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# Staging the voice : towards a critical vocal performance pedagogy

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STAGING THE VOICE:  
TOWARDS A CRITICAL VOCAL PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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In

The Department of Communication Studies

by

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*For*  
*Tonya Mudd Robbins (1969-2009)*  
*and*  
*Reuben Mitchell (1981-2012)*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Until the late twentieth century, courses in voice and diction were a staple of the field of communication studies. Increasingly these classes are disappearing from departments around the country, largely over concerns regarding the prescription of strict speech standards. At the same time, an interest in vocal training has increased in BFA and MFA actor training programs. This study looks to the shared history of voice training between the fields of communication studies and theatre instruction to provide a critical pedagogy for vocal performance, specifically for the area of performance studies, but also for use in other disciplines.

Informed by feminist and queer theory, this dissertation examines the history of vocal instruction in the U. S. from the publication of Dr. James Rush's *Philosophy of the Human Voice* in 1823 to the present. The study examines the major works of the elocution and expression movements in the U.S., recovers the voice instruction of twentieth-century theatre practitioners Konstantin Stanislavski and Jerzy Grotowski, and explores training in the "natural voice" as described by Kristin Linklater. Grounded in such a lineage of vocal pedagogy, the study provides an outline for voice instruction that honors the unique vocal qualities of the student performer while providing the student with tools for being heard, understood, and for maintaining healthy vocal usage over multiple rehearsals and performances.

## CHAPTER ONE BETRAYED BY OUR TONGUES

LECTER

You know what you look like to me, with your good bag and your cheap shoes? You look like a rube. A well scrubbed, hustling rube with a little taste. Good nutrition has given you some length of bone, but you're not more than one generation from poor white trash, are you Agent Starling? And that accent you've tried so desperately to shed? Pure West Virginia. What's your father, dear? Is he a coal miner? Does he stink of the lamp? ...You could only dream of getting out...getting anywhere...getting all the way to the FBI.

STARLING

You see a lot, Doctor.

*-The Silence of the Lambs*

In *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, a collection of short biographical stories, David Sedaris recounts his fifth grade experiences in speech therapy. After being singled out for therapy because of his lisp, the young Sedaris undergoes a semester of sessions with an inexperienced speech therapist. Upon attending one such session, Sedaris notices that all the other students in therapy are unpopular, effeminate males. Sedaris wonders whether the attempt to change the boys's sibilant [s] (a commonly cited vocal marker for gay males) is also an attempt to intervene in their future as homosexuals: "We knocked ourselves out trying to fit in but were ultimately betrayed by our tongues" (Sedaris 10).

Like Sedaris, I also was assigned to speech therapy for a lisp, but in my first, not my fifth, year of public school. I enjoyed working with my therapist, though, and became fascinated with the electronic equipment involved in the therapy: a tape recorder, headphones, and a machine like a credit card reader that emitted the sound printed on a magnetic card when you slid the card through the machine. Besides my lisp, I also was treated for a confusion of the fricatives [f] and [t], leading to some embarrassment for my mother when I exclaimed, "Mommy, look at the fruck!" to which my mom answered very loudly so everyone could hear, "Yes, Derek, I see the TRUCK." I remember giggles when, on my third birthday, I shouted, "I'm finally free!"

I credit my speech therapy with what others called my “lack of an accent” later in life. I grew up in rural Kentucky, where everyone had a thick drawl that I always felt lacked the dignity of the Southern dialects I heard in TV and film. In my area of Kentucky, one might “warsh” their car, change the “arll,” and put new “tars” on it. Given my “lack of an accent,” the high school football Coach who taught World Civilization asked several times if I was from “up North.” Even lacking the sibilant [s], I was certain that my precision of speech also read as effeminate, and I was right. Once, Coach called me out for it in front of everyone. I recall him walking down the aisle during class and, as he passed by me, he turned and said loud enough for everyone to hear, “Are you looking at my butt?” My face burned red, and I protested, “No! Coach,” looking around at my classmates to see their reactions.

As Coach may have subconsciously noticed, vocal use demarcates class, gender, and culture in ways that we can hear. My avoidance of the rural Kentucky accent was an attempt partly to social climb out of my parent’s working class and into what John Guillory in *Cultural Capital* refers to as the professional-managerial class (Guillory xii). Later in life, when taking a stage voice class, I attempted to recover my rural Kentucky accent as part of my heritage. When visiting my parents I would adopt the accent and then slip into something a bit more Midwestern upon my return to the city.

## STAGING THE VOICE

In this study, my aim is to design a critical performance pedagogy of the voice for use in pertinent courses in Performance Studies programs, but applicable to other courses and curriculums as well, such as public speaking courses in Departments of Communication Studies and beginning voice courses in Departments of Theatre. A number of related issues inform my interest.

Over the last century, there has been a decline in voice training in communication studies and performance studies programs. While the emerging prevalence of electronic media has played a major part in the decline (as voices are able to be manipulated electronically), the decrease also is due to critical concerns raised by scholars and practitioners over the last thirty years regarding voice and identity politics. As the stories I used to introduce this study imply, voice is entangled in issues of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Because much of voice instruction ignores the entanglement, it has lost favor in curriculums concerned with the politics of identity and other cultural issues, as is the case with performance studies programs. The same scenario has played out in many theatre programs with a liberal arts slant, whereas those with a conservatory focus, where individuals are trained to be professional actors, have continued to require voice instruction. In most cases, this training is ignorant of or uninspired by critical concerns, while in some cases, the training is proving to be innovative in this regard.

Over the course of its history, performance studies programs have prided themselves on their excellence in teaching, have focused on experimental and avant-garde artistic forms, and have centered their scholarship on the importance of the body and bodies to cultural politics. For these reasons, they are primed I think to re-engage the voice by means of an innovative pedagogy that positions voices as part of bodies entangled in the politics of identity and culture. In addition, the re-engagement would provide performance practitioners with the voice training, knowledge, and options they require to excel in any public performance they do, whether it be live or electronically mediated, whether it be at a local club or on the international scene.

In Chapter Six of this study, I provide a blueprint for such instruction. The critical performance pedagogy I develop is informed by the research I pursue in the prior chapters, which consists of taking a close look at significant methods of voice training in the related areas

of elocution, oral interpretation (which, in the 1990's, gave way to performance studies), and theatre. From this investigation, I glean ideas and practices I can apply to my developing pedagogy for the voice. A secondary aim of the study, then, is to write a select and admittedly partial history of voice training as it pertains to performance studies and its current concerns.

In this chapter, I establish the parameters of the study by first defining key terms and concepts. Then, I set the stage for the upcoming chapters with a historical survey of voice training in elocution, oral interpretation, and theatre. I identify the voice components and the critical perspective I use to guide my analysis of the different methods, and I look to current critical pedagogy for additional criteria that helps me articulate and exercise my central aim. To conclude, I provide summaries of the chapters to come in *Staging the Voice*.

## TERMINOLOGY

What is voice? In this study, voice refers to sounds made by the human body, as other species make sounds too. Specifically, voice is sound or sound vibrations that emanate from the vocal cords first and are manipulated by the articulators and resonators of the body before they exit the mouth. Although voice is irreducibly tied up with speech, language is not a central concern of this study, vocality is. According to Paul Zumthor, vocality refers to “the whole of the activities and values belonging to the voice...independently of language” as compared to orality where voice functions “as the bearer of language” (quoted in Cavarero 12). Vocality “concerns an analysis of the voice that avoids the traditional privileging of its relationship with language” (Cavarero 12). Vocality then refers to the essential qualities of the voice, to the “grain of the voice” to borrow Roland Barthes’s term, beyond or in spite of what is said (Barthes, “Grain of the Voice” 179-89). Zumthor claims that “for researchers, voice and language are

distinct anthropological objects,” but this distinction is difficult to make because one gives rise to the other and vice versa (Zumthor 4).<sup>1</sup>

Involved in vocality is an interest in how the vocal apparatus works or does not work, as can be a concern for voice instructors. The process is complex and, as regards some operations, still unclear or even unknown. Below, I outline the basic physiological process by which phonation occurs, setting aside the neurological aspects as they are too involved to detail here. My description is based on my own knowledge and explanations provided in *Vocal Health and Pedagogy*, edited by Dr. Richard Sataloff, M. D.<sup>2</sup>

When we take a breath, air enters the lungs through the mouth or nose. For the most part, the impulse to breathe is autonomic, meaning that the body does it automatically without conscious thought. Even breath created by the impulse to speak is largely unconscious. The impulse for breath causes the diaphragm to drop down. The diaphragm is a muscle, stretched out like a membrane, just below the lungs and dividing the upper and lower cavities of the torso. The downward movement of the diaphragm creates negative pressure in the lungs.

We might imagine the lungs as two bags with crevices and protrusions that provide the surface area for respiration to occur. On this surface area, oxygen comes in contact with hemoglobin, which contains proteins shaped to receive molecules of oxygen and disperse them to cells throughout the body. The main byproducts of this activity are carbon dioxide and water

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<sup>1</sup> See Kimbrough for a discussion of voice in performance from a linguistic perspective; and see Porter for a discussion of how logos is intimately connected to the voice.

<sup>2</sup> I draw on four chapters in Sataloff, *Vocal Health and Pedagogy*: “Clinical Anatomy and Physiology” by Sataloff, “An Overview of Laryngeal Function for Voice Production” by Rondald J. Baken, “Vocal Tract Resonance” by Johan Sundberg, and “The Physics of Sound” by Sataloff from Sataloff, *Vocal Health and Pedagogy*.

vapor, which are expelled during exhalation when the diaphragm pushes upward against the lungs forcing air out through the mouth.

In order to speak, the process of respiration is manipulated in order to make contact with the vocal folds contained in the larynx. Muscles, tendons, and cartilage join together to pull the vocal folds across the airway. During exhalation, the vocal folds flap together, hitting one another at dozens to thousands of times per second, producing sound vibrations, which reverberate upward to the mouth where they encounter obstacles that shape the sound into speech. The tongue, the soft palate, the hard palate, the gum ridge, the teeth, and the lips manipulate the qualities of the sound to create vowels and consonants. The sounds are magnified or made resonant by the spaces in the throat and cranium, and variations in pitch are created by increasing or decreasing the surface area of the vocal folds.

Given the complexity of vocal production, Jacqueline Martin condenses the physiology of vocalicity to four simple operations, "breath, phonation, resonance and articulation" (Martin 37). Breath is the action of the lungs, phonation the action of the larynx and vocal folds, resonance the action of the spaces above the larynx, and articulation the action of the different parts of the mouth that shape the sounds into speech.

What happens to the voice, though, after it exits the mouth? Where does voice go? The sound waves exiting the mouth cause permutations that rebound and resound when they hit any sort of obstruction, including ears, and it is the resound that we hear. The sound vibrations make contact with the ear membranes and are converted into neurological signals that the brain interprets as sound, noise, music, or speech. Because sound waves continually lose energy after they exit the mouth, their rebound and resound action becomes progressively weaker and softer until they fade into silence.

Among voice instructors, there is much debate regarding how much anatomy and physiology voice students should learn. Many instructors fear students will find the science dull and their boredom will influence their practice negatively or students will think too much about the mechanics of the voice, which will result in a tense vocal apparatus. In my experience, students of singing are taught anatomy and physiology in greater detail than are actors and speakers. The graduate school training of a singer typically includes courses in anatomy and physiology, vocal health, and even pedagogy whereas students training to be actors are required to take voice training courses only.

In this study, I focus on voice training methods geared toward aesthetic performance. Aesthetic performances are consciously crafted events of a creative or artistic bent that occur in diverse public settings and that operate to “solidify and modify cultural values” (Pelias and Shaffer 11). Such performance includes elocution, oral interpretation, theatrical performance, and performance art. It also includes song performance and performance in film and other electronic media. Although the methods I undertake can be used by singers, singers require additional diversified training due to the extreme use of their vocal apparatus. I also sideline the electronically-enhanced or mediatized voice in this study and concentrate on vocal production that requires the performers’ voices to be heard and understood by live audiences over several repetitions without the vocal apparatus being damaged. While performance scholars and practitioners are interested in other types of performance than aesthetic performance, such as everyday life performance, social dramas, rituals and festivities, and the visual and material arts, I do not focus on these genres in this project. I also do not address public speaking directly in this study, although it does share a history with elocution and oral interpretation and an orator may well call on aesthetic devices to compose his speech. Nonetheless, many of the methods I

analyze and the one I develop in Chapter Six are appropriate for teaching voice in public speaking courses.

The terms “voice instruction” and “voice training” refer to pedagogical practices intended to develop the student’s expressivity, clarity, and safe use of the voice. While areas once associated with the current discipline of communication studies (such as elocution and oral interpretation) bear a long history of voice training, little to no training is offered in Departments of Communication Studies these days. Voice instruction is found largely in Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts programs for actors or singers or, to acknowledge a different trajectory altogether, in departments and programs that concentrate on speech and language disorders and therapy.

As I am concerned with methods of voice instruction from the shared histories of several disciplines, let me identify those disciplines now. They overlap of course and can vary in distinction from university to university. Communication studies is a discipline that “focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media” (National Communication Association n.p.), such as the media of voice. The discipline typically includes areas of rhetoric and public address; intra- and interpersonal communication; and often a combination of other areas too, such as organizational communication, intercultural communication, visual communication, performance studies, and in smaller departments, theatre as well.

Performance studies is a discipline interested in how people create expressions, usually of an explicitly artistic or creative bent, which, in Richard Schechner’s terms, “restore behavior” so as to bring something about; the action is a performative doing (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 28). Current histories of performance studies highlight two main trajectories.<sup>3</sup> Like rhetoric, one

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<sup>3</sup> See Carlson; Jackson; and Schechner, *Performance Studies*.

trajectory harkens back to the oratorical tradition of the ancient Greeks through to the elocution and oral interpretation movements of the last few centuries. Sharing concerns with the fields of English and theatre (and through English, philosophy), the focus here is on how languages and literatures work and, for performance folks, how that understanding can be expressed by means of performance. The other trajectory identifies performance in the “everyday life” social and cultural practices of people, such as in their playing or restoring of certain roles in daily life or in the rituals and festivals they celebrate. This trajectory connects performance studies to the fields of anthropology, sociology, and cultural geography, to name but a few disciplines with scholars who share concerns with those in performance studies.

Theatre or theatre studies shares a history with performance studies and English, although it concentrates its attention on the history, literature, technology, and aesthetics of dramatic performance. Actor training is offered in Departments of Theatre where undergraduate and graduate students take practical coursework in order to prepare for a professional career in theatre, TV, or film. While almost all programs offer an acting sequence of some kind, not all provide or require voice instruction, and neither do programs of performance studies.

As many performance scholars have pointed out, bodies are a central site of study in the discipline.<sup>4</sup> However, most discussions of the body ignore the voice. If, as Peggy Phelan claims, performance is an essence that disappears (Phelan 146-166), voice may be a component of performance that disappears most. While bodies remain, the sounds bodies produce echo through the performance space and fade away. Words spoken may be compiled in a script, but the unique qualities of performers’ voices, such as the subtleties of breath and intonation, cannot

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<sup>4</sup> See Bowman; Pineau; and Pollock.

be captured on the page.<sup>5</sup> And, while a recording may document a voice, playback involves the electronic manipulation of a membrane within a speaker, not the corporeal vibration of flesh and bone. As Adriana Cavarero points out, sound “is not being but becoming” and is transient by nature (Cavarero 37). For these reasons, it is understandable why voice is not discussed consistently by performance scholars, which is not say the effort should not be made.

Below, I provide an overview of voice instruction as it pertains to the disciplines of communication studies, performance studies, and theatre studies in the U.S.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF VOICE INSTRUCTION IN THE U.S.

In the U.S., the elocutionary movement was sparked by the 1761 publication of James Burgh’s *The Art of Speaking* in England and, in its wake, subsequent texts on the subject, such as Thomas Sheridan’s *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* in 1762, and John Walker’s *Elements of Elocution* in 1799, both published in England as well. The general aim of the elocution teachers was to develop a method that would teach students the appropriate use of voice and gesture given the context. Known as the mechanical school of elocution, the approach is well known for aligning certain gestures with certain emotions and applying the schema in performance, particularly in the reading aloud from works of literature.

In 1827, U.S. born James Rush published, *A Philosophy of the Human Voice*. A medical doctor, Rush based his notation system for speech sounds on his knowledge of physiology. Although prior elocutionists had boasted a scientific approach too, Rush was the first to bridge

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<sup>5</sup> Finnegan, Rush, Sheridan, and others have tried to transcribe vocal qualities to text, but finally text is a different medium than voice. See Zumthor (3-10) for a discussion of the unique qualities of voice.

the mind and body, or speech and the vocal apparatus, through the scientific observation of how the body makes sounds.<sup>6</sup>

In the mid to latter part of the nineteenth century, teachers of “expression” sought to differentiate themselves from the mechanical school they associated with elocution. Influenced by romanticism, naturalism, and diverse spiritual and religious reform movements of the period, the so-called natural school of expression urged that the interior life of the performer be the starting point for speech expression as compared to applying an external schema of intonations and gestures (Edwards 68-69). Of the scores of teachers plying their trade in the U.S., some of the more influential include actor Steele Mackaye who taught the Delsarte method, which he learned from the French teacher of dramatic and musical expression François Delsarte, Charles Wesley Emerson of the Emerson College of Oratory (later Boston College), Samuel Silas Curry and his wife Anna Baright Curry of The School of Expression (later Curry College), Leland Todd Powers and his wife Carol Hoyt Powers of The School of the Spoken Word, and Genevieve Stebbins of the New York School of Expression.

Instruction in expression also proved to be foundational to the education of actors of the time because the prior method (of mentoring and apprenticeship within stock companies) was in disarray due to changes in the structure of theatre companies (Watson 64). While courses in acting were offered at some colleges and universities as early as the 1890’s, it was not until the opening of the Department of Drama at Yale University in 1925, that theatre or drama became its own discipline (Berkeley 11).

An event that proved highly influential in the training of actors occurred in 1923, when representatives of the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) under the direction of Konstantin Stanislavski

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<sup>6</sup> See Roach for a history of the changing views of science and nature as they pertain to acting, from the seventeenth century through the twentieth century.

came to New York City to give performances of the works of Anton Chekhov. The subtleties of ensemble work in a realist aesthetic appealed to audiences, and the company was so well received that some of the MAT actors, such as Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, stayed in New York to start their own training schools. Influenced by the MAT, U.S. practitioners, such as Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner, started training programs of their own (McTeague x). The teaching of the Stanislavski “system” proved foundational to the training of actors in the U.S., as programs across the country continue to teach versions of the system to this day. As for the voice, the system calls for rigorous training so as to shed the vocal habits of modern life, which result in a strained apparatus, and realize the beautiful voice “nature” gave each of us. This voice is aligned with the ultimate aim of system training, which is to create and express the “inner life of a human spirit” (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 17).

In the post World War II period, a decidedly vocational take on education came to the fore as evidenced, for one, by the popularity of acting instruction aimed for the professional theatre industry (Berkely 15-18). Departments of Theatre produced public performances that prepared students for work in the industry while they also served their surrounding communities. The creation of Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in theatre resulted in the development of conservatories or conservatory-like training in Theatre Departments, which allowed students to forego a liberal arts education and focus on taking practical theatre courses. As MFA degrees are viewed by Departments of Theatre as a terminal degree, comparable to a PhD, students who earn an MFA and go on to teach have little to no formal training in pedagogy. As Anne Fliotsos and Gail S. Medford point out in the introduction to their 2004 publication, *Teaching Theatre Today*:

Despite the fact that American [U.S.] education boasts thousands of theatre programs, the instruction taking place in these programs occurs with little attention to formal

pedagogical theory or practice. Perhaps teachers, instructors, and scholars of theatre give little attention to how they teach the art because they themselves did not receive any particular orientation on theatre pedagogy. (Fliotsos and Medford 1)

In 2014, there are only a handful of U.S. universities that offer MFA degrees that focus on theatre pedagogy, most notably, the programs at Virginia Commonwealth University and the Steinhardt School at New York University. Meanwhile, a large number of doctoral programs in theatre focus on theatre history, dramatic literature, and theory and criticism sometimes at the expense of learning how these subjects apply in performance.

For the most part, actor training programs provide instruction in the realist aesthetic, teaching students to act by means of Stanislavski's system or variations on the same, such as methods developed by Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, and Sanford Meisner. From the 1970s on, other so-called "experimental" methods proved of interest to students and faculty and were added to curriculums as supplements to the basic instruction in realism (Berkely 18-19). The additional approaches include the methods of Bertolt Brecht, Joseph Chaikin, and Jerzy Grotowski, who treats the voice as an integral part of the body and addresses it at length in his actor training processes.

During the early to mid years of the nineteenth century, voice training in BFA and MFA theatre programs declined as electronic media, such as film and television, came to the fore. Over the last forty years, however, and due to the growth of touring and regional theatre companies, voice training has regained prominence. The methods of Edith Skinner, Kristin Linklater, Arthur Lessac, and Catherine Fitzmaurice have been embraced as a necessary part of actor training, which is divided among a triad of courses in acting, movement, and voice. In acting courses, students typically perform scenes that are evaluated by the instructor and repeated several times. In movement courses, instructors use different techniques, such as dance,

gymnastics, or clowning, to help students develop relaxed and flexible bodies. In voice courses, students learn relaxation and visualization techniques to gain greater control of and expressivity in their vocal apparatus. In both movement and voice courses, instructors typically have to gain an education and accreditation in a particular technique (i.e., beyond their MFA degree) in order to teach in a certified Department of Theatre.<sup>7</sup>

Returning to the early twentieth century, a major event occurred in 1915 that resulted in teachers of expression splitting into two different fields, namely, oral interpretation and actor training. At the first meeting of the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (later the Speech Communication Association and currently the National Communication Association), Maude May Babcock, a Professor of Oratory at the University of Utah, insisted that teachers distinguish between the “interpretive” practice of the oral performance of literature and the “impersonative” approach of acting. In the latter, a performer enacts character(s) fully whereas, in the former, the performer suggests character(s) while retaining his or her composure as the speaker or implied author of the piece (Taft-Kaufman 158-60). Aligned with the interests of English Departments, oral interpretation was viewed as a more scholarly pursuit than impersonation and was included in the roll call of disciplines studied in the academy. While individual courses in “impersonation” or acting were offered in colleges and universities, it was not until 1925 that such courses became housed in recognized Departments of Theatre or Drama.

The secondary status of theatre and drama to oral interpretation in the academy was short-lived however, as, by the mid-twentieth century, Theatre Departments were flourishing and Oral Interpretation programs were healthy if rare. Not unlike the Babcock incident, oral

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<sup>7</sup> See Stucky and Tomell-Presto for a detailed study of current actor training coursework.

interpretation experienced a watershed moment in the late twentieth century when the burgeoning “canon of [postmodern and poststructural] theory” questioned or more aptly deconstructed the politics of the “canon of literature” to which oral interpretation had been (so blissfully) in service (Edwards 5-16). As a result of the encounter, oral interpretation evolved into a more inclusive, more explicitly political inter-discipline, embracing not only the diversity of literatures available for study and performance, but the vast range of non-literary performance activity too. To express the altered identity, programs and departments across the nation changed their name to Performance Studies.

In 2004, Dwight Conquergood identified “the three A’s” that articulate what scholars and practitioners of performance studies do: they seek an *articulation* or praxis of *accomplishment* or performance (on the page, stage, or in other media) by means of rigorous conceptual *analysis* (Conquergood, “Performance Studies” 319). While “the three A’s” might apply to any field, they help to clarify that the central concern of the field is not to train practitioners for the professional industry – although the field certainly is not adverse to people plying their trade there and many do. Nevertheless, most programs in Performance Studies continue to ground their curriculum in practical course work, stressing the importance of embodied learning by doing. In the doctoral program in which I was enrolled (housed in the Department of Communication Studies at Louisiana State University), every performance studies course contained a practical element and many were largely practical: theories and methods tested by material bodies interacting in space. While the centrality of the body and bodies to our study was emphasized, training the body and voice were not. In my research of Performance Studies programs and departments across the nation, this lack of training is extremely common, which is not to say training is not needed.

Having taken graduate level training in stage voice in two MFA programs, I am often dismayed by the vocal use I hear from faculty, students, performers, and public speakers in the related fields of communication studies, performance studies, and also theatre. I have witnessed fine actors who could not be heard or understood in even the most intimate of theatrical settings; performers who have composed amazingly sophisticated pieces undercut by their lack of voice; instructors as well as public speaking students who read from their notes without inflection or pause. Understanding that primary to the mission of the noted fields is the ability to communicate or express one's self effectively, why aren't departments and programs in Communication Studies and Performance Studies providing their students with the vocal knowledge and technique that would enable their communication? And, further, why does the training provided in some Theatre Departments not always show through in performance?

Even as I write the previous statement, I am troubled by it. Perhaps what I am feeling is a general skittishness toward addressing the voice that I believe pervades the field at this time. Informed by identity politics, we are aware that the different social, cultural, economic, racial, and gender backgrounds of our students influence their vocal use and style. We might recall a voice class we took in college where the instructor tried to eliminate regional and cultural accents in favor of a "neutral" Midwestern vocal style popular with newscasters and reporters. Or perhaps we received vocal instruction in a Theatre Department where all-too-often the psychological life of the actor is exposed in the name of voice training. Furthermore, we are aware that discussing a student's vocal usage might be experienced or viewed by the student as insensitive and domineering on our part. Without the know-how to battle the embedded hegemony of most voice training methods, we opt not to provide instruction at all.

In light of my research, the challenges we face are centered in five critical binaries that inform the voice training methods and articulate our concerns regarding them.

### FIVE CRITICAL BINARIES

I have isolated five binaries that I find embedded in the praxis of the methods I undertake in this study and that I will use to analyze them. In substance and form (i.e., when used *as* binaries), they also express our concerns regarding the teaching of voice. The binaries are high/low referring to class,<sup>8</sup> masculine/feminine referring to gender and sexuality,<sup>9</sup> natural/mechanical referring to interior and exterior approaches to training,<sup>10</sup> mind/body referring to the association or not between the mind and the body;<sup>11</sup> and spiritual/scientific referring to subjective or objective approaches to and aims of the training.<sup>12</sup> While, in many of the methods, the binaries are implemented as fixed opposites, I understand and critique the fixity as false. Gender, for instance, is not fixed to masculine or feminine traits but plays out on a spectrum of gendered performatives. Nevertheless, because the binaries *are* exercised in the methods in notable ways, they require analysis and critique. The binaries also overlap and shift in meaning over time and due to context. Highly touted in the training of the voice, “natural” assumes many different meanings over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The binaries then serve as a compass for the study, pointing the way to a more flexible and inclusive pedagogy.

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<sup>8</sup> See Levine (11-81); and Conquergood, “Rethinking Elocution.”

<sup>9</sup> See Cavarero (96-161) for a discussion of how the voice is conceptualized as feminine.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Bacon; and Giles Wilkeson Gray.

<sup>11</sup> See Descartes “Sixth Meditation” and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological criticism of Cartesian Duality in *The World of Perception*, especially pg. 61-8.

<sup>12</sup> See Roach; and Edwards.

The high/low binary refers to economic class distinctions with high associated with the tastes of the middle to upper (white collar) classes and low with tastes of the lower (blue collar) classes. One example of the high/low dual arises in distinctions made between elocution and acting in the nineteenth century. For the Christian-informed bourgeoisie and upper-crust, attending the theatre and acting were considered crude and improper activities. Elocution then – as a practice of reading aloud in spaces other than a theatre – permitted the middle and upper classes the opportunity to perform without degrading themselves. Daily or habitual vocal use signifies class too. According to Pierre Bourdieu, habits or habitus refer to “systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*” or tastes of a given social class that carry certain cultural capital within the broader social schema (Bourdieu 72). Indeed, as much as dialects may reveal geographical placements, socialects, as termed by philologists, may reveal social class (Guillory 81). Some voice instruction focuses on improving the student’s dialect or socialect should it seem to reveal an association with a culture, region, race or ethnicity that is perceived as economically challenged, which is equated often to the student being less intelligent too. Is it necessary for students to abandon their regional or social-cultural accents in order to succeed in their given careers?

The binary of masculine/feminine refers to gender and, in this case, the effects that gender and gender associations have on the voice. Among English speakers, the qualities commonly associated with the masculine voice are reduced affect, lack of variation in pitch, and a regular rhythm.<sup>13</sup> The feminine voice, on the other hand, is marked by emotion and variations in both pitch and rhythm. In a performance or acting class, should an instructor ask a male or masculine-identified student to vary his pitch and rhythm, it may make the student feel as if they

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<sup>13</sup> For a full differentiation of male and female voices, see Rodenburg, *The Right to Speak*, 74-85.

are being feminized, which they may perceive negatively. Should a male student with a feminized voice, which is typically associated with gay men, be playing a straight character, it is not uncommon for the instructor to ask the student to adopt a more masculine voice. For females, there is an overwhelming demand to masculinize the voice particularly for radio and television voice-overs, so as to provide a pitch with more (masculine) authority. The masculine/feminine binary plays out in issues of orality and textuality too. The masculine voice has been aligned with written text and favored over the feminine voice, which is aligned with oral expression. One consequence of the alignments is a relative lack of theorizing on the oral voice.<sup>14</sup> How do we avoid imposing heteronormative biases in training the voice?

The terms natural and mechanical appear frequently throughout the history of vocal instruction. Most often, natural delivery is marked by an ease and variety in delivery. It also is associated with spontaneous thought and thus perceived to be more revealing of the inner state of mind of the speaker than is a mechanical delivery. The mechanical approach refers to the practice of imitation, where, by means of observation, a voice practitioner develops a schema that aligns certain intonations and gestures with certain emotions. To express a particular emotion, then, a speaker or actor need only imitate the proper signs. During the elocutionary period, those who took a natural approach to delivery implemented an inside-out process: they allowed the thoughts and feelings of the character they were depicting to inform delivery as compared to the mechanical outside-in approach. In acting methods, Konstantin Stanislavki's "system" and Lee Strasberg's "method" reflect the inside-out approach with the express aim of developing a natural or realistic-sounding voice. Concerned with how social-historical circumstances mark the body and voice with social gestures or *gests*, Bertolt Brecht advocated an

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<sup>14</sup> See Cavarero, 7-16; and Butler, 17-18.

outside-in approach. Voice scholars and practitioners use this binary more than any of the others to denigrate prior methods, claiming that the old method is “mechanical” and the new, “natural.” Of course, the proclaimed natural voice is no more or less mechanical (that is, a social construct) than is the demeaned mechanical voice. Are discussions of mechanical and natural voices helpful in the voice classroom?

The mind/body binary refers to the association or not of the mind and body. The concept of dissociation derives from René Descartes’ famous dictum that launched the scientific rationalist tradition, “I think, therefore I am.” From this perspective, identity, knowledge, and power are associated with the superior mind and mental processes while the body is perceived as fallible, falling victim to its corporeal desires and decay. For this reason, most religions of the east and west favor separation of the pair, urging transcendence of the mind from the body. So too, Cartesian Dualism informs the maintenance of high/low class structures, the educated, wealthy, and white-color elite associated with “the mind” and the less well-educated, poor, or blue-collar populace associated with “the body.” As regards voice instruction, it is intriguing to me how many twentieth century methods claim mind-body association (i.e., there is no split), but are unable to realize the claim in practice. Some methods prove to dissociate the voice from the body, while others miss the mark by disallowing the potential of corporeal contingencies, experiences, and knowledge to play a part in the training. How might we allow body knowledge a part in vocal training while still trying to improve the expressive capabilities of the voice?

Closely related to the mind/body binary, the scientific/spiritual dualism holds a significant place in the history of voice instruction. By scientific, I mean an objective method that uses empirical data to make informed judgments about the world, as compared to a spiritual process that locates truth in what is felt and cannot be known empirically. Within current

academic culture, the scientific holds sway over the spiritual, although in the classrooms for voice instruction I have experienced, a spiritual orientation is evident if not privileged.

It is not uncommon for theorists and practitioners, as well as everyday folk, to amass and conflate the binaries into one master duel that pits the high-mechanical-scientific-masculine-mind against the low-natural-spiritual-feminine-body. As Judith Butler points out:

The cultural associations of mind with masculinity and body with femininity are well documented within the field of philosophy and feminism. As a result, any uncritical reproduction of the mind/body distinction ought to be rethought for the implicit gender hierarchy that the distinction has conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized. (Butler 17)

As the voice is a part of the body, it too is implicated in the gender hierarchy that Butler mentions. As Butler also infers, amassing and conflating the binaries is a political move that one should make or analyze carefully.

#### CRITICAL PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGY FOR VOCAL INSTRUCTION

Over the course of this study and culminating in Chapter Six, I intend to develop a blueprint for a critical performance pedagogy of the voice that, for one, troubles any fixed notion of the binaries surveyed in the prior section. Below, I discuss pedagogical theories that claim to meet the noted goal. Thereby, I articulate criteria for voice instruction that I value and that informs my perspective and analysis of the various methods in the upcoming chapters.

While I would like to say that current voice instruction in the field of actor training would help me develop a training process I like and could use in performance courses, the methods are a-critical finally. An appeal to individual pleasure and spirituality is privileged over providing students with technical knowledge of the voice and over critical discussion regarding the politics of the voice. For instance, in the most popular of training methods, Kristin Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice*, "natural" is an assumed quality innate to each of us although, given the need

for training, some of our voices appear to be more “natural” than others. And those other voices are “what?” I am led to wonder. “Unnatural?” Further, in Linklater’s method, what causes barriers to a “natural” voice are psychological in nature, which often results in an instructor pathologizing the student and his or her voice. On the other hand, discussing “Identity Politics of the Voice” with students can be awkward too and even oppressive from the students’ perspective. With these challenges in mind, I turn to take a look at critical pedagogies and how they might help us imagine alternative ways of teaching voice.

In “Critical Performative Pedagogy: Fleshing Out the Politics of Liberatory Education,” performance scholar Elyse Pineau observes that critical pedagogy draws on a “‘language of critique’ from the Marxist social theories of the Frankfurt School and a corresponding ‘language of possibility’” from John Dewey’s call for democratic education (Pineau 42). Both are encapsulated in Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Friere’s “pedagogy of the oppressed” praxis. According to Pineau:

Friere’s legacy is twofold: (a) his critique dismantles the [top-down] “banking system” of instruction through which passive students are indoctrinated into social mores...thus disabling the development of critical consciousness and political action, and (b) his method of critical collaboration between teachers and learners explores pragmatic solutions to everyday oppressions even while it facilitates a metalevel critique of the process of education itself. This dialectical emphasis on critique and possibility...the abstract and the embodied, continues to characterize critical theory and practice in education. (Pineau 42-43)

What performance brings to the table of critique and possibility, intervention and renewal, is an understanding of how bodies enact ideology in concrete physical ways, that is, people *do* it. Performance also brings creative tools for students to express, examine, and experiment with alternatives to the *doing* in physical ways too: critique and possibility realized by means of creative tools students apply themselves. While it may seem that a skills-based course in voice instruction meets these goals, in so far as the students are physically active, neither the act of

intervention nor the potential renewal are acknowledged and tested, and certainly not by means of a “critical collaboration” between student and teacher. Rather, the intervention is ignored as the teacher dictates techniques in a top-down “banking system” model.

Cultural critic Henry Giroux agrees with the potential of a critical performance pedagogy, arguing that it “opens a space for disputing conventional academic borders,” while it extends its critique to embrace the public spaces and ways of knowing we share (Giroux 8). Giroux claims that performance is able to spark this broader connection because it is viewed and experienced by people as a positive procreative activity that occurs in other places than just the classroom – which is not to say performance is always and actually “procreative.”

Queer theory focuses on an integral facet of critical performance pedagogy. Annmarie Jagose explains that the “principal achievement” of queer theory “is to draw attention to the assumptions that...inhere in the mobilization of any identity category, including itself” (Jagose 126). Identity traits then are neither innate nor fixed. Rather, they are constructed and mobilized for political purposes. Donna Nudd, Kristina Schriver, and Terry Galloway explain:

To be queer...is to be unable or unwilling to regard “any identity category” as single, fixed, or unyielding. When even such a seemingly fixed, “real” category like gender, for instance, is regarded as dynamic, pluralized, multiple, and shifting, then automatically all the other less seemingly fixed, real identifiers are assumed to be just as dynamic. To the queer mind there is no natural or unnatural identity, no real or unreal one. Rather, identity is seen as an act of engagement, a conscious performance. (Nudd, Shriver, and Galloway 105).

The notion of identity as a dynamic, unfixed, and conscious performance opens the door in voice instruction for students to engage and test out diverse vocal possibilities without fear of recrimination. A central aim of the instruction would be for students to learn and exercise a flexible voice and a flexible relationship to the voice as they engage the voices and identities of those they create onstage.

With the central theories of critical performance pedagogy and queer theory in mind, criteria for the kind of voice instruction I might teach include: (a) involving students in the critique or intervention of the social-cultural biases and assumptions related to vocality, such as those articulated by the (false) binaries I discussed earlier; (b) as the instructor, not assuming said biases and assumptions but rather discovering them in collaboration with the students through course readings, discussions, and practical performance exercises that also exercise the vocal apparatus; (c) teaching students the physiology of the voice so as to empower them with how the voice operates, again through readings and practical exercises; (d) teaching students the creative tools for making simple performances that activate points (a) through (c) above; and (e) in these ways, creating a classroom of possibility and renewal where the unique vocal traits of each student are retained, while options for vocal use are explored and a vocal flexibility encouraged.

As regards point (e) above, while every voice is unique, it is in part formed by means of the “durable, transposable *dispositions*” or habitus of which Bourdieu speaks (Bourdieu 72). We come to our voices via the daily observation and imitation of those with whom we live and interact, our family, friends, and colleagues. Our intake of mass media also influences our vocal use and qualities. So accustomed to our own voice, we do not hear the vocal habits we enact; vocal habits that we might want to un-perform if we were aware of them and aware of alternative vocal options we might adopt. A critical performance pedagogy of the voice would provide students with the tools they need to discover vocal options for performance and for everyday use as well.

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

In Chapter Two of the study, I describe and analyze the shared histories of oral interpretation and actor training in the U.S. from 1827 to the 1920s. During this time period, voice instruction emerged to prevalence in U.S. culture as evidenced by the popularity of the

elocution and expression movements. In my survey, I focus on the training methods of major theorists, such as James Rush, François Delsarte, Steele Mackaye, and Samuel Silas Curry. I analyze the movements in terms of the critical binaries that inform voice use and instruction, and glean ideas and practices I might use in my developing voice instruction praxis.

In Chapter Three, I examine the vocal training practices of Russian director and teacher Konstantin Stanislavski who developed an enormously popular “system” for actor training, aimed to be used on the realistic stage. Stanislavski’s system and versions of it stand as the dominant actor training method in the U.S. today. In the chapter, I take a close look at Stanislavski’s third book, *Building a Character*, in which he writes extensively on vocal training. My selection and discussion of Stanislavski’s techniques are informed by Jacqueline Martin’s distillation of vocal production to four simple steps, breath, phonation, resonance and articulation (Martin 37). I also examine the techniques in terms of “thought,” which refers to the processes of message creation or encoding that the sender uses to initiate speech. Almost all the voice practitioners I discuss in the study, including Stanislavski, view the initiation of speech as a crucial component of vocal production although they use different names for the activity. In the concluding section of the chapter, I analyze Stanislavski’s method in light of the binaries that inform my critical perspective in the study.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the vocal theories and techniques that Polish director Jerzy Grotowski provides in his text, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Internationally known for his *via negativa* training process and aesthetic, Grotowski strove to train actors to eliminate the socialized blocks (the habitus) that stood in the way of their experiencing and expressing the raw elements of a given myth. Rather than a realist aesthetic of accumulation, Grotowski aimed to realize a ritual aesthetic of elimination or sacrifice, confrontation, and renewal. In reviews of

Grotowski's productions in the 1960s, many reviewers note the power, variety, and flexibility of the performers' voices. Popular in the U.S. in the late 1960s through the early 1980s, Grotowski is considered to be the father of experimental actor training methods in the U.S., influencing directors such as Richard Schechner, Viola Spolin, and Joseph Chaikin. In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, voice training figures prominently, and I attend to it by focusing on those techniques that concern breath, phonation, resonance, articulation, and thought. Again, in the final section of the chapter, I analyze how the binaries play out in Grotowski's method and techniques of voice instruction.

In Chapter Five, I survey voice instructors whose methods helped to re-activate voice training in the U.S., starting in the 1960s. I then focus my attention on the extremely popular method that Kristin Linklater offers in her text, *Freeing the Natural Voice*. On the one hand, the pedagogy implied in Linklater's text seems to fulfill some of the criteria of a critical pedagogy, such as a respect for a student's subjective experience and its impact on vocal use. Further, the method works; it has proven to be successful for many people who practice it consistently. In fact, I have trained in the method and teach it myself. On the other hand, the very assumption of a "natural" voice is troubling, as are the somewhat mystifying processes the student undertakes to "free" it. As in the prior chapters, I select and discuss Linklater's techniques in terms of Martin's four vocal components as well as thought, and I analyze the politics of the instruction through the critical perspective provided by the binaries of natural/mechanical, spiritual/scientific, mind/body, high/low, and masculine/feminine.

In the concluding chapter, I first review the tenets of a critical performance pedagogy, amending and fine-tuning the criteria I outlined in this chapter in light of what I have learned over the course of my research. I then summarize Chapter Two through Five by highlighting

those ideas and practices that I find particularly useful in developing a critical performance pedagogy for voice instruction in a performance studies classroom. I then apply the summary to a blueprint I can actually use. To conclude, I discuss the significance of the study.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**CULTIVATING THE VOICE:**  
**U.S. VOICE TRAINING FROM 1827-1923**

“His voice surged and roared like the angry sea lashed into fury by a storm, till, as it reached its boiling, seething climax, in which the serpent hiss of hate was heard at intervals amidst its louder, deeper, hoarser tones, it was like the Falls of Niagara, in its tremendous down-sweeping cadence: it was a whirlwind, a tornado, a cataract of illimitable rage.”

-George Vandenhoff (qtd. in Barrett 132)

In this chapter, I look to the history of voice education in the U.S. from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century in order to ground and inform the pedagogy I will produce as a result of my research. At one end of the period is the 1827 publication of *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* by Dr. James Rush who provides a decidedly scientific view on vocal production. Inspired by the British elocutionists of the late eighteenth century, Rush’s *Philosophy* influenced voice instructors for years to come. At the other end is the 1923 arrival of the Moscow Art Theatre company to New York, ushering in Konstantin Stanislavski’s “system,” which holds to the importance of vocal instruction and is a predominate method of actor training in the U.S. to this day. Over the course of this period, the elocutionary movement both reached its height and saw its decline, and there were many shifts in attitude regarding actor training, the theatre, and vocal culture. Originally the purview of theatrical stock companies, actor training moved to private schools of instruction, while an interest in oral performance and vocal instruction expanded in the academy. The broad aesthetic of theatre and performance in the U.S. changed along the same lines as did the visual arts, moving from sentimentalism and romanticism to realism and naturalism.

In this chapter, I use the term “elocution” to refer to a practice of oratory and public reading based in delivery that became popular as people became familiar with the works of Aristotle and Quintillian during the Enlightenment. The elocutionary movement, or Elocutionism

as some call it, refers to a trend that prevailed from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century and that focused on elocution as defined above. The movement began in England with the discoveries of Thomas Sheridan, Thomas Walker, James Burgh, and others. This group sought to parse out and systemize artistic expression into intonation and gestural signs that they figured everyone understood. In part, this mechanical approach to elocution was influenced by the French philosopher and critic Denis Diderot who, in his “Paradox of Acting,” called for actors to reveal emotions through a system of signs while remaining unmoved emotionally.<sup>15</sup> As a show of emotions was aligned with an unruly body, Diderot’s call testifies to the Cartesian mind/body split that informed much thinking during the enlightenment and neoclassical periods. British elocution exemplifies this split, with the superior mind aiming to control and perfect the brute body. While the mechanized approach to elocution would be revised over the course of the nineteenth century, particularly in an effort to redress the perceived ill-effects of modernity on the body and its expression, the view that the mind controlled the body would remain.

In the late eighteenth century, elocution crossed the sea and “was accepted in America as readily as in its native land, and in the next century cultivated even more assiduously” by practitioners as diverse as Dr. James Rush and actor Steele MacKaye (Haberman 105). In the latter part of the nineteenth century, new elocution or what was to become the school of expression rose to the fore. The movement was based on the praxis of the French acting and singing teacher François Delsarte. Having studied with Delsarte in France, Steele MacKaye imported his teachings to the U.S. where they flourished among practitioners who were particularly involved in the burgeoning practice of platform reading. Eugene and Margaret Bahn

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to Diderot’s essay, see Roach (116-59), and Allison Hodge, “Introduction,” for discussions of Diderot in the context of the history of actor training.

trace the practice back to eighteenth century church services in England, where reading aloud from the Bible made up a large part of the liturgy (Bahn and Bahn 114-115). Reading from the Bible and works of literature was also a popular parlor activity among the middle classes, providing them with opportunities to perform and enjoy performance without having to be an actor or go to the theatre, which were considered immoral activities by the religiously inclined. One might also attend the broad range of platform readings, concerts, lectures, and demonstrations offered by their local Lyceum or at the summer gatherings of the Chautauqua Institute, located in southwestern New York. So popular was Chautauqua that independent and touring or tent Chautauquas popped up across the nation, providing enough opportunity for a platform reader that he could make a fair living “reading” rather than “acting.”

The school or practice of expression in the U.S. should not be confused with expressionism, the visual art and theatre movement that took hold in Europe near the end of the nineteenth century. Influenced by Delsarte, expression is most closely associated with Boston minister and educator Samuel Silas Curry who explained that expression “must be in some sense a direct and spontaneous result of its cause, which lies in the processes of thought, the earnestness, the purpose, the feeling, and the general attitude of the man who speaks” (Curry 3). Curry’s view of expression articulates the difference in method between it and its predecessor, the mechanical school of elocution. Whereas the latter is grounded in exterior (scientific) observation and imitation, the latter places its faith in the interior processes of “the man who speaks.”

With the above overview in mind, I turn now to take a close look at the work of James Rush. Afterwards, I discuss the training of actors in the mid-nineteenth century as the stock theatre companies, in which apprentice actors had once trained, faltered and actors looked to

elocution for assistance in training their voices. I then address the career of Steele MacKaye and discuss the ramifications of using the Delsarte system for vocal training in the U.S. Lastly, I examine the major schools of expression where training in elocution and acting coincided. I conclude the chapter by analyzing how the binaries of high/low, masculine/feminine, natural/mechanical, mind/body, and spiritual/scientific are at work over the course of the period influencing the politics of vocal instruction.

#### DR. JAMES RUSH: A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO ELOCUTION

Dr. James Rush was born into a Philadelphia family that had been deeply involved in the American Revolution. His father, Dr. Benjamin Rush, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and assisted Thomas Paine in his work on “Common Sense.” His mother was the daughter of Richard Stockton, another signer of the Declaration. As both a Son of Liberty and Lutheran reverend, Benjamin Rush tempered his interest in science and medicine with his faith. The Lutheran community in Philadelphia constantly challenged the elder Rush’s deistic beliefs. Nonetheless, he fostered an interest in the principles of the scientific method in young James that would lead to his own wrestling with his religious beliefs (Hale 220-223).

Many of the Sons of Liberty were interested in elocution, an import from Britain where it was extremely popular. While the works of Cicero and Quintilian and the rhetorical canon of delivery had been studied for centuries, at this time there was an explosion of interest in the study of delivery (Haberman 108). According to Haberman, the British elocutionary movement grew in response to the generally bad delivery of preachers, a recognition that the English language was worth studying, the persuasive nature of delivery, and the popularity of the theatre (Haberman 105-108). Actors Thomas Sheridan and John Walker drew on their stage experience to teach delivery techniques to members of polite society for use in venues of oratory or reading

aloud. In turn, copies of Sheridan's *A Course of Lectures on Elocution* and Walker's *Elements of Elocution* found their way into the libraries of notable U.S. families, that is, those wealthy enough to own libraries.

While often housed within the same mechanical school, Sheridan approached voice instruction differently than did Walker. Sheridan looked to “nature for examples of good technique,” basing his methods “upon an imitation of natural speech forms, such as conversational variations in pitch, force, time, and quality” (Robb 217). Considered more mechanical in approach, Walker and others “devised many rules and notations and postulated the idea that if the rules were carefully followed the techniques of good oral communication could be learned and also recorded for future students” (Robb 217). While Robb contends that the natural and mechanical approaches continue to influence delivery throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Giles Wilkeson Gray is dubious about their importance:

I find very little in the writings of these originators of the theory of elocution to indicate that any of them were attempting to set up a system of rigid patterns into which all delivery was to be cast. It is for this reason that I take very little stock in the attempts to dichotomize the whole class of teachers and writers in the field of elocution as belonging to either the "mechanical" or the "natural." All those writers, so far as I have found, based their analyses on what they conceived to be observable in nature and that would tend to put them in the "natural school." (Giles Wilkeson Gray 4)

The distinctions between natural and mechanical might be viewed more productively in regards to whether one processes delivery from the inside-out or the outside-in. That is, does one allow (natural) thought processes and feelings to effect voice or does one listen to and imitate (the nature of) voices external to oneself? The outside-in approach is evident in James Burgh's *The Art of Speaking*, which provides the student with picture upon picture of hand gestures that are meant to convey emotions. By imitating a given gesture correctly, one expresses the proper emotion.

James Rush was familiar with the works of Sheridan and Walker among others in the British elocutionary movement. His library is filled with works on elocution in which he made copious notes leading up to his writing of *The Philosophy of the Human Voice: Embracing its Physiological History; together with a System of Principles, by which Criticism in the Art of Elocution may be Rendered Intelligible, and Instruction, Definite and Comprehensive*, which was published in 1827. Rush appears to have become interested in elocution and wrote *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* after his medical training, as indicated by his attempt to describe the physiology of vocal production. Rush parses out anatomy from physiology by stating that anatomy “embraces a description of the vocal organs” and physiology describes “the functions performed by that organization” (Rush 97-98). Rush claims that the anatomy of the voice has been fully documented, but that vocal physiology has “in a great measure been disregarded” (Rush 98). For the most part, Rush is interested in describing the vocal apparatus and not in providing instruction as to its use, although near the end of the text he tells the reader that he hopes others will apply his efforts to a method for instruction in elocution.

At the beginning his text, in “Divisions of Vocal Sound,” Rush divides vocal sound into five categories: quality, force, time, abruptness, and pitch (Rush 31). Quality of voice is described by means of metaphors, such as rough and soft. Force refers to the power of the voice, and time to the duration of sound as well as to the relation of speech sounds to one another. Abruptness is distinguished by the “sudden discharge of sound” as opposed to a “more gradual emission” (Rush 32). Rush is most concerned with pitch because he believes it has not been fully developed by theorists. As music provides a way to articulate pitch, he suggests elocutionists use notes on a scale to practice and analyze it (Rush 33).

Rush identifies four “qualities” of vocal sound: the Natural, the Falsette, the whisper, and an “improved quality of sound which I shall presently describe under the name of the ‘Orotund’” (Rush 81). Natural refers to everyday speech, Falsette to a high-pitched voice, such as that of a scream, and the whisper to a quiet aspirated use of the voice. While the Orotund quality is not so easily recognized and described, Rush tells the reader he will attempt an adequate illustration in hopes that the reader will be able to recognize the Orotund when she hears it (Rush 90).

An improved quality of voice, the Orotund, is marked by fullness, clearness, strength, smoothness, and a ringing or musical quality (Rush 90). It is resonant, audible, and lacks accidental sounds or murmuring. Oddly enough, it nearly begins as a cough (Rush 93). When I give Rush’s prompt a try – that is, I try to cough – I find that I inhale quickly while the back of my throat opens: the soft palate lifts while the back of the tongue drops down. Lifting the soft palate is consistent with instruction I have received in the voice in order to produce a fuller sound that is free of tension. Many instructors suggest that to lift the soft palate, one should imagine a yawn or raise the eyebrows, which creates a sympathetic response in the soft palate. This yawning quality is used by those who wish to protect their voice, such as opera singers and actors. According to Rush, the Orotund is “more under command than the common voice,” and “the only style of voice appropriate to the master style of epic and dramatic reading” (Rush 97). The Orotund voice, then, is associated with the trained speaking voice of professional speakers and stage actors.

Rush divides the “alphabetic elements” of speech into three categories. They are the tonic, which refers to vowels; the subtonic, which refers to voiced consonants or those consonants marked by the vibration of the vocal cords; and the atonic or unvoiced consonants, which do not engage the vocal cords (Rush 52-64). In this manner, Rush anticipates the creation of phonetic

systems, such as the International Phonetic Alphabet, which is standard now in the study of vocal sounds. Rush invents ways of distinguishing between the particular sounds created by each alphabetic element using a variation of musical notation.<sup>16</sup>

In *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*, Rush devotes a lot of space to discussing differences of pitch and force and their importance to expressing the meaning of a passage of text. Using terms from musical notation, Rush explains how intervals of pitch inform or are embedded in the composition of a text, which then a speaker can realize by using the same pitch. Of particular note is the wave pattern of pitch and force that differentiates expressive texts and speaking from those that are more monotone in affect (Rush 210-232). Rush is careful to point out that the use of the wave by itself is not enough and must be matched with an understanding of the text. To that extent he finds that “a union of the Verbal and the Vocal modes of expression, if I may distinguish them, seems to be essential....it is difficult to determine which is the most significant in conveying the sentiments of the speaker” (Rush 330). So, while Rush focuses on a scientific approach to the voice in his text, he retains the importance of thought in the process.

Towards the end of *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*, Rush presents two sections that are particularly important to thinking about voice instruction during this period. First, in his discussion of the vocal signs of the passions, Rush criticizes the practice of John Walker. Second, Rush applies his theories to a blueprint for a method of voice instruction.

Rush claims that Walker’s discussion of the passions is fraught with problems because it is “unintelligible” and displays an “unnatural paternity in instruction” (Rush 328, 328). When I reviewed Walker’s discussion of the passions, I found that he describes external shows of

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<sup>16</sup> See Emsley, Thomas, and Sifritt for a discussion of the development of phonetic alphabets starting in the nineteenth century.

passion in order to provide the student with a physical model he can imitate in order to create a given passion in a text (Walker 308-79). Walker then proceeds to provide examples of passions in texts. While it is not clear if Rush finds Walker's brand of paternity "unnatural" or paternity itself "unnatural," it is clear that he dislikes Walker's emphasis on the external imitation of models in order to affect voice. Rush, on the other hand, suggests that vocal style should be informed by ideas. So, while both Rush and Walker viewed their methods as scientific, Rush criticizes Walker's "unintelligible" and "unnatural" system because of its *external* emphasis while his more scientific approach stresses the importance of *internal* processes. Notably, Rush would proceed to write a text on the human brain, pursuing his interest in psychology.

At the end of his *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*, Rush contextualizes his ideas for teachers of elocution (Rush 346). He asserts that the practice and analysis of the sound components, qualities, and alphabetic elements may not "create the essential powers of a speaker: but I know [they] can improve and direct them" (Rush 359). While Rush rejects external imitation because it reduces the independent facility of the student, he also finds that teachers who focus on "the spontaneous efforts of the voice" are at fault because they reiterate poor habits in favor of what is natural (Rush 372). For Rush, then, natural means to learn the physiological technology of vocal production so as to make good use of it as one expresses their own ideas and/or those of a particular text. However, it is only through meeting directly with a teacher, "without books," that a student can learn how to do this. Rush's focus on instruction contradicts popular notions regarding innate talent. As Rush explains, "wisdom and virtue" are not based in the "mystic notion of genius" that deludes so many (Rush 407).

Rush's call for physiological knowledge of the voice and his belief that elocution can be taught served as the basis for future scientific approaches to voice instruction. Rush develops a

method where knowledge of the vocal apparatus and the relationship between intonation and meaning is fed by thought and the imagination, resulting in excellence in the art of speaking. While *The Philosophy of the Voice* is intended as a *description* of vocal mechanisms, it is likely that future instructors with only a cursory knowledge of Rush's ideas applied his method *prescriptively*. According to Hale, many of these "overly-zealous teachers of elocution" abused Rush's work, which "earned him ill repute among most modern teachers of speech" (Hale 235). Although ignored within certain speech traditions, James Rush has a strong legacy in the fields of speech pathology and speech science.

In light of the five components of vocal production (i.e., thought, breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation) that I outlined in Chapter One, Rush's *Philosophy* features phonation and articulation most. Phonation, or the types of sounds produced by the vocal chords, is addressed in the section on qualities of voice, such as the wonderful Orotund. Rush discusses articulation in his descriptions of particular vowel and consonant sounds. Breath and resonance are largely ignored, but thought – independent thought that spurred the revolution – makes an overt appearance near the end of *Philosophy*. "The mind," according to Rush, "must furnish the design of elocution" (Rush 379). Rush claims, "No one indeed can read correctly or with elegance, if he does not both understand and feel what he utters: but these are not exclusively the means of success" (Rush 372). They must be coupled with knowledge of the physiology of vocal production and the individual phonemes of speech.

In the next section, I examine writings by and about several influential actors from the nineteenth century to see what kinds of vocal training they received as part of their actor training. As the stock company system in the U.S. failed in the mid-nineteenth century, demand for actor training increased as young people could no longer learn their craft by observing elder company

members. To meet and take advantage of the demand, schools of acting were developed by Steele MacKaye and his contemporaries, and I focus on those schools in a later part of the chapter.

#### ACTOR TRAINING IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

For 400 years, apprenticeship in stock companies was the main method of training actors. Actor training paid for itself as novice actors learned from older members of the company by performing small roles in plays produced for public purchase. This type of training was part of the repertory structure of theatre companies common in the U.S. during the early part of the nineteenth century. Although some claim the apprentice system was a fine way to learn how to act, there does not appear to have been much instruction. In *The Old Stock Company School of Acting*, Edward Mammen argues that calling the system a school would be a mistake. Rather, young actors learned the trade by participating in the repertoire of plays, imitating company elders or visiting actors, and learning tips from the stage manager (Mammen 9).

Edwin Forrest, the first well-known U.S. born tragedian, gained prominence within the repertory system. Although biographers offer little in the way of Forrest's training, we can assume that he received instruction in the manner Mammen describes. According to an 1881 biography by Lawrence Barrett, Forrest also performed with a small group of friends before making his stage debut, and, upon seeing Forrest in a play, a group of benefactors invested in the young actor by paying for lessons with the elocution instructor Lemuel G. White (Barrett 14-15).

Renowned for his physical prowess on the stage as well as an ample set of lungs, Forrest seems a departure from other actors of the period. He inspired playwrights to create new works for the stage that featured characters that fit his masculine image, such as Spartacus in Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* and the title role in *Metamora: The Last of the Wampanoags!*

by John Augustus Stone. Critic Charles Congden claims that those roles were “‘written for [Forrest’s] private legs and larynx’” (qtd. in Nagler 136). Many who witnessed Forrest’s performances noted his vocal use in particular, as does George Vandenhoff in his review of *Metamora*.

“I never heard anything on the stage so tremendous in its sustained crescendo swell, and crushing force of utterance, as his defiance of the Council in that play [Metamora]. His voice surged and roared like the angry sea lashed into fury by a storm, till, as it reached its boiling, seething climax, in which the serpent hiss of hate was heard at intervals amidst its louder, deeper, hoarser tones, it was like the Falls of Niagara, in its tremendous down-sweeping cadence: it was a whirlwind, a tornado, a cataract of illimitable rage.” (qtd. in Barrett 132)

Forrest’s vocality was so well known that it appears others imitated it, as indicated by Walt Whitman’s warning to young actors that they not copy it or his style of acting:

“The danger is, that as [Forrest] has to a measure become identified with a sort of American style of acting, the crowd of vapid imitators may spread quite all the faults of that style, with none of its excellencies. Indeed, too, in candor, all persons of thought will confess to no great fondness for acting which particularly seeks to ‘tickle the ears of the groundlings.’ We allude to the loud mouthed ranting style — the tearing of every thing to shivers — which is so much the ambition of some of our players, particularly the younger ones. It does in such cases truly seem as if some of Nature’s journeymen had made men, and not made them well — they imitate humanity so abominably. They take every occasion, in season and out of season, to try the extremist strengths of their lungs. They never let a part of their dialogue which falls in the imperative mood — the mood for exhorting, commanding, or permitting — pass by without the loudest exhibition of sound, and the most distorted gesture.” (qtd. in Nagler 546-7)

According to Congden, Forrest himself was concerned about his vocal performance, as “‘he tried...to be less outrageous; but he was rather worse when he attempted to be quiet than when he o’er did Termagant and out’Heroded Herod. Any attempt to utter anything sotto voce instantly suggested suffocation’” (qtd. in Nagler 137). These accounts provide us with an understanding of the vocal power attributed to Forrest.

Forrest’s vocal prowess was informed by a passing if not healthy knowledge of the work of James Rush. When fellow actor James E. Murdoch asked Forrest for ways he might improve

his voice, Forrest pointed him in the direction of Rush (Robb 189). In collaboration with William Russell (a teacher and editor of the *American Journal of Education*) and George Webb, Murdoch proceeded to produce a textbook of practical exercises based on Rush's *Philosophy*. First published in 1849, *Orthophony; or the Cultivation of the Voice in Elocution* underwent multiple editions and name changes. The final edition, *Orthophony: or, Vocal Culture* was published posthumously by Russell's son in 1882.

The authors explain that “the term *orthophony* is used to designate the art of cultivating the voice” (Murdoch, Russell, and Webb 7). *Orthophony* is intended to serve elocution in the same manner that the *solfeggi* (the do-re-mi system of learning a scale) serves singing and music. Although the text is divided into sections on breathing, enunciation, qualities, and force, a scant two pages are spent on breathing while the majority of the text is concerned with common errors in pronunciation and descriptions of sounds that borrow heavily from Rush. As so many other theorists and practitioners of voice have and will agree, Murdoch, Russell, and Webb claim the superiority of the natural voice:

A person of perfect organization and in perfect health, — in an undisturbed condition of feeling, and, consequently, with a clear state of thought, — utters his ideas distinctly and impressively, without special study. But defective organization, neglected habit, false tendencies in feeling, and confused conceptions, are so prevalent, that very few individuals in a community, can be selected as naturally perfect in the function of articulation. With most persons, and especially in youth, the negligence of unguarded habit impairs the distinctness and clearness of oral expression. The comparatively inactive life of the student, subjects him, usually, to imperfection in this, as in most other active uses of the organic frame; and every individual, — whatever be his advantages as such, — needs a thorough organic training, before he can pass successfully to the comparatively forcible and exact mode of using the organs, which distinguishes public reading and speaking from private communication. (Murdoch, Russell, and Webb 18-19)

As the trio sees it, then, the daily speaking voice of a “naturally perfect” person is fine for public reading and speaking. The problem is that obstacles of defective organization, habit, and feeling have corrupted the natural voice, and so the goal for voice instruction is to remove the obstacles.

Many U.S. actors of the period were not influenced by the elocution movement. Actor and teacher of elocution Alfred Ayres acknowledges that some actors had misgivings about elocution, apparently because the teachers were so bad:

This kind of elocution and the ignoramuses that pretend to teach elocution have brought the very name of the art into such discredit with the stage that most actors are of opinion that nothing is more to be shunned. Nor would there be anything more to be shunned if the elocution of the books and the elocution of the ignoramuses were all the elocution there is. (Ayres 18)

Ayres takes the actors to task as well, though:

But if the elocution teachers are as bad as the actors say they are — and they are, Heaven Knows! as bad, if you bunch them, as they well could be — are the actors themselves any better? They think they are. But how rare it is to find a man that does not think better of himself than he deserves! The elocution of the actors, as a class, is as bad as that of the elocutionists. (Ayres 19)

Ayres also finds that a central challenge to the actor and his use of voice concerns the delivery of composed and memorized, rather than extemporaneous, language.

In contrast to the bombastic voice and style of Forrest was the delivery style of Edwin Booth who was renowned for his intellectual approach to roles as well as his "voice of eloquence and beauty" (Winter 129). Son of Forrest's friend Junius Brutus Booth, the younger Edwin came from a distinguished line of actors. Junius Brutus Booth was a British born actor who expatriated to the U.S. and toured in a stock company. While some biographers claim that Edwin Booth received his stage training under the tutelage of his father, William Winter makes no mention of such an apprenticeship in his biography of Booth, reporting instead that Junius Booth was opposed to his son pursuing a stage career (Winter 4).

In his biography, Winter explains the differences between Forrest and Booth as coinciding with a "structural change" in the style of acting:

Forrest, although he had a spark of genius, was intrinsically and essentially animal. Booth was intellectual and spiritual. Forrest obtained his popularity, and the bulk of his

large fortune by impersonating the Indian chieftain Metamora. Booth gained and held his eminence by acting Hamlet and Richelieu. The epoch that accepted Booth as the amplest exponent of its taste and feeling in dramatic art was one of intellect and refinement. The tendency of theatrical life received then a favourable impulse which has never ceased to operate....The structural change in acting that has marked our period is a change from elaborate artifice to the studied simplicity of nature. (Winter 1-2)

Embedded in Winter's argument of a shift from artifice to nature are a number of other notable duels, such as opposing brain and brawn: Booth's intellect and refinement against the bodies of the brutes, Forrest and the Indian character Metamora. Clearly, class and race biases are at work here too. As Levine explains in *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, there was a concerted attempt on the part of those threatened by, for one, the immigrant hordes pouring into the U.S. to protect their interests by establishing distinct "highbrow" and "lowbrow" class lines (Levine 219-225). One way to realize this goal was by manipulating discourse so as to align the valuable currency of nature or the natural with the intellectual activity of highbrow culture.

Just as Forrest's career and legacy were impacted by highbrow tastes desiring a natural approach to acting, so too, elocution came under scrutiny for similar reasons. According to Robb:

The elocutionary movement, which had moved so rapidly, and perhaps faddishly, in the first part of the century, was beginning to meet antagonism in academic circles. It was becoming too much the performer's art and did not meet the needs of the students who were being trained for the professions of law and the ministry. (Robb 189)

The perception that elocution was artificial or mechanical negatively affected its popularity, particularly among those who were or desired to be of the upper or intellectual classes. The shift in taste required new modes of instruction.

Imported to the states by U.S. actor Steele MacKaye, the theories of François Delsarte came to dominate both actor training and elocution at the turn of the century. By teaching

Delsarte, MacKaye ushered in a new form of actor instruction that, in part, replaced the stock company system. In the process, elocution and actor training became integrated in the teaching of expression (soon to be oral interpretation) in schools across the Northeast for nearly fifty years.

#### STEELE MACKAYE AND THE DELSARTE SYSTEM

Depending on the source, Steele MacKaye is either the father of actor training in the U.S. or the founder of the expression movement.<sup>17</sup> MacKaye, who studied with Delsarte in France and returned to the U.S. with a version of his system, is both celebrated and vilified by theatre folk and speech folk respectively. After nine months of study with Delsarte at *Corps D'Esthetique Appliquee*, MacKaye became Delsarte's co-teacher, and upon his return to the U.S., MacKaye opened the first school of acting in the U.S.: the St. James School, where Delsarte instruction was offered.<sup>18</sup>

James Oakes, close friend of Edwin Forrest and executor of his estate upon Forrest's death, received letters from France lauding MacKaye's work with Delsarte (Shaver 212). Oakes forwarded the letters to Lewis B. Monroe and Rev. William Rounseville Alger, and when MacKaye returned to the U.S. in 1871, Monroe and Alger went to New York to meet him.

Monroe was one of the most influential figures in the development of both acting schools and the academic discipline of speech. He was the first chair of oratory at Boston University,

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<sup>17</sup> See McTeague x, Francis Hodge 558, Shaver 203, and Bahn and Bahn 149.

<sup>18</sup> For various reasons, MacKaye started and left several schools over a period of a few years. Founded in 1871, the St. James School survived a scant six months. After a successful return to the stage, MacKaye opened the School of Expression at 23 Union Square. Within a few years, he transferred his teaching to the Madison Square Theatre, which opened in 1880. Three years later, he left due to differences in opinion with the administrative staff. Finally, MacKaye created the Lyceum Theatre School in 1884, hiring Franklin Sargent to train the actors according to MacKaye's methodology. The main goal was to provide instruction in methods for actors that could be used in approaching whatever role came their way.

serving in the role until his death in 1879, at the age of 54. Monroe was so impressed with MacKaye's ideas that he brought him to Boston, in 1878, for a series of lectures at Boston University, the content of which inspired many of Monroe's students. Among those who witnessed the lectures were Leland T. Powers, Franklin Sargent, Carol Hoyt, Anna Baright, Charles Wesley Emerson, and Samuel Silas Curry – all of whom would form schools of their own in which they combined their experiences under Monroe's tutelage with their interest in Delsarte's system of expression.

Unfortunately, Delsarte left little in the way of written documentation regarding his techniques and passed away shortly after MacKaye's return to the U.S. Delsarte's methods via MacKaye had a profound effect on culture in the Northeastern states. The elocutionary movement had lost ground due to a perceived mechanical take on delivery, and Delsarte's praxis offered teachers of elocution an alternative to the external focus. It is important to note, however, that Delsarte was focused less on oral reading and acting and more on visual art, music, and opera.

Delsarte's theories are based in Catholic mysticism and an embrace of the Trinity in all things. The lungs, tongue, and torso, for instance, represent the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Delsarte links art to the divine, to the soul of man, and to the perfection of God. Responding to Neo-Classical thinkers who advanced an analytical view of beauty, Delsarte claimed that such an aesthetic perspective is "atheism disguised under the precious title of a new science" (Stebbins xxi-xxii). Delsarte's views restored to oral readers and speakers, as well as artists, the inspirational and spiritual affect of expression.

It is difficult to say how much of MacKaye's praxis drew directly on Delsarte's instruction and how much was his own invention. Paul Edwards claims that "the story of

Delsarte in America...is complicated especially by its lack of documentation: How much of it was authentically Delsartian? How much MacKaye's invention, how much the improvements or 'perversions' of MacKaye's students" (Edwards 66). The emphasis on Catholic mysticism, for instance, may be due more to MacKaye than Delsarte. We do know, however, that MacKaye developed a technique of physical gymnastics that Delsarte's daughter stated was not her father's and MacKaye's wife attributed directly to MacKaye (McTeague 31-34).

Two texts with very similar names, the *Delsarte System of Oratory* by multiple authors and *The Delsarte System of Expression* by Genevieve Stebbins, offer competing takes on Delsarte's work. In 1882, Edgar S. Werner published the work of a Delsarte-trained French priest by the name of L'Abbe Delaumosne under the title *The Delsarte System of Oratory*. The work was republished several times, augmented at each iteration with writings by Delsarte and others. In the second edition, published in 1884, a new section by Angeliqne Arnaud, French novelist and student of Delsarte, provides an account of Delsarte's training. Originally published in France under the title, *Francois Delsarte; Ses Decouvertes en Esthetique, sa science, sa methode*, the section is simply called "Arnaud on Delsarte" in the *Delsarte System of Oratory*. Published in 1887, the third edition concludes with a selection of articles by Delsarte translated by Rev. William R. Alger's daughter, Abby L. Alger.

In the *Delsarte System of Oratory*, Delaumosne's version of Delsarte's work seems much more mechanical than one might expect:

There is a fact proved by experience, which must not be forgotten. The high voice, with elevated brows, serves to express intensity of passion, as well as small, trivial and also pleasant things.

The deep voice, with the eyes open, expresses worthy things.

The deep voice, with the eyes closed, expresses odious things. (Delaumosne et al., 13)

Delaumosne presents rules for vocal production very like those of the mechanical school of elocution, and he often takes a negative approach, listing things that the speaker should not do. He dictates rules for inflection and rules for when to take breaths. Notably, of the 165 pages of Delaumosne's portion of the *Delsarte System of Oratory*, thirty-five are devoted to the voice, the remainder focus on gesture and how it relates to language.

The section on voice in Madame Arnaud's contribution to the *Delsarte System of Oratory* is quite short, although it is notable for several reasons. First, Arnaud highlights Delsarte's focus on the importance of breathing. She claims that "Delsarte established his theory of diaphragmatic breathing in accordance with his anatomical knowledge" (Delaumosne et al., 186). Delsarte opposed "costal breathing," which focuses on the manipulation of the chest and ribcage. Second, she differentiates between "vital" and "artificial" breathing. Surprisingly, Delsarte is in favor of artificial breath, which apparently "preserves the ease and freshness of the voice," although further explanation is not provided (Delaumosne et al., 187). It seems though that "vital" refers to everyday breathing and "artificial" to breath control that is special or trained; it is not habituated, as it were. Arnaud's comments seem to apply to singing in particular and she observes, "Delsarte has been severely blamed for the way in which he trained the voice" (Delaumosne et. al., 188). According to Arnaud, some find Delsarte's methods "barbarous," and although she is not knowledgeable enough to determine this herself, she does feel that Delsarte "endangered" the voice (Delaumosne et. al., 188).

*The Delsarte System of Expression* was written by Genevieve Stebbins, a former student of MacKaye's at the Union Square Theatre School and a private instructor of expression. Published in 1885, the text begins with a translation of an address Delsarte gave to the Philotechnic Society of Paris. Delsarte's address confirms the importance of Catholicism to his work. In the address,

Delsarte links art to the divine, to the soul of man, and to the perfection of God. “Art is, then, definitively, a mysterious agent, of which the sublime virtues work in us, by contemplative paths, the subjection of divine things” (Stebbins xx). For Delsarte, it is only by means of the artist’s relationship with God that he is able to express himself, and it is for this reason that “Never has an artist denied his God” (Stebbins xxiii).

In much of his address, as recounted by Stebbins, Delsarte discusses his education and the faults he associates with it. He is especially critical of a student being required to imitate his teacher, as “slavery is at the root of it” (Stebbins xxxiii). Delsarte recalls an experience in his youth of reading aloud for his different teachers. When he performs the piece for the first teacher, the teacher explodes and then shows Delsarte exactly how he should perform it. The same occurs with the next teacher and the next, each claiming there is only one way to perform the work. Eventually, Delsarte loses his voice out of frustration and overuse (Stebbins xxxvi-ii).

The description of Delsarte’s abuse at the hands of his instructors serves as the basis for understanding the revolutionary pedagogy that MacKaye and others promoted. However, it also stands in stark contrast to Delaumosne’s take on Delsarte’s instruction or the “barbarism” that Madame Arnaud describes. One quickly begins to understand the frustration regarding what exactly is the Delsarte system.

Stebbins authored almost all of *The Delsarte System of Expression*. Addressing the reader as “Dear pupil,” she provides a manual on expression that features a conversational approach to instruction (Stebbins 11). Given Stebbins close work with MacKaye, one can assume Stebbins’ text represents MacKaye’s techniques too, which is significant as he did not produce a text of his own. Stebbins emphasizes physical exercises in her text, and while she attends to voice some, she also recommends that the student look to “Guttman’s ‘Gymnastics of

the Voice” (Stebbins 187). *Gymnastics of the Voice for Song and Speech also a Method for the Cure of Stuttering and Stammering* was written by German Oskar Guttman and was published in the U.S. in 1882. Guttman’s text is notable because he spends more time on breathing than most texts from this period and because his “gymnastics” look very similar to current vocal warm-up techniques.

Stebbins’ own section on the voice recounts the triune divisions that Delsarte and MacKaye taught. Upon reiterating Arnaud’s emphasis on artificial breath and diaphragmatic breathing, Stebbins recognizes the three zones that Delsarte associates with the three different types of breathing. The moral zone is associated with the diaphragm, the mental zone with clavicular breathing (as indicated by the shoulders moving up and down), and the vital zone with breathing from the gut (Stebbins 187-8). She proceeds to associate these three ways of breathing with three different emotional states. She also divides vocal production into “three essentials: 1. The lungs; 2. The larynx; 3. The pharynx, nose and mouth-cavities” (Stebbins 189). She then addresses inflection, in which she quotes “the master” Delsarte:

“Persuade yourself that there are blind men and deaf men in your audience whom you must move, interest and persuade! Your inflection must become pantomime to the blind, and your pantomime, inflection to the deaf.” (qtd. in Stebbins 193)

In “Particular Inflections,” Stebbins provides instruction for creating the outward show of “groans,” “lamentations,” and the “sob” (Stebbins 195). She then includes notes from Lewis B. Monroe on “Principles of Emphasis and Inflection,” observing that “their minds were akin, and he [Monroe] welcomed every thought” she offered “with great joy” (Stebbins 196). Stebbins provides a practice chart for vowel sounds and consonants, but little instruction on how to produce the sounds.

The U.S. was ripe for MacKaye, Stebbins, and others to offer a new direction in vocal expression. Less than a year after MacKaye's Boston lectures, Edgar S. Werner launched a magazine dedicated to vocal culture that fanned the fires for expression across the U.S. First called *The Voice* and later simply *Werner's Magazine*, the fact of this publication testifies to the importance and popularity of voice culture in the U.S., a consequence many would claim was due to MacKaye's work. *The Voice* was a site for debate among the quibbling elocution set while it also provided listings for schools in the different vocal fields. The popularity of the magazine coincided with that of platform reading, and platform performers and teachers pitched their skills as well as looked for work in the classifieds of *The Voice*. It was here too that the New York, regional, and tent Chautauquas advertised their offerings and looked for entertainers to fill their many stages. The movement would recede in the early part of the twentieth century along with the interest in elocution.

#### THE SCHOOLS OF EXPRESSION

Inspired by Steele MacKaye, private schools for voice instruction popped up across New England. In *History of Speech Education in America*, there are two essays that address the growth of these schools. The first essay appears in the second part of the book called "Rhetoric, Elocution, and Speech," and in the essay, Edyth Renshaw describes the "Five Private Schools of Speech." In the third part of the book titled, "The Educational Theatre," Francis Hodge addresses "The Private Theatre Schools in the Late Nineteenth Century." The substantive overlap in these two essays suggests the close and contested relationship between speech and theatre education as regards voice instruction during the period from 1890-1927.

According to Edyth Renshaw, the "Five Private Schools of Speech" were The National School of Elocution and Oratory, The Emerson College of Oratory, The Columbia School of

Oratory, The School of Expression, and The Leland Powers School of the Spoken Word. The National School was founded in Philadelphia, by J. W. Shoemaker and Rachel Hinkle Shoemaker in 1875. It closed shortly after the deaths of each in 1880, and 1915, respectively. The Emerson College of Oratory, (first named The Monroe Conservatory in honor of Emerson's mentor, Lewis B. Monroe) was founded by Charles Wesley Emerson in 1880. The Columbia School of Oratory was founded in Chicago, in 1890, by two students of Emerson's. Founded by Monroe's assistant Anna Baright in 1879, the School of Expression would become more closely associated with Samuel Silas Curry when he and Baright married, although Curry continued in Monroe's old position as Professor of Oratory at Boston University. Leland T. and Carol Hoyt Powers, both students of Monroe, founded the School of the Spoken Word in 1904.

In Francis Hodge's account of the "The Private Theatre Schools...", the founding of Steele MacKaye's Lyceum Theatre led to an explosion of small schools across Boston, New York, and Chicago (Francis Hodge 561-563). Although Hodge surveys too many schools to address here, it is notable that she includes all the schools that Renshaw addresses. Additionally, while Renshaw attributes the legacy of schools to Lewis B. Monroe (with a slight nod in MacKaye's direction), Hodge links the growth of schools directly to MacKaye's Lyceum.

James McTeague draws on Francis Hodge's essay as a starting point for his consideration of actor training schools from 1875-1925, focusing in-depth on three of those Renshaw covers: the School of Expression, the Emerson School, and the Powers School. He also looks at two of the schools founded by MacKaye: the Lyceum, which became The American Academy of Dramatic Arts under the direction of Franklin Sargent, and the Madison Square Theatre school, which Dion Boucicault directed after MacKaye's departure. McTeague also covers the

Stanhope-Wheatcroft school, named for its instructors Adeline Stanhope and Nelson Wheatcroft, and the National Dramatic Conservatory under the direction of F. F. Mackay.

In what follows, I narrow my discussion to two of the schools all three authors consider: the Emerson School and the School of Expression. The central figures at these schools left behind a legacy of writings, many on the voice in particular. While these writings are attributed to the patriarchs at each school, each school also had a strong female leader, who directed the school upon the death of the patriarch. Jesse Southwick at the Emerson School authored a brief handbook titled, *Expressive Voice Culture, Including the Emerson System*. Although regarded as “the greatest woman reader in the country,” Anna Baright’s career at the School of Expression was overshadowed by the career of her husband S. S. Curry, who wrote prodigiously on vocal expression and its instruction at this time.

Instruction at the Emerson School sounds very different from the instruction offered by the earlier, more prescriptive elocutionists. The student-teacher relationship described in McTeague’s study is nurturing and supportive. Teachers understand that “since self-consciousness handicaps spontaneous outgrowth, the student should never be made conscious of his faults” (McTeague 109). Faculty encourages the student’s positive habits rather than focusing on their errors or limitations. Emerson’s close associates Henry and Jesse Southwick, who both taught at the school, claim that “free play” and “helpfulness” replaced the repressive regulations used by previous teachers of elocution at the Emerson School.

Emerson’s approach to teaching expression was influenced by Delsarte in particular. In his text *Psycho Vox*, Emerson claims that the “proper study of the voice is a study of the manifestation of the soul,” which connects closely with Delsarte’s focus on the soul of the performer (Emerson 11). “Think what an estimate the Bible puts upon the ‘Word!’” Emerson

exclaims, describing speech as a “symbol of the relation of Christ to the father” (Emerson 11). Emerson’s discussion of the father, son, and soul echoes Delsarte’s embrace of the Trinity in vocal instruction.

Jesse Southwick’s *Expressive Voice Culture, Including the Emerson System* is a remarkably concise and cogent work. It was first published in 1908, and reissued as recently as 2008! Southwick lists four types of emphasis: force, pitch, volume, and time, which are very similar to the five types Rush advances in *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*: force, pitch, abruptness, quality, and time. While Southwick’s volume may be akin to Rush’s abruptness, she views quality as a consequence of the four other components. Notably, Southwick draws a connection between force and thought. When discussing volume, she claims that “the idea of projecting tone is based upon the feeling of sympathy with those at a distance, and not simply upon the desire to make them hear” (Southwick 24). I have heard Southwick’s take on projection echoed by several of my own instructors. While the term “projection” is still popular in theatre and performance circles today, the term is not favored by voice instructors as it typically leads to vocal strain. Instead of asking performers to project, most current instructors ask the student to change the thought behind what they are saying, typically with a focus on communicating with the audience as well as with the other performers on stage.

An additional concern of Southwick’s is that the student should ignore her throat when speaking, otherwise it will become tense (Southwick 24). She also queries notions of genius and the natural voice. “Those who postulate the ‘perfectly natural’ voice...presuppose [a] condition of innate perfection” (Southwick 35). However im/perfect and un/natural our voices may be, Southwick feels that all voices can gain from direction and training. None of the voice

instructors with whom I have studied have mentioned Southwick although her text is filled with ideas, advice, and exercises that anticipate those of current voice instructors.

Samuel Silas Curry's *Lessons in Vocal Expression* is just one of dozens of books he wrote on the subject. In *Lessons*, he divides expression into three modes. They are:

Verbal, or the symbolic representation of ideas; Vocal, or the manifestation of the process of the mind, of feelings and emotions through the modulation of tone; and third, Pantomimic, or the manifestation of emotions and conditions through the motions and positions of the various parts of the body. (Curry 1)

Curry explains that elocution "often applies to the whole of delivery," although it sometimes is used to refer to just vocal expression. For Curry, vocal expression does not include "articulation, or pronunciation" but instead refers to "the modulations of inflections, the textures, and the resonance of the voice, by actions of the mind and the emotions and conditions of the man" (Curry 2). Curry focuses his instruction more on the expressive qualities of the voice, or vocality, than on the mechanics of speech.

Curry claims that there are two competing methods for voice instruction that are both invalid. First, there is imitation where a student is required to copy precisely what his teacher does. The second type of instruction is mechanical where one studies vocal expression and emotions in order to recreate them. Imitation does not take into account differences of "temperament" and "destroy(s) individual elements of power" (Curry 2). The mechanical use of the voice makes the student self-conscious of vocal use, inciting her to "think of the sign rather than of the thing signified" (Curry 2).

Curry offers his own version of instruction that differs from imitation and mechanization. Curry states, "Both of these methods proceed from without inward, and not as nature always does, from within outward" (Curry 3). While vocal expression should take into account outward study, it "must be studied side by side with the actions of the mind" (Curry 4). The thought

behind what is being said should guide vocal expression. Indeed, Curry believes that "wrong action in delivery can be traced to wrong action in thinking" (Curry 4). Change the thought and one can change expression. The use and consequence of outside-in and inside-out approaches are central to debates concerning actor training and performance pedagogy to this day.

Over time, the instruction provided at the schools of expression shifted away from a focus on reading aloud to a focus on actor training. Although Emerson believed his techniques were applicable to many different fields, the college made the noted shift around 1909 (McTeague 116-9). At the School of the Spoken Word, Leland T. Powers resisted focusing on actor training until his death in 1920, whereupon his wife and cofounder, Carol Hoyt Powers, allowed the shift to occur (McTeague 179-180). The Currys' School of Expression included actor training as part of the purview of expression from early on, and by 1909, the Currys had developed a full curriculum for actor training (McTeague 156). Many of the schools continue in business today. The Emerson school, now Emerson College, is nationally known for its actor training program. The School of Expression became Curry College. MacKaye's Lyceum is now the American Academy of Dramatic Art. The School of the Spoken Word continued as a training school for actors until the 1970s.

Although the many schools of expression contributed significantly to the immense popularity of vocal culture during this period, their legacy is often overlooked by both theatre studies and communication studies. I suspect one reason is that the instruction they provided was grounded in the mystical teachings of Delsarte. Another reason is suggested by James McTeague when he observes, "we have been brainwashed into thinking that significant actor training in America did not exist until the arrival of Stanislavsky in 1923" (McTeague ix). For McTeague, the focus on "inner technique" foreshadows the emphasis on the actor's emotional

life that will predominate once Stanislavski's techniques are introduced to the U.S. (McTeague 245). Viewed as too mechanical by those concerned with actor training and lacking intellectual heft by scholars of speech, the Delsarte techniques are largely ignored.

I find the vocal instruction in the schools of expression to be quite different from the instruction offered by the elocutionary methods that preceded it. As regards the components of thought, breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation, the expression movement was focused largely on internal thought over external technique. Breath became quite important with Delsarte and MacKaye's focus on studied diaphragmatic breathing as evidenced in Stebbins instruction. Southwick's call for relaxation of the throat directly impacts phonation, while resonance and articulation are evidenced in Curry's focus on the affect of inflection patterns and "textures." In terms of pedagogy, I find I am inspired by Emerson's recommendation that instructors reinforce the strengths of their students and Curry's focus on the importance of individual expression.

#### DUALISMS IN VOICE TRAINING

Historical movements do not begin and end at precise times, such as 1827-1923; rather a movement blurs with the past and the future, impacted by and impacting those movements that precede and follow it, each emerging to prevalence and then receding, embedded in the movement that follows. In this section, I discuss the different viewpoints of the noted time period highlighting the dual operations of high/low, masculine/feminine, natural/mechanical, mind/body, and spiritual/scientific.

Academic views of the U.S. elocutionary and expression movements vary wildly. Published in 1954, *History of Speech Communication* features essays by leading speech scholars of the mid-twentieth century, many of whom boast of the growth of speech education in the twentieth century and belittle the nineteenth century movements, finding them pedestrian,

whether mechanical or mystical. While Rush is respected, his work is often misunderstood and misrepresented (Shaver 216). MacKaye and Delsarte are dismissed as charlatans. Even the great Lewis B. Monroe, the head of the first school of oratory in the U.S., is not valued enough to be featured in an essay of his own, perhaps because he was MacKaye's loyal advocate. These examples reveal particular proclivities on the part of the mid-twentieth century speech scholars toward the high, mind, natural, and to an extent, scientific sides of the dualisms I have outlined.

In his 1960 essay, "What was Elocution?" Giles Wilkeson Gray revisits the British antecedents of the U.S. elocutionary movement before concentrating on the work of Rush and other U.S. theorists. Gray concludes his overview with an attack on the "false gods" of voice instruction, particularly Delsarte and his followers, whose mysticism Gray feels led to the demise of elocution (Giles Wilkeson Gray 7). Paul Edwards observes that Gray's article "barely mentions elocution's relationship to the professional theatre" (Edwards 17), resulting in what Edwards calls an "unstoried" effect. That is, Gray's history forgets the story of the close connection between theatre and elocution so as to advance Gray's preferred view of the field, dissociated from the lowbrow shenanigans of theatre. Gray's history and Edwards' comments articulate the high/low duel at work in the movement. Often the battle is difficult to parse out in the writings because class distinctions are unstoried by the authors; or, rather, they are storied via the author's discourse that assumes reader agreement with his often highbrow inclinations, as is evident in Winter's comparison of Forrest and Booth.

In his essay, "Rethinking Elocution," Dwight Conquergood attempts to "relocate elocution within a wider socio-historical context of racial tension and class struggle" (Conquergood, "Rethinking Elocution" 326). Rather than view the movement as a kind of inclusive literacy campaign, Conquergood asserts that it was a sign of "gentility as the

bourgeoisie conversed, read aloud, and entertained in their parlors" rather than attend the public theatre. As Lawrence Levine explains, during this period, the middle classes shunned the theatre generally as they felt it was a site of bawdy activity and loose morals (Levine 56-9). Levine proceeds to examine how, in the late nineteenth century, the middle and upper classes set about to articulate the class divide in distinct ways, resulting in the highbrow and lowbrow concepts and terms we use today.

As regards the masculine/feminine binary, it is compelling to me that during the phase most influenced by Delsarte, from 1871 to 1900 or so, there is an increase in the amount of women involved in the movement. The increase might be due to women having more leisure time to participate in vocal culture, or to the impact of the suffrage movement, or, as Cavarero argues, to the inscription of the voice as feminine and hence its appeal to women as a tool of expression they use well (Cavarero 6). Taking a close look at Genevieve Stebbins practice, Edwards finds her students were "almost exclusively women," indicating a broad "crisis of manhood in elocutionary education" (Edwards 7). Many of the schools I examine in this chapter boasted female directors as well as instructors, particularly in the area of vocal training.

While I have discussed the differences between mechanical and natural instruction consistently throughout the chapter, a few additional observations are warranted, all showing how the view and meaning of the terms shift in complex ways over time. Although Rush centered his study on physiology, i.e. the natural world, his documentation of inflections and modulations of the voice were viewed as unnatural prescriptions (that is, as mechanical) by many critics. And while Delsarte's praxis is advanced as the epitome of natural, Delaumosne's study of his techniques show that they are no less mechanical than those attributed to the mechanical school of elocution. The contradiction leads me to wonder to what extent it is the religious

proclamations and not the actual practices of Delsarte, Stebbins, Emerson, et al. that have been (mis)aligned with nature and the natural. Or, as Curry's distinction between the mechanical outside-in approach and the natural inside-out approach suggests, it is mental processes or psychology that we have come to view as natural in performance practice. Indeed, this view will dominate in actor training and voice instruction in the U.S. over the course of the twentieth century. I do not believe I need to rehearse here how an emphasis on the internal processes of the individual, *as natural*, benefits capital and a capitalist ideology, except to recognize that the growth of capitalism, knowledge of psychology, and the emphasis on internal processes in serious or highbrow performance came about in the U.S. during this time period, specifically over the course of the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.

The mind/body duel often enfolds and is enfolded in natural/mechanical and high/low attributions. In this chapter, the confluence of binaries was most evident in Winter's comments regarding the differences between Forrest's brutish body and Booth's refined mind. While Winter associates the body with "elaborate artifice," the mind is aligned with "the studied simplicity of nature" (Winter 2). Another compelling mind/body interaction concerns the "mechanic" Rush and his approach to instruction. He surprises us, I think, when he recommends that "the mind must furnish the design of elocution" (Rush 379). The orator should "understand and feel what he utters" (Rush 372), and couple this knowledge with how the physiology of vocal production can help him better express his thoughts and feelings. Rush's recommendation that we learn the scientific operations of the voice so as better to express ourselves coincides with what Neil Harris identifies as an operational aesthetic, which was popular with audiences in the early to mid part of the nineteenth century; that is, with audiences of Rush's time period and the burgeoning U.S. republic. Rather than claim innate value for an artistic object or expression,

an operational aesthetic emphasizes how things work, exciting the audience's "delight in observing process and examining for literal truth" themselves, as independent men and women (Harris 79).

The mind/body as well as the high/low and internal/external attributions proved central to the incorporation of speech education into the academy, as exemplified by two renowned public debates. The first debate occurred between Curry and Stebbins at a meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists (NAE) and the second between Maude May Babcock and Lawrence Talbott at the first meeting of the National Society of Teachers of Public Speaking (Edwards 63). At the first altercation, Genevieve Stebbins recommended using physical full-body exercises to teach voice, which Curry and many others found offensive. As regards academic acceptance, Curry won the bout. Mind: one. Body: zero. At the second altercation, in parsing out the differences between interpretation and impersonation, Maude May Babcock insisted on separating the intellectual mind-based study of reading aloud from the imitative body-based work of actors. Talbott countered with the argument that the mode and style of the text should guide the performer's choices, and given the range of texts, both interpretation and impersonation are viable possibilities. Babcock won the debate, resulting in oral reading gaining ground in the academy years before actor training. Mind: two. Body: zero

Clearly, in his *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*, Rush focuses on the science of vocal production as based in human physiology. The focus resulted in elocution gaining popularity for a good part of a century, until MacKaye returned to the U.S. with the teachings of Delsarte. MacKaye's import of Delsarte-based mysticism came at a time when there was a burgeoning of interest in mysticism and spiritualism generally. Following the ravages of the Civil War, people looked for solace in immaterial transcendent means and mediums, not only to redress their

personal losses and fears but to provide answers to the many social problems too. If Rush's practice sidelined the spiritual from vocal production, Delsarte's practice reconnected the voice to religion and spirituality.

From the early to the mid part of the twentieth century, speech instruction proves to gain prominence in the academy, while actor training largely remains the purview of private schools. But a comprehensive system for actor training comes to the U.S. via Konstantin Stanislavski and the actors who worked with him. Beginning in 1923, the arrival of the Moscow Art Theatre company to the U.S. sparks interest in Stanislavski's system, which proves to dominate actor training to this day. Interpreted as an inside-out practice that focuses on expressing the internal life of the actor and character, the system is reminiscent of Curry's praxis. As a result of the profound emphasis on internal processes, instruction regarding the vocal apparatus is viewed as an outward-in, mechanical approach by many and interest in vocal training begins to decline. However, the legacy of Stanislavski's vocal training has been overlooked by many actor training instructors. In the next chapter, I seek to recover Stanislavski's theories and practices for vocal training to inform a critical vocal pedagogy.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**A NEW WAY OF SPEAKING: KONSTANTIN STANISLAVSKI**  
**ON VOICE**

When Tommaso Salvini, the great Italian actor, was asked what one must have to be a tragedian he replied: "Voice, voice, and more voice!"

– Konstantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character* (94)

It would be difficult to overestimate the influence of Konstantin Stanislavski on actor training in the U.S. in the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> Although actor training was occurring in the U.S. prior to the influence of Stanislavski, to some it seems as if Stanislavski invented actor training on his own.<sup>20</sup> As James McTeague points out, the legacy of Stanislavski's methods has eclipsed the importance of the former schools of expression (McTeague ix).

Actors in the U.S. were ready for techniques appropriate to the new form of realism that developed in the U.S. during the 1920s. Although the theatrical styles of realism and naturalism emerged in Europe during the late nineteenth century, U.S. realism came of age during the second decade of the twentieth century (Brockett 460). Often cited as the father of "American Realism," the plays of Eugene O'Neill ushered in an era that required illusionistic techniques (that is, the ability to create the illusion of real life on stage), which is not to say O'Neill wrote only in the style of realism. Stanislavski's training methods were perfectly suited for U.S. actors and their audiences of the time.

Two major waves of influence mark the dissemination of Stanislavski's teaching in the U.S. The first was a series of performances by the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) in New York, in

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<sup>19</sup> As there are several spellings of Константин Сергеевич Станиславский, I have opted to use Konstantin Stanislavski, which I find used in most current scholarship. When quoting an author who uses an alternative spelling, I retain their choice.

<sup>20</sup> See McTeague (x). Also see Strasberg who claims, "Before the discoveries of the great Russian director Constantin Stanislavsky all acting was thought to be either inspirational or external. Now we know of a third approach" (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 5).

1923. The second was the 1924 publication of Stanislavski's autobiography, *My Life in Art*, followed by a trilogy of books on actor training published between 1936 and 1961. During the first wave, many MAT actors remained in the U.S. after the company's return to Moscow and opened acting schools. The American Laboratory Theatre (ALT) was particularly instrumental in exposing U.S. actors to Stanislavski's methods. Students at ALT, such as Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler, became leading teachers of versions of Stanislavski's system.

Once Stanislavski's texts were published in the U.S. students and teachers could read Stanislavski's method for themselves. Although Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares* has become standard reading in university acting programs, it is in *Building a Character* where Stanislavski details training for voice and diction. The third book, *Creating a Role*, provides approaches to the rehearsal process.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Stanislavski's first wave of influence, recounting the teachings of MAT actors who relocated to the U.S. and U.S. teachers who were influenced by them. Then, I examine the second wave by looking at Stanislavski's three major texts on acting, *An Actor Prepares* (*AAP*), *Building a Character* (*BAC*), and *Creating a Role* (*CAR*), with particular emphasis on the chapters in *BAC* that pertain to vocal training. In this way, I recover the important place that vocal training held in Stanislavski's comprehensive approach to actor training. I handle important aspects of Stanislavski's voice praxis, focusing on the components of thought, breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation. To conclude, I discuss Stanislavski's praxis in light of the five critical binaries that guide my perspective on voice training in this study.

## FIRST WAVE OF STANISLVASKI'S INFLUENCE

The predominant myth as regards actor training in the U.S. claims that voice was largely ignored until 1970 or so. In “Actor Training in the United States: Past, Present, and Future (?)” Ian Watson recognizes that voice training was prevalent prior to the 1970s, although it did experience a decline during the mid-twentieth century:

As one might expect from a training grounded in nineteenth century declamation with links to schools of oratory, speech was always an important part of training prior to the Americanization of Stanislavsky. The Group Theatre and the teaching that grew out of it moved attention away from the mechanics of speech and onto the inner-justification for how one's character spoke. But the pendulum swung back [in the 1970s] with the likes of British trained Kristin Linklater, Edith Skinner, and Cecily Berry. (Watson 26)

Established in 1931, the Group Theatre that Watson mentions studied “the Method” of Lee Strasberg, which was informed by Stanislavski’s system although it placed a greater stress on the psychology of the actor-as-character than did Stanislavski. Because Strasberg’s method became popular *prior* to the publication of Stanislavski’s methods, particularly those regarding voice, Strasberg’s focus on the psychological aspects of delivery overshadowed vocal technique. The growth of the film industry in the U.S. further contributed to the decline in the importance of voice training during the mid-century.

Acting for the camera requires less focus on voice than does stage acting. If the main concerns for vocal use are that the voice should be heard, understood, and used in a safe manner for repeated rehearsal and performance, film in many ways alleviates these issues. From the first widely released talkie, *The Jazz Singer*, in 1927, through to today, voices can be recorded and played back at a louder volume than the volume used by the actors when recording. In film, microphones are placed near the actors so that they only need use a conversational volume and tone. Filming alleviates the need for safe usage as scenes are unrehearsed in many cases or rehearsed at low volumes and then performed for only a few takes. Further, once filmed, actors do not need to re-perform the scenes night after night. The criterion of being understood still

requires that the actor stress and intonate words, however the familiar everyday language style commonly used in contemporary film eases this challenge. Further reducing the importance of vocal training, film text is frequently improvised so as to affect a more “natural” sounding delivery as compared to the expectation in the theatre that the author’s words be memorized and delivered accurately.

Lee Strasberg, a widely respected teacher of film actors of the mid to late twentieth century, recalls that after witnessing the MAT performances in New York, he decided to become a professional actor (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 41). The even quality of the ensemble acting on display in the MAT shows excited Strasberg and set the MAT performances apart from most U.S. theatre productions of the period, where performances revolved around one major star while smaller parts were played by less skilled or amateur actors. The quality work of the MAT inspired Strasberg to study acting formally.

After a stint at the Clare Tree Major School of Theatre where Strasberg studied "speech, voice, ballet, and other...requisites of the actor's basic training," Strasberg enrolled in ALT under the direction of former MAT actors Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 41). In subsequent years, the ALT would serve as the training ground for a revolutionary group of actors, directors, and instructors including Harold Clurman, Stella Adler, and Strasberg himself, all of whom would be involved in the Group Theatre.

According to Strasberg, Boleslavsky outlined three possible paths an actor could follow. The first path was the commercial theatre where the actor works to please the audience. Influenced by classicism, the second path of the French school focused on precision of technique. This approach was based in popular derivatives of elocution and Delsarte practice still operative at the time. The third path was one in which “the actor must live (through the part)

every time” (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 66). In this method, the externals of performance, such as “voice, speech, bodily actions,” are trained as are the internals or, as Strasberg notes, “what was...called ‘the soul’” (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 67). The actor could access the internals via work on “concentration and affective memory” (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 67).

Study at the ALT was split into three main categories. First the actor trained his body and voice, “which Boleslavsky called the outer means of expression” (Willis 113). These lessons were taught by authorities in “ballet, interpretive dance, Delacroze Eurhythmics, fencing, mime, phonetics, diction, voice production and make-up” (Willis 113). The second category concerned the interior aspects, such as training the actor to imagine himself in the given circumstances of the play. The third category involved “the enlargement of the actor’s intellectual and cultural awareness,” which was addressed through history lessons in “theatre, music, art, literature and ‘Ideas of Western Culture’” (Willis 113). Unfortunately, the actor’s work on body and voice at the ALT is not well documented. The ALT existed for just four years before Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya moved to Los Angeles; nonetheless, the school played an influential part in the story of actor training in the U.S.

While at the ALT, Strasberg met Harold Clurman and Stella Adler, and together, through the Federal Theatre Project initiative of the Public Works Administration, they formed the Group Theatre whose members have had a tremendous impact on U.S. theatre and actor training. Ian Watson claims that “the first critical step toward an American technique of acting that had its roots in the Stanislavsky system lies in the formation of the Group theatre in 1931” (Watson 66). Indeed, different versions of Stanislavski’s instruction were instrumental in the *dissolution* of the Group Theatre. Several members left to start The Actors’ Studio where Strasberg’s instruction dominated. Strasberg developed what is called the Method, which emphasizes one component of

Stanislavski's system: emotion memory. The Actors' Studio was vaulted into national prominence after Marlon Brando's performance in the film, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, although Brando attributed his technique more to Stella Adler than to Strasberg (Brockett 206).

Strasberg's focus on emotion memory in the Method has overshadowed the importance of other types of training for the actor, including speech. While, in *A Dream of Passion*, Strasberg mentions that "vocal training, relaxation, movement work, affective memory etudes — all these components are essential for the schooling of the actor," he does not discuss the noted components fully (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 78-79). Instead, he provides a cursory overview of relaxation exercises that involve a vocal release. Strasberg writes:

During the relaxation exercises, the student will often encounter some emotion welling up from within himself which sometimes scares him and hinders his effort to relax. The actor's first impulse is to try to stop the emotion from happening or being physicalized. This usually takes place automatically, since it is part of the social conditioning that we all are subject to. We must try to permit this emotion to be expressed. This happens through a simple procedure: the actor makes an easily and evenly vibrated sound from his chest: "Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh." (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 129)

Strasberg blames the actor's fear of relaxation on social conditioning, urging that the actor submit to the relaxation through, notably, the voice: releasing the voice eases physical tension, which then allows emotions to flow more easily than when the body is tense.

In the Method, Strasberg's version of affective memory focuses on recalling memories that spark emotions like those of one's assigned character in the play. In rehearsal, the actor explores personal memories that are associated with emotions similar to those of their character, and in performance, the actor aims to relive the associated memories as the scene and play progress. Strasberg advises:

You do not start to remember the emotion, you start to remember the place, the taste of something, the touch of something, the sight of something, the sound of something, and you remember that as simply and as clearly as you can. (Strasberg, "Working with Live Material" 132-3)

The actor's spontaneous response to the recall of sensorial memories creates the desired effect of the character living in the moment or so that is the aim.

Strasberg's Method has received harsh criticism from reviewers for its oversimplification of Stanislavski's system, including the lax attention paid to the actor's voice. Theatre historian Oscar Brockett reports that a frequent criticism of the Method is "actors using it often seemed so self-absorbed that they neglected the technical skills needed to externalize internal feelings and that they mumbled rather than speaking audibly and intelligibly" (Brockett 206). In *Acting: Onstage and Off*, acting teacher Robert Barton observes that Strasberg and others "took bits and pieces of [Stanislavski's] work, adapted them freely, and sometimes twisted them beyond all recognition" (Barton 111). According to Barton, the Method results in "self-indulgence, self-absorption," and "muddy, mumbled communication" (Barton 111).<sup>21</sup>

As indicated by the above-quoted passages from *A Dream of Passion*, Strasberg's Method focuses on the psychology of the actor. Later in the text, Strasberg appears to defend the Method against those who have claimed he psychoanalyzes his students:

I do deal with the total human being, the way in which he thinks, feels, emotes, behaves, and expresses himself, I cross areas that are dealt with in other contexts....I help each individual to become aware of the deepest sources of his experience and creativity and to learn to recreate them at will in the process of achieving an artistic result. (Strasberg, *A Dream of Passion* 104)

Strasberg's words anticipate how many current voice instructors discuss their work with actors. On the one hand, they claim that the link between the individual psyche and vocal use is central to success while, on the other hand, they claim that *they* are central to unlocking the student's artistry, resulting in success. As acting and voice instructors are not trained in psychotherapy

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<sup>21</sup> For a feminist critique of the Method, see Malague, *An Actress Prepares: Women and "The Method."* For a pro-Method account, see Krasner, "I Hate Strasberg: Method Bashing in the Academy."

typically, it is my feeling that they should not pry into an actor's subconscious. Instead, should they value a psychological approach to voice instruction, they should provide students with the tools they need to discover the relationship between their emotions and their voice themselves.

Despite and because of these various concerns, the Method has proven to be a popular technique for film work as the camera can focus in close on the performer's emotive center, his or her face. Further, should the actor's emotions result in a whisper, sob, or mumble, sound technology can capture, record, amplify or clarify the spoken words. "Even Readers' Digest versions of Stanislavski," says Barton, "work well...particularly for film, where sustaining, repeating, and projecting performances are not always necessary, because 'one great take' will do it" (Barton 111). Stanislavski scholar Jean Benedetti confirms that the Method is "extremely useful in the cinema" because the director and the editor can manipulate the flow and timing of the actor's performance. The theatre actor, however, "is in overall control of his performance - pace, rhythm, timing, emotional level - and he has to reproduce it night after night" (Benedetti, *The Art of the Actor* 148).

## SECOND WAVE OF STANISLAVSKI'S INFLUENCE

Konstantin Stanislavski served as director of the MAT when the company staged their renowned performances in New York City. The MAT's success at portraying realism onstage resulted directly from the actor training system developed by Stanislavski, which MAT actors Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya drew on when they began to teach at the ALT. During his visit to the U.S., Stanislavski was approached to write a memoir, which resulted in the 1924 publication of *My Life in Art*. *My Life in Art* stood as the gospel on Stanislavski's thinking as regards theatre and actor training until the U.S. publication of *An Actor Prepares (AAP)* in 1936. *AAP* is the first of three books, each detailing, in sequence, a year in the training of an actor. However,

because the second book, *Building a Character (BAC)*, was published 13 years later and 11 years after Stanislavski's death, many thought *AAP* was Stanislavski's final word on actor training. In fact, *BAC* adds a significant amount of external training to the internal-based practice covered in *AAP*. Voice and speech are central to the technical training described in *BAC*. The final book in the trilogy, *Creating a Role (CAR)*, published in 1961, details the rehearsal process of a production during the third year of training and provides a method of physical action for performance.

Translator of the trilogy for the U.S. market, Elizabeth Hapgood, provides a note at the beginning of *BAC* that explains the delay in publication. While they were hoping to publish as early as 1924, Stanislavski's continuing quest for a more perfect method resulted in a delay. Further, in 1928, he suffered a heart attack. While recovering in southern France, Stanislavski met with Hapgood and renewed his commitment to complete documentation of his method. At this time, Stanislavski planned a single volume that would cover the first two years of training and a second book that detailed work on a production. According to Hapgood, Stanislavski sent the first year to her "because he had lacked the time and strength to edit all his material, and also because he believed its inclusion in [just] one volume would further delay the book" (Hapgood 2).

Translator of a 2007 version of all three books (the first two in a single edition, and the third on its own), Jean Benedetti offers additional insight into the publication of the books based on evidence that has come to light since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. First, Benedetti claims that Stanislavski pulled together unfinished writings and journals for the first volume, much of which predates the Revolution (Benedetti, "Translator's Forward" xv). The first year focuses on "the inner life of a character" and the second year on "how this is expressed in

physical and technical terms" (Benedetti, "Translator's Forward" xv-xvi). Stanislavski intended both years within one volume because he was afraid that "the psychological aspects of acting would be identified as the total 'system' itself" (Benedetti, "Translator's Forward" xvi). As it turns out, Stanislavski's fears came to pass. Due to the delayed publication of *BAC*, *AAP* became the official word on Stanislavski's system and, as a result, "Directors have seen the 'system' as purely 'psychological,' they are unaware of the enormous emphasis Stanislavski placed on physical and vocal technique" (Benedetti, "Translator's Forward" xvi). In "The Teaching of Acting in American Colleges and Universities, 1920-1960," Patti Gillespie and Kenneth Cameron support Benedetti's view when they observe that *BAC* made "less impact than the many essays about Stanislavski," and that "although both educators and professionals praised the book," it "did not have the same effect as *An Actor Prepares*," which has become standard reading in university theatre programs (Gillespie and Cameron 58).

Stanislavski wrote *AAP*, *BAC*, and *CAR* in the style of a journal written by the student Kostya Nazvanov. Kostya is a nickname for Konstantin, and Nazvanov translates to "chosen one" (Whyman xvi). Kostya's classmates appear throughout the series, and they include Grisha, Paul, Sonya, Vanya, and Leo. The characters' traits align with their last names, which, translated, are "Brainy, Fatty, Pretty-face, Youngster, Happy, Showy" (Benedetti, "Translator's Forward" xxi). In the first two books, the actors take classes with the director Tortsov, which means "creator" in Russian, and in the third book, he directs the students in a production of *Othello*. Hapgood explains that the "semi-fiction" format of the book creates a distance from the actual performers with whom Stanislavski may have worked. She claims that "he himself (Stanislavski) appears under the name of Tortsov" while "the enthusiastic student who keeps the record of the lessons is the Stanislavski of half a century ago" (Hapgood v). By presenting a

double version of himself as director-teacher and student, Stanislavski infers that one is always a student from whom one can learn continuously, while he also highlights the “double life” of the actor, central to the activity of theatre. Below, I cover the main tenets of the system taught and practiced in *AAP*, which then provide a grounding for a close examination of the chapters on voice training in *BAC*.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Stanislavski's theories on acting are an outgrowth of the philosophic and scientific thought of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are several major and sometimes conflicting influences on Stanislavski's system. These influences include romanticism, a theory of affective memory from the French philosopher Théodule Ribot, and reflexology as theorized and tested by Ivan Pavlov.

Towards the end of *BAC*, Tortsov asks his assistant to create a series of banners that outline the system the students have been studying for the past two years. At the base of the banners, serving as the foundation of the system, is a quote from Russian romanticist Alexander Pushkin that states, “Sincerity of emotions, verisimilitude of feelings in given circumstances, that is what our mind requires from the playwright” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 270). Romanticism developed during the nineteenth century as a counter response to modernity as typified by industrialization and urbanization. As modern life corrupts the mind and body, romanticists suggest we look to the fundamental laws and processes of Nature to redress the impact and discover Truth, that is, the true order of things. By expressing our discoveries through art, we might counter the ill effects of modernity and redeem humanity. In Stanislavski's system, the romanticist trust in Nature is evident in Stanislavski's view of his method as an organic process and in the training of the body and voice so as to address their corruption and return them to a

natural expressive state. In so doing, the body and voice are better able to infer the internal life of the character, which after all is the main aim of the system and Pushkin's quote.

Stanislavski mentions French philosopher and psychologist Théodule Ribot throughout *AAP* and *BAC*. In particular, Ribot's theory of affective memory influenced Stanislavski's concept and activation of emotion memory. Ribot claimed that associated feelings and sensations were stored in the subconscious memories of individuals. Emotion memory sought to access these feelings and sensations through conscious means. Emotion memory inspired Strasberg's method, which I described earlier in the chapter.

Russian behaviorist Ivan Pavlov also influenced Stanislavski's system. Drawing on his renowned experiment with dogs, Pavlov theorized that external stimuli cause involuntary responses in the nervous system that circumvent conscious thought. In his system, Stanislavski's increasing emphasis on physical action as a stimulator of interior feelings is based in Pavlov's findings. Due to the emphasis on external causes in Pavlov's theory, a theory of reflexology, it was one of the few psychological theories embraced by the Soviet Union (Whyman 7).

Stanislavski began to develop his system prior to the Revolution, and he continued to adjust it through the Revolutionary period and Soviet regime. The shifting social-political scene has an indirect bearing on the system as documented in *AAP*, *BAC*, and *CAR*. In the pre-Revolutionary period, an internal approach to acting is stressed and *AAP* focuses on this approach. After the Revolution, the internal stress is tempered with external cause and bodily technique or technology, as is articulated in *BAC*. And, in *CAR*, Stanislavski further extends the importance of external stimuli by introducing a system of physical actions.

## *AN ACTOR PREPARES*

The main tenets for activating the inner creative state in Stanislavski's system are provided in *AAP*.<sup>22</sup> In *AAP*, Kostya enters his first year of actor training under the direction of Tortsov. For the first exercise, Tortsov asks the students to work in pairs to prepare a scene from a classic play. Kostya decides to play Shakespeare's Othello with his friend Paul playing Iago. All of the students present their scenes to Tortsov with very little success. Tortsov then begins a course of instruction meant to address the issues that the students faced in working on their scenes. After several weeks, Kostya expresses admiration for Tortsov's choice to let them begin in failure:

What a good lesson the Director gave us in that test performance, when we did all the wrong things with complete assurance. It was a wise and convincing way of proving his point. (Stanislavski, *AAP* 110)

While it may seem unnecessarily cruel to allow students to fail an assignment for which there has been no instruction, as a result of doing so, students experience their failings and hence their need for instruction, leaving them open and receptive to an instructor's teachings in the future.

Tortsov explains that acting "calls for extremely complicated creative work. This work is carried on in part under the control of our consciousness, but a much more significant proportion is subconscious and involuntary" (Stanislavski, *AAP* 14). By means of Stanislavski's system, then, one aims to control consciously those techniques that excite the subconscious or inner life of the actor and character. "Living the part" is the aim of the training Tortsov will provide.

"To play truly means to be right, logical, coherent, to think, strive, feel and act in unison with your role....If you take all these internal processes, and adapt them to the spiritual

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<sup>22</sup> For an in-depth summary of *AAP*, see Merlin (39-82).

and physical life of the person you are representing, we call that living the part.”  
(Stanislavski, *AAP* 14)<sup>23</sup>

Techniques that are central to meeting this aim include the “magic if,” given circumstances, concentration, muscular relaxation, emotion memory, units, objectives, and the super-objective.

The “magic if” is the technique of imagining oneself in the situations in which one’s character finds him- or herself. The point is not to become the character, but to ask, *if* I were the character, how would I behave? For instance, in approaching the role of Hamlet, an actor might ask, what if I were the Prince of Denmark; what if my father had just died; what if my mother had married my uncle, what would I do? When Tortsov asks Paul to act like a tree, Paul exclaims, “I am an age-old oak!” Tortsov suggests instead, “Why don’t you say to yourself ‘I am I [Paul]: but *if* I were an old oak, set in certain surrounding conditions, what would I do?’” (Stanislavski, *AAP* 65). The “magic if” tool results in a process that is different from Strasberg’s method where actors become the character. Using the “magic if” encourages actors to retain their agency and not lose themselves in the role. The stress of having to achieve the impossible activity of actually becoming the character is alleviated.<sup>24</sup>

Stanislavski uses the term “given circumstances” to refer to the surrounding conditions or context of the fictive world of the play. These circumstances determine what “magic if” questions the actor asks and answers, giving rise to the creative work of the actor. Returning to

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<sup>23</sup> When I use block quotes to quote Stanislavski’s texts, I do not use quotation marks when quoting the narrator Kostya’s direct address to the reader; I use regular quotation marks (“”) when Kostya quotes other characters, as is the case here; and I use a single quotation mark (‘’) within the regular quotation marks when a character quotes someone else. When I do not use block quotes, I use regular quotation marks (“”) to quote Kostya’s direct address to the reader; double quotation marks (“”) to quote Kostya’s quote of another; and a single quotation mark (‘’) within the double quotation marks when a quoted character quotes another.

<sup>24</sup> See Mudd for an actor’s account of the problems that arise when trying to become a character, particularly when portraying actual living people.

the role of Hamlet, for example, given circumstances include that Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark and a student who, upon returning home from the university, finds his father dead and his mother married to his uncle, which prompts a different set of questions than if he were an elderly female peasant who deals in black market goods during war time. The given circumstances then direct one to consider the who, what, where, when, and why questions central to the construction of a character or agent.

Performing on the stage requires remarkable levels of concentration, both externally and internally. In Stanislavski's system, the actor is asked to focus their concentration on stage in the given circumstances of the play. Following an exercise in which the students appear to be performing for an imagined audience, Tortsov reprimands, "*an actor must have a point of attention, and this point of attention must not be in the auditorium*" (Stanislavski, *AAP* 75; emphasis in original). The onstage focus enhances the illusion of real life (that is, the real life of the fictive play) as the actors play behind the fourth wall of the stage, ignoring the theatrical reality of the audience. It also helps to address self-consciousness and stage fright as, conceivably, the actors are unaware of the audience. In addition to the onstage focus, actors are trained to focus their concentration internally as well, on the associated actor-character feelings and sensations.

In order for the actor's body to be fully expressive it must be free from tension and relaxed. After Kostya injures himself while working on a scene, Tortsov addresses the students.

*"You cannot, at the very beginning of our work, have any conception of the evil that results from muscular spasms and physical contraction. When such a condition occurs in the vocal organs a person with otherwise naturally good tones becomes hoarse or even loses his voice. If such contraction attacks the legs, an actor walks like a paralytic; if it is in his hands, they grow numb and move like sticks....It is worst of all, however when this condition affects his face, twisting his features, paralyzing them, or making his expression turn to stone....This muscular tautness affects other parts of the body also and cannot but have a deleterious effect on the emotions the actor is experiencing, his*

expression of them, and his general state of feeling.” (Stanislavski, *AAP* 96; emphasis in original)

Broadly, this quote shows the impact of romanticism on Stanislavski’s thought as he rationalizes that “good tones” and bodies occur “naturally.” By means of a series of exercises in which various parts of the body are isolated and relaxed, the students learn to reduce tension and restore the body to a more “natural” state.

As Strasberg stressed emotion memory in his method, many teachers and students assume that emotion memory is the most important part of Stanislavski’s system too, rather than one of many central components. In the one chapter in *AAP* in which Stanislavski addresses emotion memory, he distinguishes between it and sense memory, which are memories associated with sensory causes, many of which one stumbles upon unexpectedly; that is, they are not consciously retrieved. As a result, ““The *unexpected* is often a most effective lever in creative work”” because the emotion is recovered spontaneously (i.e., naturally) rather than mechanically (Stanislavski, *AAP* 165; emphasis in original).

Analysis of the play text is of the utmost importance in Stanislavski’s system. Units, objectives, and super-objectives are intertwined concepts that assist the performer in analyzing the play and the character she is portraying. Units make up the moment-to-moment action within each scene of a play. In the U.S., these units or bits are commonly called “beats” as a result of how the Russian instructors who taught Stanislavski’s system pronounced “bits” as “beats.” Tortsov compares these discrete units to a channel through which the actor constructs and plays the role. Each unit informs and is informed by a concrete objective the character desires to realize. According to Tortsov, ““Each objective is an organic part of the unit or, conversely, it creates the unit which surrounds it”” (Stanislavski, *AAP* 117). In *AAP*, students are taught to articulate objectives by completing the phrase, “I wish to...” with an active verb.

The super-objective refers to the main action and theme of a play, which each character's units and objectives should speak to and support in logical and coherent ways. The super-objective requires the actors to make choices regarding the "magic if," given circumstances, sense and emotion memories, units and objectives that affect their character in terms of a unified aim, thus resulting in the ensemble affect of system based performance.

By exercising these components, the actor aims to stimulate responses in her subconscious that resemble those that the character experiences over the course of the play, resulting in a convincing portrayal of real life. Tortsov sums up the first year of training thusly:

"All this [inner] preparation trains your 'inner creative state', it helps you to find your 'super-objective' and 'through line of action', it creates a conscious psycho-technique, and in the end it leads you...to the 'region of the subconscious'. The study of this important region is a fundamental part of our system." (Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares* 281)

By claiming that the process "leads you," Tortsov means that the system brings the actor to the role, which, in the spirit of romanticism, Tortsov likens to the birth of a new creation: "*the person in the part*" (Stanislavski, *AAP* 312; emphasis in original). Notably, the aim allows room for both the person (the actor) and the part (the character) in creative interaction.

#### *BUILDING A CHARACTER: CONCEPTUAL CONCERNS REGARDING THE VOICE*

Near the end of *BAC*, Tortsov provides his students with a conceptual-theoretical understanding of the system they have been exercising.

"The method we have been studying is often called the 'Stanislavski system'. But this is not correct. The very power of this method lies in the fact that it was not concocted or invented by anyone. Both in spirit and in body it is a part of our organic natures. It is based on the laws of nature. The birth of a child, the growth of a tree, the creation of an artistic image are all manifestations of a kindred order. How can we come closer to this nature of creation?...It is not possible to invent a system. We are born with it inside us, with an innate capacity for creativeness. This last is our natural necessity, therefore it would seem that we could not know how to express it except in accordance with a natural system." (Stanislavski, *BAC* 287)

In this passage, the author Stanislavski draws on tenets of romanticism to distinguish between natural and artificial creative processes. Whereas the latter is a concoction of profane modernity, the former is innate to us as human beings, although it has been corrupted by our everyday modern life and habits. By means of Stanislavski's natural organic system, the actor will excite inner and outer creative states that are of nature too, hence true and worthy of being expressed onstage.

One consequence of the process is that the voice the actor (re)discovers is a voice of Nature rather than a voice of everyday life, an innate rather than corrupted voice. The seeming paradox of an actor needing to train his voice so as to realize its nature is reflected in the following anecdote. While exploring the nature of inflections for particular phrases, Tortsov suggests that if an actor cannot realize the right inflection for a phrase, he might try to force a pattern on the phrase (Stanislavski, *BAC* 136). When Tortsov leaves the room, Kostya's classmate Grisha argues against such "forceful methods" to which Tortsov's assistant Rakhmanov answers that some "force is part of the natural quality of language" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 136). Nonetheless, Grisha continues to query:

"First we are told we must not talk the way we do in ordinary life, then we are told we must speak in accordance with some law or other. If you will excuse my saying so, we ought to be told definitely what we need for the stage. Does it mean that we must speak differently from the way we do in ordinary life? We have to speak in some special way, is that it?" asked Grisha.

"Yes, yes, that's just it," Rakhmanov said in picking him up. "Not as in ordinary life, but in a special way. On the stage we may not speak in the uneducated way we do in ordinary life." (Stanislavski, *BAC* 136-7)

In the logic of the system, one reason we (re)learn how to speak "in a special way" is because we are speaking special texts in a special space, and the speakers, texts, and spaces are expressive of the truth...of Nature.

When Kostya applies Rakhmanov's and Tortsov's advice, he finds that imposing external inflections leads his imagination to "a real, a living inflection" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 137). Informed, it appears, by the theories of Ribot, Kostya concludes, "That is where the true, the spontaneous source of natural speech technique lies. The external word, by means of intonation, affects one's emotion, memory, feelings" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 138). By adopting a particular external inflection, then, an actor will experience feelings that one would experience speaking with that inflection in daily life. By means of the exercise, Kostya implements a psycho-technique used to excite and express inner states. In other words, the inside-out approach can be bolstered by an outside-in approach in order to achieve specific aims. The simultaneous interior and exterior work of the actor implies a "double-life." As Tortsov describes, quoting Salvini, "'An actor lives, weeps, laughs on the stage, but as he weeps and laughs he observes his own tears and mirth. It is this double existence, this balance between life and acting that makes for art'" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 173). Just as the "magic if" provides agency to the actor, so too, a knowledge of these techniques empowers performers with technologies for the body and voice that inspire imagination and flexibility in their application. As Hapgood states in her "Explanatory Note from the Translator":

[Stanislavski] never intended that his statements be taken as rigid rules or his exercises be considered literally applicable to all situations or usable by all persons. In questions of diction and speech particularly, he wanted it understood that the primary purpose of the exercises was to challenge the imagination of the student of acting, to arouse in him a realization of his own needs, of the potentialities of the technical tools of his art. (Hapgood 4)

In *BAC*, Kostya goes to his friend Paul's house for dinner with Paul's uncle. Paul's uncle is an actor as well, and when Paul recounts the day's lessons with Tortsov, the uncle exclaims, "'There! You hit it squarely on the head: Infect your partner! Insinuate yourself into his very soul, and you will find yourself the more infected for doing so'" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 123). As

Paul's uncle infers, much of Tortsov's work with Paul and Kostya involves infecting and being infected by how words are spoken. "To speak is to act," the uncle claims, drawing a direct connection between speech and action, or speech as a doing act. The concept of words doing or performing actions has been theorized by J. L. Austin, John Searle, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and others under the label "speech acts."<sup>25</sup> Speech acts do something in the world, they bring something about, whether a relational commitment ("I do") or a physical action ("achoo"). While Paul's uncle and the author Stanislavski understand speech as performative, many acting and voice teachers do not and some actually claim that physical action is the only "doing" on stage, as words are too intellectual an activity for modern drama and its audiences.<sup>26</sup>

In order to understand the relationship of speech to action, Stanislavski offers an innovative approach to rehearsing plays in his final book, *Creating a Role*. In the chapter, "Creating the Physical Life of a Role," Tortsov asks his students to act out a scene from *Othello* without scripts. Thereby, Tortsov claims, they will learn the "simple physical objectives" related to the words they speak before they add the text (Stanislavski, *CAR* 133; emphasis in original). Later, Tortsov offers the following justification for assigning the physical life first.

"The greatest advantage of our method has to do with the thoughts, words, and diction of a role.

"You scarcely had to work on your lines because for some time in advance I had been suggesting to you Shakespeare's own words when...you were reaching out for...the verbal accomplishment of this or that objective. You grabbed them hungrily because the author's text expressed a thought or carried out a piece of action better than your own. You remembered the Shakespeare words because you fell in love with them and they became necessary to you.

"What happened as a result of this? Another person's words became your own. ...Now you do not rattle off your part, you act by means of the words for the sake of carrying out an objective basic to the play....Do you suppose that if you had begun your

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<sup>25</sup> See Austin; Searle; Derrida; and Butler *Excitable Speech*.

<sup>26</sup> See the comments of Dr. John Reich of the Goodman Theatre School in Schechner, "Stanislavski at School" (204-205).

work by slaving away to learn the lines, as is done in the majority of the theaters of the world, you would have achieved what you did by means of our method?...the answer is - no. You would have forced yourselves to memorize the text mechanically, trained the muscles of your speech organs to reproduce the sounds of words and phrases. In this process the thought contained in your parts would have evaporated and the text would have become cut off from objectives and actions.” (Stanislavski, *CAR* 207-208)

By exercising the method of physical action first, the text of the play eventually becomes “the verbal accomplishment” of the character’s objectives and the actor’s desires; that is, the words become “necessary” to the actor.

### *BUILDING A CHARACTER: VOCAL TRAINING*

In this section, I use the five central components of vocal use to guide my selection and discussion of the voice training techniques in *BAC*. The components provide structure for analyzing Stanislavski’s techniques, but require slight adjustment in light of the system. In *BAC*, thought, resonance, and articulation are of far greater importance than breath and phonation, which are taught by teachers other than Tortsov. Breathing is covered by Madame Zarembo via the singing lessons she offers, which Kostya does not discuss, and Sechenov covers “accentuation” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 172) and “the laws of speech” (Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work* 454). Below, then, I focus on thought, resonance, and articulation, followed by a brief discussion of breath and phonation as it relates to the musicality of the voice.

Predominately, Stanislavski deals with the relationship of thought to speech, and the main teaching mode for experimenting with the relationship is the student’s recitation of memorized text.<sup>27</sup> Stanislavski’s vocal theories as they relate to thought fall into three main categories: logic, visualization, and subtext. In terms of logic, pauses and phrasing of the text help one to realize the inherent logic of what is written and said, along with imagining or visualizing the

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<sup>27</sup> The teaching method in *CAR* that I discussed previously stands as an exception, or, more likely, it reflects Stanislavski’s revision of his system over time.

circumstances of the utterance. This process leads to various intonations that imply the subtext or what is not spoken. For Stanislavski, implying subtext lies at the root of a truthful expression of character.

Logical pauses and phrasing are critical to creating realistic stage speech. During one class described in *BAC*, Tortsov asks Kostya's classmate Vasya to recite a memorized text. Vasya begins and Tortsov immediately reprimands him for running his words together (Stanislavski, *BAC* 127). Tortsov instructs the students to "divide speech into measures" that include "stops or logical pauses" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 127). Tortsov illustrates the importance of pauses by showing how re-phrasings of a seemingly harmless sentence can result in dire consequences. Tortsov concludes, "the first work to be done with speech or with words is always to divide into measures, to place the logical pauses where they belong" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 128). In many ways this work seems rudimentary, and I find myself asking, if a performer has read and presumably understood a script, why does meaning have to be reconstructed? Why do logical pauses not happen naturally? Is this work necessary for dense texts only? I ask these questions even though I too have worked with actors who run their words together, eradicating the meaning of the text, while other actors seem to navigate the phrasing effortlessly.

In a later lesson, Kostya goes on stage and delivers text from *Othello*. The piece he has selected is long with only one period, so he assumes he needs to deliver it as one long sentence without pauses. Tortsov reminds him to add logical pauses (Stanislavski, *BAC* 129). After Kostya repeats the piece, Tortsov explains that punctuation marks require particular phrasing and intonations.

"Take away from the period its final rounding out drop of the voice and the listener will not realize that the sentence is ended and that nothing more will follow. Take from the question mark its typical phonetic twist, and the listener will not know that a question has been put to him, and to which he is expected to answer." (Stanislavski, *BAC* 130)

Tortsov then explains how commas affect the speaking of a text, showing how the voice rises and falls before and after its placement. He then encourages the students to explore other punctuation marks on their own (Stanislavski, *BAC* 131-2).

Stanislavski's training of intonation as it relates to punctuation recalls the study of inflections James Rush provides in *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*. For example, Rush notes how the voice inflects upward at the end of interrogative sentences and downward before periods (Rush 169-84 and 149-50). Although these kinds of inflections occur naturally in everyday speech without conscious use of punctuation, the habitual response is lost in the transfer of speech to the page. One runs the words and lines together, which when applied to memorization results in a by rote or mechanical-sounding delivery. The consequences lead me to wonder to what extent written punctuation lingers in the memory of an actor once she has memorized a text? Does an actor visualize the page, lines, and punctuation as she speaks?

During a later class, Kostya recites from *Othello* again. Tortsov tells him that he needs more power, so Kostya repeats the speech with more volume. Tortsov exclaims, ““What on earth have you done?...Don't you know that the power lies in the logic, the coherence of what you are saying?”” not in increased volume (Stanislavski, *BAC* 143). Tortsov suggests an experiment:

“Relax all the muscles of your vocal apparatus, remove all tension pressure, forget about playing on passions, do not be too concerned about volume. Now say the same phrase over to me, quietly but with your broadest vocal range, and well based inflections. Think up some imaginary circumstances likely to stir your feelings.” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 144-5)

Kostya tries the experiment by imagining he is admonishing a fellow student for being late, which results in his using an expanded vocal range, a musical “fifth” according to Tortsov. Tortsov then recommends that Kostya aim to extend his range further, to a full octave. Kostya tweaks his given circumstances by imagining the fellow student is a full hour late to class, to

which Tortsov responds, “[the performance] came out strong, not loud but without any strain” and notes the variations in pitch as opposed to volume (Stanislavski, *BAC* 145). Tortsov explains how soft and loud occur in relation to one another, concluding, “volume is not to be sought in high tension use of the voice, not in loudness or shouting, but in the raising and lowering of the voice, in intonations” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 148). According to Stanislavski, then, phonation and breath will develop naturally if the actor allows imaginative thought to initiate and inform delivery.

Stanislavski employs visualization in various ways throughout *BAC*. In one particular lesson, Tortsov asks the students the connotations of certain words. In particular, he repeats the word “cloud” with different types of clouds in mind, which the students are able to guess due to Tortsov’s inflection (Stanislavski, *BAC* 115). Tortsov observes that words that represent “an abstract conception” are harder to visualize and imply through voice (Stanislavski, *BAC* 117). Kostya tries to see “justice” in his mind and finds the experience frustrating and indefinite. Tortsov claims that “To hear is to see what is spoke of, to speak is to draw visual images” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 118). In other words, when humans speak they actually see the image(s) in their mind’s eye that they are trying to convey, and listeners see the images that are spoken. Tortsov implores, “when you are in verbal intercourse on the stage, speak not so much to the ear as to the eye” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 118).

Stanislavski’s technique of exploring the connotations of particular words anticipates the technique of “dropping in” developed by Tina Packer and Kristin Linklater of Shakespeare & Co., a U.S. based theatre company. The exercise asks actors to coach each other, so as to explore the words their characters speak. To play the game, the “coach” poses questions about a given word that the partner must answer, using the word but changing the inflection, tone, or other

variable to create meaning. For instance, if the word is “teeth,” the coach might ask, “How many teeth do you have?” and “What color are your teeth?” and “Are you scared of sharp teeth?” and the actor uses the word “teeth” to answer each question, differently. To explore the entire scene or play in this way takes a lot of time, but, in my experience, the words gain in richness and resonance.

Returning to *BAC*, Tortsov asks Paul to voice a few lines on stage. Tortsov claims Paul is not believable because he has not used his imagination fully. Tortsov asks Maria to play opposite Paul and tells Paul to try to convey images through his speech, looking to Maria for confirmation that she “sees” what he speaks. As a result of creating and speaking a film of sorts, Paul is successful in “mak[ing] Maria hear and feel what he had in his mind” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 121). In a later lesson, Tortsov reiterates the importance of replaying images in the mind while speaking, and he reminds the students that when ““words are spoken not for you, not for the public, but for the person playing opposite you,”” the replaying of the images will gain strength (Stanislavski, *BAC* 125). A further advantage of seeing and expressing images is that it allows the actor to continue to enjoy and to develop her role even after a long run.

The concept of subtext is one of the most important connections between Stanislavski’s general aim of revealing the inner state of characters and voice training. According to Tortsov, subtext is:

“the inwardly felt expression of a human being in a part, which flows uninterruptedly beneath the words of the text, giving them life and a basis for existing. The subtext is a web of innumerable, varied inner patterns inside a play and a part, woven from ‘magic ifs,’ given circumstances, all sorts of figments of imagination, inner movements, objects of attention, smaller and greater truths and a belief in them, adaptations, adjustments and other similar elements. It is the subtext that makes us say the words we do in a play.” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 113)

Subtext is revealed to an audience through the physical and vocal nonverbal acts an actor performs. Just as posture, stance, and gestures infer subtext, so too do vocal intonations and other paralanguage. For instance, the phrase, “I really love you,” can be intonated to infer sincerity or sarcasm, love or even hatred.

During one particular class, Tortsov performs a version of Kostya’s *Othello* monologue himself. His aim is “not to show off my own skill but to make clear to you step by step the secrets of speech technique, as well as the various calculations, considerations in an actor’s mind concerning the dramatic effect on him and his partner in the scene” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 166). I quote Tortsov at length (but not in full) because the passage reveals the thought processes at work in Tortsov and Stanislavski’s vocal praxis.

“I shall not show what is inside me!...I must save, build up my emotion....The phrase is not intelligible by itself...I must take care not to hurry....I shan’t take the highest note yet....Not too flat, put some design in!...I must climb, but not all at once, gradually....See that the second measure is stronger than the first, the third stronger than the second, the fourth than the third. But no shouting!...Noise is not power....Power lies in heightening....If I raise each measure by a third, then the fifty-two words of the sentence will require a range of over three octaves. I do not have any such range!...Therefore after a rise I shall make a light downward dip....Five notes up, two down again....Total rise: three tones. But the effect will be of five!...Nothing prevents my putting in a psychological pause. In addition to the logical one....A rest gives me time to check over my mental pictures... I come to the high note: Hellespont!...I shall say it and then I let the sound drop! Before I take the next, the final dash...I’m afraid of lapsing into false pathos here....Intuition, subconscious, nature!...Do what you will!...You have free rein! But I hold myself in, I tease you with my waits....Tempo and rhythm!...Even loudness!...Not a shout!... Then I add the period!...Do you realise what this means?...The period of a tragic speech?... It is the end!...It is death!” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 166-170)

When Tortsov ends, Kostya feels crushed because the delivery process seems so precisely planned and mechanical. Kostya wonders, “In moments like these can actors be moved by such technical and professional considerations? Where then is inspiration?” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 171).

This example explicates the type of double-life that the actor must inhabit while performing, using thought and technique in order to create a dynamic performance.

Unlike the many exercises Tortsov uses to teach voice in relation to thought, when he teaches resonance he lectures at length for what appear to be several classes. Perhaps Stanislavski is more concerned with explaining the details of vocal placement than in experimenting with techniques for achieving said placement. Nonetheless, some of the information Tortsov provides can be applied in practice to discover effective resonance.

While addressing resonance, Tortsov recounts his investigations into voice while studying opera. In his studies he discovered “‘the advantage of voices placed ‘in the mask,’ where the hard palate, nasal cavities...and other chambers of resonance are situated’” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 96-7). Opera performers impressed upon Tortsov that placing sound against bones, the teeth, and the skull results in a “‘ring of power’” while sound that hits the soft palate or glottis is “‘muffled’” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 97). In other words, phonation finds more resonance against hard surfaces, such as the hard palate and gum ridge, than against soft fleshy surfaces, such as the pharynx and uvula. Imagine for instance making sound in a room with no furniture, where the sound bounces around actively, as compared to a room where the sound is muffled by upholstered furniture, carpets or rugs.

Tortsov continues to detail his youthful vocal explorations while studying opera, including the practice of sounding a “‘moo’” to move the voice out of the throat and into the “‘mask’” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 98). Unfortunately, constant placement of sound in the mask resulted in a nasal voice that Tortsov sought to remedy by exploring other registers while returning periodically to the mask voice, which he accomplished by tilting his forehead and dropping his chin (Stanislavski, *BAC* 99-100). Tortsov tells his students that after a year of practice he found a tone that was placed equally in the nose and the mouth, resulting in an increased and varied vocal range. To develop this new placement, Tortsov learned to create

more space in this throat and thereby relax it by imagining a yawn while he sang (Stanislavski, *BAC* 102). Singing instructors often tell vocalists to think of a yawn in order to create a response in the soft palate that results in the velum tucking up towards the roof of the mouth and out of the way of vocal vibrations. Raising the eyebrows operates similarly.

Believing that “every actor must be in possession of excellent diction and pronunciation,” Tortsov begins a lesson on articulation by running his words together so that what he says cannot be understood (Stanislavski, *BAC* 85). He proceeds to explain that when actors muddle their speech similarly, misunderstandings result, and once an audience strains to understand what is being said, they become fatigued, uncomfortable, and lose interest in the stage. Then (God forbid) they begin to cough.

To avoid this scenario, articulation (also known as diction) is key, and to explain articulation, Tortsov quotes a Russian prince by the name of Volkonski, who observed, “If vowels are a river and consonants are the banks, it is necessary to reinforce the latter lest there be floods” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 88). Formed by the teeth, lips, gum ridge, tongue, and palate, consonants give shape and punch to sound, although they require more energy to make than do vowels, which are generated by the vocal folds as breath flows past them: a river of vowel sounds that can easily flood the banks of consonants, if the banks are not engaged.

Tortsov proceeds to explain the differences between consonants that are voiced and unvoiced, noting the relationship of voiced consonants to vowels (Stanislavski, *BAC* 88). (To note the differences yourself, compare the phonation of the voiced letter “b” to the unvoiced letter “p,” both of which use the same action of the lips.) As the pronunciation of consonants in Russian and English are quite different, little of what Tortsov says applies directly to English speakers. More general exercises do apply, however, such as exploring the sound of consonants

before exploring words that contain those sounds. Such play dissociates the sounds from (logical) meaning, allowing the students to focus on how the sounds are produced. As Kostya reports, “It was probably the first time in my life that I really listened to the sounds of letters” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 90).

In his teaching of diction, Tortsov leads the students in exercises rather than lecturing to them, and he seems to enjoy the process, encouraging the students by example to be gourmets of sound. As the mouth is both the center of articulation and mastication, Stanislavski’s gourmandizing has not been lost on modern voice teachers who similarly encourage their students to taste or savor words.

Having addressed articulation, which deals predominately with consonant sounds, it should be noted that readers of *BAC* are not privy to lessons for vowel production. Early in the students’ voice training, Tortsov relinquishes the training of vowel sounds to the singing instructor Madame Zarembo, claiming, “Vowels will not require my interference because singing will naturally set them right” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 92). However, Tortsov warns the students that singers often go too far with vowels and ignore the consonant sounds, which is why he will address consonants himself. In making the case for Madame Zarembo’s lessons, Tortsov explains that “work on voice [placement] consists primarily in the development of breathing and the vibration of the sustained notes” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 93). Breath and phonation (vibration) then are covered in the singing lessons, which Kostya does not recount.

Nonetheless, in *BAC*, musicality plays a key part in discussions of voice. As Tortsov claims, “Speech is music” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 83). For instance, when Tortsov recounts stories about his discovery of different resonators, he directly references his study of opera. He views voice as an instrument and words and text as musical notation (Stanislavski, *BAC* 225). He

addresses tempo-rhythm at length in regards to voice, physical action, and literary genres. While the rhythm of poetry may be obvious, prose has a rhythm too (Stanislavski, *BAC* 230). The central purpose for training in tempo-rhythm, according to Tortsov, is to “accept the fact that *tempo-rhythm, whether mechanically, intuitively or consciously created, does act on our inner life, on our feelings, on our inner experiences*” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 243; emphasis in original).

### DUALISMS IN STANISLAVSKI’S SYSTEM

In this section, I address Stanislavski’s system and techniques for vocal training using the five binaries, in an effort to reveal the poetics and politics at work in his praxis. The most evident binaries are the natural/mechanical, scientific/spiritual, and mind/body duels. The high/low and feminine/masculine are not as noticeable as are the other three, although they still provide interesting matters for discussion.

In Stanislavski’s system, the binaries of natural/mechanical, mind/body, and spiritual/scientific go hand-in-hand with each other. Because the natural-spiritual-mind is difficult to access consciously, the scientific-mechanical-body is trained to activate, service, and eventually give way to it. In this way, the end goal of creating and expressing the “inner life of a human spirit” (Stanislavski *AAP* 17) or, as Pushkin would have it, “sincerity of emotions and verisimilitude of feelings” is realized (Stanislavski, *BAC* 270). Both natural and mechanical (inside-out and outside-in) approaches are used.

The dual approach is apparent in the relationship of thought to speech. In the system, the logic of the external text predominates, providing the super-objective in terms of which the actor determines her units and objectives. The point, however, of making (conscious mechanical) choices is to activate the (subconscious and natural) imagination: the actor processes “magic if” questions, visual imagery, sense and emotion memories in response to the given circumstances

of the text so as to realize the inner subtextual life of the character. Co-created by the actor and the text, the subtext shows the mechanics of textual analysis to be part of or to become part of a natural organic process, as it is the subtext (i.e., the “inner life of a human spirit”) that “makes us say the words [text] we do in a play” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 113).

As regards training the voice, there are many incidences where Tortsov’s students express a preference for an inside-out approach and react negatively when Tortsov asks them to exercise a mechanical technique. Kostya is crushed by the pain-staking “step by step...secrets of speech technique” that Tortsov performs for the class, wondering, “can actors be moved by such technical and professional considerations?” Where then is inspiration?” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 166, 171). And Grisha is dismayed by the artifice of applying inflection from the outside, questioning the need “to speak in accordance with some law or other” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 136). However, in the same class, Kostya finds that when he imposes an inflection from the outside, it results in “a real, a living inflection,” and thereby he realizes that the doing act (the performative act) of speaking the words affects the performer’s “emotion, memory, feelings” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 137, 138). The idea is that over time the external technique will become so habitual that the actor will be able to rely on it without conscious effort. It will become part of the internal psychology of the character.

Just as the mechanical approach excites and services the natural aim, so too the science of the system activates and implements the inner spirit of the actors and characters. Because, when acting, starting with an emotion (e.g., I am sad) results in a fake expression, Stanislavski bases his system on Pavlov’s theory of reflexology, trusting that external stimuli will provoke an appropriate internal response in the actor over multiple performances. The internal spirit, then, is moved by external circumstances or context. This social historical understanding of psychology

makes a lot of sense given Russia's revolutionary move at this time to a Marxist or communist based system. However, the end goal of spiritual realism – i.e., expressing the inner spirit in a “natural” way – has not been overlooked by Marxist critics. Bertolt Brecht, in particular, found the language that Stanislavski employs to be overly spiritual. While Brecht champions the “progressiveness” of the system as regards to its ensemble work, he finds the language Stanislavski uses to explain the system “treacherous,” as it associates theatre and its operations with the mystique of (Christian) religion rather than treat it as a social historical entity that can speak to the “scientific age.” Brecht parodies the system when he writes:

A character should be “creative.” The creator is God.  
Art is “sacred.” The actor is to “serve.” Whom? Art.  
The actor “transforms himself,” just as in the Mass the bread is transformed into the Body of Christ.  
What happens on stage must be “justified,” just as at the last Judgment all must be justified that has happened on earth.  
Concentration is the “withdrawal into the self” of the mystic.  
The imagined fourth wall permits the actor to be “alone” with his God, art.  
It is a question of “truth”; it arises through genuine feeling, but that itself can be produced through exercises.  
The audience must stare “captivated at the stage.”  
“The soul.” (Brecht 156-7)

I think Brecht's argument is a bit of a stretch. When working with students, I find the terminology of the system is not overtly spiritual, especially when compared to, say, Delsarte's direct address of Catholicism in his method. There is ample room for students to channel their own spiritual content in Stanislavski's system. Further, I am able to address all the various components of the system without conjuring a deity or, as is the case with Grotowski's method, asking the students to confront a primal mythic experience.

The mind/body dualism is bound to the previous discussions of the natural/mechanical and the spiritual/scientific. At base, the body and voice are trained rigorously so as to redress the corrupting influences of modern life and return the body to a natural state, better able to express

the nuances of subtext as determined by the co-creativity of the actor and the text. Certainly, the end goal of expressing the internal life of a character contributed to the misconception that emotion memory was the key component in Stanislavski's system, over-riding the equal importance of the body and voice to meeting that goal. And, over the course of *AAP*, *BAC*, and *CAR*, the importance of the external body and voice becomes pronounced: in *AAP*, the students use the body and voice in playful natural and mechanical ways to excite their imagination; in *BAC*, the influence of Pavlov's theories of stimuli-response become evident as external technique is emphasized; and in *CAR*, a system of physical actions is articulated and tested. In rehearsals for a performance, the physical life of the character is processed before the actors learn and process text. Text does not predominate in the actor's discovery of objectives. Rather, the actors develop a score based on "simple physical actions," which they call on to motivate eternal processes, including reasons for speaking (Stanislavski *CAR* 150). The system of physical actions intrigues me. I am inspired to try the method myself in directing and performance.

As Judith Butler argues, the masculine and feminine are automatically a part of any discussion regarding the mind/body binary. In Chapter One, I briefly discussed the differences between masculine and feminine voices, where masculine voices are perceived to suffer from reduced affect and lack of variation in pitch and rhythm whereas feminine voices use diverse pitches and rhythms to display a wide range of emotions. With this gendered typology in mind, it would seem that, in Stanislavski's system, the natural voice that transcends profane life is feminine while the base industrialized voice of modernity is masculine. However, based on the division of labor between Tortsov and Madame Zarembo, the reverse appears to be the case. Tortsov trains the students in thought, resonance, and articulation, all of which take place above

the larynx, in the region of the head. The singing instructor, Madame Zarembo, trains the actors in breathing and phonation, actions which take place at the larynx and below, all the way down into the gut. On the one hand, the division of labor recalls the biases that Adriana Cavarero critiques when she observes that according to popular notions of femininity and masculinity, “Woman sings, man thinks” (Cavarero 6). On the other hand and with the first typology in mind, the division of labor suggests we need to distinguish between gender and sexuality. While, in biological sex, Tortsov is male; in gender, he is feminine, teaching voice concepts and techniques associated with the feminine voice and spiritual ideal.

A high/low duel is evident in the advancement of an educated voice over that of quotidian usage. When Grisha complains about the “laws” for training the voice, Tortsov’s assistant Rakhmanov explains, ““on the stage we may not speak in the uneducated way we do in ordinary life”” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 137). Additionally, Tortsov claims:

“Whereas distortion of our conversational speech may be half-way condoned in the surroundings of our home, any such coarse grained way of talking carried on to the stage, and used to pronounce melodious verse on exalted topics, on freedom, ideals, pure love – is offensive and ridiculous.” (Stanislavski, *BAC* 87)

Again, in order to achieve the goal of expressing the internal spirit of character and text, the attributes associated with modern life, such as distorted ““course grained speech,”” are denigrated. Notably, Stanislavski assigns the condemnation to the assistant Rakhmanov rather than the master Tortsov, either because he does not believe entirely in what “he” is saying or he does not want his character tainted with the discourse. Whatever the case, the preferred style of discourse in the system is a natural realistic style that services the expression of the spiritual psychology of character. As is the case with realism generally, the style should disappear so that the audience is not aware of the artifice and can surrender fully to the illusion of real life created on stage.

Some feminists have taken issue with realism because it reaffirms the political and class related biases already at play in society, thereby calcifying both the feminine/masculine and the high/low binaries, leaving little room for agency. Feminist theatre scholar Jill Dolan claims, "Realism is prescriptive in that it reifies the dominant culture's inscription of traditional power relations between genders and classes" (Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* 84). Further, it "naturalize[s] social relations" rather than interrogates them and (in the case of tragedies anyway) shows society to be "incapable of change" (Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* 106). While I wonder to what extent Dolan's views are true, it does seem that Stanislavski's system is best suited to realistic dramatic works. And, I believe that is okay. As I noted earlier, Stanislavski never wanted his system to result in "rigid rules or...exercises considered literally applicable to all situations or usable by all persons" (Hapgood 4). Indeed, as regards "isms," Stanislavski once stated that, "Human life is so subtle so complex and multi-faceted, that it needs an incomparably large number of new, still undiscovered 'isms' to express it fully" (quoted in Carnicke 14).

Another way to think about the high/low binary is in terms of the student/teacher relationship presented in the trilogy of texts. If we understand that a common student/ teacher relationship is represented in the banking model described by Paulo Freire, where active teachers deposit knowledge into the minds of passive students, then Stanislavski's system marks a departure from this type of relationship. The texts offer a unique pedagogical format and tactic. Rather than explain theories and practices in a top-down manner using dry professional discourse, Stanislavski composes a semi-fictional tale where his expertise is channeled through and tempered by the student narrator Kostya and his mix of personal, popular, and professional discourses. The latter is disseminated largely through the discourse of the teacher Tortsov whom Kostya quotes directly or paraphrases indirectly. In this way, Stanislavski represents himself as

both a lowly student and an expert at the top of his game, or more precisely, he validates the importance of being a student throughout one's career. The low-high student-teacher integration also reflects the double-life of theatre and performance and those who play and work there, suggesting to those who do not, the possibilities of thinking and behaving in multiple rather than singular ways.

As with Kostya's mix of discourses, Tortsov uses different styles to teach his lessons, such as anecdotes, lecture, discussion, modeling or imitation, as well as practical exercises where he encourages the students to discover concepts and techniques on their own. As regards Tortsov's use of anecdotes, the technique builds Tortsov's ethos with the students as they discover that he is not only an experienced actor but a student like them who does not know all of the answers to acting conundrums. Tortsov exemplifies performers whose curiosity leads them to develop their craft constantly over the course of their lifetime.

As I have shown, Stanislavski's system employs both natural and mechanical acting techniques in order to create the appearance of a natural (i.e., spiritual) life on stage. Scientific techniques are employed by the conscious mind to train the body so that it can excite internal responses as well as express them eloquently, artistically, "naturally." While the binaries of feminine/masculine and high/low play a less evident part in Stanislavski's writings, they do influence the typification of gender and discourse styles, and how students and teachers relate in the system.

Stanislavski's practice provides additional techniques for the development of a critical pedagogy for voice instruction. Stanislavski's treatment of relaxation, diction, and resonance exercises provides students with the tools to increase vocal range and expressivity and realize vocal clarity. His handling of logic, visualization, and subtext offers students ways to create and

communicate meaning effectively as well as build performances that activate the audience's imagination. Stanislavski continues in the tradition of Curry by providing tools for students to create original performances. His approach departs from those of Emerson and Southwick as he focuses on the students' weaknesses rather than their strengths, although he attributes the weaknesses to the ill-effects of modernity.

In Chapter Four, I analyze the vocal instruction offered by Jerzy Grotowski in his text, *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Grotowski's method both continues and contrasts with that of Stanislavski's system. Grotowski did not have an interest in realism, preferring to excavate and find ways to express the elemental nature of performance. Grotowski's ideas and training methods for the voice have been overlooked despite the impact he had on U.S. theatre practice and actor training.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JERZY GROTOWSKI: PERSONAL-SCENIC VOCAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The very walls must speak with the voice of the actor

– Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (147)

In contrast to the “real life” illusion that Stanislavski strove to realize in his practice, Polish director Jerzy Grotowski aimed to create an elemental ritual-like experience. Despite the differences, Grotowski viewed his methods of actor training as a continuation of Stanislavski’s efforts (Wolford 193). During his early work at the Polish Laboratory Theatre, Grotowski developed a rigorous training method for actors that included ample instruction in vocal techniques. Also like Stanislavski, Grotowski continued to test and change his theories and practices over his career, resulting eventually in Grotowski choosing to concentrate on the actor’s technical and psychological development rather than on staging public performances.

In this chapter, I examine Grotowski’s praxis of actor training, focusing on the voice and the significant contributions he made to voice instruction for actors. Having provided a brief overview of Grotowski’s career, I summarize his methods and aims as disseminated in his influential text, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, after which I attend to his training of the voice. As I explained in Chapter One, I focus my attention on those practices that concern breath, phonation, resonance, articulation, and thought. In the final section of the chapter, I turn my attention to how the binaries of natural/mechanical, spiritual/scientific, mind/body, high/low, and masculine/feminine play out in Grotowski’s praxis, once again curious as to the poetics and politics that result from their operations and integration in this case.

Jerzy Grotowski was born in Poland, in 1933. His early life was marked by an exposure to Eastern philosophy including an interest in the writings of the Hindi mystic Ramana Maharishi (Slowiak and Cuesta 4). Hindu beliefs combined with those of his Catholic upbringing had a

significant impact on Grotowski's ideas concerning the Holy Actor and the actor's spiritual relationship with the audience. Despite Grotowski's interest in Eastern philosophy and psychology, he attended the State Theatre School of Poland in Krakow. Intrigued by Stanislavski's system of actor training, he traveled to the Soviet Union where he studied with one of Stanislavski's students. While in the USSR, he also discovered the work of Vsevolod Meyerhold, who was first a student and then a partner of Stanislavski's at the Moscow Art Theatre, until he struck out on his own. Unlike realism, Meyerhold's stylized theatre approach was anti-illusionary, highly physical, visual, and musically oriented, and it highlighted the double life of theatre by privileging trickery, the mask, and the grotesque.<sup>28</sup> Later in his career, Grotowski will observe that his ideas on directing are informed by Meyerhold while his actor training praxis derives from Stanislavski (Slowiak and Cuesta 6).

Grotowski divided his professional work into five distinct periods: Theatre of Productions (1959-1969), Theatre of Participation/Paratheatre (1969-1978), Theatre of Sources (1976-1982), Objective Drama (1983-1986), and Ritual Arts or Art as Vehicle (1986-1999).<sup>29</sup> Although focused on staging productions early in his career, actor training became the driving force behind Grotowski's work. The imposition of martial law in Poland, in the early 1980s, resulted in the closing of the Polish Laboratory Theatre, and Grotowski moved to the U.S. There, he taught at Columbia University for a year before accepting a position at the University of California at Irvine in 1983, where he founded the Focused Research Program in Objective Drama. Due to pressure from the University to produce performances and a diagnosis of cancer,

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<sup>28</sup> After the Soviet Revolution and during Stalin's cultural crackdown, Meyerhold's work was found to be decadent, and Meyerhold was imprisoned and eventually executed in 1940. Almost all evidence of his career and prolific writings were secreted away until the last twenty years or so. For an overview of Meyerhold's career and praxis, see Pitches.

<sup>29</sup> See Slowiak and Cuesta (9-41), for an overview of each of the noted periods.

Grotowski relocated to Italy, where he opened the Workcenter, which focused on the role presence plays in the training and ontology of the actor (Salata 121). Grotowski died in 1999, and passed on leadership of the Workcenter to his longtime student and companion Thomas Richards.

Grotowski is well known for his Theatre of Productions period, particularly as regards the physical prowess his actors displayed. Many who witnessed a Grotowski performance recall that part of the exceptional physical work was the unique aural landscape created by the actors.

Reviewing a production of *Akropolis* at the Polish Laboratory Theatre, Ludwik Flaszen recounts:

The means of verbal expression have been considerably enlarged because all means of vocal expression are used, starting from the most confused babbling of the very small child and including the most sophisticated oratorical recitation. Inarticulate groans, animal roars, tender folksongs, liturgical chants, dialects, declamation of poetry: everything is there. The sounds are interwoven in a complex score which brings back fleetingly the memory of all the forms of language. (Flaszen 77)

Robert Findlay claims that *Akropolis* had a “persistent atmosphere of the operatic” (Findlay 8), and even Lee Strasberg offered qualified praise:

The use of the voice was an outstanding feature of the Polish Laboratory Theatre: the actors seemed able to use their voices in a way that would have strained those of many other actors. The method that Grotowski uses in training the voice deserves special attention, but the actual expression seemed to follow the conventional theatrical intonation. The voice followed a steady climb toward a point of emphasis. It captured a general sound image, but had none of the spontaneity and variety that reflects the possibilities of human expressiveness. (Strasberg 181-2)

When I viewed a recording of segments from *Akropolis*, when it was produced by the Polish Laboratory Theatre in New York City in 1969, I found the voices of the actors to have a rugged muscularity that was powerful: impactful. Perhaps, in part, it was the chanting and droning that Strasberg disliked. While the voices show tremendous vocal range and make use of a variety of tones, I too felt there was a lack of subtlety and nuance within the words and phrases.

Below, I focus on Grotowski's Theatre of Productions period because it is the featured period in his one text, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, and because it is the period other scholars have addressed most. As Grotowski favored the "oral tradition," he wrote little following the Theatre of Productions period, preferring that others write about his work while retaining final editorial control (Schechner, "Exoduction" 463). Although the Theatre of Productions phase was brief, the innovative training methods Grotowski developed there had a significant impact on his subsequent experiments, as well as on the work of a host of other theatre and performance practitioners.

#### GROTOWSKI'S PRAXIS FOR A POOR THEATRE

In addition to the Catholic and Hindu faiths and the methods of Stanislavski and Meyerhold, Grotowski also was inspired by the French Surrealist theorist and playwright Antonin Artaud and spiritualist George Gurdjieff. For Artaud, the true nature of theatre rests in its early connections to religion and ritual and their potential to transform attendees through an experience of *communitas*. Contemporary theatre was unable to provide this kind of experience to audiences, Artaud felt, because of its focus on syllogistic narrative and the internal psychology of individual characters (Carlson 100). In *The Theatre and its Double*, first published in English in 1958, Artaud theorized a "Theatre of Cruelty," which was a performance event that sought to provoke audiences to confront their most primitive unconscious fears, which are submerged beneath the civil behavior they enact in everyday life. Following in the tradition of Surrealism, Artaud felt this confrontation was beneficial to those who experienced it, as well as being honest and true. It was not in the least sadistic. One way to incite such an experience was to "put an end to the subjugation of the theater to the text, and to recover the notion of a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought" (Artaud 89). This unique language included:

The visual language of objects, movements, attitudes, and gestures, but on condition that their meanings, their physiognomies, their combinations be carried to the point of becoming signs, making a kind of alphabet out of these signs. Once aware of this language in space, language of sounds, cries, lights, onomatopoeia, the theatre must organize it into veritable hieroglyphs, with the help of characters and objects, and make use of their symbolism and interconnections in relation to all organs and on all levels. (Artaud 90)

The aims Artaud describes here are very like the process of *via negativa* Grotowski develops in his practice and also like Meyerhold's method of stylization where content is distilled to an elemental sign, which then can be expressed at that raw point or connected with other signs, resulting in a refreshed use and view of language. In this way, actor and audience are liberated from their habitual relationship to language.

Grotowski often protested against "the pervasive tendency to view his work as part of an Artaudian lineage" because he felt it obscured his significant debt to Stanislavski (Wolford 11). Nonetheless, in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski sticks up for Artaud, reprimanding those doing experimental theatre who have abused Artaud's ideas. While Grotowski himself claims that it is "impossible to carry out [Artaud's] proposals" (Grotowski 118), his praxis shows the influence – for example, in his general aim of ritual confrontation and transformation and the distillation of habituated language to elemental signs. Further, that which Grotowski claims is central to Artaud is central to Grotowski praxis as well; namely, the spontaneous interaction of actor to audience:

...the theatre is an act carried out **here and now** in the actors' organisms, in front of other men, when we discover that theatrical reality is instantaneous, not an illustration of life but something linked to life **only by analogy**, when we realize all this, then we ask ourselves the question: wasn't Artaud talking about just this and nothing else? (Grotowski 118-9; emphasis in original)

Understanding that "Cruelty is rigour" (Artaud quoted in Grotowski 125), Artaud also called for discipline and rigor in training, insisting that "spontaneity and discipline, far from

weakening each other, mutually reinforce themselves” (Grotowski 121) – a lesson he might have learned from Stanislavski and Meyerhold as well. The broad point of course is that by learning the technology or tools of theatre, by means of training, one is able to use those tools in innovative and creative ways.

Artaud’s and Grotowski’s confidence in the redemptive nature of elements recalls the psychologist Carl Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious. Jung linked the collective unconscious to what Freud calls “‘archaic remnants,’ which are mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual’s own life and which seem to be aboriginal, innate and inherited shapes of the human mind” (Jung, *Man and His Symbols* 57). According to Jung, the collective unconscious is a reservoir of pre-existent forms, or archetypes, that all humans inherit and that give shape to how we process psychic content. The collective unconscious “is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals” (Jung, *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* 3-4). While, in the twenty-first century, we might find the belief in innate trans-cultural structures troubling, they do inform religions generally and are at work in Grotowski’s praxis, as one of Grotowski’s central aims is to excite the collective unconscious of the audience by means of what his actors do.

An esoteric spiritual leader of the mid-twentieth century and a Russian, George Gurdjieff developed a method that people could use to excise themselves from their hum-drum daily existence and experience a spiritual awakening. Also called “The Work,” as in “working on oneself,” the idea is similar to Grotowski’s personal-scenic technique for actor training and, generally, Stanislavski’s psycho-technique.

The structural influences of Artaud, Jung, and Gurdjieff are evident in Grotowski's praxis, as is inferred in Zbigniew Osinski comments regarding Grotowski's work:

At the very heart of Grotowski's explorations lies a conviction about the existence of cultural generalities or cultural universals. This means that in a great many cultures certain elements are common, and thus they must have preceded cultural differentiation. In Grotowski's words, "sources – something quite simple – are given to each 'individual' – they are something given at the beginning." (Osinski 108)

In his study, Osinski connects Grotowski's search for "sources" (which Grotowski defines elsewhere as origins and even "*the origin*") to the same intent in ancient alchemy, alchemy in the arts, and the function of art for the ancients as based in imitation or mimesis, which does not mean the "slavish repetition of reality," but the "free enunciation of the artist about it" (Osinski 109). Like some ancient philosophers and alchemists, then, Grotowski strives to discover elemental sources and, by means of creative imitation, mine them for their transformative and curative powers. Hence, in 1967, he explains, "'our work may be understood as an effort to restore the ancient values of the theatre. We are not moderns, but traditionalists through and through'" (Grotowski quoted in Osinski 110).

The restoration of theatre traditions is apparent in why Grotowski desires to make "poor theatre." Understanding that "No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television," Grotowski seeks "to define what is distinctively theatre, what separates this activity from other categories of performance and spectacle" (Grotowski 19, 15). Channeling Artaud's ideas, Grotowski's answer is that primary to theatre is the present tense interaction between the actor and the audience in a shared physical space (Grotowski 19). Rather than a rich theatre of assimilation and spectacle, Grotowski "propose[s] poverty in the theatre" where the body of the performer is central to the

experience (Grotowski 19).<sup>30</sup> Typically, the physical context implies a role for the audience too. In *Akropolis*, for instance, the actors played concentration camp prisoners who built a crematorium structure around the audience, implying they were prisoners too. Further enhancing the immersive environment was the broader context of Auschwitz being located but sixty miles away from Opole, home of the Polish Laboratory Theatre.

Grotowski's concept of myth articulates why the actor and audience might gather to participate in a ritual-like theatre event. For Grotowski, myth is "a primeval situation and a complex model" that inspires "group behavior and tendencies" (Grotowski 22). As with Jung's collective unconscious, it is a trans-historical, trans-cultural deep structure elemental to humans. It is "universal truth" (Grotowski 23). However, because we have personalized myth and made it an "individual truth," Grotowski asks us to confront rather than identify with myth so as "to perceive the relativity of our [individual] problems" and "their connection to the 'roots'"; that is, their connection to myth as universal truth (Grotowski 23). In her training and performance, the actor confronts myth to the extreme, stripping away the naturalized expression of myth so as to experience and express the "concrete mythical situation, an experience of common human truth." (Grotowski 23). In other words, the performer sacrifices herself to myth in an effort to "incarnate" it (Grotowski 23). As myth incarnate, she taps into deep structures of human truth and expression, which the audience cannot help but be affected by. By challenging herself, she "publicly challenges" the audience and "makes it possible for [them] to undertake a similar process of self-penetration" and, as Gurdjieff might have it, spiritual awakening (Grotowski 34).

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<sup>30</sup> As the fundamental concern in poor theatre is the relationship between the performer and audience, all the other stage components are minimized or eliminated. Costumes are minimal, featuring the actors' bodies. Make-up is viewed as a trick of the trade and replaced by the actors' manipulation of their faces. The only scenery and props are those indispensable to the action and nothing is to be introduced on stage that is not there at the beginning of the piece. And the actor's voice supplies any necessary music or sounds.

In the tradition of the scapegoat shaman pharmekon Christ-figure, the actor becomes a “holy actor” on a sacred stage sacrificing herself for the transformative health of her community (Grotowski 34).

To undertake such an enormous task and responsibility, the actor must undergo rigorous training, developing a mind-body (including voice) that is exceptionally flexible and transformative itself. In the second chapter of *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski proposes a blueprint for an actor training program where a young actor would receive both a “technical course on practical exercises” and a “humanistic education” that would “awaken...his sensibility and introduce...him to the most stimulating phenomena in world culture” (Grotowski 50). The program would be attached to an “institute of research” for theatrical production (Grotowski 51), very like the (Niels) Bohr Institute where physics is studied. Although Grotowski is quick to admit that theatre is not a scientific discipline, per se, he does feel that the development and acquisition of a step-by-step observable method for performance frees the performer from the whims of talent and inspiration (Grotowski 129).

In his actual training process, Grotowski outlined three "conditions essential to the art of acting" (Grotowski 128). They are:

- a) To stimulate a process of self-revelation, going back as far as the subconscious, yet canalizing this stimulus in order to obtain the required reaction.
- b) To be able to articulate this process, discipline it and convert it into signs. In concrete terms, this means to construct a score whose notes are tiny elements of contact, reactions to the stimuli of the outside world: what we call “give and take.”
- c) To eliminate from the creative process the resistances and obstacles caused by one's own organism, both physical and psychic (the two forming a whole). (Grotowski 128)

To activate these conditions, the actor proceeds from point “c” to point “a,” and below I discuss them in that order.

For Grotowski, there is a “dialectics of human behavior” that must be addressed in training and in performance too (Grotowski 17). One part of the dialectic are those “forms of common ‘natural’ behavior” that “obscure the truth” (such as our intellectualized, socially-individualized or, in Artaud’s terms, civilized behavior) and the other part is “a system of signs which demonstrate what is behind the mask of common vision,” that is, behind the civilized behavior (Grotowski 17). Grotowski claims that in moments of extreme shock, terror, danger, or joy, “a man does not behave ‘naturally,’” but rather “a sign, not a common gesture, is the elementary integer of expression,” and it is this elemental sign the performer aims to release and express in performance (Grotowski 18).

To remove both physical and psychological blocks the actor undergoes a process of *via negativa*, learning what not to do rather than what to do (Grotowski 133). As with poor theatre as a whole, *via negativa* is an inductive technique of elimination rather than a deductive technique of accumulation (Grotowski 35). And it contains both personal and scenic aspects. The personal aspect allows the actor to root and process his scenic training through his imagination, personal associations, and his unique physicality whereas the scenic training refers to acquiring the physical skills necessary to express the personal input in a way relevant to others. *Via negativa*, the personal is distilled to the elemental and collective. Grotowski explains the relationship:

In [the actors’] daily work they do not concentrate on the spiritual technique but on the composition of the role, on the construction of form, on the expression of signs – i.e., on artifice. There is no contradiction between inner technique and artifice. We believe that a personal process which is not supported and expressed by a formal articulation and discipline structuring of the role is not a release and will collapse in shapelessness. We find that artificial composition not only does not limit the spiritual but actually leads to it. (Grotowski 17)

Similar to the stimuli-response (external-internal) logic of reflexology, the physical exercises operate to stimulate (*via negativa*) a “state of idle readiness, a passive availability,” in “which one does not ‘want to do that’ but rather ‘resigns from not doing it’” (Grotowski 37, 17). In this state of concentration, the actor confronts and exposes latent aspects of his personality as they relate to the myth (story, play, or character) under investigation. The actor expresses this exposure “through sound and movement . . . impulses,” which are recorded and from them a score, the “artificial composition,” is produced (Grotowski 35). In this way, the actor “construct[s] his own psycho-analytical language of sounds and gestures in the same way that a great poet creates his own language of words” (Grotowski 35). In performance, the actor works from the score, and while the notes of the score never change, the manner in which the notes are played can change from performance to performance.

A number of key components characterize the pedagogical method Grotowski used to guide his actors through the training process, such as: the constant adaptation of physical exercises to the circumstances at hand; silence; close contact between the director and the actors; and intense physical challenges that drive performers beyond their comfort zone.

The physical exercises the actors process are designed to meet a number of goals, such as to strengthen the physical instrument and increase its flexibility, to help it eradicate physical and psychic blocks, and to ready it for the intense process of self exposure and communal expression outlined above. Given the personal-scenic method, once an exercise is learned, the performer can adapt and change it by means of her personal exploration of and response to the exercise. On a broader scale, like Stanislavski, Grotowski constantly experimented with the exercises his actors used. For instance, early on, the company processed yoga exercises only to find that they inhibit passion. They then explored the work of Delsarte, but felt his gestural language was too

stereotypical for their needs. So they developed their own exercises drawing on Delsarte's ideas, and while they experienced success for a time, their application soon became constraining too. So, they set aside the Delsarte inspired exercises for a time, returning to them eventually with fresh eyes and ideas as to how they might apply them (Grotowski, 244-7).

In the daily work of learning and processing physical exercises Grotowski recommends silence. Only the director should speak, if necessary. *Via negativa*, the silence eliminates the noisy trappings of daily life, thus encouraging the actors to remove the masks they wear in daily life and embark on creative exploration. Grotowski claims, "Creativity does not mean using our daily masks but rather to make exceptional situations where our daily masks do not function" (Grotowski 251). Silence also helps the performer to begin their work in emptiness, passively available to whatever might stimulate them.

In the "Statement of Principles" for training at the Polish Laboratory Theatre, Grotowski observes:

An actor can only be guided and inspired by someone who is whole-hearted in his creative activity. The producer, while guiding and inspiring the actor, must at the same time allow himself to be guided and inspired by him. It is a question of freedom, partnership, and this does not imply a lack of discipline but a respect for the autonomy of others. Respect for the actor's autonomy does not mean lawlessness, lack of demands, never ending discussions and the replacement of action by continuous streams of words. (Grotowski 258)

In these principles for interacting with the performers, Grotowski integrates the personal and scenic components that characterize the broader technique. He claims a structure of (scenic) discipline is absolutely necessary, but it should not ignore the (personal) autonomy and agency of the individuals involved. The statement also implies the creative and emotional stake that the director has in the process, allowing him to be creative too and promising inspiring feedback. This stake is expressed explicitly in another chapter in *Towards a Poor Theatre* when Grotowski

claims of his method, “The actor is reborn - not only as an actor but as a man - and with him, I am reborn” (Grotowski 25). Desiring “rebirth” as a result of working with one’s actors marks a significant investment on the part of the director, one that can go horribly wrong should the director privilege his own investment (and, quick on its heels, singular authority) over that of the actors.

Grotowski’s investment is tangibly evident in various accounts of workshops led by Grotowski and frequently one of his main actors. One particularly descriptive account is provided by Franz Marijnen who recorded a workshop led by Grotowski and Ryszard Cieslak in 1966. Marijnen recalls that the participants first recited text or sang while Grotowski guided their efforts by touching various parts of their body, such as their “chest, backs, heads or abdomens” (Marijnen 176). “Nothing escapes [Grotowski’s] notice,” Marijnen notes (Marijnen 176). Then, Grotowski worked separately with four different students. He asked one to “low” like a cow, encouraging him to project the sound against the ceilings and walls and also to exclude thought from the exploration. With another student and working with a text, Grotowski imitates a tiger that is going to attack a student. He asks the student to roar a response, coloring the roar with an intention drawn from the text. Marijnen recalls Grotowski’s side-coaching during the exercise: “Come closer . . . Text . . . Shout . . . I am the tiger, not you . . . I am going to eat you” (quoted in Marijnen 177). In another exercise, Grotowski imitates a matador and the student a bull. The actor must sing the entire time that he tries to attack the matador Grotowski.

Clearly, touch and specifically Grotowski touching others plays a significant part in Grotowski’s pedagogy. Most often Grotowski’s purpose is to put the student “in touch” with that part of the body that requires their manipulation, the stimuli of touch prompting the desired response, or so that is the idea. In the same workshop cited above, Marijnen reports that, as

directed by Grotowski, a student lies on the floor singing “la-la-la.” Grotowski “massages the pupil’s belly to loosen up and stimulate the resonator there,” and as a result, the pupil “reaches intonations and ranges that one would never guessed he possessed” (Marjinen 178-179). Also lying prone on the floor, another student is asked to imagine that he is “lying in a warm river” and, after a moment of silence, to begin to sing. As the pupil sings, Grotowski touches parts of the body that might come in contact with the water, instructing the student to “simply react” (Marjinen 182).

In a different workshop given at New York University in 1967, a workshop participant recalls that when coaching a particular student, Grotowski began by walking gently with him around the room. Eventually, this activity shifted to Grotowski throwing the student against a wall, after which he brought the student to the floor, cradling his head in his lap and coaxing him to sing without physical tension (Dunkelberg 37). While I understand that the point of the dynamic shifts in physical temperament is to catch the student off guard and elicit a spontaneous response, I cannot help but wonder if the student’s autonomy is sacrificed in this case and to the benefit of the already empowered teacher and director. More generally, I wonder if intense physical work like this can be done without the submission of one body to another?

Contact of a little different variety plays an important part in the relationship established between the actors and the audience. Grotowski cautions his actors that it is not enough to simply look at the other actors onstage, rather one needs to see or sense them fully (Grotowski 227). Just as Grotowski is totally invested in his actors, they need to be totally invested in each other. Listening is central to this contract, as audiences “often detect a lack of harmony because the actors don’t listen to their partners. The problem is not to listen and ask oneself what the intonation [of the speaker] is, only to listen and answer” (Grotowski 227). Contact between the

actors and the audience is crucial as, for Grotowski, the ontology of theatre is based there; that is, in the present tense interaction of actors and audience. Further, the specific aim of the actor is to confront and incarnate a given myth, a deep structure of human truth, so as to incite the audience “to undertake a similar process of self-penetration” and spiritual awakening (Grotowski 34). One confrontation infects another. This idea of contact as an act of confrontation, penetration, and transformation also informs Grotowski’s specific aims for the voice, and it is to those details that I now turn my attention.

### VOCAL TRAINING FOR A POOR THEATRE

In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski explains his expectations regarding the vocal power of the performer’s voice:

Special attention should be paid to the carrying power of the voice so that the spectator not only hears the voice of the actor perfectly but is also penetrated by it as if it were stereophonic. The spectator must be surrounded by the actor’s voice as if it came from every direction and not just the spot where the actor is standing. The very walls must speak with the voice of the actor. This concern for the voice’s carrying power is further necessary in order to avoid vocal problems which may become serious.

The actor must exploit his voice in order to produce sounds and intonations that the spectator is incapable of producing or imitating. (Grotowski 147)

While Artaud held similar expectations as Grotowski, he did not have a company of actors or students with whom he could explore exercises necessary to realize his expectations. Grotowski did and the vocal exercises he developed are quite extensive. As in prior chapters, in this section, I select and focus on vocal exercises that address the central elements of vocal production and training: thought, breath, phonation, resonators, and articulation. I also discuss a few additional aspects of Grotowski’s vocal training that do not fit neatly into any of the five categories.

For Grotowski, voice is part of the manifestation of the physical body in performance. The body and the voice are fully integrated in Grotowski’s training. To that extent, he is critical

of vocal techniques that ignore the rest of the body. He writes, “The most elementary fault, and that in most urgent need of correction, is the over-straining of the voice because one forgets to speak with the body” (Grotowski 185). Grotowski is wary of vocal techniques (such as diction exercises) that may inhibit the spontaneous impulses of the actor. He encourages students to “react with the body” first, letting vocal expression follow (Grotowski 185).

In his production work, Grotowski’s central concern is the relationship between the performer and the audience who are engaged in an act of communion, and the vocalizations of the performer must facilitate this connection. Grotowski frequently reminds performers not to listen too much to their own voice, but to participate in an encounter with the audience. While on stage, the actor should not “listen . . . to himself” or “from within himself but from the outside,” which means he should not be enamored with the sound and manipulation of his own voice, but hear and respond to it as an audience member might. In this way, the actor increases the possibilities for vocal expression (Grotowski 165).

As regards the vocal component of thought, Grotowski advises that “the actor must always aim at spontaneous vocal reactions rather than ones which are coldly calculated” (Grotowski 166). So, while thought is certainly involved in the rehearsal and performance of the voice, ideally it is produced in response to stimuli from a state of idle readiness, *via negativa*. Which is not to say techné is not involved, for, as Grotowski also advises, a performer “must learn to control his own voice” (Grotowski 165). The seeming contradiction is answered by the foundational personal-scenic technique where “there is no contradiction between inner technique and artifice” (Grotowski 17). The actor consciously learns a technique, and through repetitive practice and personal adaptation, the training becomes secondary and able to be applied without

thought, per se. Grotowski tells us, “artificial composition not only does not limit the spiritual but actually leads to it” (Grotowski 17).

One aspect of thought is the imagination, which plays a significant part in Grotowski’s praxis. For one, it is part of the stimuli to which the body and voice respond. Many of Grotowski’s exercises call for the student to imagine the voice as an object or action; that is, to compose the voice in terms of a visual metaphor. For instance, in various exercises, Grotowski asks the student to imagine the voice as a “wide tunnel, then a narrow tunnel” or to use the voice “as if it were an axe, a hand, a hammer, a pair of scissors” or, with the voice, to put a “hole in the wall” or move objects around the room (Grotowski 166). The imagination also comes into play in the student adapting the scenic techniques to his personal physical and psychic tenor.

Breathing techniques form a critical part in Grotowski’s training of the body and voice. According to Grotowski, his method is "the opposite of normal methods" in that he does not prescribe the same respiration rules for all students (Grotowski 183). Understanding that “breathing is an organic and spontaneous process,” his “exercises are not intended to submit [breathing] to a strict control but to correct any anomalies, nevertheless retaining its spontaneity” (Grotowski 151).

In addition to retaining the organic and spontaneous aspect of breathing, the exercises also aim to realize “total respiration,” which is the integrated use of two different types of breathing: “thoracic or pectoral respiration” and “lower or abdominal respiration” (Grotowski 147-8). The former involves the ribcage and the chest and is the typical way most people breathe. Lower or abdominal respiration is also known as diaphragmatic breathing. It calls for the abdominal muscles to expand outward in order to make room for the diaphragm to drop

down, which causes air to be forced out of the lungs. Total respiration, then, refers to a person's use of both these breathing processes, not just one.

To train the performer in total respiration, Grotowski employs various approaches. One technique is a popular yoga exercise called *nadi shodhan pranayam*. First, the student holds one nostril closed while inhaling through the other nostril and then holds the other nostril closed while exhaling through the other. Then, the reverse is performed. In yoga, this exercise is used to realize total respiration, to help align the hemispheres of the brain, and to produce a calming and centering effect. To further develop total respiration, Grotowski asks the student to lie on the floor with one hand on his chest and the other on his abdomen. As the student breathes, he should feel the hand on the belly rise first and then the one on the chest, although "the succession of the two phases should not be noticeable" (Grotowski 149). In another exercise attributed to the Chinese theatre, the student places her hands on her bottom two ribs and inhales into the abdomen, through to the chest, and into the head. She then uses her abdominal muscles to support the reverse process for exhalation: head, chest, and abdomen. When I first practiced this exercise, I discovered that I had greater capacity in my upper chest than I thought. Indeed, I felt as if I might cough due to the amount of air filling my upper chest. In addition to teaching the student total respiration, the exercise also is designed to prepare the body's breath to "carry' the voice" (Grotowski 149-50).

Care should be taken in practicing breathing exercises, and Grotowski encourages the presence of a teacher. According to Grotowski, the "subdivision of the phases [of abdominal and thoracic breathing] can bring about inflammation of the vocal organs and even nervous disorders" (Grotowski 149). For these reasons, novice students should practice with an instructor

at hand, and the instructor should take care to provide solutions to individual variations or problems in respiration.

In preparing for a public performance, the guidelines for respiration are more definitive than in training. Grotowski advises:

A good actor breathes in silently and quickly. He breathes at the place in the text (whether prose or poetry) he has established as a logical pause. This is functional since it saves time and avoids superfluous pauses; it is necessary since it lays down the rhythm of the text. (Grotowski 150)

To realize this type of breathing, Grotowski provides “exercises for rapid and silent inspiration” (Grotowski 150). These exercises require the performer to gulp air quickly and take short silent breaths. Grotowski cautions however that, in order to “retain the spontaneity” of breathing, the training should not be overdone (Grotowski 151).

Grotowski does not address phonation directly in *Towards a Poor Theatre* although he does provide exercises that address the larynx, which is a network of cartilage and muscle that houses the vocal folds. Phonation is the process whereby the vocal folds vibrate to produce sound. Viewed from outside the body, the larynx is noticeable in the widening of the throat just below the jaw or just behind the Adam’s apple on men. Internally, the larynx divides the upper part of the respiratory system (the mouth and pharynx) from the lower part (the trachea, bronchial tubes, and lungs).

Grotowski tells us that a closed larynx results in poor tone and is visibly evident when the neck muscles are strained, sometimes resulting in a jutting or lowered chin. A common reason for the strain, according to Grotowski, is voice training that emphasizes diction over breath and breathing. In order to realize greater vocal variety, the larynx must be opened and relaxed. One exercise that helps to open the larynx is based in the imagination, as the student simply needs to imagine “plenty of room in the back of the mouth (as when yawning)” (Grotowski 152).

Another technique requires the student to recite text while doing a headstand. The upside-down position applies pressure to the larynx, making speech difficult. The student then experiments with ways to reduce the pressure in order to make the voice sound as it does when standing. In this way, the performer learns what actions to take to open the larynx while upright (Grotowski 180-2).

Former Grotowski students, James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta, view resonators as “the greatest adventure of Grotowski’s work on the voice” (Slowiak and Cuesta 148). In his comprehensive address of resonators, Grotowski argues for using multiple resonators and calling on imagery to enhance the resonators’ ability to permeate a space – i.e., literally and figuratively resonate – and thereby affect the audience. Resonators are cavities in the body where the sounds created by the vocal folds are amplified. There is some debate among voice practitioners and pathologists regarding which body spaces actually resonate. Some contend that only the spaces above the larynx (the sinuses, mouth, and nose) are involved in resonance while many others, including Grotowski, contend that other parts of the body resonate too.

Grotowski articulates five distinct resonators. They are the head, the chest, the nasal passages, the larynx, and the eye sockets. Grotowski also includes resonators that we use “unconsciously,” such as the “maxillary” or jaw, the abdomen, and the “lower parts of the spine” (Grotowski 155). According to Grotowski, even the “various positions of the hand change the resonance of the voice” (Grotowski 228). In fact, Grotowski understands that “our whole body is a system of resonators – i.e., vibrators” and recommends that actors use it as such (Grotowski 228, 155).

In Grotowski’s training, a resonator is activated by forcing breath into the part of the body one wants to resonate and imagining that the voice is coming from that part of the body.

The different parts of the body align with different pitches. The head resonator creates high pitches, for instance, while the chest produces lower pitches. For Grotowski, “the most fruitful possibility lies in using the entire body as a resonator” (Grotowski 155). Just as both the thoracic and abdomen should be engaged to realize total respiration, more than one part of the body should be engaged to realize full resonance. One way to achieve full resonance is by focusing on a body part that is not typically engaged when producing a particular pitch. For instance, if I am using the head resonator to achieve a high pitch, I might try to integrate the chest resonator as well. Grotowski observes that while there is no scientific proof that forcing air into a particular resonator will cause “the area to function objectively as a resonator,” using imagery does produce vibrations that change the voice (Grotowski 153).

In a speech given at the Skara Drama School in Sweden, Grotowski provided an explanation of resonators that connects his techniques to the desire for and realization of a natural voice. Grotowski’s “Skara Speech” is transcribed in a chapter in *Towards a Poor Theatre* and, in part, runs:

All these exercises with resonators are only a beginning to open the possibilities of the voice and afterwards, when you have already mastered these possibilities, you must live and act without calculated thought. You must progress beyond this and find resonators without any effort...But as a development of these exercises you should seek another voice, your natural one, and through different impulses of your body, open this voice. Not everyone uses their real voice. Speak naturally and through these natural vocal actions set in motion the various possibilities of the body’s resonators. Then there will come a day when your body will know how to resound without prompting. It is the turning point, like the birth of another voice, and can be achieved only by completely natural vocal actions. (Grotowski 228)

The natural voice that Grotowski advocates lies latent beneath the strained voice brought on by modern life, and it can be realized only by learning to activate the body’s resonators, naturally, without calculated thought.

Grotowski typically refers to articulation as diction. He claims, "the best training in diction is obtained in one's private life" where one should "pay continual attention to his pronunciation" (Grotowski 169). An actor then should attend to diction, just not in the training or rehearsal space of the poor theatre. Grotowski recommends, "the basic rule for good diction is to expire the vowels and 'chew' the consonants" (Grotowski 167). He emphasizes vowels because an overuse of consonants can lead to tension in the vocal apparatus, particularly in the larynx. Over-emphasis also can result in the "petrification" of the delivered text (Grotowski 169). For these reasons, Grotowski avoids diction exercises favored by a host of other voice instructors, such as tongue-twisters and voicing vowel sounds with different consonants.

While reluctant to exercise diction, Grotowski nonetheless argues that diverse kinds of diction should be used in a production in order to avoid stagnation. A single style of diction also limits the performers' possibilities, just as if all the performers were wearing the same costume (Grotowski 168). Understanding that "every role necessitates a different type of diction," Grotowski lists ways one might experiment with diction so as to create different kinds of characters or different aspects of the same character (Grotowski 168). An actor can "parody the diction" of his acquaintances; he can use "diction alone [to] portray various characters (a miser, a parvenu, a glutton, a pious man, etc.)"; and he can "characterize through diction certain psychosomatic particularities (lack of teeth, a weak heart, neurasthenia, etc.)" (Grotowski 168).

Grotowski understands that pronunciation and rhythm influence each other, which proves particularly important in the delivery of dramatic prose and poetry. He recommends that a sentence be spoken as "one long respiratory wave," although an actor can change the pattern if a different effect is desired. (Grotowski 171-172). Some ways an actor can alter the rhythm of a

line or sentence is by varying the rate of speed, making abrupt shifts in rhythm, making the exhale audible or affected, and inhaling at odd times.

A few voice bits of training advice I find unique to Grotowski that do not fit into the prior categories concern errors, memorization, and the continual renewal of one's voice. In a brief section on "Exploitation of Errors," Grotowski recommends that should an actor make a vocal mistake, she should integrate the error into the rest of the performance. For instance, should she mispronounce a word, she should continue to mispronounce it throughout the remainder of the piece, turning a negative into a positive (Grotowski 170). Grotowski also suggests that an "actor must never learn his part aloud" as his body memory will fixate on the intonations and rhythms he used to memorize the lines, resulting in a by rote delivery (Grotowski 169). Lastly, as voices change over time, Grotowski recommends that every so often an actor should take the time to "rediscover his voice" by returning to the training techniques explored previously (Grotowski 173).

#### DUALISMS IN GROTOWSKI'S METHOD

In this section, I draw on the five critical binaries of spiritual/scientific, natural/mechanical, mind/body, feminine/masculine, and high/low to inform my discussion of the acting and voice training techniques detailed in *Towards a Poor Theatre*. As in the prior chapter, the first three dualisms are referenced in overt ways in the text, while the latter two are covert, implied through other discursive threads.

The central aim of Grotowski's method is spiritual confrontation, transformation, and redemption of the actor and audience. To reach this goal, scientific knowledge of the body and voice is necessary. Informed by Hindu and Catholic beliefs and Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty," Grotowski endeavors to create theatrical performances that evoke a ritual-like experience for the

audience. The main agent and agency of the ritual is the holy actor who serves as a sacrificial surrogate for the audience, shedding her quotidian baggage so as to confront elemental myths the collective shares. In terms of the voice, the spiritual quality and impact are realized in the “carrying power of the voice” (Grotowski 147): the performer trains her voice so as to surround and penetrate the audience with speech, noises, song, and other sounds that evoke the elemental myth.

To realize these ends, a personal-scenic process is undertaken. The scenic aspect refers to the scientific and technical knowledge and training of the body, which includes the voice. The training runs along the lines of other scientific approaches; for instance, it is like that of the Bohr Institute that Grotowski mentions or we might recall James Rush’s approach. Rather than initiate the artistic process with abstract notions of talent and inspiration, one begins with concrete phenomena, like respiration, asking how it works and testing its operations with various exercises. The personal aspect refers to the actor experimenting with the scenic aspects in terms of her unique physiology and psychology. As with Stanislavski’s system, the aim is to practice the technique until one can exercise and adapt it without conscious thought. The possibilities of resonance, for instance, are learned consciously, but eventually the actor must “resound without prompting” or calculated effort (Grotowski 228). In the case of the spiritual “carrying power of the voice,” then, it is realized by the actor’s scientific education in total respiration and her adaptation of that knowledge to how her unique body respire or breathes, first in the context of rehearsal and then in performance before an audience.

As with the interdependent relationship between spiritual and scientific aspects, the relationship between natural and mechanical aspects is summarized by Grotowski when he argues, “there is no contradiction between inner technique and artifice” (Grotowski 17). In other

words, they enhance rather than counter each other. One example of this collaborative interaction is evident in Grotowski's "conditions essential to the art of acting" (Grotowski 128). The conditions are to eliminate physical and psychological blocks that impede (the scientific and mechanical) training and its impact on the actor's (personal and spiritual) "self-revelation" (Grotowski 128). The latter is "canalized" so as to stimulate the desired reaction in the audience (Grotowski 128). By "canalization," Grotowski means that *via negativa* the actor strips away unnecessary expression, distilling the self-revelation to elemental signs that are relevant to all human beings. In this way, the actor "does not behave 'naturally,'" as he does in everyday life, but in a distilled manner that we might recognize as stylized due to its socially-significant tenor and impact. Artificial external technique, then, activates internal technique, which is concentrated to a score of artificial external signs that the audience finds relevant and revelatory.

The body is central to this process of course and to the concept and practice of poor theatre generally, as live bodies in space are the only components necessary to doing theatre, which then distinguishes it from mediatized expression where, according to Grotowski, accumulation is the norm. In Grotowski's praxis, the body and mind are integrated. There is no Cartesian split where the imperfect body is in service to the superior mind. The mind-body balance is evident in the rehearsal processes where conscious thought is brought to bear on the experimentation and application of bodily techniques. However, in performance before an audience, Grotowski urges that "the actor must always aim at spontaneous vocal reactions rather than ones which are coldly calculated" (Grotowski 166) – as might be claimed of Tortsov's tortuous performance of the "step by step...secrets of speech technique" (Stanislavski, *BAC* 166). Of course, the ideal aim of both Stanislavski's and Grotowski's praxis is that, via rehearsal, technique becomes so familiar that an actor can rely on it without conscious thought. I

might compare this ideal to Tai Chi where the aim is to experience the mind-body as a single rather than double entity. Also similar to Grotowski's practice, Tai Chi consists of a series of physical actions that are a conduit through which the spiritual life of the performer moves.

If Stanislavski's system requires an educated and transcendent approach to language, Grotowski's method encourages a raw, elemental approach where animal and other nonverbal sounds, pre-cognitive babbling and chanting are common. For these reasons, the essential body that the audience sees and hears in a Grotowski performance aligns with the low and grotesque body Bakhtin examines in *Rabelais and his World*. For Bakhtin, the grotesque celebrates the low domain of the body, which includes behavior that is considered taboo or even dangerous. The act of sacrifice that Grotowski asks of the holy actor represents an act of "degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract...to the material level, to the sphere of the earth and body" (Bakhtin 19). Spirit is made flesh and flesh makes sounds.

One might expect that Grotowski's focus on creating a low, mythic, and collective encounter with an audience would result in the production being a popular affair. This was not the case, as the grotesque body expressed mythic signs that were developed by Grotowski's company and not by the attending audience. Unlike popular ritual, the attendees had no knowledge of the ritual activities and their purpose, and hence they could not play (and were not given) any of the roles participants typically play in ritual, such as Elder, novice, or witness *with* the wisdom to evaluate the process. As is claimed of some modern and postmodern expression, the low and grotesque body proved to speak to an elite few. This result is evidenced by Grotowski inviting fewer and fewer audience members to attend his productions until, late in his career at the Italian Workcenter, he allowed only a handful of select visitors to watch the workshop process.

In addition to this curious high/low body dynamic, the high/low binary plays out in the classroom too, in the relationship between the teacher or director and his students. In light of the personal-scenic approach to acting, students are provided with the tools or technology of the craft, which they are to make their own. I wonder, though, to what extent actors retain their agency. First, they are directed to remain silent during instruction while the teacher guides them through the exercises. Second, while Grotowski does not prescribe the same rules for breathing, say, for all students, he also advises against students experimenting with the exercises on their own. He suggests that the teacher be present, creating a teacher-student co-dependency that is troublesome. Third, Grotowski's method relies on the teacher physically touching the students in order to relax certain muscles or activate resonators. In anecdotes regarding Grotowski's workshops, he went so far as to push a student up against a wall or cradle another, like an infant, in his lap. In my estimation, physical interaction along these lines would be found inappropriate in most classroom settings in the U.S. Even touching students briefly is problematic in the academic environment, but may be appropriate in workshops where students have agreed to the process. I know I would find it difficult to use many of the instructional techniques outside of a graduate level acting studio. There is a tipping point between challenging students and casting them into an unsafe environment, and ideally we can design pedagogy that is both stimulating and safe.

Despite these concerns, there are plenty of practical tools Grotowski offers that would be useful in a critical pedagogy for vocal performance. First, Grotowski's exercises concerning strength and flexibility, breathing, and development of resonators provide students with tools to establish presence in performance and create a feeling of connection between themselves and the audience. Grotowski's strategy of analogous thinking – e.g., using the voice “as if it were an axe,

a hand, a hammer, a pair of scissors” – helps students compose their voices in imaginative ways and develop creative performances with vocal impact (Grotowski 166). And Grotowski's *via negativa* approach seeks to eliminate vocal problems rather than dictate prescriptive solutions, which I find beneficial. In all, Grotowski's vocal praxis offers a range of tools for performance that are applicable to the diversity of performance genres, styles, and modes that students study in performance study classrooms.

In the next chapter, I examine the pedagogy of Kristin Linklater, one of a handful of voice instructors who came to prominence during the 1970s and whose methods continue to set the standard for stage voice instruction today. In particular, I focus on Linklater textbook, *Freeing the Natural Voice*, which has become required reading in many actor training programs. Her method is highly influential, as she has provided specialized training to a generation or two of voice instructors certified in her particular technique.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**KRISTIN LINKLATER: TRAINING A NATURAL VOICE**

Let it happen.

– Kristin Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (87)

Following World War II, the G.I. Bill allowed a generation of U.S. soldiers to attend university, resulting in a significant increase in the size and number of U.S. academies and the departments they housed. Departments of Theatre developed at a rapid pace with play production becoming an important component of training students. During the 1960s, Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees in theatre were developed, focusing on production and professional training. Due to the burgeoning growth of the off-Broadway and regional theatre scene, the newly trained theatre practitioners were in demand across the country.<sup>31</sup> Regional theatre companies produced recent Broadway hits as well as the “classics,” such as plays by the ancient Greeks, Shakespeare, Ibsen, and others. The growth of interest in producing classics required a more thorough approach to stage speech than had been provided by practitioners invested in contemporary U.S. realism.

During the 1950s and 1960s, two practitioners of voice training, Edith Skinner and Arthur Lessac, emerged to the fore in the U.S. Edith Skinner was a voice coach at the well known acting programs of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburg, and The Juilliard School in New York City. Her methods were published posthumously in 1990, in the text *Speak with Distinction*, although a draft of the document had been shared with students for many years. While Skinner’s method was influential, her legacy has been tempered by her focus on

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<sup>31</sup> See Berkely for an account of the development of vocational theatre training in the academy.

standardized speech (i.e., “speech with distinction”), which critics have questioned for its upper-class bias and adoption of various British pronunciations.<sup>32</sup>

Arthur Lessac was trained as a singer and developed a method for training voice that he first published in 1960, as, *The Use and Training of the Human Voice*. Clear, comprehensive, and effective, Lessac’s method continues to be taught today at many universities and at the Arthur Lessac Institute where students learn to teach the method themselves. In the “Introduction” to *The Use and Training of the Human Voice*, Lessac explains that his text is for “those who want beautiful voices” and “clear, articulate speech” (Lessac xi).

The voice training method of British émigré Kristin Linklater stands in contrast to those of Skinner and Lessac. Linklater does not aim to produce “beautiful voices,” but rather to “free the natural voice” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 3). In this chapter, I focus on Linklater’s method for several reasons. First, it has been the predominant method of stage voice instruction in U.S. academies for nearly forty years. Second, it provides an alternative to methods that advocate standardized speech or beautiful voices. Third, I have trained in the Linklater method for four and a half years, and, in large part, it is the method I continue to teach. I can provide then an insider’s perspective on this very popular method for training the voice.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Linklater’s career before I take a close look at her method as disseminated in *Freeing the Natural Voice* and as I experienced it as a student and teacher. As in prior chapters, in my discussion of the specific exercises, I focus my attention on breath, phonation, resonators, articulation, and thought. In the final section of the chapter, I re-view Linklater’s method through the perspective of those false binaries that continue to influence voice training, as is evident in the title of Linklater’s text, *Freeing the Natural Voice*.

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<sup>32</sup> See Knight for a full discussion of the legacy and criticisms of Skinner’s method.

## OVERVIEW OF LINKLATER'S CAREER

During the growth of the BFA and MFA degree programs in theatre, coursework for actors was divided into three main categories: acting, voice, and movement. Voice courses might address any number of concerns, from articulation to singing to exercises in approaching text. The designation of specialized courses required that teachers be trained to teach those courses, which then required the development of schools and programs where training in the specializations were taught.<sup>33</sup> Today, most theatre programs require that movement and voice instructors are accredited in a particular method or technique. On the one hand, the requirement bears witness to a self-perpetuating system of supply and demand. On the other hand, as few theatre programs in the U.S. offer courses in instruction, specialized schools are necessary at this point.

Kristin Linklater was born in Edinburg, and raised in Orkney. She attended the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) to study acting. While at LAMDA, she studied voice with Iris Warren and, over the years, learned Warren's method by observing her teach. In an interview with Dawne McCance, Linklater relates that Warren "never wrote anything down because, she said, books will tell lies; everybody will misunderstand them" (qtd. in McCance 9). Linklater, then, took it upon herself to document Warren's technique or her version of Warren's technique in *Freeing the Natural Voice*.

In his "Foreword" to *Freeing the Natural Voice*, former director of LAMDA Michael MacOwan sings Iris Warren's praises. MacOwan recounts that both discipline and warmth characterized Warren's classroom. She also "had a great understanding of people and could diagnose – it seemed instinctively – the strengths and weaknesses of their temperament and how

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<sup>33</sup> See Mennen for a history of the development of the Voice and Speech Trainers Association.

their best capacities could be realized” without using force (MacOwan ii). Warren died in 1963, the same year that Linklater left the U.K. for the U.S.

Linklater cites the growth of federal and foundation support for theatre in the U.S. as one of the main reasons she moved to the U.S. (McCance 10). She was employed first at the Lincoln Center in New York City by a repertory company under the direction of Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan, and Harold Clurman. When it closed after a few years, she worked with actors in different companies across the U.S., such as the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., and the Nina Vance Theatre (now the Alley Theatre) in Houston. Eventually, she joined the faculty of the Department of Theatre at New York University, where she published *Freeing the Natural Voice* in 1976. She also founded a training institute and a theatre company called Shakespeare & Company, which continues to offer Linklater-based instruction. Linklater herself returned to the academy in 1997 to teach voice at Columbia University in New York City. She published an additional text, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, in 1993, and a revised edition of *Freeing the Natural Voice* in 2006.

Linklater's training institute, The Linklater Center for Voice and Language, offers a three to five year course of instruction for individuals who want to teach her method. Upon graduation, one is certified as a Designated Teacher of the Linklater technique. As of 2013, there were 103 such Designated Teachers (*Linklater Center for Voice and Language*).

#### CONCEPTS INFORMING THE LINKLATER METHOD

In “An Introduction: The Approach to Vocal Freedom,” Linklater outlines the goals of *Freeing the Natural Voice*:

Its aims are to present a lucid view of the voice in the general context of human communication and to provide a series of exercises to free, develop and strengthen the voice – first as a human instrument, then as the human *actor's* instrument. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 1; emphasis in original)

Rather than separate the treatment and training of the actor's voice from the voices of everyday people, Linklater roots the one in the other, thereby implying that what is "natural" in everyday life is "natural" on the stage and that both stage and everyday life actors desire to communicate. The humanistic slant also broadens the appeal of her method to a larger audience than just theatre folk. Additionally, Linklater is not concerned that her students develop a standardized speech pattern or a beautiful voice or, as the elocutionists would have it, a "voice beautiful" (Berry, *The Actor and the Text* 287). Rather, the Linklater "approach is designed to liberate the natural voice rather than to develop a vocal technique" (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 1). To realize a natural voice, Linklater uses a psycho-physical approach to encourage relaxation, alleviate barriers, and thereby free the inner voice. Clearly, her general method echoes those of Stanislavski and Grotowski, although the production aims of all three practitioners differ, largely in terms of what each perceives as "natural."

Linklater believes that "everyone possesses" an *a priori* natural voice, but that all kinds of blocks acquired by living in the world "inhibit the human instrument" (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 1). These psycho-physical obstacles include "emotional blocks, intellectual blocks, aural blocks, spiritual blocks" (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 2). Linklater acknowledges that Freudian psychology informs both her and Warren's methods. In the interview with McCance, Linklater recalls Warren's involvement with a Freudian psychoanalyst who invited Warren to work with his patients:

"She taught them to relax in their bellies, to breathe, and lo and behold, their throats opened up, words rushed out, tears rolled down their cheeks, and they spoke their stories... What Iris took back to her studio was the conviction that the voice actually depends on emotional freedom, and that is when she began to transform the work of the musical instrument into the human instrument work. Instead of working from the outside of the body in, she started to work from the inside of the body out." (qtd. in McCance 6)

Linklater's version of Warren's discoveries is provided in the third section of her "An Introduction" and is subtitled, "Why the Voice Does Not Work." According to Linklater, the voice does not work (well) because "most people have lost the ability, and perhaps the desire, to behave reflexively" (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 11), which in this case means instinctually not critically. Due to social-cultural conditioning and the development of unconscious "mental and emotional habits," we lose our "animal instincts" as we age (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 11-12). In other words, we lose our ability to express who we are, really and truly and naturally. As Linklater claims, all vocal problems "stem from the separation of the voice from the person, and that their root causes can be found in psycho-physical conditioning by family, education and environment" (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 192).

In contrast to the psychological slant of "Why the Voice Does Not Work," Linklater provides a simple physiological outline and description of the mechanics of the voice in a section on "How the Voice Works," also in "An Introduction." Linklater's outline contains six steps for vocalization:

- (1) There is an impulse in the motor cortex of the brain.
- (2) The impulse stimulates breath to enter and leave the body.
- (3) The breath makes contact with the vocal folds creating oscillations.
- (4) The oscillations create vibrations in the breath stream.
- (5) The vibrations are amplified by resonators.
- (6) The resultant sound is articulated by the lips and tongue to form words. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 6)

Linklater follows with a more detailed scientific description of the process, after which she explains her preference for using imagery rather than anatomy to teach voice:

I want to make it clear that from this point on I shall not be using exact scientific terminology. I have chosen to describe the voice metaphorically, analogically and by its perceivable features. While this simplification may make the voice scientist quail it has proven the best approach for the voice user. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 7)

In the 2006 edition of *Freeing the Natural Voice*, however, the scientists appear to have gained some ground in so far as Linklater provides a more extensive overview of anatomy than in the 1976 edition, and there is an appendix written by a Dr. Robert Sataloff on vocal terms and health.

Linklater also revises her aims:

From this point on, I shall make minimal use of exact scientific terminology. I have outlined the physical anatomy faithfully, but I have chosen to describe the voice in metaphor and in analogy. This simplification may make the voice scientist quail, but it has proven to be the best approach for the voice user. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language* 14)

Linklater proceeds to argue that “a rigorous approach to anatomical exactness would be counterproductive to the freedom of vocal function,” before she returns to a slightly modified version of the 1976 chapter (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language* 14).

Linklater addresses additional conceptual preferences and influences later in the text when she denigrates elocutionist tendencies in vocal instruction. Linklater distinguishes between form and content, the first which she aligns with speech and the second with the intellect and emotions. She claims that the elocutionists’ method resulted in an over-articulated speech form and an indulgent yet mechanical expression of emotion or content. Linklater aims, instead, to teach students to inform speech with ideas and emotions that spring spontaneously from instinctual responses (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 172). Linklater supports her argument with a rudimentary lesson in public speaking in which she claims that the Elizabethans stood at the summit of human eloquence because they understood “verbal power was an essential part of the whole person” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 172). In contrast to the Renaissance view of voice and identity is that of “modern Western education,” which has hindered the “means by which the inner life can be revealed through the spoken word” because it

separates mind from body (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 173). As the Elizabethans were influenced by the burgeoning scientific rationalist logic that would *separate* mind and body, it might be more accurate to say that for the Elizabethans “verbal power” referenced the ability to use spoken language well, rather than it referencing a mind-body unity. Further, in light of my Chapter Two, it would be negligent of me not to observe that the elocutionists held a similar view as that of the Elizabethans regarding the importance of verbal power to shaping identity or one’s character.

The importance of verbal power, not only to one’s identity but to the success of the actor and the survival of the theatre, is not lost on Linklater when she recommends:

Today’s actors, if they are to compete for audiences with the technological powers of film, electronically souped-up music and television, must generate within themselves an electric presence that transcends technological excitement. The power is in there to be tapped, and the expansion of the theatre experience into something once more significant, depends on going in, in order to come out; on tackling cause before result; on drawing the arrow back as far as it will go before releasing its pent-up energy to the target. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 210)

Linklater’s rousing (and somewhat phallic) call is similar to that made by Grotowski when he urges that “special attention should be paid to the carrying power of the voice so that the spectator not only hears the voice of the actor perfectly but is also penetrated by it as if it were stereophonic” (Grotowski 147). Also like Linklater, Grotowski hopes that the power of the voice will result in a special experience for the audience that will help to regenerate the importance of theatre in and to the community.

#### TRAINING IN THE LINKLATER METHOD

Linklater recommends that students follow a specific sequence of exercises when they work on the voice. They should start with “conscientious physical relaxation” and then progress to phonation, vibrations, the relaxation and stretching of the tongue, soft palate, and the throat,

work on resonators, freeing the voice, and finally work on the floor. They are not to “alter the sequence or make arbitrary jumps” until they are quite sure of what they are doing (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 118). The components of the voice I have selected to guide my analysis of vocal techniques in each chapter – thought, breath, phonation, resonance (vibrations), and articulation (relaxation and stretching of tongue, soft palate, throat) – correspond pretty well to those of Linklater’s. Freeing the voice and work on the floor integrate all of the components. She uses breathing exercises to relax the body and vocal mechanism, and then moves on to phonation. Linklater does not cover “thought” directly, but I believe thought is inferred by what she calls the “center.” I discuss this component at the end of this section following my address of breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation.

To develop physical awareness, Linklater has the student explore spinal alignment, which provides support of the breath. This series of exercises relaxes the shoulders, spine, and ribcage allowing for increased movement and flexibility in all three areas. To start, the student is asked to notice the feel of her feet on the ground and in all parts of her leg. This sensory awareness of the body continues up to the hips, sacrum, vertebrae, shoulders, neck, and head. Then, the student is instructed to imagine herself as a puppet with strings attached to her elbows, wrists, and fingertips. When she imagines the elbow string being pulled, she is to respond allowing the elbows to float upwards while the rest of her arms and hands remain limp. She imagines a pull on the wrist strings and her wrists lift, and then the same with the fingertips. Then, the process is reversed. Between each step, the student is encouraged to breathe deeply into the space between the shoulder blades and notice how the different sensations and gestures affect alignment and breathing. Lastly, the student is instructed to roll down the spine by dropping her head to her

chest first and then folding the spine inward, vertebrae by vertebrae, until she is hanging loose from the hips. She then reverses the process (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 20-4).

In the next exercise, Linklater seeks to reconnect the actor to the need and impulse for breathing by asking the actor to wait to inhale. While the student focuses on his breathing, Linklater invites him to:

*Explore the following description of the breathing process: The outgoing breath is complete inner relaxation. The incoming breath will happen automatically if you wait.* (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 26; emphasis in original)

The student begins to wait to breathe in, encouraged to note what it feels like to *need* to take a breath. Then the student is prompted to make an “fff” sound by breathing out with the upper teeth touching the lower lip and the upper lip slightly raised. Creating the “fff” sound requires more energy and greater breath control than does a relaxing “sigh,” which is exactly how the exercise ends: with a “sigh of relief” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 26-28). Over the course of the exercise, the student is reminded to breathe through his mouth, not his nose. While breathing through the nose might be more hygienic and aesthetically pleasing, when speaking on stage, “the breath must be able to respond quickly to fast-changing impulses,” thus an actor should breathe through his mouth (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 27).

The next breath and relaxation exercise occurs on the floor. The student lies on his back relaxing his legs, chest, shoulders, and arms. He is instructed to place one hand on his abdomen, feeling it rise and fall as he breathes in and out. The student is told to sigh in order to allow the stomach to relax more fully. He then stands and is asked to note the differences he feels in his body. This exercise is designed to help the student to learn to breathe from his diaphragm, which supports vocalization better than does, say, breathing from the upper chest (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 28-31). This exercise is quite similar to Grotowski’s exercises for discovering

“total respiration,” although Linklater focuses on the belly in order to prevent tension in the shoulders and ribcage.

Generally, these initial breathing exercises focus on relaxation and getting in touch with and using the diaphragm. Later in the sequence, exercises for developing breathing power are added, and they focus on the development of additional muscles, such as the abdominals and the intercostals, which are the muscles located between the ribs that expand during inhalation.

One of the advanced exercises I find particularly helpful asks the student to lie on her back and imagine her chest (and body) as a six-sided three-dimensional box rather than a flat two-dimensional TV image. One-by-one, she imagines each side of her box and experiments with moving it in many different directions, as if it were made of an elastic material. The exercise helps the student activate her imagination as well as her diaphragmatic breathing and use of muscles in the ribcage and lower back and sides (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 126).

Taking quick breaths is another useful exercise for developing breathing power. The student is instructed to take a series of short breaths without phonation, as if she were panting. At the end of each cycle of short breaths, she sighs at length and relaxes. Linklater claims that this exercise helps to disconnect emotional tension from the breath (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 131-134). I also find it helps to develop the muscles of the pelvic floor, thus building support for breath.

In my teaching of relaxation and breath, I draw on many of Linklater’s exercises, although there are a few I avoid as I feel they can cause unnecessary stress and even injury. For instance, the “rib awareness” exercise asks the student to hold her arms out to the side and imagine she is “wriggling” the ribcage upward, first on one side and then on the other side

(Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 124-6). When I do this exercise, I often strain my intercostal muscles and those under my shoulder blades too.

I find the exercise “vacuuming the lungs” troublesome as well (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 128-9). It has caused me to panic and has popped my eardrums so badly that I was in pain for several days. As I experience the exercise, I stand relaxed with my feet wide apart, inhaling deeply through my nose and exhaling through my mouth. I wriggle my spine, squeezing the ribcage downward toward my pelvis until I have vacuumed all the air from my lungs. Then, I pinch my nostrils shut with my right hand and cover my mouth with my left hand, holding my breath for as long as I can. Then, leaving my mouth covered, I release my nose and allow air to race into the vacuum of the lungs. I then return to my usual breathing pattern. Whenever I do this exercise and let go of my nose, I find my eardrums pop and my nostrils get stuck together and I have to open my mouth in order to breathe. It’s extraordinarily stressful. Or I find it stressful anyway, perhaps because I had asthma as a kid. Others seem to have problems with it too, though, because Linklater directly addresses “panic” in association with this exercise. In the end, however, she claims the exercise is safe because the student is completely in control; no one is forcing him not to breathe.

Linklater addresses phonation by means of a series of exercises called a “touch of sound” and a number more concerning the larynx, tongue, and soft palate that she refers to as the “Channel for Sound.”

A touch of sound is a simple soft “huh” sound that the student discovers as an impulse in their gut and exercises in order to shift their sensory awareness of voice from “the aural to the tactile sense” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 35). Linklater explains that “in order to remove effort from the throat, it helps to imagine that sound, as well as breath, start from the

middle of the body” and that “the impetus for sound [in the middle of the body] is impulse, and the raw material is breath” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 35). To begin, the student is asked to imagine a “pool of vibrations” in the abdomen (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 36). Instructed to raise the soft palate and allow the tongue to flatten out on the bottom of the mouth, the student continues to imagine that there is a long unobstructed tube running from the pool all the way up and out of the mouth. The student then imagines that there is a birthday candle in front of her lips, which she proceeds to blow out using an “fff” sound. The student is instructed to switch back and forth between the “fff” sound and the small “huh” sound in her gut, keeping the throat relaxed and using the same amount of air for both sounds. The entire sequence is repeated in a prone position. Then, to conclude, the student stands and rolls down the spine. When hanging over from the hips, she produces the “huh” sound and then rolls back up, touching on the same “huh” sound as she rolls. One strength of this exercise concerns where Linklater locates breath and sound. The impetus for sound comes from deep within the pelvis where muscles provide support for breath when exhaling. This is why coughing can sometimes cause sensations and even pain in the pelvis. Another strength concerns the economy with which the voice is activated. The same amount of energy used to breathe activates the voice while also insuring that the larynx, pharynx, tongue, and soft palate are relaxed.

Having located the impetus for breath and sound, Linklater focuses on “Vibrations that Amplify the Initial Sound” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 41-51). At work here are two central concepts that my voice instructors stressed repeatedly. Namely, “vibrations are murdered by tension,” and they “thrive on having attention paid to them. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 41). That is, tension in any part of the body and particularly those involved in vocal

production can cause the vocal folds to seize up and vibrate less, while relaxation allows the vocal folds to vibrate more and more, as in a snowball effect.

To exercise these ideas, the student is asked to return to the “touch of sound” technique, developing a “double touch” with the second “huh” held longer than the first: “huh, huhhh.” The student then rolls his head while voicing the double touch and experimenting with different pitches. This action demands relaxation of the neck muscles while also requiring that the throat remain open. Relieving tension in the neck and throat allows for the vibrations to intensify instead of being squelched by tension.

The “Channel for Sound” is that part of the vocal apparatus that is located above the vocal folds and includes the trachea, pharynx, and the mouth. According to Linklater, “work on the voice must fluctuate constantly between freeing the breathing muscles which deal with the source of sound, and freeing the throat, tongue and jaw muscles which constitute the channel through which the sound travels” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 57). To that end, Linklater provides exercises that relax the jaw, tongue, and soft palate. If tense, these parts can inhibit the passage of vibrations from the larynx out of the mouth and into space.

“Jaw awareness” involves realizing how the jaw and its muscles relate and seeking to relax the muscles by manual manipulation. Using his hands, the student raises and lowers the jaw aiming not to interfere with the action of the jaw. This exercise is more difficult than it sounds as the jaw muscles will intervene by not relaxing and hence making it difficult to open and close the jaw, or the muscles will try to help out in the effort (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 60-63).

Exercises for the tongue involve recognizing that its preferred “home” is loafing on the floor of the mouth, not clinging to the roof. In one exercise for stretching the tongue, the tongue

starts at home. The student then sticks the tip of the tongue behind the lower teeth and rolls the back end out. Then, the tongue is returned home and the sequence repeated. An extension to the exercise asks the student to “sigh” with the tongue hanging out of his mouth followed by the student rolling the tongue in and out rapidly while exhaling with a “huh” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 63-69). Another exercise directs the student to roll the tongue up toward the gum ridge on a “hee-hee-hee” and back home on a “huh-huh-huh” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 70). When I do this exercise, I find the tongue becomes weary and, as a result, relaxes quite completely on the floor of my mouth. Yet another exercise challenges the student to keep the tongue relaxed while “huh huh-ing” the musical scale. Should the tongue actively engage, the student should retreat down the scale and try again. The student’s goal is to reach his highest pitch without engaging the tongue. One broad reason for relaxing the tongue is that “when the tongue tenses,” so too does “the breathing area” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 71).

The same can be said of the soft palate, although, unlike the tongue, not many people know what the soft palate is. To help my students understand, I have them undertake some exploratory anatomy. I ask them to take the tip of their tongue and place it behind their upper teeth and then, using the tip, explore the roof of their mouth. They will notice that at the back of the teeth is a ridge, called the gum ridge, which is involved in making consonant sounds like “t” and “d.” The gum ridge gives way suddenly to an upside down bowl or right-side-up dome that forms the roof of the mouth and is called the hard palate. Exploring further back, one can feel where the hard palate gives way to a soft area called the soft palate. It has muscles that allow it to move up and down. When you look in a mirror, you will notice it looks kind of like a curtain with a dangling thing hanging down in the middle of it. The dangling thing is called the uvula,

and it can be used to produce consonant sounds that American English does not typically employ, such as the “trill” of “r” sounds in German and the Scottish “burr.”

According to Linklater:

Without regular, extended vocal exercise, the soft palate tends to become lazy or stiff. If it is lazy it hangs down like a heavy curtain at the back of the mouth absorbing and muffling vibrations. . . . I cannot over-emphasize that these movements [of the soft palate] occur naturally on the involuntary level of the nervous system. . . . Any work we do is to restore the possibility of the involuntary connection. If, having observed that the soft palate lifts in response to the thought of a high note, you proceed to lift the soft palate whenever you want to sing a high note, you defeat the aim of a free, natural voice. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 72)

As with Stanislavski’s and Grotowski’s praxis, the idea here is to learn the technique consciously and exercise it until it becomes habitual, whereupon one is able to apply it in flexible ways without thought, that is, “naturally.” In one exercise, designed both to relax and activate the soft palate, the student is instructed to draw the soft palate and the back of the tongue together to make a “k” sound on both the inhalation and exhalation of breath. The soft palate should pop open upon making the “k” sound. An extension of this exercise asks the student to extend the making of the “k” sound into a yawn and then also experiment with different kinds of yawns, such as the “vertical yawn” where the mouth stretches from side to side and the “total yawn” where the jaw drops down (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 74). Between exercises, on stage, and in everyday use too, Linklater recommends that one “*allow the soft palate to adjust automatically as it chooses. Do not attempt to keep it lifted or you will end up sounding false, plum-voiced, and pompous*” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 77; emphasis in original).

Exercising the soft palate contributes to exercising the throat, where the aim is to open the throat fully so that sound is not inhibited or trapped in a throat that is tense and constricted. To open the throat, the student is directed to drop their head back and look up at the ceiling, allowing the jaw to drop open. The student then sighs out on a deep “ha-a-a-a-a-a.” The

student returns their head to center and sighs out on a “hu-u-u-u-uh,” aiming to experience the same sensation of an open throat as when their head was tilted back. The exercise is repeated several times (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 77-81).

Like Grotowski, Linklater emphasizes the importance of resonators while admitting that “opinions still conflict on how the resonating system works” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 8). The basic understanding is that the vibrations of the sound waves emitted by the vocal cords are affected by whatever “texture” they hit, such as bone, cartilage, muscle, and soft tissue. According to Linklater, “bone is best, cartilage is very good, and toned-up muscle can provide a good resonating surface,” while soft flesh, such as the uvula and tongue, “muffle and absorb vibrations” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 8-9).

Linklater distinguishes between different channels and cavities of resonance, which she articulates in terms of a low-to-high scale or “ladder.” The low channel consists of the chest, throat, and mouth cavities, the middle channel, the nasal cavity and sinuses, and the high channel, the skull. The different channels affect pitch, as low pitches find more resonance in the chest whereas high pitches resonate in the sinuses and skull (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 9). Exercising the resonators, then, influences and improves vocal range. The exercises Linklater provides instruct the student to isolate a particular cavity and to imagine and experiment with sounds being emitted from that cavity, the broad aim being to increase the vibrations therein.

An exercise that activates the low channel resonators of the chest, throat, and mouth begins with the student tilting her head back and emitting a deep laugh of “ha-ha-ha-ha.” As she laughs, the student taps gently on her chest to awaken vibrations there. Then, the student floats her head up to center and emits the soft touch of sound “huh-huh-huh,” which places the voice in

the center of the mouth between the soft palate and the tongue. The student then drops her head forward and makes a “hee-hee-hee” sound, focusing on the front of the mouth and the teeth. The student repeats the exercise several times. Linklater reminds the student not to force the particular sounds of “ha,” “huh,” and “hee,” as the different positions of the head will effect the different sounds naturally. The student should just “Let it happen” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 87).

The middle channel of resonators are “the most subtle, complex, and interesting part of the voice,” according to Linklater (Linklater, *Freeing the Voice* 97). The first of these are the maxillary sinus resonators that lie inside the skull just behind the cheeks. They are the largest and best known sinuses, although there are many others, such as the frontal sinuses located above the eyes. Linklater distinguishes between activating the nasal resonator, located just inside the nasal passage, and the creation of a nasal tone or quality. The latter, “nasality,” is caused by a lazy palate and a raised tongue that direct vocal vibrations *into* the nose (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 104). Among voice instructors, all three cavities are referred to as mask resonators as they occupy an area just below the skin’s surface where (on the surface) a face mask might be worn.

An exercise to activate the nasal resonator involves sniffing up into one nostril while pressing the other nostril shut, much like the yoga exercise that Grotowski mentions in *Towards a Poor Theatre* that is meant to align the hemispheres of the brain. This exercise is followed by humming through the open nostril while the other nostril is closed. The student then aims his hum at the bridge of the nose before changing to a “meeeeee” sound coming through the nose, not the mouth. The sound is then spread to the cheekbones by shifting to a “mey” sound before spreading to the mouth on “mah-mah-mah” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 105-7). By the

end of this exercise, the student has isolated and awakened the nasal, occipital, sinus, and mouth resonators.

An exercise to activate and explore the high channel resonator, the skull, begins with the student rolling down his spine until he hangs loosely from the hips. With an open relaxed throat, the student makes a “kee” sound on a single high pitch. He repeats the sound on a little lower pitch, and ends with a final flourish of “Kee-yee-yee-yee-yee” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 116-17). If the student feels his scalp at this time, the dome of the cranium can be felt to vibrate rapidly.

Articulation or “jointed-ness” receives relatively little attention in *Freeing the Natural Voice* (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 6). Linklater mentions eight anatomical areas that divide or ar-ti-cu-late sound so as to produce vowels and consonants, but she does not detail them fully. She also does not prescribe standards for “correct” speech (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 144). One reason she avoids prescriptions is that she does not want to create tension in a vocal instrument that, by this point in the process, should be relaxed. Rather than focus on correct articulation, she recommends we focus on communication, desiring that the receiver understand fully what we say to them. While Linklater appears to appreciate the richness of local accents, she also suggests that the “limited conditioning of one’s environment” can be overcome by developing the full “potential of the voice” via her method (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 145). “Limits” to this potential “lie only in the possible limitations of talent, imagination or life experience” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 145).

To develop our potential as regards articulation, Linklater suggests an “economical use of the articulating musculature,” which can be realized by means of limbering exercises for the lips and tongue (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 145). Unlike Grotowski, Linklater provides

exercises that involve repeating certain consonant sounds with different vowel sounds attached to the consonants on each repetition. The exercises concentrate first on consonants formed by the lip (m, b, p), followed by those formed by the tip of the tongue (t, d, l, n), and lastly those formed by the soft palate (k, g, ng). Other consonants are explored too, but only briefly as “they do not present much difficulty once the lips and tongue develop freedom and natural strength”

(Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 155). Once the students have completed the limbering exercises, they can move on to do tongue-twisters, such as “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers...” or “How much wood would a woodchuck chuck...”

To close the section on articulation, Linklater discusses vowel sounds very briefly, and then once again expresses her aversion to rules of articulation, claiming, “rules of speech do not have any place in the free development of such a natural ability. As long as there is a sensitive connection between the mind and the organs of speech, the natural ability develops as the mind develops” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 144). Linklater views articulation, then, as a “natural ability” that will develop, as long as the speaker bears “a sensitive connection” between the speech organs (which govern articulation) and the mind, which is another natural ability. The all-important caveat leads one to wonder what *is* this “sensitive connection” and how do I do it?

Although Linklater does not address mental processes in a comprehensive way in her text, they certainly inform her psycho-physical approach and are laced throughout. Above, I provided one such example and another, also concerning articulation, is provided early in the text. In “An Introduction,” Linklater writes, “the muscles of the body can never respond finely enough to reflect the agility of thought, but the articulating muscles should crave that ability in the interest of accurate revelation of the mind” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 10).

Together, the two quotes seem to suggest that Linklater views the interior mind pretty much as Stanislavski does, that is, as the *raison d'être* for doing theatre. For Stanislavski, the actor trains to create and express “the inner life of a human spirit” (Stanislavski, *AAP* 17), which he views as natural of course. For Linklater, the actor trains her voice so as to develop its “natural ability,” which is like that of the mind, and in order to express the fine agility of thought produced in the mind.

The all-important “sensitive connection” is addressed indirectly elsewhere in the text. In the chapter on relaxation and breath, Linklater locates “breath” and the “mind . . . in the same place: the center of your body” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 28). The center is aligned with sensitivity, which for Linklater describes not only a state of mind but the most important attribute of an actor’s voice. While there are many “essential attributes,” such as “range, variety, beauty, clarity, power, volume,” the most important is “sensitivity” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 135). It follows then that the “sensitive connection between the mind and the organs of speech,” crucial to the natural development of speech, is based in locating and developing the center. It is difficult to define precisely what Linklater means by center. She seems purposefully ambiguous on what it is because she claims it can be anywhere. Although the impulse for breath appears to be situated somewhere near the bottom of the diaphragm, it may more accurate to say that the center is where attention is focused at any given time. She admits that, “As a purist . . . I would argue that there is an immutable center, one center of energy from which all movement and sound spring,” but she seems reluctant to provide an exact answer (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 143).

To explore sensitivity and as the center, Linklater instructs the student to do a panting exercise by “quiver”-ing at the center of the diaphragm, drawing in and exhaling in short, quick

breaths. After repeating the panting exercise, the student is directed to create the sensation of a pant without actually inhaling or exhaling. Then, Linklater asks the student to paint a picture, a seascape, on the wall using the “fff” sound as their paintbrush. Having completed the picture, the student paints the image again using words to describe the scene she is painting. Then, Linklater instructs the student to recall the story of Jack and Jill and “make a short, clear movie” of the story in just five frames, using the “fff” sound (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 141). To conclude, the student is asked to voice aloud the rhyme of Jack and Jill, aiming to realize by means of her voice the emotions embedded in the images she painted with the “fff” sound on the wall.

Another similar exercise known as “dropping in” is used in text work. The student is instructed to allow a single word from the text to “drop into” the belly as he speaks it and then to respond to the consequences without intellectual interference. The student can use the same process with lines and phrases from the text. This exercise represents Linklater’s general view of text as it relates to vocal training: again and again, Linklater recommends that the student be led by her emotional responses to a text or to a technique rather than undertake textual or technical analysis as well (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 5, 11, 12, 13, 184, 190). By privileging emotions over analytical thought processes, as if the two cannot work together, and by locating the natural voice in an abstraction – i.e., the sensitive center – Linklater creates a mystique about voice training and creative processes generally. The mystifying language infers that realizing the goal of a natural voice is innate (either you’re sensitive or you’re not) or it is dependent on developing sensitivity. By so mystifying the training and its results, Linklater empowers herself and her system as the purveyor of a specialized knowledge and hence worthy of purchase.

## DUALISMS IN LINKLATER'S METHOD

In Linklater's text, the duel between natural and mechanical approaches to voice instruction predominates although the other binaries are evident too and intimately entwined with the central theme and purpose of "freeing the natural voice." In a sense, the natural/mechanical binary provides structure to the other binaries. Informed by a pseudo-scientific understanding of Freudian psychology, Linklater believes that all vocal problems "stem from the separation of the voice from the person, and that their root causes can be found in psycho-physical conditioning by family, education and environment" (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 192). Rather than "develop a technique," Linklater's aims "to liberate the natural voice" from the alienating effects of modern life and thereby reconnect the person with her voice (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 1). In other words, the voice from which the person is separated is a natural voice that is not conditioned by anyone or anything. It just is.

Linklater's rationale of an alienated voice echoes a similar view in Stanislavski's and Grotowski's approaches to the voice, although neither Stanislavski nor Grotowski would sideline the importance of developing technique to redress the alienation. Of course, like Stanislavski and Grotowski, as well as Rush and others, Linklater relies on a scientific understanding of vocality and mechanical processes by which to exercise the voice; it appears she just does not want to admit it, preferring to locate the natural voice in some mystic sensitive center. In this way, her method reveals an anti-intellectual bias that is troubling and that Richard Knowles undertakes in his essay, "Shakespeare, Voice, and Ideology: Interrogating the Natural Voice."

In his essay, Knowles examines six canonical voice training texts published between 1973 and 1993. They are *Voice and the Actor* (1973) and *The Actor and the Text* (1987) by

Cicely Berry, *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976) and *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* (1992) by Linklater, and *The Right to Speak* (1992) and *The Need for Words* (1993) by Patsy Rodenberg. Knowles's central claim is that while the methods in the texts profess to free the voice, they actually restrict it to a natural voice realized by means of anti-intellectual processes (Knowles 93). Knowles acknowledges that, in part, the texts are responding to what the authors "perceive...to be the classism, racism, and elitism of earlier voice and speech training," such as elocution (Knowles 92). In developing their critique, however, the authors have simply substituted one ideological framework for another, and these frameworks play out along the lines of the dichotomies that guide my examination in this study: natural, spiritual (read: individual emotions in this case) and the body are set up against the mechanical, scientific, and the mind.

In Knowles's essay, he tracks the anti-intellectual bias to the work of renowned theatre artists, such as Peter Brook, who in turn influence theatre practitioners, such as Berry, Linklater, and Rodenberg, and the instruction offered in theatre departments.<sup>34</sup> Brook's development and recommendation of a theatre space as an "empty space" where anything can happen is used by Knowles as a metaphor for the consequences of an anti-intellectual bias. Knowles claims, "empty spaces of whatever kind...are to the theatre what common sense is to critical practice: vacuums to be filled by the unquestioned because (of) naturalized assumptions of (dominant) ideology" (Knowles 94). In Linklater's case, such assumptions include the importance of a natural voice, without questioning what natural means, to and for whom.

In "Freeing the Natural Voice? Performance, Gender, Society," Diana Looser uses a feminist perspective to question assumptions regarding the natural voice. Finding support in the "unnatural" voices of performance artists Karen Finley and Laurie Anderson, Looser argues that

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<sup>34</sup> See Jackson for a discussion of anti-intellectual tendencies in theatre departments in the U.S.

“although natural voice training appears to represent a critique of society, being a response to the repressive structures and processes of everyday life, it in fact serves to maintain the societal status quo” (Looser 39). Looser aligns Linklater’s techniques with creating a “*feminine*” voice with a subservient, “compliant” performer (Looser 39; emphasis in original). Natural becomes a byword for normal and the oppressive structure of normativity, which prove to constrain rather than free the range and possibilities of the voice and identity.

Informed by feminist theory, queer theory also perceives natural as a hegemonic term that functions to marginalize the queer community as not natural. However, as queer theorists Nudd, Schriver, and Galloway point out, “to the queer mind there is no natural or unnatural identity, no real or unreal one” (Nudd, Schriver, and Galloway 105). Rather natural is a construct that changes in meaning given its user and context. For example, for Rush, natural equates to physical phenomena we can observe in the world, for Stanislavski, it equates to inner truth, and for Linklater, it equates to a sensitive center.

I understand Linklater’s interest in the sensitive center as spiritual, in that it locates the true voice in what is felt and not able to be proven empirically. Linklater is ambiguous about where the center is located because it appears to alter given the person and situation. In this way, Linklater’s method is similar to Grotowski’s personal-scenic process in that the training technology is flexible, adaptable to and by each student. On the other hand, in the most recent edition of her book, Linklater is less flexible on this point but just as ambiguous, claiming the central source of vocal impulse is “a feeling in the diaphragm or the pelvic/sacral region” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language* 241).

While Linklater favors the spiritual, she clearly possesses a thorough scientific understanding of the body and voice as evidenced by her occasional use of anatomical terms and by the design and function of her exercises. Nevertheless, she argues that metaphorical imagery is “the best approach for the voice user” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 7). Linklater’s preference for using imaginative discourse when describing an exercise or discussing vocal operations drew criticism from reviewers, resulting in her providing more ample scientific information in two sections of the second edition of *Freeing the Natural Voice*. In my experience, many teachers of Linklater’s methods, including myself, supplement her imaginative discourse with exercises that highlight scientific discourse in a fun way. One common exercise is to take the students on an anatomy tour of their vocal apparatus. As tour guide, the teacher uses accurate anatomical terms for the different stops on the tour, but she stimulates the students’ sensory and emotive imaginations as well, for example, by asking questions of comparison. One of my favorite questions is to ask the students how they would describe the uvula other than calling it “a dangling thing.”

In terms of the high/low binary, Linklater avoids discourse that might align her method with an elitist perspective. She does not provide standards for speech or prescriptions for vocal production, and she does aim to produce “beautiful voices” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 3). While she claims she is concerned with human communication generally, which potentially would widen the appeal of her method, she does not address how communication and communicating alter given the context in which people find themselves. This oversight reveals a less inclusive perspective than Linklater might desire in that it is based on the assumption that all human communication is the same, requiring the same natural voice. A similar oversight and result emerge when Linklater claims that, while one’s voice may be conditioned by the

environment, the “potential of the voice” is limited only by one’s “talent, imagination, or life experience” (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 145). Apparently, one can and should shuffle off social-cultural conditioning via innate talent or imagination. However, Linklater does not address those of us without talent or imagination (or those of us who believe we are without talent or imagination) just as she does elaborate on those life experiences that limit voice potential as compared to those that do. In these ways, along with Linklater’s broader aim of realizing a natural voice, her praxis turns hegemonic.

In regards to the relationship between the student and teacher, like Grotowski, Linklater feels that the student needs the teacher in order to do the exercises. In “An Introduction to the Approach,” Linklater tells the reader that she would have preferred not to have written the book because:

...the strength of this approach is the one-to-one relationship between teacher and pupil. No two people, no less two voices, are the same, and each person’s problems differ. How do you teach relaxation? By touching the pupil’s body and feeling whether the muscles are responding to the messages being sent to them. How do you induce a new use of the voice? By taking hold of the body and moving it in new directions which break conditioned, habitual movements. How can the student know that a new experience is a constructive one without feedback from some external and trustworthy guide? To this last question I have no good answer, and do believe that a book is a poor substitute for a class. (Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice* 4-5)

While there is no doubt that live classroom interaction is beneficial to teaching tools of the body, the problem here is that Linklater does not appear interested in teaching the tools so that the student can use them independently, without the teacher’s guidance. Rather, the teacher is empowered in this quote as an omnipotent presence that the student cannot do without. One aspect of the student’s lack is his “conditioned, habitual movements,” which the teacher has the right to “break” in order to “induce a new use of the voice.” Linklater’s discourse leads me to wonder what a teacher should do if, upon “breaking” the student, they cannot put him or her

back together again? Should the teacher rely on the vagaries of talent or imagination or just the right life experiences?

As in Grotowski's practice, touch is important to Linklater; and while touch is not inherently bad, it gives rise to issues of power and agency when used by a director or teacher. My concern is the use of touch in the college classroom. Already sensitive to touch as a sexual signifier, college-age students might perceive an instructor's physical interaction with them as a sexual advancement or at least domineering. An instructor can find ways not to touch students, such as by using highly specific and descriptive language that provides students with the tools they need in order to get "in touch" with their bodies themselves. Or, an instructor might discuss the concern with the students, explaining the purpose of touch within body-based methods and developing a contract for touching with which everyone is comfortable. Involved here is re-visiting the contract every so often to insure that everyone is still aware of the agreement and that it is being following to everyone's satisfaction.

Although I have found my experiences using and teaching the Linklater method to be beneficial for the most part, the method needs to be adjusted. When I first applied Linklater's exercises in a public speaking class, I thought they would operate to promote individual voices over a standardized voice and speech practice. While the exercises proved to privilege individual voices, they did so to the extent that personal expression was exercised over communication with an audience. As different communication contexts are not addressed by Linklater in her text, the student fills-in with the context that *is* emphasized, particularly in the description of the exercises. This context is turned inward toward the psychological life of the student or performer, which often leads to students thinking they need to divulge private information in order to do the exercise correctly. The personal focus is exacerbated by

Linklater's failure to address both audience and articulation, which suggests to students that they need not be concerned with clarity. Of course, a teacher does not need to apply Linklater's method in an anti-intellectual or psychologically dubious way, and I hope to show how a teacher might avoid these pitfalls in Chapter Six when I provide my pedagogy for voice instruction.

On the other hand, Linklater offers many practical tools and techniques that are useful in developing a healthy approach to the voice that avoids physical strain and damage. Linklater's relaxation, breath, and resonance exercises provide students with the tools they need to express themselves effectively in performance. Her focus on imaginative analogies and visualization techniques offers students ways to provoke physiological responses without necessarily personalizing them in psychological terms.

In the concluding chapter, I provide a blueprint for a critical performance pedagogy for voice instruction that embraces a non-prescriptive approach to voice training. The pedagogy I develop avoids advancing a beautiful voice or a natural voice or a Standardized American Accent-ed voice. It provides a praxis that can be used in a performance studies classroom within a liberal arts curriculum, thereby insisting that intellectual curiosity and knowledge is part of body technologies, and vice versa. The pedagogy also attempts to avoid overtly spiritual discourse, leaving transcendent aims to the student to figure through. In these ways, I hope to provide the student with the tools to gain awareness of and train for multiple vocal possibilities on and off stage.

## CHAPTER SIX A CRITICAL PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGY FOR VOICE INSTRUCTION

To talk about training a power, mental or physical, in general, apart from the subject matter involved in its exercise, is nonsense.

– John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (76)

My father's new voice sounds very much like his old one. After having his larynx removed due to cancer in 2005, my father now breathes through a hole in his trachea called a stoma, which is located just above his sternum and between his clavicles. Although he used an electric voice box for the first few years after his surgery to speak, he now wears a prosthetic valve that, when he covers his stoma, allows his epiglottis to flap, creating a sound similar to that of vocal fold phonation. Whether using his electric voice box or his valve, the voice that comes from his body sounds surprisingly similar to his speech before his surgery. The shape of his pharynx, mouth, nasal cavities, skull, sinuses, palate, gum ridge, and teeth has not changed. While vocal difference is affected by the length and thickness of the vocal folds, my father's new voice constantly reminds me of how resonators contribute so significantly to what makes a voice unique. It is the sound of my father's body that is his unique voice.

The voice is the sound of the body. It is, according to Roland Barthes, the connection between the body and discourse. Barthes writes:

Listening to the voice inaugurates the relation to the Other: the voice by which we recognize others (like writing on an envelop) indicates to us their way of being, their joy or their pain, their condition; it bears an image of their body and, beyond, a whole psychology...the singing voice is not the breath but indeed that materiality of the body emerging from the throat, a site where the phonic metal hardens and takes shape. (Barthes, "Listening" 255)

The voice is a substantial indicator of the identity of the speaker that is so unique it can be used as a means of identification.

I introduce this chapter with the anecdote regarding my father's voice and Barthes's reflections on voice because retaining what makes a voice (and) identity unique is central to the critical performance pedagogy for voice instruction that I articulate in this chapter, reflecting upon material I have discussed in the prior five chapters. In what follows, I first recount my experiences in voice training classes that I have taken over the years in actor training and communication studies programs. By means of the anecdotal evidence, I seek to highlight certain issues at work in current voice instruction, acknowledging my investment in them and in the study generally. Next, I recall the criteria for a critical performance pedagogy I outlined in Chapter One. The criteria serve as a framework for articulating a course in voice instruction that integrates historical and other readings with practical exercises and performances. I discuss a few additional theorists who influence the approach I would take in the course before moving on to articulate the tools I would teach. These tools include the study and practice of the various techniques that exercise thought, breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation that I have learned about and disseminated over the course of the study. As a result of using the tools, the students will discover critical concerns and issues regarding voice that we will analyze as a class, and thereby the pedagogical criteria of engaging students in critique in collaborative ways will be realized. I discuss these aspects next, including how the critical binaries that I used in this study might guide analysis in the classroom. I then discuss the central aim of the course, which is to retain the unique vocal identities of the students while offering them tools to expand their vocal flexibility and possibility. To conclude, I discuss the significance of the study and provide ideas for further research.

When I reflect on the voice training I received in the two MFA acting programs I attended, I find ideas and practices that have burned themselves into my psyche. While most of

these influences are generative, others I seek to change. To explain the impact, I look to Michel Foucault's "Technologies of Self," in which he surveys different types of technologies of control. While technologies of power seek to control individuals from the outside, technologies of self are driven by self-surveillance. Foucault describes the interplay of these two technologies as "governmentality" (Foucault 147). Such an interplay is at work in the pedagogical processes of voice instruction in current actor training programs: a voice instructor observes the actor (from the outside) in both classroom and performance contexts, listening for poor usage, tension, and audibility. By means of oral and written evaluations, the teacher disciplines the actor to internalize the criticism and self-monitor his problems and their redress. In this way, the instituted government of the teacher is incorporated into, enacted, and pass on through the actor's self-governance. Most of the governing technology I have learned in voice courses is positive, such as being able to resolve tense spots in my vocal apparatus. Of course, my positive view of this ability is a mark of the govern-mentality, as is my knee-jerk reaction to wonder, "Gol' darn it, what's wrong with me?" whenever I sense tension in any part of my body.

In voice instruction, I fear that attempts to heal the mind/body split actually have exacerbated certain issues. Inspired by New Age philosophies of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Esalen or gestalt therapy, current holistic approaches often result in students discussing past traumas in their voice classes, goaded on by instructors who inquire, "what happened to you when you were little that put all of that tension in your right shoulder?" In my experience, such pseudo-psychological governance has resulted in my thinking that all bodily tension is indicative of a mental malady. "Oh no, my stomach is tight, what am I afraid of?" "Oh no, my right leg is tense, what am I trying to hide?" I often feel as if I have earned an MFA in Neuroses or perhaps an MFA in Pandering to Neuroses. At the extreme, some acting teachers further exploit a

student's neuroses by marketing the student-as-neurotic in auditions for film and television: a particularly perverse kind of governance.

Clearly, I am concerned about the implementation of pseudo-psychological strategies in the classroom. I have seen many students (besides myself) become tearful in response to an instructor's prying questions. As encouraged by the very popular Linklater method, many instructors seek to guide the student to a "breakthrough" moment where the student acknowledges a past trauma, releases tension, and bursts into tears, whereupon the instructor prompts, "Move it to the text" – i.e., apply the pain you are feeling to the role you are working on. The resulting performance often amazes and moves the class. However, the performance is moving because the student (not the character) is genuinely upset. Minus the teacher's prompting in the future, the student will be unable to recreate the same moving experience again. As I see it, the main problem (and solution) is that the teacher has not abstracted the personal breakthrough to a general tool the student can use in the future when she cannot or does not want to experience a breakdown in order to breakthrough.

And what about communication studies voice classes? Many of them have simply disappeared. The undergraduate course in voice and diction that I took in college was required of all students in the School of Communication, which included Departments of Theatre, Radio and Television, and Speech. The classroom was a typical college classroom, with rows of desks facing a larger desk at the front of the room where the teacher sat. Honestly, the only thing I remember from the course is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which has come in handy ever since. The IPA is a method for notating speech, much like the symbols for pronunciation that are included in a dictionary. Unlike those notations, IPA provides a single character for each phoneme across all human languages. For instance, in a dictionary, the word

“deep” would be followed by “/dēp/” whereas in IPA, “deep” would be “[dip]” as the symbol [i] stands for the long e sound. If you wanted to take a dip in the pool, “dip” would be notated as [dIp]. The only other aspect I recall from the class are activities we did not do, such as drill the sounds of words or do performances.

There are many reasons why a performance studies program is a perfect area in which to test out and teach a critical course in voice instruction. First, given our disciplinary history, performance studies grew from the fifth canon of rhetoric, that is, delivery. Should the tradition of delivery be important to the department, the instructor, and her students, then constantly questioning and improving upon what we understand “delivery” to be and do seems important. Second, and also in light of our disciplinary history, performance studies pedagogy is known for being exceptional in quality and experimental in temperament. We are well-suited then to test out the promise of a new course in informed and innovative ways. Third, performance studies is centered in body based theory, practice, and instruction. And, fourth, faculty and students develop and participate constantly in public performances that require that voices be heard, understood, and reused night after night. While we are gifted composers of performances, most of us lack voices that can express the gift of the composition, as do great orators with their voices. I recently attended a panel of performances honoring the great Mary Frances HopKins at the Southern States Communication Conference where several of her colleagues and students performed, many of them with astonishingly rich voices that reveal emotion and thought. A light bulb went off in my head: this is what our discipline will lose by not addressing the voice.

#### A CRITICAL PERFORMANCE PEDAGOGY

In Chapter One, I drew on the pedagogical approaches of Pineau, Freire, and Giroux and feminist and queer theory to develop criteria for a critical performance pedagogy for voice

instruction. The five criteria are: (a) to involve students in the critique or intervention of the social-cultural biases and assumptions related to vocality, such as those articulated by the (false) binaries; (b) as the instructor, to not assume said biases and assumptions but rather discover them in collaboration with the students through course readings, discussions, and practical performance exercises that also exercise the vocal apparatus; (c) to teach students the physiology of the voice so as to empower them with how the voice operates, again through readings and practical exercises; (d) to teach students the creative tools for making simple performances that activate points (a) through (c) above; and (e) in these ways, to create a classroom of possibility and renewal where the unique vocal traits of each student are retained, while options for vocal use are explored and a vocal flexibility encouraged.

As the last point is a result of realizing the prior points, in my discussion of points (a) through (d), I will strive to show how they impact (e). Because learning about and using the tools will give rise to critical concerns and issues that the students discover, I will discuss points (c) and (d) before points (a) and (b). First, though, I would like to address a few additional ideas that further inform the pedagogy I develop here. The ideas are those of Jesse Southwick, Jill Dolan, and Arthur Frank.

Jesse Southwick provides the most coherent address of the vocal pedagogy that Emerson developed and they both taught. As I described in Chapter Two, Emerson and Southwick believed that instructors should not harp on a student's vocal weaknesses but rather focus on their strengths. With a focus on play and being a helpful pedagogue, the Emerson and Southwick method contrasts the address of weaknesses we find in other voice instruction, such as that of Grotowski. I have always felt that the dressing down of student actors, attacking their mistakes in front of their classmates, does not create the most productive results.

In *Geographies of Learning*, Jill Dolan seeks to mediate the relationship between her three academic homes of theatre studies, performance studies, and gender studies. Thereby, she develops a method for integrating and practicing all three emphases in her classroom. Dolan's "goal as a feminist teacher, is not to force my students toward some artificial consensus," but to provide them with the tools of learning, which "empowers them, regardless of how students use them" (Dolan *Geographies of Learning* 5). Dolan lends support to my choice to ground my instruction in practical exercises and performances that extend the tools or technologies of voice to the students. In this way, they are able to train – compose and use – their voice independently, without the instructor's guidance, in the future. Further, by means of "doing" practice, the students discover issues of voice that concern them, rather than being told from the start what issues they should concern themselves with. Lastly, a tool based approach helps me avoid dictating general prescriptions, readymade for all students.

In his essay, "For a Sociology of the Body," Arthur Frank provides a useful resource for evaluating the (socialized) ways bodies behave.<sup>35</sup> The body typology that Frank develops is determined by how bodies behave in response to four questions bodies commonly confront in situations. They ask, am I in control or not? Am I fulfilling my desires or experiencing lack? Is my relationship to others dyadic or monadic; do I need or desire another body in this situation? And, is my identity grounded in my corporeal body or do I want to transcend corporeality; am I associated or dissociated from my body? The different combinations of answers result in four basic styles: disciplined, mirroring, dominating, and communicative. The noted questions and body styles speak to the five critical binaries that I have used to guide my evaluation and theorization in each chapter. For instance, the question regarding association and dissociation

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<sup>35</sup> See Bowman on the usefulness of Frank's essay in body based learning.

with the corporeal body informs and is informed by mind/body and spiritual/scientific concerns. Further, a desire (or not) to associate with the contingencies of corporeal bodies highlights what is at stake in the identity politics of class and gender, as well as in the communicative relationship between performer and audience. All the methods I discussed in the prior chapters that seek to move the student from a mechanical to natural voice activate bodies engaged in a regime of discipline or governmentality. Developing exercises that encourage students to discover how we use our voices to discipline, mirror, dominate, or communicate (in generative ways) opens the door to a wealth of possibilities for classroom practice, performance, and discussion. Indeed, a goal of the course or an exercise in the course might be to realize Frank's so-called communicative body type, which is a body who fulfills his or her desires by engaging the unpredictable and contingent bodies of oneself and others, as grounded in and associated with corporeality. What does a voice grounded in this desire sound like?

With these ideas in mind, I turn now to address the teaching of tools for learning about the anatomy and physiology of voice and for composing performances that exercise those tools. Studying the science of vocal production provides students with tools for addressing vocal problems and challenges on their own. Many of the theorists and practitioners I have examined in this study encourage such study, and I would integrate their emphases into my pedagogy. Rush's focus on physiology and the phonemes of speech provide students with a scientific understanding of vocal production and a cognitive framework to use when exercising and composing voice. Stanislavski's system emphasizes relaxation, diction, and resonance, which increases vocal range, expressivity, and clarity. Grotowski's focus on strength, flexibility, breathing, and the resonators develops the student's presence and creates a connection between the spectator and the performer. Linklater's relaxation techniques, breathing, and development of

the resonating ladder help to insure vocal hygiene and prevent vocal damage during performance. In my embrace of these emphases, I intend to recognize and find compelling ways to teach the physical science of voice rather than direct the science toward and overwhelm it with a spiritual goal or rationale, as is the case with Linklater's rhetoric of the natural voice. In other words, any "spiritual" gain or rationale I would leave to the student to figure through.

One excellent way I have found to teach anatomy in the classroom is via the practice of body-mapping, which Barbara and William Connable cover in their text, *How to Learn the Alexander Technique: A Manual for Students*. F. M. Alexander was a popular Australian platform reader who, after losing his voice, developed practices that reduce stress on the body by using it in efficient ways. Although the Alexander technique focuses on the body (not the voice of the body), it has been used by voice teachers for many years to reduce tension in the vocal apparatus. I had the good fortune to take a course in the technique with a certified instructor in the Department of Music at Louisiana State University. The Connables use body-mapping to redress what Alexander calls "debauched kinesthesia" or misunderstandings of the physical workings of the body. The Connables find that when people have an accurate (scientific) understanding of the human skeleton and the location of organs, they use their bodies in more healthful ways than they do without this knowledge. To body-map, students draw a picture of what they think their skeleton looks like and where they think their major organs are housed. Then, via experiential touring of their anatomy and viewing anatomical drawings, the students learn how the body is actually composed. The initial maps and the vast differences between them and what the students learn make for a humorous experience, which results in invested learning.

Below, I use the components of voice – thought, breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation – to discuss the tools for vocal use I would teach in the classroom. Thought provides the impetus for speaking. Besides referring to an understanding of the text, thought also is inferred in the stimulation and use of the imagination. For Rush, the speaker must understand the text that they are speaking. S. S. Curry believed that vocal expression develops directly from thought, which reveals the emotions of the speaker. In Stanislavski’s system, thought is used to compel subconscious responses via a focus on the logic of the text, visualizing what is being said, and exciting the subtext behind speech. In terms of the mind/body and mechanical/natural binaries, both Stanislavski and Curry provide tools of the mind and the body to excite organic (read: natural) interior responses.

Grotowski and Linklater provide a little different approach to thought in vocal performance. For them, thought gets in the way of a direct connection between the body and the text or, in Grotowski’s case, the myth being confronted. They favor instinct and imagination over thought, although both activate the imagination via creative ways of thinking, such as the use of analogies and visualization techniques.

In my classroom, thought and instinct will be explored by considering the false binary of the mind and the body. Does the mind control the body and voice? Or vice versa? Or is the dueling relationship an illusion of culture? How are emotions motivated through the voice? How is a lie composed; what does it sound like? Are there times when voice or even speech happens without conscious thought? To discover and answer questions like these, students will pursue playful explorations of text using both analytical and spontaneous (so-called mechanical and natural, mind and body) methods. They also will analyze the work of theorists and practitioners who discuss the relationship of thought to voice in their studies. Broadly, I will

urge the view that an analytical understanding of the text stimulates and is stimulated by the imagination, and together the pair excites physiological responses in the vocal apparatus that can be heard and felt by an audience.

The key relationship between thought and sound or spoken language is breath. For the most part, breathing is ignored by the elocutionists. It is not until Delsarte and Stebbins appear on the scene that we hear breath discussed and most of that discussion is confusing and contradictory. In Stebbins' version of the Delsarte method, the different types of breathing (from the diaphragm, the chest, and the gut) excite different emotional states. Stanislavski claims that breathing is best taught through singing lessons. For Grotowski, total respiration is sought, which is a method that is based in connecting breath to the body by combining both diaphragmatic and chest breathing. Linklater presents lengthy exercises for discovering the impetus for breath and calls for an efficient use of breath for performance. Almost all the methods I have covered in this dissertation favor an approach to breathing that is trained but not consciously manipulated, and it engages both the diaphragm and the chest cavity while avoiding activation of the shoulders.

While I understand why Grotowski advocates total respiration, I believe that diaphragmatic breathing is the most important type of breathing for students to learn, as most people already breathe from the chest and the action of the chest is largely a sympathetic, autonomic response to the action of the diaphragm. Both Grotowski and Linklater recommend lying on the ground with a hand on the belly to feel and encourage the action of the diaphragm. I feel that Linklater provides wonderful exercises for exploring the breath, although, as a teacher, I find students most resistant to them, especially when prompted to imagine their belly as a

swamp. To remedy this situation, I might ask the students for analogies they would prefer to imagine and use.

Reflecting on the prior chapters, it would seem that phonation is the most difficult of the components to teach. The reluctance may be intentional on the part of the practitioners as focus on phonation can result in tension in the throat and larynx, which can strain sound and cause vocal damage. Many practitioners feel it is better to focus on breath and resonance and let phonation take care of itself. However, the qualities of the voice that Rush outlines, the natural, the falsette, the whisper, and the Orotund, are types of phonation with which it would be fun to experiment in class in order to understand what phonation is and how it operates in various ways.

The importance of resonance, or the reverberation of vocal sound in different parts of the body, emerges to the fore in the twentieth century. Stanislavski relates in-depth work on his development of resonance over the course of his career. In his series of anecdotes regarding his voice, the director Tortsov describes how he first discovered voice placement and resonance in the mask (the sinuses, nose, and forehead) before discovering chest resonance, after which he proceeded to try to balance the two. Grotowski discovers many more resonators than Stanislavski and advocates that the most exciting prospect for vocal resonance lies in the use of the entire body as a resonator. Linklater, too, provides ample instruction in exercising the different resonators, calling the entire system of resonators a resonating ladder.

To teach resonance, I believe it is most helpful to call on Linklater's resonating ladder as it provides the most comprehensive series of practical exercises. One of the exercises I often use is drawn from Linklater's text, *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice*, and it involves exercising the voice by moving up the resonating ladder on particular phonemes. One begins by emitting a deep "zoo" sound from the hips while moving the heels of each foot up and down in alternation to

shake out the sound. One continues with similar sounds all the way up the body to emitting a “r-r-eeee” sound from the cranium. The practices of other teachers are valuable too, such as thinking of a yawn or a cough when one is about to speak in order to get the soft palate out of the way of the vibrating sound.

The teachers I covered in the study vary in terms of the importance they place on articulation, that is, the use of different parts of the mouth in order to shape sound into speech. Rush is interested in understanding and putting to use the physiology that creates the different consonants and vowels. Curry, on the other hand, largely ignores articulation in order to focus on what he calls vocal expression. The powerful image of a river of sounds, with the consonants as the banks and the vowels as the water, provided by Stanislavski, reveals his merger of science, the imagination, and expression. For Stanislavski, play is central to articulation, and I particularly appreciate his exercise where consonants are removed from their relationship to words and explored as individual flexible sounds. For Grotowski, too much focus on articulation results in unnecessary tension in the jaw, tongue, and throat, and therefore he avoids direct discussion of articulation with students. Linklater also gives articulation short shrift, which supports her claim that she will avoid notions of correct speech. I believe that a balance can be found where the vocal apparatus is relaxed while creating precise diction in order to realize clarity (or a deliberate lack of clarity) in one’s communication with their audience.

Instruction in articulation can be taught by learning the phonemes that make up human language. I find that the teaching the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is instrumental to work on articulation and provides students with a powerful tool for analyzing voices. I have used IPA effectively over the years to teach pronunciation, not only to experiment with the “accurate” pronunciation of a word but to create and experiment with different accents and

dialects. One way to play with the IPA system is to concoct actual pillows in the shape of each IPA sound and then have the students throw the pillows around the room and to each other, voicing each fluffy phoneme they receive and toss. Or they might hug, squeeze, kick, stomp, sit or lie on the phoneme while they voice it.

As you might suspect, the classroom I am advocating is a noisy one! It might best be taught in a performance space or studio, but could occur in a regular classroom as well, as long as faculty are aware that sound is a major component of the course. As with Stebbins' gymnastics, which led Curry to turn up his nose, the course I imagine is a body based course. It requires students to move because physical strength, flexibility, and relaxation are crucial for vocal use that is strong, flexible, and relaxed. While there is a multitude of exercises that help students to realize these traits, basic yoga is a good place to start as it is easy and safe enough for most students to engage. Stanislavski, Grotowski, and Linklater employ yoga at some point in their teachings. In the latter case, vocal work is preceded by the well-known sun salutation and certain exercises are taught while holding a particular yoga pose. Often a Linklater lesson concludes with the deep relaxation offered by the "corpse pose," which consists of lying loosely on one's back on the floor. Body alignment is important too, which can be realized by means of Linklater's spinal roll and puppet exercises.

The practices I have outlined result in a wealth of meaningful outcomes for voice students. Many exercises encourage a feeling of connection between the performer and the audience, an engagement that I feel is undervalued not only in performance but in public speaking as well. They contribute to the presence of the performer and increase vocal range and expressivity. The intent of all of these exercises is to encourage healthy use of the voice that mitigates the vocal damage that might occur from nightly rehearsals and performances.

The tools for learning anatomy and physiology by exercising thought, breath, phonation, resonance, and articulation can be informed by or geared toward the creation of original performances. Performance studies classes nearly always include a live performance element that may consist of exercises, experiments, and workshops as well as more formal performances where students are graded in terms of their application of the tools they have learned in class. These performances integrate embodied learning and analytical thinking while they also activate collaborative processes of design, creation, and response.

One performance exercise is inspired by Grotowski's analogous thinking process where students use their imaginations to activate the sound-color of words. The associative link stimulates sensory and emotional connections that result in a deeply invested performance on the part of the performer, which often impacts the audience in powerful ways too. Examples of the analogous thinking process include the student trying to move an object with her voice or imagining that the voice is accomplishing certain physical tasks, such as breaking through a wall, stirring the air, pushing people away or drawing them close. Genres of metaphors might produce compelling results too, such as voicing words like a certain animal, or plant, or type of weather, or color.

Many of Stanislavski's processes provide us with ways of working on particular texts, such as analyzing text in terms of its logic, visualizing what is being said, and recognizing the hidden meaning or subtext of a text. Exercising these techniques activate the student's analytical and imaginative capabilities and inform the meaning communicated to the audience. To relate logic through voice, Stanislavski advocates dividing the text of one's character or speaker into units and objectives that serve the broader thematic aim of the text. To exercise visualization, a student is to imagine a series of visual images that correspond to the action of the text. In order

to facilitate this goal, I often have students take paper and colored pencils and draw what they sense as the imagistic equivalent of words or phrases. Often lyric poetry is an effective tool for exploring visualization because it is composed more in terms of imagery than action or character. An intriguing alteration to Stanislavski's visualization exercise would be to imagine imagery that is disassociated from the text. What happens to my voice if I imagine something other than the images implied in the text, for instance, a gigantic whale out at sea rather than the inferred towering building? Subtext might be tweaked similarly: rather than use the voice to imply sadness, say, I might imply happiness or some emotion unrelated to the given circumstances. I think that both Stanislavski's and Grotowski's methods might be used to perform scholarly texts. Speaking texts that are not intended to be spoken presents a compelling challenge for performers, testing their creative intellect and their voice, as often the delivery sounds stilted or monotone. What happens to the text and to the voice if the performer composes and concentrates on placing a subtext behind an essay by Butler or Foucault or Rush or Linklater?

Another advanced performance assignment I might use would ask the students to create an autobiographical performance in which they recount their vocal history, restoring and analyzing the voices with which they have come into contact and used over the course of their lives. A variation of the project would be to use Frank's ideas to inform the process. The student might ask and, via the performance, answer: where did my voice come from? How is it disciplined? Do I mirror any voices? What personas from my past do I imitate? Do they each have their own voice or do I merge voices? How do I use my voice differently to communicate with different people or in different contexts? Do I use my voice to dominate others or have I felt dominated by the voices of others?

I do think it is useful for students to try to imitate other voices. In addition to the possibility mentioned above, students could create a short performance in which they audiotape and imitate a voice that is quite different from their own. Oral histories present opportunities to embody other voices, learning accents and vocal habits. In a recent television documentary, from the HBO *Masterclass* series, Anna Deveare Smith leads students through an exercise in which each student tells the story of one of their classmates, trying to imitate as precisely as they can their classmate's voice. In her discussion of one of the performances, Smith discusses how subtext is a tool that not only reveals character but patterns of cultural thought and communication (Smith).

A critique of the binaries inherent in discourses related to the voice is of the utmost importance in order to engage a critical view of vocal usage. Students will read many of the sources discussed in *Staging the Voice* with an eye toward the biases of the binaries of high/low, masculine/feminine, mind/body, natural/mechanical, and spiritual/scientific. Each end of the binary, in fact, can be thought of as a tool for using the voice. I would encourage the students in class to play with high and low voices and consider the politics at work in how society favors particular accents, dialects, and socialects. Troubling the notions of the masculine and feminine can help students understand how their voice is used to express gender and to think about how the mis-match of a gendered voice to the sex of the speaking body is viewed in society. Both the natural inside-out and the mechanical outside-in approaches to voice can be explored and utilized in performance. While physiology speaks to a scientific approach to the voice, spiritual considerations should be left to the student's private beliefs and not dictated by the instructor.

One way to thinking about the binaries that seeks to heal the duels at play within them is articulated by the renowned oral interpretation instructor and theorist Wallace Bacon. In his

1960 essay, “The Dangerous Shores: From Elocution to Interpretation,” Wallace Bacon responds to Gray’s essay “What Was Elocution?” wherein Gray argues that all the elocutionists intended that their approaches be natural and hence the mechanical/natural binary is mute. Bacon embraces the two terms, arguing:

Meaning, for them, becomes not lexical meaning, not abstracted or extracted meaning, but whatever is included in *both* sides of that dichotomy we have been observing — intellect-emotion. And it is served not simply by “mechanical” means, not simply by “natural” means, but by both sides of *that* dichotomy. It employs not simply scholarship, not simply performance techniques – but both sides of *that* dichotomy. The teachers who pay lip service to performance but really care only about discussion of literary texts are not properly meeting their obligations as teachers of interpretation. The teachers who pay lip service to literature but really think of it only as something to perform are not meeting their obligations – and there are many such teachers. Interpretation moves, as it has always moved – and as all the performing arts are always likely to move – between two dangerous shores. One may be wrecked on either. But all the seas between are navigable, and the voyage is wondrous. (Bacon 152; emphasis in original)

I would like the students to think of the binaries we study in a manner like Bacon when they read the materials for the course. I want them to recognize the biases involved in the politics of vocal production in order to develop more free and expressive vocal approaches that will help them be heard, be understood, and prevent damage to their voice over multiple performances.

A common thread in the instruction of most of the practitioners I have examined in this study is the importance of communication with the audience. For Rush, Southwick, Curry, Stanislavski, and Grotowski, the relationship with an audience is of the utmost importance. The communicative act is valued and, in fact, essential. One of the complaints of Strasberg's Method is that communication with the audience is not as important as individual feeling and emotion. In many ways, Linklater’s method echoes this interior focus, but I believe this is because the technique she outlines in *Freeing the Natural Voice* is directed at preparing for performance not at what to do in the performance.

By means of the tools I outlined above, I seek to create a classroom of possibility and renewal where the unique vocal traits of each student are retained, while options for vocal use are explored and a vocal flexibility encouraged. Two approaches to help achieve this classroom come from the expression movement. Charles Wesley Emerson and Jesse Southwick sought to provide instruction that focuses on the strengths of the student instead of revealing weaknesses to fix. The ideas seem so simple in concept, but I find them difficult to realize, especially when so much of bodily instruction is based in negative discipline or governance.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, Curry's encouragement of the individual expressivity of the performer as opposed to imitating instructors creates room for vocal uniqueness and personal interpretation.

#### SIGNIFICANCE AND FURTHER STUDY

Over the course of this study, I have provided a history of the shared histories of vocal training in the disciplines of theatre and oral interpretation from 1827-1923. I recovered the vocal techniques laid out by Konstantin Stanislavski that have been overshadowed by his emotion memory practices. Jerzy Grotowski's theories on the voice have served as an inspiration for me for over twenty years, but most remember him for his treatment of the performer's body, not the voice. While Kristin Linklater's voice techniques are the standard in many actor training programs, I sought to introduce her work to the discipline of performance studies and continue to adapt her exercises for students of various disciplines and interests. In the current chapter, I provided a blueprint for a critical performance pedagogy for voice instruction that avoids some of the post-structuralist misgivings of current scholars. I hope that this pedagogy can be used to heal the divide between teachers of theatrical practice and teachers of performance theory to engage in vocal instruction.

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<sup>36</sup> See Connerton, in "Bodily Practices," when he claims, "the ability to disapprove must be among the first teaching abilities in the effort to establish a transmissible culture" (70-1).

There are many areas for further research implied by this dissertation. First, in the field of sociolinguistics, scholars provide many ideas that could enrich my pedagogy. The concept of sociolects, for instance, offers an interesting way to view the interplay of hegemonic vocal practices alongside the vocal practices of the other. Another term from sociolinguistics, code-switching, provides an intriguing concept for vocal practice. Although code-switching was originally a term describing the way that multilingual speakers navigate their various languages, code-switching has come to mean the way that speakers change their speaking style in order to effect certain results. One result is to “pass” in particular cultures or to establish relational connections to different audiences. The most helpful text that I have found in addressing these issues is *Language and Authority* by Milroy and Milroy, in which the authors analyze how accent and dialect impact and are impacted by issues of race, sex, and class.

Another fascinating area for future research regards the place of the voice within rhetorical address. In particular, I wonder to what extent vocal identity and vocal usage represents a kind of vocal ethos, giving the speaker an air of credibility, trustworthiness, and impacting their dynamism.

While I intend my study and course of instruction to address performance studies students in particular, I believe that *Staging the Voice* could be of benefit to anyone seeking to be heard and understood in front of others.

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## VITA

Derek Mudd was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and grew up just south of there in rural Bullitt County. He attended Morehead State University in Eastern Kentucky, earning a Bachelor's Degree with dual majors in English and theatre in 1994. After starting an MFA in Acting at the University of Louisville, Derek left the university to pursue acting full time. After performing with multiple theatre companies in the Louisville area he moved to Austin, Texas to participate in the city's growing theatre community. In Austin, Derek appeared in many new works by various local and national playwrights and enjoyed providing voiceovers for anime series. Additionally, he worked as the Administrator for Contracts and Evaluations at the Texas Commission on the Arts before deciding to pursue an advanced degree. Derek earned an MFA in Acting at Louisiana State University in 2007, while appearing in many professional performances at Swine Palace Productions. Through Swine Palace he earned membership in the Actors' Equity Association. In the Department of Theatre, he taught Acting: Improvisation and Stage Voice: Beginning Techniques, and was a teaching assistant for Stage Voice: Advanced Techniques. While in the Department of Communication Studies he taught Public Speaking, Introduction to Performance of Literature, and served as a teaching assistant for Introduction to Communication. He has taught courses in acting and workshops in poetry interpretation for Pre-K through 12 students in Baton Rouge and Zachary, Louisiana since 2007. Currently, he is an Instructor in the Department of Languages and Communication at Southeastern Louisiana University where he teaches courses in Public Speaking, Advanced Speaking for Professionals, and Persuasion.