THE VOICE OF TRAINING

Performer Training Working Group Interim Event 2014
TaPRA

Wednesday 7th May 2014 | SCAFM, Eldon Building, 1.10 | Portsmouth
11.00am – 5.00pm
Performer Training Working Group
TaPRA Interim Event – The Voice of Training
7th May 2014, 11.00 – 5pm
University of Portsmouth

11.00 – 11.30: Registration
11.30 – 11.40: Welcome by WG Convenors
11.40 – 12.30: Panel 1
   Chris Palmer (Guildford School of Acting), ‘Vois-ing: How to best train the musical theatre performer?’
   Laura Vorwerg (Royal Holloway, University of London), ‘Testing boundaries: (inter)disciplinarity and the voice’
12.30 - 13.15: Workshop 1
   Matt Smith (University of Portsmouth), ‘Speaking the Unspeakable’
13.15 - 14.00: Lunch
14.00 - 14.40: Panel 2
   David Wiles (University of Exeter), ‘Quintilian as the father of actor training? A Provocation’
   Pamela Karantonis and Mark Langley (Bath Spa University), ‘Dialect, dialectics and vocal poetics: envoicing the other and transforming the self in/as actor training’
14.40 - 15.20: Workshop 2
   Daron Oram (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), ‘Being here now: voice and presence in performance’
15.20 – 16.10: Panel 3
   Bernadette O’Brien (Rose Bruford), ‘The critical voice’
   Christina Kapadocha (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), ‘Towards intersubjective dynamics in psychophysical actor training: logos and the use of metaphor’
16.10 – 16.40: Plenary discussion
VOI-SING: HOW TO BEST TRAIN THE MUSICAL THEATRE PERFORMER?

Chris Palmer, Head of Voice GSA

This paper sets out to explore the most appropriate method of voice training in musical theatre. Historically, it has been universally acknowledged that the pedagogical methods of voice practitioners for actors will do just as well for the musical theatre performer. The musical theatre student should be vocally trained in a vastly different way to that of the actor. This may be a contentious statement; however research is beginning to show that the speech quality of musical theatre performers needs to adopt a different approach from that of the actor for the medium they are entering. This research comes about in the form of the MA in the Practice of Voice and Singing programme which I had the task of writing and delivering over the last five years. This course trains vocal coaches in both disciplines and looks at the pedagogies of many practitioners in both spoken and sung voice and how to integrate them to coach the musical theatre performer.

By exploring the many singing styles of Frederick Hustler, Bel canto and Speech level singing to name a few, within a pedagogical setting, alongside that of some contemporary voice practitioners I have begun to understand the vocal and physical challenges placed on the musical theatre performer.

From alignment, tongue placement, resonance and articulation, the differences are more evident between acting students to that of the musical theatre one. The training of Voice and Singing needs to adapt for the modern musical age, therefore this paper sets out how I have produced a more interdisciplinary approach to training the voice for the musical theatre performer.

BIOG: Chris Palmer in her capacity as Head of Voice at GSA also delivers voice across the University of Surrey, from lawyers to PHD students. Chris has worked with the World Economic Forum in Geneva and delivers voice to numerous shows in the West End, working on Mamma Mia for 5 years. Her latest project she has been working on a triple cast production of Chess with numerous accents for the Union Theatre London.

TESTING BOUNDARIES: (INTER)DISCIPLINARITY AND THE VOICE

Laura Vorwerg, Royal Holloway, University of London

In his book, Training for performance: a meta-disciplinary account, John Matthews asserts that '[t]raining has become integral to
performance practice', a statement he evidences by a focus in theatrical programmes and performers biographies on institutional training (1). In order to attain the status of a trained professional then one must select a disciplinary path to follow: the classical stage actor, the opera singer, the musical theatre performer and the public speaker or orator to name but a few. This disciplinarity is a consequence of our need for a validated training; without the framework a discipline offers, it is not possible to assess the quality of the skills under development.

Yet vocal skills feature in many other clearly defined disciplines without constituting a core training concern of that discipline. Does the same attention need to be paid in giving voice to a puppet as to its physical animation? Similarly, additional performance skills are required of artists in vocally based disciplines. Opera singers may be required to deliver lines or dance. Actors may need to sing. Where can/do we draw these disciplinary boundaries? Do these boundaries exist? Does a performer's physical ability to produce vocal sound determine the automatic inclusion of voice in any given performance discipline with, perhaps, the notable exclusion of dance? This paper seeks to examine these questions of disciplinarity in relation to the voice. Centrally it aims to investigate the (inter)disciplinary manifestations of voice in performance and the potential division of performance skills necessitated by disciplinary training.


BIOG: Laura Vorwerg is a PhD researcher and visiting tutor at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research focusses on interdisciplinary performance practice and examines approaches to developing or acquiring skills within a production context.

**SPEAKING THE UNSPEAKABLE: THE VOICE IN APPLIED PUPPETRY**

*Matt Smith, University of Portsmouth*

The workshop concerns the issues for the use of puppets when they are used to enable vocalisations in groups. The experiments will engage in playing with puppets to explore the types of voice or voices that are encouraged with the puppet. Reference will be made to some examples of practice and personal reflections of practical experiences, workshops and projects within the frame of PaR schemas. The workshop will connect with the themes of, power, globalisation, ethics and applied theatre that are part of my Phd practice. The question considered will be; how does the puppet encourage a heteroglossia in workshop practice and how does this effect participants relationship to power? The workshop will playfully animate some of the issues involved in how to encourage vocalisations with vulnerable groups. I will conclude the workshop by asking for comments on the issues raised by the practice of puppetry in relation to the voice.

For 22 years I have been using puppetry in a number of unusual settings to engage groups in work that can be considered applied puppetry. This work has opened up many different and surprising results in workshops. I am describing this work
critically and developing an advanced study of puppetry as part of applied theatre for puppeteers and academics. These aims connect with my PhD thesis; Speaking the unspeakable. How can puppetry be engaged as a tool in applied theatre practice?

BIOG: Matt Smith currently works as Senior Lecturer in Applied Theatre at The University of Portsmouth, UK. Matt is currently a PhD student at Royal Holloway University. Previously Matt led the undergraduate Community Drama programme at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, Liverpool, UK. He is also the artistic director for PickleHerring Theatre Company. Matt was a freelance artist for sixteen years, working in diverse settings such as schools, prisons, hospitals, environmental agencies, and with the homeless. Matt’s work is always eclectic, working across disciplines such as drama, puppetry, masks, and music.

QUINTILIAN AS THE FATHER OF ACTOR TRAINING? A PROVOCATION

David Wiles, University of Exeter

Quintilian should be regarded as the father of actor training because he maps out a precise and comprehensive method for the public speaker which embraces voice, gesture, scenography and every possible aspect of performance. His work became a kind of bible for renaissance actors. Starting from his propositions about rhythm and gesture, I want to reflect on the difference between French and English classical theatre, where the two different languages seem to demand completely different forms of corporeal expression. My provocation is really going to be a question, about the sources of rhythm in performance.

BIOG: Professor David Wiles is a historian of the theatre, which means that he is someone who wants to understand the present, because it is the past that has made each of us who we are. Undergraduate teaching has always informed and stimulated his research, while postgraduate supervision has opened up countless new horizons. His main historical areas of specialism have been the theatres of Greece and Elizabethan England, and important themes in his work have been performance space, masked acting, festival, and the function of theatre in society. He has always resisted limiting himself to one historical period in order to take a broader view of how theatre has evolved. His current research focus is the history of premodern or 'classical' acting.

DIALECT, DIALECTICS AND VOCAL POETICS: ENVOICING THE OTHER AND TRANSFORMING THE SELF IN/AS ACTOR TRAINING

Mark Langley and Pamela Karantonis, Bath Spa University

This paper will consider the very practical phenomenon of how actors build a stage voice and prepare for accent and dialect work, within the professional demands of the industry that present in Higher Education.

How many times will a director say: "I don't want this rehearsal to be about the accent"? However the reality is that what the director really means is that s/he does not want the actors worried
about getting the accent right. One of the arguments we make in this paper is that until the actor engages with the technical demands of the form, they cannot fully access the meaning of the text. Actors must engage from within, with what Cicely Berry calls the ‘muscularity of the word’ so all the technical and physical demands of its delivery release the comprehension. In order to do this however, they need to release a deeper imaginative process of voice work that often falls into tension with notions of their own identity.

The praxis element of this paper will consider how a wide range of disciplines can complement actor voice-training by unlocking an individual voice in order for the actor to imagine finding the voice of the poet. Aspects of music and postcolonial theory will be considered here, with the importance of imaginative play in the discovery of canonical poetry as a sonic ‘sign taken for a wonder’ (to paraphrase Homi Bhabha).

**BIOGS:**

Mark Langley is Head of Department of Performing Arts, Bath Spa University and for over 25 years has worked as a voice coach for theatre, film and television.

Pamela Karantonis is Senior Lecturer in Voice within the Acting Programme at Bath Spa University. She is also a Convenor of the Music Theatre Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Research. Her current publication project, *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality*, is due for release with Ashgate in September 2014.

**BEING HERE NOW: VOICE AND PRESENCE IN PERFORMANCE**

*Daron Oram, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama*

‘The distinctions between “acting” (pretending/representing) and “non-acting” (performing real “present” actions) are ambiguous...Even when actors represent by making-present fictional propositions, it is likely that they will draw attention to their being-present’ (Power C. *Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in the Theatre* p.111)

This workshop seeks to explore the ambiguity of presence in relation to the actor and his voice. Participants will initially explore the actor’s presence with self, and the vocal expression of that self, by drawing on the vocal practices of Kristin Linklater as laid out in *Freening the Natural Voice* (Linklater K. 2006). Antonio Damasio (*Self Comes to Mind* p.21) states that “the body is best conceived as the rock on which the proto-self is built, while the proto-self is the pivot around which the conscious mind turns.” Linklater’s voice work helps to make this pre-existing sense of self consciously present and begins to allow that growing sense of self to become present in the voice.

Following this initial exploration, the actor’s ‘present’ self will be challenged by shifting the relationships between: self and other-actor; self and space; and self and other’s-audience. In this way, the actor’s ‘performance’ is constantly re-framed and the seeming paradox - or conflict - of actor-to-actor presence and actor-audience presence begins to dissolve.

**BIOG:**

Daron specialises in teaching and coaching voice, text, accents and
dialects. He started working at Central in 2012 after 6 years as Head of Voice at Arts Educational Schools, London. Prior to training as a voice teacher Daron worked as an actor and was also artistic director of Twisted Productions and co-director of bYAct Theatre Company. Daron’s initial training in voice was at Central on the MA Voice Studies course and he has also subsequently been trained as a designated Linklater Voice Teacher by Kristin Linklater. Daron’s research focuses on developing voice practice for the contemporary multi-modal actor working across classical, contemporary and post-dramatic theatre. Daron has also worked professionally as a voice/dialect coach for the RSC and on West End and National Touring Productions.

THE CRITICAL VOICE

Bernadette O’Brien, Rose Bruford

Many trainers have the express aim of helping their students free their voices from restriction, and to increase fluidity, range and muscularity. And yet we also need to ‘train’ the voice, which may suggest a kind of goading or persuading it to ‘do the right thing’? Often our attempts to ‘perfect’ the voice take us in the opposite direction of freedom, covering up our ‘real’ voices as we attempt to create a ‘false’ voice – the acceptable voice we think people want to hear.

This paper will address how we might re-language our feedback or analysis of the student’s voice in an effort to create the conditions where we can work without fear of criticism or reprisal. What happens when we do away with shame? How can the model of a therapeutic approach to working with the voice, be bought to bear on voice training, and what are the ramifications for this on the way we utilize the voice in our theatre.

BIOG: Bernadette O’Brien is an actor, director, voice practitioner and therapist. She originally trained at Rose Bruford College where she now teaches Expressive Voice on the European Theatre Arts Course. She specialises in extended voice techniques achieved through working with subtle body processes, breath, movement and imagination. The work draws on her trainings in Voice Movement Therapy, (based on the work of Alfred Wolsohn and the subsequent development of the Roy Hart Theatre) and Core Process Psychotherapy, a Buddhist oriented approach with an emphasis on working in the present moment with embodied awareness.

TOWARDS INTERSUBJECTIVE DYNAMICS IN PSYCHOPHYSICAL ACTOR TRAINING: LOGOS AND THE USE OF METAPHOR

Christina Kapadocha, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

In this paper I will discuss logocentric aspects that emerge during the formulation, articulation and dissemination of psychophysical actor training practices. I identify elements of logos in the transition from the actor’s subjective experience to the intersubjective dynamics between the actor and the trainer. This exploration is formulated out of my Practice as Research project which consists of a somatic approach to psychophysical
actor training. I engage with the notion of psychophysical in the acting process as the development of the actor’s holistic embodied experience. Through practice, I revisit the integration of inward and outward perceptions of logos particularly through the use of metaphor as a potent source of kinesthetic awareness and empathy. For this discussion, I imbricate the examination of logos in theatre practice with philosophical perspectives through the lens of Merleau-Ponty’s embodied phenomenology. The practical element of my research is underpinned by Linda Hartley’s IBMT (Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy) somatic approach which is developed along the lines of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen’s somatic technique of Body-Mind Centering. Throughout the somatic experience, I explore the emergence of embodied logos within the application of somatic metaphor in different acting environments. The question that arises is: what if the embodiment of logos as language, voice, silence, thought and action could represent both the psycho and the physical in an integrated but at the same time differentiated actor-trainer experience?

**BIOG:** Christina Kapadocha is an actor, somatic educator and practice-based PhD candidate at RCSSD. Her research is a somatic approach to psychophysical actor training.

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**WORKING GROUP CONVENORS**

http://tapra.org/groups/c20-c21-performer-training/

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http://wwwm.coventry.ac.uk/researchnet/cucv/Pages/Profile.aspx?profileID=442

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**MANY THANKS AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO FUTURE TAPRA EVENTS**