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ESTILL VOICE TRAINING: THE KEY TO HOLISTIC VOICE AND SPEECH

TRAINING FOR THE ACTOR

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

by

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Richmond, Virginia  
May 2014

### Acknowledgement

My time in graduate school and in particular, the writing of this thesis, has been like driving up a winding mountain road: constantly shifting gears as I climb; stomach dropping as I teeter to close to the edge of a hairpin curve, sometimes driving in dappling sunlight, other times plunged into blind darkness. Only now as I sit atop the mountain and gaze down at the country I have traversed do I truly see how far I have come and how beautiful the drive really was. I would be remiss to neglect to thank the following people who have been with me on this journey.

Susan Schuld, my valued teacher and advocate. Thank you for your affirmation of my abilities as a teacher, and more importantly as a human, and for being willing to jump into the deep end with me.

Dr. Noreen Barnes, my mentor and guide. Thank you for nudging me ahead with your scholarly edits and friendly zingers throughout this project.

Valerie Accetta, my colleague, friend and trusted advisor of all things Estill. Thank you for recommending EVTS to me and for your immensely helpful suggestions throughout the writing process.

Dr. Steven Chicurel, my inspiration and Estill pioneer. Thank you for providing an introduction to this life-changing vocal philosophy and for serving as a willing fount of information during my research process.

Michael Salsbury, my father, trusted adviser and favorite red pen wielder. Thank you for the late-night outline crafting sessions, the time-consuming revisions and for always being my champion.

Sandra Salsbury, my mother, constant encourager and confidant. Thank you for passing on your teacher's heart to me and for your faith, reassurance and comfort in this process.

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## Abstract

### ESTILL VOICE TRAINING: THE KEY TO HOLISTIC VOICE AND SPEECH TRAINING FOR THE ACTOR

By Katharine E. Salsbury, M.F.A.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Theatre  
Performance Pedagogy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2014

Major Director: Dr. Noreen Barnes  
Director of Graduate Studies, Theatre

The aim of this paper is to examine the Estill Voice Training System to explain how it may be used in tandem with widely accepted voice and speech methodologies such as those developed by Kristin Linklater, Patsy Rodenburg and Dudley Knight/Phil Thompson in order produce versatile performers able to meet the vocal gauntlet flung at the feet of the contemporary actor. Students must be able to effectively function as voice-over talent, sing musical theatre, rattle off classical text with aplomb and work in film, all with superior vocal health. Synthesizing proven techniques with the skills presented in the inter-disciplinary Estill Voice Training System, I hope to develop a new, anatomically

specific, voice and speech training progression to efficiently assist the student actor

discover the physical and emotional vocal ranges demanded of the contemporary actor.



## The Search for a System

The role of the pedagogue is dual in nature: to have one eye on the past and the other trained on the horizon. In an ever-changing world, the demands on the voice of the actor continue to shift. The aspiring actor living in New York City in the year 2014 relies on university undergraduate training to book jobs for commercials, films, TV pilots, webisodes, extras work, comedy, drama, summer stock, musical theatre, Shakespeare and work in development, while remaining vocally healthy enough to balance one or two “day jobs” hawking steaks and ales to tourists or nannying elite three-year-olds. The role of “actor” is a tall one, and that is before adding adjectives such as “working,” “paid,” or “successful” to it. The career of the performer is nearly impossible to prepare for; but as an actor myself drawn back into the world of academia I desire to assist in the shaping of performers who are at least partially prepared for the harsh reality of the “real world.”

I was never supposed to be a teacher. Maybe it is the motherly roles I am often called on to play or the hope to be a part of something bigger than myself that drove me back into academia. The sight I discovered upon opening the door as a Teacher’s Assistant to my first Voice and Speech Training class at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2012 was a mirror image to the one I had left years before. Yes, the roles were reversed; it was, after all, my own voice I heard droning the clichéd, hippie-dippie mantras amidst the humming and breathing of the students rolling around on the floor around me. Doe eyes

blinked and reflected my own too-wide eyes as I struggled to remind my own chest how to rise and fall with ease. When assignments were doled out, they were answered with due diligence. I soon got the routine down: relax, align, relax, roll around, realign, relax, make sound, discuss, assign chapters inspiringly titled to help students “free their natural voice,” each prescribed exercise familiar from my own training years before. Then, before either teacher or student realized they crept up on us, Midterms arrived to take their toll.

As though they had never experienced the alternative, flexible, Alexander-inspired alignment or the Linklater-influenced pool of vibrations deep within themselves to which we had faithfully dedicated eight weeks, ten students stood at attention, knees locked, feet splayed, voice strained; over emoting and strenuously attempting to indicate feelings that never reached their eyes. I could not believe my eyes or ears. Students who, had made great strides only one class before, had fallen all the way back to square one. When questioned about their performance, students stated with a shrug that they still felt they deserved an A. Other students came to me privately to state that while they did not want to offend me or the other teachers, but could not understand how the warm-up was actually supposed to help them in performance. After all, they did not see the professional actors of the community engaging in the “humming and hahhing” we did in class in the “real world.”

The worst part about this realization was that I saw myself in the students. After working professionally for ten years, the only time I tried to recreate a warm-up learned in voice and speech class was a particularly hellish summer when my voice had fallen apart due to laryngitis, sand, strain and smoke. Even then, that particular exercise was not

terribly high on my list of solutions. Only after I tried every other solution proposed in the dressing room did I google “Linklater” to find a solution. Whether it was the severity of the damage or my lack of understanding in applying the techniques, the Linklater work only served to make me feel silly and then angry when it did not produce the results I so desperately wanted. It would be more than one terrifying year later when I had my voice back. I still carry a slight rasp in my tone from that summer. Spurred partially by bitterness, I wanted a user-friendly voice and speech pedagogy that specifically answered the “Why?” and gave fast results.

Thus began my search for “my” master of pedagogy. Amazon.com bills skyrocketed as I purchased book after book by Kristin Linklater, Arthur Lessac, Patsy Rodenburg, and Cicely Berry. While I gleaned immensely helpful information from each, the “Why?” and more importantly “How?” question still glared in my mind. How exactly does vacuuming my lungs help, Ms. Linklater? Why does “y-buzz” help me get louder, Mr. Lessac? Why does “intoning” awaken my resonators so well, Ms. Rodenburg? How do I remain emotionally engaged, Ms. Berry? These admittedly cheeky questions were playing loudly in my mind one day in May 2013 when I signed up for a week-long workshop with Dr. Stephen Chicurel, a Certified Course Instructor with Estill Voice Training International.

My vocal world was turned inside out and upside down during that workshop. Although completely exhausted by the end, I knew I had found something exciting. Finally, someone could show me pictures of the vocal tract and rattle off names of the anatomical structures that house the voice, subsequently showing me how to manipulate

each structure to create sound. I was an evangelist. I attended another workshop a month later, this time with Dr. Kimberly Steinhauer, President of Estill International, and she suggested I attend the Estill World Voice Symposium at Harvard University the following month. A deeper exploration of the Estill Voice Training System (EVTS) will follow in future chapters, but suffice it to say that the specificity and the science behind the system has led to its embrace by speech language pathologists as well as theatre and musical theatre professionals and educators.

While rubbing elbows with Estill educators, scientists, performers and professionals all who laud the specificity associated with the EVTS model, I began to truly understand that voice and speech training must be pursued with a holistic mentality because indeed everything (body, voice, and mind) are connected equally. It was Robert Sussuma and Tom Burke, both Estill Certified Course Instructors with EVTS, who first exposed me to the idea of Holistic Vocology. It is this style of study that I foresee growing in popularity in the coming decades.

Jo Estill, the researcher and singer upon whose research current EVTS is founded, believed heartily that everyone had a beautiful voice, if he or she only knew how to use it. Her system prizes specificity and flexibility, important skills for the actor, while actively promoting vocal health. It is an ideal vocal foundation on which the student may build stage combat skills, musical theatre singing, commercial voice work or any vocal extremes. In short, EVTS “plays well with others;” and it is my belief that its inclusion in undergraduate curricula will only serve to complement other vocal techniques as well as the full realm of existing acting techniques.

If the body, mind, and voice are interconnected within the actor's being, then it stands to reason that an equal emphasis must be placed on each in order to achieve balance in the actor. In the following pages, I will seek to summarize the major tenets of the Estill Voice Training System, and I will finish my study with a synthesis of all of these pedagogies by constructing a proposal for a four-semester undergraduate Voice and Speech progression.

## The Estill Voice Training System

In most traditional undergraduate programs, whether they train students within a B.A. or a B.F.A. in Theatre Performance structure, voice training is separated into singing and non-singing voice work, encouraging counter-productive compartmentalization. As both a singer and actor, I have spent my time in graduate school seeking a system that synthesizes these two traditionally different systems and complements the various methodologies of movement and acting training used in undergraduate progressions. Pardon my colloquial mandate, but what is needed is a system that “plays well with others.” I believe I have found that system with the Estill Voice Training System. Established in 1988 after ten years of rigorous scientific research that continues today, EVTS offers a technique that promotes vocal versatility alongside vocal health. The interdisciplinary nature of EVTS makes it ideal for work within a liberal arts research university as many speech language pathologists, otolaryngologists, and ENT (ear, nose and throat) doctors are using the system for lab research. The ability for young performers to discuss vocal health issues alongside university scientists using a common vocabulary is a boon to any training program. The interdisciplinary nature of EVTS is undoubtedly intriguing, but it is the massive results achieved efficiently that will set Estill above other pedagogies used in the university system in future years.

## History and Development

A curious singer, Jo Estill (1921-2010), developed EVTS in the 1980's as a way to validate her hypothesis that "everyone has a beautiful voice. You just have to know how to use it" (Level One). Born in Pennsylvania, Jo Estill's professional singing career took her all over Europe and the United States. A naturally gifted singer, Estill, like many other singers, knew she was doing *it*, but had no idea what *it* was and much less how to teach *it*. A performer with the heart of an educator, she received her B.A. in Liberal Arts from Colorado College and her M.A. in Music Education from Case Western Reserve University in Ohio. She then moved to Syracuse, NY to be an Instructor in Voice at the Upstate Medical Center. It is during this time that she began to develop her own method for vocal instruction based on scientific research of the anatomical structures of the voice. She received an honorary doctorate from the University of East Anglia for this research in 2010 just before her death.

Since the development of EVTS in the 1980's, EVTS has continued to research steadily in the fields of vocal physiology, acoustics, and perception of voice quality for over twenty-five years, making new discoveries and expanding as an organization currently boasting well over two hundred certified master teachers worldwide. The sixth Estill World Voice Symposium held at Harvard University included twenty-five presentations from world-renowned otolaryngologists, university performance professors and community vocal instructors whose topics ranged from "Pitch-Pharyngeal Relationships," "The Sociocultural Voice," and "Managing Glottic Insufficiency" to "EVTS and the Bush Band" (Symposium Program CITE). As a performer, it was truly

amazing to see fellow teachers arguing the correct placement for heavy metal “screeching” or to listen to the tonal singing of the East, styles of music I had written off as forbidden or unattainable years before. Many Estill Certified Master Teachers teach singing voice lessons at the community or local level, but many are lead scientific researchers and ENT doctors; and some are hired by large corporations like Google to teach effective verbal communication skills to their employees. Unlike other vocal pedagogies, it is neither artistic nor aesthetic bias that unites this unlikely group of scientists, researchers, teachers and performers, but an unapologetic bias for vocal health.

The Estill Voice Training System is based on a model separating Craft, Artistry and Magic conceived by Jo Estill. Estill delineates Craft as the study that goes into learning how to control and manipulate the multiple anatomical structures that house the voice. This creates the foundation for vocal work and allows for a myriad of vocal options, later referred to as Qualities. Artistry incorporates style and aesthetic into performance. It focuses on the effective communication between speaker/singer and audience, whether it be singing an aria, performing Shakespearean verse or delivering an impressive public speech. The last piece of the model prescribed by Jo Estill is that of Magic. Magic dips its toe into the metaphysical arena and focuses on research conducted on the phenomenon that happens when a performer seems to step outside of her body, where the audience is transported and transformed and later reports loss of breath or goose bumps. Generally, those moments are rare and unpredictable for most performers. Estill’s supposition was that by strengthening the Craft and Artistry foundation, one could rely on these Magical moments happening more frequently.



According to the EVTS website, benefits of Estill study are summed up by the following. Estill Voice Training:

- Replaces mystery with knowledge.
- Reduces performance anxiety.
- Promotes confidence.
- Empowers students to make choices.
- Provides vocal variety.
- Leaves nothing to chance.
- Leads to a balance of vocal health and aesthetic freedom. (Estill Website)

As I conducted a rather informal survey amongst my colleagues who teach theatre at the undergraduate level, it seems as though these are indeed common goals across the undergraduate curriculum. Although Jo herself was adamant that her system of vocal production was not just applicable to singers, much of the research that has been done thus far has been done with singing or speech pathology in mind. As a scholar myself, I hope to explore its applications to stage voice and speech including foundational skills, application to verse speaking skills and accents and dialects. Having studied various other more established stage voice pedagogies in depth in the past two years, I will include discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of other methodologies determining if and how they can work in tandem with the EVTS model.

### **Estill Foundational Skills**

When Jo Estill was initially conceiving her method, she had the idea that one should be able to put together a performance like an exquisite layer cake. She saw Craft as the separate ingredients that must be measured, stirred and baked precisely, relying on chemistry and science to sort out the fluffiness and taste of the cake. Artistry is the frosting, the added hit of sugar to the tastebuds and pleasing designs to the eye, leaving Magic to be the moment when the girl conjures her wish and then blows out the candle on the top of the cake. When the girl is just the right age and the ethereal candles flicker just so, a certain wistfulness hangs in the air and the child knows that this time her wish will come true. Estill's courses still retain this idea of the Voice Training System being a Vocal Cookbook, with each described vocal Quality having certain ingredients, which are manipulations of the vocal construct. By focusing on the science or chemistry involved in combining ingredients, Estill further isolates herself from the aesthetic bias created by other pedagogies.

Estill tackles the process of vocal production by coining the Power-Source-Filter model. The three parts may be described as follows:

1. Power- The respiratory system. Breath is broken down into observable scientific elements such as aerodynamics, intensity and breath noise produced by the lungs and musculature of the upper torso.
2. Source- The larynx (voice box) where the true vocal folds vibrate together producing sound. Tone is further broken down into observable elements such as bioelasticity, pitch & harmonics, volume and clarity.

3. Filter- The vocal tract structure. Resonators can be identified and studied using treble-bass balance, vowel and singer's formants, volume and consonants (Level One).

In the first phase of EVTS, it is imperative that students learn to control the individual components that make up the three main categories above. Estill calls the manipulation of these structures "Compulsory Figures," named after the foundational skills test issued to ice skaters before competition, and has created simple exercises demonstrating each of thirteen Figures she and her researchers identified.

1. Larynx: The speaker has the ability to consciously move the larynx in varying directions in order to manipulate sounds. Its movement has long been associated with pitch change, but it is more related to pitch quality than pitch change. A low larynx often produces a darker tone, while a high larynx produces a brighter sound.
2. True Vocal Fold Onset/Offset: Sound is produced by the oscillating of two bands of tissue (the True Vocal Folds or TVF) housed within the larynx that stretch above the glottis, or the opening that air vacuumed down into the lungs must pass through, and vibrate, creating sound. Onset/Offset refers to how the speaker begins and ends the tone, either glottal, aspirate or smooth onset.
3. True Vocal Fold Body-Cover: The speaker can also control the way that the vocal folds vibrate against each other. When TVF are "thick," they vibrate all the way from the top to the bottom, but when the TVF are "thin," only the tops vibrate together, causing a decrease in volume and intensity. The TVF can

also be “stiff” where they are held rigidly, thus producing a slightly dysphonic sound as the TVF do not come together cleanly. An ever-increasing phenomenon is for the body of the TVF to be “slack,” meaning that the folds are floppy and instead of producing clear tone, produce a “vocal fry” sort of sound similar to a glottalized clicking sound.

4. False Vocal Fold: With practice, the speaker can also control the False Vocal Folds (FVF), two parallel bands of flesh above the TVF, which often constrict in the case of vocal damage. They can be either constricted, retracted or midway between the two. According to Estill’s research, retraction of the false vocal folds is often linked with feelings of empathy.
5. Thyroid Cartilage: Located at the front of the larynx, which is housed in cartilage protection, this top “shield” of cartilage may be independently controlled by the muscular ligaments surrounding them to add “sweetness” to sound and, in singing, contributes to vibrato. In EVTS, it may be tilted or vertical and it is often linked with onset of “emotion.”
6. Cricoid Cartilage: Located at the bottom front of the larynx, this section of cartilage is controlled by the cricoid ligament and allows the TVF to “thicken” allowing for louder volume with minimal effort. When the cricoid cartilage is tilted, it is used largely for shouting or belting.
7. Aryepiglottic Sphincter: This term refers to the band of muscles in the vocal tract just above the larynx that can be either wide or narrow in sound production. Often called the AES, manipulation of this area creates a distinct,

twangy, bright sound that adds volume and brightness to the sound without much effort.

8. Velum: Often described in other pedagogies as the soft palate, the scientifically named velum is the flap of flesh that channels air through either the nasal or oral cavities. In EVTS, its position may either be high, mid, or low. A velum in the low position produces a sound that is entirely nasal in production like the bilabial nasal continuant [m] or the velar nasal continuant [ŋ], while a mid position creates a nasalized French vowel. Most speakers who do not have a “nasal” quality identifiable in their speech speak with their velum in the high position, completely cutting off the flow of air to the nose.
9. Tongue: In the Estill system, the tongue is not just used for articulation, but is actually notable in its connection to the height of the larynx. After all, the tongue connects to the hyoid bone which also holds the larynx in place. This causes a domino effect on the larynx’s flexibility depending upon tongue position or excess tension. It may be controlled in either the high, mid, low or, in singing and some dialects, compressed.
10. Jaw: While most pedagogies focus on the vertical dropping of the jaw, EVTS places emphasis on the position of the jaw on a horizontal perspective, moving from forward to mid to back *and* dropped. As any dialectician can tell you, the jaw’s relationship to the oral posture of the community is important in reproducing specific sounds. For instance, the tightly locked jaw generally

associated with the “mumbled” sounds of the native speakers of Appalachia is a commonly shared trait amidst that community group.

11. Lips: The lips in EVTS can be protruded, mid, or spread, altering the sound.
12. Head and Neck: Contrasting with other vocal pedagogies, Estill advocates the use of muscles in “anchoring” to keep the effort out of the vocal tract. For this set, muscles in the face and neck are activated to assist in sound production including the sternocleidomastoid anterior muscle, which connects the head to the torso.
13. Torso: In this set of anchoring muscles, Estill suggests the use of large muscles like the abdominals and trapezius to assist in vocal production.

Some of these exercises are easier for some students than others. To encourage students and explain this common occurrence, EVTS acknowledges “attractor states.” An attractor state is the state where a student is most comfortable, but that does not mean the student cannot change it. For instance, many of my young female performers have attractor states that combine to make the following vocal recipe: aspirate onset/offset, stiff and slack vocal fold cover, mid larynx that habitually slides higher at the ends of phrases, high tongue and spread lips; resulting in a breathy, high-pitched, flat and consistently unsure tone that occasionally gravels into a “creaky” voice. Once the student’s current “recipe” is pointed out, she is often anxious to “fix it.” The beauty of the EVTS is an affirmation that her attractor state is useful, though not always preferable. After all, it has gotten her to this point in her life, but to be a successful communicator or performer, she

must be able to access all parts of her voice evenly, by choice. I have observed this empowering conversation multiple times and am truly heartened by it. If undergraduate theatre performance training is about encouraging the student to make smart choices in acting, should that same empowerment not cross disciplines to vocal production?

## CHAPTER 3 The Estill Voice Qualities

Although the following qualities are most applicable to singing, it is my belief that the facile teacher can find ways to apply each of the following qualities to both textual and musical communication. Jo Estill identified six categories for vocal production, which she named Qualities: Speech, Sob, Falsetto, Twang (oral and nasal), Opera and Belting. In keeping with the cookbook analogy, these configurations are recipes for a common sound for each quality. For each, she outlines the position of the thirteen components of the anatomical structures. The position of each structure can be monitored by either a laryngoscopy or, much less invasively, by using the Estill Voiceprint computer software, which measures the decibels, acoustics and formants of the sound production. As a teacher training in EVTS, I have been amazed at how easily I may identify and correct issues specifically and efficiently even after a few months of study simply by ear. The identified qualities are as follows. In future chapters, I will illuminate the application of each quality to voice and speech work.

### **Speech**

#### **The Recipe**

- Glottal True Vocal Fold Onset
- Mid False Vocal Fold Position
- Thick True Vocal Fold Body Cover



- Vertical Thyroid Cartilage
- Vertical Cricoid Cartilage
- Wide Aryepiglottic Sphincter
- Mid Larynx Height
- Mid Tongue Position
- High Velum
- Mid Jaw Height
- Mid Lips
- Relaxed Head & Neck
- Relaxed Torso

### **What Does It Sound Like?**

While it is possible to get lost in the semantics of the word choice when it comes to the vocal qualities, the Speech quality is often touted as the one used most often for “everyday” speech or, in singing, for the generalized “speak singing” of adults singing “Happy Birthday” at a restaurant for a child.

### **Benefits**

The speech quality is possibly the most intelligible of all the qualities, largely because the vocal tract is open, relaxed and free of excess tension and because the tongue and jaw position being less important to actual sound production are free to serve a larger purpose as articulators. It takes advantage of the lower pitches that are often more aesthetically pleasing and easier to hear for the listener.

**Limitations**

Depending upon the performer's natural attractor state (tongue position for example) speech quality only allows the speaker or performer access to a limited range, generally in his or her lower register. When singing, if a performer attempts to sing higher pitches without changing the Speech recipe, lack of clarity, a break in the voice or damage may occur. In singing, in order to sing those higher pitches, the quality of the voice must change in order to allow for true vocal health. In the female voice, for instance, "speech quality is difficult to maintain above G (392 Hz) in the female voice" (Estill Level Two 16).

The intensity and maximum volume in Speech quality will also vary performer by performer due to increasing breath effort or False Vocal Fold (henceforth referred to as FVF) effort. If one is directed to become louder in this vocal quality and therefore takes a larger breath, the performer may, in fact, flip into Falsetto quality (where the vocal folds are held stiffly in an effort to keep the glottis closed) producing a broken or breathy tone, or the performer may "overblow" which will make the produced tone sharp at best, or at worst, result in phonotrauma. If the performer is asked to amp up the volume and instead increases the effort level of the True Vocal Folds, the performer risks accidentally engaging the False Vocal Folds and constricting them when they should be at the mid position. If the resulting tone is scratchy or dysphonic (two pitches simultaneously or commonly recognized as hoarseness) damage has already occurred or may occur as the False Vocal Folds constrict to muscularly assist the True Vocal Folds in vibrating closer together.

**Application to Singing**

In singing, Speech quality is commonly used in various styles including jazz, rap, musical theatre, folk and punk music. For years there has been a suggestion that belting used in musical theatre is merely an extension of this style of “speak-singing,” and I, as a performer, was a victim of this philosophy for years. I was unable to “belt” above an A without the quality of the sound becoming “legit” completely outside of my control. After discovering Estill and finding the healthy way to truly belt, discovering there was a completely new recipe, I could belt an entire octave higher than previously.

As with all of the Estill Voice Qualities, there should be no pain or discomfort with any vocal production, least of all Speech! If there is, immediate help must be sought to diagnose the root of the pain. Because the belief that belt is an extension of speak singing is so pervasive amongst singers, it is likely that many will have an issue with False Vocal Fold constriction or “over-blowing.” Depending on one’s attractor state, the effort of the speech quality is often unnerving, especially for the experienced singer. Some may feel an uncanny relaxation while others report intense effort. Again, this is the beauty of a truly specialized pedagogy for individual voices.

**Application to Speaking**

As its name implies, the Speech quality recipe is one of the most important qualities for the actor to develop. The mid or retracted position of the vocal tract, which in Estill’s system is so easily measurable, is a God-send to the voice and speech instructor. Just as Linklater, Fitzmaurice and Rodenburg all aim to help students attain a blank canvas on which to begin to paint, EVTS provides the same with the speech quality. Once the

students have a comprehension of the basic figures, a brief reminder to “thicken” their True Vocal Folds, relax their larynx from a high position, and release their tongue from a high position is all it takes to produce this energetic neutral. It should be noted that the term “energetic neutral” may not fit every voice. According to conversations with other Estill practitioners, some very trained opera singers have trouble with this Quality even in speaking. This is where the ear of the teacher and the entirely impartial Estill Voiceprint software comes in handy. Vocal production is demystified and the student is empowered because s/he knows exactly what s/he is doing and is completely responsible for the changes that occur.

Speech quality is the baseline from which the voice and speech instructor and student may work with confidence, playing with the recipe, changing up ingredients and tasting to see if the result is good for the character or moment within the play. For instance, a coach preparing a male performer for a role in a film may suggest that because the camera and sound equipment is so close, he may “thin” his TVF in a particularly vulnerable scene to shape his voice to a style more appropriate for the intimate medium of film. That same coach and performer might have an audition for a new play the next day, and the coach might suggest that the performer keep the recipe the same except he might allow his jaw to drop in order to create an oral posture that provides enough resonance to fill a 150-seat house in the basement theatre in Tribeca. This same student probably used the same speech quality playing Harold Hill in *The Music Man*, Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird* and Torvald in *A Doll’s House* over the summer at a 300-seat regional theatre, but simply added in the tilting of his Cricoid cartilage in order to be heard with as

little effort as possible. The choices are endless for teacher and student, if he is only given the tools to demystify his voice.

### **Falsetto**

#### **The Recipe**

- Aspirate True Vocal Fold Onset
- Mid False Vocal Fold Position
- Stiff True Vocal Fold Body Cover
- Vertical Thyroid Cartilage
- Vertical Cricoid Cartilage
- Wide Aryepiglottic Sphincter
- Mid Larynx Height
- Mid Tongue Position
- High Velum
- Mid Jaw Height
- Mid Lips
- Relaxed Head & Neck
- Relaxed Torso

#### **What Does It Sound Like?**

Again, the semantic challenge of words make Falsetto a somewhat confusing title for this vocal quality, as it is commonly believed that men are the only ones capable of producing falsetto tones. EVTS attempts to redefine the term and uses it to apply to the commonly known breathier, higher sound of the male “head voice,” but also to include the

common qualities found in children's choir voices, yodels and even iconic speaking voices such as Michael Jackson or, even, Marilyn Monroe.

### **Benefits**

The benefits of this vocal quality are many, largely because this sound is associated with innocence, sweetness and beauty aesthetically. Men benefit from the ability to sing soprano roles and mimic women's naturally high speaking registers. It is used frequently combined with other vocal qualities in pop music and often produces that vulnerable, intentional "break" in the voice in highly emotional, musical interludes.

### **Limitations**

Just as speech quality has a limited pitch range, Falsetto is mostly useful in higher registers. Because of the amount of air required to maintain high pitch, Falsetto volume can be difficult to control in higher registers if pitches must be held for a long period of time. Concurrently, if Falsetto is maintained in lower pitches, the sound often cracks or bottoms out, and is nearly impossible to amplify except through electronic means.

In order to maintain its signature tone, the Power, or airflow needed to produce sound, must be strong. Because of possible constriction, it is important that the singer or speaker monitor the effort level. If the performer "pushes" more breath to add volume, the pitch will go sharp or crack. One option is the narrowing of the AES, which may add more volume, but can also make an overly bright tone. Some head and neck, and torso anchoring is encouraged to take the effort out of the larynx in order to increase volume, but the extra air that it takes to both anchor the body and produce the sound may be too much. Students should be wary of this extra effort, which may creep into the False Vocal Folds.

The performer may be tempted to constrict to help the TVF weather their windstorm, but must allow the FVF to stay released for healthful vocal production.

### **Application to Singing**

The Falsetto quality, as defined by Estill, is applicable to many different styles of singing including Gaelic/Celtic, Jazz, Folk, Country and Early Music styles. As long as the singer understands how to navigate his or her range using this recipe, the possibilities are endless. In pop music, often Falsetto will be trotted out as a “trick,” showing off range and control. In traditional Baroque music, this quality is necessary for both men and women. It is important to note that this quality need not always have a breathy tone and is not always limited to high pitches.

Often, it is used to convey sweetness, innocence or purity in musical applications and, perhaps for that reason, it is featured as the signature sound of children’s choirs. Its connotation is not always one of child-like innocence as anyone who has heard Marilyn Monroe’s rendition of “Happy Birthday, Mr. President” can attest. In musical theatre specifically, it is used alternatively with the belt quality to add layers to a character who may be teetering the line of innocence such as Lois, the Bianca-like character, in *Kiss Me, Kate* in “Always True to You in My Fashion.” The ability to encourage young musical theatre artists to add layers to their characters simply by changing the vocal quality in which they sing is a hallmark benefit of Estill training for singers in an undergraduate degree.

### **Application to Speaking**

The Falsetto vocal quality is of course useful to the actor as well for many reasons. First of all, many female students because of societal norms speak in this style naturally. By recognizing the way they are controlling their vocal mechanism to produce this sound, they can begin to find more options in vocal production. Currently, I have a student who speaks and sings with a rasp. While she may have an injury that is undocumented that causes her dysphonia (although she has been scoped by an ENT), the rasp is not always present, which leads me to believe that it is merely, or not so merely, a determined habit, and is therefore correctable.

Because there is currently a socio-cultural reward for women who speak or sing with a rasp (think Marilyn Monroe or Rachel Ray), it can be a difficult struggle for the young actress to recognize that she may be able to speak in a different way which will open up further casting options. By isolating the significant Figures that are limiting the actress' vocal versatility and not condemning them, the actress can begin to feel empowered to make different choices with her voice. By adjusting her larynx height, onsets and offsets, and TVF body cover, the speaker can reduce the Falsetto state to which her body is initially attracted. Likewise, the actress who is always type-cast as the strong, level-headed best friend, can make the same adjustments to her own vocal recipe and utilize more of a Falsetto style of speaking for her dream role of a wispy-voiced ingénue. Again, when the voice is demystified and the changes remain simple and specific, the choices for the actor are endless.



**Sob/Cry****The Recipe**

- Smooth True Vocal Fold Onset
- Retracted False Vocal Fold Position
- Thin True Vocal Fold Body Cover
- Tilted Thyroid Cartilage
- Vertical Cricoid Cartilage
- Wide Aryepiglottic Sphincter
- Low Larynx Height
- High Tongue Position
- High Velum
- Mid Jaw Height
- Mid Lips
- Anchored Head & Neck
- Anchored Torso

**What Does It Sound Like?**

According to Estillian legend, Jo named the Sob quality after she overheard a young boy say that it looked as though she was crying after she sang a particularly moving and emotional piece of music. After scientific research was conducted, the little boy's observation proved astute. Anatomically, this style of emotional singing or speaking has a lot in common with the vocal tract's position in severe grief or empathy. The tone is often described as dark and intense emotionally, but it does not fill a large space without some

adjustment to the recipe. Bing Crosby is a notable user of this vocal quality, and as one of America's first recording artists, it became his signature style. Naturally, the volume is more at the musical level of pianissimo and is difficult to hear without amplification. Blues and jazz singers often highlight this quality in their sound.

### **Benefits**

The nearly tangible emotive quality present in Sob quality is perhaps its strongest benefit. While each of the other qualities has connotations associated with it, the sob quality is unmistakable in the way that it communicates emotion to an audience member. In research conducted when non-native speakers listen to a song sung in this quality, they mark the song as sounding "sad" nearly one hundred percent of the time (Level One Workshop-Chicurel). Any performer would be happy with those odds.

Even though the effort level is high for many other parts of the vocal tract, this quality is particularly easy on the TVF and if the TVF body cover is truly left to thin coverage, it is entirely healthy. Because of this it can be used when the voice is recovering from a particularly strenuous exercise with plenty of "bang for its buck" while communicating emotion.

### **Limitations**

The most prevalent limitation of Sob quality is the fact that it cannot be loud. It is imperative that the vocal folds remain at their thinnest body cover in order to produce the signature sound. Because of its quiet nature, it must be electronically amplified over other instruments and sounds. It is not generally useful in large spaces, which severely limits its application to stage voice and speech, although film work remains an option.

**Applications to Singing**

The Sob quality is highly applicable for the singer attempting to have connection with the audience. Because the thyroid cartilage is tilted, the glottis is wide open and the thin vocal folds stretched over it are very relaxed for many performers. Estillians have done much research on the cause of vibrato, which is the slight wavering up and down in pitch heard by most classically trained singers. No one is entirely sure what causes vibrato, but Estill researchers have found that vibrato is present when the thyroid cartilage is tilted. It is important to note that it is possible to tilt the thyroid cartilage forward without adding vibrato, however, so more research is still needed to describe this correlation. In my latest conversation with Dr. Stephen Chicurel, I discovered Estill Voice International is conducting this research.

As a singer, this quality can be particularly helpful as a way of combating TVF fatigue, but it should be noted that it is incredibly effortful in the large muscle groups used in anchoring. There is also a necessary tension that builds from the connection of the use of a high tongue with a low larynx. The tongue, of course, attaches to the hyoid bone, which is the topmost part of the larynx. Maintaining this distance takes practice and precision. Perhaps it is the effort needed in these areas that adds the palpable energy that issues forth from use of this quality.

**Application to Speaking**

At first glance, one may not see the initial attraction in teaching Sob quality to speakers, however, it is one of the most effective recipes for actors to attain. According to an interview I conducted with Dr. Steven Chicurel, Estill's latest Lifetime Achievement

Award winner, in some of Jo Estill's early research, she discovered a correlation between FVF retraction and a psychological feeling of empathy, pinpointing a psycho-anatomic connection. No matter our vocal training, when we watch a particularly moving concert, observe a touching eulogy or stream one too many sad orphan panda videos on the Internet, our larynx bobs up and down and our FVF retract. Larynx movement can be felt by placing three fingers on the front of one's throat. FVF retraction, though a bit more difficult to feel, is most easily recognized by a feeling of an entirely "open throat" or a laugh one is trying to keep in. Estill's belief was that these unconscious movements were born out of empathy. The psycho-anatomic movement of the receiver denotes a response that is deeper than mere sympathy as the receiver's body is affected by the outside force. Many of my students have drawn the correlation between Sob quality and the tilting of the thyroid cartilage and FVF retraction as the colloquial "lump in the throat" as one holds back tears. If indeed there is a relationship between physiology and psychology showcased in sob quality for both the listener and the speaker, what an important thing for the actor to study thoroughly!

Many playwrights of classical text, such as Shakespeare, demand heightened emotion from actors highlighted in pieces such as Constance's "I am not mad..." speech from *King John*. Sob quality becomes an excellent quality to highlight. Certainly, the struggle of filling the space is present as the speaker's TVF must remain thin, but for rehearsal and in more intimate settings, it is incredibly useful. The actress has the ability to fully explore the emotions of grief aside from anger in the piece without fear of traumatizing her instrument and while adding layers of volume and pitch to her speech that

may not have been there without using the Sob quality. It warrants noting that, because the line between grief and anger is so often blurred, the actor must work only within the confines of the sadness found grief in order stay within Sob quality. If the line into anger is crossed, the actor begins to constrict and can be in danger of vocal trauma.

To me, it seems the biggest benefit to using Sob quality in speech work is the ability to focus on the physiology or Craft of the moment and know that the psychological result will follow. As a voice and speech teacher, I deal with students who come in with a jumble of acting methodologies running through their heads. For some, emotional recall and affective memory is key to their process; others find it damaging. Some have the ability to transform entirely into character by focusing on environmental cues, while others get lost when presented with given circumstances. The beauty of the specificity of physiology presented in EVTS is that while it is only bolstered from the actor's own emotional work, it is capable of functioning independently of it. For instance, an actress tasked with the same Constance speech mentioned earlier may choose to use emotional recall to add to her performance, nightly reliving the time that she miscarried her child. Indeed that process may result in a truly heart-rending speech. For another actress who has had the same experience this may be an overly traumatic choice, or as often happens in long runs, it may not be a fail-safe one. This is where the technique, the Craft as Estill would call it, becomes paramount. On a night when the actress is not feeling particularly connected to the audience or the topic, she simply must lower her larynx, thin her vocal folds and tilt her thyroid cartilage forward, using the physiological to affect the psychological.

## **Nasalized Twang**

### **The Recipe**

- Smooth TVF onset
- Retracted FVF
- Thin TVF Body Cover
- Tilted Thyroid
- Vertical Cricoid
- Narrow AES
- High Larynx
- High Tongue
- Mid Velum
- Mid Jaw
- Mid Lips
- Relaxed Head & Neck
- Relaxed Torso

### **What Does It Sound Like?**

This sound is nearly always identifiable even by the layman as being “nasal” in tone. When speaking or singing in the nasalized twang quality the sound is very far forward, and at least part of the air necessary is sent through the nose instead of the mouth. This is not true for the alternative Oral Twang quality described by Estill. Although described as Twang, it is not used exclusively in American Country music or by the

Sesame Street characters Bert and Ernie. In fact, nasalized twang is one of the most common speaking styles heard in the United States.

### **Benefits**

Nasalized twang is perhaps the most useful recipes for the speaker that Estill suggests. Essentially, because the vocal tract is narrowed severely, the sound is both powerful and strident. It is useful in particularly large houses where amplification is not used, or to carry long distances effortlessly. It should be noted that the TVF need not be in thick body cover in this recipe, nor does the voice rely on Cricoid cartilage tilting in order to amplify the sound. By narrowing the AES, the part of the pharynx just above the larynx, the speaker/singer has created a strong surface for resonance, therefore keeping the effort level low. Estill describes the high volume by suggesting that “the Narrowed AES creates an aerodynamic back pressure that causes the vocal folds to remain closed longer” (Workbook 42).

The most obvious benefit of the Nasalized Twang is its ability to create an amplified sound without significantly raising the effort level. It is also incredibly helpful when it is combined with another quality to assist in the volume level to help the speaker be heard in a noisy environment. For instance, in most contemporary musical theatre repertoire by artists such as Idina Menzel, a combination of belt, detailed in future pages, and nasalized twang is used.

### **Limitations**

Because of the requirement of a high larynx for vocal production, it is difficult to maintain the Nasalized Twang on lower pitches or frequencies. That said, very high

pitches can be difficult to maintain with nasalized strength due to the control that is needed to keep the vocal tract appropriately narrow. If the effort is misplaced, the speaker/singer runs the risk of constricting the False Vocal Folds instead of just narrowing the AES. This can be easily felt as it results in a tickle or coughing sensation, however, students who are already accustomed to constricted the FVF may be tempted to ignore this warning sign and further injure their True Vocal Folds. This is why it is important that students of the Estill system learn to manipulate independently each structure of the vocal tract before putting the recipes together.

### **Applications to Singing**

As previously mentioned, Nasalized Twang is often used in contemporary, popular music. Its signature sound is often narrowly applied to American country western music, but it is necessary for nearly all genres including opera, musical theatre, gospel and other global traditions including African and Asian styles. Upon hearing nasalized twang for the first time, one often thinks of character musical theatre roles such as Princeton in the puppet musical *Avenue Q*. Nasalized twang has far more uses than that for the contemporary singer. For the undergraduate voice instructor, nasalized twang is especially helpful in assisting students who desire to sing the majority of “new musical theatre.” Although it also uses Oral Twang, *Rent*, the 90’s rock musical, is often credited as beginning a more nasalized pop/rock sound in musical theatre with its demands on “rock-tenors” like Anthony Rapp and certainly marked a departure for the women of musical theatre who henceforth desire to wail like Idina Menzel. There is no doubt that Nasalized Twang is an important piece of the contemporary musical theatre puzzle, however, it



should be noted that before amplification was common, if one were to listen to recordings of vaudeville or early musical theatre, Nasalized Twang is just as important an ingredient to an Ethel Merman tone as her ability to belt and fill a vaudeville theatre. Again, Nasalized Twang's ability to project over large spaces makes it particularly valuable to singers regardless of the era.

### **Application to Speaking**

For the speaker, a true Nasalized Twang recipe is mostly helpful in character roles. Its distinctive qualities allow it to stand out from the crowd and make it more memorable; think of Fran Drescher for example. That said, in its purest form, it is rarely looked upon as aesthetically pleasing, so it is somewhat limited. When it is blended with other qualities, however, the speaker has a way of increasing his or her volume without straining. As an example, in a recent production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* which I vocal coached, the performance space, although an indoor arena style, is known for being an acoustic black hole. The director was adamant in his pursuit to maintain the beautiful, film-like intimacy created by the cast in the rehearsal space, but could simply not hear a word the actors spoke when they got in the space. By awakening the nasal resonators and tightening the AES, one actor in particular (who struggles with far-back, denasalized sound) was able to adjust his vocal production level in only a fifteen-minute session. In his effort to lower his vocal pitch, per the director's instructions, the actor had brought the sound back into his body. By allowing him to raise the pitch slightly, he was able to nasalize the sound and fill the 250-seat house comfortably. Kristin Linklater, as well as other vocal pedagogues, has long suggested that the nasal resonators are the key to

amplifying the voice, but Estill work acknowledges that the effort is back in the vocal tract around the AES and does not simply rely on Velum position to initiate the change in air flow. This is just another example of EVTS taking a previously understood tenet of voice training, finding scientific research and expanding on the idea.

### **Oral Twang**

#### **The Recipe**

- Smooth True Vocal Fold Onset
- Retracted False Vocal Fold Position
- Thin True Vocal Fold Body Cover
- Tilted Thyroid Cartilage
- Vertical Cricoid Cartilage
- Narrow Aryepiglottic Sphincter
- High Larynx Height
- High Tongue Position
- High Velum
- Mid Jaw Height
- Mid Lips
- Relaxed Head & Neck
- Relaxed Torso

#### **What Does It Sound Like?**

Like the Nasalized Twang, this quality is uniquely brassy in sound. Unlike Nasalized Twang, the layman and even other trained singers and speakers often

misidentify it as nasalized. It requires narrowing the vocal tract even more than for nasalized twang, producing an even brighter tone, somewhat cartoony in nature. The sound is not sent through the nose at all, due to a high velum position, so it can be difficult to maintain without strain. Like Nasalized Twang, Oral Twang is used in country and folk music as well as musical theatre repertoire.

### **Benefits**

Like Nasalized Twang, the major benefit lies in its strident and bright quality. It carries across space, cutting through extraneous noise in an even sharper way than Nasalized Twang. Oral Twang helps in volume amplification as much if not more than Nasalized Twang.

### **Limitations**

While Nasalized Twang relies on the narrowness of the nasal cavity to keep the vocal tract small, Oral Twang relies on both a high velum and high tongue in order to be produced healthfully. Unfortunately, the muscularity required by the velum's high position can cause strain on the false vocal folds and even the true vocal folds as they seek to monitor air pressure in the tract. This physiological action is similar to that of swallowing and therefore can produce constriction. It should be noted that it is possible to breathe too deeply to maintain this sound. If this happens, the muscles controlling the expanding lungs and bronchi, may attempt to pull the larynx into a lower position, causing the false vocal folds to constrict as they fight for stability. Because of the high tongue placement necessary for the sound production, certain vowels are much easier to speak or

sing in Oral Twang, particularly vowels such as [i] which is naturally produced with less jaw height and a more lateral tongue position than darker vowels such as [o] and [ɑ].

### **Applications to Singing**

As previously stated, Oral Twang is often mistaken for Nasalized Twang. It requires more effort than Nasalized Twang, but the brilliant tone it produces is often worth it. Kristin Chenoweth, famous for her role as the bubbly Glinda in the hit musical *Wicked* often uses this quality to both sing and speak. Singers who can master this quality do have a few niche roles available, and many of the conditions present in Oral Twang are useful in other more common vocal recipes like belt and opera. Mastery of Nasalized Twang is often the first step in learning to produce oral twang properly.

### **Application to Speaking**

In my research of other stage voice pedagogies, I have not yet found a teacher who recognizes Oral Twang as a separate sound from Nasalized Twang, but having studied Estill Voice Training, I find that Oral Twang needs to be addressed in stage voice and speech, largely because it is many students' attractor state. As someone who grew up surrounded by the lateralized vowels of the Midwest, I got to drama school on the East Coast and was told that my voice was intensely forward and "nasal." For two years of actively studying Linklater technique, I attempted to reduce this perceived nasality through Linklater's resonance ladder. Time after time, however, I did not feel the vibrations in my nose. I could certainly send them there, but when I was focusing on teeth resonance, my teachers commented on the "nasal" quality of my tone. Frustration mounted as I attempted to explain that I was not sending the air through my nose. After studying EVTS, I now

know that I was involuntarily narrowing my AES in an attempt to focus the vibrations on my front teeth. Once I observed this common occurrence, I began to recognize it in my natural speaking voice which due to growing up as a member of a loud and lateral Midwestern family, had developed into a bright Oral Twang, not a nasalized one as was always assumed. Once I observed my narrow AES attractor state, I was then able to control when I wanted it to be activated and when I did not. This discovery has been personally empowering and in my understanding of stage voice pedagogy is unique unto EVTS.

In the past semester, I have worked with a number of students who are branded “nasal” from their first year, whom the acting faculty have charged the voice and speech faculty to “fix.” Estill Voice Training has given me the ability to help them make the same empowering discovery that I did. Because there is no aesthetic bias in EVTSS other than vocal health, it is so much easier to have these discussions with students who might otherwise feel attacked or frustrated by simply hearing the same terminology over and over again, with no clear results.

## **Opera**

### **The Recipe**

- Smooth True Vocal Fold Onset
- Retracted False Vocal Fold Position
- Thin True Vocal Fold Body Cover for Women/Thick True Vocal Fold Body Cover for Men
- Tilted Thyroid Cartilage

- Vertical Cricoid Cartilage
- Narrow Aryepiglottic Sphincter
- Low Larynx Height
- High or Compressed Tongue Position
- High Velum
- Mid Jaw Height
- Mid Lips
- Anchored Head & Neck
- Anchored Torso

### **What Does It Sound Like?**

One of the most easily recognized and named vocal qualities, Opera quality is distinctive even to the layman. According to Estill, Opera quality is an advanced quality actually functioning as a combination of the Speech, Sob and Twang varieties. In Opera quality, often one or two of these other qualities come to the forefront for a pitch or two depending on tone and context. It is the distinctive quality heard in Renée Fleming's rendition of the National Anthem at the 2014 Superbowl in opposition to the popular riffed up stylings more common prior to most sporting events of our time. It is the use of a high or compressed tongue and low larynx position that creates a darker sound, while the tilting of the thyroid may assist in the controlled wavering of pitch known as vibrato. Estillians still remain unsure about the cause of the vibrato phenomenon and detail that vibrato may in fact be a tremor produced by the larynx "being pulled in two directions: up for Twang (to tighten the AES) and down for Sob quality. The high Effort numbers... may account

for the vibrato associated with the quality, a shaking with effort” (Workbook 54). This theory is not dissimilar to Catherine Fitzmaurice’s voice work now becoming widely accepted in stage voice and speech academia, although Fitzmaurice’s work focuses on large muscle groups to activate the small muscles of the vocal tract.

In this quality, the vocal tract is as long as possible, allowing for the multiplication of vibrations as the voice bounces up the tract shattering on various resonators along the way. The anchoring of the head and neck is particularly useful in widening the vocal tract, as the narrowing of the AES and the lowering of the larynx position serve to lengthen the tract. By keeping the AES narrow, the voice is amplified with attainable effort levels that do not activate false vocal fold constriction. This perhaps explains why opera remained such a powerful musical medium in a world before electronic amplification as it easily soars over complex orchestration.

### **Benefits**

As previously stated, the Opera quality soars over orchestrations and cuts through noisy halls due to a lengthened vocal tract and a narrow AES. The sound produced is complex, both bright and dark, round and yet pointed. It is instantly recognized as “trained” or the more contemporary “legit.” The heaviness often associated with opera quality can easily be lifted by adjusting the TVF body cover, changing the TVF body cover from thin to stiff. This produces an innocent, airy tone that is still supported and rings with brilliance.

**Limitations**

Opera quality is quite strenuous to maintain considering the conditions placed upon multiple vocal tract structures at a time. This can cause strain for those not yet comfortable with manipulating the vocal structures. Just as an athlete must take time to make his muscles strong enough to perform the requirement of his sport, so must the practitioner who seeks to use Opera quality in either speaking or singing. Because of the low larynx position, singers reaching for top notes may go flat or speakers may not have required brightness making their voice seem monotone. By slightly adjusting the narrowness of the AES or allowing his or her larynx to freely “bounce” up and down instead of holding it down, the singer and speaker may achieve the hoped for result. If the voice cracks or dysphonia is experienced, there is a great chance that the Power level, or breath intake is too high for the task at hand. If that is the case, the singer or speaker, must adjust the amount of air s/he is taking in.

**Applications to Singing**

Obviously, this quality is easily applied to singing. The contemporary musical theatre artist must be at home singing a rock torch song one day, an up-tempo Gilbert and Sullivan piece the next, and a pop ballad the next. The beauty of the Estill Voice Training system is its ability to simplify and classify the basic recipes for each Quality in a way that is efficient and accessible to the average undergraduate musical theatre student. Instead of training in one vocal style as has been the expectation in years past, the student must be able to train in all styles at once in order to meet career demands. Although all opera technique from the past hundred plus years can hardly be distilled down into one recipe for



the vocal tract, Estill does offer a plausible solution for the average, contemporary, musical theatre performer. Also, intrinsic in the Opera quality recipe is the ability to teach a large group of students all at once. Certainly individual lessons are needed in order to deal with the specificities found in the voice of each participant, but the ability to have a basic Singing for the Actor class which covers not only fundamental theory, but also various vocal styles is a distinct benefit of the Estill Voice Training system. Once the student completes this class, the studio teacher has an effective and efficient way of working multiple styles in lessons without a large amount of remedial work.

### **Application to Speaking**

While the application may at first seem like a bit of a stretch, I posit that the Opera quality is the quality present in the voices of “classically trained” actors prior to the 1990’s. One has only to listen to John Barton’s *Playing Shakespeare* for a few minutes before one begins to equate the dulcet tones of actors Derek Jacobi and David Suchet with those of an opera singer. It is the tremor found in Katharine Hepburn’s signature Trans-Atlantic accent. It is also the style of sound production that may be still be used for many large, outdoor drama spaces today. It is my belief that it is the advent of film that has led to the demise of this now antiquated style of speaking. While highly emotive in quality, contemporary listeners often perceive a “phoniness” in this style of the Opera recipe to actors who are applying it to speaking. Personally I believe speaking in Opera quality does have uses today, whether on the outdoor drama stage or as the farcical Colonel Mustard in a summer stock repertory company production of *Clue*. After all, the repertory actor needs limitless options at his or her disposal.

## **Belt**

### **The Recipe**

- Smooth/Glottal True Vocal Fold Onset
- Retracted False Vocal Fold Position
- Thick True Vocal Fold Body Cover
- Vertical Thyroid Cartilage
- Tilted Cricoid Cartilage
- Narrow Aryepiglottic Sphincter
- High Larynx Height
- High Tongue Position
- High Velum
- Mid Jaw Height
- Mid Lips
- Anchored Head & Neck
- Anchored Torso

### **What Does It Sound Like?**

This is perhaps the most coveted of all of the sound qualities discussed thus far as it is widely assumed that not all voices have the ability to make this sound healthfully. Jo Estill's pioneering work in this field has proven that anyone and everyone can make this signature sound if they know the right ingredients. Jo Estill described the Belt as "Happy yelling set to music" (Level Two- Chicurel). This sound is largely associated with musical theatre, but is used in most other forms of music including pop, gospel, R&B, country and

many other styles from all over the globe. From Christina Aguilera to Natalie Weiss to Ethel Merman, the Belt quality is utilized by nearly all contemporary musical styles.

### **Benefits**

The main benefit of Belt quality is its signature sound, which is inherently strong, loud and joyful. Its loudness has been harnessed to project across crowded music halls and its strength has been used in many a triumphant moment on the musical theatre stage. As Estill's Level Two workbook proclaims, "Belting is an exciting sound—partly because it requires total commitment on the part of the singer, and partly because of the risks involved...There is no substitute. The audience always knows" (Level Two 66). The configuration that is key to this quality is the tilting of the Cricoid cartilage. When the Cricoid cartilage (the bottom part of the larynx) is tilted it allows the TVF body cover to be even thicker than usual, giving them more surface area on which to create vibrations. As the Level Two Workbook describes in detail, "This allows for a very long closed phase (>70% of each cycle), with an increase in subglottal air pressure during that closed phase that leads to high amplitude sound waves" (Level Two 66).

Because of its prevalence in musical literature, it is necessary that every vocalist, no matter their specialization, have at least one or two songs showcasing this style in their repertoire. Because of its use of glottal onsets, it is ideal for communicating dramatic moments to the audience, because clear diction is amplified. While not always the case, there is generally a decrease in vibrato in the tone produced in belt, which also aids in clarity and diction.

**Limitations**

An extraordinarily high level of effort is needed to produce the Belt quality, similar to the Opera quality. Because of the high effort level, it is common that one or more of the structure conditions will become unbalanced and, without swift observation and correction, phonotrauma at the True Vocal Folds is likely. This is perhaps why the Belt style of singing has long been thought to be unhealthy by singing teachers. If a teacher and student are skilled at recognizing the correct balance of each configuration, belting is harmless. One of the most common misconceptions about belting is that it requires a large amount of air. On the contrary, taking in a large breath is actually counter-productive to the vocalist as the subglottal pressure will be multiplied to a level that even vocal folds in their thickest state cannot withstand. This “overblowing” causes temporary dysphonia (hoarseness) caused by dryness of the TVF at best, or vocal nodules (essentially blisters on the TVF themselves) at worst which require surgery.

Belting is also not appropriate for all songs at all times. Rarely is a song sung in belt quality for the entirety of the song and rarely does an actor yell through an entire scene effectively. Belt should be reserved for the climactic or particularly dramatic moments, otherwise it loses its potency. Teaching a student when to use belt effectively is part of the EVTS step of Artistry, which comes *after* the basic technique of establishing Craft.

**Applications to Singing**

As previously discussed, the Belt quality is no longer merely a nice zinger to have “in one’s back pocket,” or even a rare specialization. It is a *requirement* for all singers, male and female, of all genres. Like the Opera quality, EVTS makes it easy to explain the

highlights and important features of Belt quality while in a large classroom setting, allowing for more rigorous, individualized work in the studio later.

Because it requires an extremely different “recipe” than Opera quality, which is the quality most “trained” singers use, and because of the various legends surrounding effective belting which further mysticize the quality, people are often resistant to the Estill prescribed Belt quality. I know I was. Singers who have been trained to sing with a lowered larynx at all times will have difficulty with this quality, as will singers who are accustomed to the idea of equating effort level with breath support. Even basic diction can become a challenge as plosive consonants and fricatives require aspirate onsets, which can result in the “overblowing” of the TVF, activating the FVF who constrict to assist. This causes an unpleasant crack.

Cracking may also occur when sustaining a specific pitch, especially a high one. As the pitch and power demands for belters become higher and higher turning belters into the affectionately termed “Screlters” of contemporary pop/rock musical theatre, it becomes increasingly important for the belter to be able to blend their registers. Just like a car has to shift gears as it climbs a hill, so the voice seeks to settle into a comfortable gear. Usually this can be adjusted by reminding the student about the effort level of head and neck, and torso anchors. By focusing on these large muscle groups, the vocalist is able maneuver that stretch of vocal road without stalling out.

Because Belt is so distinctive, it is often a challenge to blend the loud, strident Belt quality in with lower and higher pitches where the Belt quality is neither needed nor as accessible. Often belters are told to “send the sound through the nose” to push accessible

pitches higher. While that does work for some voices, EVTS focuses on the active tilting of the Cricoid cartilage, and the assumption that breath support may be too high. From personal experience as a singer, I can attest to the difference this made in my ability to belt in my higher register. For example, the higher the note I wanted to belt, the more breath I frantically swallowed. Once I discovered that I needed to actually exhale before belting instead of taking bigger and bigger breaths, I was amazed at the power I found.

Most important for singers who use this quality is the uncompromising retraction of the false vocal folds. Like Opera, the complexity of the recipe and the high effort level required will make many vocalists engage their FVF out of fear or frustration. This must not happen, as it is how damage most frequently occurs! In my studio, I find good belly laugh is the best way to practice retracting the FVF and relieve excess tension in the vocal tract.

### **Application to Speaking**

Belting has numerous applications to stage voice and speech. Tilting the Cricoid cartilage is the paramount configuration I use with my students struggling to project, as it adds volume nearly effortlessly. I have also found what seems to be a correlation between the tilted cricoid cartilage and the students' improved jaw height. Instantly, they open their jaw further without strain and the sound bounces out of them. When working in a stage space without electronic amplification, the use of the Belt comes in very handy.

Intrinsic in the Estill-style teaching of the belt quality is the image of an Italian grandmother shouting down to her granddaughter, aptly named Francesca, calling her to the house for supper, “ Ay, Francesca!” Phonetically this transcription reads [e

fɹæntʃeskə]. The placement of the initial call of [e] is repeated at the emphasized syllable of Francesca's name and the voice naturally arcs up to it and falls back down with ease.

While Twang (both oral and nasal) are just as loud as belting, belting does not have social connotation (at least in America) that Twang does. It is generally more aesthetically pleasing and easier to listen to and is therefore easily utilized in large theatre spaces.

A strong foundation in the Belt quality comes in handy when teaching the vocal extremes of battle cries and screams. If the students have mastered how to yell healthfully, half the battle is won. All that must be added is some attention to the onset and offsets of the sound, a siren or two, and perhaps a uvular trill to add the goosebump factor. Once students have mastered the compulsory figures and have learned the basic qualities or vocal recipes, the sky is truly the limit. Using the earlier baking metaphor, students are now able to build the perfect confectionary dessert for any occasion, combining cake and frosting flavors with ease. The Craft is learned, if not mastered, and the student actor can move on to Artistry and Performance Magic. By understanding all of the vocal qualities, the vocalist is prepared to work healthfully in truly any environment.

## CHAPTER 4 Progression into Practice

Now that the reader has acquired a basic summary of the foundational principles intrinsic to the Estill Voice Training system including the compulsory figures and basic recipes, it is necessary to lay out a plan for integrating EVTS into the training program of an average undergraduate conservatory housed within a liberal arts university. The beauty of Estill work is that it “plays well with others” and complements many other voice and speech pedagogies for the stage, including but not limited to, Linklater, Fitzmaurice, Rodenburg and Knight/Thompson Voice and Speechwork. In order to narrow the scope of this proposal, I will present a plan seeking to combine the voice and speech methodologies of Kristin Linklater (Voice), Patsy Rodenburg (Text Analysis) and Dudley Knight/Phil Thompson (Speech-work) using Jo Estill’s voice-work as a foundation. It should be noted early that an emphasis on the relationship between the whole body and the voice is useful for most students; therefore, much of the foundational work will always include some sort of voice and body work influenced by Arthur Lessac, Catherine Fitzmaurice, F.M. Alexander and Moshe Feldenkrais. It is my belief that there is much to be explored with Estill work and Laban movement styles as well as with the Michael Chekov style of acting training and hope to research this connection in the future. For those not familiar with the basic tenets of the pedagogies explored in the above paragraph, I have included a brief description of each pedagogy in the Appendix.

In order to show the practicality and efficiency afforded to both student and teacher by using the Estill Voice Training system, I will focus on a discussion of the voice and



speech progression at the fictional conservatory housed within a liberal arts university, not dissimilar to the program at Virginia Commonwealth University. The progression will be based upon a two-year, four-semester program designed to work with students in their sophomore and junior year. It should not be assumed that many of the students who enter this program will have prior theatre education or even experience. The goal of the administration is to produce performers who are competitive in the theatre Meccas of the United States including New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago alongside graduates from independent conservatories. Energy and time are, therefore, of the essence!

### **Year One- Workshop Foundations**

It is imperative that, in the first year of training, students begin to learn to approach text with imagination and playfulness. While many students use their freshman year to adjust to life living away from home and take required core classes in both Theatre and General Education, a year without prioritizing voice and movement skills under-serves the student who seeks to be competitive with other conservatories. To solve this issue, I propose two required weekend workshops for all first-year students in which both movement and voice faculty have the opportunity to teach the very basics of their field in a 10-hour workshop early in both semesters of the first year. In the appendix, please find proposed outlines for the workshops, complete with activities. It is in these first workshops that students will be introduced to the foundational work in both voice and movement. They will establish an individualized warm-up regimen, which is both efficient and effective, and will be expected by their acting teachers to carry over the newfound ideas of vocal production and movement into their acting classes.

These workshops serve to introduce a student to the rigors of a conservatory program early on, and to give them practical tools such as warm-ups to use as they continue in their work at the university. For the voice teacher, the workshop functions as the student's introduction to traditional voice work like Alexander body work, Linklater vocal exploratory work and Rodenburg's three circles of energy of being. The vocal awareness gained from these basic exercises can then be filtered into Estill Voice Training terminology, giving the students a common vocabulary for future work in the sophomore level class and in the performances in which they may be cast as freshman. The sooner the student has a deeper, more specific understanding of vocal structure, the less remedial work will need to be done in the first few weeks of the sophomore year. With the support of the acting teachers, some vocal and alignment habits may be eradicated before the student even steps foot in the vocal studio.

### **Second Year- Develop Craft**

In the second year, the students must begin to train in earnest. Owing to the two-semester-per-year model, most departments choose to divide the first year of full-time voice training into two semesters with the first focusing on Voice and the second Semester focusing on Speech. In my effort to avoid student compartmentalization, I strongly suggest tackling the issues found at the foundational level of voice and speech simultaneously, establishing common ground. In order to make the educational process as holistic as possible, it makes more sense not to divide and conquer. With that in mind, I have developed a single, albeit two-part, course designed for use in the second year of undergraduate study, establishing a voice and speech foundation in the first semester using

a synthesis of Knight-Thompson Speechwork and Estill Voice Training to build basic technical vocal production skills, and utilize the work of more traditional pedagogues such as Patsy Rodenburg and Kristin Linklater.

### **Estill and Knight-Thompson**

In my quest to find pedagogies which the Estill Voice Training complements I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the Speechwork developed by Dudley Knight and Phil Thompson is a nearly perfect fit in both teaching style and goals for the student. Inherent in Knight/Thompson Speechwork is the supposition that a skeptical approach is required when assigning standards to something so personal and individualized as one's speech. Just as Estill was suspect of the aesthetic biases existing in vocal productions, so also was the late Mr. Knight. In his article simply entitled "Standards," he made a case for the eradication of the popular standard accents affecting speech in favor of a somewhat fuzzy term he called "intelligibility." "Setting intelligibility as our standard means to focus our training strategies on the development of an expanded repertoire of diverse speech skills—as diverse as the accents and languages we all, as humans, speak. In so doing, we not only meet the minimum "standard," we elevate the art" (Knight). Philosophically then, it is clear that Thompson and Estill are perhaps two sides to the same coin with Estill's only bias being "vocal health" and Knight's "intelligibility."

But do the philosophies line up in practice? This was my question as I researched, and I believe that they do. Just as EVTS relies on creating "vocal recipes" by manipulating individual structures of the vocal tract, so also does Knight-Thompson Speechwork rely on the "speech recipes" put forth by the linguist creators of International Phonetic Alphabet as

way to efficiently teach the articulation necessary for intelligible speech. Students of Knight-Thompson Speechwork are able to make any sound, not just American phonemes, listed on the IPA chart, simply by understanding the speech recipe used. For instance, the voiced, bilabial plosive is produced by allowing the true vocal folds to vibrate as a stream of air rushes past them, but is blocked by the closed lips and upon release creates the explosive [b] sound. The other component that both the Estill and Knight-Thompson systems share is a heavy emphasis on the isolation of anatomical structures. Because of the similarities found in the practice of the pedagogies Estill Voice Training and Knight-Thompson Speechwork are a remarkable pair.

Estill Voice Training identifies three levels of performance study. The first step is the Craft, the second is Artistry and the third is Magic. The supposition by Estill was that if a performer's Craft and understanding of technique was solid, it would be easier to place Artistic choices on top of that foundation. If both the Craft and Magic were well-aligned, then the Magic or metaphysical component would be more likely to fall into place. If, in the first semester of the first year, students really receive a strong technical foundation, their voices will develop quicker and they can spend their third year focusing on making strong, artistic choices with strong and flexible voices. By the end of the semester, it is expected that the students will have an understanding of Estill's Compulsory Figures for Voice Control, depth of knowledge concerning IPA and will have a built-in awareness of each student's vocal attractor states, as they apply to speech and diction. Through Knight-Thompson Speechwork, the student will also better comprehend the choices he or she must make in personal speech patterns in order to adapt to any situation or code-switch.

**Year Two Semester Two**

Now that the students have a full semester of measurable Estill and Knight-Thompson technique under their belts, they are better prepared to further discover the depth of their own voices. In this semester, students will explore their voices' outer limits and engage in thoughtful text analysis in order to bring playwright's intention to life. The class will explore a balanced, task-oriented body, breath, voice connection in order to better sustain characters that are larger than life. While in the semester before students learned to engage with the basic structures of their voice on a scientific level, this semester they will begin exploring a more psychological or even spiritual plane. As in the semester before, the only biases that exist are for vocal health and intelligibility. Students will utilize the work of Patsy Rodenburg and Kristin Linklater as they seek out the vocal heights and depths available to them. The EVTS foundation that students have retained will be integral for the vocal extremes unit.

**Year Three- Exploring Artistry**

The junior year at any conservatory program is reputed to be the most difficult. While the second year of voice and speech study is designed to be appropriately rigorous, with the right level of demands in the first year of the voice and speech progression and an appropriate emphasis on foundational technique, the third year should not be arduously more difficult than the previous. The emphasis of this year of teaching lies appropriately in the Artistic circle of the Estill model. Students will be assessed upon not only their

competency of basic voice and speech skills but also on the artistic integrity of their choices as they apply them to specific types of text.

The first semester will focus on the vocal challenges that lie in the study of texts in verse, specifically Shakespeare. The course schedule will utilize Patsy Rodenburg's approach to heightened text but will include some technical suggestions from Estill voice work and will also utilize IPA transcriptions of monologues and scenes produced in order to be certain of intelligibility and in order to keep IPA skills sharp. Again, the emphasis will be placed on using the foundational technique to make smart, artistic vocal choices.

The second semester will focus on developing character accents and dialects. Quality not quantity will be paramount in this work; however, two styles of dialect acquisition will be utilized. Because of the Knight-Thompson foundation established in the first year, students should be able to develop well-formed dialects using kinesthetic, aural and oral cues by listening to native speakers. In addition to this style of dialect acquisition, students will also learn a slightly more traditional approach to dialect acquisition that is "quicker and dirtier" than the Knight-Thompson style using Paul Meier's dialect acquisition materials. Students will then have the option to choose which style is more beneficial for them and will put their skills to work in a final project.

### **Estill and Musical Theatre**

Considering that the Estill Voice Training model is used in Musical Theatre programs world-wide and is gaining in popularity, it seems only fitting to mention how EVTS might be integrated seamlessly into a Singing for the Actor class, if it is not used in the entire Musical Theatre curriculum. My colleague, Valerie Accetta, has previously

published on this idea, and interested parties should consult her thesis, *Singing for the Actor: an Interdisciplinary Approach to Musical Theatre Training*.

The connection between Estill and musical theatre runs deep, largely because of its reputation for healthful belting, a musical theatre signature. If indeed our desire as instructors is to produce well-rounded individuals who are capable of adapting to whatever job available, it is clear that every performer needs to be able to survive a musical theatre call. This is where Estill can help. Even those who are not natural singers respond to the kinesthetic and visual cues layered into EVTS. Because the foundational techniques of Estill are covered in the second year, students in their third year can take this course truly hitting the ground running with only a few adjustments.

Again, this style of learning avoids the compartmentalization trap that so many undergraduate training programs encourage. It is my strong belief that musical theatre calls for the same acting, movement and voice techniques as does “straight” theatre. By uniting the voice curriculum the progression becomes clearer to the student and further strengthens instructors and faculty.

## CHAPTER 5 Conclusions

Obviously due to the longevity and specific conditions required for the implementation of this Voice and Speech progression, only assumptions with a healthy dose of hope can be made in conclusion to this proposal. Although the number of Certified Master Teachers of the Estill Voice Training System continues to grow year by year, the likelihood of an entire music and theatre department making the radical change to EVTS is a rather Utopian ideal. With that in mind, I can only cling to my belief that EVTS “plays well with others” and complements any of the currently widely accepted voice and speech pedagogies.

The Estill Voice Training system has been personally life-altering, and I have no doubt I will continue to use it in my teaching. As I mature as a teacher and performer, I may find its limits or may prefer to combine it with other pedagogies than the ones explored in this proposal. For the moment, I believe in the efficacy of this style of teaching vocal production, synthesizing science and art in order to appeal to the broadest array of learners possible, whether they be aural, oral, visual or kinesthetic learners. Without an individualized understanding of the how and the why in vocal production, the true mysteries of the voice will never be solved or even defined. As a voice and speech teacher, whether in the undergraduate classroom or my personal studio, I feel honored to take up Estill’s cause and join the ranks of teachers excited to demystify the voice and replace that mystery with knowledge.



In the future, I have many research interests concerning Estill Voice Training. I am considering eventually pursuing an advanced degree in Speech Pathology to further understand the scientific complexities related to health and the human voice. The compatibility of Fitzmaurice training and EVTS also holds interest to me. Other areas of interest include pursuing the connection that may lie between Knight-Thompson Speechwork and Estill Voice Training. I also believe that Estill has much to lend the world of accent and dialect acquisition. In my conversations with Dr. Steven Chicurel I understand that there is currently exciting research being done in Scotland on the relation of Estill voice qualities, dialects developed and their relation to land mass structure. For instance, the lateral oral twang of my Midwestern family makes sense bearing in mind my family's multigenerational, flat-land farm. In the former Black Swamp of Ohio, with no mountains off which to bounce higher and lower pitches, our family accent has developed into a laser-like twang with the occasional belt for emphasis. Add in the high and lateral tongue position observed by Knight-Thompson Speechwork and a synthesized hybrid of accent acquisition is born.

A finite number of my colleagues have carried Estill's work into academia, possibly owing to the fact that many of the Estill Voice Training instructors work largely in the private studio sector. Year by year, though, more academic institutions and conservatories are beginning to recognize the undeniable results Estill produces. While the University of Central Florida, Mars Hill College and Motherwell College in Scotland remain the three licensed Estill educational affiliates, the University of Michigan, the Ohio

State University and University of Pittsburgh each include instructors who are teaching Estill based technique. In only a few years, Estill Voice Training may rise to new heights.

Certainly more research must be done to discover whether the proposal for a synthesized voice and speech program I have presented would be successful, but I am confident in the efficacy found in a foundation in Estill Voice Training. I look forward to putting my theories to the test on future faculty teams and having the opportunity to partner with both acting and movement faculty members in creating a truly comprehensive approach to voice and speech that prepares students to make healthful, playful and bold choices. One day I look forward to developing a truly holistic voice and speech curriculum, keeping an eye on the horizon by testing new methodologies, an eye in the rearview mirror questioning dogma, one foot in the classroom celebrating student individuality and the other foot firmly planted on the boards keeping my own performance skills alive. After all, the role of both actor and pedagogue is to celebrate balance and duality in all things.

Literature Cited

## VCU Libraries

**Comment:** The reference section begins with a cover sheet headed Bibliography or List of References or Literature Cited, or other heading as determined by the discipline. It is centered on the page without punctuation.

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APPENDIX A

Voice and Speech Progression Course Plan

**Freshman Voice Workshops**

**Workshop One- Developing an Effective Voice and Body Warm-Up**

A 16-hour workshop focusing on creating individualized voice and body warm-ups for the beginner divided into two days. The goal of the workshop is not to cover each technique fully, but to bring an awareness of the student's voice and body to the forefront of their minds. It is imperative that the culture created in the classroom is one of both joy and discipline facilitated by the instructors. Most vocal games are assembled from "The Complete Voice and Speech Workout" by Janet Rodgers.

**Workshop Objectives:**

- Introduce the student to the integration of mind, body and voice required for the actor.
- Assist the student in devising an individualized and holistic voice and body warm-up.
- Introduce the student to the foundational skills voice and body skills, including techniques developed by F.M. Alexander, Kristin Linklater, Rudolf Laban, Patsy Rodenburg and Jo Estill.

**First Year Workshop 1 Day One****9 am- Welcome by Faculty and Select Upperclassmen**

Establish workshop environment as one of playfulness and discipline. Introduce the basic tenets of a good voice and body warm up: Body, Breath, Voice, Articulation, Acting.

**9:30 am- The Name Game**

Icebreaker

**10 am- Yoga Fundamentals**

Introduce students to the basics of lengthening and conditioning of muscles in a safe, but introverted environment.

**11 am- Alexander Technique and Hands-On Bodywork**

Provide cursory understanding of Alexander technique alignment work while with hands-on work assisting the students in recognizing habits.

**12:00 pm- Statue Freeze Tag**

Incorporate the understanding of Alexander alignment just discovered with play.

**12:30 pm- Break for Lunch****1:30 pm- Call and Response Gossip Hoing game**

Reestablish community after lunch break as well as introducing the student to the fine line that exists between speaking and singing.

**2:00 pm- The “Hey!” Breath Exercise**

Build awareness to the amount of breath support required for specific tasks.

**2:30 pm- Linklater Whispered Counting Breathing Exercises**

Assist students in finding the connection between breath and body.

**3:00 pm- Laban Movement Work**

Introduce Eight Laban Efforts and encourage integration of voice work.

**5:00 pm- End of Day One.**

**First Year Workshop 1 Day Two**

**9:00 am- Day One Review**

**9:30 am- Estill Voice Warm Up and Basic Anatomy**

Explore selective compulsory figures including Larynx Height, Thyroid and Cricoid Cartilage Tilt, AES narrowing and Velum control.

**11:00 am- Consonant Conga**

Reestablish community while exploring rhythm and pitch playfully while introducing articulators.

**11:30 am- Knight-Thompson Basic Anatomy, Face Isolations and Gurning**

Stretch and bring awareness to muscles of the face, mouth and neck which aid in articulation.

**12:30 pm- Tongue Twister Explosion**

Put newfound voice and articulation skills to work by applying to text.

**1:00 pm- Break for Lunch**

**2:00 pm- Rodenburg's Circles of Energy**



Bring acting basics to the forefront of student's mind using 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Circle exercises.

Helps students recognize basic physical and vocal habits and to work together.

**3:30 pm- Open Scenes with Given Circumstances and Relationships From a Hat**

Encourage student creativity by giving students open scenes to tackle paired with random given circumstances and relationships to be explored. Side-coaching by faculty essential.

**4:00 pm- Warm-Up Activities Brain-Storming Session**

Students and teachers swap exercises that combine the five components of a warm up (Body, Breath, Voice, Articulation and Acting) and students write down their individualized warm-ups utilizing their favorite exercises or tongue twisters.

**4:30 pm- Student Presentation of Warm-Ups**

Students present individualized warm-ups as faculty observe and side coach.

**5:00 pm- End of Day 2**

**Voice and Text Workshop - Developing an Effective Voice and Body Warm-Up****Workshop Description:**

A 10-hour workshop focusing on deepening vocal awareness for first year students to better prepare them for their sophomore year. While it is designed to expose students to the work they will continue in their sophomore year, it is a cursory study focusing mostly on healthful vocal production and the basics of text analysis. It is imperative that the culture created in the classroom is one of both joy and discipline facilitated by the instructors. Students are required to bring an imagery filled poem that is not yet memorized on which to work.

**Workshop Objectives:**

- Introduce the student to the integration of mind, body and voice required for the actor.
- Introduce the student to the foundational skills voice and body skills, including techniques developed by Patsy Rodenburg, Kristin Linklater, Rudolf Laban and Jo Estill.
- Emphasize basic vocal and body health and hygiene for the university student.
- Utilize newfound text analysis skills and apply to text

**Voice and Text Workshop- Day 1****9:00 am- Voice and Body Warm Up**

A basic thirty minute warm-up designed to review the exercises discussed in the workshop a semester before. Students will be responsible for warming up on their own the next day.

**10:00 am- Discussion of Voice Issues Brainstorming Session**

Students are encouraged to make observations about their voice since being at the University. They fill out a questionnaire with basic observations and are encouraged to ask any questions on the back. The broadest of these questions will be discussed in the Vocal Health workshop the following day.

**11:00 am- Literary Terms Defined**

Discovery and defining of literary terms including consonance, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia, antithesis, metaphor, simile, adjectives, adverbs, objective words, syntax, lists and more.

**12:30 pm- Break for Lunch****1:30 pm- Punctuation Dance**

Developed as a preface to the Rodenburg thought exercise, I developed this exercise as a way to engage and educate students on the importance of punctuation in literature.

**2:00 pm- Rodenburg Thought Exercises**

Develop strategies for conveying energy from thought to thought, not line to line.

**3:30 pm- Estill Voice Introduction**

Introduce students to selected compulsory figures and apply to text.

**5:00 pm- End of Day One. Students are to learn poem by heart by the next day.**

**Voice and Text Workshop Day 2**

**1:00 pm- Estill Voice Introduction Continued**

More compulsory figure review.

**2:30 pm- Vocal Health Discussion**

Vocal Health strategies are discussed and demonstrated.

**3:30 pm- Students Vocal Warm Up**

Students warm up on their own with side-coaching.

**4:00 pm- Poem Presentation**

Students present short pieces and receive feedback.

**5:00 pm- End of Day 2**

**Year 2 Semester 1****Foundations of Voice and Speech- 1****Course Description**

This course will serve as the foundation for the actor's voice and speech skills arsenal.

The course will explore the fundamentals of vocal production as observed by Jo Estill and students will learn to name and manipulate structures of the vocal tract in order to produce limitless sounds in a healthful manner. The course will also supplement this work with Dudley Knight and Phil Thompson's *Speechwork*, which will be used to further examine the space and muscles that shape sound. Once the actor has a firm grasp on the physical anatomy that supports healthful vocal production, the actor will begin to categorize the sounds of human speech narrowing our focus to the phonemes used specifically in American speech. At the end of the semester, students put their newfound skills to work as they apply them to text.

**Text(s)**

*The Estill Voice Training Level One Workbook*- Estill Voice International

*Speaking with Skill*- Dudley Knight

**Course Outcomes**

The student who successfully completes this course will:

- Be able to name, and successfully manipulate the movement of the vocal structures that shape sound in the vocal tract in the Estill Voice Training system and using Knight-Thompson *Speechwork*.

- Demonstrate an excellent understanding linguist’s categorization of phonemes by their placement in the International Phonetic Alphabet charts.
- Hone voice and speech communication skills with the goals of total intelligibility and uncompromising vocal health.

### **Grading**

It should be noted that this class is designed specifically for the actor and while the technical skills gained are important, the resulting performance is rendered ineffective if the actor is connected to authentic emotion. Although the focus will shift to emotional connection in future semesters, it is important to remember that only students who use the skills gained to embody fully realized characters can expect to earn an A in this class.

A	The student exhibits an excellent grasp of course outcomes including the creation of a fully embodied character and storyteller.
B	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes including the creation of a fully embodied character and storyteller.
C	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, but does not create a fully realized character.
F	The student does not exhibit an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, nor create a fully realized character.

### **Assignments**

#### **Attractor States Assignment**

This assignment serves as an in-depth analysis of the vocal habits in the student's speaking voice as observed by the student in the first two weeks of practice. Three pages (double-spaced) or 1500 words of structured observations in addition to the Estill Voice Training Worksheet completed for your attractor states. You should also include specific goals for your voice by the end of this semester and beyond. This assignment should be attached to your Blog created for this course.

### **Isolations Image Assignment**

For this assignment students will take pictures of themselves executing each of the isolations (lips, cheeks, tongue) on Knight pgs. 47-61.. These goofy pictures will be posted to the student's Blog created for this course.

### **Text and Article Reflections**

Every week students are required to either vlog or blog about the readings from the week. Each blog post must be 300 words and each vlog must be no more than 3 minutes, and each must include at least two quotes from the texts assigned. They are due every Sunday at 11:59:00 pm.

### **Weekly Quizzes**

Each week there will be a quiz or test scheduled to test skills learned from the week before. Topics range from anatomy to IPA to voice quality recognition.

### **Written Midterm and Final**

A comprehensive vocal anatomy and IPA skills test will be given as a Midterm and a Final Exam.

### **Outlandish Talent Contest- Midterm Performance**

In the Knight Thompson Speechwork, students will have explored the borders of Outlandia and IPA skills required for Omnish in class. They will be cordially invited to an Omnish Talent Contest. Contestants may sing their favorite song, slam some poetry, or give an inspirational speech in their native Omnish tongue. A winner will be crowned at the end of the contest and will earn a special prize. Time and energy outside of class must be expended in this assignment as it serves as the Performance section of the Midterm. The point is to not only have fun, but use the actor's voice and speech skills to make the audience feel something.

### **Jabberwocky Final Performance**

A partner assignment, each student is required to create a theatre piece using the text in Lewis Carroll's "The Jabberwocky." Use of theatre conventions including costumes and props is encouraged to bring the poem to life in a creative way. Students will be graded on the range of voice exhibited as well as intelligibility of speech. Although group participation is an important part of the grading process, each actor's individual skills will be assessed independently.

### **Course Outline**

Week 1- Anatomy Basics

Week 2- Anatomy Basics + Isolations and Gurning

Week 3- Estill Figures

Week 4- Estill Figures

Week 5- Estill Figure Review

Week 6- Outlandish and Obstruents



Week 7- Obstruents and Omnish

Week 8- Midterm and Fall Break

Week 9- Writing the American Consonants

Week 10- Sound to Word and Vowels

Week 11- Writing the American Vowels

Week 12- American Diphthongs, Diphthongs of R, Triphthongs

Week 13- Review

Week 14- In class work on “Jabberwocky” project and Final Exam Review

Week 15- Written Final Exam and Performance

**Year Two Semester Two****Foundations of Voice and Speech II- Emotion and Text****Course Description**

Now that the actor has laid the foundation of healthful and intelligible voice and speech skills, s/he is ready to access the emotional complexities found within the human voice. In this course, the actor will learn to discover depth of meaning within texts and will begin to explore the smart artistic choices the actor must make. Over this semester-long course, the classroom ensemble will stretch the limits of their voice, body and imagination using techniques developed by Kristin Linklater and Patsy Rodenburg to breathe life into text. The skills gained from last semester will also be put to work as the actors seeks to find emotional specificity along with range. The learning style will be different than last semester and students are reminded to keep an open mind as they learn new skills.

**Text(s)**

Course Pack including articles from Patsy Rodenburg's *The Second Circle* and *The Actor Speaks* and Kristin Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice*

**Course Outcomes**

The student who successfully completes this course will:

- Possess the voice and speech skills to create expressive, fresh and interesting theatre with the goals of total intelligibility and uncompromising vocal health.
- Develop an individual system of daily vocal practice to strengthen the emotional and physical range required to play dramatic characters using a synthesis of the Linklater progression and Estill Voice Training System.

- Apply Patsy Rodenburg's text analysis techniques to text in order to create dynamic performances.

### **Grading**

This course is a continuation of Foundations of Voice and Speech and it is expected that the foundational voice and speech skills learned last semester will carry over into this semester with an emphasis always on vocal health and intelligibility.

A	The student exhibits an excellent grasp of course outcomes including the integration of foundational voice and speech skills.
B	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes including the integration of foundational voice and speech skills.
C	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, but does not effectively integrate foundational voice and speech skills.
F	The student does not exhibit an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, nor effectively integrate foundational voice and speech skills.

### **Assignments**

#### **Voice Blog- Journal**

Just as last semester utilized a blog/vlog system, each student will be required in this class to maintain a weekly journal of progress. The student is encouraged to record sessions in class in order to be able to review them later. Each week a 500-word post describing the fresh discoveries made in the week's in-class and at-home work will be due. These journal entries are due each Sunday at 11:59:00 pm.

**Voice Blog- Article Discussion**

Each week students are required to post at least one article or video story illustrating a new and interesting concept in the world of linguistics, vocal production or acting and post a brief explanation of its importance to the world of voice and speech. If the student is in need of ideas, the instructor may be able to give suggestions.

Each week students are also required to discuss these article entries by posting on two classmate's blogs. Each post must be at least 300 words in length and must cite the article or video story. These posts are due no later than Sunday at 11:59:00 pm. In addition, the student is responsible for notifying the instructor by emailing a hyperlink of each response.

**Literary Terms Test**

This test, given early in the semester, will ensure that all students understand the basic literary terms and poetic devices necessary for text analysis.

**Voice and Speech Scores**

For all performances voice and speech scores of text including IPA transcriptions, Estill Voice Qualities used and literary terms will be required.

**Midterm Performance- Library Poetry Performance**

The theme for this assignment for this section will be poems about Nature. The instructor strongly suggests poetry pre-dating 1950. Each student will choose a poem and will perform it for their classmates from all sections and for invited guests at the local library as a kick-off for their Spring fundraiser.

### **Final Performance- 90 Second Audition Package**

In preparation for Sophomore assessments and the more rigorous acting training of the Junior year, students will develop a 90 Second Audition “package.” Students will choose two contrasting characters from two contrasting pieces of dramatic literature and will apply not only voice and speech skills to them, but are also expected to bring in the work they have developed in movement and acting classes thus far as well.

### **Course Outline**

Week 1- Linklater- The Spine and Breathing Awareness

Week 2- Linklater- The Touch of Sound and Freeing Vibrations

Week 3- Linklater- Freeing the Channel- Jaw and Tongue and Soft Palate

Week 4- Linklater- The Spine and the Channel and Breathing Gym

Week 5- Text Analysis

Week 6- Text Analysis and Poetry Workday

Week 7- Nature Poetry Workday and Midterm Poetry Performance

Week 8- (Spring Break)

Week 9- Linklater- Resonating Ladder- Chest, Mouth, Teeth, Sinus, Nasal, and Dome

Week 10- Linklater- Basement to Attic

Week 11- Rodenburg- Resonance, Range and Speech

Week 12- Rodenburg- Voice and Speech Meet Word and Text

Week 13- Review

Week 14- Final Performance Workdays

Week 15- Final Performance

**Year 3 Semester 1****Advanced Voice and Speech- Heightened Text****Course Description**

Now that the student has solid foundation in voice and speech skills including vocal production, diction and text analysis, s/he is ready to tackle heightened text by playwrights like Shakespeare. This course, designed to follow Patsy Rodenburg's approach to heightened text, will assist the actor in deciphering the meaning in blank verse and archaic language, demystifying some of the most popular roles of all time. A healthful and intelligible voice is integral to the production of Shakespeare's larger-than-life characters, so a reminder of the foundational Estill and Knight-Thompson techniques will help the actor hit the ground running. The access to range and imagination developed last semester working with the Linklater Progression and Patsy Rodenburg's textual analysis will become paramount in this semester. This semester will be particularly rigorous with a midterm performance of two contrasting Shakespeare monologues and a final performance including one monologue and one scene from each student. The students who complete this course successfully will find they are prepared to work confidently with this style of text.

**Required Text(s)**

Patsy Rodenburg's *Speaking Shakespeare*

David and Ben Crystal's *Shakespeare's Words*

Access to a copy of the Arden Shakespeare

**Suggested Text(s)**

Rhoda Silverbush's *Speak the Speech*

**Course Outcomes**

The student who successfully completes this course will:

- Possess the voice and speech skills to create expressive, fresh and interesting theatre with the goals of total intelligibility and uncompromising vocal health.
- Successfully design an individualized strategy for tackling verse work.
- Develop four fully realized, layered and believable Shakespearean characters throughout the course of the semester.

**Grading**

This course builds upon the Foundations of Voice and Speech course and it is expected that the foundational voice and speech skills learned last year will carry over into this semester with an emphasis always on vocal health and intelligibility.

A	The student exhibits an excellent grasp of course outcomes including the integration of foundational voice and speech skills.
B	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes including the integration of foundational voice and speech skills.
C	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, but does not effectively integrate foundational voice and speech skills.
F	The student does not exhibit an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, nor effectively integrate foundational voice and speech skills.

**Assignments****Shakespeare Blog- Reading Responses**

A journal of responses to the readings assigned are due weekly as with the other voice and speech courses. 500 word posts are due Sundays at 11:59:00 pm.

**Shakespeare Blog- Practice Logs**

Each week students are to post a video of them performing their chosen speech or scene. They will write a critique of their work and post another video taking their notes. A guest blogger may appear to critique their work as well. Due weekly on Sundays at 11:59:00 pm.

**Shakespeare Blog- Article and Video Scavenger Hunt**

Each week students must post links to an interesting article or video story dealing with the production of Shakespeare throughout time. Due weekly on Sundays at 11:59:00 pm.

**Shakespeare Blog- Production Review**

Students are responsible for posting six (6) reviews of Shakespeare in production throughout the semester.

**Scores**

As in previous Voice and Speech classes, scores to “show your work” will be due.

**Midterm- Shakespeare Audition Project**

Students prepare and perform 90 seconds of two contrasting monologues.

**Final- Shakespeare Scenes and Speeches Night**

Students devise a night of Shakespeare Scenes and Speeches to be performed for classmates, the department faculty and invited guests.



**Course Outline**

Week 1- Review Voice and Speech Skills and Vocal Extremes

Week 2- Shakespeare the Man and Shakespeare's works  
\*First Two Monologues Chosen

Week 3- Rodenburg: Structure

Week 4- Rodenburg: Structure

Week 5- Rodenburg: The Thought and the Line

Week 6- Rodenburg: Literary Terms Review

Week 7- In Class Work Week

Week 8- Midterm and Fall Break

Week 9- Rodenburg: Character  
\*Scenes and Final Monologue Assigned by Instructor

Week 10- Rodenburg: Character

Week 11- TBA

Week 12- TBA

Week 13- Workshop Scenes and Speeches

Week 14- Workshop Scenes and Speeches

Week 15- Final Performance

**Accents and Dialects for the Actor****Course Description**

One of the most useful skills for the actor is the ability to believably make sound changes as well as adjust vocal patterns like rhythm and tone in order to recreate the cadence of another speaker's accent. People learn accents in many ways including using aural, oral, kinesthetic and visual cues. This class attempts to appeal to this broad range of learners. Using the Knight-Thompson approach to accent and dialect work in the beginning of the semester, students will learn an accent using narrow IPA transcription, real-life speakers and oral posture as the basis for accent acquisition. In the latter part of the semester, the class will speed through a "quick and dirty" style of accent acquisition that relies mostly on loose IPA transcription, key sentences and aural cues. Finally students will be responsible for teaching a dialect of their choice to the class using an individualized system. It is important by the end of this course for each student to not only have some of the more commonly demanded accents in their toolbox, but also determine how s/he learns accents and dialects most effectively.

**Text(s)**

Dudley Knight's *Speak the Speech*

Paul Meier's *Accents and Dialects for the Stage and Screen*

**Course Outcomes**

The student who successfully completes this course will:

- Skillfully execute believable accents for the stage and screen in an efficient manner.

- Possess the voice and speech skills to create expressive, fresh and interesting theatre with the goals of total intelligibility and uncompromising vocal health.
- Successfully design an individualized strategy for accent acquisition.
- Develop fully realized characters using the depth of vocal and emotional range explored in previous courses.

### **Grading**

This course builds upon the Foundations of Voice and Speech course and it is expected that the foundational voice and speech skills learned last year will carry over into this semester with an emphasis always on vocal health and intelligibility.

A	The student exhibits an excellent grasp of course outcomes including the integration of foundational voice and speech skills.
B	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes including the integration of foundational voice and speech skills.
C	The student exhibits an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, but does not effectively integrate foundational voice and speech skills.
F	The student does not exhibit an acceptable grasp of course outcomes, nor effectively integrate foundational voice and speech skills.

**Assignments****Accent Blogs- Accent Doppelgangers**

When learning accents, it is most helpful to have examples of native speakers. Each student is responsible for three Accent Doppelgangers audio or video samples for each accent tackled.

**Accent Blogs- Practice Videos**

To show work outside of class, students are required to video themselves rehearsing the dialect weekly. As with the Shakespeare blog, they are required to critique themselves and then record again.

**Accent Recipe Cards**

For each accent presented, students are responsible for writing out a vocal and articulator recipe card. Ingredients are specific sound changes, tone and rhythm changes, the required equipment include the Figures of the Estill vocal tract and articulators used. The result is the key sentence that will serve as the springboard for each dialect. These are fully individualized as each person needs to make specific changes.

**Individual Dialect Presentation**

To show mastery of each dialect, students must perform a 1-minute monologue in that dialect and will then be asked to “riff” or improv in that dialect as the auditor asks questions.

**Shakespearean Switcheroo**

For their final project, each student will perform a fully realized Shakespearean monologue from the semester before, but will be asked to switch dialects on cue. They will be responsible for all of the dialects learned thus far.

**Against the Clock Audition**

For the second part of their final project, students will be issued a call-back side for a show requiring a dialect, but will have only forty-eight hours to master the dialect called for. They will perform their dialect and include an Accent Recipe Card detailing their process.

**Course Outline**

Week 1- Review IPA and Estill Figures

Week 2- Southern Unit

Week 3- Southern Unit

Week 4- London Dialects

Week 5- London Dialects

Week 6- New York Dialect

Week 7- Mini Shakespeare Switcheroo

Week 8- Spring Break

Week 9- Group Presentations

Week 10- Group Presentations

Week 11- Requested Dialects

Week 12- TBA

Week 13- TBA

Week 14- Shakespeare Switcheroo Rehearsals

Week 15- Final Performance

### VITA

Katharine Salsbury was born on October 24, 1986 in Dayton, OH and Northwest Ohio. While traveling as an actress and singer, she graduated from Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA with a B.A. in English. She has immersed herself in the theatre industry both in New York City and regionally. A well-rounded theatre practitioner, her professional experience stretches from the front of house to the backstage, from assisting Tony Award winning costumer William Ivey Long in New York City to performing alongside the incomparable Sally Struthers in *The Full Monty*. In May 2014, Kate will graduate with her M.F.A. in Performance Pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA. In addition to maintaining her private voice studio, Kate taught multiple classes at VCU in the past two years, including Voice and Speech I and II, Shakespeare, Accents and Dialects, Acting Styles and Analysis, Effective Speech and Speech for the Business and Professions.