

Teaching Philosophy

My voice teaching is based on the work of Rodenburg, Berry and Linklater (who I trained with at 'The Royal Central School Of Speech and Drama' in London) but I am also familiar with Turner/McCallion, FitzMaurice and Lessac. I prefer to combine all the disciplines to work to the specific needs of the individual student.

My personal training as a voice coach came from a need to develop and strengthen my own voice for performance. Initially having trained as an actor I was aware that my voice was not developed to its full vocal capacity. Studying voice seemed to be the way forward. As a result, my approach to voice training is very much organic to the whole acting process. I would like to believe that, as an actor myself, I am more in tune with the demands placed on the student working towards a career in the professional theatre and the overall learning process required of them.

Although a specialist in the field of voice I believe it to be integral to the other disciplines involved in the acting process. (Movement, character, emotional analysis etc.) I believe voice work should not be studied as a separate entity but needs to be linked with exercises that develop the relationship between the physical and emotional with the voice.

My initial objective to any preliminary work with students is to address all areas of physical tension, to encourage the student to play with sound in order to feel free to release the voice creatively in a relaxed, fun environment and to discover for themselves a muscular awareness through specific exercises. Exercises cover relaxation, posture, centering of the breath and breath support, vocal capacity and freedom.

Whilst developing the above vocal techniques, I then like to focus more closely on the link between the physical body, voice and text. I am qualified in physical training and often use Alexander exercises, T'ai Chi, the disciplines of martial arts, Grotowski or Laban work in helping the students to connect physically to breath work and centering.

Based on the principals of Laban I have been developing my own vocal exercises. Through the use of music and 'free choreography' I like to encourage students to discover contrasting movement qualities regarding weight, time, space and flow. Finally relating this to character work from a physical, emotional and vocal standpoint. These exercises encourage students to explore the links between the psychological state of a character as expressed through the physical gesture, which ultimately reflects on the tone, placement and quality of the voice.

Should it be required I am able to teach a phonetics program developing student's awareness towards the placement of vowels and consonants whilst addressing vocal problems specific to the individual. (Weak 'r', sibilant 's' etc.) This work supports the study of accents. I teach the tools for learning accents using Received Pronunciation as an example and then broaden the field by encouraging my students to apply these tools in the learning of other accents of their choice. Being British, I can be a strong reference point for most British and European accents. I also have a basic grounding in the French, German, (fluent), Welsh and Danish languages.

Finally, I pull the above work together to focus predominantly on text, audition technique and performance. Having performed and directed much Shakespeare I believe my strongest area as a voice coach/acting teacher is in the interpretation of classical text, (specifically, heightened or poetic work.) That, combined with the physical training of Laban, addresses issues of heightened vocal work such as screaming, wailing and shouting etc.

The above is a general description of my approach to voice teaching and I am always flexible to fit around the more specific needs of a college/student as required. Having a Masters in psychology, I am also able to offer further support to students, if addressing deeper emotional issues 'blocking' the freedom of the vocal sound.

The fundamentals of voice work are quite basic to grasp from an intellectual point of view. To understand them in an organic sense is much harder. As a director, actor and voice/movement teacher I believe that when teaching voice the best work results from an understanding of the actor, the creative process and being able to adapt vocal exercises around these specifics. In order to teach voice successfully the more approaches the voice teacher understands the more flexible he/she can be in the teaching methodology and ultimately in communicating it effectively to the individual student.

