next important factor. Many of the participants noted a need or a wish at least for greater funds to be put into home-grown writing, better voice staffing at arts institutions and, importantly, at professional development levels of theatre companies. This of course is a particularly difficult problem at a time where arts funding all over the world is being seriously cut by governments.

In terms of our vocal sound and abilities, I believe despite some contrary comments that most of the participants would not want or try to change the nature of its 'Australianness'. They all, however, agree that changes need to be implemented in terms of clarity; muscularity; tone and ease of speech and that people's conception of voice teaching can sometimes be misguided. This I think is a universal aspiration and problem for any voice teacher.

Conclusion

The results of this research demonstrate that the elements and methods of training an actor's voice are similar all over Australia and that the international literature and the current practices in Australian drama schools follow along parallel lines with only minor variations occurring from teacher to teacher as a result of their methods or style. However, whilst this was the main focus of this study, the research has also highlighted many further interesting and somewhat complex issues. So in conclusion, I want to briefly re-focus and make some observations about a few of them. They include our vocal perceptions, gender, skill sets and time factors, assessments and a more integrated approach to the training of the voice and therefore acting programs as a whole.

The perception of a 'good' voice

The word good has many definitions and synonyms, for example definitions include "in excellent condition; sound", or "having the qualities that are desirable or distinguishing in a particular thing" (The Free Dictionary Farlex), whilst a list of synonyms might include, pleasant, satisfactory and agreeable.

It was, however, firmly noted by both the literature and the participants of this study that the word good when used in the label 'good' voice should be considered to have a negative value. But is it not true that some of the vocal examples we hear on radio or television contributes to or inspires the very use of this term? For example, most of us I am sure would consider Richard Burton to have a 'good' voice and Leonard Teale was always held up as example of a 'good' Australian voice.

So, when a prospective student is auditioning for drama school, one member of the panel is usually a voice teacher (who will be assessing through listening and sight the student's vocal strengths and weaknesses). But what are they looking for? Is not something good or desirable about the vocal sound that the student already possesses that influences their decisions about who gets into the training or not? Because after all what do vocal teachers do, but train a voice which they consider to be 'good'?

Gender

Many points were raised relating to the issue of gender in voice teaching in terms of both students and the staff. But I think the most interesting of these issues was the disparity between the numbers of male and female voice teachers. Why does this occur? Opinions on this disparity were all very similar and came from both the male and female participants. The general consensus was that the voice teaching profession is seen as having a nurturing component which is traditionally perceived to be a female role in society therefore men do not see it as a profession. They used words like 'wafty' and mothering in their descriptions. This observation was coupled with perceptions of voice training as a lower status job and not as well respected as directing for example. Whilst I have no doubt that most of these opinions have been formed on the back of personal, maybe even negative, experiences, it is interesting that the majority of voice teachers in Australia are female.

A further matter to be considered relating to this disproportion is, role modelling. Whilst the participants of the study did not think it mattered so much which sex taught which sex, they did feel that having an appropriate vocal role model for both sexes during their training was important and that, where possible, the students should have access to both male and female voice teachers.

It would be interesting to have further investigation into the poor numbers of male voice teachers in Australia with perhaps an emphasis on how to improve the level of training numbers by changing opinions of voice teaching as a profession

Skills Sets

As has been noted, many students come into drama schools and struggle with the transition from secondary to tertiary education. These struggles may include insufficient English and writing skills, poor general learning and listening skills and lack of basic time management. This is a common situation across all tertiary learning. And as a teacher in a performing arts institute, I have encountered these problems many times.

Of course in terms of actor training, it might be said that, as the courses mostly comprised practical elements, these shortcomings might not be considered too serious. However an actor's job is to primarily communicate through words and

language and a basic understanding of that language is essential. Couple this with a profession that is competitive and over populated, where many actors have to create work for themselves and find themselves in positions where they have to apply for funding which involves articulating their proposed projects in a written format and then language articulation might become more of a problem than is usually acknowledged.

General basic learning and listening skills may not be the major focus at a senior secondary level of education. Certainly in an environment where many schools are endeavouring to keep themselves high up on the so called education 'league tables' many students are 'spoon fed' through their final years of high school and are not called on to exercise skills like research or public speaking. In an article from 2006 in the English newspaper, the Daily Telegraph, this problem was clearly articulated:

University admission tutors have warned the Government that the reputation of higher education is being put at risk by failing standards in literacy, numeracy and study skills among school leavers. They say that the "reduced teachability" of new under-graduates means that increasingly universities are losing valuable time in providing remedial courses in subject knowledge and study skills, such as writing essays. School pupils are being "spoon-fed" to pass exams instead of being encouraged to develop knowledge and understanding. As a result, they arrive at university expecting to be told the answers. ("Daily Telegraph - Spoon-fed pupils can't cope at college," 2006)

These increasingly common problems are not easily resolved with an already overstretched staff, timetables in place and any strategies for solutions probably dismissed as not feasible. It might be useful to explore this issue further in terms of establishing how detrimental it is a student's future and possibly include some facilities for remedial English as part of the course time and money notwithstanding.

I also feel that there needs to be an increased liaison with secondary schools, advising on pre-requisites for drama school training; highlighting English and learning skills and, in addition, some form of mentoring scheme, to advise and assist first year performing arts' students through their sometimes difficult transition from secondary to tertiary education.

In terms of a student's time management or lack thereof, there may be no easy solution to finding more time for students to practice given the complexities already discussed. One possible solution may be a limited re-organising of the timetable, in order to give students the opportunity to spend more time practicing in the classroom rather than after hours. This would have the added benefits of allowing the practice to be overseen by the teacher where any necessary adjustments can be made immediately not days or as much as a week later

Integrated Education

In the ideal actor training environment, the notion of an integrated/collaborative teaching approach would seem to be the goal. In the case of voice tuition, for example, it has been suggested that the perfect model would have it taught together with movement, combat and dance in joint classes. However, as has also been noted, this is often far from what happens. Factors observed as contributing to this situation have been, once again budgetary and timetabling constraints, a lack of perception of what the voice can or cannot do which creates tensions and disputes between the disciplines regarding a student's education, inhibiting effective pedagogical collaboration. This then seems to be an insurmountable problem. But I feel that some further study to first establish a measure and then use it to prove or disprove the advantages of a more integrated approach would be of some benefit to the future of vocal training.

Assessment

My understanding of voice training before I started this research project was based almost solely on my own music theatre and singing training and subsequent practice as a professional performer. During the course of the research, I have spent a great deal of time reading the current and historical training manuals, observing and indeed participating in a number of voice classes at different institutions. It is an area of actor education that I feel should be constantly evolving. One area particularly, I think that is most important, is that of assessment. Assessment of students, as has been noted, is conducted by the teachers based on their experience and own opinions and therefore has little or no objectivity. This I believe is a problem for drama schools and may have a direct

bearing on the perceived image and status of the voice professional and the training.

Whilst there is much well documented scientific research conducted about the physiology of the human voice involving measurement equipment that would be impossible for drama schools to possess or indeed gain access to, I believe that it is important to find a way in the future for voice teachers to conduct a more scientific approach to voice assessment within the drama training environment and, to pursue further exploration of how this may be achieved.

Finally at the end of this research the biggest question to ask is, have my thoughts and opinions been changed on the need for and benefits of voice training? The answer is yes. As a student, like many of my cohort and I am sure many acting students today, all I really wanted to do was perform. The disciplines like voice, being taught in preparation for this, were secondary. And whilst one had to work to pass the units, I am sure I never gave voice training much thought whilst performing. As I progressed in the profession, I had to take better care of my voice as it was my 'meal ticket'. Since commencing this study and learning a great deal more about the complexities of voice training and observing the teachers in their teaching, I find that my listening skills have been altered and I pay much more attention to the way people sound, listening for both vocal problems and their unique characteristics. I think the ability to listen forms the core of any actor training program and should be considered as crucial in the development of an actor's voice.

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Appendix 1

Beginnings, Basics and Syllabus.

- I. When you meet students for the first time where do you start? For example do begin talking about the subject of voice & what their journey may be or do you start with a formal voice class immediately or something completely different?
- II. What do you consider are the main components of teaching voice to actors?
- III. Please rank them in order of importance. Is this the same order in which you would teach them? (Prompt) Why?
- IV. How do you go about assimilating voice into the overall syllabus?
- V. How do you balance refining a student's vocal quality and maintaining his/her personality or class? How do you alleviate any apprehension?
- VI. In your opinion how detailed should the study of the physiological workings of the voice be?
- VII. How important is to use the correct technical terms as opposed to imagery?
- VIII. Are there any issues associated with this when there are more than one staff member teaching the students and are therefore bringing in different experiences etc?

Techniques & Training

- I. How do you evaluate and chart a student's progress during their training?
- II. How do you monitor or encourage personal private practice to complement class work?
- III. How much importance do you place on Vocal Health and what support systems do you or the institution have in place for it?
- IV. What are the main differences between training the male & female voice?
- V. Does it matter who teaches who?
- VI. What is an ideal mix
- VII. There appear to be more female voice teachers than male. Do you see this as an issue in the training environment?

- VIII. Do you prefer group or individual training or even a mixture of both?
- IX. What is the ideal size for a class?
- X. If you incorporate singing in your training programme, then how does this activity benefit the overall voice development?
- XI. Should it be taught individually or in a group and at what stage in the overall programme should it be introduced?
- XII. Are different vocal techniques required for classical text as opposed to contemporary text and if so what are they?
- XIII. How have Film & television and therefore microphone use affected vocal training and how much emphasis do you place on these differences?
- XIV. What areas of vocal training do student's today find more difficult to comprehend? And what strategies do you employ to encourage the development of their understanding?

Expectations

- I. What do you consider to be a good voice and have your opinions changed since your started teaching?
- II. "Undoubtedly, the voice is the main weapon in an actor's armoury" Relating this to the stage!! What is your opinion of this statement –
- III. What are your minimum expectations of a student at the end of each year of their training?
- IV. What do you consider are the unique vocal needs of the Australian performer?
- V. Do you consider that voice training is given enough priority in Australia?
- VI. What areas of voice are under taught in Australia due to time constraints and money or neglected completely?
- VII. Is there anything you would like to add?