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AN AMERICAN ACTOR'S DIALECT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Master of  
Fine Arts in Theatre Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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M.F.A. Virginia Commonwealth University, May 2004  
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May 2004

## Acknowledgement

There are many people I would like to thank for their guidance during the course of this project. To my mentors Janet Rodgers and Kate Ufema, thank you for your patience and allowing me access to the wealth of knowledge amassed throughout your individual careers. I would like to thank Dr. Noreen Barnes for her unique pedagogical approaches that allowed me the freedom to pursue my studies in a way specific to my learning. To Bonnie Raphael, Paul Meier, Jan Gist and Rocco dal Vera, your collective insights into current usage helped to clarify and legitimize the project. To my colleagues at VCU, Wendy Hagenow, Marlene Johnson, Phil Timberlake and the late Jeffrey Smart, your encouragement and camaraderie will always provide fond memories of graduate school. To my family for being...my family. And last, but foremost, my beautiful wife Amy, thank you for your unwavering support and unconditional love.

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## Abstract

### AN AMERICAN ACTOR'S DIALECT

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Over the course of the past ten years, both studying and teaching Voice & Speech for the Actor, I have become frustrated with the status quo of so called 'standard speech'. The two dialects that I have studied in depth are Edith Skinner's 'American Classical Stage Standard' and Kenneth Crannell's 'Career Speech'. I have found something lacking in both the Skinner dialect and Crannell's 'Career Speech'. Yet, I believe that each has a strength from which the other could benefit.

The specificity of the Skinner dialect makes 'American Classical Stage Standard' not only easy to learn but also an excellent tool in ear training. The problem with this dialect is that before its artificial creation, it did not exist in the American English language. Additionally, 'American Classical Stage Standard' is not appropriate for theatrical works in a contemporary setting.

Conversely, the 'standards' that have been formed in reaction to Skinner's method, such as Crannell's 'Career Speech', are rooted in American English Speech. But since Crannell's 'Career Speech' relies heavily on observation, the resulting paradigm avoids specificity because in the real world not everyone speaks in the same way.

The dialect that I am setting forth in this project is my attempt to combine the Skinner dialect and Crannell's 'Career Speech' to create a dialect that is contemporary but non-geographic specific in sound. My American Actor's dialect will be simple and efficient to learn and teach and will provide the student with a base dialect for further study in voice and speech for the stage and for contemporary American theatrical works set post 1980 if there is no dialect called for in the script or if the director chooses not to include dialect work in that specific production.

## Interest in the Topic

My interest in the subjects of voice and speech for the stage and more specifically dialects and Standard Speech began during my sophomore year of undergraduate study. It was then that I was first introduced to the existence of the voice and speech professional and the actual phonetic study of speech. I, of course, did know of the existence of dialects other than my own blossoming upper-Midwestern dialect, but the methodical study of a dialect using phonetic transcription was a completely new concept. It was through this study of speech and the use of voice that my interest in and frustration with the current 'stage standard' speech, or lack thereof, began, and it was both my interest and frustration that provided impetus for creating a contemporary dialect for contemporary performers. Through careful observation and consultation with some of the American theatre's top voice and speech professionals I have created a non-geographic specific dialect for use in actor training and theatrical works set post 1980 if there is no dialect called for in the script or if the director chooses not to include dialect work in that specific production.



My first introduction to any type of standard speech for the stage was Edith Skinner's 'American Classical Stage Standard' as described in Speak with Distinction. For the most part, this dialect did not appear dissimilar to my own at the time. After a little relaxation of the voice, resulting in an 'open' tonal quality, and some reduction of regionalisms, there were a few, seemingly subtle, changes; the broadening of the short 'a' sound as in the word 'cat', the rounding of the back vowels, the addition of the liquid 'u', the softening of the 'r' sound when the sound occurs in what Skinner calls 'short diphthongs', the use of the sixth back or 'ask' vowel and the regular usage of the aspirated 'wh'. After only a short amount of practice, they were easily learned and incorporated into my stage speech.

'American Classical Stage Standard' is not intended for contemporary American works. The clarity of speech required is excellent with the implementation of this dialect, but to the contemporary American ear, it sounds antiquated. The use of soft 'r' sound (short diphthongs), the liquid 'u', the aspirated 'wh' and the sixth back or 'ask' vowel are all foreign to the contemporary ear. The next introduction to my catalog of 'standard' speech for the stage came in the form of Kenneth Crannell's 'Career Speech', as described in Voice and Articulation, which is not as strict in its rules of pronunciation as the Skinner method but has a more contemporary American sound. This is a step in the right direction but still not the answer.

The Skinner dialect, while lacking in aesthetics for theatrical works set post 1980, is wonderfully specific which aids in the teaching of the dialect. “Career Speech” is more comfortable to the contemporary American ear but is lacking in specificity. The obvious answer is to use the best of both methodologies and create a new dialect that is specific in sound and based in current usage.

I am by no means suggesting that this is the only way the student should speak, or that the student eradicate his/her regionalisms. Rather I am offering an alternative, and, I believe, a more current ‘standard’ dialect for beginning training in the subjects of voice and speech and use in theatrical works set post 1980 if there is no dialect called for in the script or if the director chooses not to include dialect work in that specific production.

## Brief Overview of American Standard Stage Speech

In creating a new dialect for the actor, I first wanted to understand what 'standard speech' is exactly and where it came from. The answer to that question was not easily found. An essay by Dudley Knight entitled "Standard Speech: An Ongoing Debate" provided the most comprehensive information. According to the Knight, a large portion of the current 'standards' used in theatrical voice and speech training can be traced back to one man, William Tilly. Tilly was an Australian immigrant who came to New York after the First World War. Before WWI Tilly lived in Germany, where he had gone to university and later returned to establish a school to teach foreigners the German language and culture. He was known for being a strict disciplinarian; he would arrange the classroom with the best students in the front and the worst in the rear (Knight 156). His pedagogical style was likened to the British Navy with regard to precision and discipline. Regardless of his stern teaching style, Tilly's school was very successful.

At the outset of WWI, the German government closed Tilly's school, and he was held in Germany for a short time before setting out for New York (Knight 157).

In New York Tilly found work teaching at Columbia University in the extension program (Knight 157). It was here that Tilly made his mark on the American voice and speech world through his passionate promotion of both the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet, an alphabet of symbols that describe the sounds of spoken speech, and a dialect he called 'World English'. I will be concentrating on the latter.

'World English' was a dialect of pure creation; by that, I mean that it never existed anywhere before Tilly. His teaching of it is the only reason it exists today. The dialect has a strong base in articulated vernacular American English, but with several additions taken from the British 'Received Pronunciation' (RP). These additions include the 'lightened' final and medial 'r' sounds following vowel sounds, the aspirated 'wh', the medial 'a' sound (later known as the 'ask' vowel) and the rounding of the back vowels. Tilly created this dialect not as a tool for clear communication but as a status symbol; it was how he believed one should sound if one were educated (Knight 160).

Tilly found a large audience with the women teachers of New York City, and later American teachers at large (Knight 157). Windsor P. Daggett wrote of one of his many lecture engagements, "Tilly told his audience, mostly women, that he was not sorry that there were only three men in sight. If the women take hold of this question we shall have nothing to fear in the

progress of cultured speech”. Daggett went on, “All the school teachers follow after Tilly when he goes a-visiting, and when he has been announced to speak on the letter ‘r’ the auditorium of Hunter College isn’t large enough to hold the schoolmarms who follow their Pied Piper into the mountain of *Silent Letters*” (qtd. in Knight 167). This statement makes it obvious that despite Tilly’s severe pedagogical style, his students were not lacking in number or in zeal. Despite his popularity Tilly had no direct impact on the theatre (Knight 172). It was one of his students, Edith Skinner, who was instrumental in bringing ‘World English’ to the American Theatre.

Edith Skinner was an actress who had trained at the Leland Powers School in Boston. There, Skinner met a woman named Margaret Prendergast McLean, who, in the late 1920’s, was Head of the Department of English Diction at the Powers School, taught at Boleslavsky’s American Laboratory Theatre, and had also worked as Tilly’s assistant during the previous decade. At the time, McLean was also a prestigious speech teacher for actors. It was through her that Skinner was introduced first to Tilly’s work and then to Tilly himself.

Skinner began her work with Tilly in either 1928 or 1929, and as her notes suggest, she worked with him for a minimum of five years. Skinner also continued to work with McLean at the American Laboratory Theatre and

soon after that she accepted the job of speech instructor at Carnegie Mellon University's theatre training program (Knight 174).

Skinner was not the only student of Tilly's who was working in the theatre, but what set her apart was her embracing of Tilly's pedagogical style. She presided over her classes with an iron fist and, like Tilly, she received the utmost respect from her pupils (Knight 175). Sanford Robbins in an essay entitled, "Edith Warman Skinner: A Former Student's Recollection and Appreciation" says of his time in Skinner's classes, "My experience was life-altering, and I am forever in debt to this remarkable woman" (55). At Carnegie, Skinner firmly established herself as *the* speech trainer for the American theatre (Knight 175). After Skinner left Carnegie, her legacy was further secured when she was asked by John Houseman to be a founding faculty member of the theatre program at the Juilliard School, where she trained many successful classical actors (Knight 174).

The 1950's brought with it the rise of 'method' acting and during this time, in order to better capture the 'reality' of the role and the play, many actors, teachers and directors turned their backs on speech training for contemporary theatrical works set in that time period. The 1960's, however, saw the rise of regional theatre and the reawakening of Skinner's influence on speech training in America. The new regional theatre movement created an increased demand for classically trained actors, and the universities,

quick to fill the gap, began theatre training programs. Many of Skinner's pupils were hired as teachers in the programs (Knight 175).

In the late 1960's and throughout the 1970's a portion of the voice and speech world went through a backlash against the prescriptive nature of Skinner's method. Many actors and voice teachers raced to the other end of the spectrum. They felt that 'American Classical Stage Standard' lent itself to a stilted performance and that the eradication of regionalisms also removed some of the actor's identity and should possibly be done away with. It is from this philosophical split that new 'standard' dialects, such as Crannell's 'Career Speech', originated (Knight 179).

'Career Speech' and all of the other 'standard dialects' developed at that time share two traits; first, they are based on actual dialectical traits in current American English usage, and second, because they are based on all of the various dialects in American English, they allow for a little pronunciation 'wobble room' in phonemes, ie. more than one sound is acceptable for the same phoneme in a word. The second item is their downfall as students find this 'wobble room' more cumbersome than helpful. At the beginning level of training, students have a hard time grasping the concept of more than one right answer

From my experience as a student and my limited teaching experience, I feel that today's beginning voice and speech student does not want a choice. S/he wants an answer.



## Initial Work on the Dialect

The idea for this project sprang from my own teaching. Between 2000-2002, I taught a sophomore level voice and speech class at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). One of the topics taught in this course was Kenneth Crannell's 'Career Speech'. As I taught, I found my students having a more difficult time with 'Career Speech' than I recalled either myself, or any of my classmates, having when we learned Skinner's 'American Classical Stage Standard'. I began to wonder why.

It is accepted that 'American Classical Stage Standard' is not appropriate for theatrical productions with a contemporary setting; 'Career Speech' has a much truer ring for contemporary works. However, what 'American Classical Stage Standard' can offer that 'Career Speech' cannot is precision.

With 'American Classical Stage Standard' there is no range of acceptable sounds. There is one answer to each question. While this may not be completely true to the current general American dialect, it provides a solid base for the student without presenting a quagmire of gray areas in a field of study that can already be confusing. My decision to create a new Actor's

Dialect was based on these two observations: the importance of a dialect that is based in current American speech patterns and the advantages of precision for both student and teacher. in describing that dialect. These became the two governing stars of my work.

Crannell's 'Career Speech' formed the starting point of my new dialect. As previously stated, I believe that 'Career Speech' has strong roots in current American speech patterns, but it needs refining. So I began looking at 'Career Speech' and specifically searching out the 'problem' sounds. Here is my initial draft of the dialectical changes.

wh, liquid u m,n,t,d,s,l, medial t, extended our, your, sure centering diph, ing, and-an, want-on, a, ou diph, u sound, ei diph, short a sound preceding n should not be colored/made diphthong - lowered, marry, Carry, cruel, jewel, to, poem, bouquet, orange, forest, can, be/de/re prefixes, engine

#### Consonants-

- All medial and final [t] sound are exploded
- All "ing" endings are pronounced [ɪŋ]
- Initial [w] sounds when spelled "wh" are pronounced [hw] with the exception of "who"
- Final [d] sounds are exploded
- Final [k] sounds are exploded
- Final d's when preceded by a voiceless consonant are pronounced [t]
- "and you" not pronounced as anjew
- you preceded by a [t] is not pronounced "choo"
- often is pronounced [ɔfən]

#### Vowels-

- [eɪ] diphthong is used only in a stressed position in the word, otherwise use [e]
- [oʊ] diphthong is used only in a stress position in the word, otherwise use [o]
- "our" is pronounced [aʊ]
- "your" is pronounced [jʊ]
- "sure" is pronounced [ʃʊ]
- "to" is pronounced [tu]
- be-, de- and re- prefixes are pronounced [bɪ], [dɪ] and [rɪ]
- "engine" is pronounced [ɛndʒɪn] not [ɛndʒɪn]
- "orange" is pronounced with the centering diphthong [ɔɪ]
- "forest" is pronounced with the centering diphthong [ɔɪ]
- "bouquet" is pronounced [bʊkɛt]
- "poem" is pronounced [poʊɪm]
- the liquid u is used when the [u] sound <sup>follows</sup> precedes [m], [n], [t], [d], [s] and [l] - stupid???

#### Questionable items-

- ✓ pronunciation of carry and marry
- ✓ pronunciation of cruel and jewel
- ✓ phonetic spelling of centering diphthong immediately preceding vowel sounds
- ✓ use of the fifth back, ex [hʊɪ] or [hʊɪ]

The first section of this draft was a brainstorming, problem-finding section and the following sections become more specific. The consonant and vowel sections were mainly concerned with clarity of articulation. The last section was where lines began to blur and the bulk of the project lay. These few 'questionable items' are where 'Career Speech' lacks specificity and the pedagogical philosophy of 'American Classical Stage Standard' will benefit

the dialect. It is in this area that I sought the insight of my colleagues at VCU and several prominent vocal coaches.

The first 'questionable item' that I chose to address are the different variations of the pronunciation of the vowel sound in the word 'carry': ['kærɪ] or ['kɛrɪ]. In every voice and speech class, I have been taught that ['kærɪ] is the preferred way of pronouncing this word (Kenyon and Knott 70). However, I feel that while this pronunciation may have been valid before 1980, to the ears of current audiences it does not ring true. The use of [æ] in words such as these does not mesh with current American usage and as a result, the actor's speech is removed from current usage, thus distancing them from the audience.

The next item is the pronunciation of words such as cruel and jewel. Are these words one syllable or two? While the latter pronunciation of the word provides an extension of sound, from my own observation of current usage, the preferred pronunciation should lean toward the former.

The third item is not, in this draft, concerned with pronunciation. This question began merely as an attempt to clean up phonetic spellings of words. The point of contention comes from the usage of 'short diphthongs' (Crannell calls them 'centering diphthongs'). These phonemes replace the 'r' sound in the second half of the phoneme with a schwa with 'r coloring', but when this sound is immediately followed by another vowel sound, the rules of phonetic

spelling begin to blur. I have been taught two different viewpoints for this issue. The first is that the 'short/centering diphthong' should be used but with the addition of the 'r' sound immediately preceding the next vowel sound. Alternatively, that in these instances the diphthong is not used and the schwa is replaced by the 'r' sound.

The last questionable item from this draft is the use of the fifth back vowel [ɒ] and where it is appropriate. It seems that this vowel sound has always been problematic. Skinner presents specific examples regarding the usage of the phonemes [ɔ], [ɒ] and [ɑ], however, actually distinguishing these phonemes from one another when pronounced can prove to be difficult, as all are similar in sound. In fact, I have found that most students cannot hear the difference between the sounds at first. It took me about six months to hear it.

Armed with these questions, the next step that I took was to have a round-table discussion with the head of voice and speech, Janet Rodgers, and the two other MFA students specializing in Voice & Speech for the Stage at VCU, Jeffrey Smart and Phil Timberlake. On Saturday, December 15, 2001, we had lunch and talked through these 'questionable items'. The following draft was the result of that meeting.

## The Actor's Dialect

### Consonants-

- Medial [t̥] sounds are slightly aspirated
- All “ing” endings are pronounced [ɪŋ]
- Final d's when preceded by a voiceless consonant are pronounced [t̥]
- Final s's in the plural are pronounced [z] when preceded by a voiced vowel or consonant
- “and you” not pronounced as anjew
- you preceded by a [t] is not pronounced “choo”
- often is pronounced [ɒfən]

### Vowels-

- [oʊ] diphthong is used only in a stressed position in the word, otherwise use [o]
- [eɪ] diphthong is used only in a stressed position in the word, otherwise use [e]
- our is pronounced [ɑvɚ]
- sure is pronounced [ʃvɚ]
- to is pronounced [tu]
- be-, de- and re- prefixes are pronounced [bɪ], [dɪ] and [rɪ]
- engine is pronounced [ɛndʒɪn] not [ɛndʒɪn]
- bouquet is pronounced [buːkeɪ]
- poem is pronounced [pɔvɪm]

### Questionable items-

- ✓ pronunciation of words containing “arry”? [æri] or [ɛri] or ? – I realize that this item may seem to be self explanatory, but please consider what is used more frequently in current American english.
- ✓ pronunciation of words such as cruel and jewel? [kruəl] or [krɔ]

- ✓ do you advocate the use of centering/short diphthongs and if so, when do you use them and what phonetic spelling of centering diphthong immediately preceding vowel sounds do you advocate to your students?
- ✓ Rules for the use of the fourth, fifth and sixth back vowels; [ɔ], [ɒ], [ɑ]?
  - ✓ possible rules – [ɑ] when preceding [t] and [d]
  - [ɒ] when preceding [s]
- ✓ liquid sound of the liquid “u” lightened to [ɹʊ]?
- ✓ your - pronounced [jʊr] or [jɔr]?
- ✓ aspirated “wh” not used?
- ✓ In words ending in “y” the final [ɪ] sound changes in length but vowel sound itself remains unchanged?
- ✓ [ɪ] preferred over [ə] in short nondescript vowel sounds
- ✓ pronunciation of the vowel sound such as in the first syllable of the words ‘orange’ and ‘coral’? [ɔr] or [ɔɹ] or [ɔʊ] or ?

After this round of consultation, I next enlisted the help of some of the top experts in the field of Voice and Speech for performance. Upon the recommendation of Janet Rodgers, I contacted twenty-five teachers of Voice & Speech via email requesting their expertise for this project. After receiving their consent, I emailed each of the specialists a set of ten questions, taken from the ‘questionable items’ section of the latest draft of the dialect.

## Polling the Experts

*“Hello all,*

*First, I would like to thank you all for participating in this project. Secondly, attached you will find a list of questions that I would like you to answer using what you observe in contemporary spoken American English. Please respond by February 20. You can either reply via email or regular mail, whichever you prefer. If you have any questions regarding the questions, or anything else about this project, please contact me.*

*Again, thank you for all your help,  
Michael Bruckmueller”*

The preceding is the preface to the questions that were sent to Kate Ufema, Rocco Dal Vera, Bonnie Raphael, Paul Meier and Jan Gist, leading teachers of Voice & Speech in the American Theatre. Note that one of the stipulations is that these specialists base their replies on what they observe from current spoken American English. I believe that this criteria is the most important factor in the research of the project, for the closer this dialect can come to a geographically neutral early 21<sup>st</sup> century spoken American English, the more credibility it will carry with the general public, and therefore the more believable the actors using the dialect in contemporary



American plays, set post 1980 when a dialect is neither called for by the script nor the director, will be to their audiences.

After this preface a series of ten questions were sent. I will detail the questions, the reasoning behind them and the various responses I received from the five experts contacted.

1. Pronunciation of the 1<sup>st</sup> vowel in words such as 'carry' and 'marry'?  
Do you advocate the use of the 5<sup>th</sup> front vowel [æ] or the vowel [ɛ] with or without the centering diphthong – Which seems to be in more current use in contemporary speech?

The first question on the list proved to be the most controversial of the set. I have spent many an afternoon in the office of Janet Rodgers debating this point. The traditional pronunciation uses the fifth front vowel [æ] (Kenyon and Knott 70). However, in my observations, I found [ɛ] to be the common sound associated with this lexical set. An argument could be made for the aesthetic value of [æ] over [ɛ], but in order to remain true to the goal of making this dialect a reflection of current usage, I feel the latter is the stronger choice. While almost all of the experts prefer the aesthetic value of using [æ], the resounding consensus among the experts is that [ɛ] is currently the common phoneme for this set in contemporary American English.

2. How do you prefer the pronunciation of words such as cruel and jewel? [kruəl] or [kru:əl] or [kruəl] or?

This question mainly deals with the number of syllables found in the words in this lexical set, with a secondary question regarding the phoneme used in the second syllable [ɪ] or the schwa, if indeed a second syllable is used. All of the respondents prefer the words in the set to have two syllables. However, only one, Kate Ufema, addressed contemporary usage in her reply. Ms. Ufema stated that when used in contemporary works she advocates only one syllable [ˈkru:l]. While this choice was not the consensus for the preferred choice, I feel that it more accurately represents the current usage of the word.

3. Do you advocate the use of centering/short diphthongs and if so, when do you use them and what phonetic spelling of centering diphthong immediately preceding vowel sounds do you advocate to your students?

This question was an attempt to address the use of schwa with 'r' coloring in what are known as the short or centering diphthongs use in words such as 'core' and 'there'. My intent was to ask if these diphthongs should be used. The reason I asked this is because, even though Crannell does use them, the use of short (or centering) diphthongs seems to be a carry-over from the British standard dialect 'Received Pronunciation' by Tilly and later

carried on by Skinner. In my observations, I hear the use of [r ] and not the schwa with 'r' coloring. I am advocating the elimination of the shwa with 'r' coloring and using [r ] in place of it.

**4. Do you follow any rules for the use of the fourth, fifth and sixth back vowels: [ɔ ], [ɒ ], [ɑ ]?**

possible rules – [ɑ ] when preceding [r ] and [ɔ ]  
- [ɒ ] when preceding [s ]

Skinner presents specific examples regarding the usage of the phonemes [ɔ ], [ɒ ] and [ɑ ], however, actually distinguishing these phonemes from one another when pronounced can prove to be difficult, as all are similar in sound. For example in the Skinner dialect 'all', 'golf' and 'father' have three separate, distinct vowel sounds. In 'Career Speech' Crannell presents the three phonemes to the reader, but offers little guidance for distinguishing these phonemes from one another. When comparing the responses for this question, it became obvious that the current trend in contemporary American speech is to use the phoneme [ɑ ] in all cases. It seems as if the difficulty of the layperson to distinguish the subtle differences between the phonemes has led to a consolidation of pronunciation.

**5. Do you prefer the 'liquid u' or the lightened [ɪʊ]?**

In both 'American Classical Stage Standard' and 'Career Speech', the use of the liquid 'u' [ju] is advocated, in words such as 'student' and 'new'. I propose the liquid 'u' sound is too foreign to the contemporary ear and that a lighter [ɪu] or the complete elimination of the liquid 'u' are preferable. All of the experts queried responded in the same way. They agreed that in contemporary American speech the liquid 'u' is not used. The sound is simply [u].

6. Do you advocate the pronunciation of 'your' as [jʊr] or [jɔr]?

The breadth of responses to this question surprised me. It seems that none of the panel really agree on what is preferred. One states that it does not matter which phoneme is used, they are interchangeable. Three advocate [jɔr], two of whom do so because they feel that [jɔr] sounds British. However, the respondent from Britain prefers the latter for contemporary speech. The answer appears to be more perplexing than the question. My preference is [jɔr].

7. Do you advocate the aspirated "wh" in everyday actor's speech?

To use [hw] or not to use [hw], in words such as 'whisper' and 'when', that was the question; the answer, an unanimous 'no'.

8. In words ending in “y” do you represent the final sound with [ i ], [ ɪ ] or ? How do you pronounce it? What if it is in isolation?

In the Skinner dialect, the final sound in words ending in ‘y’, such as ‘lately’ and ‘carry’, is [ɪ]. This seems to draw from the British ‘Received Pronunciation’. In ‘Career Speech’ a variety of notations are acceptable; [i], [i̇], or [ï], each variant describing the slight changes in length that occur when the vowel sound [i] is the final phoneme of a word. Three of the five respondents advocate the use of [i]. The other two advocate the use of one of the variants to compensate for the short length of the sound. I feel this observation of a slight phonetic variation due to the length of the vowel still holds true and I am therefore going to advocate the use of the symbol [ï]. This symbol reflects both the length of the vowel, and remains true to its sound.

9. Do you prefer [ ɪ ] or [ ə ] in short nondescript vowel sounds?

Perhaps my quest for clarification and simplification became a bit fanatical with this question. Since the schwa and [ɪ] are virtually interchangeable in many instances of contemporary speech, I thought that perhaps one phoneme or the other could be considered the rule when applied to short nondescript vowel sounds, in words like ‘about’ and ‘normal’. In

doing so, I neglected to recognize a problem that Rocco Dal Vera brought to my attention. When the vowel in question is in the initial or final position it is lengthened slightly, retaining its distinct sound. Therefore, one sound cannot replace the other in all instances of short nondescript vowel sounds. The rest of the experts had varying opinions on the subject. One advocates the usage of the schwa, one the [ɪ], one has no preference, and the fourth states there is no rule, the sound is word dependant. But the concept of the interchangeability of the schwa and [ɪ] does apply to almost all medial nondescript vowel sounds. When the vowel is in the initial or final position of a word, as pointed out by Dal Vera, it is lengthened slightly, retaining its distinct sound.

10. Do you prefer the pronunciation of the vowel sound such as in the first syllable of the words 'orange' and 'coral' as [ɔɪ] or [ɛɪ] or [ɔə] or [ɛə] or ?

'Orange', do you pronounce it with the first syllable sounding as [ɔɪ] or [ɛɪ], both are listed in Kenyon and Knott's "A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English" as acceptable (306). I have received various answers throughout the years, the most predominant, agreeing with Kenyon and Knott, is that either phoneme is acceptable. I was interested in finding out if one stands out as the most preferred among the experts polled. Surprisingly, all but one preferred [ɔɪ] for this lexical set, the remaining respondent

preferring [ɑr ]. Using [ɔr ] rings more true to contemporary American speech in my ear as well. The lexical set [ɔr ] is the only time [ɔ ] is used in the American Actor's Dialect

Armed with all the information and opinions gathered through the discussions with Janet Rodgers, my fellow graduate students at VCU and the five experts who responded to the questionnaire, I was ready for the next step, compiling the information and putting the dialect on paper.

## Unveiling the Dialect

The next step in the creation of this dialect was to commit it to paper. For this endeavor, I will be providing the phoneme in question and describing it through the use of a set of words that all contain that specific phoneme in different syllabic positions.

### Vowels

#### i

he	team	edict	repeat
pea	Venus	heal	cedar
legion	weave	succeed	pristine

[hi]	[tim]	[ídikt]	[rɪpít]
[pi]	[vínɪs]	[hɪl]	[cídɹ]
[lɪdʒɪn]	[wɪv]	[sɪksíd]	[prɪstɪn]



## ɪ

Note: This phoneme is only used in the final syllable of a word.

very                      lucky                      distinctly                      deeply  
 really                      library                      preppy                      badly

[vɛrɪ]	[lʌkɪ]	[dɪstɪŋktlɪ]	[diplɪ]
[ri:lɪ]	[laɪbrɛrɪ]	[prɛpɪ]	[bædlɪ]

## ɪ

zip                      igloo                      decipher                      looking  
 tinkle                      believe                      receive                      sing  
 different                      India                      something                      been

[zɪp]	[ɪglu]	[dɪsɪsaɪfrɪ]	[lʊkɪŋ]
[tɪŋklɪ]	[bɪli:v]	[rɪsi:v]	[sɪŋ]
[dɪfrɪnt]	[ɪndɪjə]	[sʌmθɪŋ]	[bi:n]

## ɛ

let	engine	tempt	marry
pen	carry	elephant	Aztec
mellow	defend	yellow	tear

[lɛt]	[ɛndʒɪn]	[tɛmpt]	[mɛrɪ]
[pɛn]	[kɛrɪ]	[ɛlɪfɪnt]	[æztɛk]
[mɛlo]	[dɪfɛnd]	[jɛlo]	[tɛr]

## æ

act	rabbit	gather	began
man	hang	stallion	thank
laugh	dagger	athlete	scratch

[ækt]	[ræbɪt]	[gæðr]	[bɪgæn]
[mæn]	[hæŋ]	[stæljɪn]	[θæŋk]
[læf]	[dægər]	[æθlɪt]	[skrætʃ]

## u

crew	who	shoot	poodle
bloom	kahuna	Tartuffe	smooth
boot	fluke	ruthless	intrusive

[kru]	[hu]	[ʃut]	[pudl̩]
[blum]	[kəˈhʌnə]	[tɑːtʃuf]	[smuð]
[but]	[fluk]	[ˈruθlɪs]	[ɪnˈtrʌsɪv]

## ʊ

pudding	hood	woman	pull
fulfill	woolen	shook	Brooklyn
bully	stood	tour	butcher

[ˈpʊdɪŋ]	[hʊd]	[ˈwʊmɪn]	[pʊl]
[fʊlfɪl]	[ˈwʊlɪn]	[ʃʊk]	[ˈbrʊklɪn]
[ˈbʊliː]	[stʊd]	[tʊr]	[ˈbʊtʃɹ]

## O

Note: This phoneme is only used in the unstressed syllable of a word. When this sound appears in the stressed syllable it becomes the diphthong [ou].

opine	Othello	O'Reilly	locality
romance	profess	procrastinate	Sophia
possess	hotel	Yosemite	Joanne

[o'paɪn]	[oθɛlo]	[o'raɪli]	[ləkælɪtɪ]
[rɒmæns]	[prɒfɛs]	[prɒkræstɪnət]	[sɒfiə]
[pɒzɛs]	[hoʊɛl]	[joʊsɛmɪtɪ]	[dʒoʊæn]

## ɑ

Note: This phoneme now takes the place of [ɔ], [ɒ], [ɑ]. As a result, the set of words relating to this sound is more extensive.

paw	audience	august	drawn
leprechaun	all	cross	nausea
moron	are	taunt	author
hopped	proper	watch	God
scotch	Iago	father	drama
nirvana	aria	mirage	plaza

[pɑ]	[ádi:ns]	[ágɪst]	[drɑn]
[lɛprɪkɑn]	[ɑl]	[krɒs]	[náʒə]
[mɔrɑn]	[ɑr]	[tɑnt]	[áθɹ]
[hɑpt]	[pɹɑpɹ]	[wɑtʃ]	[gɑd]
[skɑtʃ]	[iágo]	[fɑðɹ]	[dɹɑmə]
[nɛrvɑnə]	[áɹiɑ]	[mɪrɑdʒ]	[plɑzə]

## 3

Note: This phoneme is only used in the stressed syllable of a word and varies from the standard IPA as it has no 'r' coloring attached to it.

world	murder	birth	cursive
circle	Earth	curse	immerse
Perseus	merchant	dirt	shirt

[wɜrlɪd]	[mɜrdɜ]	[bɜrθ]	[kɜrsɪv]
[sɜrkɪl]	[ɜrθ]	[kɜrs]	[ɪmɜrs]
[pɜrsɪsɪs]	[mɜrtʃɪnt]	[dɜrt]	[ʃɜrt]

## ə

Note: This phoneme is only used in the unstressed syllable of a word.

apart	attack	again	police
Dakota	together	idea	panda
pasta	pizza	vanilla	drama

[əpɑrt]	[ətæk]	[əgeɪn]	[pəlɪs]
[dəkəʊtə]	[təgeðə]	[aɪdiə]	[pændə]
[pɑstə]	[pɪtsə]	[vʌnɪlə]	[drɑmə]

## ʌ

Note: This phoneme is only used in the stressed syllable of a word.

up	cup	bubbly	under
ugly	rug	sunken	gum
culture	love	crush	discover

[ʌp]	[kʌp]	[ˈbʌbɫ]	[ˈʌndr̩]
[ˈʌɡliː]	[rʌɡ]	[ˈsʌŋkɪn]	[ɡʌm]
[ˈkʌltʃʊr]	[lʌv]	[krʌʃ]	[dɪskʌvr̩]

## Diphthongs

### aɪ

I	apply	spine	sublime
benign	tribe	reconcile	jive
geyser	tight	icicle	typhoon

[aɪ]	[əˈplaɪ]	[spaɪn]	[səˈblaɪm]
[bɪˈnaɪn]	[traɪb]	[ˈrɛkɪnsaɪl]	[dʒaɪv]
[ˈɡaɪzr̩]	[taɪt]	[ˈaɪsɪkɫ]	[taɪfun]

## eɪ

aim	pay	persuade	Spain
behave	cape	naked	ache
famous	saving	always	procrastinate

[eɪm]	[peɪ]	[pərsweɪd]	[speɪn]
[biˈheɪv]	[keɪp]	[ˈneɪkɪd]	[eɪk]
[ˈfeɪmɪs]	[ˈseɪvɪŋ]	[ˈɔːlweɪz]	[prəkɹæstɪneɪt]

## ɔɪ

boy	annoy	coin	Illinois
avoid	enjoy	moist	voice
paranoia	poison	oil	choice

[bɔɪ]	[əˈnɔɪ]	[kɔɪn]	[ɪlɪˈnɔɪ]
[əˈvɔɪd]	[ɪnˈdʒɔɪ]	[mɔɪst]	[vɔɪs]
[pəreˈnɔɪə]	[ˈpɔɪzɪn]	[ɔɪl]	[tʃɔɪs]



## OU

Note: This phoneme is only used in the stressed syllable of a word.

crow	boat	open	old
sew	note	roam	boulder
vocal	going	stone	revoked

[krou]	[bout]	[óupɪn]	[ould]
[ʃou]	[nout]	[roum]	[ˈbouldr̩]
[ˈvokəl]	[ˈgouɪŋ]	[stoun]	[rɪˈvokt]

## au

out	howdy	bounce	powder
shout	thou	south	lookout
scout	cloudy	pronounce	grouch

[aʊt]	[ˈhaʊdɪ]	[baʊns]	[ˈpaʊdr̩]
[ʃaʊt]	[ðau]	[saʊθ]	[ˈlʊkaʊt]
[skaʊt]	[ˈklaʊdɪ]	[prəˈnaʊns]	[ˈgrɑʊtʃ]

## Consonants

### t

time

entertain

doubt

Tutonic

[taɪm]	[əntərteɪn]	[daʊt]	[tuˈtɒnɪk]
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### d

dance

under

hid

city

water

dead

candor

deciduous

[dæns]	[ʌndr̩]	[hɪd]	[sɪdɪ]
[wɔdr̩]	[dɛd]	[kændr̩]	[dɪsɪdʒɪʊɪs]

### p

port

pimple

cup

whipped

[pɔrt]	[pɪmpl]	[kʌp]	[wɪpt]
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**b**

body

Bambi

job

cobra

[bɒdɪ]	[bæmbɪ]	[dʒɒb]	[kɒbrə]
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**k**

cookie

coat

back

crowd

[kʊkɪ]	[kəʊt]	[bæk]	[kraʊd]
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**g**

egg

grown

rig

gaggle

[ɛg]	[graʊn]	[rɪg]	[gægl]
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tʃ

chicken

teach

chair

chug

[tʃɪkɪn]	[ti:tʃ]	[tʃeə]	[tʃʌg]
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dʒ

judge

George

jingle

jump

[dʒʌdʒ]	[dʒɔːrdʒ]	[dʒɪŋɡl]	[dʒʌmp]
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m

Michael

bumble

boom

marsupial

[maɪkl]	[bʌmbl]	[bu:m]	[mɑːsʊpiəl]
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## n

night

tin

noon

kindle

[naɪt]	[tɪn]	[nuːn]	[kɪndl]
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## ŋ

thing

longest

England

punk

[θɪŋ]	[lɒŋgɪst]	[ɪŋɡlɪnd]	[pʌŋk]
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## l

little

Willy

linger

llama

[lɪdl]	[wɪlɪ]	[lɪŋɡr]	[ləmə]
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**f**

fiddle

fog

stuff

different

[fɪdl]	[fɒg]	[stʌf]	[dɪfrɪnt]
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**v**

valium

vigor

move

lovely

[væliəm]	[vɪɡɔr]	[muv]	[ləvli]
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**θ**

throw

mouth

thwart

breath

[θrou]	[mauθ]	[θwɔrt]	[brɛθ]
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## ð

that

father

those

breathe

[ðæt]	[fɑðr]	[ðoʊz]	[brið]
-------	--------	--------	--------

## s

snake

pass

assessment

satisfy

[sneɪk]	[pæs]	[əˈsɛsmɪnt]	[sætɪsfaɪ]
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## z

zoo

swords

razor

zamboni

[zu]	[sɔrdz]	[reɪzr]	[zæmˈboʊni]
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## ʃ

shout

trash

cushion

fish

[ʃaʊt]	[træʃ]	[kʊʃɪn]	[fɪʃ]
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## ʒ

vision

Asia

casual

seizure

[vɪʒɪn]	[eɪʒə]	[kæʒuəl]	[siʒr]
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## r

write

train

tear

discrete

[raɪt]	[treɪn]	[tɪr]	[dɪskrɪt]
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## h

home

mishap

who

behalf

[houm]	[mɪʃhæp]	[hu]	[bɪhæf]
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## w

wood

queen

when

dwarf

[wud]	[kwɪn]	[wɛn]	[dwɔrf]
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## j

you

Italian

brilliant

yellow

[ju]	[ɪtæljɪn]	[brɪljɪnt]	[jɛlo]
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## Final Thoughts

Language is fluid, it changes with time and is constantly influenced by culture. In fact, I would wager that language and speech are changing more rapidly today than in any other time in history, as our world is becoming smaller and smaller, and people from all over the globe are communicating with each other. Additionally, the pace of life continues to accelerate with the digital revolution and with that language and speech continue changing as well.

As theatre artists we have two choices: either we can hold fast to traditions of the past or we can embrace change while retaining the knowledge and wisdom of those who have gone before us. Of course, valid arguments can be made for both choices. However, I argue in favor of the latter.

In analyzing these choices, it is important to ask why we perform theatre. Is it to rigidly adhere to the standards that we have been taught concerning how speech should sound? Or is the purpose to make connections with the audiences and thereby convey feelings and messages that we feel are important?

I believe the latter is the goal of theatrical performance. Theatre is a medium that can spark thought and social change. But to promote these sparks we must communicate with the audience effectively. While current usage may not be aesthetically pleasing to the trained ear, I contest that ‘pretty speech’ should be overridden by effective communication. I believe that the dialect model set forth in this project will aid in that communication.

I am not holding this model up as the ‘gold standard’ of geographically neutral dialects for use in actor training. But I do believe my model is firmly based in current usage with close attention paid to clarity and geographical neutrality. I also believe that in ten years - possibly less – this model will be outdated and antiquated. Thus, I challenge the reader and my colleagues to constantly question standards and the status quo.

The definition of standard dialect I have found the most useful is put forth in a book entitled, Linguistics for Non-Linguists by Frank Parker and Kathryn Riley. Here, Parker and Riley define a standard dialect as “one that draws no negative attention to itself” (Parker 159). How true. After all is not the best review for a vocal coach no review at all? Our success is that our work be invisible to the ear, so that the audience can concentrate on *what* an actor is saying rather than *how* an actor is saying it.

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# Appendix 1

## Drafts of the Dialect

### Draft 1

### **The Actor's Dialect**

#### Consonants-

- All final plosive sounds are exploded
- Medial [ t ] sounds are slightly aspirated
- All "ing" endings are pronounced [ ɪŋ ]
- Final d's when preceded by a voiceless consonant are pronounced [ t ]
- "and you" not pronounced as anjew
- you preceded by a [ t ] is not pronounced "choo"
- often is pronounced [ ɒfən ]

#### Vowels-

- [ ɔv ] diphthong is used only in a stressed position in the word, otherwise use [ ɒ ]
- [ ɛɪ ] diphthong is used only in a stressed position in the word, otherwise use [ e ]
- our is pronounced [ ɔvɜ ]
- your is pronounced [ jvɜ ]
- sure is pronounced [ ʃvɜ ]
- to is pronounced [ tɔ ]
- be-, de- and re- prefixes are pronounced [ bɛ ], [ dɛ ] and [ rɛ ]
- engine is pronounced [ ɛndʒɪn ] not [ ɪndʒɪn ]
- orange is pronounced with the centering diphthong [ ɔɪ ]
- forest is pronounced with the centering diphthong [ ɔɪ ]
- bouquet is pronounced [ bukɛ ]
- poem is pronounced [ pɔvɪm ]

#### Questionable items-

- ✓ pronunciation of "arry" words? [ æri ] or [ ɛɪri ] or ?
- ✓ pronunciation of cruel and jewel? [ 'kruɛl ] or [ kru ]

## Draft 2

**The Actor's Dialect**

## Consonants-

- Medial [t̚] sounds are slightly aspirated
- All “ing” endings are pronounced [ɪŋ]
- Final d's when preceded by a voiceless consonant are pronounced [t̚]
- Final s's in the plural are pronounced [z] when preceded by a voiced vowel or consonant
- “and you” not pronounced as anjew
- you preceded by a [t] is not pronounced “choo”
- often is pronounced [ɒfən]

## Vowels-

- [oʊ] diphthong is used only in a stressed position in the word, otherwise use [o]
- [eɪ] diphthong is used only in a stressed position in the word, otherwise use [e]
- our is pronounced [aʊr]
- sure is pronounced [ʃʊr]
- to is pronounced [tʊ]
- be-, de- and re- prefixes are pronounced [bɪ], [dɪ] and [rɪ]
- engine is pronounced [ɛndʒɪn] not [ɪndʒɪn]
- bouquet is pronounced [buːkɛt]
- poem is pronounced [pəʊɪm]

## Questionable items-

- ✓ pronunciation of words containing “arry”? [æri] or [ɛri] or ? – I realize that this item may seem to be self explanatory, but please consider what is used more frequently in current American english.
- ✓ pronunciation of words such as cruel and jewel? [kruəl] or [kruɪ]

- ✓ do you advocate the use of centering/short diphthongs and if so, when do you use them and what phonetic spelling of centering diphthong immediately preceding vowel sounds do you advocate to your students?
- ✓ Rules for the use of the fourth, fifth and sixth back vowels; [ɔ], [ɒ], [ɑ̃ ]?
  - ✓ possible rules – [ɑ̃ ] when preceding [t] and [d]
  - [ɒ ] when preceding [s]
- ✓ liquid sound of the liquid “u” lightened to [ɹ̥]?
- ✓ your - pronounced [jʊr] or [jɔ̃r]?
- ✓ aspirated “wh” not used?
- ✓ In words ending in “y” the final [ɪ] sound changes in length but vowel sound itself remains unchanged?
- ✓ [ɛ] preferred over [ə] in short nondescript vowel sounds
- ✓ pronunciation of the vowel sound such as in the first syllable of the words ‘orange’ and ‘coral’? [ɔ̃r] or [ɔ̃r] or [ɔ̃r] or ?



## Questions for the Experts with notes by Janet Rodgers

JANET - TAKE A COOL

How do you ~~advocate~~ <sup>advocate</sup> ~~practise~~ <sup>practise</sup> the following? <sup>Do you prefer...? Might be ways to phrase the questions.</sup> <sup>AT TIMES AND TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK, MICHAEL</sup>

- Questionable items -
- ✓ Pronunciation of the 1<sup>st</sup> vowel in words such as 'carry' and 'marry'?
  - ✓ Do you advocate the use of the 5<sup>th</sup> front vowel [æ] or the vowel [ɛ] ] with or without the centering diphthong - Which seems to be in more current use in contemporary speech?

- ✓ pronunciation of words such as cruel and jewel? [kru:əl] or [kru:l] <sup>or [kru:l]</sup>

- ✓ do you advocate the use of centering/short diphthongs and if so, when do you use them and what phonetic spelling of centering diphthong immediately preceding vowel sounds do you advocate to your students?

I would start each ✓ with a capital letter - even if it is not a complete sentence.

Do you follow any.

Rules for the use of the fourth, fifth and sixth back vowels; [ɔ], [ɒ], [ɑ]?

- ✓ possible rules - [ɑ] when preceding [ɹ] and [d]
- [ɒ] when preceding [s]

- ✓ Do you prefer the liquid "u" or the lightened [ɪu]?
- ✓ liquid "u" lightened to [ɪu]?

- ✓ "your" - pronounced [jʊr] or [jɔr]?

- ✓ Do you advocate the use of the aspirated "wh" in everyday actor's speech?
- ✓ aspirated "wh" (no) used?

- ✓ In words ending in "y" the final [i] sound changes in length but vowel sound itself remains unchanged? <sup>Do you represent the sound with [ɪ], [i] or something else?</sup>

- ✓ Do you prefer [ɪ] or [ə] in short nondescript vowel sounds?
- ✓ [ɪ] preferred over [ə] in short nondescript vowel sounds

How do you pronounce it? In isolation? When it is used as an adjective?

- ✓ Do you advocate the pronunciation of the vowel sound such as in the first syllable of the words 'orange' and 'coral'? [ɔr] or [ɔɹ] or [ɔə] or?

## Appendix 2

### Responses of the Experts

#### Kate Ufema

Non-Geographic Specific Actor's Dialect  
Bruckmueller

1.  $\text{E}^1\text{m}^1\text{r}^1$  and  $\text{E}^1\text{c}^1\text{r}^1$

My ear much prefers the 5th front (as in Ann), but no one really talks like that any more. So I give in to the  $\text{E}^1\text{a}^1\text{r}^1$  sound in contemporary.

2.  $\text{E}^1\text{c}^1\text{r}^1\text{u}^1\text{e}^1$  and  $\text{E}^1\text{j}^1\text{e}^1\text{w}^1\text{e}^1$

one syllable for contemporary (no schwa)

3. I don't understand what you mean by  $\text{E}^1\text{c}^1\text{e}^1\text{n}^1\text{t}^1\text{e}^1\text{r}^1$ /short diphthongs.

4. In classical standard, I make a great distinction between the 4th, 5th, 6th back vowels. In contemporary, we barely hear the 4th anymore. And that's probably the way it should be.

5. Again, my ear prefers the liquid  $\text{E}^1\text{u}^1$ , but it can draw attention to itself  
in contemporary. So it's best not used.

6.  $\text{E}^1\text{y}^1\text{o}^1\text{u}^1\text{r}^1$

I prefer that  $\text{E}^1\text{y}^1\text{o}^1\text{u}^1\text{r}^1$  rhyme with  $\text{E}^1\text{c}^1\text{u}^1\text{r}^1$ . When it rhymes with  $\text{E}^1\text{o}^1\text{r}^1$ , it sounds British to me.

7. aspirated  $\text{E}^1\text{w}^1\text{h}^1$

only occurs in classical. It sounds too affected to my ear, in contemporary.

8. Final  $\text{E}^1\text{y}^1$

I prefer pronounced as  $\text{E}^1\text{i}^1$  (ee) – but certainly not stressed  
What do you mean by  $\text{E}^1\text{w}^1\text{h}^1$  if it is in isolation?<sup>1</sup> an example?

9. I prefer the schwa in nondescript vowel sounds.

10.  $\text{E}^1\text{o}^1\text{r}^1\text{a}^1\text{n}^1\text{g}^1\text{e}^1$  and  $\text{E}^1\text{c}^1\text{o}^1\text{r}^1\text{a}^1$

I prefer the short  $\text{E}^1\text{o}^1\text{r}^1$  diphthong

## Bonnie Raphael

Non-Geographic Specific Actor's Dialect  
Bruckmueller

1/12/02

## Questionable Items- How do you prefer the following?

1. Pronunciation of the 1<sup>st</sup> vowel in words such as 'carry' and 'marry'?  
Do you advocate the use of the 5<sup>th</sup> front vowel [æ] or the vowel [ɛ] with or without the centering diphthong - Which seems to be in more current use in contemporary speech? *I prefer /æ/ but hear /ɛ/ more often in contemporary American speech.*
2. How do you prefer the pronunciation of words such as 'cruel' and 'jewel'? [krʊəl] or [kru:əl] or [krʌl] or?  
*2 syllables - I prefer /ɔl/ to /l/*
3. Do you advocate the use of centering/short diphthongs and if so, when do you use them and what phonetic spelling of centering diphthong immediately preceding vowel sounds do you advocate to your students? *he not Schwan - raised + don't usually get this specific in my teaching*
4. Do you follow any rules for the use of the fourth, fifth and sixth back vowels: [ɔ], [ɪ], [ɪ], [ɑ]?  
possible rules - [ɑ] when preceding [ɪ] and [ɔ]  
- [ɪ] when preceding [ɪ]  
*no - I teach /ɑ/ as OK for both /ɔ/ + /ɑ/ in several American + /ɔ/ as an independent of Stage Speech.*
5. Do you prefer the 'liquid u' or the lightened [ɪu]?  
*depends on context - usually /ɪu/*
6. Do you advocate the pronunciation of 'your' as [jʊr] or [jɔr]?  
*unstressed stressed*
7. Do you advocate the aspirated "wh" in everyday actor's speech?  
*no*
8. In words ending in "y" do you represent the final sound with [i], [ɪ] or? How do you pronounce it? What if it is in isolation? *I heard it as /ɪ/ I heard that /i/ now happens in an unstressed syllable. I use /ɪ:/ to simulate the compromise.*
9. Do you prefer [ɪ] or [ə] in short nondescript vowel sounds?  
*either*
10. Do you prefer the pronunciation of the vowel sound such as in the first syllable of the words 'orange' and 'coral' as [ɔr] or [ɒr] or [ɔɹ] or [ɒɹ] or?  
*I use /ɔ/ but think /ɒ/ is OK too - just not /ɔɹ/*

## Paul Meier

1. I advocate [kæɹi] but find [kɛɹi] more prevalent.
2. I prefer [kɹuəɹ]
3. The question is not clear. I advocate [pʊə, kɛə, fɪə]  
etc. Preceding a vowel-initial word the 'r' become  
consonantal, linking the two words. E.G. [klɪəɹ\_aɪz]
4. I have never thought about this one. I suppose you mean  
words like 'possible', 'thought', 'caught', 'laud' etc. I tend  
to go for [pɑsəbɹ, θɒt, kɒt, lɒd]
5. In 'news', 'duke', 'music', I advocate [j]
6. [jɔ]
7. No.
8. 'pretty' is [pɹɪdi] in GenAm speech.
9. It depends on the word.  
[ɹaɪdɪŋ, tɪkɪt, pətɛɪdʊ]
10. I prefer [ɹaɪndʒ] or [ɑɪndʒ] but not  
[ɔɹɪndʒ]

## Jan Gist

1. Standard says "carry" and "marry" with the "a" as in "cat"  
General says them with the "a" as in "head".
2. I recommend most characters in plays to use 2 syllables for "jewel" and "cruel" because otherwise the audience will hear "jew" and "crew". But it always depends on the character and situation in the play.
3. I don't know what you mean by the term: "centering/short diphthongs." Do you mean "diphthongs instead of R-coloring"? I go with Skinner's text on "here's" "their" "poor" "ore" "car" "fire" "power" for Standard American. For General American, I use the diphthong with a schwa with a little "r" to show "R-coloring".
4. Standard differentiates between the vowels in "All", "hOnest", "fAthers".  
General American says all three words the same way, using the "ah" as in "fAthers".  
I recommend they use the Skinner text and Kenyon and Knott's A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English, noting their differences of ES = Eastern Standard or E+ = Standard American.
5. Standard uses "liquid u", which is optional after "s" and "l". General does not use "liquid u".
6. Standard uses either "your" to rhyme with "bore" or "cure". I recommend "yer" in General American only when there is a specific character choice.
7. Standard uses "hw". General usually only uses "w"
8. Standard differentiates between strong and weak syllables, and that is why prefixes (as in "beleive", "decieve", "rely") and suffixes (as in "lovely", "lady") are weaker and shorter and so they are closer to "i" as in "it" than as in "need". General American does not make as dynamic a difference between strong and weak syllables, but tends to equalize syllables and so in prefixes tends to use "i" as in "need" or "uh", and in suffixes tends to lengthen to "i" as in "need".
9. Depends on character and speed of speech. Standard tends toward "i" as in "it"  
General tends toward "uh".
10. Standard uses the vowel of "hOnest" for "orange" and "coral". So do many East coast American regionalisms. Westerners and General American tends toward the vowel of "All" or even "Obey".

You can call me to clarify. (619) 294-5965  
Jan Gist

I hope you will send me the results of your survey. I'd like to know what the others are answering.

## Rocco dal Vera

1. For words in the lexical set TRAP where the order is TRAP/[ɪ]/Vowel, and the context is General American, I suggest that [e] should be used, since its use seems more transparent. For Stage Standard, I encourage [æ]. In both cases I suggest that Vowel/[ɪ]/Vowel is preferable to Vowel/[ə.ɪ]/Vowel, since I think separating the r-consonant away from the vowel, and eliminating the r-colored vowel produces a cleaner set of sounds. I tell my students that in certain cases where the letter A is followed by one or two R's, followed by a vowel sound, that letter A will receive a varied pronunciation. This actual pronunciation appears to be governed less by a fixed rule than by usage. For example parish will appear as [pə.ɹəʃ] in GA (Kenyon and Knott, pg. 317), [pæ.ɹɪʃ] in SS (Skinner, pg. 74), and [pæ.ɹɪʃ] in RP (Jones, pg. 366). Parent, which appears to have the same context, will be treated as [pə.ɹənt] in GA (Kenyon and Knott, pg. 317), [pə.ɹənt] in SS (Skinner, pg. 172), and [pə.ɹənt] in RP (Jones, pg. 366).

As a result of this situation a sentence like, "Merry Mary, marry" could contain one primary vowel for GA, three for SS and two for RP.

Recommendations for Lexical Set: A				
Key Word	GA	SS	RP	Marked RP
MARY	[ˈmɛ.ɹɪ]	[ˈmɛð.ɹɪ]	[ˈme.ɹɪ]	[ˈmɛ.rɛ]

Recommendations for Lexical Set: B				
Key Word	GA	SS	RP	Marked RP
MERRY	[ˈmɛ.ɹɪ]	[ˈmɛ.ɹɪ]	[ˈme.ɹɪ]	[ˈmɛ.rɛ]

Recommendations for Lexical Set: C				
Key Word	GA	SS	RP	Marked RP
MARRY	[ˈmæ.ɹɪ]	[ˈmæ.ɹɪ]	[ˈmæ.ɹɪ]	[ˈmæ.rɛ]

The following is a sample of minimal pairs comparing the sets above.

Set A	Set B	Set C
airy=aerie	Eric	arid
paring	perish	parish
bearing=baring	bury=berry	Barrie=Barry
tearable	terrible	tarry
dairy	Derry	Darrow
caring	Kerry	carry
Mary	merry	marry
Marion	America	Marilyn
hilarious	celerity	hilarity
vary	very	Varro
Sarah	serenade	Saracen

hairy sparing	herring Sperry	Harry sparrow
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2. I tend toward [ˈkɪu.əɪ ˈdʒu.əɪ] for both General American and Stage Standard even though I know that Skinner suggests [u] for Stage Standard.
3. I don't understand this question can you provide examples?
4. I have never heard of the rules you've suggested. Perhaps you could share them with me. In any case.... I usually don't suggest that General American speakers worry too much about making a fine distinction between these vowels. In the phrase "Paul wants calm," I allow a GA useage of [ɑ] or close variants for all three words. In SS, I prescribe [ɔ | ɒ | ɑ] in that order. The choice of when to use which sounds corresponds to the sets Thought, Cloth and Palm (in order). There are spelling correlatives which become apparent when those sets are compared. This is a difficult area to explain to GA speakers when asking them to shift into SS or RP. Often they need word lists presented as minimal pairs in order to get the right sense of when to use each sound.
5. I think that the employment of the "liquid U" in a transparent General American dialect is more complex than your question. (Now, this is assuming that you are talking about "duty" as opposed to "beauty" or "duke" as opposed to "puke" – or those words where many in the USA tend to not use the "liquid U" at all [Wells Lexical Set Goose (b).] If your goal is to create the most opaque dialect for the American ear, then I would tend to drop the "liquid U" entirely. My personal observation is that as you move from acrolect GA into hyperlect SS there is a chain of acquired jod insertions starting with jod following [n] as in news, knew, then [d, t] as in duke, and tune, then [θ] as in enthusiasm, and finally [s, l] as in suit and lewd. This chain is part of a continuum shift from one dialect to another. The choice of [ɹu] or [ju] can be seen as an incremental adjustment in that continuum, with [ɹu] being less elevated than [ju].
6. In the weak form of the word I suggest [jə-] for GA. In the strong form, I prefer [juʒ-]. [jɔʒ-] strikes me as too British and the commonly heard [jɪɾ-] isn't quite acrolectal to my ear.
7. I don't suggest [Σ] for GA. I insist on it for SS.
8. I suggest for words like "easy" and "hilly" that the GA use should be [i.zi, 'sɪ.li] as long as the specific environment is that it occurs on an unstressed terminal syllable (or if that is the root word before a suffix, i.e., silly~silliness.). In SS and RP I suggest [ɪ], though I think its use is fading in modern RP.
9. This is a tough one because not all weak "schwas" are suitable for elevation to [ɪ] so the question is dangerously general. The lexical set in question is "Comma."  
Theatrical dialecticians seem to pay more attention to this set than linguists. Most

linguists find that [ʌ] and [ə] tend to have the same accent values and so group them together. Actors need to pay more attention than average people to how a word carries over distance. To overcome the natural acoustic decay words undergo, actors are often advised to elevate [ə] to [ɪ] (Wise, pg. 14). The heightened energy and forward placement of that vowel will make the word more intelligible and amplify the difference between similar sounding words. For American actors, it also means an adjustment of their speech toward a more British pronunciation. Wells writes of this phenomenon as the Weak Vowel Merger (pg. 167-8). Traditional RP is more conservative in this respect, retaining a larger percentage of [ɪ], whereas GA tends toward [ə] and loses the contrast present in RP.

This choice of [ɪ] or [ə] usually occurs in a weak syllable before a final consonant. Compare *Lenin* and *Lennon*. In RP they will appear as [ˈle.nɪn, ˈle.nən] respectively. In GA the contrast is lost as they both merge to [ˈlenən]. Rabbit and abbot will experience the same treatment in the final syllable.

Several further examples to test the possible contrast in weak syllables arise through the clitic (i.e., weak form) pronouns: thus *pig it* [ˈpi.gɪt] vs. *bigot* [ˈbi.gət], *sell it* [ˈse.lɪt], vs. *zealot* [ˈze.lət]. Some RP speakers have dye it and diet as homophones [ˈdaɪ.ɪt], but most currently pronounce *diet* [ˈdaɪət] (Wells, pg. 168). Compare also a *massive cloud* vs. a *mass of cloud*.

The Weak Vowel Merger factors into the creation of syllabic consonants. For example [ən] is an input to [ŋ], but [ɪn] is not. Thus, the final syllable of *Barton* could be either [ən] or [ŋ] in both GA and RP. *Martin*, by contrast could be either [ən] or [ŋ] in GA but [ɪn] only in RP (Wells, pg. 168).

Skinner adopts the RP protocols for SS (pg. 61-7).

For the British there is little question of where to employ [ə] or [ɪ]. They have the natural linguistic environment to support them. Americans, in trying to counteract the Weak Vowel Merger, might become confused by the lack of clear guidelines (Wise, pg. 14). For example, in *vigilant*, the first two vowels do well as [ɪ], but the third only works as [ə]. *Luggage*, spelled with the same letter *a* in the weak syllable elevates (both socially and physically) easily to [ɪ]. Spelling is not an effective guide, as weak syllables can have a variety of spelled vowels, but may be pronounced both [ɪ] and [ə].

This is an area of vagueness that appears to indicate further study. Even the most detailed sources consulted do not set down clear guidelines for the elevating of [ə] to [ɪ] in weak syllables. Most do not mention the subject, although Skinner, Wells, and Wise at least make a passing reference to it. Wise (pg. 240) is the most specific, explaining its occurrence as "[ɪ] generally in unstressed medial syllables spelled with e, i, and y, as in *celebrate* [ˈse.li.breɪt], *president* [ˈpre.zɪ.dənt], *analysis* [əˈnæ.lɪ.sɪs]. With medial y, [ə] is used alternatively with [ɪ] as in *paralysis* [pəˈlæ.lə.sɪs, pəˈlæ.lɪ.sɪs]."

I know that was a long answer to a short question, but after all, this is your thesis and it is important that you get it right!

10. This is the lexical set Wells: Cloth (c). It is a very difficult one. I tell my students that in the case where the letters *o*, or *au*, or *aw* are followed by one or two R's followed by a vowel sound, the pronunciation is varied. As in the case of the lexical set "guarantee," the vowel sound is determined by usage rather than by a clear phonetic rule. Orange, for example, will appear as [ˈɔ.ɹəndʒ] in GA, and [ˈɔ.ɹɪndʒ] in SS and RP. The word "oral,"

which has the same basic circumstances however, will be pronounced as [ˈɔ.ɹəl] in all three accents.

For example:

Words Using [ɔ.ɹ] in GA and [ɔ.ɹ] in SS and RP	Words Using [ɔ.ɹ] in All Three Accents
coral	choral
moral	moron
oracle	oral, aural
Lawrence	Laura
origin	orient
florid	flora



## Appendix 3

### “Comma Gets a Cure” with Phonetic Transcription

Well, here's a story for you: Sarah Perry was a veterinary nurse who had been

[wɛl hɪrɪz ə stɔːri fɔː ju ʃerə pɛrɪ wɔːz ə vɛtrɪnɛrɪ nɜːs hu hæd biːn]

working daily at an old zoo in a deserted district of the territory, so she was

[wɜːrkiŋ deɪli æt ən ould zu in ə dɪzɜːtɪd dɪstrɪkt əv ðə tɛrɪtɔːri sou ʃi wɔːz]

very happy to start a new job at a superb private practice in north square near

[vɜːri hæpi tu stɑːt ə nu dʒɔːb æt ə səʊpɜːb praɪvɪt praɪktɪs in nɔːrθ skwɛr nɪr]

the Duke Street Tower. That area was much nearer for her and more to her

[ðə duk stri:t taʊə ðæt ɛəriə wɔːz mʌtʃ nɪrər fɔː hɜː ən mɔː tu hɜː]

liking. Even so, on her first morning, she felt stressed. She ate a bowl of

[laɪkiŋ ívɪn sou ən hɜː fɜːst mɔːniŋ ʃi fɛlt strest ʃi eɪt ə boʊl əv]

porridge, checked herself in the mirror and washed her face in a hurry. Then

[pɔːrɪdʒ tʃɛkt hɜːrsɛlf in ʃə mɪrər ən wɔːʃt hɜː feɪs in ə hɜːri ðen]

she put on a plain yellow dress and a fleece jacket, picked up her kit and

[ʃi put ən ə pleɪn ʒelə drɛs ənd ə flis dʒækɪt pɪkt ʌp hɜr kɪt ən]

headed for work. When she got there, there was a woman with a goose

waiting

[hɛdɪd fɔr wɜrk wɛn ʃi gɔt ðɛr ðɛr wɔz ə wʊmɪn wɪθ ə gʊs weɪtɪŋ]

for her. The woman gave Sarah an official letter from the vet. The letter

[fɔr hɜr ðə wʊmɪn geɪv sərə ən əfɪʃəl lɛdɜ frəm ðə vet ðə lɛdɜ]

implied that the animal could be suffering from a rare form of foot and mouth

[ɪmˈplaɪd ðæt ði ˈænɪml̩ kʊd bi sʌfərɪŋ frəm ə rɛr fɔrm ʌv fut ən maʊθ]

disease, which was surprising, because normally you would only expect to see

[dɪzɪz wɪtʃ wɔz səˈpraɪzɪŋ bɪkʌz ˈnɔrmɪli ju wʊd ɒnli ɛkˈspekt tu si]

it in a dog or a goat. Sarah was sentimental, so this made her feel sorry for

[ɪt ɪn ə dɔg ɔr ə goʊt sərə wɔz sɛntɪˈmɛntɪl sɒ ðɪs meɪd hɜr fi:l sɔri fɔr]

for]

the beautiful bird.

[ðə bɪˈtʊtɪfɪl bɜrd]

Before long, that itchy goose began to strut around the office like a lunatic,

[bɪfɔr lɔŋ ðæt ɪtʃi gʊs bɪɡən tu strʌt əraʊnd ðə ɔfɪs laɪk ə lʊnɪtɪk]

which made an unsanitary mess. The goose's owner, Mary Harrison, kept

[wɪtʃ meɪd ən ʌnsənɪtəri mes ðə gʊsɪz ɔnər ˈmɛri hɛrɪsɪn keɪpt]

calling, "*Comma, Comma*," which Sarah thought was an odd choice for a

[kɑliŋ kɑmə kɑmə witʃ sɛrə θɑt wʌz æn ɑd tʃɔɪs fɔr ə]

name. Comma was strong and huge, so it would take some force to trap her,

[neɪm kɑmə wʌz strɑŋ ən hju:dʒ sʊ it wʊd teɪk sʌm fɔrs tu træp hɜr]

but Sarah had a different idea. First she tried gently stroking the goose's

[bʌt sɛrə hæd ə dɪfrɪnt aɪdɪə fɜrst ʃi traɪd dʒɛntlɪ stroukiŋ ðə ɡʊsɪz]

lower back with her palm, then singing a tune to her. Finally, she

[lʊəər bæk wiθ hɜr pɑlm ðɛn sɪŋɪŋ ə tun tu hɜr faɪnəlɪ ʃi]

administered ether. Her efforts were not futile. In no time, the goose began to

[ædˈmɪnɪstərd iθɜ hɜr ɛfɜrts wɜr nɑt fiʊtɪl ɪn noʊ taɪm ðə ɡʊz bɪɡən tu]

tire, so Sarah was able to hold onto Comma and give her a relaxing bath.

[faɪr sʊ sɛrə wʌz ɛɪbəl tu hoʊld ɑntu kɑmə ən ɡɪv hɜr ə riˈlæksiŋ bɑθ]

Once Sarah had managed to bathe the goose, she wiped her off with a cloth

[wʌns sɛrə hæd mænɪdʒd tu beɪð ðə ɡʊs ʃi waɪpt hɜr ɑf wiθ ə klɑθ]

and laid her on her right side. Then Sarah confirmed the vet's diagnosis.

[ən leɪd hɜr ɑn hɜr raɪt saɪd ðɛn sɛrə kənfɜrmd ðə vɛts daɪəɡnəʊsɪs]

Almost immediately, she remembered an effective treatment that required

[ɑlmʊst ɪmɪdiətli ʃi rɪmɛmbərd æn ɪfɛktɪv trɪtmɪnt ðæt rɪkwaɪrɪd]

her to measure out a lot of medicine. Sarah warned that this course of

[hɜr tu məʒɜr ɑʊt ə lɑt ʌv mɛdɪsɪn sɛrə wɔrnd ðæt ðɪs kɔrs ʌv]

treatment might be expensive—either five or six times the cost of penicillin. I

[trɪtmɪnt maɪt bi ɪkspɛnsɪv ɪðər faɪv ɔr sɪks taɪmz ðə kɔst ʌv

pɛnɪsɪlɪn aɪ]

can't imagine paying so much, but Mrs. Harrison—a millionaire

[kænt ɪmædʒɪn peɪɪŋ sɔʊ mʌtʃ bʌt mɪsɪz hɛrɪsɪn ə mɪljɪnɛr]

lawyer—thought it was a fair price for a cure

[lɔɪər θɔt ɪt wɔz ə fɛr praɪs fɔr ə kiʊr]

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## Vita

Michael J. Bruckmueller was born on March 21, 1975, in St. Paul, Minnesota. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre from the University of Minnesota Duluth in 1999 and received a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2004.