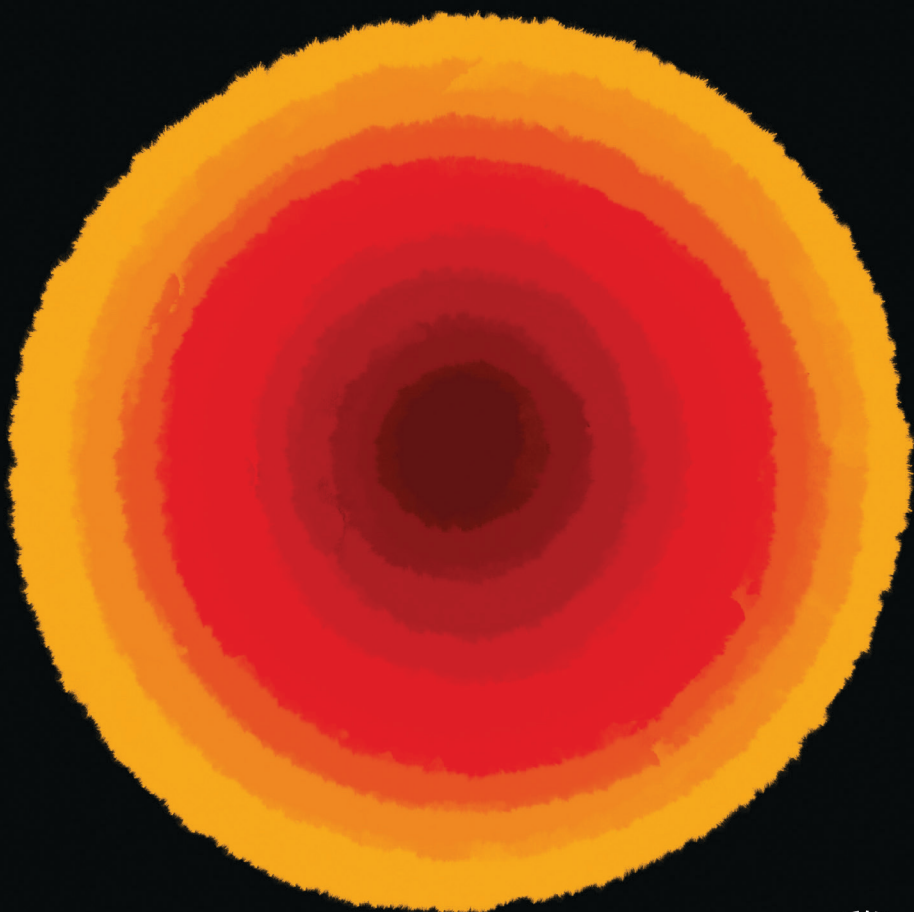


Rafael Lopez-Barrantes



Voice Made Visible

Multi-Octave Voice Training and
Techniques for Performers



Voice Made Visible

Voice Made Visible is an exploration of voice training and performance practice based on the use and application of Multi-Octave Vocal Range techniques.

“Multi-Octave” is understood as the arsenal of sounds that exists uniquely within each human voice, beyond the comfortable average octave that we use in everyday life. In *Voice Made Visible*, Rafael Lopez-Barrantes builds on the voice work created by Alfred Wolfsohn and developed by Roy Hart and his company in France to assist students, artists, and those interested in the performing arts with their vocal practice. He draws from over three decades of multi-cultural performance and teaching, sharing the three fundamental pillars of his system: Fiction, News, and Body Source. This book will help readers unfold their understanding of the voice by strengthening it and inspire them to create new vocal paths for the stage, camera, and voice acting, as well as for their own personal expressive growth.

Voice Made Visible is an invaluable resource for students of Acting and Voice courses, as well as working performing artists.

For supplemental material, including pedagogical audio-visual clips, please visit www.barrantesvoicesystem.com.

Rafael Lopez-Barrantes is the creator of the Barrantes Voice System (BVS) and co-founder of the Archipelago Theater in France and the US. Rafael’s work as a Spanish performer and voice teacher developed from his time acting, directing, and teaching with the Roy Hart Theatre, as well as research in traditional Japanese Noh Theater, Buddhist Shomio, and Spanish Flamenco. He was a faculty member at the National School of Puppetry Arts in France

from 1984 to 1992, Duke University from 1992 to 2007, and the American Dance Festival from 1992 to 2015. Since 2007, he has been a full-time faculty member in the School of Theater at the California Institute of the Arts teaching the Barrantes Voice System to MFA and BFA students. Between 2010 and 2016, Rafael served as the Associate Director of Performance for the CalArts School of Theater and in 2018 conceived the House of Voices initiative. Rafael is committed to the development of the BVS teacher certification program for CalArts alumni.

Voice Made Visible

Multi-Octave Voice Training and Techniques for Performers

Rafael Lopez-Barrantes

Edited by Grace Leneghan

Illustrated by
Aaron Lopez-Barrantes

Designed cover image: Aaron Lopez-Barrantes

First published 2024

by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2024 Rafael Lopez-Barrantes

Illustrations © 2024 Aaron Lopez-Barrantes

The right of Rafael Lopez-Barrantes to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Lopez-Barrantes, Rafael, author. | Leneghan, Grace, editor. | Lopez-Barrantes, Aaron, illustrator.

Title: Voice made visible : voice training and performance practices with multi-octave vocal range techniques / Rafael Lopez-Barrantes ; edited by Grace Leneghan ; illustrated by Aaron Lopez-Barrantes.

Description: New York, NY : Routledge, 2024. |

Includes index. Identifiers: LCCN 2023014608 (print) |

LCCN 2023014609 (ebook) | ISBN 9781032451794 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781032451787 (paperback) | ISBN 9781003376842 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Voice culture.

Classification: LCC PN4162 .L66 2024 (print) |

LCC PN4162 (ebook) | DDC 808.5—dc23/eng/20230707

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023014608>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023014609>

ISBN: 978-1-032-45179-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-45178-7 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-37684-2 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003376842

Typeset in Optima

by Newgen Publishing UK

Access the Support Material: www.barrantesvoicesystem.com

*To Alfred Wolfsohn, Roy Hart, the Roy Hart
Theatre, all my pupils, and especially to my sons
Aaron and Samuel*

Knowledge is a rumor until the body knows it.

– An ancient proverb from the Asaro Tribe in Papua New Guinea

Contents

	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
	Introduction	1
1	Beginnings	4
	<i>In the Beginning Was Sound</i>	4
	<i>The Foundations of My Work</i>	5
	<i>My Own Epiphany</i>	6
2	Voice Made Visible	9
	<i>The De-Colonization of the Voice</i>	9
	<i>"I Want to Be Someone Like Somebody Else Was Once" and the Multi-Octave Voice</i>	11
	<i>Voice Made Visible</i>	14
3	The Prerequisites: Fiction and News	16
	<i>Fiction</i>	16
	<i>News</i>	23
4	Sound Grounding	28
	<i>The Eyes</i>	28
	<i>Head Resonators</i>	32
	<i>The Mouth</i>	35
	<i>The Pharynx</i>	37
	<i>The Thorax</i>	51
	<i>The Diaphragm ("The Power Tool")</i>	57
	<i>The Abdomen</i>	62
	<i>The Pelvis</i>	65

5	The Industry of Breath and Alignment	78
	<i>On Breath</i>	78
	<i>Alignment</i>	94
	<i>Shower Mouth</i>	97
	<i>Gills and Intercostal Awakening</i>	101
	<i>Three Basic Tongue Positions</i>	110
	<i>Support of Sound with Diaphragm</i>	117
	<i>Four Times Eight</i>	120
	<i>Voice Like Concrete: Shomio</i>	123
	<i>Acoustic Levels</i>	129
	<i>Foo Dog Experiment</i>	137
6	The Foundational Pillars: The Body Sources	142
	<i>From Chaos to Order: The Body Source</i>	142
	<i>Earth</i>	144
	<i>Broken Earth</i>	148
	<i>Strong Wood</i>	154
	<i>Soft Wood</i>	158
	<i>Broken Wood</i>	160
	<i>Epic Hollow Wood</i>	162
	<i>Lyric Hollow Wood</i>	164
	<i>Metal</i>	165
	<i>Broken Metal</i>	169
	<i>Air</i>	172
	<i>Water</i>	177
	<i>The Scream</i>	182
7	Training	186
	<i>Grotesque</i>	186
	<i>Building Your Training Session</i>	189
	<i>Eclipse Yourself: The Task</i>	196
	<i>On Connection</i>	200
	Conclusion: The Universe in a Lid . . .	207
	<i>Glossary</i>	209
	<i>Index</i>	218

Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been a deep pleasure for me, in large part because of the encouragement and assistance many people – especially my students – have given me throughout the years.

I would initially like to thank my first teachers Roy Hart, Richard Armstrong, Barry Coghlan, and Saule Ryan – and most deeply Marita Gunter for her patience and generous energy over 15 years of her profound teachings. I am also most indebted to the late Alfred Wolfsohn (1896–1962). Without his vision and perseverance, the work I have done and developed would have never seen the light.

I want to thank the many people whom I have worked alongside and crossed paths with over the years. They come from the worlds of arts, sciences, and human sciences, but most importantly from the vast universe of life.

My heartfelt recognition goes to those colleagues and professionals whose individual techniques and approaches helped guide my inner compass. Thanks to them, I learned that if one is sufficiently open to experience, all roads *can* indeed lead to Rome. *Gracias* to the following: Abbot Dr Fujita of the Daienin temple (Koyasan, Wakayama Prefecture, Japan); Robert Courbon, for his acupuncture instruction; Claire Heggen for her heart and body knowledge; Laurie McKlin for her art and body practice; Charles Reinhart, Martha Myers, Donna Faye Burchfield, and Jodee Nimerichter of American Dance Festival; Masao Yamaguchi for his mentorship, generosity, and knowledge of world theater; E. Barba, Yoshi Oida, El Toro, Marie Agnes Faure, Heide Teggeder, Akeo Kanze, Kosuke Nomura, and Travis Preston.

Adam J. Smith and Kanean Ung for their editing help and Grace Leneghan for her dedication and thorough work seen throughout my whole book. My partners Johannes Theron, Ellen Hemphill, and Maurice Boswell. My son Aaron for his illustrations and my son Samuel for his most valuable first edits. And last but not least, all my students for making me the teacher that I am.

Finally, I would like to thank Hirokazu Kosaka sensei, Master Artist in residence at the Japanese American Community Cultural Center in Los Angeles, and Tatsushige Udaka sensei of the Kongo School of Noh Theater in Kyoto, for their depth of knowledge of the disciplines of Kyudo and Noh and for how they inspired me.

Introduction

As a 21-year-old, I dreamed of one day writing a book that would speak about my experience of the voice. Forty-two years later, as I write from a Japanese monastery while on my sabbatical semester at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), I am finally ready to dive into my life's work by investigating, structuring, and developing decades of thoughts and lessons that I have assembled over these many years.

On March 9, 2015, I traveled to Mount Koya, Wakayama prefecture, Japan. Once I finally reached Gokurakubashi, the base of the mountain, a number of signs guided me to an unusual red and cream yellow cable car. This took me to the top of the Koya San Mountain.

I had never been in a railcar like this before. It felt like an oversized, broad, steep staircase, built at a 60° angle with large panoramic windows all around, allowing me to fully take in the spectacular view. Though it looked rather antiquated, it was clearly a very sturdy and safe "mountain ship." A gentle shake with a barely audible engine noise started to elevate me and all the other passengers up the steep mountain's slope, our backs to the mountain and our eyes down at the platform as it faded away.

I found myself thinking that this would not simply be another mountain climb. The cable car was offering me an ascension from the depths of the valley to the very peak of the mountain!

And suddenly it hit me: what a great way to begin writing my book! Every time I readjusted my body on my seat, I felt the strong pull of gravity, shifting me forward. I had never experienced anything like this. Nor had I experienced what I would describe as a strange hourglass-like optical effect. As we went up, what was

below us closed in like a narrowing, centripetal circle, zooming away. Simultaneously, what had been behind our backs and above us fanned out like an immense aperture, opening wide as it zoomed closer to the clouds. Straight ahead, the horizon got broader and wider, unveiling new mountain ranges. Hundreds of trees stood guard on both sides of our “mountain ship,” escorting our ascent.

A few minutes later, we arrived at the top of *Koya San Mountain*. The valleys deep below us were now hidden by a sea of soft, rippling clouds that transformed the mountains into distant islands. The wide-open sky at the top of the mountain was an arresting winter-crystal blue.

I was transported elsewhere. I knew: *I will be able to write here*. I have come to this particular place in Japan because of the fierce inspiration I felt the first time I heard Shomio. It was the summer of 1984 in Tokyo. Jodo Buddhist reverend, Horyu Haneda, introduced me to this soul-stirring style of devotional chanting. Now, 31 years later, I have returned to Japan. This time, however, I am coming to the very cradle and repository of the Shingon Buddhist Shomio tradition. Its founder Kukai, later known as Kobho Daishi, established it here during the ninth century. It is in his headquarters that I will get up well before sunrise to start the day. As I sat and listened to the Shomio chanting, and as I closed my eyes to meditate, I began to put order to the thoughts, notes, and writings of my last 42 years.

This book is the result of innumerable hours spent taking voice lessons, giving them, preparing them, dreaming about them, and pondering about them. It is also the outcome of many failures, bumps on the road, and successes in the unfinished process of becoming a voice teacher.

Voice Made Visible is an exploration for voice training and performing practice based on the use and application of Multi-Octave Vocal Range techniques. “Multi-Octave” is understood as that “arsenal of sounds” that exists uniquely within each human voice, beyond the comfortable average octave that we use in everyday life.

You will find the essential terms in the book **bolded** when first introduced and developed further in the Glossary. In addition to this book, please visit: www.barrantesvoicesystem.com for

supplemental material including pedagogical audio-visual clips to complement what you will read here.

My hope is that this manual will assist you in your practice and open your understanding of the voice, strengthen it, and inspire you to create new paths.

Thank you very much for reading it.

Rafael Lopez-Barrantes
Koya San, Wakayama, Japan

Chapter 1

Beginnings

In the Beginning Was Sound

Be not afeared. The isle is full of noises. Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices, that, if I then had wak'd after long sleep, will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming the clouds methought would open and show riches ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked I cried to dream again.

Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 3.2, Caliban

The notion of “**Multi-Octave Vocal Range**” stems from the observation that there is far more to the voice than the sounds we hear and make daily. There is a vital gap between the sounds available to us as human animals, and our ability – let alone willingness – to express these sounds.

The use of the voice in our culture appears to rest on the tenet of achieving maximum effect with minimum effort. On the other hand, when we think of producing voice for the stage, the opposite should be true: “invest maximum effort to achieve what seemingly looks effortless.”

With the advent of Modernism, our ability to get drunk in thought and chatter has increased considerably; but while we can engage in small talk until we are blue in the face, the truth is we do this to muffle pain, cover hurt, and deaden the anxieties inherent to the human condition. While we have learned how to develop sophisticated forms of abstract thought (how to fly to the moon, how to build a nuclear submarine), our ability to draw upon sensorial, experiential, and emotional intelligence is lacking.

Imagine if we could better understand the disconnect between our technological prowess and our animal nature! While many of us know how to build a website, for example, our ability to decrypt, liberate, and communicate the more primordial aspects of our being seems to remain elusive.

One way to remedy this situation is by putting our effort and abilities toward connecting to a basic universal humanity. Brigitte Gauthier wrote about Pina Bausch's work of the importance of erasing one's cultural and social differences in artmaking.

Performance, being such an efficient vehicle for understanding our human experience, condition, and emotions, appears to be the ideal tool for potentially closing that disconnect. As a performer, I am convinced that the voice can bridge the gap between the noise of modernity and the connection to our more primal selves. In the beginning was sound. We must not only hear it, but also listen to it.

The Foundations of My Work

The work developed in this book has its roots in the work originated by the visionary Alfred Wolfsohn (1896–1962).

Born in Germany, Wolfsohn became a singing and voice teacher. He served in the First World War where he survived the seminal experience of being buried alive in the trenches amongst the bodies of dying soldiers. The emotional force and power of the sounds he heard then led him to explore with his own voice and to develop a new understanding of the power of the human voice and what lies behind it. The rise of Nazism in Germany made A.W., as he was endearingly called then, seek asylum in London. Over the years several pupils gathered around him researching and exploring their own voices beyond the four basic existing traditional vocal registers: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. His work on the voice became intimately connected and inspired by human psychology, Jung, and disciplined self-study. A unique and very progressive modern understanding of the voice was born.

After his death, one of his pupils, Roy Hart (1926–1975) took the lead on the work, adding a strong theater component to what Wolfsohn had previously created and developed. Over the years, the work became better known and attracted many people. In the mid-sixties, with the presence of 40 people, the **Roy Hart Theatre**

was created. In July 1974, the company moved to the South of France, to the Chateau de Malerargues: an abandoned hotel in the heart of the Cevennes mountains on a former seventeenth-century silk farm in the Languedoc-Roussillon, near the towns of Nîmes, Avignon, and Montpellier, and an important center of “La Resistance” in France during World War II.

I spent 16 meaningful years of my life there. The Chateau felt to be a real hands-on, international, “utopian” village. Hard work but meaningful. This life adventure still informs what I do and how I do it. This chapter of my life was loaded with joys, struggles, discoveries, contradictions, and growth, yet driven by the vision of this multicultural, theater community where its 40 members created, researched, studied, and experienced the possibilities of the voice. This school of life and of theater helped me to refine, build and develop what later in my life has become my vision, culminating in the creation of the Barrantes Voice System.

My Own Epiphany

In March of 1971, I was a third-year law student at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. As I was about to start dinner that night, my friend Juanjo called me. “Rafael, come! In 30 minutes, there is a performance that you have to see at the Teatro de la Zarzuela.”

I left my dinner untouched on the table and ran. The performance “And,” by the Roy Hart Theatre, was part of Madrid’s International Theater Festival that year. As I watched it, I became spellbound, paralyzed in my seat for almost two hours. Though I had seen plenty of theater before, I had never experienced anything like this. The entire piece was performed with “pre-verbal” sounds, songs, and phonemes . . . no words. And yet, I seemed to understand everything on a visceral, emotional, universal level. This was an epiphany for me. My life changed forever. That night I experienced the protean nature of the voice. My life took a turn in that very moment. That night I knew I would join the Roy Hart Theatre as soon as I finished law school (which would also mark the end of my law career). I became passionate about the voice. From then on and through years of research, practice, and study, I discovered the plethora of possibilities contained in what we refer to in the West as the Multi-Octave Vocal Range.

I joined the Roy Hart Theatre in London on February 24, 1974. At the time, the company was a very hermetic and tightly knit ensemble of people from many nationalities. We worked, lived, and created theater together, and by July 1 that year, seven of us, "The Magnificent Seven," had begun to move the company to France. After a period of six months, all 40 of us were living in the Chateau de Malerargues, our headquarters in the Midi of France.

During those years I worked a variety of jobs. I painted many walls, became a plaster finishing master, retiled roofs, translated papers, cleaned kennels, combed many high end "silver match" poodles (which I really did not care for), taught children, became a sous-chef and later a chef, became a tour manager and a grant administrator, took theater and dance workshops, picked apples, chestnuts and grapes, learned the technical aspects of the stage, became a voice teacher, gave workshops, traveled the world, joined the faculty of the National School of Puppetry, acted, directed, and co-founded the Archipelago Theater France with my partner, Johannes Theron. By 1988, I became the wealthiest man in the world: the father of my extraordinary twin sons Aaron and Samuel.

Two years later, in August 1990, I moved with my own family to the United States. I worked for 15 years at the Theater Studies Department of Duke University (North Carolina) and the American Dance Festival, where I taught Multi-Octave Vocal Range techniques to dancers and choreographers.

I acted, directed, co-founded Archipelago Theater USA with my partner, Ellen Hemphill, and created Celebrations Inc., which became a very successful business producing and enhancing high-end events through the arts and design for notables like President Clinton, Michael Jordan, Yoyo Ma, and Luciano Pavarotti, among others. The government of Spain appointed me as Honorary Consul of Spain in 2000 (2000–2005), and in 2007 I moved to Los Angeles, California, after being offered a teaching position at the Theater School at California Institute of the Arts. I served as Associate Director of Performance for a number of years and continue teaching graduate and undergraduate students the Multi-Octave Vocal Range Technique now known as the Barrantes Voice System.

Parallel to my life in the Roy Hart Theatre, I focused my research on the study and practice of two ancient cultural traditions where

the voice and gesture play a profound role. One is represented by Spanish Cante Jondo (Deep Flamenco Singing), and the other relates to Japanese traditional Noh Theater and **Shomio** Buddhist chanting.

I sojourned twice to Tokyo; the first in 1984 when I was invited by theater anthropologist and professor Masao Yamaguchi (1931–2013) of Tokyo Gaikokugo Daigaku. Yamaguchi San introduced me to the writings of Zeami, who along with his father Kannami, are considered the originators of Noh Theater (fourteenth century). There is no question that his writings and Noh Theater have deeply influenced my approach to process and performance.

It was also on that visit that I heard for the first time Shomio, an ancient ninth-century chanting practice belonging to the **Shingon Buddhist** sect initiated by Kobodaishi Gobyō. I am fully indebted to Mr. Horyū Haneda who introduced me to his Jōdo sect Shomio style. Shomio's impact on my life has been a very deep and inspiring source ever since, leading me to live in the Daien-in Monastery, in Kōya San, to practice Shomio at its birthplace.

My second visit to Japan was in 1987 when my partner Ellen Hemphill obtained a grant from the Asian Cultural Council in New York, which enabled us to travel to research the Japanese traditional forms of Noh and Kyōgen. Both visits were crucial for developing my teaching and stage techniques. Not only did it open me up as an actor, a teacher, and a researcher, but it also guided me as a director. Through these seminal experiences, I created several works of theater with both my companies, Archipelago Theater France and Archipelago Theater USA.

My process all those years was fundamentally informed not only by studying, but also by the inclusion of empirical, artistic, and experiential research.

Voice Made Visible addresses the educational, aesthetic, and philosophical principles that inform my current pedagogic method and artistic practice.

Voice Made Visible

The De-Colonization of the Voice

For decades, I have been pondering the work of the actor and the inherent transformational power of the voice. The common saying, *"In the beginning was the word"* has always bothered me due to the implicit supremacy granted to language. I'd like to propose:

"In the beginning there was sound."

Sound is a primordial utterance. We are born in sound. The first thing we do when we enter this world is scream as we take our first breath. There is something about the phrasing of "the word" in the original proverb that seems "divisive," while we cannot say the same thing about sound. *Sound* precedes the apparition of words. Sound has the benefit of acting as a proto language, while "the word" is a highly sophisticated specialization of sound that helps to differentiate groups of people through language and dialect. We are both fascinated and scared of each other. While words create boundaries, sound connects us all.

In sound, our inner ear not only listens and discerns carefully, a matter of fight or flight animal response, but deciphers the meaning behind that sound without interference or the intermediary of words. I would guess that the first human animal that expressed tender feelings for another did so through singing sounds, utterances, and touch, rather than words.

If we believe that *"In the beginning there was sound,"* then we can bridge the disconnect between words and meaning with others, as well as become less foreign to ourselves. The word

language has “colonized” us by driving our voices on remote control. Even though sound existed before the appearance of the word, we live under the tyranny and imperialistic inflation of the word.¹ We must remind ourselves that the voice is emotion and experience, not just a platform or a vehicle for trafficking words. We need to return to a state in which the voice itself is primary in expression, superseding language, rather than the voice remaining a “colonized” servant to words. We must decolonize the voice from language’s supremacy so that we can restore to the word its emotional, experiential, and energetic powers.

Each individual, and hence each voice, is unique. Each voice contains within itself its own imprint. What if we considered the voice as an ecosystem unto itself composed of an ensemble of textures, elements, and identities? Suffice it to think of (and this is not a metaphor) how voraciously the industry is pursuing methods to identify each and every voice in order to open doors, windows, unlock passwords, bank accounts, etc. The price of convenience at the hands of technological progress is the usurpation of our vocal individuality.

What interests me in the Multi-Octave Vocal Range is its potential to give back to the voice its protean nature as an instrument of expression and communication versus an instrument of power. I am thinking of “power” as all the overzealous political, ideological, and religious (both historic and contemporary) examples of voice power.

What the Barrantes Voice System strives for in the voice is its intrinsic diversity and versatility. As individuals, we experience the voice as something impermanent, much like spring mist, or insubstantial like an open sky; however, as a man of theater and as a voice pedagogue, I strive to see the voice as something very real and material. I consider the voice as a holistic mass, which includes muscles, cartilage, mucosae, nerves, bones, viscera, and air. Yet together, it does not occupy any one fixed place in the body, but rather many and none at the same time.

I long for the voice to have as much of a substance as possible so that I can create and render it visible to the audience. Voice is a theater,² or as Roland Barthes referred to it while speaking of his love for German *lieder*: “a kitchen of reflected emotion.” This is a very inspiring quote for me. It brings forth the notion of materiality and tangibility of the voice or the dish in question with its

variety of ingredients, possible ways of cooking, temperatures, condiments, etc., as well as the notion of emotional transformation that happens as we admire the final “dish” (the final vocal product). Hence, the voice can be perceived as a substance, as sustenance, and as consumption. Voice as tapas, appetizers, entrees, and desserts. Voice as a metaphoric ingestion of what we experience when we listen “ad libitum” to our favorite lullabies, chants, songs, and arias.

Do you remember the last time you listened to one of your favorite voices? For me this is Katherine Ferrier, Eartha Kitt, Tom Waits, El Agujetas, Janis Joplin, Maria Callas, Thomas Quasthoff, The Beatles, Billie Holiday, Mahalia Jackson, and the Shite in Japanese Noh theater. As soon as the voice is heard that voice is physically gone, yet still works inside of us, sustaining us and creating memory.

How many times have we wanted to say, “Sing it again, please!” to our favorite singer? This is a futile attempt to hold onto it and make it ours. We want to hear it once more so that our spirit and memories are nourished over and over again by hearing our favorite voices, and yet, what an extraordinary paradox. The voice is at the same time substance and transparency; it allows us to see through.

It connects us both to the core of experience and emotion, as well as to the mystery. The voice is always ephemeral in its presence, however forever lasting in its essence.

“I Want to Be Someone Like Somebody Else Was Once” and the Multi-Octave Voice

Just like the performer it resides in, the voice is a nomad “par excellence.” It travels and moves constantly with our emotional fleeting moods. The human voice is constantly adjusting and transforming its fluid frontiers. Now it appears and then suddenly is gone. It is evanescent, ephemeral, and hard to pin down: a fugitive of sorts. However, the moment we can pinpoint the consistent source of the voice, be it emotional, physical, or imaginative, and learn to repeat it, we become distinctly more ourselves.

The voice is not a simple instrument existing “out there” and made from a particular material, but rather a complex one produced from human substances and from the depths of human

experience. In fact, it is not outrageous to say that the voice is made of the same “stuff as dreams are made on.” The voice is a fluctuant, sensitive, and delicate instrument to maintain because it must be tuned not only with the body, but also with the mind and the spirit. There is a myriad of neurobiological complexities at work to make it function properly at the right time, with the right emotion, and for the right reason.

The voice I am talking about is the one that stands behind Peter Handke’s aphorism in his masterful play *Kaspar*, in which the titular character repeats *ad libitum*:

“I want to be someone like somebody else was once.”

Kaspar is loosely based on the historical figure **Kaspar Hauser**, a German boy who claimed to be raised in total isolation, deprived of language itself, and then suddenly appeared at a Nuremberg square one day armed with only a single sentence (that he apparently did not even understand the meaning of). He became the ward of a well-known socialite lawyer, who educated and socialized him toward assimilation.

If we breakdown the sentence above from Handke’s play, we uncover a few fundamentals:

“I want to be someone . . .”

He, Kaspar, wants to communicate and wants to come into existence. Kaspar not only wants to re-establish the connection with himself prior to his socialization, but he also wants to include those different “somebody’s” that we all experience during the unfolding of our lives:

“... like somebody else was once.”

By verbalizing *“I want to be someone like somebody else was once,”* we can deduce that Kaspar (you, me, the actor) finds himself in the ideal circumstances so that he is able to act. And of course, even though it might be obvious, by virtue of stating these needs, he is expressing himself. Kaspar wants to connect to something which he intuitively has always been inside of him, and without stating that desire, no action will manifest.

Saying such a phrase-statement tells us that he has created a favorable environment where things can naturally happen and develop. He is right on target regarding the relational aspect of the voice because his fervent desire to express himself and to communicate with “the other” exists already. Since he has a longing for connection, he might stand a chance to materialize the statement he first uttered.

Kaspar’s need to connect with his previous self is how I see the voice. In this context, all Kaspar’s “somebody” translates to the many textures that are revealed by the Multi-Octave Voice, that vocal territory that remains outside the well-known one octave voice framework we hear and use in our everyday lives. In expanding the vocal range, we open to multiple dormant identities and expressions contained within ourselves. In view of this, I would like to suggest that we are repositories of personal as well as ancestral emotions and experiences. Today we experience ourselves as singular and unique individuals, but if we look back to our parents and parents’ parents, etc., there is an interminable lineage of individuals, as well as worlds of sounds, that came before us.

The Multi-Octave Voice could be regarded as the connective tissue of the imaginative, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual chambers of our being; a “**proto voice**” that is accessible and identifiable by all individuals regardless of culture, age, gender, or any other social construct available. We could even refer to it as the “objective voice” in the sense of a voice that is *universal*. It exists within every individual, beyond linguistic and cultural differences.

The Multi-Octave Voice is the Pandora’s box that holds Aldous Huxley’s images of the “antipodes of the mind,” those images, emotions or sensations that don’t belong to the utilitarian mind, as well as those of Antonin Artaud’s *Theater of Cruelty* and Federico Garcia Lorca’s *duende*. It is a voice that includes Jung’s notion of the shadow and Goethe’s words about Paganini playing the violin: “A mysterious power that all may feel, and no philosophy can explain.” An Abraxian voice or a voice, as understood in the ancient Gnostic philosophical sources of knowledge, that reconciles and supports the presence of opposites. A voice that contains, as Noh theater creator Zeami described in his treatises, the “yugen” notion of the ineffable, profound, and mysterious beauty of the human experience.

If we think of expressionism as the art form accentuating the value of its representation by *intensifying* expression, I propose that my vision of the voice is fundamentally expressionist. Not only because of the life force released by the voice, but also because it reflects the intensely unfiltered substance of the person producing the sound. This potentially irrational expressionism of the voice forces both the doer (performer) and the viewer (audience) to invent new meanings and connections on and off the stage.

Voice Made Visible

I have often been asked, naturally so, why did I title my book *Voice Made Visible*? The voice is something perceptible, and though it is not my intention to get philosophical, there is a lot about it that simply touches into what is not visible, namable, or tangible.

As an actor before going on stage, I used to always remind myself of the etymology of the word “theater,” which is “making visible that which is not.” I have chosen to understand the voice also as a theater with a myriad of characters in it, as if one’s voice was a **spelunker** opening uncharted trails in the secret subterranean cavities of our experience, our identities, and ourselves.

The idea of *visible* crystalized for me after reading Zeami’s writings on the importance for the actor to operate with a “beginners mind.”³ Zeami encourages in his teachings that we as actors search our entire lives in hopes that one day, we see the voice and hear dance. This mystery has fed me, inspired me, and kept me busy through the years of my teaching and learning.

Visible, as in blatant, clear, and obvious, as when we are touched by someone’s voice. When that happens, we are consumed and fully taken by their voice. In those moments something prodigious, inescapable, and absolute takes place.

That is why the singers we love are so important to us. Because there is something total, integral and fourth dimensional in the way we are affected by them. I can remember as a young man running to buy the latest LP release of my favorite band, The Beatles. Even though at the time I did not know it, that run was my way of galloping after the *unattainable*, the *absolute*... the voice of my favorite singer.

We can certainly express verbally our world of reality but how do we go about describing the realm of the absolute? That is where “*To see the voice... to hear dance*” must come in. Only through metaphors, allegories, and stories are we able to fully grasp theater. We may not be able to see the presence of the voice we hear, but our spirit certainly does. That is why it was so reassuring to “have” the recording in my hands. I was, at that very moment, one step closer to that which is unnamable.

I think of *visible* not so much as in something tangible, but as in something that is apparent, manifest, obvious, evident, discernible, and capable of being perceived. Visible is being seen, as much as a celestial body after an eclipse. **Eclipsing** our ego enables other voices to emerge.

Voice Made Visible relies fundamentally on four cornerstones of inspiration and each one of them is strongly anchored in traditional vocal practices:

The Roy Hart Theatre:

for excavating the body, revealing hidden and raw sounds

Spanish Cante Jondo:

for the depth and poignancy of its emotions

Japanese Noh Theater:

for the representation of ghostly voices

Shingon Shomio Chanting:

for the vocal imagination of their devotional practice

This book is a path to align the invisible connection that exists between the five inseparable components of one's voice: the breath, the body, the sound, the mind, and the spirit.

The Barrantes Voice System reveals the arsenal of sounds of the Multi-Octave Voice and its substance, grit, and authenticity. I strive to inspire the performer to make their *voice visible*.

Notes

- 1 This concept is explored more in *The Tuning of the World* by R. Murray Shafer (1981).
- 2 Etymologically from Greek *theatron*. “Theater” is a place for viewing where things are seen, revealed.
- 3 Zen Buddhist concept “shoshin” refers to the attitude of receptiveness, passion, and lack of bias while studying a subject.

The Prerequisites

Fiction and News

Fiction



Figure 3.1 “Red Light/Green Light”.

Having grown up as a Spaniard, I was very familiar with the physical and spiritual energy of *duende*, expressed in both flamenco and bullfighting, two of our cultural hallmarks. But it was only after my first visit to Japan in 1984 that I grasped the link between performers across borders and styles having this fundamental quality of being on stage.

French philosopher Simone Weil claimed that our imagination and **fiction** are at the core of our real life. What I call "Fiction" is something physical and perceptible and resides in the body. It is not a concept. It is a physical transformation that elevates one's state of being above the "daily" or "pedestrian body." It is an energetic, psychophysical, and psychosomatic understanding that is very present in Asian performing techniques, but not so much in the West.

Since Fiction is intimately connected to the body of the actor, the body of the actor needs to be "augmented," to become larger, hence "readable" for the stage. The moment we allow ourselves to slow our daily pace, much like in the game "Red Light/Green Light," then fiction will emerge offering us the possibility to unmask reality.

Fiction is the transformation that abandons the everyday realm. It is a heightened state of being in which skin, flesh and bones are reconnected to secure our theatrical metamorphosis. It is always good to remember that an audience is not looking at who you are, but rather at who you have become. It represents a fine line between the un-manifest and the manifest.

Our reality is quite often obscured; we use fiction to reveal our truths. Fiction consists of eclipsing oneself and one's **biography**. It changes the frame of reality. It means sacrificing one's body to embrace the incarnate body of the performer, the "other."

Though this ought to be a given for any actor on stage, since a part of you must cease to exist to become the other, as a theater professional, I often do not see this in practice in many performers and performances. As an audience, we should know "Fiction" is happening in the body, without being able to locate precisely *where* it is happening in the body on stage. We are talking of perception. If we are able to pinpoint it, then the performer is *telegraphing, ham acting, indicating, or showing* something rather than just *being it*. It is not exempt from bringing some discomfort, and I would suggest that a performer's body that has become too comfortable on stage has slipped back into the "daily."

Fiction is a vital element for the actor to make their voice visible. It is a shift of energy that takes place inside the body of the performer. Fiction is a subtle energy in the body of the performer that cannot be confused with the person performing it.

With Fiction, the body appears to be seething internally just like the innumerable bubbles clinging to the walls of a pot before it breaks into a boil. It is a “quality of being,” a presence inherent not just to actors, but also dancers, singers, and even athletes.

A simple illustration that conveys the kinesthetic understanding of what I am describing is the suspension of action that occurs as the caller shouts the words “Red Light!” when playing the game “Red Light/Green Light.” Everyone instantaneously suspends his or her actions. Fiction is that very instant, that “out of time” moment, that internally seething suspended state of being.

In the same way that we ask the audience to suspend their disbelief as they enter the theater, the performer must suspend their embodied reality to incarnate the “fiction” they are displaying for the audience. It is a matter of a non-visible yet perceptible extra effort in the body of the performer. Only in this unnatural and non-ordinary state of being created by Fiction, we as performers will be seen larger than life and be able to mislead the incredulity of the audience with our playing.

Actors and Athletes

While teaching at Duke University, I had many young men and women in sports taking my classes. It was there that, after many conversations and hours of viewing their work, I began drawing connections between the actor and the athlete.

Our disciplines share a fundamental similar quality: we eclipse ourselves to change our daily habits in order to excel in the expression of our talent. Both the actor and the athlete must succeed under an extraordinary timeline of pressure and variety of circumstances. We strive to find the right gesture or action that encapsulates the most effective result to attain our goal. This goal is simply to engage the spectator, to captivate, and to suspend the audience’s capacity for disbelief.

We gallop towards the place where we can trust our instincts to guide us; where our left hemisphere becomes available to instinct and our right hemisphere anticipates thinking. This pursuit leads us to the delicate dance that occurs between the individual, the self, the ego, the collective, and the group. We learn to make

those moves concise, economic, and effective so they feed the character, the player, the team, and the ensemble. And in this, we draw from the best part of who we are: the self rather than the ego.

Both actors and athletes present a world to the public eye that looks natural, effortless, and as if magic is happening right then and there. In this presented world, the onlookers do not see the interminable hours of practice, rehearsals, failures, successes, and resilience built from the passion that drives the actor and the athlete to keep trying, growing, and mastering their craft.

The pillars of concentration, intensity, and focus we share are paramount to balance the distractions, obstacles, and external forces brought by the audience and/or the spectator. We learn to integrate them as they happen, making the athlete and performer fully available to adaptation in the present.

Freedom is gained by virtue of the training and the discipline that becomes integrated in the athlete and actor's bodies, making it appear natural, spontaneous, and real.

Understanding Kinesthetically the Notion of Fiction Experiment

- 1) Lie down on the floor. Feel the weight of your head resting against it.
- 2) Now carefully lift your head just enough to allow a piece of paper to go between your head and the floor, no more than a millimeter or so.

That adjustment you just made is Fiction in your body.

Tailor Position Experiment

Sit comfortably on the floor with your legs in **tailor position**. Allow all of your “**biographical**” idiosyncrasies to show up. Let the air come into you and with the next exhale begin to lengthen your spine, vertebrae by vertebrae. By the end of this action, you have attained Fiction in your body. Make sure you are not forcing or contracting your back in order to straighten it. Instead, simply allow your back to lengthen as if you had pneumatic bubbles between each vertebra.



Figure 3.2 Sitting in tailor position.

Sculptor and Clay Experiment

Two people are playing. One is the sculptor, the other is the sculpted. The task of the sculpted is to move from point A to point B at the far end of the room very slowly and on all fours without ever letting the knees touch the floor. The sculptor taps gently the back of the sculpted to indicate they can start moving in space. The sculpted then moves freely in slow motion across the space until the sculptor stops them by tapping their back again. The sculpted suspends their action in whatever position they find themselves in at that moment. This continues over the course of the journey from A to B. One tap releases the movement of the sculpted while the next tap makes them suspend their action. The sculptor wants to always take the sculpted by surprise, so they can never anticipate when they are going to be suspended in their movement. Every time the body of the sculpted is arrested that is Fiction! It is crucial that the sculpted does not hold their breath while maintaining their stillness and engaging their full body.

Glass of Water Experiment

Start by carrying a half-full glass of water from one end of the room to the other. Assess how you felt executing this action. Now

fill it up close to the rim and carry it to the opposite end of the room, without spilling one drop of it. Notice how your movement, breath, and body must adjust to this additional challenge, and how your focus is attuned as your daily body comes to life. That is Fiction.

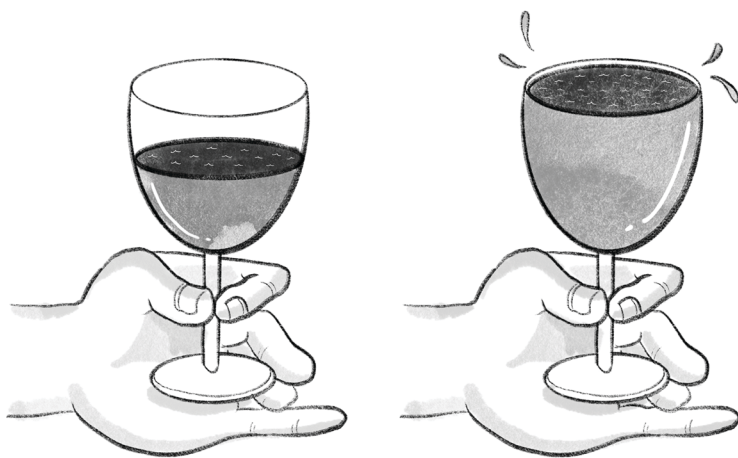


Figure 3.3 Glass of water imagery.

In her work, British novelist and Nobel Prize winner Doris Lessing implies that the moment we go inwardly into ourselves as human beings, we end up creating our own reality.

Hypo, Hyper and Tonic: The Three Muscular States

There are three fundamentally distinct muscular states distinct muscular states of tonicity in your body. To experience them please lie down on your back resting your hands between your navel and pubis for this experiment.

A) *Hypotonic*

- 1) As you lie down facing up, touch your low abdomen with your hands. Notice that your low abdomen is floppy,

soft, and like Jell-O. This muscular state is what is called Hypotonic (less than Tonic).

HYPOTONIC



Figure 3.4 Hypotonic position.

B) **Tonic**

- 1) This time you are going to simply bend your ankles at 90° and lift your head lightly up to look at them. Notice that your low abdomen is taut. This muscular state is **Tonic**. The desired optimal muscular state for Fiction.

TONIC

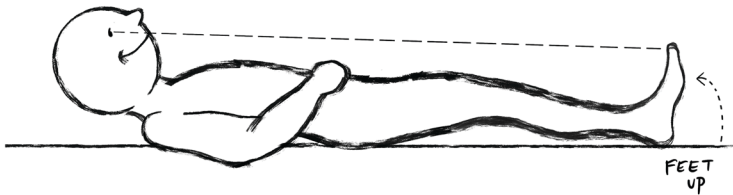


Figure 3.5 Tonic position.

C) **Hypertonic**

- 1) This time you do the same as in "B" but keep lifting the head up. Notice this time that your low abdomen has contracted. This muscular state is called **Hypertonic** (more than Tonic). What happened is that the muscles went beyond the point of its own resistance becoming extra tight and consequently oxygen cannot reach the tissue.
- 2) A muscle that shakes or tremors is "calling" for oxygen.

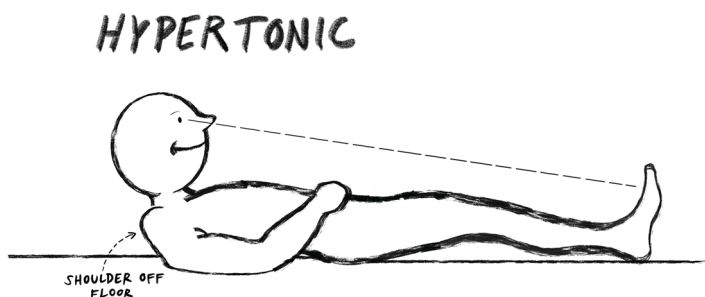


Figure 3.6 Hypertonic position.

News



Figure 3.7 Newspaper.

News is to the mind of the performer as FICTION is to the body.

Since sound itself is invisible, the eyes become a key element in the chain of voice production and making the *voice visible*. I constantly request from my students and performers to “give me **News**,” which is not so different from Stanislavski’s idea “being in the moment” or Peter Brook’s concept of the magic “*if*.” This issue is very simple. If you are in the business of telling stories, it is imperative that whatever you do on stage is “connected” to a specific image, emotion, sensation, perception, feeling, thought, or idea linked to what you are expressing. Performers are athletes of the soul, so they must make their gaze available, open, penetrable, and accessible to whatever the voice is expressing. News is that: an ephemeral, renewable, ever-present, constant flow of information (intellectual, sensorial, perceptual, experiential) that must be communicated.

Play, invent, and make things happen, but do not let the pupils of your eyes crystallize. If your imagination is out of focus, your eyes will betray you. The performer must absolutely avoid having the vacant gaze of a corpse, a talking head, or a zombie. No one enjoys watching the barren look of death, which is why we close the eyelids of the dead. A **crystallized** pupil is a crude reminder of a sterile and unproductive gaze that is the opposite of active, vibrant life.

Although it sounds simple, this in practice requires commitment. The performer must be willing to become “transparent” while unconditionally sharing the inner world they experience of the play. What this really means is that they must reveal themselves along with it, a technique that requires mastery. It is a marriage of the internal with the external.

Regarding “revealing,” it is very important that all those potentially “uncomfortable garments” hung away in the closet (hate, longing, anger, love, compassion, tenderness, envy, desire, jealousy, etc.) must constantly be taken out of it and worn, confronted, unveiled repeatedly on stage.



Figure 3.8 Laptop with news.

In the past eight years, I have seen thousands of actors in auditions. Time after time, the pupils of those performers were crystallized. They did not move, dilate, or contract. Their eyes were not alive. That paralyzed, immovable gaze of absence must be systematically revitalized. My simplest answer is to remind my students of the words the Duchess tells Alice in the Mock Turtle’s story in *Alice in Wonderland*. The Duchess says Alice must take care of the sense and the sounds will follow¹.

The actor’s voice must be in direct contact with the implicit emotional impulse that the voice carries. The task consists of how

to direct the mind to the image, emotion, sensation, perception, feeling, thought, or idea and to naturally let the intention rise².

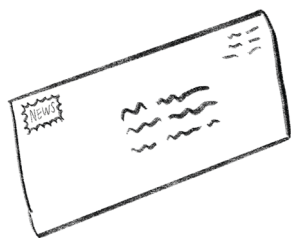


Figure 3.9 Envelope delivering news.

Connection to what you are voicing is imperative, but so is the *desire* to communicate and express that connection. Without both these elements working simultaneously, your voice will not cooperate. This *sine qua non*³ condition helps prevent voice work from devolving into a series of mechanical movements.

For example, consider singing a song. The whole mechanism of voice production is set in motion by your desire to communicate and serve that very song. It is that desire, along with your own personal connection to the material that results in News.

Singing a song without connection or without a real desire to communicate will simply be an empty, unrevealed voice. The bottom line is that the audience does not want to hear your voice; what they really want to hear is *you*.

There is a popular Spanish proverb that states, “*The eyes are the mirror of the soul.*” What the performer expresses must be sharp, clear, never blurred. Another way to envision News is to think of your gaze while you are driving a car. In driving, you are constantly alternating between very specific and peripheral/general foci. You see the landscape but also the road signs, highway boards, the car on your right two lanes away, the one on your left passing you, and of course that one to the rear mirror approaching while you had time to look at your speed gauge and glance at the radio. And all that happens in milliseconds. You are alert, present, and connected. You are handling a machine that needs powerful control amongst other people doing the same thing. It is an unpredictable dance of the pupil of the eye, adjusting constantly to the reality of the moment. If you allow yourself to focus

too long on one specific point while you drive, you run the risk of “zoning out,” falling asleep, or having an accident. The same will happen to you on stage if you are disconnected and do not have News. The radical difference is that what you drive on stage is the powerful engine of the imagination.

Remember: the audience is demanding! We asked them for their time, money, and ability to suspend disbelief while sitting in their seat. If the story they are watching falls short of captivating their mind and spirit, they will fall asleep, think about tomorrow’s shopping list, or worse, leave the theater.

When I speak of “News,” I certainly think of newspapers, television channels or the web. News reaches the reader, and it holds our attention for a certain period. When that attention fades, we notice other headlines, scanning different sections until the eye settles on another set of news that compels us.

As an actor, when your connection to the material you are working on is fizzling out (and that is totally human), you do not need to be afraid of shifting over and over again to another “news channel.” In daily life, this happens naturally and organically; yet, on the stage, it becomes a battle. Our discipline as performers is to fuel our work with a constant stream of News and seek its connection, because if you cannot connect with what you are saying or singing, why should the audience?



Figure 3.10 Newsboy with newspaper.

For News, the mind of the performer should be porous, fertile, multiple. They should have plenty of mental room to shift, allowing agile, spontaneous changes in direction/image/thought while still fully committing to each one as it arrives. A quick-witted, permeable mind is like the flippers of a pinball machine trying to keep the ball alive and away from the drain, moving back and forth from an emotion to an image, or to a perception, or from an idea to a feeling, or a sensation . . . before your news stagnates or loses its vibrancy.

Notes

- 1 Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Published in 1970 by Flammarion, Paris.
- 2 Very similar to the notion of "News" is the concept of Apophenia, from the Greek *apo-* (away, off, apart) + *phainein* (to show). This term is used in the field of psychology to describe the perception of connections or meaning in unrelated or random phenomena.
- 3 A requirement; an absolute necessity.

Sound Grounding

The Eyes

A popular proverb tells us that *the eyes are the mirror of the soul*. The eyes are vital for voice production.

Moshé Feldenkrais,¹ author of *“Awareness through Movement,”* has found in his research that the softening of the muscles in and around your eyes has a very relevant effect on the softening of the muscles of your neck, and therefore on the muscles of your larynx.

In daily life, the connection between our eyes and our actions is done automatically, unless our own idiosyncrasies or neuroses come into play (i.e., not looking at the person with whom we are speaking, “spacing out,” etc.).

On stage, this connection is not a given. It must be created.

Ideal Gaze Building

As I have mentioned before, a “crystallized,” “glazed,” or “rigid” pupil is not something an actor can afford because it reminds us of the absence of life, which is death.

One of the ways to encourage an alive and dynamic gaze is to remind ourselves how we use our eyes when we drive a car. While driving, we fluctuate constantly between peripheral and selective or central vision; if we focus on one point for too long, we quickly become fatigued and drowsy and have a much higher chance of getting into an accident. This analogy can also be applied to the performer’s crystalized eyes onstage.

The best way to avoid a crystalized pupil is to “GIVE NEWS!”

In other words, to engage yourself and the audience through the telling of your story with images, sensations, proprioception, feelings and emotions, thoughts, and ideas to feed simultaneously the story you are telling on stage. As a result, you have

a better chance of connecting to what you are saying. Your eyes will become engaged and engaging, which is the whole point of being a performer – to establish communication with the other.

Ideal Gaze Building Experiment

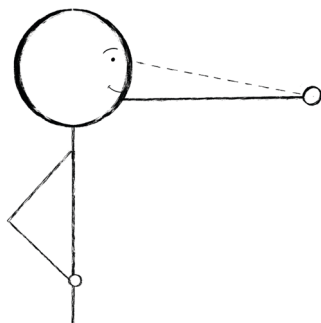


Figure 4.1 Proper neck position for ideal gaze building.

- 1) Stand in your **Relative Position** as if you were at sea level. Avoid any curving of the neck upwards (i.e., do not flamingo/guillotine neck) by gently combing your hair on the back of your neck/base of your skull upwards several times, lengthening your cervical belt, thus creating space between each vertebra.

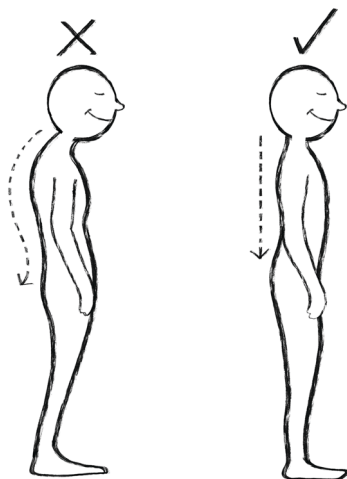


Figure 4.2. Proper spine lengthening for ideal gaze building.

- 2) Lengthen your whole spine by aligning the sternum and the navel on the same plane. Imagine you have a tiny emerald on your sternum emitting diamond fires. Your ears should be in line with the neck and shoulders.
- 3) Look straight ahead 10% below the horizon line, where sea and sky would meet if you were at the shore. Avoid creating a “double chin.” Extend one arm forward with your thumb parallel to the horizon. Match the upper part of your thumb with the line of the horizon and direct your gaze to the lower part of your thumb.

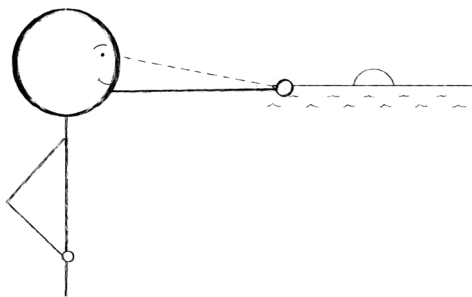


Figure 4.3 For proper gaze, look straight ahead 10% below the horizon line.

Consequence of this experiment

By aligning your gaze, your larynx got closer to your vertebral column, making the esophagus, which is attached to the diaphragm, descend into the thoracic cage thus creating more space for the larynx to go down. This makes the quality of your sound richer.

Freeing and lengthening the cervical belt allows the muscles and vertebral ligaments around them to open up and expand. These ligaments support the vertebrae in such a way that the vertebral column becomes a unified and compact vibrating instrument without hurdles in its way.

Coordinating your gaze with the lengthening of the spine contributes significantly to the **Acoustic Coupling** of the column of air and the column of sound, causing the most resonant and round vocal sound possible.²

Imagery

- Visualize your head as a helium balloon attached by its string to the center of your abdomen (between the naval and pubis).

Imagine this balloon swaying and floating lightly above your shoulders. Allow the lengthening of the head to pivot and oscillate in almost imperceptible micro movements all around the first cervical vertebrae (the “atlas”) much like a buoy bobbing in a calm sea.

Trajectory of the Eyes Experiment

You will be focused on the basic trajectories of the eyes during this experiment. To begin, do the following isolated eye movements in sets of four. If an uncomfortable, almost queasy feeling arises, stop, and focus on slow, **conditioned breathing**.



Figure 4.4 Isolate your eye movements up and down. Repeat 4x.



Figure 4.5 Isolate your eye movements right to left. Repeat 4x.

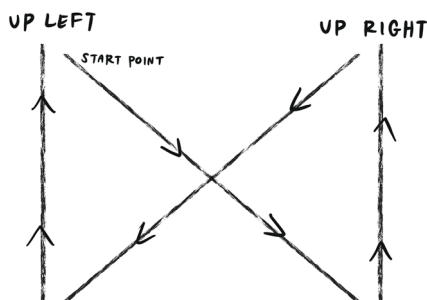
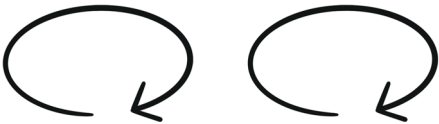


Figure 4.6 Isolate your eye movements starting from up left, bottom right, up right, bottom left. Repeat 4x.



BASIC CIRCLES LEFT & RIGHT

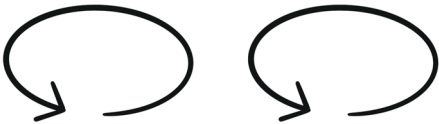


Figure 4.7 Isolate your eye movements in basic circles. Repeat 4x to the right and 4x to the left. Avoid “exorcist” eyes . . .

Varying length foci

10, 20, and 30 feet are the actual suggested distances.

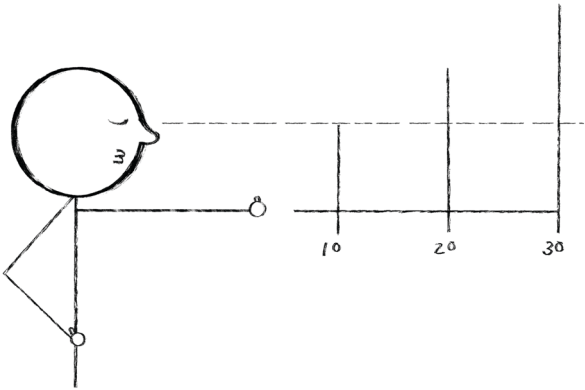


Figure 4.8 Visual representation of various foci lengths.

Head Resonators

Without delving too far into the scientific literature, for the purpose of this chapter we shall define resonation as the enhancement of

a phonated sound. Consequently, we can state that sound can be improved and transformed by resonance.

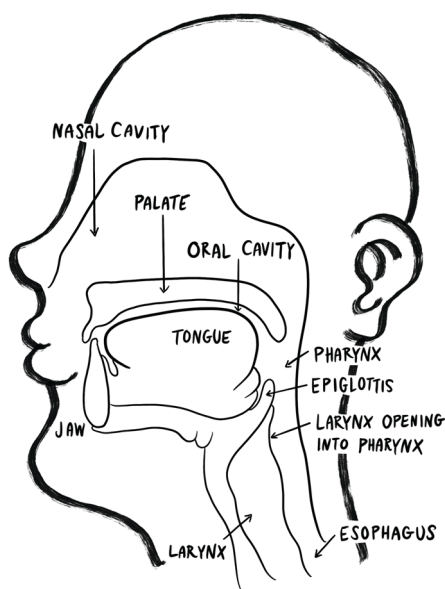


Figure 4.9 Anatomy of the head for resonance.

The Sinuses

The role of the sinuses in the Multi-Octave Range technique is very important particularly relative to adding **nasal quality** to sound, as well as enhancing Metal, Broken Metal, and Air **Voice Textures**.

The sinuses are a connected system of empty cavities within the skull and around the nasal cavity and the eyes. The sinuses help to lighten the weight of the bones in the head. They also help to warm and humidify incoming air. Apart from a thin layer of soft, pink tissue called mucosa, the sinuses are normally empty. The mucosa's secretions drain into three ridges of tissue in the nasal passage.

The human voice, much like a cello, a piano, or a guitar, has its own resonant chambers. As the sound vibrates and moves

through those chambers, the sound acquires a certain color and texture.

The head has several resonators. From a purely acoustic point of view, the paranasal (around the nose area) sinuses are not technically resonators; however, from the proprioceptive point of view, they offer great assistance to the performer regarding quality, timbre, and placement of sound. Having clarified this point, I would like to include them under the ‘head resonators,’ in addition to the nasopharynx, oropharynx, and the laryngopharynx.

The Four Paranasal Sinuses

Each sinus is named for the bone in which it is located. These are the different paranasal sinuses that you may be able to “feel” when you produce certain sounds that have a “metallic” quality:

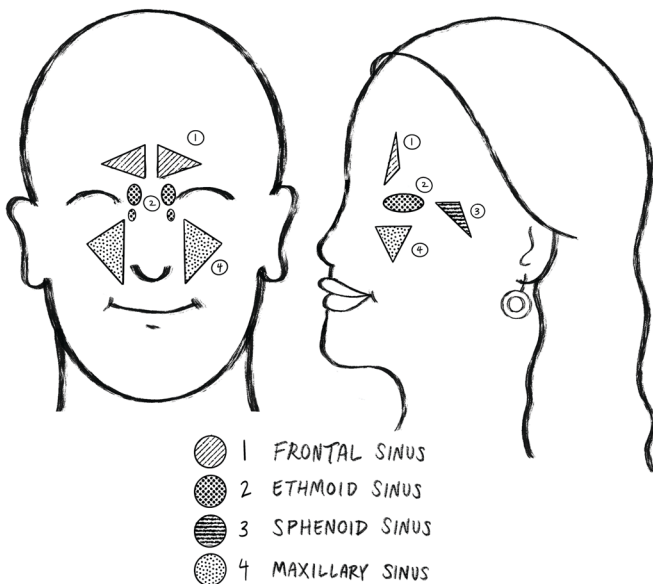


Figure 4.10 Anatomy of the four paranasal sinuses.

Frontal Sinus: located in the low center of the forehead, above the orbital bone of each eye, within the frontal bone, behind the brow ridges.

Ethmoid: situated at the nasal bridge, its shape is cubical, and is relatively lightweight because of its spongy and honey-comb structure. It separates the nasal cavity from the brain and is located at the roof of the nose, between the two orbits.

Sphenoid: a bone behind the nasal cavity and the ethmoid sinuses. The body of the bone is basically cubical in shape and hollowed in its interior. Its shape suggests a bat or a butterfly with open wings.

Maxillary Sinus: the largest of the paranasal sinuses. It is located below the cheeks, above the teeth and on each side of the nose.

The Mouth

There is no question the mouth is one of the important resonance chambers of the voice. The following experiments are designed to help you to experience the three basic types of mouth resonance I work on to optimize vocal production. I will be referring to proprioceptive notions, as well as placement, sound, vibration, and resonance.

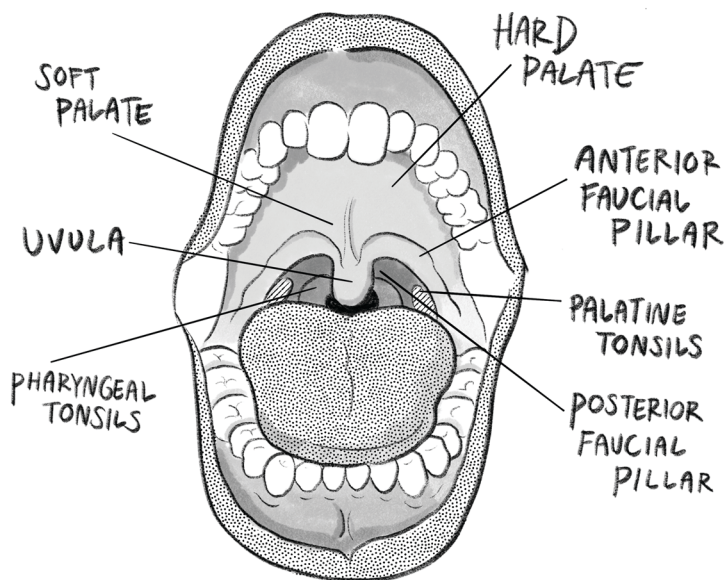


Figure 4.11 Anatomy of the mouth.

Proprioception of the Three Mouth Positions

Mouth #1 with “N” in preparation for Tongue #1 or “Front Yard” Experiment

Rest your top row of teeth on your bottom row without clenching your jaw. Your lips are resting on each other as well. Add a sustained “N” sound on your **Natural Pitch**. Your tongue is up against the upper ridge of your teeth. Notice how the front of your face from the forehead to your chin, “the mask,” or what I often refer to as the “Front Yard,” is activated with vibration. Feel the connection with your diaphragm as you make the sound.

Mouth #2 with “M” in preparation for Tongue #2 or “Home” Experiment

Your teeth now are no longer touching, but the lips still remain resting on each other. Allow 1/4-inch between your upper and lower teeth in a relaxed, dropped, and hanging loose Shower Mouth.

Add a sustained “M” sound on your Natural Pitch and be attentive to the difference in the feeling of the vibrations with the previous “Mouth 1.” The tip of the tongue should rest behind the lower incisors.

Avoid tension. Feel the spherical nature of the space you are creating inside your mouth. Imagine the shape of a large plum or tangerine occupying this space.

Notice how the vibrations have now shifted and they are more centrally localized above and below your tongue.

Mouth #3 with “NGA” in preparation for Tongue #3 or “Backyard” Experiment

Start with the “M” sound as you did on the previous mouth position. On your Natural Pitch, gently initiate a slow-motion yawn shifting the sound from “M” to “NG” finishing by opening your lips with the sound of “NG-A.”

Feel how the vibrations take place now between the soft palate and the nape of your neck. Your soft palate should be up (umbrella), and the back of the tongue has now dropped down (as in “Hot Potato”) due to the yawn itself. Allow the mouth to drop and hang naturally as a result of the yawning action you induced.

To increase your proprioception, tap lightly on the nape of your neck until you feel a light tingling sensation in the area due to blood rushing to that area.

This experiment is fundamentally designed for you to understand sensorially and experientially the areas in which the three basic tongues are going to operate.

Notice how the sound resonates in the ensemble of your head as if you were wearing a motorbike helmet.

The Pharynx

The pharynx is the membrane-lined cavity behind the nose and mouth, connecting them to the esophagus.

It extends from the base of the skull and the nose to the six cervical vertebrae. It acts like a tube, approximately five inches long and one inch wide, located in front of the cervical column. The pharynx is a part of both the digestive system and the respiratory system.

It is composed of three distinct areas: nasopharynx, oropharynx, and laryngopharynx.

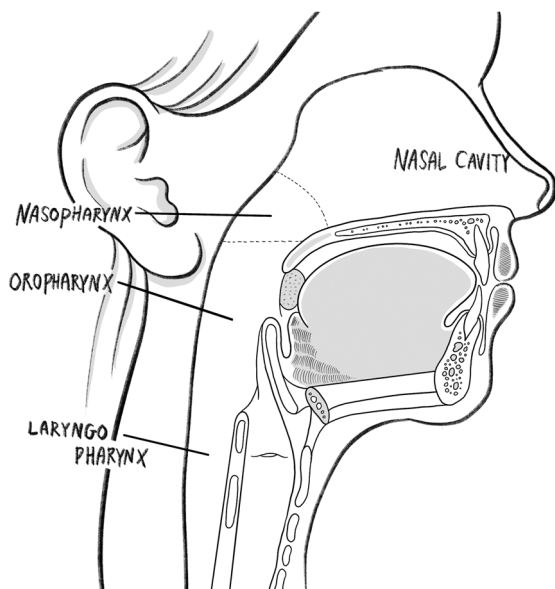


Figure 4.12 Anatomy of the pharynx.

The pharynx is a powerful resonance chamber. The three pharyngeal cavities mentioned above are the primary resonance chambers for the voice. These three connecting cavities can be formed into many different shapes, each supporting or suppressing different overtone frequencies.

The pharyngeal constrictor muscles are a series of muscles that constrict in our throat when we swallow to make the food progress downwards through the esophagus towards the stomach. It is often the case that when we hear a tight, throaty voice, it means that these very muscles are being used (i.e., the sound we hear from a person that has a knot in their throat because they are “moved”).

The pharynx is highly adjustable and can change its size and shape. This is the reason why the human voice has a greater range of expression than any other animal’s voice or instrument.

Schematically speaking, anything to do with pure vocal sound production happens below the Adam’s apple, whereas anything to do with the shaping of that vocal sound for speech and communication happens above the Adam’s apple.

Regarding the resonant role of the pharynx, in daily life, vowels are easily and naturally shaped in the oral cavity; however, for the stage, it is far more efficient to shape them further back using the ensemble of the pharynx. The resonance for the stage will be fuller and stronger if resonated in the pharynx, freeing up the oral cavity, tongue, and lips to articulate the consonants.

A Note about Tension

If the breathing muscles are tensed, the muscular tissues that surround the larynx will also become tensed. This tension will diminish the ability of the voice to be able to respond directly to brain stimulus.

If the subtle muscles of the larynx become tensed, unfortunately they cannot be applied to the needs of a given Voice Texture.

These are the three typical areas of tension to be aware of:

- 1) Tension on the upper area of the larynx and thoracic girth when high, light, and stridently pitched sounds are produced.
- 2) Tension at the low area of the larynx, like in very deep male voices with a “basso profundo” quality.

- 3) Nasal tension when the soft palate and the back of the tongue get too close to each other.

Now let us take a closer look at each of the three distinct areas of the pharynx.

I. Nasopharynx

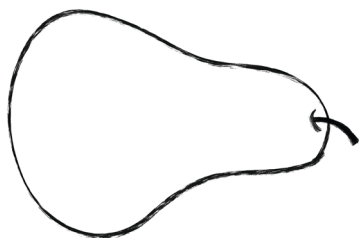


Figure 4.13 A pear representing the nasopharynx.

As its name indicates, this area is at the very back of the nose. This is the area you feel when you overdo the intake of wasabi with your sushi...

Of all the head resonators, only the nasopharynx can change its size due to the extraordinary mobility of the soft palate. This translates to offering a large variety of vocal qualities.

The optimal conditions for nasal cavity resonance are somewhat paradoxically created by the ability to produce subtle adjustments in the oropharynx, which starts at the soft palate (see following section on “Oropharynx”).

II. The Oropharynx

This area includes the very back of the tongue, the soft palate, the sidewalls of the throat, the arches of the palate, the tonsils, and the pharyngeal constrictor muscles. The soft palate plays the lead role in the process of phonation; its position influences significantly the resonance of the oropharyngeal channel and intervenes strongly in the color properties of sound. Vocal quality depends a great deal on the degree of the soft-palate muscular activity. For these reasons, the soft palate should be constantly active while singing. A sagittal view of this area could be represented in its