

the VASTA Voice

THE ENEWSLETTER OF THE VOICE AND SPEECH TRAINERS ASSOCIATION, INC.



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

[Beth McGee](#)



What a fantastic VASTA conference we had last August! For those of you who were unable to attend, the 2009 Conference in New York City had over 300 attendees! Arthur Lessac gave an inspirational keynote that got the ball rolling, and Kristin Linklater, Patsy Rodenburg, and Catherine Fitzmaurice taught workshops and gave a demonstrations of their work with three very brave volunteers. As has become a VASTA conference tradition, there was also a very lively discussion of diversity in the profession.

And of course, we got to know one another and chatted with old friends. I want to thank Michele Cuomo and Micha Espinosa again for their conference planning.

But of course, we have much to do! I want to welcome Jeff Morrison, Krista Scott, and Lynn Watson to the Board of Directors. I also want to welcome

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Get Involved!

If you are interested in being involved and helping VASTA grow, please write to hr@vasta.org to see how you could become involved.

several new VASTA Officers: Antonio Ocampo-Guzman as VASTA's Treasurer beginning 2010; Hilary Blair as our new Membership Director, Guy William Molnar as our new Editor of the VASTAVoice, Dudley Knight as our new Editor of the *Voice and Speech Review*, and Fran Bennett as our new Diversity Committee Chair. This of course means we give sincere and grateful acknowledgments to departing Board members Craig Ferre and Christine Morris, departing Treasurer Krista Scott, departing Membership Director and Diversity Committee Chair Antonio Ocampo-Guzman, and departing *Voice* Editor Jeff Morrison and *VSR* editor Rena Cook.

We are still planning our 2010 conference in Mexico City and hope to have a call for proposals out to you soon.

My best to all of you.

Beth McGee

president@vasta.org

Associate Professor of Voice

Case Western Reserve University

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FROM THE EDITOR

[Guy William Molnar](#)

Welcome to the longest edition of the *Voice* in a while. In this issue we are pleased to be able to publish a pair of articles detailing some current creative and research activity of several VASTAns, including work that was supported in part through VASTA's Dorothy Mennen Grant program. (We'll continue to feature projects supported by the Mennen Grant in the next two newsletters.) Also included below are a note from Eric Armstrong soliciting applications for the next round of grants, and Antonio Ocampo-Guzman's final report as Chair of the Diversity Committee.

Guy William Molnar



We are especially pleased to be able to share with you Arthur Lessac's keynote address from the 2009 VASTA Conference in New York. A number of Conference attendees specifically requested that we publish Mr. Lessac's remarks here in the *Voice*, and he very graciously and generously consented to let us do so. I want to extend many thanks to Mr. Lessac for his kind permission, and I also send out a slightly-belated "happy birthday" as well: he just turned 100, and continues to inspire and challenge. His only condition was that we reproduce his address in its entirety, which to me seemed like no condition at all – I wouldn't dream of deleting a word. I'm particularly

grateful to Mr. Lessac since – as I wrote here in July – I was unable to attend the Conference and hear his address in person.

I also want to repeat last month's thanks to Tech Director and Board Member Michael Barnes and to outgoing Editor and new Board Member Jeff Morrison: they continue to be generous with their time, experience, and expertise as I continue to learn what's involved in publishing the *Voice*.

Thanks as well to Beth, Antonio, Eric, Julia, Ruth Rootberg, and Joan Melton.

Thanks, finally, to VASTAn (and former *Voice* Editor) Erica Tobolski for her help in obtaining publication permission from Arthur Lessac. Erica was my voice teacher in graduate school, and her help in reaching Mr. Lessac was only one of the ways she continues to help and inspire me as I follow, in so many ways, in her footsteps.

Wishing you all a safe, happy, and productive autumn,

Guy

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2009 VASTA CONFERENCE KEYNOTE ADDRESS

[Arthur Lessac](#)

Arthur Lessac

Given on August 3, 2009 at the VASTA Conference in New York, NY

Thank you, Beth, for that very generous introduction.

Hello, everyone!

Since in four short weeks I'll be gently tip-toeing into the two zeros of my 100th year, I can think of no better birthday gift than this privileged invitation to address my fellow

VASTAns, and I thank you heartily. This is an honor as well as an opportunity I shall not easily forget.

And speaking of forgetting...

Did you hear the one about the old man in the park?

An old man is sitting on a park bench, crying bitterly. A young man walks over to him and says, "Is something wrong?" And the old man looks up and says "I have a beautiful sexy wife, 30 years old...she cooks like an angel...we have sex every night." Young man says, "So why are you crying?" And the old man says, "I can't remember where I live!"

"Remembering" is a little harder these days. At 100, my memory is just not what it used to be. I have discovered that growing older is not for the faint of heart. I wear two very expensive hearing aids now, and neither of them are worth a damn. And as far as my eyes are concerned, I'm blind in my right eye, and I have only 20% vision in my left eye. I mean, any one-eyed pirate can see better than I can!

But for all that, my heart is good, my voice is strong, and I can still hold my breath underwater for 90 seconds! That makes me feel like a young man inside. And that's why I'm sorry I have to read this to you. I would rather talk to you. But that's the way it is. So I ask you, please, to indulge me a little if I forget what I'm going to say next, or if I lose my place in my speech.

The full title of this conference is "ORIGINAL VOICES: Voice Methodologies from the Source". And before I begin, I want to share with you my realization that all of us here are involved in training the voice, but for the next few moments, I ask you to think of just the first two words of that title: "ORIGINAL VOICES" and not about a specific way of training. Let's consider an ORIGINAL VOICE in a much broader perspective, as something which is innate, in need of protection, something that should always be encouraged to grow and thrive. Such a voice could help create a better world, a better world which honors communing instead of just communicating.

Let me tell you a story. It's a legend.

And this legend has it that in the very beginning of mankind (and womankind) human communication was carried on entirely through the singing voice, with appropriate melodies, body rhythms and facial expressions. Whenever groups of people got together, the communication process would evolve into original choral exchanges. Their bodies would move into dance forms, and ensemble harmony was a natural occurrence. But, as the many years kept racing by... "time" became more and more frugal and more and more economical and therefore, time itself became shorter and shorter until what was left was just barely enough time for consonants and vowels...

and thus speech was born, leaving precious little time for meaningful melodies, for harmony, for expressive sharing... and certainly no time at all for supportive communing.

And that's where the legend ends. (And believe me I had nothing to do with

that legend, I'm not that old.) But if we were to continue the story, more and more consonants and vowels would no doubt be eaten up by time. In other words, our ORIGINAL VOICE would get fainter and fainter and possibly could get lost altogether.

Now what do we really mean by "ORIGINAL VOICES"? Not original thoughts, not original words, but ORIGINAL VOICES!

I decided to look up the word "original" and I immediately got out my thesauruses (yes, I do have more than one!). Did you know there are over 60 synonyms for the word "original"? I didn't know that. There's "fundamental", "new", "unused", "native", and "basic", not to mention "cutting edge", "new wave" and "new age"! I was overwhelmed. Finally, I came to "creative". That's it! I thought. Creative— fresh...yes. So I chose "creative" as part of my definition.

Now how about voices? Voice also has many meanings. It can mean freedom of speech, taking a stand, our unique imprint on the world. So, I asked myself the question: What can a voice really do? Any voice?

Well, it can....
hum a lullaby
call you in to dinner
But it can also.....
ring out in protest
sing out in pure joy
warn you of danger
cry out for freedom....

Voice is so much more than tone or timbre, vowels or consonants. It is so much more than the apparatus. A voice that is free, that feels its inherent right to speak, will have no fear of calling out, whenever and wherever it is needed.

But most importantly, a voice can be a beacon in the darkness, something that lights the way for others.

And therefore, for my meaning of "voice", I chose "visionary"—someone who lights the way for others.

So, an ORIGINAL VOICE is a creative visionary, a remarkable energy. And here, at this very conference, we VASTAns are honoring four creative visionaries, four remarkable energies, who have followed their ORIGINAL VOICES and who have been beacons for others. However, I believe that all of us—all of us here in this room are ORIGINAL VOICES, capable of being a beacon for others.

In fact, I believe that everyone, everywhere, is an ORIGINAL VOICE. I mean, consider the newborn baby, fresh out of the womb. Talk about original! Every single baby born in this world is an original. Like a Stradivarius violin, no two are alike. (You do know, of course, the history of the Stradivarius violins? Stradivarius used only the finest and best woods and handcrafted the violins so that each violin, while essentially the same in appearance, produces an original, unique sound.) I think every baby is a Stradivarius violin, capable of producing unique music—with their ORIGINAL VOICE.

As a matter of fact, a baby's first cry is a perfectly placed clarion "Call"—it has all the qualities I believe to be part of an ORIGINAL VOICE—it's exciting, pure, healthy, fresh, singing, and strong.

Why is it, then, that many of us, as we grow into adulthood, suffer an adulteration of our "ORIGINAL VOICES"? What happens to that baby Strad? How does that ORIGINAL VOICE get lost or weakened or corrupted?

I believe the answer lies in a better understanding of our environments. And I'm using the plural, *environments*, intentionally.

So, at this point, I ask you to seriously consider that we are all, all of us, living, functioning, creating and problem solving in two separate, highly significant environments.

On the one hand, there is the huge Outer Environment:

With everything and everyone in it.
With all its ecologies, histories and mysteries
With all its different NRG uses and NRG powers
With its conditioning and patterning
With its left brained, quantitative forceful influences
And with its thousands and thousands of professionally trained ecologists.

On the other hand, we have our very own, vastly infinite, personal Inner Environment:

With its own ecology.
With its own mysterious wilderness.
With its own multitude of personal NRG qualities.
With its own right-brained qualitative and harmonic sensing.
And, oh yes, with only one inner trained ecologist.

Every baby is born with this Inner Environment. But eventually the negative forces of the Outer Environment are over-powering. Pretty soon, the awareness of the Inner Environment has diminished so much that we lose

touch with it, we lose our ability to feel it. But it still exists, it still exists inside us, inside a far vaster inner milieu or inner domain than anything conceivable in the outside world. It is in this Inner Environment that our ORIGINAL VOICE survives—that our ORIGINAL VOICE lives, though often unheard and unrecognized, even by us.

Too often, we become a “cog in the wheel” of the Outer Environment. Its patterns and its conditioning become our patterns and our conditioning, so much so, that we don’t identify those patterns or conditions for the *poisons* they really are.

Now, friends, I want to make myself clear. You may think I’m being extreme. After all, poisons? Well, let’s see. What are some of these poisons?

Well, there are the obvious ones: over-indulgence in food or alcohol, drug addiction, daily stress. . . . Stress alone causes negative emotions to accumulate in the Inner Environment. Current research indicates significant connections between emotions and disease—anger contributes to heart disease, anxiety causes panic attacks or heart arrhythmia, depression contributes to headaches and back pain. Stress creates more than discomfort in the body—it creates ill-health. It slowly *poisons*.

And then there are the larger, societal poisons which afflict all of us. For example, the Outer Environment asks us to accept “the lesser of two evils”, but my inner voice says a life surrounded by the lesser of two evils still means living under evil. We don’t want to live under the lesser of the two goods, either. Because our inner voices know that that particular ‘good’ just may not be good enough.

It is indeed the Outer Environment that seems perfectly content with half truths, quarter truths, honest truths. On the other hand, the Inner Environment tells us there “ain’t no such thing” as a “half-truth” or a “quarter-truth” or a “perfect truth.” A “half-truth” or a “perfect truth” is a contradiction in terms. The Inner Environment tells us: truth is truth; good is good...and poison is poison.

In our own Outer Environment today, right now, there is the poison of racism, the poison of thievery. Hunger is poison. Homelessness is poison. Being unjustly thrown out of a job is a nasty poison. Paying teachers with IOUs is a sneaky poison if there ever was one and there is no end to this list.

As far as I am concerned, it is the Outer Environment that seems to favor a left-brained democracy with a large, capital “D.” Our Inner Environment, with its heart, gut, soul and spirit NRGs seems to favor an organic democracy with a small “d”.

You know, we can go for our entire lives without recognizing all the kinds of

poisons that exist today in our outer world. Take the economy, for example. Even with the recent downturn of the stock market, one could say that the average American lives in a fairly good economy. But, do we really know what kind of economy we are living in? We're not living in a capitalist economy. We're not living in a socialist economy. We're not living in a money or people's economy. But we are, I regret to say, living in a military economy. And all production is expected to feed and expand the worldwide military economy. And one of the most important products of that economy is war. And war, of course, is the greatest poison of all.

Our planet has been poisoned with continuous war for an awfully, awfully long time. And, mind you, war develops its own poisons such as killing, murdering, torturing, hating...

Clearly, as you might guess, I strongly prefer that the Inner Environment influence the Outer Environment rather than vice versa. *Because the Outer Environment stifles and starves the ORIGINAL VOICE that exists in our Inner Environment.* And I believe that we've been relentlessly losing our voices.

What can we do? Well, my experience tells me that the answer lies in our Inner Environment....and by developing our awareness of the feeling sense within us, we can become better ecologists for ourselves.

Now, what is the feeling sense?

Well, we all experience the Outer Environment through the five outer senses (touch, hearing, taste, smell, and sight)—which are quantitative (meaning they can be measured) and therefore, they can be limited.

But, in our Inner Environment, we do our experiencing and sensing through one sense only...the feeling sense... we call its workings "the feeling process". It is very close to that harmonic 6th sense and it also takes us a step closer to that elusive "Soul" NRG. Yes, for me, "soul" is the most delicate of all our body NRGs, and there are many of them, many NRG fundamentals and many NRG harmonics.

Now, you may ask, what do I mean when I talk about energy? Well, in very general terms, I am speaking of kinetic energy, the energy of motion. All matter in the universe is in motion; therefore, all of the universe is energy—including us. And in our Inner Environment, we also have definable energy qualities. I'm talking about body NRGs that can be felt neuro-physically.

For example, from my own research, I discovered that:

- There is an inner NRG quality that makes our bodies feel lighter, weightless, floating; we call this inner-felt sensing "buoyancy" NRG. [At this point, Professor Lessac demonstrated the various Body NRGs as he described them in more detail.]

- There is an inner NRG that gives us a new found strength, power and resilience; which we call “potency” NRG
- There is an NRG that helps us experience the various sensations of cheer-gee-exhilaration which we call inner-felt “radiancy” NRG.
- And there is an inner NRG that helps us feel our vocal and verbal sensations and we call that “tonal” NRG. . . .tonal NRG that incorporates the music of tone –the music of consonants—the music of vowels—the music of speech. . . .a plethora of musical feeling that leads us to a livelier appreciation of random poetic expressions. . . . expressions such as “music is the universal language of mankind” or the expression “voice is the speech of angels”.

We can also learn to feel the energy of courage, of awareness, of curiosity, or the energies of spirit and of love. And when I feel them, I sense a bit of questing, or better still, a bit of mystery. I believe it was Thomas Carlyle who said, “the perception of the mysterious is the origin of discovery”, and I take that to mean the discovery of fascinating qualities and sensations within our Inner Environments.

And may I say that I am not alone in this recognition of the inner feeling process and its importance.

- It was the poet Yeats who said: “God spare me from men who think in their heads alone; he who sings a lasting song sings in the marrow bone.”

Here is a person who recognizes the power of the energy found in the Inner Environment.

- And Neitzsche, the German philosopher said: “There is more wisdom in your body than in your deepest philosophy.”

You see, he recognizes that it is our feeling process that holds the key to learning, not our thinking.

- And Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: “How wonderful is the human voice! It is indeed the organ of the soul. The intellect of man is enthroned visibly on his forehead and in his eye, and the heart of man is written on his countenance, but the soul, the soul reveals itself in the voice only.” (Bless his soul.)
- And then there’s the story of Artur Rubenstein, the great virtuoso pianist. He had thoroughly prepared himself for a very, very special performance, but when he was on the stage performing, he found that part of his creative playing at this concert was outside his carefully practiced repertoire. Later, he said, “If my fingers hadn’t done it, my

mind would never have thought of it.”

This is all Inner Environment percept-fullness...and what I hear Rubenstein saying is that this experience happened through a feeling process—not through an intellectual process. His preparation probably included both. But in that moment in performance, it was his feeling process that taught him more about his artistry than all his practicing had done.

My point here is that these artists and philosophers, themselves creative visionaries, perceived the mysterious feeling process within themselves and others, and held it up as a beacon to creativity, originality, leadership, and wisdom. This is ORIGINAL VOICE. It is only found in the Inner Environment. And when the poisons of the Outer Environment invade the Inner Environment, the ORIGINAL VOICE withers and even disappears.

But, here’s the encouraging part (finally!): It is our feeling process that recognizes these poisons, and it is our inner body energies that give us the informational experiences that open the door to health and wellness and humanness and communing. And the really good thing about this is that no poison can possibly co-exist or co-habit with any of our Inner Environment NRG qualities. One or the other must leave. They cannot live together. If, when we walk, we feel the rhythm of dancing and if, when we talk we feel the lilt of singing, our Inner Environment fills up with joy, pleasure, laughter, and spirit-fullness. In such an environment, it is impossible to also harbor hate, fear, jealousy, or rage.

And if, within these parameters, we recognize a poison, the wisest thing to do is to kick the damn thing out! If we don’t, it will continue to do its dirty work. It’s not difficult, either. We recognize fevers, rashes, and pains all the time. If we would recognize that jealousy, hate, or fear are poisons far worse than fever or rash, then we would immediately use our natural NRG resources to get rid of them and, yes, regain our health, regain our posture, regain our voice.

Our world, too, has pains, rash, and fever—but we call them poverty, hunger, and pollution, among other things. As long as those poisons continue to contaminate our Outer Environment, our Inner Environments are in danger. That is why it is in our best interest to combat all poison in the Outer Environment—so that we can all stay healthy. In fact, we must become selfish, very selfish—selfish about health! Individual wellness is very much at stake here.

When we are fully aware of our Inner Environments, when we can use our natural NRG qualities to combat the ever-present poisons of the Outer Environment, then we will feel the stirrings of the true ORIGINAL VOICE: a healthy voice, which, just like our baby Stradivarius voice, is exciting, pure, fresh, singing and strong.

This is the voice that is the beacon. This is the voice that ‘sings from the marrow bone’ in every nook and cranny of our globular planet regardless of the differences in pronunciation, accent or dialect. Peace, health, joy and spirit, work the same way, at any point in the universe. Universal communion may be bathed in different customs, different costumes, but the heart and soul and spirit is the same anywhere in our spherical world.

And while there are thousands of different languages in the Outer Environment, there is only a “communing language” for the Inner Environment, no matter what climate you are in; and most importantly, the fuel for that “communing” language is the feeling process. We should be interested in ‘communing’ rather than feeling that it is perfectly okay to just communicate. The truth is that communing always communicates fully but that communicating very often is inhumane. It is our ORIGINAL VOICE which speaks out for humaneness, and which recognizes all humanness.

We must ask ourselves: Do we want to live with the loss of this ORIGINAL VOICE?

Do we want to live in a world community without ORIGINAL VOICES? We all want and need to live with freedom of speech-- with ringing and powerful ORIGINAL VOICES. But, unfortunately, they have weakened. They have become tarnished, tarnished to the extent that freedom of speech is crippled, and we must have freedom of speech for—if we don’t have freedom of speech—we have nothing.

Above all, we need that freedom of speech couched and housed healthfully, and wellfully.....and spirit-fully and colorfully voiced.

We are all born with ORIGINAL VOICES. Let us rediscover them, and then let us use them to create the promise and the potency and the peace of our world. Let us recognize the existence of poisons all around us lest they enter into our Inner Environments and rob us forever of our birthright—our ORIGINAL VOICE.

Our spherical world is currently spinning at a dangerous speed on the very cusp of nowhere, falling downward instead of rolling forward, like any ordinary ball. A ball never rolls backward—it keeps rolling forward—no matter what direction it takes. How can we get our globular planet rolling forward again?

This is where we, the members of VASTA, can play a unique and important role. We VASTA members understand better than anyone I know how important it is to celebrate and grow our unique and individual voices. It is incumbent upon all of us to look beyond the boundaries and limitations of

specific styles of training—no matter how treasured or popular—to the far greater question of what we are doing to restore the world’s ORIGINAL VOICES to their rightful strength and expressiveness. I challenge us to consider every client, every job, and every coaching opportunity with this spirit – the spirit of communing, the spirit of health, the spirit of peace.

As I enter my 100th year, I am inspired by the endless contributions that our work can make to a sick and despairing world. We are not a large group, but each of us touches many lives through our work. Together, we can keep this earthly ball rolling forward. Personally, I believe that it’s mostly a matter and manner of Inner Environment NRG, of Inner Environment courage, of Inner Environment soul and spirit.

So, I’ve asked the guy upstairs for 2 or 3 more years. I want to see where all this goes. I want to live, if only for a short time, in a world that rolls only forward. I want to experience the feel of that forward-rolling world. And I would love to see “VASTAns” help to “light the way” with our “ORIGINAL VOICES”.

Meanwhile, I’ll be like Ol’ Man River, and I’ll just keep on rolling along!

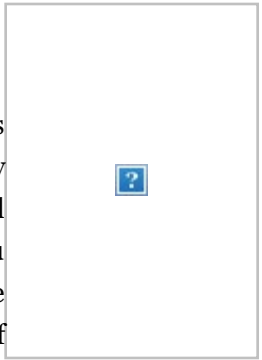
Thank you, and bless you.

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FROM THE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

[Antonio Ocampo-Guzman](#)

It was wonderful to see such a diversity of members represented at the conference in New York. Not only diverse ethnicities and languages, but also physical abilities, professional outlook and pedagogies. As you know, that was the main goal of the Diversity Committee for this past year. We are also delighted that a number of participants have expressed interest in joining the Committee and we look forward to introducing them to you during the coming year.



In New York we also were lucky to have the opportunity to invite our four main presenters—Arthur Lessac, Kristin Linklater, Catherine Fitzmaurice and Patsy Rodenburg—into the conversation and listen to their invaluable insights in a lively, and sometimes rowdy, three-hour session. It is clear that the issues around diversity continue to ignite our passions and challenge our understanding of this complex world we live in.

Fran Bennett



VASTA's Diversity Committee is four years old. We now need to take the next step: not only keeping the conversation alive among the membership during the academic year, but also begin to implement some more definitive actions. I'm delighted to announce that the formidable **Fran Bennett** has agreed to join the Committee, and that she has accepted to serve as Chair, effective immediately. Fran Bennett is a Distinguished Member of VASTA and a much beloved faculty member at the California School of the Arts. She earned a BS, MA

and credit toward a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and was the voice and movement director for the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis for 12 years as well as an actress in the company. She was trained by Kristin Linklater in her first voice teacher training program, and is a Master Voice Teacher with Shakespeare and Company, as well as an Associate Director of the Company of Women created by Kristin and Carol Gilligan. Under Rockefeller and Ford Foundation grants, she studied movement with Litz Pisk at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. Fran is the recipient of the first AEA/AFTRA/SAG Diversity Honor Award. I know Fran has several incredible ideas and boundless energy to help VASTA reach a new level in its commitment to diversity. Stay tuned!

Wishing you all a productive and adventurous academic year,

Antonio Ocampo-Guzman
Assistant Professor of Theatre
Northeastern University

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THE DOROTHY MENNEN RESEARCH/DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

[Eric Armstrong](#)

Eric Armstrong



The VASTA Endowment Grants and Awards Committee is pleased to announce its first grant/award for 2009-10: VASTA's Dorothy Mennen Research/Development Grant awards of up to \$1000 to fund VASTA members for research or professional development. This is the third time VASTA has been able to offer this kind of grant, thanks to the success of our VASTA Endowment; last year's grant was shared by Debra Hale, Ruth Rootberg and D'Arcy Smith. As part of the ongoing mission of the organization, VASTA is

very pleased to be able to support the profession by providing an opportunity to members for greater professional development.

This award is named for Dorothy Runk Mennen, "the mother of us all," who served as the founding president of VASTA. She organized the voice and speech program for the American Theatre Association in 1968, and in 1986 helped to found VASTA. Dorothy created the voice curriculum at Purdue University where she taught until 1985, and as Professor Emerita she was involved in the classroom climate interactive theatre workshop program. Dorothy continued as a vital member of the VASTA board for a good twenty years into her retirement. Dorothy's spirit of encouragement, vision of inclusivity, professionalism, determination and generosity are at the heart of VASTA's mission.

Dorothy Runk-Mennen

VASTA Members are invited to apply for awards of up to \$1000. Examples of the kinds of projects or professional development opportunities include (but are not limited to):

- attending a workshop with a master teacher to further your development as a trainer and/or artist,
- a small research project related to voice and/or speech,
- subvention of publication of an existing manuscript,
- a travel subsidy to support training or research to cover transportation and or subsistence,
- purchase of equipment to support teaching.

NOTE: We will not be accepting applications to fund electronic equipment and computers at this time.

Applicants for the Mennen Research/Project Grant should submit the following:

1. A 2-page condensed C.V.
2. A 2-page project description, which must include the following:
 - project overview and rationale,
 - indicating the scope and objectives of the project,
 - summarizing the significance of the project to your career;
3. if this is a research project, a brief statement of its relationship to existing research and literature, and outline plans and methods;
4. anticipated dates of the project.
5. A detailed budget for how the money will be spent, based on actual quotes (do not use rough estimates).

In addition, applicants must answer the following questions in the budget document:

1. Do you intend to seek additional support or matching funds for this project? If so, please name other source(s) of funding.
2. If we are unable to fully fund this request, would partial funding encourage institutional support for your project? If we are unable to fund fully, would you prefer not to be funded at all?

Applicants must be VASTA members in good standing for a minimum of 2 years prior to application.

Please submit your materials in .doc or .pdf format via [email to me at e.r.armstrong@gmail.com](mailto:e.r.armstrong@gmail.com) by October 31, 2009.

Eric Armstrong

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THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE AS AN ASSET TO VOCAL THERAPY: A PILOT STUDY

[Ruth Rootberg, M.AmSAT, DLT](#)



As one of three recipients of the Dorothy Mennen Research Grant for 2008, I will tell the behind the scenes story of how I conducted research for the first time since my undergraduate days.

As part of my local marketing, I have, from time to time, sent Dr. Mary Andrianopoulos, (CCC-SLP, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Communication Disorders at UMass, Amherst) materials about the Alexander Technique. Molly Johnson, another Alexander Technique teacher (M.AmSAT) and soon to be PhD in neuroscience (UMass, Amherst), had recently collaborated with Mary on some research. She encouraged me to contact Mary once again. I did so, and suggested we do something on voice and the Alexander Technique. Mary responded with enthusiasm. The three of us met in early September to discuss experimental designs.

The Alexander Technique has been appreciated for a long time on an anecdotal level as a great support to vocalists. I wanted to find out if we could design an experiment that used currently accepted vocal measurements to note differences attributable to the Alexander Technique lessons when given to a vocalist who was diagnosed with muscle tension patterns.

VASTA announced the deadline for grant proposals and I submitted a proposal to cover the cost of private Alexander lessons given to participants

during the pilot study. I was granted half of what I asked for. Concurrently we applied and were accepted to present our research at the Voice Foundation in Philadelphia, June 2009.

To orient us to voice research, Mary invited us to a voice lab on campus. Molly was amazed at the sophistication of acoustic analysis in the voice science world. To measure human movement in her lab the way Mary can measure voice, the neuroscientists have to write their own programs, which can take months. Mary recorded us, and in less than 5 minutes, she had measurements of our vocal quality in a spreadsheet.

In order to conduct research on human subjects through a university, one needs to pass "CITI," the human subject research exam given by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. Passing the test means you have learned the principles of honoring the privacy and dignity of humans who consent to participate in the research. I studied several modules online that included multiple choice questions that needed to be passed before proceeding to the next module. When I had completed all modules, our team could submit our proposal to the UMass IRB (Institutional Review Board).

While we waited for IRB approval, Molly and I tested the design and recording equipment on each other. We concluded it would be important to have a script of specific instructions so that each subject received the same prompts before recording any vocal sounds to be measured. We thought it would be interesting to eventually compare our data to the subjects, but we didn't include it in the research, because we were not naïve to either the experiment, or to the Alexander Technique.

Mary identified an experimental subject diagnosed with vocal tension via the on-campus voice clinic. We then looked for a candidate for the control; it had to be someone of the same sex, height and weight. We found a grad student who in turn was gratified to be part of the research; our experimental subject was 39 years old, and usually the grad student, also 39, was too old to be included in the generally younger crowd of undergrads used at UMass for research.

Finally the day arrived for our first testing. Mary set the recording levels and was in charge of the equipment. Molly gave instructions and, for the experimental subject, the initial Alexander lesson. During the next three weeks the experimental subject received nine private lessons in the Alexander Technique. The post-testing came next. A graduate research assistant assembled the data for us into an Excel file, and then we analyzed the results.

I prepared the 15-minute Power Point presentation and talk, receiving tremendous support from Molly. Power Point combines graphics with text, and the script is usually quite different from the projected word. I had a steep learning curve, especially when it came to adding bells and whistles to the graphs.

Our results are small but gratifying. The experimental participant who received nine lessons in the Alexander Technique showed improvement in several areas, while the control participant did not. These results will become more meaningful if the same trends are found to a statistically significant level with a larger population. Next step: to evaluate and modify the design, and take a larger sampling.

Many thanks to VASTA for partially funding this research.

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TRAININGS RELATE, BUT DO NOT EQUATE

[Joan Melton, PhD, ADVS](#)

In 1985, I was teaching singing and music theory in New York City, heading a music school on the East Side, and tutoring models from Zoli in speech. Then I began to be asked to work with actors on voice, and suddenly I was out of my book. I didn't know what I was doing. Yet, I had acted professionally in a range of venues, and had a Masters in vocal performance and a doctorate in education. None of that, however, prepared me to work with actors on voice. And so began my journey—and career change!



In 1986, a series of events led me to the other coast, where I met and studied with Rowena Balos—who opened my eyes and ears and heart to voice and text. Later that year, I met Catherine Fitzmaurice, whose work immediately became the core of my teaching and my personal practice. Catherine also pointed me in the direction of the Central School of Speech and Drama, London, and in 1989, I went back to school.

In *Singing in Musical Theatre* (2007), Gillyanne Kayes speaks of having to teach classes for eight hours straight when she first went to Rose Bruford, and about winding up in a voice clinic—not because of the way she was singing, but because of the way she was speaking. Her expertise in one area of voice training did not equate to expertise in another. Thus began her journey along a path that changed the direction of her career.

Although there are many common denominators between the training of singers and the voice training of actors, there are at least as many *uncommon* and unique skills that must be understood and mastered before attempting to teach in either area (See sample curricula).

In 2002, at a conference in Salzburg, Austria, I presented a workshop entitled, “Speaking and Singing with the Same Voice.” Johan Sundberg was a participant, and almost immediately asked me a very pointed question. He said (paraphrased) “Are you suggesting that anyone who can speak well can also sing well?” I said, “No, of course not” and continued with a discussion of common denominators among techniques—*ONE VOICE* was still a year away from publication.

Dr. Sundberg’s question was exceedingly well taken, and I’ve thought about it many times since that day. Classical singers spend years of painstaking training and practice to develop the technical skills and artistry required for a career in opera, as a Lieder singer, or as a specialist in New Music. Likewise, musical theatre singers spend a thoroughly focused period of time developing the skills to sing a wide range of material and styles. Jazz singers go through an amazing training process at conservatories, and pop/rock singers learn to handle vocally challenging material in ways that are technically sound and physiologically healthful. So, to suggest that someone who speaks well might automatically have some kind of singing expertise would indeed be absurd.

Nevertheless, what is generally overlooked outside the theatre community is that *actors*—who speak, laugh, cry, scream, shout, wail, and even sing—also go through an extensive training process. “Speaking” to the general public, and even to other vocal performers, is frequently taken for granted as a necessary, mundane communicative vocal activity, hardly worthy of consideration in the same sentence as “singing.” To illustrate, at a national conference of singers several years ago, I attended a workshop in which the presenter said, “The ‘speaking voice’ has a range of approximately a fifth.” And I thought, “*Whose* speaking voice? Certainly not the speaking voice of a trained actor!”

So there are blind spots even in professional circles. There are singing teachers who have never been inside a theatre voice class who will tell you they work with the “speaking voice.” And there are—fewer of these, I think—voice teachers for actors who have never had a singing lesson in their lives, who will tell people to “Just sing!” Would you go into a class and tell students to “Just scream!” In some situations, either of those directives might be acceptable and appropriate. However, in Western culture generally, singing has become such a hothouse plant that emotional traumas often surround the activity, and misuse and abuse are rampant. Regardless of the situation, singing is an aerobic vocal activity, and the teacher who uses it had better know what s/he is doing!

There are teachers who advertise methods that have you “sing like you speak, naturally and easily.” For some people, this will work; for others it will be confusing. “Sing like you speak” is helpful only if you speak well. And, to confuse matters further, you can speak in as many different ways as you can sing—which is news to anyone stuck in the “speaking voice” trap! We can

change the shape of the vocal tract, speaking or singing. We can change the thickness of the vocal folds; we can manipulate the positions of the laryngeal cartilages; we can use more or less twang—indeed, the possible combinations of variables are over 5,000, according to Jo Estill. And we all have a pitch range, potentially, if not immediately available, of at least three octaves—singing, speaking, whining, crying, laughing, whimpering, calling.

Over the past few years I have focused on integrating the disciplines and seeing the connective links among trainings. However, as I observe well-meaning teachers stepping over into territory they do not know, without bothering to train—or even realizing they need to train—I am concerned. By all means, integrate singing techniques into theatre voice classes, and coach monologues as well as songs—if you know what you’re doing. But do not attempt to work out of your book. The human voice is a precious, though resilient instrument, and particularly vulnerable in its role as singer. It can be injured, harmed and even destroyed by a teacher who does not thoroughly understand the dynamics of the particular performance medium.

Sample curricula for singers and singing teachers:

Music Theory – focusing on styles periods from Renaissance to Contemporary
Counterpoint
Composition
Music History and Literature
Italian, German and French diction (classical training)
Art Song, Opera, and/or other Genres
Improvisation – for jazz majors
Piano – including a proficiency exam
Electronic music, ethnomusicology, and/or performance practices
Vocal Pedagogy – including a survey of major singing styles and approaches to teaching
Acting for Singers – in some programs
Alexander Technique – in some programs

Individual singing lessons at least weekly; coaching for recitals and for roles in productions.

Sample curricula for actors and theatre voice specialists:

Voice/Movement:
Anatomy/physiology
Speech, phonetics, accents and dialects
Movement training, e.g., Laban, Suzuki, yoga, Pilates, Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, Viewpoints
Practical work in voice from a variety of perspectives, e.g., Fitzmaurice,

Linklater, Lessac, Rodenburg
Period Styles
Singing for the Actor- in some programs
Stage Combat – in some programs
Microphone techniques – in some programs
Acting – from a variety of major approaches
Theatre History
Text Analysis
Performance classes in:
 Poetic text
 Prose text
 Dramatic text
Acting for film – in some programs
Playwriting and/or directing

Individual coaching for roles in productions.

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