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Exploring the Standard: A Look into Modern Voice and Speech Curriculum

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

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This thesis explores the current state of voice and speech education to discover if there is a standard of learning amongst from university to university. By examining the history of voice and speech, discovering basic skills, breaking down teaching methodologies, and looking at current university and conservatory acting programs, the thesis discovers there is not a standard way of teaching, but there is a standard set of skills that should be upheld when planning voice and speech curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS VOCAL PRODUCTION?

What are the specifics of vocal production in performance? What, if any, are the tenets of voice and speech education across multiple theatre programs? The first question is answered easily enough through a specific cross-referencing of vocal production methodologies used by various theatre departments. The second question requires access to information that is not as readily available. We can trace the origins of vocal production for performance all the way back to the ancient Greeks, but this history has not led to any standard adhered to across the board. There are so many different methodologies that have come to fruition by various practitioners based on the needs of the modern theatre, but as instructors, how do we know what to pick and choose from to best enhance our students' education? An understanding of the history and of the methodologies at our disposal today is arguably the first step in discovering if a standard is to be found or can even be applied universally. This thesis will attempt to address this range of options available to make an informed choice on building voice and speech curriculum.

Before jumping into the history, it would be wise to define some of the key terminology we will be dealing with. First, we must define the intricacies of *vocal production*. Vocal production is the umbrella under which all other terms fall. The Voice Foundation is a group dedicated to research in this field. They describe themselves as "the world's oldest and leading organization dedicated to voice research, medicine, science, and education." They have an initial definition of vocal production as follows:

> The “spoken word” results from three components of voice production: voiced sound, resonance, and articulation. Voiced sound: The basic sound produced by vocal fold vibration is called “voiced sound.” This is frequently described as a “buzzy” sound. Voiced sound for singing differs significantly from voiced sound for speech. Resonance: Voiced sound is amplified and modified by the vocal tract resonators (the throat, mouth cavity, and nasal passages). The resonators produce a person’s recognizable voice. Articulation: The vocal tract articulators (the tongue, soft palate, and lips) modify the voiced sound. The articulators produce recognizable words.

This is followed by a more scientific account of the above sentiment:

> Voice production involves a three-step process.
>
> 1. A column of air pressure is moved towards the vocal folds
> 2. Air is moved out of the lungs and towards the vocal folds by coordinated action of the diaphragm, abdominal muscles, chest muscles, and rib cage
> 3. Vocal fold vibration – sequence of vibratory cycles.

Item three goes on to reveal multiple ways in which the vocal folds can vibrate to create different categories of sound proving that even from a medical perspective, vocal production includes so many elements that it can be difficult to break down into a more digestible definition. Perhaps describing it as combining breath with resonators, articulators, and the diaphragm is a comfortable springboard into the topic. Moving forward, let’s group all elements of voice and speech under the umbrella of vocal production.

It is one thing for a human to speak utilizing the processes of vocal production, but these processes would be useless without a human's ability to hear. To form coherent language, humans must be able to hear the sounds they are creating to then manipulate these sounds into words. Relevant, then, to the study of voice and speech is the concept of *aurality*. If the term aural can be defined as anything "of or relating to the ear or to the sense of hearing" by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, what then does the term *aurality* mean? The earliest mention of this term I could find is in an article entitled "Aurality" written in April 2007 by Joyce Coleman, a Professor of English at the University of Oklahoma. She gives a comparison of orality to aurality:

> Orality—understood as the oral delivery of texts—is often assumed to have given way to literacy—the private reading of texts—over the course of the medieval period. The two entities are mutually exclusive and can be placed in a relationship of evolution that has preoccupied scholars of Middle English literature. Orality differs from "aurality," which is defined as "the shared hearing of written texts" and combines aspects of both orality and literacy. (Coleman. Web)

This difference becomes very important when considering the development of vocal performance for means of communication dating back to the ancient Greeks. Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier, Associate Professor of Music and Director of the Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University, published a book on the topic of aurality in November of 2014, entitled *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Columbia*. Duke University Press describes her findings as follows:

> In this audacious book, Ana María Ochoa Gautier explores how listening has been central to the production of notions of language, music, voice, and sound

> that determine the politics of life. Drawing primarily from nineteenth-century Colombian sources, Ochoa Gautier locates sounds produced by different living entities at the juncture of the human and nonhuman. Her "acoustically tuned" analysis of a wide array of texts reveals multiple debates on the nature of the aural. These discussions were central to a politics of the voice harnessed in the service of the production of different notions of personhood and belonging. In Ochoa Gautier's groundbreaking work, Latin America and the Caribbean emerge as a historical site where the politics of life and the politics of expression inextricably entangle the musical and the linguistic, knowledge and the sensorial. (Duke University. Web)

So, then aurality can be ultimately defined as the impact of listening and hearing upon almost every aspect of human life, making it an extremely important element to discuss within the realm of voice and speech for the stage.

The next terms I would like to examine are *voice* and *speech* and the differences between them. While they are often lumped together when discussing the overall concept of vocal production, there are important distinctions between the two. Google Dictionary defines speech as “the expression of or the ability to express thoughts and feelings by articulate sounds,” especially those that relate to communication of thoughts and ideas. In essence, speech contains the more definable phonetic elements of vocal production, outlined in the International Phonetic Alphabet; the “how” and the “where” humans create sounds. It is logical then that speech is coupled so closely with voice because they must work hand in hand in the creation of vocal production. Defining voice is where things get a little more muddled. Many consider the voice to be an unseen

entity that is difficult to ever fully control. Robert Barton and Rocco dal Vera, co-authors of the book *Voice: Onstage and Off*, explain this dilemma beautifully by stating:

> Your voice is hiding in a cave. The cave is your body. You will never know your voice as well as your body because there is no photograph, scale, measuring tape, full-length mirror or zipper to help you. No one will ever kiss, slap, caress or shove your voice. It hides well. (Barton 3)

Study of the voice is where we start to see large variations in pedagogical approach. Some methodologies like the Linklater progression, play to the idea that the voice is an unseen entity powered by breath, while others, like the Alexander Technique, attempt a more scientific approach. Some, like Fitzmaurice Voicework, fall somewhere in between.

Jane Boston was the former Senior Voice Specialist at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and is now a Principal Lecturer in Voice at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, UK, as well as the Head of the International Network for Voice. In a book simply entitled *Voice*, part of a series called “Readings in Theatre Practice,” Boston breaks down the definition of voice into multiple categories. She begins by saying:

> For many, voice remains one of the most elusive and invisible factors among all the visible and measurable knowledge about the body...Whilst there is no one definition, it is useful to appreciate that voice is best understood in relation to several historical, social, scientific and cultural paradigms. Once these are stated, it is easier to see how they illuminate the specific codes, values and terminologies that collectively construct theatre voice. (Boston. 5-6)

She continues to break down voice into seven categories: Anatomical Voice (how voice fits in with the study of humanities), Physics of Voice (the phenomenon of voice), Psychological Voice (connecting the voice to the mind), Neuroscientific Voice (connecting the body and breath to the brain), Sociocultural Voice (how voice is manipulated by social and cultural influence), Pedagogical Voice (the voice of the instructor), and Speech and Voice (the combination of all of the factors discussed thus far). Providing this breakdown gives instructors a formalized way of categorizing all the different elements of voice in as concise a way as possible. While this is only one scholar's point of view, it is safe to say that attempting to define voice does not end with a beautiful bow atop a nice neat box.

THE HISTORY OF VOICE FOR THE STAGE

So where did it all start? Why has vocal production become such an important component of performance? It dates back to the Ancient Greeks, as oration and vocal production was pivotal to their way of life, or at least among the educated as it was up to them to spread news to the masses and uneducated who could not read. As Jacqueline Martin states in her book *Voice in Modern Theatre*:

> It is not difficult to understand why rhetoric and the art of oratory reached such a high standard in ancient Greece. As reading and writing were difficult and unnatural, Greek society relied on oral expression… 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 1)

It is customary for theatre history education to begin with the ancient Greeks, although we do have evidence of theatre before this point in history. The Greeks are where we first have solid evidence of this idea of oration, a profession held in high esteem. In a time when written language was not as accessible to the masses, people would rely on orators for all their information, scholarly and otherwise. Theatre was also not only an opportunity for entertainment, but often a take on the political climate of the times as well as a religious experience. In a time when public speaking is the main source of communication, vocal production became a topic of much importance, however we can only theorize that actors of the time were trained vocally, as we have no way of knowing this for certain. We can consider the conditions under which they were performing to give us a better idea. While the theaters were designed to assist in the projection of sound from the stage, we must imagine that it would still be required for the actors to project, even though the masks they wore were constructed in a way to assist in vocal projection. Dr. Nathan Hurwitz, an Associate Professor of Theatre, states:

> Having the actor's words heard clearly was so important to the ancient Greeks that the actors wore masks with megaphones built into them. Although one actor would play several parts in each play, each character had a mask that identified them to the audience. Thanos Vovolis, a contemporary Greek mask-maker, believes that not only did the small megaphones amplify the voice and help project it to the back of the auditorium, but that they would alter the acoustical qualities of the actor, thereby, literally giving each character a unique vocal range and timbre. (Hurwitz Web)

But even in knowing this, we can still only theorize how the actors would have sounded. Greek theatre was meant to be large in nature, so bold acting and vocal choices were likely made to fit the comic or tragic nature of the script. Jane Boston states:

> It is possible to accept the view that Greek actors had well-trained voices, but we can never know for sure and it is too simplistic to make assumptions about it. What the voice sounded like remains largely unknowable, and premature conclusions based upon the aesthetics of 'well-trained' voice are loaded with cultural and social connotations and remain problematic. It is probable, though, that factors related to practical and sustainable vocalization helped to determine the vocal stylistics of the day. In which case, it is the voice as instrument that comes to the fore, and not its aesthetic outcome in the drama. (Boston 26)

So, while we may not be able to pinpoint the sound quality, what we can do is evaluate the emotional connection to the script that was spoken. Oliver Tapin wrote in his book *Greek Tragedy in Action*:

> Behind the words of Greek tragedy there is action, behind the action emotion: the abstract and concrete are made one, the emotion and the meaning are indivisible. The actual and felt play is my subject. Greek tragedy is often thought of as static, verbal, didactic and irretrievably alien: I hope to show, rather, how it is theatrical, emotional, absorbing - and so can still speak directly to us. (Taplin 1)

This proposes the idea that the emotion ancient Greek actors must have portrayed was powerful, and in their inability to rely on facial gesture, they must have focused on vocal gesture to some extent.

We now look to the Elizabethan era, as this is the next widely referenced period in theatre history in addition to being a time when we see changes within voice and speech history. While the written word is now more accessible, even if mainly to the higher classes, vocal production for the stage continued to evolve with the time. Jacqueline Martin, a British theatre scholar responsible for writing the books *Voice in Modern Theatre* and *Understanding Theatre*, had this to say about the theatre of this time:

> Elizabethan acting was designed to express the spirit through the physical medium of the body. The tragic actor could bring the author's character to life with a vivid grandeur of spirit and truthful intensity of emotion, and the Elizabethan audiences, well-schooled from an early age in the intricacies of rhetorical delivery, including manual rhetoric, appreciated these nuances in the text - even the groundlings could understand the difficult language by this use of gesture. Actors were expected to behave in the Elizabethan theatre with a sensitivity to rank in terms of speech, gesture and behaviour. The countenance and the eye, together with the use of fingers, hand and arm, were the most important features of gesture. (Martin 7)

This implies that Elizabethan stages still respected the sentiments of history by using Greek theatre as a model but combined it with the added ability to combine grand and intimate gesture. Elizabethan audiences were not as far from the stage, with groundlings being close enough to touch the actors, so Elizabethan actors could begin to play with the intricacies of subtext and intimate vocal gesture.

By the mid-1700s to late 1800s, we see a new struggle emerging for stage voices. Martin writes:

> This struggle of styles continued to the end of the 1800s, when, on the one hand, elocution in the classical mould advocated strict adherence to the verse metre, orchestrated vocal delivery, careful enunciation and attitudes derived by imitation of models. In direct contrast, the romantic ideal combined strong inner emotions, expressive face and varied tones, lack of clarity in diction, infrequent use of verse and over-use of gesticulation. With the advent of naturalism in the theatre, a general deterioration in elocution was the result, and the attitude to speaking blank verse by strictly following the metre gave way to regarding it as prose. (Martin 9)

With this turn towards a more direct vocal delivery, much of the traditional vocal style the theatre had been used to was lost. Naturalism swapped grand vocal delivery for a more intimate and conversational way of speaking. This would have affected the entire physicality of a performer, from the amount of breath they would need to take in to how wide they would open their mouths to speak, directly affecting vocal quality.

All this history led to the formation of new approaches to vocal performance on the modern stage. Now, the genre of the production tends to dictate a lot of the vocal requirements of the actor. Martin continues later to say:

> Together with the changes which have been made in methods of interpreting language and literature in the modern theatre, many changes have taken place in the nature of the language used. These changes very often reflect the ideology which lies behind them, such as realism, naturalism, symbolism, expressionism,

> surrealism, absurdism, and the epic theatre. Consequently, they make special demands on the actor's vocal delivery in the way they influence the voice, text, emotion ratio. (Martin 27)

This is where vocal production for the stage stems from for modern theatre artists. With the potential vocal demands being placed on an actor, it is up to voice and speech instructors to prepare them for all the possible vocal situations they could be put in throughout their careers. Dudley Knight, co-creator of Knight-Thompson Speechwork wrote an excellent piece on the history of speech training in the United States entitled "Standard Speech: The Ongoing Debate," that states:

> Based on our awareness of what speech training for actors has been in the past, we can now look to what speech training might consist of in the future...Speech training for actors will always be a subject for debate because human speech patterns are always subject to change, and these changes will always be measured against the need for full and easy understanding in the theatre environment. (Knight, Web)

This brings me back to my prior question: what, if any, are the tenets of voice and speech education across multiple theatre programs? Looking specifically at a four-year, Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Acting, what should the standard voice and speech education be? With an examination of programs of varying styles across the United States, coupled with a comparison of various voice and speech ideologies, my hope is to come to a conclusion on what the standard education should be.

THE VOICE AS AN OBJECT

We have defined the various differences between voice and speech and how these qualities work together to create vocal production, but now I would like to examine the voice as if it were a theatrical object. Perhaps using this terminology to identify the voice could be a useful tool for young actors to better understand how they can use their voices on stage. Actors are accustomed to utilizing various objects while on stage. Props, costumes, set furnishings, and even scripts are all objects that assist actors in delivering an effective performance. Well, what if actors, and instructors for that matter, began to think of the voice as an object, more specifically a theatrical object, to be called upon in performances and manipulated in various ways to elevate their performances to the next level? Would separating the voice in this way, making it an object and treating it as such, make it easier for students to connect to the work? What if studying the voice became less about the theoretical and more about the concrete limits of the human voice as object? Can the voice, as it is used as a tool on the stage, be considered an object?

First, we must define the term *object*, which is seemingly arbitrary, but more difficult and broad than it sounds. As per the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, I found not one, or two, but six definitions of the term “object”, eleven if you consider the similar definitions for different uses in speech. Here is what I found:

Object (noun)

1a: something material that may be perceived by the senses. I see an *object* in the distance.

b: something that when viewed stirs a particular emotion (such as pity). Look on the tragic loading of this bed … the *object* poisons sight; let it be hid. — William Shakespeare

2a: something mental or physical toward which thought, feeling, or action is directed, an *object* for study. The *object* of my affection delicately carved art *objects.*

b: something physical that is perceived by an individual and becomes an agent for psychological identification. The mother is the primary *object* of the child.

3a: the goal or end of an effort or activity : PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE Their *object* is to investigate the matter thoroughly. The *object* of the game is to score the most points.

b: a cause for attention or concern. Money is no *object*.

4: a thing that forms an element of or constitutes the subject matter of an investigation or science. *Objects* of study.

These were not even all the definitions; however, others pertained to data-entry and are clearly not relevant to this discussion. Under this pretense, we can also eliminate definition 3a and 3b. The other definitions, however, are of relevance to this discussion. First, we have “something **material** that may be perceived by the senses.” Voice can definitely be perceived by the senses, but can we call it material? I argue yes: it can be felt on the breath through vibrations as it makes its way through the vocal channel and out of the mouth, and it can be heard by us and those around us. Second, “something that when **viewed** stirs a particular emotion.” Voice and speech can absolutely stir emotions in numerous ways, but the voice itself cannot be viewed; although it can be

felt, as previously stated. Fitzmaurice Voicework is all about utilizing the body's natural desire to tremor to release bodily tensions to ultimately create fuller sound quality when speaking on stage. Allowing the body to produce sound on these tremors can stir many emotions. Then we can skip to number four, "a thing that forms an element of or constitutes the subject matter of an investigation or science." Studying the voice can incorporate elements of science in the study of human anatomy and the processes that must occur for proper speech and vocalization. So, it appears we can tentatively categorize the voice as an object.

Now that we know the definitions of an object, where does something cross the threshold of becoming a theatrical object? In the introduction to *Theatricality*, edited by Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, they open the discussion of the term by saying the following:

> One thing, but perhaps only one, is obvious: the idea of theatricality has achieved an extraordinary range of meanings, making it everything from an act to an attitude, a style to a semiotic system, a medium to a message… Depending on one's perspective, it can be dismissed as little more than a self-referential gesture or it can be embraced as a definitive feature of human communication. Although it obviously derives its meaning from the world of theatre, theatricality can be abstracted from the theatre itself and then applied to any and all aspects of human life. Even if limited to theatre, its potential meanings are daunting. Thus, it can be defined exclusively as a specific type of performance style or inclusively as all the semiotic codes of theatrical representation...Thus, to some

> people, it is that which is quintessentially the theatre, while to others it is the theatre subsumed into the whole world. (Davis 1)

In order to adequately classify the human voice as an object in terms of use for theatre, we must take our analysis a step further and understand it as a *theatrical object*, thus marrying the definitions of object and theatricality.

Willmar Sauter describes the idea of theatre objects in his book *The Theatrical Event*, stating:

> The “object” of theatre studies is considered an essentially phenomenological problem: is it a question of materiality, people, relationship; is it an idea or a condition; is it permanent or transitory? How do scholars conceptualize theatre, and how does it affect their writing about theatre? (Sauter 20)

In this case, what would the voice be considered? Perhaps as an idea, but it would appear to be more concrete than that to me. Stemming from the beautiful world of puppetry with terminology like “object theatre” and “theatre of objects”, a possible definition for *theatrical object* could be any object that is given life on stage. While this can be seen much more clearly when utilizing a tangible object, like a scarf, can an actor’s voice still be considered within this realm? It is something that is used by the actor and insights emotion in an audience. It is also something that can be trained and manipulated in various ways.

With this idea of manipulation and training in mind, while not a precise definition, I agree with what Jane Boston has to say in her book in reference to voice as a theatrical object. She states:

> A number of case studies provide evidence of the ways in which the voice is both characteristic of the individual and, at the same time, the property of theatre form and context; they illuminate the interrelationship between unshaped raw material and the culturally influenced sonic elements that collectively define the output and perceptions of an individual's voice in any one expressive instance. (Boston 23)

An actor's voice, then, equally belongs to them and whichever character they are portraying at a given time under a specific set of circumstances, directly influenced by environment and training. People often refer to an actor's voice as their "instrument," and with any instrument, as an object, the musician or actor must learn how to properly utilize it to its full extent to get from the object what they need and to develop enough of a trust with this object that it becomes second nature. This idea is discussed in the book *Voice for Performance* by Linda Gates, who says:

> When asked to describe those qualities they associate with a fine actor's voice, people will often use terms like rich, resonant, powerful, commanding, strong, clear, easy to listen to, and so on. What gives the voice these qualities? Are they something the actor was born with or are they acquired and developed through training? The answer is that the actor's voice is developed in much the same way that one learns to play a musical instrument. While the quality of the instrument itself is important, it takes a great deal of study, practice, and application to master it and real talent to produce a superb artist. The human voice is, in fact, the most sublime musical instrument of them all; full of great range and subtlety, and, as with any musical instrument, the first step in learning to play it is to find

> out how it works… Fortunately with a well-trained voice, the actor need only concentrate on the part he or she is playing, confident that the voice will respond. The establishment of a healthy, secure vocal technique means the actor doesn't have to think about the voice while performing. (Gates 3-10)

Patsy Rodenburg says something similar in her book *The Actor Speaks*, on how technique is what the audience is listening for. She states:

> I am a firm believer in technique. Technique is not the end of a process but the beginning of one. Well-applied technique can liberate the actor, I think. I know it does because I've seen it work. I am not suggesting that the actor should think always about technique either in rehearsal or performance, but that the technical work is done so well that it can be forgotten as the imaginative life of the character takes over the actor. That is the transformation we in the audience wait for when the actor speaks. (Rodenburg xiv-xv)

As voice and speech instructors, our job is to provide our students the skills to perfect their instrument, so which voice and speech related skills should students be proficient in upon completing a BFA performance program? And what methodologies are currently utilized to teach these skills? By answering these questions, the goal is to determine if there is a standard method to teaching voice and speech that can be upheld when planning voice and speech curriculum.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE BASICS

"A good voice has sufficient variety to maintain interest, is pleasant to listen to, and has enough strength to be easily heard." - *Voice and Speech Handbook*

When learning any new topic, it is important to know where to begin. Curriculum for any subject should start at the most basic level and increase in difficulty over time. No one would expect a student to understand trigonometry until they had first learned basic addition and subtraction. The same goes for the arts, and, for our purposes, voice and speech. We should not expect a freshman performance major to scream in terror on their first day with no prior training. That being said, what are the basic skills required in voice and speech education? In order to determine a standard, we must first determine what skills are the most important to beginning voice and speech training.

In the introduction, we defined the intricate topic of *vocal production*, as well as the individual terms *voice* and *speech*, but I would like to analyze these terms further. (Remember, *speech* is the "where" and the "how" of vocal production while, for our purposes, *voice* can be considered an unseen theatrical object to be manipulated within vocal production for the desired effect for a character.) What skills are imperative to a strong theatrical voice? What skills are of equal importance to theatrical speech? After consulting numerous sources from voice and speech pioneers, (including Kristin Linklater Patsy Rodenburg, Robert Barton, Rocco Dal Vera, Arthur Lessac, and Jaqueline Martin, among others), I have pieced together the most commonly mentioned skills that mark the starting point within their writings for beginning actors. *Voice* skills

include *physical awareness, projection/volume, resonance/resonators, pitch, vocal variety*, and *tension* versus *relaxation*. *Speech* skills include *articulation/diction, phonetics,* and *operative words*. Then there were two concepts that fall under the umbrella of both *voice* and *speech*, and those were the ability for an actor to properly warm themselves up vocally, as well as an understanding of human anatomy as it pertains to voice and speech. Unpacking and defining each of these skills will provide a further understanding of why these practitioners feel that this is where a voice and speech education should begin.

Voice Skills

Physical Awareness

Physical awareness was always a term I related to acting skills on stage, by making sure the actor knows their surroundings as well as how their body moves through the space they inhabit, however Kristin Linklater enlightened me to considering physical awareness for the purposes of voice and speech. In fact, in her opinion, physical awareness is imperative before an actor can begin to fully play with all aspects of their voice. She states within her book *Freeing the Natural Voice*:

> Physical awareness and relaxation are the first steps in the work to be done on the voice. The mind and the body must learn to cooperate in activating and releasing inner impulses and dissolving physical inhibitions. Actors must develop bodies that are sensitive and integrated, rather than super-controlled and muscular; and they must educate the voice into the union of self and body. (Linklater 8)

Tension

This segues nicely into the concept of bodily *tension*, and an actor's physical awareness to recognize such tension exists and to locate its source in order to release it to the best of their ability, creating a freer body and, in turn, freer voice. Tension is clearly not a skill to obtain, but rather the ability to identify it is. All tension is not bad, of course, as some is needed for the proper use of muscles, but within the world of voice, habitual tension can hinder the production of a strong voice in multiple ways, depending on its location within the body. This is actually what much of Linklater's methodology targets. Tension within the throat, shoulders, jaw, or lips can all hinder the quality of sound the body can produce by limiting the amount of breath that can escape the body, or, just the opposite, hindering the ability of the actor to take in the amount of breath needed for the monologue they are about to perform. But what is tension? According to Arthur Lessac in *The Use and Training of the Human Voice*:

> The term "tension" has a twofold definition: (1) the natural physical process of "extension"; and (2) a state of: rigidity, stiffness, strain, tightness, tautness, flaccidity, heaviness, flabbiness, weakness, friction, nervousness, and disharmony. Our discussion refers to the latter definition. (Lessac 249)

As one can see, tension can be created under almost any negative state an actor may find themselves in. Utilizing their physical awareness, they can learn to recognize when and where they feel tension in order to release it, preparing the body to produce the desired voice for the actor.

Projection

One of the more obvious skills to those even outside of the theatre community is an actor's ability to *project* or *vocally support* their voice across a theatre space. Whether they are in a two-hundred seat black-box theater or a two-thousand seat proscenium, actors must learn to direct their voices all the way to the back of the house. Projection is more than just merely shouting at the top of one's lungs, however. If an actor does not learn how to control their volume properly, they could find themselves unable to speak at all for a few days by straining their vocal chords. Levy, Mammen and Sonkin describe this best in their book *Voice and Speech Handbook*, stating:

> In the area of strength - or loudness, force, intensity, volume, or power - we have several goals. We want to develop a voice: (1) that is audible for normal purposes; (2) that adjusts readily to differing physical conditions, such as the size of a hall or the size of a crowd; (3) that effectively emphasizes important ideas; (4) that, whatever its degree of loudness or softness, is produced efficiently and without strain. (Levy 67)

It is imperative for actors to also understand how their voice is being projected from their body. The old adage "speak from your diaphragm" is what most young actors are taught in high school, by filling up the belly with air, watching it expand outwards as they do so, then using this breath along with sound to send their voices flying across the room. However, this concept is not entirely accurate. The diaphragm can expand to help us take in enough breath to support our speech, but actors are not actually able to "speak" from it. It is more important that actors understand the amount of breath they need to take in, in order to support the volume they are attempting to produce. All these

concepts come into play just to produce the level of volume required for stage performer.

Resonance/Resonators and Pitch

Resonance is the next aspect of vocal production to explore, and couples nicely with the concept of *pitch*. Pitch refers to how high or low a sound is. This is not referencing the volume of the sound, but rather refers to a range in sound from low and deep to high and squeaky. Pitch is created by vibrating breath within the body, and where these vibrations take place is where resonance comes into play. *Resonators* are the locations of the body in which the voice can resonate to create variations within the voice. The resonators include nasal, sinus, pharyngeal, throat, mask, chest, and head, according to Barton and Dal Vera in *Voice: Onstage and Off*. Rodenburg states in The Actor Speaks, "The resonators are what give notes their amplification and tonal quality. They enable the performer to make the vocal music to suit any score or text." (Rodenburg 7) Resonance and pitch play a huge role in character development for actors. If an actor is portraying a mighty king they may choose to resonate from the chest and speak in a lower pitch to sound powerful and mighty, or perhaps if they are playing a young girl on the playground they may choose to speak from their head of nasal register and at a very high pitch to exude excitement and immaturity.

Vocal Variety

Lastly, *vocal variety* is an essential skill to learn from the beginning of an actor's voice and speech training. Vocal variety really combines all the skills mentioned thus far

to create a dynamic and interesting vocal actor. Levy, Mammen, and Sonkin refer to vocal variety as follows:

> Variety in voice commands interest because it suggests physical vitality, mental alertness, and emotional sensitivity. It depends upon a keen appreciation of, and responsiveness to, one's material and the immediate situation. From a technical standpoint, it embraces flexibility in the use of pitch, loudness, quality, and rate, taken both separately and together. (Levy 56)

Most people do not speak in a monotone voice with the same pitch, volume, and resonance for every situation. Being conscious of utilizing vocal variety on stage ensures that actors are more believable, but also more entertaining in their delivery, captivating an audience while also driving the plot forward.

Speech Skills

Articulation

Articulation is one of the most important speech skills to learn as an actor. It is one thing for an audience to see and hear an actor, but if they cannot understand what the actor is saying, they will be lost and lose interest. Articulation, then, is defined as forming clear and distinct sounds while speaking. Barton and Dal Vera speak of the importance of articulation within their book *Voice: Onstage and Off*:

> Your articulation has little to do with how you pronounce a word (that comes up next) but how precisely, carefully, and crisply you speak each sound in the word. You may totally mispronounce a word and yet articulate it beautifully. You may be accurate in your pronunciation and drop the ball on articulation. This concerns

> mumbling, slurring, and stumbling or sluggish speech versus a precise forming of sounds… Articulation has all to do with consonants, and if they are clean it is often unnecessary to push the sound behind them. (Barton 16)

Words mean nothing on stage unless an audience can understand them. Often times, younger actors have trouble with articulation because it can feel unnatural from their day-to-day speech. Therefore, it is imperative to include this skill from the beginning of an actor's voice and speech training.

Phonetics and the International Phonetic Alphabet

Part of what Barton and Dal Vera stated in the prior quote referred to consonants driving articulation. Attention to speech details such as these is rooted in *phonetics*. Phonetics is described by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as "**1**: the system of speech sounds of a language or group of languages; **2a**: the study and systematic classification of the sounds made in spoken utterance; **b**: the practical application of this science to language study." It is literally a way of explaining every sound that is used to communicate as language within any culture across the world. The system that has been developed to further understand and classify these sounds is the *International Phonetic Alphabet* or IPA. IPA is an alphabet of sounds, utilizing various symbols as a means of identifying each sound. Barton and Dal Vera explain it as:

> This is the notation system most often used by acting conservatories, scholars, and linguists. It is regarded as the "science of speech," in much the same way that linguistics, acoustics, and audiology are the sciences of language, sound, and hearing. Its disadvantage is that you have to learn new symbols… No other

> system can accurately represent non-English sounds and describe the details of connected speech. It is an essential tool for accent study. (Barton 115)

Understanding phonetics and IPA creates a more informed actor who can make better, more relevant speech choices for their character. Also, as stated above, learning IPA can make learning and understanding accents and dialects, as well as one's own idiolect, a lot easier, thus marking this an essential skill-set for a beginning voice and speech education.

Operative Words

When an actor is confronted with a new script, something they should consider is which *operative words* occur within their lines. These are the words of importance that drive the plot forward and assist in character development. Operative words provide the audience with subtext of a given relationship, or the true intentions of a character, and can change from one dramatic interpretation to the next. There is not necessarily a right or wrong way of choosing operative words for a given line of text but doing so with skill can indicate a noticeable difference between a new actor or a seasoned actor, as they can add depth to a character that young actors may not yet understand. Operative words can also provide an actor with a deeper connection and understanding of the text and the playwright's intentions for the character by analyzing the word choice and any patterns the playwright may have chosen for that character.

Basic Concepts

There are two concepts that are not skills that can be obtained by an actor, but rather knowledge that will assist them in learning the basic skills or putting the basic skills to use: warm-ups/vocal health and vocal anatomy. Learning how to properly warm-up the voice as well as how to properly care for your voice day-to-day is of the highest importance to an actor. Warm-ups should include exercises to work all the skills discussed throughout this chapter, typically beginning in a state of silence and slowly incorporating sound to ease the voice into action. Having a basic knowledge of the human anatomy utilized in vocal production is also essential to voice and speech education. Rodenburg states in *The Actor Speaks*:

> Voice work makes use of the whole body from head to toe. The way you stand, the angle of your head, the drop of your shoulders, the position of your spine and pelvis all contribute to the production of a strong voice. Speaking and singing are really the end results of a whole series of reflexive physical actions and body placement which you simply must become aware of in order to gain mastery and control over your vocal instrument. (Rodenburg 5)

If students understand the physical process of speech, they will have a better understanding of how to manipulate it to create a strong theatrical voice.

There are plenty more advanced voice and speech skills that could be taught during a BFA performance program, but I was more interested in identifying the basics that are absolutely essential to a voice and speech education. These are the concepts that students would be expected to know and understand within a professional company or production. Would it be fun to include dialects within voice and speech curriculum?

Sure. Is it essential to their professional career? Realistically, no, especially if they have knowledge of IPA, they could utilize resources to teach themselves what they need to know for specific roles. If given the time, instructors could teach a few of the most used dialects, such as Received Pronunciation, Cockney, Southern, or New York, but only after the essential concepts have been taught. Such is the case for topics such as keening or portraying a character who has experienced some kind of vocal trauma that affects their ability to speak. Are these interesting topics to learn and discuss? Absolutely, but they are only utilized under specific circumstances and productions, so it is more important to dedicate time in the classroom to the essentials. The skills explored in this chapter were the most frequently mentioned by numerous voice and speech scholars as the basics. Without a strong understanding of these, students will not be able to move on to more advanced techniques throughout their careers.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE METHODOLOGIES

Now that we have discussed the various individual skills important to a voice and speech education, we can continue on to the wide range of methodologies at the forefront of modern voice and speech education. If the goal is to teach students the various skills discussed in the previous chapter, methodologies can be utilized as a way to interpret these skills into an understandable practice. By exploring more than one methodology, students can work with their instructors to determine what exercises and practices work the best for them. Similar to finding the right acting technique, such as the methods of Uta Hagen or Meisner, finding voice and speech methodologies that work best for the individual can change an actor's performance immensely. This chapter will explore the work of voice and speech practitioners who have shaped the current approaches to voice and speech education. For voicework, I will examine the teachings of Kristin Linklater, Catherine Fitzmaurice, and F. M. Alexander and for speech, the teachings of Edith Skinner, Dudley Knight and Philip Thompson.

It is important to note that although opinions on these techniques vary greatly, they are some of the most discussed and utilized techniques within the current voice and speech community. My primary goal is to compare the stated values of each methodology to find the similarities and differences and determine if these methods utilize the basic skills explored in Chapter One.

Kristin Linklater

Kristin Linklater is a pioneer in the voice and speech community. Working at many prestigious universities and theaters throughout her career she is a working actor and teacher whose work has become one of the leading in her field. Within her published works *Freeing the Natural Voice* and *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, actors are introduced to a methodology rooted in deeply personal and vivid, image-focused exercises designed to free an actor's impulse to breath with a free channel for air to move through the body, and utilizing the imagination, or 'mind's eye' to create a more connected actor. Releasing habitual tensions that inhibit the body from breathing to its fullest potential is the underlying message of much of her work. Of the three voice methodologies we are examining, Linklater's work is arguably the most rooted in abstract thought. She also recognizes that many of the original ideas for her work are not her own, stating in the introduction of her book *Freeing the Natural Voice*:

> I must acknowledge that very few of the physical exercises were created by me; I have appropriated and absorbed them from many different sources and married them with voice so that they have often undergone a sea change. Movements reminiscent of gym exercises may have been transformed by changing the goal from muscle development to that of energy flow. Yoga floor exercises have been customized for specific vocal purposes and may be almost unrecognizable as Yoga. (Linklater 3)

Linklater studied with many great instructors, most notably Iris Warren, who she pays tribute to at the beginning of the same book. Warren was an instructor at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts and a huge influence on many within the voice

and speech community. Linklater bases most, if not all, of her teachings on the work of Warren, and says in her tribute to Warren within *Freeing the Natural Voice*:

> The creation for assessing progress lay in the answer to the question "How does it feel?" rather than "How does it sound?" The ultimate aim was, and is, to free oneself through the voice. Iris Warren's constant emphasis was "I want to hear you, not your voice." This was happening at a time when the "voice beautiful" was still very much in vogue, when pear-shaped vowels and technical skill were preferred to "vulgar" emotion. (Linklater 5-6)

It is safe to say that the work of Kristin Linklater is one of the most popular voice and speech methodologies in modern theatre education. Many actors have encountered her work at some point or another, due to the number of "Designated Linklater Teachers" around the world, but also due to the accessibility of her books. With around one-hundred certified teachers scattered across numerous countries, and more currently completing the certification process, Linklater's work has touched many within the theatre community. Her website lists the contact information for all certified instructors, but her books are also written in a way that actors can easily understand and interpret the exercises on their own. As stated within the book, the summary of her methodology is as follows:

> This approach to voice is designed to liberate the natural voice and thereby develop a vocal technique that serves the freedom of human expression. The basic assumption of the work is that everyone possesses a voice capable of expressing, through a two- to four-octave natural pitch range, whatever gamut of emotion, complexity of mood, and subtlety of thought he or she experiences. The

> second assumption is that the tensions acquired through living in this world, as well as defenses, inhibitions, and negative reactions to environmental influences, often diminish the efficiency of the natural voice to the point of distorted communication. Hence, the emphasis here is on the removal of the blocks that inhibit the human instrument as distinct from, but not excluding, the development of a skillful musical instrument. I must underline at the outset that in our perception of our own voices there is a vital difference to be observed between what is “natural” and what is “familiar.”... To free the voice is to free the person, and each person is indivisibly mind and body. (Linklater 7-8)

The book is designed for any actor or instructor to be able to pick it up and work either on their own or leading a group of students. Each chapter is marked with a certain amount of time that should be spent on the section of work before moving on, and the exercises are to be repeated daily. The progression is designed to move in a specific order, but, once familiar with all of the techniques, exercises can be completed individually as needed to tap into various aspects of the voice. For instance, if an actor wanted to focus on hitting higher pitches, they could focus on the exercises designed to tap into the nasal, sinus, and skull resonators.

Linklater’s work definitely addresses all the basics of voice and speech we have discussed. There are exercises that target individual skills, for instance there are some designed to target each resonator (chest, mouth, teeth, sinus, nasal, and skull) which she calls the “resonating ladder,” with each one building to the next notch on the ladder. There are also plenty of activities that combine the use of multiple skills, providing

students the opportunity to combine everything they have learned into one cohesive action.

Catherine Fitzmaurice

The methodology was trademarked and founded by Catherine Fitzmaurice, is aptly named Fitzmaurice Voicework. Catherine Fitzmaurice has dedicated her career to working with doctors and specialists to discover the true science behind her methodology and it shows in the work. Jane Boston outlines Fitzmaurice's trajectory in her book *Voice* as follows:

> The countercultural experimentation period of the late 1950s and 1960s... informed those of Catherine Fitzmaurice in the development of her experimental voice work known as Destructuring/Restructuring. It is a strand of voice training developed out of the rules and conventions of UK voice work and the countercultural climate of the 1960s in the USA, with its attendant challenge to conformity at all levels of society… [it] is ultimately less focused on the literary or dramatic textual traditions of interpretive acting, and more on the psychophysical processes that place the body under specific forms of duress in order to release more possibilities for individual vocal expression than are customarily afforded. (Boston 163)

This merely scratches the surface of the research Fitzmaurice has done and continues to do to this day. She is fascinated by the idea of breath and the body's natural instincts around wanting to breathe. Fitzmaurice Voicework is described via The Fitzmaurice Institute's website as follows:

> The purpose of Fitzmaurice Voicework® is to support people in finding and using their unique voices—in healthy, clear, and creative ways—while developing greater freedom and presence. Fitzmaurice Voicework combines adaptations of classical voice training techniques with modifications of yoga, shiatsu, bioenergetics, energy work, and many other disciplines. This integration serves to harmonize the voluntary and involuntary aspects of the nervous system, and the voice. (Fitzmaurice Web)

Another section of their website states that “the work is endless,” meaning there is really no marked end date to mastering the work, but rather actors can explore it throughout their lives. Catherine Fitzmaurice invites her certified teachers to bring their own knowledge to the table to incorporate into the teachings of Fitzmaurice Voicework, so the work is constantly evolving and re-interpreted. Her core concepts of Destructuring and Restructuring have become the foundation of her methodology. In her essay *Breathing is Meaning*, Fitzmaurice defines and describes the process of Destructuring, stating:

> The Destructuring work consists of a deep exploration into the autonomic nervous system functions: the spontaneous, organic impulses which every actor aspires to incorporate into the acting process. The tendency of the body to vibrate involuntarily as a healing response to a perceived stimulus in the autonomic "fight or flight" mode (as in shivering with cold or fear, trembling with grief, anger, fatigue, or excitement) is replicated by applying induced tremor initially through hyper-extension of the body's extremities only, thus leaving the torso muscles free to respond with a heightened breathing pattern. At the same

> time a great deal of unaccustomed energy, waves of tremor, and, ultimately, relaxation, flow throughout the body, sensitizing it to vibration, and increasing feeling and awareness. The introduction of sound into these positions allows the ensuing physical freedom to be reflected in the voice too, not just the body… (Fitzmaurice, Web)

Destructuring is a very intricate process but prepares the body for the process of Restructuring by releasing undue tension through the use of tremoring. In the same essay, Fitzmaurice defines Restructuring as follows:

> Restructuring, then, is not only the introduction of intercostal and abdominal breath management into the act of speaking, but is also the harmonizing of that pattern with the individual's physical and/or emotional needs for oxygen moment to moment. It requires the ability to isolate particular parts of the abdominal muscles and of the intercostal and back muscles, without interrupting the organic oxygen need… The sometimes physically and/or emotionally painful work on the release of inhibitory tensions in Destructuring, combined with the mastery and application of technique in Restructuring, is a long and often frustrating journey for the actor, but the rewards are great… It is at this point that voice work becomes indistinguishable from acting. (Fitzmaurice, Web)

The idea is to become unencumbered by any and all tensions that may be living in your body. It is a life exploration with no definitive end point. But what does it mean to tremor? The term can be used synonymously with Restructuring, but in an interview with Nancy Saklad about Fitzmaurice as a master teacher within the book *Voice and Speech Training in the New Millennium*, Catherine said this about tremoring:

> Tremoring is hard to speak about because it's like talking about what salt tastes like. You have to experience it. The fact is that every single body has experienced tremoring - though the idea of inducing it, and the idea that it is healing to the body, are new for most people....It's the way that the body begins to reflexively tremor when it's a little unclear about what you want it to do. That angle of uncertainty is the crevasse that one's need for control can slip into, and that can open up and offer one an experience of newness, chaos, freedom, creativity. (Saklad 99)

According to her website, there are approximately three-hundred certified Fitzmaurice instructors across six continents, meaning the technique is taught worldwide. Like Linklater's work, Fitzmaurice Voicework is about freeing tension, with the addition of the concept of tremoring. The work incorporates deep exploration of all the basic skills we explored in Chapter One, pitch and resonance especially, as well as techniques for tension release previously mentioned.

F. M. Alexander

The last of the voice techniques I would like to discuss can be categorized as both acting and life technique. The work of F. M. Alexander, called The Alexander Technique, is considered part of voice and speech canon, but can also be considered an acting methodology. If Linklater and Fitzmaurice are both considered more abstract, The Alexander Technique is almost all science, more specifically, human anatomy. While Alexander was in fact an actor, he did not intend on developing this methodology; it grew out of necessity based on a medical issue he was experiencing, and he was

determined to find his own solution. From the website for The Alexander Technique, they explain this, stating:

> F.M. Alexander (1869-1955) was an Australian actor who began to experience chronic laryngitis whenever he performed. When his doctors could not help him, Alexander discovered a solution on his own. He had not been aware that excess tension in his neck and body were causing his problems and began to find new ways to speak and move with greater ease. His health improved to such an extent that his friends and several of the doctors he had consulted earlier persuaded him to teach others what he had learned. Over a career span of more than fifty years, he refined his method of instruction. After teaching for over 35 years, he began to train teachers of what has now become known as the Alexander Technique. (Web)

Thus, the Alexander Technique was born. It is safe to say at this point that the common thread between these three methodologies is the desire for actors to release undue tension throughout the body for a freer vocal experience. Alexander's way of achieving this is through simple changes in posture combined with a greater knowledge of the human spine so that over time one can control the ease at which they live. Therefore, the technique is also used for an actor's overall presence on stage and not just in their voice work. In an article entitled "Alexander Technique," written by certified teacher Joan Arnold, she explains the complexities of this methodology:

> The Alexander Technique is an intelligent way to solve body problems. Many people are mystified by their own back pain, excess tension or lack of coordination. They often see problems in their joints or muscles as structural,

> unchangeable... They find that, by learning the Technique, they can improve their overall movement and achieve optimal health for both body and mind. We all have unconscious movement habits. Without realizing it, we put undue pressure on ourselves. We use more force than we need to lift a coffee pot or a weight bar. We slouch as we sit, unaware that our way of doing things gives our bodies a certain look. We blame body problems on activities -- carpal tunnel syndrome on computer work, tennis elbow on tennis. But often it is how we do something that creates the problem, not the activity itself.... The Technique's basic idea is that when the neck muscles do not overwork, the head balances lightly at the top of spine. The relationship between the head and the spine is of utmost importance. How we manage that relationship has ramifications throughout the rest of the body. (Arnold, Web)

Of the three voice methodologies we have discussed, The Alexander Technique boasts the most certified instructors by far, with several thousand world-wide. In terms of the technique covering the basic skills from Chapter One, the focus is definitely on tension release, however projection, resonance, tone, and vocal variety all develop due to this release.

Edith Skinner

While the former are all methodologies focused around voice work, there are also prominent speech practitioners as well. Some are famous for their focus on how to teach the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), while others are prominent for their work in dialects. Edith Skinner is a speech practitioner who pioneered speech education

in the United States with her book *Speak with Distinction*. Acting programs took her word as law when it came to speech education and her opinions on articulation and pronunciation, particularly her use of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Due to this extreme influence, actors tended to neutralize and sound the same during the height of her prominence, as her book is very specific about what she felt was a proper acting voice. Nancy Saklad describes the influence of Skinner within her book *Voice and Speech Training in the New Millennium*, stating:

> In 1942, Edith Skinner added a new dimension to speech training for the stage when her book Speak with Distinction was published. Skinner was descended from a formidable speech-training line led by William Tilly (1860-1935) who, in addition to developing World English, was especially regarded for his fervent promotion of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Tilly advocated that certain phonemes were superior to others...The book became the articulation and pronunciation bible and IPA handbook for scores of actors for almost seventy years. (Saklad 7)

For one text to have an influence on an entire generation of actors proves her prominence within the voice and speech community.

Unlike the voice methodologies discussed previously, there was not a certification process rolling out Skinner-approved speech teachers. Instructors were using her book to teach their actors her method. Many within the voice and speech community of present day acknowledge that Skinner's teachings are now outdated, especially in an era that is embracing an actor's individual idiolect instead of attempting to neutralize all voices, but it is important to mention Skinner as almost all modern

speech education stems from her teachings. Dudley Knight, who will be discussed in the next section as a prominent speech innovator himself, acknowledges Skinner's legacy in his paper "Standard Speech: The Ongoing Debate," stating:

> Why did Skinner's approach prevail?...Like Tilly, Skinner ruled her classes with the proverbial rod of iron. Like Tilly, she seated students in order of their skills in Good American Speech, and progression to the front of the class became a sought-after goal. Like Tilly she favored narrow, rather than broad, phonetic transcription... Like Tilly she relied heavily on incessant drill exercises… And like Tilly, Edith Skinner imparted a sense of mission to her students. Skinner made it clear that she was engaging in a long struggle to mold the cacophony of her students' regional accents into the euphony of Good American Speech. Gaining her approbation was not easy for her students, and once won, it was all the more cherished. (Knight, Web)

As far as her method including the basic skills we discussed, articulation and phonetics embody the entirety of her teachings, so the basic speech skills are covered. She remains a useful resource for teaching a Neutral American Dialect with thorough explanations of the sound shifts in IPA. Even if actors and instructors choose not to utilize her teachings, it is still important to understand her relevance to the history of speech training for the stage.

Dudley Knight and Philip Thompson

The final two practitioners came together to form their methodology. In direct response to the work of Edith Skinner, Dudley Knight and Philip Thompson joined

forces to create what is now known as Knight-Thompson Speechwork. But first, who are they individually?

Dudley Knight was a voice and speech practitioner who trained and worked with both Kristin Linklater and Catherine Fitzmaurice, becoming a certified master teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework. As a young instructor, Knight taught the methods of Edith Skinner, but discovered what, he felt were flaws within her method. He explains this during an interview with Nancy Saklad in her book *Voice and Speech Training in the New Millennium*:

> Originally, my exposure to the field was via the Skinner work, because that was essentially the only thing being taught other than Lessac work… Skinner used the IPA, but in a rather old-fashioned and limited version. What I ended up doing was starting to teach Skinner work… I saw the advantages of it, but I also began to see that there were serious impracticalities about it. (Saklad 151)

Knight used this as inspiration for his own work, and began slowly developing his own methodology, eventually teaming up with Philip Thompson, a voice and speech instructor, also certified as a Master Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework, who met Knight while they were both instructors at the University of California, Irvine. Together they formed Knight-Thompson Speechwork (KTS), which is described on their website as:

> ...a skills-based approach to speech and accent training for actors that places emphasis on developing the speaker's detailed awareness of—and deep engagement with—the precise physical actions which make up speech. By combining a rigorous investigation of those actions with playful, experiential

> exercises, this work moves efficiently past the usual interference that can make speech training difficult for many students. (Web)

Students studying this technique learn anatomy, phonetics, and the physicality of speech actions. They also put their skills to the test with dialect and accent acquisition. They claim to have a more fun and open approach to speech education, in direct response to the hardened nature of Edith Skinner's work.

KTS offers a certification process and currently has a small (but growing) group of about thirty certified instructors, with most in the United States. A unique offering of this methodology, however, is a series of webinars that can be accessed for a small fee, allowing instructors or actors the opportunity to sample the methodology before committing to a longer workshop or certification process. Knight-Thompson work is designed to cover a wide range of speech related topics, so education in articulation, phonetics, and operative words from Chapter One are covered.

CHAPTER THREE:
WHAT IS BEING TAUGHT?

At this point in our exploration we have discussed in detail the differences between voice and speech and the individual skills that fall into each category, as well as a sampling of popular methodologies within the community. Now, before giving my final thoughts, I would like to explore what is actually being taught within higher education theatre programs in the United States. Before determining an ideal curriculum, we must examine what is already out there.

The intention of this chapter is to reach out to a representative from university programs, preferably the head of voice and speech or the equivalent, to ask them a survey of questions cultivated to discover similarities and differences between the programs. This is merely a sampling of various programs. I will be examining five private conservatories versus five public university programs. This is to explore what theatre programs are teaching and what methodologies may be the most popular to better assist me in my final assessment. The trajectory of voice and speech related classes throughout each four-year program will be listed as per the course catalogs provided by the school's website. I am also aware that, without attending each individual class or having access to each syllabus, skills and ideas may be explored within courses that may not be spelled out in the university's course catalog. By comparing private versus public, as well as BFA versus BA, I hope to draw some conclusions about what voice and speech related skills are deemed the most pertinent by these various programs.

There is a reason I chose to focus on the schools that I have chosen. After much research, I narrowed it down to ten schools based on multiple factors. First, there is an equal sampling of both public universities and private conservatories. The private conservatories, minus the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), are the most prominent in the country: Carnegie Mellon, Boston Conservatory, New York University Tisch School of Drama, and The Juilliard School. These are the elite programs that smaller schools look to for guidance in modeling their own programs. They are held in high esteem within the theatre community, therefore it only felt right to investigate what they were teaching in comparison to less prominent programs. SCAD was included as a look inside a private school that only offers arts programs but is not conservatory style.

With the public programs, I had varying reasons for including the ones I chose. Rutgers is a well-known and respected public program. The University of Minnesota and the University of California, Los Angeles, are both well-respected public programs, and were also chosen as examples representing programs outside of the east coast. Longwood University is where I attended my undergraduate career, so I can speak from personal experience; but it is also a very small school and serves as an example of a program that is not well-known in the least. Virginia Commonwealth University is my current program; however, it is also an example of a public program that models its structure and curriculum after that of a conservatory. Some of these schools also offer a BA, MA, or PhD, which will be discussed if it has any influence over the curriculum taught within the BFA program.

As for the interviews, all programs will be asked the same four questions in an effort to gauge how they implement voice and speech curriculum. The questions are as follows:

1. How would you describe the progression of voice and speech training for actors in your BFA/BA acting program?
2. Which methodologies do you draw from the most heavily? Why?
3. What kind of voice and speech electives does your program offer, if any?
4. What skills do you hope actors will gain by the end of their training with you?

I wanted to ensure that the questions were open-ended and not guiding the instructors in any particular direction. Their answers will help illuminate the current state of university acting programs across the United States.

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

To begin with what is most familiar, Virginia Commonwealth University offers both a BFA and BA program for acting. VCU prides itself on being a public university program that models its class structure after that of a conservatory. Actors must audition to enter the program and all performance majors spend the first four semesters completing the same course work. In this program, students do not officially begin their voice and speech training until their sophomore year, when they get one class per semester: *Voice and Speech for the Actor I and II*. During *Voice and Speech for the Actor I*, students explore various voice techniques and methodologies as well as

receiving an introduction to the International Phonetic Alphabet. In *Voice and Speech for the Actor II*, students get a complete look at the International Phonetic Alphabet and put the practice to use with transcription and dialect work, with some voice training sprinkled in.

At the end of the sophomore year, students are assessed and work with faculty to decide whether or not they should pursue a BA or BFA degree. If students decide to take the BA track, they do not officially receive any further voice and speech training. They can request access to the Advanced Voice and Speech courses if there is room or take a voice and speech elective if one is being offered, but there is no guarantee for further training. If a student goes BFA, they receive two additional voice and speech courses during their junior year: *Advanced Voice and Speech for the Actor I and II*. In *Advanced Voice and Speech for the Actor I*, students explore Shakespeare from the perspective of voice and speech. *Advanced Voice and Speech for the Actor II* circles back to the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet and puts it to use learning a vast array of dialects for the stage.

Outside of these four courses, there are frequently voice and speech-related electives offered to both BA and BFA students. Some recent courses have included the Alexander Technique, Fitzmaurice Voicework, and Suzuki and Viewpoints. These electives are offered by certified instructors and often depend on who is currently on staff within the program, including current MFA students who may be available to teach. Which brings me to the number of voice and speech staff at VCU. While the department itself is rather large, there are only a small hand-full of voice and speech faculty. There is only one full-time assistant professor who is the Head of Voice and Speech, Karen

Kopryanski, one adjunct instructor, Erica Hughes, and then various MFA candidates fill in where needed from semester to semester.

Overall, this program covers the basics of voice and speech education but does not get very deep into the material.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The University of Minnesota is a public university that offers both a BFA in Acting as well as a BA in Theatre Arts which can be focused into concentrations, such as performance studies. Students attend theatre classes for their major as well as general education required classes, meaning their sole focus is not just on theatre. Actors must audition for acceptance into the BFA program. The university partners with the Guthrie Theater to offer students the unique ability to work professionally while earning their BFA.

For a BFA degree, students take one voice and speech class per semester for the freshman and sophomore year, *BFA Voice and Speech I-IV*, and then have the opportunity to take voice and speech electives throughout their junior and senior year: *BFA Voice and Speech V*, *Text and the Actor*, *Voice for the Actor*, and *Alexander Technique for Movement*. The Alexander Technique class, however, is specifically marketed as a movement class, so it is unclear if students would also review skills in a way beneficial to voice and speech. If students prefer the BA track, it appears that no voice and speech classes are required, but they have the opportunity to take one class as an elective, *Voice for the Actor*. Aside from that class, there is no indication that BA students receive any further voice and speech curriculum.

Looking one step further, I was interested to see what the descriptions for each course are to get a better idea of what is taught. In *BFA Voice and Speech I,* students receive “study/practice in breath centering/expansion; vocal resonance, musicality, placement; ear training; strengthening and making more flexible the muscles of speech.” *BFA Voice and Speech II* continues “building a foundation for further work in the program. Emphasizes practicing the sounds of good American speech and of the written phonetic alphabet.” In the sophomore year, students begin work on Shakespeare in *BFA Voice and Speech III*, “continuing to build a strong, healthy voice. Mastering written phonetics, sounds of good American speech for stage. Students begin to explore speaking of heightened verse, particularly Shakespearean text.” *BFA Voice and Speech IV* is described the same way, the only difference being a note that emphasis is placed on “basic dialect acquisition work for the stage. Emphasizes English/Irish dialects.”

As for the elective options, the description for *BFA Voice and Speech V* is fairly vague, stating that students will learn by “experiencing a foreign theater culture/history. Applying voice training to dramatic material of that culture.” *Text and the Actor* appears to be a literature review class, described as “standard stage speech, [International Phonetic Alphabet] transcription, and textual analysis to perform heightened language texts such as Shakespearean/Shavian monologues, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, and Beowulf.” *Voice for the Actor* is a more-in depth look at vocal anatomy, “anatomy/physiology of vocal/respiratory mechanisms. Abdominal breathing, forward tonal placement, articulation of consonants, vocal projection. IPA phonetic transcription and vowel standardization for American Standard Stage Speech. Techniques applied to

performance of monologues." And finally, the *Alexander Technique for Movement Artists* course, though it is intended to focus on movement. It is described as "increased kinesthetic awareness of habitual movement patterns in order to improve dance/movement technique and prevent related injuries."

So far, in comparison to VCU, the schools seem to offer similar curriculum, the main difference being that the University of Minnesota begins their voice and speech training during the freshman year as opposed to the sophomore year at VCU, allowing time for more class offerings.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Rutgers University is a public university located in New Jersey. Similarly to VCU, the Mason Gross School of the Arts models its program after that of a conservatory style. The university offers many degree options, including a BA in Theater, BFA in Acting, and an MFA in Acting. Rutgers offers a unique experience to students through their partnership with Shakespeare's Globe in London, which allows BFA students to spend their junior year abroad studying their art in an intensive conservatory environment. Even with this year of studying abroad, the intended length of the BFA Acting program is only three and a half years as opposed to the traditional four-year program.

As far as course load, as with the other universities discussed so far, voice and speech courses appear to be contained to the first two years. However, Rutgers offers separate classes for voice and speech curriculum. In the freshman year, students take *Voice I* and *Speech I*, which are each a full year long, so students are to sign up for both

courses in the fall as well as the spring. The sophomore year is conducted the same way, only with *Voice II* and *Speech II*.

LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY

For the sake of comparison, I wanted to throw a small-town lesser-known university into the mix. Longwood University is a public university located in Farmville, VA and even though it is such a small school, Longwood offers both a BA and BFA in Theater. There is a heavy amount of general education requirements, so students are not focused solely on their major classes.

Similarly to VCU, acting students take all the same classes for their freshman year; however, students audition for the BFA track at the end of their freshman year instead of the sophomore year. Students that are not initially accepted into the BFA track are allowed to audition again at the end of their sophomore year, but that is the last opportunity to switch from a BA to BFA. Students on the BA track still have the opportunity to take all the same performance-based classes as the BFA students; however, they are encouraged to take more of the technical theatre classes to become a theatre generalist.

Unfortunately, there are only three voice and speech classes offered throughout the program and they are combined with movement classes, aptly named *Voice and Movement I-III*. *Voice and Movement I* is explained as an "introductory exploration of the physical and vocal skills required for effective performance. Emphasis is placed on developing self-awareness and control of the actor's instrument through relaxation and tension-release, proper breathing techniques, the improvement of resonance,

articulation and projection." *Voice and Movement II* dives in to period acting, stating "this studio course is a continued exploration of the physical and vocal skills required for effective stage performance. Emphasis is placed on the development of the actor's instrument through the study of period movement and the use of heightened language and verse...Content is directed toward the specific needs of the actors." Lastly, *Voice and Movement III* introduces IPA and dialect work, "emphasis is placed on the development of the actor's instrument through the study of mask, mime, and period movement... This study will include the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Content of the course will be directed toward the specific needs of the actors." Outside of these three courses, there are no elective opportunities for voice and speech.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES (UCLA)

The last of the public universities in this analysis offers a BA in Theater, as well as an MFA in Theater and a PhD program in Theater and Performance Studies. I spoke with Paul Wagar, Professor of Acting and Voice and Speech for undergraduate performance to get his take on the curriculum offered within his program. He described them as a "BA/BFA hybrid," saying that the courses really model themselves after that of a BFA program with more rigorous study. They consider voice and speech to be a vital part of their students' education, with coursework in both the sophomore and junior years, including *Intro to Voice and Speech I* and *II, Voice I, II, III,* and *IV, Dialects,* and *Voice-over/Microphone*. He described the progression of skills being taught from basic breathing techniques through making very specific choices with the voice, but feels the skills work on a continuum.

As for methodologies, the Skinner method was immediately shot down, stating her teachings are “out of date.” Wagar prides himself on teaching various approaches to the work but does find the Alexander Technique to be very useful. He also made the following powerful statement: “all methodologies are the same at their core with contradictions of approach.” By drawing on various methods, he feels his students are getting a broader look at the voice and speech approaches. We ended the discussion with the skills he hopes his students will gain from this program: breathing effectively, how to connect sound through the whole body, utilizing open and forward sound, and flexibility for varied vocal situations.

This conversation left me with a fuller understanding of what UCLA has to offer in their BA program. They provide a wide array of methodologies and courses geared towards teaching as many voice and speech skills as possible. He supported the idea that voice and speech education does not need to focus on one particular methodology, or the “how” concepts are taught, but rather it is more important to focus on providing a strong foundation of skills that can be explored by the actors until they find what works best for them. As he was my first interview, if I had the opportunity to speak with him again, I would ask him to expand more on what skills he felt were critical to beginning voice and speech education and if he could define what each skill means to him. Otherwise, the questions were effective in opening a strong dialogue.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES/CONSERVATORIES

As we shift our gaze away from public universities towards private universities and conservatories, there are a few notable changes to keep in mind. The purpose of

private and conservatory programs is often to center a student's education entirely around their craft, without the requirement of general education courses. Therefore, it is my prediction going in that there will be many more course offerings for voice and speech curriculum within these programs. Many of these programs are the top theatre schools in the country due to the intense nature of the course work. How do these schools compare to the public BFA programs already discussed?

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

Carnegie Mellon School of Drama is the first degree-granting theatre institution in the United States. They are a private university with a conservatory theatre program, offering many different degrees, but our main focus is on their BFA in Acting. As discussed previously, as a conservatory, the School of Drama has no general education requirements, allowing students to eat, sleep, and breathe theatre. Due to this, it comes as no surprise that the program offers an extensive amount of voice and speech opportunities designed to fill every semester of a four-year program.

Each school year has specific requirements for voice and speech. In the first year, students take a *Voice/Alexander I* course as well as a *Speech I* course. Both are listed in the fall and the spring, so it is unclear if students take both each semester or choose one per semester. Year two is the same way, only this time the classes are *Voice and Speech II* and *Alexander Tutorial*, separating the Alexander Technique from the voice curriculum. Year three mimics year one, in that voice and Alexander Technique are once again combined for the class *Voice/Alexander III*, in addition to the speech class *Accents and Dialects*. Year four only has one required speech class in the

fall semester entitled *Advanced Speech Technique*, with an option for both the fall and the spring to include another *Alexander Technique* class as an elective. It is clear now that they offer a full voice and speech course load over four years, with a lot of individual attention on speech and the Alexander Technique.

It also came as no surprise that they have not only a large theatre faculty over the entire School of Drama, but a large voice and speech faculty specifically. There is Gary Logan, Assistant Professor of Speech and Dialects, Don Wadsworth, Professor of Voice and Speech, Gary Kline, Teaching Professor of Voice, Janet Madelle Feindel, Professor of Voice/Alexander Technique, and Claudia Benack, Assistant Teaching Professor of Voice.

BOSTON CONSERVATORY AT BERKLEE

Next up is another renowned theatre conservatory, Boston Conservatory at Berklee. While the Boston Conservatory has been around since 1867, the school just recently merged with Berklee in 2016 to create one hub of collaboration and artistry. The program currently offers many degrees but the one we will focus on is their BFA in Contemporary Theater. While this is a conservatory, the degree does have a few liberal arts requirements outside of the theatre courses, however nowhere near the number of general education requirements of a public university. The program breaks down their curriculum into four main concepts: training, performing, creating, and producing.

Similarly to Carnegie Mellon, there are voice and speech classes during every semester of this four-year degree program with a very specific progression. Year one focuses on the work of Kristin Linklater, year two moves to Edith Skinner-based speech

and dialect work, year three analyzes Shakespeare and advanced voice topics, and year four focuses on practical voice work, including voice-over, on-camera voice, and Restoration and other comedy work.

As for class content, each semester brings something new and exciting to the table. Each *Voice and Speech* class is fully explained via their current course catalogue. During *Voice and Speech I and II*:

> Students delve into the acting methodologies of theater realism and studying the tenets of Stanislavski as the inspiration for prominent interpretation of his theories by master American teachers like Uta Hagen. Suzuki exercises are introduced to prepare the students to be in the moment to find the essential truth of their characters. Shakespeare is introduced. Principles of Linklater voice and speech, and movement are utilized to free students of physical habits, emotional blocks, and redundancies.

Voice and Speech III moves on to new material, stating “methodologies of Meisner, Fitzmaurice, and Viewpoints are explored to create the intuitive actor. These approaches in acting, voice and speech, and movement allow an actor to act on impulse rather than relying on rationalization which hinders the depth of choices an actor can make. The work of this semester is predominantly applied to monologue work and group exercises,” while *Voice and speech IV* revisits the course work from year one, “study of methodologies from the first semester continues, with the addition of vocal Viewpoints and the methodologies of Michael Chekhov. The students move beyond monologues and group work into scene work.”

Voice and Speech V visits some previous material in addition to some new methodologies, described as “heightened voice for non-contemporary theater work is explored. Methodologies of Fitzmaurice, Patsy Rodenberg, Cicely Berry, and Kristin Linklater are utilized. Dialect work is studied in depth.” The options for *Voice and Speech VI* were fairly self-explanatory, between the work of Roy Hart, Linklater, or learning voice over work. During the final year, students learn to prepare audition materials for their careers in *Voice and Speech VII and VIII* when:

> In the senior year, units of study are compartmentalized. The first semester concentrates on building a repertoire book of contrasting monologues to meet any expectation at an audition. The second semester begins with various circumstances that require cold readings—with time to prepare and very little or no time to prepare. The second unit deals with voiceover work, recorded readings of literature for the seeing impaired, voice for dramatic, comedic, and commercial animation. This unit builds vocal and acting dexterity, when the voice is the only tool to convey the intent of the author, the director, the producer, or marketing/advertising executives making decisions about product desirability and placement.

Of all the programs we have examined thus far, public schools or private conservatories, Boston Conservatory definitely provides the most well-rounded voice and speech education, exposing students to several varying methodologies and skills. There are four full-time voice and speech faculty in the program, which includes Paul D'Agostino, Bryn Austin, Joy Arcolano and Candice Brown.

THE SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN (SCAD)

The Savannah College of Art and Design, also known as SCAD, is a private college located in Savannah, Georgia. At its inception in 1978, it was meant to bring arts opportunities to an area of Georgia lacking in college arts degrees. It is similar in nature to a trade school, but for the arts. SCAD offers both a BFA in Performing Arts and an MFA in Performing Arts. They do require some general education courses; however, all of them are based in arts education (such as *Foundation of Story* as an English course, or *History of Cinema* as a history course).

For a program that is solely based in arts education, I was surprised at the lack of voice and speech-related course work. There is only one required voice class for the degree, *Vocal Training for the Actor*, with two possible electives, *Voice-Over for Game Design, Animation and Commercials*, and *Phonic Alphabet and Dialects*. There are sections of *Special Topics in Performing Arts* offered, so there is a possibility some further voice electives may be offered, but it is likely dependant on the staff available. *Vocal Training for the Actor* states “through an introduction to a variety of vocal training methods, students explore alignment, breath and voice to examine their habits of vocal production. This exploration aids in the development of awareness, mobility, freedom and strong vocal support. Students link diverse vocal pedagogies to varying performance demands and venues for optimal vocal ease and clarity.” It is unclear which “diverse vocal pedagogies” those may be. If students are able to take *Phonic Alphabet and Dialects*, students explore IPA and put it to use in various dialects, similar to other courses we have examined. The *Voice-Over for Game Design, Animation and Commercials* course is a unique experience from previous schools. In this course:

> Voice-over training expands career opportunities for actors in the competitive markets of commercials, animation, game design, promos, trailers, audio book narration and other digital media. Students master techniques for accent acquisition in character work proceeding from the in-depth study of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Students familiarize themselves with appropriate studio protocol and produce work for use on their website and industry demo reel.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, TISCH SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

It should come as no surprise that New York University would make its way onto this list. The Tisch School of the Arts at NYU is a conservatory program within a private university. Students get equal exposure to professional training as well as classroom theatre studies and general education requirements. They offer a BFA in Theatre, as well as a world-renowned graduate acting program. Professional training accounts for 48 of 128 credit hour requirements for the BFA degree track. This leaves the voice and speech curriculum to be added on as an elective option. As per the 2019 Tisch School of the Arts Official Bulletin, there are only three voice and speech classes offered as elective credits: *Alexander Technique*, *Workshop in Shakespeare Verse*, and *Private Vocal Lessons*.

It appears that students are to work one-on-one with a voice instructor as elective credits throughout the course of their degree, as outlined in the description for the *Private Vocal Lessons*. NYU's description of their *Alexander Technique* class is the first of any university we have discussed to describe the technique as a learning tool for

voice and speech skills, stating “actors enhance their performance by learning to work with greater ease in breathing, vocal production, and movement while learning to recognize the habits that interfere with the natural postural reflexes.” The *Workshop in Shakespeare Voice* is not marketed as a voice and speech class, but “concentrates on the text of Shakespeare’s plays and how to use the text as a guide for the actor to achieve the character’s intentions. Emphasis is placed on analysis of the verse, how to speak it, and how to use it to create character. Students prepare monologues, soliloquies, set speeches, and sonnets for presentation in class.”

THE JUILLIARD SCHOOL

Last, but certainly not least, we will be examining The Juilliard School. Like Carnegie Mellon and NYU, Juilliard is one of the first schools that comes to mind when discussing prominent theatre programs within the United States. Created in 1905, Juilliard is “a world leader in performing arts education.” It is a private conservatory program offering a BFA in Drama as well as an MFA in Drama. Like the other conservatory programs, students take a few courses in liberal arts, but their main focus is on their theatre curriculum.

Juilliard offers a full load of voice and speech opportunities over the course of this four-year program. In Year One, there are four courses: *Alexander Technique I*, *Speech I - Foundation and Practice*, *Voice I - Foundation and Practice*, and *Voice I - Practice and Poetry*. Year Two consists of *Alexander Technique II*, *Speech II - Application and Expansion*, and *Voice II - Application and Expansion*. During Year Three, students jump back to four classes with *Alexander Technique III*, *Suzuki* (which

is not strictly voice work, but is included within the technique), *Speech III - Dialects*, and *Voice III - Synthesis and Transformation*. In the final year, training drops to a single class, *Alexander Technique IV*.

As seen, we have yet another institution loyal to the Alexander Technique as a means of movement training. Like the other programs, the *Alexander Technique* courses are marketed as movement classes with no mention of the benefits for voice and speech, but I included them for the sake of comparison of popularity to other methodologies discussed in Chapter Two. With this being the case, technically voice and speech training ends at the junior year instead of the senior year. The *Voice* and *Speech* courses, however, are heavily explained within the course bulletin. *Speech I - Foundation and Practice* is explained as follows:

> The course focuses on a wide palette of sounds for use with a range of characters, plays, and venues, including film. Focus is on the muscular development of the speech organs for flexibility, strength, precision, and varying shapes. Actors develop a more sensitive ear for sound and variations in sounds, as well as a connection to and appreciation of the onomatopoeia of language and its direct application to text. Students identify and explore the formation of vowels and consonants of spoken English using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as written reinforcement of muscular, auditory, and linguistic awareness. Students work individually and in small groups with their teachers. Application and evaluation involve physical and vocal exercises, text memorization, phonetic transcription, and landmark recorded passages.

Voice I - Foundation and Practice explores the basics of vocal training as expected, stating, “the course focuses on the principles and practice of respiration, phonation, resonance, and articulation. Anatomy, physiology, and the physics of sound are introduced as students explore exercises for relaxation, flexibility, capacity, breath control, placement, and the production of sound.” This course is likely taken in the fall of the freshman year, as it appears to be a prerequisite for the *Voice I - Practice and Poetry* course, which “continues work on the principles and practice of respiration, phonation, resonance, and articulation. Through poetry and prose, actors use sound to reveal imagery, dynamics, and rhetoric in poetry and prose.”

Speech II - Application and Expansion continues the work from *Speech I*, but also is “a class in vocal dynamics to explore heightened expressivity.” *Voice II - Application and Expansion* builds on *Voice I*: “Work focuses on increased physical awareness and expansion, with exercises for breath capacity, initiation of sound, resonance, and size. Exercises to expand the range of expression are explored. Support, flexibility, vocal dynamic, and character are challenged through a wide variety of texts.” During the third year is when *Suzuki* is introduced, which is explained as being:

> Developed by internationally-acclaimed director Tadashi Suzuki, the Suzuki Training Method is a rigorous physical discipline drawn from such diverse influences as ballet, traditional Greek and Japanese theater, and martial arts. The training seeks to heighten the actor’s emotional and physical power and commitment to each moment on stage. Attention is on the lower body and a vocabulary of footwork, sharpening an actor’s breath control and concentration.

For the final speech course, *Speech III - Dialects*, students continue their use of IPA with the introduction of various dialects. And lastly, in *Voice III - Synthesis and Transformation*, brings all of the voice and speech work together and is described as follows:

> This course focuses on vocal transformation through a seamless synthesis of skills including rhetoric, stamina, and vocal characterization. Work in vocal dynamics further explores heightened expressivity, style, and transformation. Students work individually and in small groups with their teachers. Text work includes political speeches, classic and contemporary monologues, and tv and film texts with an emphasis on dialect.

Although we have more extensive descriptions for these courses, overall they do not appear that far off from what other programs are providing and teaching.

Similarly to some of the other larger conservatory programs discussed, the Drama faculty at Juilliard consists of about forty people, but seven of those are voice and speech faculty, marking Juilliard the largest voice and speech faculty of any school discussed throughout this chapter (although two of them are Alexander Technique instructors, which would tie them with Carnegie Mellon). Juilliard Drama faculty includes Deborah Hecht - Voice and Speech, Ellen Lauren - Suzuki Training, Charlotte Okie - Alexander Technique, Carolyn Serota - Alexander Technique, Elizabeth Smith - Voice and Scene Study, Wendy Waterman - Voice and Speech, and Kate Wilson - Voice and Speech.

So what are the things that we can take away from this exploration? I would say as a general statement that the Alexander Technique is the most universally utilized

methodology of any we have explored, cropping up in half of the curriculum plans discussed. We can also see that every university at least offers a small hand-full of voice and speech courses, even if they were only electives and not program requirements. For the schools that thoroughly explained the material covered in their courses, the same basic skills are taught within the early voice and speech classes. Skills like IPA and dialect work, as well as articulation and explanations of vocal anatomy consistently popped up in speech curriculum, while resonance, placement, projection and vocal health consistently popped up in voice curriculum. This supports the basic skills that we examined in Chapter One.

CONCLUSION

This entire process has been extremely illuminating for my views on voice and speech education. We have discussed the ins and outs of vocal production, the history of voice for the stage, explored the voice as a theatrical object, determined the basics of voice and speech curriculum, analyzed prominent methodologies, and compared various BFA acting programs across the United States. But I return to my overarching question: is there a standard to voice and speech education? And if not, should there be?

What began this exploration from the beginning was a realization that no BFA acting program was exactly the same in terms of voice and speech curriculum offered. Some programs utilize Fitzmaurice Voicework and some swear by the Alexander Technique. Some offer two voice and speech classes over four years, while others offer separate voice and speech classes every single semester. With so much variation out there, it originally appeared that no standard for voice and speech education currently exists.

These questions led to this exploration and the outcome is unexpected. I have realized through this analysis, that there appears to be an unspoken standard among *what* the programs are teaching, but *how* the programs teach varies greatly. We discovered that, at their core, the voice and speech methodologies are all based in the same skills; where they differ is in execution. So whether a program is teaching Linklater or Alexander, at the end of the day the students are still learning skills in resonance, projection, tension release, etc. It is the same concept as an actor choosing one acting technique over another. Some people prefer Michael Chekhov, while others

are die-hard fans of method acting, but they are still learning skills that will help them make informed decisions on stage. The actor has to choose what they respond to the most. This made me realize that there should not be a standard *method*, but acknowledgement of this standard set of *skills*. In Chapter One I established what the basic skills of voice and speech are. Through my exploration into the methodologies, I did not find that any of them lack in teaching these basic skills. Through analyzing the course catalogs of the various BFA programs, I discovered that many name the basic skills in their descriptions. The anticipated outcome was that one methodology or program would reign supreme and inform my decision in creating my ideal voice and speech standard for education; however, this did not occur.

The quality of the education, programs, instructors, students, and methodologies is not in play here and has never been a goal of this exploration. It is also impossible to quantify what an adequate amount of time spent on voice and speech education would be. Obviously, the more time the better, but, working within the time each program is given, as long as those basic skills are taught, students are leaving the program with the tools they need to grow their acting voice. This also circles back to not previously comparing the effectiveness of the various methodologies. What works for one student may not work for another, which is why different methodologies and techniques have been created throughout the history of voice and speech education by scholars who figure out what works for them and share their findings with the rest of the community. It would be impossible to quantify which methodologies provide the best outcomes or education without following the careers of every actor who has ever been exposed to the teachings. Theatre is not like math, where things are mostly black and white; theatre

lives in the gray areas. The same can be said for education. Adhering to a basic skill-set allows instructors to work one-on-one with individual students to determine what works best for them.

It would appear, then, that the tenets of voice and speech education are physical awareness, projection, resonance, pitch, vocal variety, tension release, articulation, phonetics, operative words, vocal care, and anatomy. While it may be generally understood that these are important skills to teach BFA acting students, if the voice and speech community adopted these as tenets or an official standard, perhaps it would change the way instructors view their curriculum. Instead of moving on from these skills so quickly, if they were viewed as an important standard, perhaps instructors would be more mindful with the amount of time they allow students to build these skills up, and administrations and department chairs could be better convinced that instructors need adequate time to teach them. Spending more time really exploring with these basics will create stronger voices for the stage.

While I previously stated it is impossible to determine an adequate amount of time to allocate for voice and speech education within a BFA acting program, I will say that it is imperative they at least allow for one full semester of voice and one full semester of speech to explore these basic skills. This would allow instructors the time to explore various methodologies of their choosing while also teaching vocal health and anatomy. Ideally, more time would be allowed for voice and speech education, but it is not always possible. Based on the programs we examined, though, it appears many are making an effort to include more voice and speech instruction. The voice and speech

community continues to gain traction within theatre education, so it can only get better from here.

Vita

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