

# VOICE*Prints*

JOURNAL OF THE NEW YORK SINGING TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2009



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### Featured Course:

## VOCAL HEALTH FOR *Voice Professionals*

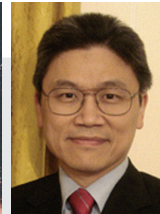
Offered On-Site and Real Time Webinar  
On-Demand access begins April 3, 2009



Benjamin Asher  
MD, FACS



Anat Keidar  
PhD, CCC-SLP



Peak Woo  
MD, FACS



Lucian Sulica  
MD



Linda Carroll  
PhD, CCC-SLP

## January 13-March 3, 2009

Tuesdays, 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM

*A detailed exploration of vocal health issues relevant to singers and teachers of singing. This course addresses vocal fold injury and includes the mechanisms of vocal pathologies, their diagnosis and treatment. Common conditions such as nodules, polyps, edema, reflux, and hemorrhage will be covered. The goal is to enable teachers to advise students on vocal hygiene, to recognize the necessity of medical intervention, to be conversant with commonly used drugs for performers, and to be able to participate as part of the medical treatment team in the rehabilitation of the singing voice.*

### Vocal Health 2009 Lecture Schedule

- January 13** Mechanism of Vocal Injury: **Peak Woo, MD, FACS**
- January 20** Vocal Fold Nodules, Polyps, Varix, Edema, Cysts: **Peak Woo, MD, FACS**
- January 27** Reflux Laryngitis, Acute Laryngitis, Chronic Laryngitis: **Peak Woo, MD, FACS**
- February 3** Neurological Disorders of the Voice/Broadway Emergencies: **Lucian Sulica, MD**
- February 10** Muscular Tension Dysphonia (MTD) and Other Posturing Abnormalities: **Anat Keidar, PhD, CCC-SLP**
- February 17** Medication and the Voice: **Peak Woo, MD, FACS**
- February 24** Integrative Approach to the Professional Voice: How Alternative Therapies Enhance the Conventional Approach for Optimal Health: **Benjamin Asher, MD, FACS**
- March 3** Optimizing Vocal Hygiene and Communication with the Health Profession: **Linda Carroll, PhD, CCC- SLP**

**Teacher's College, Columbia University** Grace Dodge Hall, Room 179, West 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam.

The cost of the course is \$220, \$110 for repeaters, and for those who have taken the course previously and would like to just take the two new lectures by Dr. Asher and Dr. Sulica on-site at Teacher's College, the cost is \$60 per lecture. (This option is not available for Real Time or On Demand Purchase. Online repeaters must purchase the entire course.)

## Featured Event:

### SIXTEEN BARClinic

Presented in association with NYU Steinhardt's Program in Vocal Performance

**February 9, 2009** Monday, 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Back by popular demand, twelve singers get to strut their stuff before a panel of industry experts who give candid and supportive advice often not offered in the audition setting.

**New York University**, Kimmel Center, 60 Washington Square South, Shorin Performance Space, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, NYC.

Photo ID required. Free to members, \$25 non-members, \$15 students with valid ID.



**VICTORIA BUSSERT** (Director) has directed more than 200 musicals over the past twenty years. In New York, her work has been seen at the Manhattan Theatre Club, New World Stages and the York Theatre. Regionally, she has directed for Goodspeed Opera, Repertory Theatre of Saint Louis, Portland Stage, Dallas Theatre Center, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Cleveland Playhouse, Westchester Broadway Theatre, Pegasus Players, Marriott Lincolnshire Theatre, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Playhouse Square and Beck Center for the Arts. She has directed seven national tours including *Into the Woods*, *Once on this Island*, *The Secret Garden* and *The Who's Tommy*. She has also led an active career in opera having directed for Anchorage Opera, Piedmont Opera, Cleveland Opera, Skylight Opera and Pennsylvania Opera Theatre. Victoria serves as Resident Director for the Great Lakes Theatre Festival, Artistic Director for Cain Park and Director of Music Theatre for Baldwin-Wallace College. She received her MFA in Directing from Northwestern University. She is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.



**JOAN LADER** (Voice Therapist and Teacher) has worked in private practice in New York City for nearly 30 years. Her extensive practice, which includes leading singers and actors from Broadway, Film, Opera, R&B, Rap and Rock, provides training and development of professional singers and vocal therapy for injured voices. In addition, she is a frequent guest lecturer at Columbia University, Pace University, the Voice Foundation in Philadelphia, the Pacific Voice Foundation in San Francisco, NYSTA, Berklee College of Music as well as giving numerous Master Classes and Workshops at Yale (Calhoun College), BTP (Broadway Theater Project), "The Lost Colony" in North Carolina and the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley.

Ms. Lader is a certified master teacher of the Estill Voice Training System (EVTS) and has extensive training in the Alexander Technique as well as Fitzmaurice Voice Work and the work of Arthur Lessac. Her teaching and therapy draw from all of these disciplines in order to individualize and address the specific needs of her widely varying client population.



**DALE RIELING** (Musical Director) was the Musical Supervisor and Director for the original Broadway production of *Les Misérables* from the Tenth Anniversary until its closing. He also supervised the third national tour and music directed the First National and International tours of *Les Misérables*. Also on Broadway, he music directed *Miss Saigon* and is currently the associate conductor of *Mary Poppins*. Other productions: *Hairspray*, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Full Monty*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Nine*, *West Side Story*, *Dracula: A Chamber Musical*, *The Will Rogers Follies*, *Married Alive*, *Into The Woods*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *Footloose*, *Evita*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *She Loves Me*, *A Wonderful Life*, *The Secret Garden*, *Cinderella*, *Gypsy*, *My One and Only*, *Sweet Charity*, *Peter Pan*, and *Hello, Dolly* starring Michele Lee. Mr. Rieling has conducted the Kansas City Symphony and Bob McGrath in Concert with the Louisiana Philharmonic and Syracuse Symphony. He received his master's degree in conducting from Northwestern University.



**ALAN FILDERMAN** has been a Casting Director in New York for twenty years. His Broadway and Off-Broadway credits include: *Grey Gardens*, *Marie Christine*, *Master Class*, *Once on this Island*, *Dessa Rose*, *Here Lies Jenny*, *Listen to My Heart*, *Miss Evers' Boys*, *A New Brian*, *A Beautiful Thing*, *Three Tall Women*, *From the Mississippi Delta*, *Song of Singapore* and *The Sum of Us*. He casts for many Regional Theatres across the United States including the Berkshire Theatre Festival, Syracuse Stage and Theatre Works Palo Alto. His film and television work includes: *Ice Age*, *Broadway Damage*, *Anastasia* and *Out of the Box*. He has taught acting and given audition seminars at The University of Missouri, Syracuse University, North Carolina School of the Arts, Rutgers, Baldwin-Wallace and University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. In New York he offers audition seminars at The Actor's Connection, TVI and One On One. He is a member of the Casting Society of America.

## MESSAGE FROM THE *President*



### YOU GOTTA HAVE FAITH!

Dear Fellow NYSTA Members,

I hope each of you had a wonderful and joyous holiday season. It was such a pleasure to see so many of you at the Catherine Malfitano Masterclass and annual holiday party at the Laurie Beechman Theater and West Bank Café. One of the great pleasures of being your President is getting to see and hear from many of you throughout the year. And, at our annual party, it always becomes very clear to me that we members of NYSTA are truly one big, happy, extended family.

With a five-year-old daughter, the holiday season remains one of wonderment and surprise each year, as we track Santa's whereabouts on the computer and rush to get to bed before the annual nightly visit. But, perhaps the holiday season has you feeling wiped out and ragged? And now with the start of a new semester just around the corner, you might ask "where

was the rest for ye merry gentlemen (and women)?"

Well, my friends, never fear. With only the fewest of exceptions I am sure you had a more restful holiday break than my family did. By the time you read this my own family and I will be in the midst of feverishly unpacking, adjusting to, and hopefully enjoying our new suburban life in Bloomfield, New Jersey. And, we will have added two new additions to our family: 1) Grandma (Tom's Mom) is now living with us, and 2) we have been (once again) placed with an 18-month-old baby girl named Faith.

After our last two foster children (Ricardo and Jaden) left us we thought for sure we were done with trying to expand our family. But just a few weeks later we received a call about this little girl who was already freed for adoption and needed a loving home. So, after a long family

discussion and deliberation, we decided to give it one more shot. And, we are all so happy that we did.

So, after losing two other children in a thirteen-month period, an economic recession in full swing, a major home purchase, move to another state, a new live in in-law, a new car (and commute) to adjust to, and a new toddler in the house, I can fully report that although at times it may seem it, we are never really given more than we can handle. And when in doubt, you just gotta have Faith.

In retrospect now your holiday season may seem a little more restful, eh? Consider this my gift to you this holiday season. Enjoy!

*David Sabella-Mills*



## MESSAGE FROM THE *Editor*



Happy New Year! I hope that 2009 is off to a great start for each and every one of you. It certainly is for NYSTA: January marks the beginning of our eight-week *Vocal Health for Voice Professionals* course, offered on-site, online, and on demand. This course will bring together five of the top vocal health specialists in the country with lectures specifically designed for teachers of singing.

Then, in February, be sure to attend NYSTA's *16-bar Clinic*. In this popular event, twelve singers, of various ages and professional experience, perform two contrasting 16-bar selections for musical theatre. The panel, comprised of top professionals in the field, then provides feedback to each of the singers on their "audition."

The event concludes with a rather in-depth question-and-answer session between the panel and the audience. Topics frequently discussed include repertoire

selection, making sensible 16-bar cuts, and vocal/physical typing. The purpose of the event is to help singing teachers and coaches better understand industry standards and expectations.

The feature article this month is by Dr. Joan Melton. Dr. Melton has earned an international reputation for her work on voice and movement, and has written two critically acclaimed books. Be sure to take advantage of her upcoming course in New York City. I would also like to thank Dr. Anthony Radford of the University of California at Fresno for his thoughtful critique of Richard Miller's new book: *Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices*.

On a more touching note, David-Sabella Mills has shared a recent letter and poem that he received in response to his November-December President's letter. Gerald Ginsberg has a long association with NYSTA dating back to the 1970s. I hope that you

enjoy "A Single Song." (reprinted here on page 8 under NYSTANews).

Finally, and as always, remember that VOICEPrints is YOUR publication, so please send all questions, comments, and ideas for future articles to me at [voiceprints@nyst.org](mailto:voiceprints@nyst.org).

Sincerely,

*Dr. Matthew Hoch*

Editor-in-Chief, VOICEPrints  
[voiceprints@nyst.org](mailto:voiceprints@nyst.org)



# NYSTACalendar Spring 2009

OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM \*

## VOCAL HEALTH FOR *Voice Professionals*

**January 13-March 3, 2009** Tuesdays, 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM

A detailed exploration of vocal health issues relevant to singers and teachers of singing. This course addresses vocal fold injury and includes the mechanisms of vocal pathologies, their diagnosis and treatment. Common conditions such as nodules, polyps, edema, reflux, and hemorrhage will be covered. The goal is to enable teachers to advise students on vocal hygiene, to recognize the necessity of medical intervention, to be conversant with commonly used drugs for performers, and to be able to participate as part of the medical treatment team in the rehabilitation of the singing voice.

Instructors: Dr. Peek Woo, Dr. Lucian Sulica, Anat Keider PhD, CCC-SLP, Dr. Benjamin Asher, and Linda Carroll PhD, CCC-SLP

**Teachers' College**, Grace Dodge Hall, Room 179, 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.

## SIXTEEN BAR*Clinic*

**February 9, 2009** Monday, 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

*Presented in association with NYU Steinhardt's Program in Vocal Performance*

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**New York University**, Kimmel Center, 60 Washington Square South, Shorin Performance Space, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, NYC.

Photo ID required. Free to members, \$25 non-members, \$15 students with valid ID.

## ACCESSING *The Inner Divo/Div*

**April 19, 2009** Sunday, 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Understanding the psychology of performance can aid a voice teacher to take a student to the next level. NLP Practitioner and Certified NGH Hypnotist Sarah Carson and NLP Master Practitioner and Trainer, Certified NGH Hypnotist and Certified Clean Language Facilitator Shawn Carson will outline cutting edge techniques of peak performance psychology in the singing arena drawn from the disciplines of Humanistic Neuro-Linguistic Psychology, NLP, EFT Hypnosis and Clean Language.

**Teachers' College**, Columbia University, Room TBA, 120<sup>th</sup> Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.

Photo ID required. Free to members, \$25 non-members, \$15 students with valid ID.

OREN LATHROP BROWN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM \*

## COMPARATIVE *Pedagogy Weekend 2009*

**June 2009** Dates and Instructors TBA

During this course, six master teachers will present teaching demonstrations after case histories of students have been discussed. Concrete links will be made between various teaching strategies and the scientific and medical information covered in other courses of the PDP program.

**Teachers' College**, Columbia University, 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC.

All PDP courses are \$220 and can be registered and paid for online at [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org). One graduate credit per course is available from Westminster Choir College, for an additional \$150. A form will be obtained at the class. The courses take place at Columbia University, Teachers' College, 525 West 120th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue, NYC. Check desk at entry for class location. For more information contact Janet Pranschke at [pdp@nysta.org](mailto:pdp@nysta.org) or [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org).

Hello Fellow VASTA's and Fellow NYSTA's,

As a member of the Board of Directors of the New York Singing Teachers Association and a Voice and Speech Trainers Association member, I have been anointed the official liaison between these two incredible groups of dedicated educators.

Having experienced two national VASTA conferences (Chicago '06/Oregon '08) and been knee deep in NYSTA events and development, I offer this official introduction.

Both NYSTA and VASTA have tremendous educational resources that I believe we can share with one another. NYSTA is well into the techno age with online resources that will blow your mind and inform your teaching and personal growth. VASTA has a membership of brilliant academic minds working with theater voice in bold new ways as well as the tried and true. The most significant binding factor between the groups is our thirst for more knowledge, better techniques to share with our students and professional integrity.

Please get to know one another! Use the resources on the websites: [www.nysta.org](http://www.nysta.org) and [www.vasta.org](http://www.vasta.org).

Let me know if I, Sally Morgan, can be of further help. You can reach me [Sally@MorganixMethod.com](mailto:Sally@MorganixMethod.com) or through my website [www.VocalPowerTools.com](http://www.VocalPowerTools.com).

Sincerely,

*Sally Morgan*

NYSTA Board of Directors



Sally Morgan

## BOOK REVIEW: *Vocal Pedagogy*

by NYSTA Member Anthony Radford, DMA

Richard Miller, *Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

*Securing Baritone, Bass-Baritone and Bass Voices* is the latest book in what could be called Richard Miller's "voice specific series," with tenors and sopranos already receiving attention in previous editions. Like many teachers of the current generation, I cut my teeth in pedagogy classes and first teaching experiences on principles that Mr. Miller has espoused and developed over the last half century, so I was eager to explore his latest findings.

A casual glance at the table of contents immediately caught this reader's interest. Chapter titles include "The Agility Factor" (Chapter 7), "Voice Viruses" (Chapter 15), and "Pedagogic Uses of Falsetto for Baritone, Bass-Baritone, and Bass Voices" (Chapter 10). There are also a number of useful tools for student and teacher: a glossary, an IPA chart, a detailed bibliography and a multitude of exercises.

In the opening paragraph, Miller states that this edition was created in response to repeated questions about the specific problems encountered by lower male voices. He also states that his goal was to write a "progressive guideline," in an attempt to offer the reader an idea of the total sweep of technical development from inexperienced beginner to proficient artist. Mr. Miller wrote each chapter as an essay in itself, to accommodate the reader who has one or two specific questions.

So it seems Miller sets out to write a systematic, organized and user-friendly study; the question is, does he succeed? The answer is a qualified "yes." All teachers, singers and voice types will find useful information in this volume. In Part I, entitled "Technique," Miller defines the baritone, bass-baritone and bass voice in scientific terms and proceeds to tackle each area of technique in the order he feels they should be addressed including onset, breath management, and vowel modification. At the end of this section is a series of short essays, the most fascinating of which is titled "Establishing Technical Security (Trusting the Body)." Here, Miller triumphs in the logic and the simplicity of nature, saying that there lies no quicker route to physical and artistic freedom than by trusting the body.

Also in Part I, and of particular interest to this singer, are passages from the baritone, bass-baritone and bass repertoire. Mr. Miller explains why, for example, a passage in Handel's *Messiah* is difficult, and proposes an exercise to work on the problem. For me, it was like a personal history of arias left on the shelf because of that one passage that never quite worked. These chapters are very motivating and perhaps for some, a reason to pick up that old aria one more time.

It seems that every singer and teacher is in search of a big sound by physical means: opening the mouth or attempting to make the throat bigger (conscious pharyngeal spreading). Miller calls for a stop to this. He writes that volume is achieved by harmonics, and no amount of space or "noise elements" that are in the sound will

increase the volume level. In fact, attempts at pharyngeal spreading lead to a swallowed sound, and Miller suggests remedies for the singer with this problem.

Miller indicates that his opinions on singing are scientifically based and therefore objective. His view is that many of the problems in today's teaching arise from ignoring the objectivity and systematic nature of scientific discovery. These subjective teachers, he says, do a great deal of harm to their students. This is a fair point, but his frequent criticisms of other pedagogic approaches tend to derail him from the subject at hand. When he is critical of a viewpoint he never offers the opposing view fully and never cites the author to whom he is referring. Miller is the epitome of a gentleman and academic but sometimes it would be nice to know who stands behind the approach he is criticizing. His audience is left to seek out the opposing view as Miller moves on quickly after a few sentences.

One such occurrence in this book is where Miller dismisses the "sword-swallowing" position where vocal freedom is sought by asking the student to lift his head up and sing. Miller comments that one cannot swallow and sing at the same time and therefore this approach is useless, and the swords should be kept in their scabbards in the voice lesson. This is an immediate dismissal of what many have found to be a useful and interesting tool in the voice studio when working with a student who is prone to closing the throat while singing. I am in no way mounting a defense of this approach, but I am sure that teachers are not asking students to attempt to swallow with the head up as Miller suggests.

Another such argument is over vocal register development and blending. Miller argues an opinion that is hard to refute; that the male singer, as he sings higher in pitch, should blend from one register to another. But Miller misunderstands register separation advocates when he says that they attempt to stretch the chest or modal register above its natural limits. The fact is that much of the last 30 years in register separation, primarily done in the studio of the late Cornelius Reid, has been invested in trying to avoid such chest register stretching by focusing on the pedagogic advantages of strengthening the falsetto (in heavy, chest-dominated voices), and then reintegrating a stronger falsetto register with the chest voice to create a more perfect balance.

Miller recognizes the benefits of the falsetto in the development of the male voice by saying that it is useful in finding a free tone. He includes exercises that bring about a stronger and more present falsetto, in an attempt to free the vocal production of a singer with "pressed phonation." Miller does not cite other advocates of this approach, but for years teachers have used falsetto as a pedagogic tool, and find that its development through isolation leads to a free tone. These teachers go further, saying that when strengthened and then reintegrated with the "modal" or chest voice, it allows the singer to improve in all areas of singing.

To pick one's way through the maze of



Dr. Anthony Radford

technical and scientific jargon in any pedagogy book is a challenge. Just as our performance style has changed, vocal pedagogy is an evolving art. For the 300 or more years prior to the invention of the laryngoscope, we relied on unscientific and subjective language to describe the voice. For the last 150, we have tried to wean ourselves off subjective language in an attempt to establish a vernacular that is firmly centered on what we understand scientifically. On the whole, Miller makes this journey easier in *Securing Baritone, Bass Baritone and Bass Voices* by writing a study that is accessible, scientifically sound and thorough.

**Dr. Anthony Radford** is currently Assistant Professor of Voice at California State University-Fresno. He has also taught voice at University of Lethbridge, Concordia University-Nebraska, and York College, Nebraska. A frequent performer on the opera and recital stage, he has performed roles and held recitals in Britain, Canada and the US. He is also a master class clinician and competition adjudicator. He was director of the opera workshop at Concordia University as well as an assistant director in productions at the University of Nebraska and the University of Lethbridge. He has presented papers at the International Congress of Voice Teachers Conference in Vancouver, the American Musicological Society Pacific Northwest Chapter meeting in Lethbridge, the College Music Society Rocky Mountain Conference in Fort Collins, CO and the 2008 National Opera Association annual meeting in Los Angeles. In 2006, Dr. Radford participated in the NATS Internship Program in Kansas City. He is also the founder and past-president of the Lethbridge/Medicine Hat NATS chapter. In 2009 his article on Mozart's first Figaro, Francesco Benucci, will be published in the *Journal of Singing*, and he is currently compiling a similar vocal profile of Mozart's first Bartolo, Francesco Bussani.

## AB PRINTS and the Triple Threat

by NYSTA Member Joan Melton, PhD, ADVS

In January 2007, voice professionals from around the world gathered at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), London, for a Conference on Performance Breath. Over several days, participants were given splendid opportunities to interact, both at plenary sessions and at a wide variety of workshops. I was particularly intrigued by a workshop entitled, "Ultrasound Imaging of the Abdominal Support Mechanisms whilst Voicing," led by physiotherapists Ed Blake and Jane Grey, of PhysioEd Medical, London:

*[The presenters] demonstrated...the advantages of Real Time Ultrasound in assessing abdominal muscular patterns while voicing, and consequently the effect of poor support...This Real Time approach is ground breaking in its speed to diagnose and see the problems (Hawkins 2007, 8).*

Working with volunteers, Blake and Grey focused on the *transversus abdominis* (the deepest layer of superficial abdominal muscle) to be sure it was active during normal conversation. They explained that if the *obliques* were working without the transversus, there would likely be compensatory muscle contractions elsewhere in the respiratory-phonatory system to effect the needed respiratory drive to produce the desired voicing:

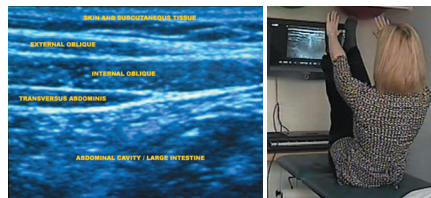
*The overriding clinical presentation is of over activity of the sternocleidomastoid musculature and secondary tightness of the suprahyoid soft tissue resulting in an elevated larynx in resting position and poor cricothyroid mobility (Hawkins 2007, 8).*

This seemed to verify Zemlin's suggestion (1988) that, because of their location and fiber direction, transversus would have more to do with exhalation, and obliques with postural stability of the torso in space. However, as I work primarily with healthy voices in actor training, I wanted to know how abdominal muscles responded and performed in physically demanding circumstances. So after the conference I met with Jane Grey, put myself under investigation, and saw—perhaps for the first time ever—the abdominal muscle activity for laughing, crying, shouting and other extended voice use, as well as for speaking and singing in a variety of physical positions. The equipment for observing abdominal activity during extended physical movement has not yet been developed.

Following that initial session, Jane and I conducted pilot studies to determine the specifics of abdominal muscle activity for nine other subjects. Seven of those were trained performers (including three major teachers of singing for musical theatre); two were fit adults with no prior voice training. In addition, we looked at the abdominal activity of an advanced trumpet player, while playing, and found it to be highly similar to that observed in the breath management of singers.

Continued research involving a larger cross section of populations will be required before these preliminary findings can be generalized. However, at least two very interesting observations may be mentioned at this point:

(1) The transversus abdominis (Figure 1) can release and engage, even when remaining superficial abdominal muscles (internal and external obliques and rectus abdominis) are involved in maintaining postural stability in the mid-lower torso, e.g., in a Pilates V (Figure 2).



Figures 1 and 2

This information is enormously useful for voice/movement specialists, and may have particular relevance to musical theatre performance.

It is important to note that engagement of the transversus appears to be spontaneous in normally functioning subjects, although less conscious and decisive in individuals not trained as performers. Also, activation of the transversus may be queued from different points in the torso (e.g., from the pelvic floor, or from the lower abdomen), and the fact of its engagement tells us very little about the overall technique of the performer.

The critical part of the equation for all the abdominals seems to be a *release* of muscle contraction after exhalation, to facilitate a more efficient inhalation. That release, far more than engagement, frequently needs attention in the technical training of actors and singers, and in the vocal training of dancers.

2) Each subject seems to have a unique "ab print," or basic neuromuscular pattern that may be seen to a greater or lesser degree, regardless of the vocal/physical task. Overall, observation suggests that transversus tends to take the lead in any activity, with internal and external obliques, in that order, coming in to assist whenever necessary. In certain extended voice use, e.g., laughing and crying (Figures 3–7), the rectus abdominis is also involved.



Figure 3: Preparation

While this represents only a preliminary set of observations based on a small sample size, it opens the door to an almost unlimited variety of full-scale projects and collaborative designs. In addition, it calls attention to the physicality of voice work and to the extraordinary range of vocal sounds that are essential to the actor's repertoire.

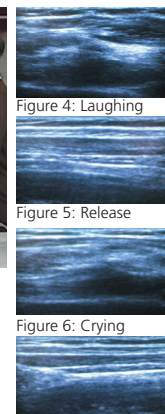


Figure 4: Laughing

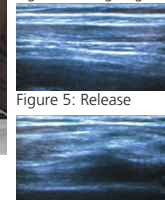


Figure 5: Release

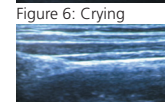


Figure 6: Crying

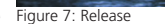


Figure 7: Release

### Practical Applications

Although we have examined only one part of the total instrument, focusing on the physical core is both critical and timely, especially in the training of musical theatre performers. When the abdominal/pelvic "center" is overlooked, activity in the upper body (shoulders, chest, neck and head) frequently attempts to compensate for a lack of awareness and use of the lower torso.

In *Communicating Voice*, March 2008, Janice Chapman says:

*Again and again I have found that intervening at the level of the torso to correct breathing and support problems has resulted in the vocal fold and resonance problems either disappearing altogether, or being able to be resolved quickly and easily. For example...[jaw and tongue root tension] problems resolve very quickly (and stay resolved) once a singer has been introduced to some Accent Method work to free up their air followed by work on postural alignment and abdominal support.*

The Accent Method was developed by Svend Smith in Denmark for use in voice therapy, and is a brilliant addition to the technical tools of a voice teacher or coach. Repeated rhythmic patterns (with accents) are employed, first with unvoiced fricatives, then with other sounds—rather like staccatos in rhythm—to wake up and train the abs.

One of the most valuable skills gained in an Accent Method approach is the ability to let go quickly, or to release the abdominal muscles—albeit only one in some strenuous positions—so that the need for an upper chest "top up," or "catch breath," is eliminated.

In *Singing and the Actor*, Gillyanne Kayes says:

*A very wise singing teacher told me during my training that the secret of breathing in was to breathe out... [Exercises based on the Accent Method] engage the muscles of active expiration, and they will help you to release the abdominal wall so that you can breathe in fast and efficiently.*

In addition to relieving stress in the upper body and solving technical problems, use of the abs is key to our experiencing a character as a whole person, rather than as a "talking head." Mel Churcher, who coaches and directs the gamut of theatre venues, frequently asks an actor who is working on a TV monologue to place a hand on the abdomen the second time through the piece. That simple action changes the sound and impacts communication immediately, so that both actor and coach are working at a different level very quickly.

In the second stage of the ultrasound project—which moves now to Australia—we are focusing on singers in different media (e.g., opera, jazz, folk, as well as musical theatre), and on the technical connections between voice work and dance. Although "performance breath" for singing has traditionally been considered incompatible with certain aspects of dance technique(s), the triple threat must marry the two. And as we begin to examine dance and voice work *together*, the common denominators appear! What those are and how they interact in performance will be the subject of future articles.

My interest in the use of ultrasound imaging while voicing springs from a desire to know the

“truth” about what we do and what we teach. Voice training is and has been fraught with myths, and some of those myths have been useful at times. Yet, when we are able to sort out what actually happens in even one aspect of the technical process, we are then freed to make subtle adjustments in our understanding of the whole mechanism.



**Joan Melton** trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama, London, holds a PhD from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Bachelors and Masters degrees in music from the University of Mississippi, Oxford. She is the author of *Singing in Musical*

*Theatre: The Training of Singers and Actors* (Allworth 2007), and, with Kenneth Tom, PhD, of *ONE VOICE: Integrating Singing Technique and Theatre Voice Training* (Heinemann 2003).

Joan initiated and developed the Voice/Movement program (1996–2007) for the Department of Theatre and Dance at California State University, Fullerton, has taught at leading drama and music centers in the United States, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand, and is now based in New York City. She has been a performer, vocal coach and/or musical director on productions in virtually all media, from daytime television to musical theatre, from new music premieres to panoramic theatre in Central Park. She is the author of numerous articles for voice journals, and is a Master Teacher of the Fitzmaurice approach to theatre voice training. Please visit her website at [www.onevoicebook.com](http://www.onevoicebook.com).

#### Photographs

Figures 1, 3-7, Joan Melton & Jane Grey; Figure 2, Betsy Allen. Photography by Gerard Reidy.

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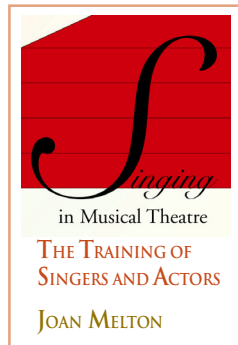
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## Voice and the Triple Threat

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**Rusty Curcio** toured internationally with *Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo* and with *Ballet Grandiva de Russia*, and performed in NYC with *Peridance Dance Ensemble* and *Acanthus Ballet Company*. He is an award-winning director and choreographer.

# VOICEPrints

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The New York Singing Teachers' Association

## NYSTANews

A Note and Poem by NYSTA Member Gerald Ginsburg

Dear Mr. Sabella-Mills:

As a result of reading your President's Message in the November-December issue of VOICEPrints, I have written a poem about singing, but a little different in its approach. NYSTA is fortunate to have your expertise and enthusiasm as our new President.

Sincerely,

*Gerry Ginsburg*



Gerald Ginsburg

### A SINGLE SONG

The world has always been made up  
Of haves and have nots.  
It's always been this way.  
Each person must choose  
How to deal with the knots  
In the world we find today.  
I will not judge.  
I will not begrudge.  
Whole countries are going bankrupt,  
But for some this does not seem to interrupt  
Their lives that go on without question.  
But for others I'd make  
The following suggestion:

Let the whole world sing  
A single song to bring  
Healing to this recession  
By creating a union of expression,  
A fusion of all hearts  
That starts the progression  
Towards one combined end:  
To mend.  
In harmonies of peace  
So that the horror will cease.  
Singing not for perfection of tone,  
But singing so that we are not alone.  
Singing not for career.

Just singing without any fear.  
Just opening the throat, and  
Letting ourselves emote.  
Singing together in all the languages  
Of the world,  
So that there is unfurled a quilt  
Without guilt  
To cover us all in security  
Because of the purity  
Of our goal: to heal Our One Soul.

October 24, 2008  
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