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# **Voice: Onstage and Off**

By Robert Barton, Rocco dal Vera

*A Chapter Sampler*

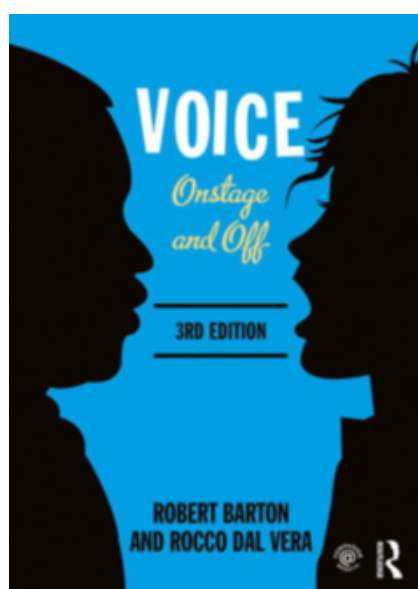


## **A tribute to Rocco dal Vera**

In memory of Rocco Dal Vera, who was a tremendous mentor and advocate for emerging practitioners, and had a boundless generosity of spirit. He was the Head of the Division for Acting, Arts Administration, Dance, Musical Theatre, Opera, and Theatre Design and Production at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. Rocco coauthored *Voice: Onstage and Off* and *Acting in Musical Theatre*, was a columnist for *Dramatics Magazine* and *Teaching Theatre*, and was a founding editor of *The Voice and Speech Review*.

# Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 Owning your voice  
CHAPTER 2 Healing your voice  
CHAPTER 3 Mastering your language  
CHAPTER 4 Expanding your voice  
CHAPTER 5 Refining your voice  
CHAPTER 6 Expressing your text  
CHAPTER 7 Releasing your other voices  
CHAPTER 8 Selecting your system  
CHAPTER 9 Planning your voice future



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# Owning your voice

## CHAPTER 1

*The human voice is the organ of the soul.*

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poet**

*Start where you are.*

*Use what you have.*

*Do what you can.*

**Arthur Ashe, tennis champion**

The book you are holding contains far more than you will be able to cover in a term or even an academic year. This is because *Voice: Onstage and Off* is your lifelong guide to all matters regarding the use of your voice. It will take you far beyond your vocal past and present and well into your future. As various questions or challenges come up during the rest of your training, during your career, and during the full arc of your personal life, you will be able to return to this volume again and again for help.

It may be some time before you are cast in a classical role or required to prepare a Shakespearean monologue for an audition. But when that time comes, you can go to Chapter 6 for help in speaking that material effectively.

It may also be a while before you are cast in a role requiring mastery of a dialect, but Chapter 7 will give you the assistance you need when that day comes.

You may feel as if graduate study is light years away and not even be certain you wish to pursue it. But if and when you do, Chapter 8 will give you everything you need to examine various advanced programs in order to make the right choice for yourself.

Your vocal work may be largely supervised now, but when you are on your own and still want to keep your voice fresh and fit, Chapter 9 will provide you with many choices for working independently.

## 2 OWNING YOUR VOICE

So enjoy whatever introductory work you can handle at present, and take comfort that you can return here repeatedly when you need advice in the future.

*To understand your voice, imagine having another person living within you — all the time.*

**Bernadette Peters, actor**

Your voice is hiding inside a cave. The cave is your body. You will never know your voice as well as your body because there is no photograph, scale, measuring tape, full-length mirror, or zipper to help you. No one will ever kiss, slap, caress, or shove your voice. It hides well.

Can you remember the first time you found out about your height, weight, strength, and motor skills? By kindergarten, you knew who was tallest and heaviest, and who ran fastest. You knew who could draw so that everyone could guess what the picture was. Every year, you learned more about bodies. By now, you have a fairly sophisticated knowledge of your: waist measurement, hat size, energy level, sleep needs, body fat ratio, cardiovascular fitness, muscle tone, and pain threshold — in each case you know or can easily learn how your body reacts. From soccer to calligraphy, you know what you can and cannot do well. Or you can make a fairly accurate prediction. Bodily, you know who you are. But vocally? It is possible you do not yet know yourself at all.

When you've finished this chapter you should be able to:

- Describe your voice in intimate and appreciative detail;
- Recognize the ingredients that make up a voice and be able to identify them in yourself and in others;
- Own your voice without judging it;
- Apply several basic methods for warming up your voice.

### UNIT 1.1 A stranger inside

There are five major reasons why you can have a voice all your life and still not know it.

1. **The voice is elusive.** Not only can you not see it, but you also hear it differently from others. Because you *are* the cave and other people are outside the cave, the voice *you* hear and *they* hear is not the same. It haunts you from its place of hiding. Just when you least expect it, your voice reveals your innermost secrets. It hides from you, but then it suddenly doesn't let you hide from other people. If the eyes are the mirrors of the soul, the voice is its echo. It will suddenly break, rise in pitch, take on an edge, choke, gasp, guffaw, and disappear altogether, revealing far more about how you feel than you hoped to show. It stays always out of sight and often out of control.

*As we open our mouths and words pour forth we reveal the deepest parts of ourselves . . . our fears, our denials, and in some crucial instances our very souls.*

**Patsy Rodenberg, author of *The Right to Speak***

2. **Our society is voice ignorant.** We live in an overwhelmingly body-conscious culture, with almost zero vocal awareness. While people are irritated by unpleasant voices, they often are not *consciously* aware that a voice is the source of that irritation. An interesting study involved professional models who were auditioning for commercials. Videos of a sample group of these beautiful people (who had unpleasant voices) were chosen for the research project. Observers watched each tape twice, first without sound then with, and were asked what was different. Almost invariably, people found the models less attractive *with* sound ("She's not nearly as pretty as I thought at first"), but when asked had no idea why. Some would claim camera angles, lights, or focus had changed, though none had. Most people just don't factor voice into the package. The result is that someone concerned with "attractiveness" may spend mega-hours with a trainer, nutritionist, hair stylist, diet consultant, skin specialist, manicurist, masseuse, wardrobe designer, and even a plastic surgeon yet never stop to consider the voice as an erogenous zone.

*You can spend all day getting ready and then blow the whole thing when you open your mouth.*

**Kathleen Turner, actor**

3. **Our own voices turn us off.** When you to listen to a recording of your voice, you recoil. It doesn't match your self-image. Even if there are elements of this recorded voice you like, it doesn't seem like *you*. It manages to reveal personal shortcomings and insecurities and yet still somehow seem foreign. It becomes a dreaded stranger. You avoid listening instead of facing your fear. You decide that it isn't you on the machine, and whoever it is, it isn't someone you want to be near. You are not alone. Everyone feels this way, even those whom others believe to have exquisite voices.

*The first time I heard a recording of myself I thought they must have made a mistake and substituted the voice of some other silly ninny for mine.*

**Katharine Hepburn, actor**

4. **Voices do magic.** They operate so far below awareness that they are frighteningly powerful. This is why most guided hypnosis is achieved by voice alone. Voice effects us sensorially in the same way touch, the most intimate form of communication, does. With voice, (1) air moves past the vocal folds causing them to vibrate; (2) the vibration causes shock waves in the air; (3) these shock waves ripple out through the air; and (4) the waves reach the ear of the listener, touching and flexing the eardrum. Talking can be as soft as a tickling feather or as forceful as a slamming sledge-hammer. And the recipient is almost completely unaware of how the touch happened. The effect is every bit as powerful as music.

*You are speaking with a musical instrument and . . . while the pen is mightier than the sword, the spoken word is far mightier than the written one.*

**Raymond Rizzo, author of *The Voice as an Instrument***

5. **Voice is contagious.** When someone speaks to you with a thin, nasal voice, you will become tense, breathe more shallowly, focus on your own nasal area, get emotionally

## 4 OWNING YOUR VOICE

constricted, and project these feelings back to the speaker, thinking, “What a nerd!” No one ever seems to recognize the romantic yearnings of the person with a deviated septum. The opposite happens when someone murmurs to you with relaxed, open, chest resonance, low, sultry pitch, and slightly breathy tone. This person makes tax forms seem like love letters. Action and reaction take place below conscious awareness. We have powerful emotional reactions to voices without comprehending why — a fact advertisers exploit to their advantage!

*If you cut off a response, you may be haunted by that response later. In US mental hospitals, the majority of hallucinations are auditory, because people in this culture do not pay much attention to the voice.*

**Richard Bandler, information scientist, co-founder  
of neuro-linguistic programming**

So, you can't quite find your voice, your society doesn't seem to overtly notice it at all, and when you notice it, you are basically stunned and turned off. Voices are hypnotic and frighteningly powerful. What to do? The good news is that every one of these negative images surrounding your voice can be changed to something positive. You can make it all work for you. Elusive? Much, much less so with practice and technique. Ignorance? Others may remain so, but you can develop knowledge quickly and use it. A turn-off? Only until you listen to yourself enough to make peace with your voice. Then you begin to sound pretty good! Magic? Yes, and you can be the magician. Contagious? Once you understand how voice works, you can develop the power to catch, to be caught, or to escape at will. You can develop true vocal freedom.

### UNIT 1.2 Voice baby – starting fresh

There are three important points to remember as you start. First, you need to face the fear and embrace the power connected to your own voice. Do other people judge your personality based on your voice? Sure they do. The word *persona* originally meant “mask” and comes from two other small words: *per* meaning “of” or “by the,” and *sona* meaning “SOUND”! Your personality is the mask you wear in public, powerfully shaped by the way you speak. But **personality** (how you communicate who you are) is not the same as **identity** (how you perceive yourself). What you put *out* is not necessarily what you *are*. Do you fear that changing the way you speak will cause you to lose a part of yourself? Wrong! If you change your voice, you will change the way people *react* to you. You don't need to lose what you had and are inside. You simply expand your options. If you wish, you can become more effective at communicating who you are inside. If you wish, you can hide better. If you're tired of people coming on to you while you're trying to explain their 1040 forms or if you are a great lover with a nerd voice, you may be able to change your whole life!

Second, think of yourself as a voice infant. You have been speaking all your life, but *unconsciously*. Your conscious vocal life begins today. You are a baby in this subject. Let this be comforting. Give the same loving patience we give all newcomers to life, to yourself. This will allow you to laugh at yourself (and your stumbling) with delight instead of derision. It will let

you greet your smallest steps with exultation. If anything you need *more* patience than does a small child, because while you are brand new to the world of voice *training*, you come into it with a lifetime of habits, many of them deeply set. So ease yourself into growth.

Third, do not expect miracles. Being kind to yourself means being kind to your teacher as well. An amazing number of actors sign up for a voice class and are appalled to find their problems are not solved in ten weeks. There are no instant cures. The process we will pursue in this book is that followed by anyone who decides to make a change in their life and then succeeds.

In our society, someone who decides to get healthy usually focuses on the physical or psychological (rather than vocal) self. Those who do well in fitness or therapy (1) start off gaining self-knowledge and acceptance, (2) move into correcting problems, and then, (3) work towards advanced skills and growth, constantly expanding their options. Those who try on the first day to make the Olympic team or leap to spiritual perfection always fail. You are reading this book because you have decided to make a change in your life. You are going to become an actor who uses your voice better, onstage and off.

So stop letting your voice be a stranger. Begin by taking the time to recognize your own vocal past. Feedback has shaped your self-concept, whether that feedback was accurate or not. Your physical history has been captured in photo albums, videos, and growth charts. It may even be represented by various boxes of clothing in the attic. Unearthing the history of your voice will help you to begin to understand how it has grown.

### EXERCISE 1.2.1 MY VOICE HISTORY

1. **EARLY FEEDBACK.** Can you remember the first time anyone said anything to you about your speech? Was it being told to be quiet, to speak up, not to say that word? How did you figure out that whatever popped out of your mouth would not necessarily be accepted? What positive feedback did you receive? What did you decide to try again because it seemed to go over well?
2. **CONSISTENT FEEDBACK.** What have been the most consistent voice responses you have gotten over the years? Positive or negative, what has come up most often? You may try closing your eyes and going back year by year through your life. You will come up with many blanks, which is OK, but it is important to bring back all the feedback because some of it may have *really* left its mark.
3. **TRYING TO CHANGE.** Did you ever consciously try to change your voice? When and why? Were you imitating someone? What made you try? Did you succeed or give up? Did you try more than once?
4. **INDIRECT FEEDBACK.** Were there times when others didn't address your voice directly, but you *suspect* that it was your voice that got to them? Like being told not to be so angry when you didn't feel angry but must have sounded like it? Or being told to stop being meek when you thought you were asserting yourself? When have you been misunderstood or misjudged because of your speech rather than your thoughts or behavior?



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5. ACTING NOTES. If you've been involved with theatre for a while, what are your vocal notes (from your director, teacher, coach, scene partner, or even your mother) most of the time? Be sure to establish both what you feel is good about your voice and what needs work.

The questions coming up in subsequent exercises are tough ones. You could return to these for years and not be quite satisfied with your answers. A sophisticated answer would take a good bit of training. We are not asking for sophisticated answers. All we ask is that you give your best possible conjecture (maybe even a guess) NOW. Your answers will get better every time you return and ask the questions. And you will probably return and probe many times. But the sooner you start wrestling with these issues, the sooner you will know your voice.



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### EXERCISE 1.2.2 MY VOCAL PROFILE

Describe your voice as if it has a personality or nature of its own. Come at it from the following angles:

1. PUBLIC/PRIVATE. How does your speech change in public from what it is in private? At what *point* does a group become large enough to instigate the change? Does private stop beyond one person or are you much the same in small groups? Where do you really begin to feel outnumbered and so alter your vocal choices? Or do groups bring out the best in your voice so that the extrovert in you opens up? Is your telephone voice different from the voice you use in normal conversation? How do you adjust for contact with strangers?
2. EAR/AGILITY. Can you mimic others easily? Can you hear something and recreate it? Are you facile with words and good with sound? Do you have perfect pitch? Was catching and doing voices encouraged in your home? Do you do it for fun? Or is this something you normally avoid/ignore?
3. MOODS. How does your voice change with your mood? Does your sound alter depending on the kind of day you are having? Can others catch this? How radically and in what way?
4. MASKING. How do you try to conceal with your voice? What tricks have you learned to cover up how you're really feeling? Even given the voice's unpredictability, where are you usually successful?
5. REGIONALISMS. Do you have a regional accent? Can people tell where you're from? Can they tell what *kind* of place it was even if they can't identify it?
6. HERITAGE. Does your family's past or history influence your speech? How do its national origins, race, religion, affiliations, cultural background, or socio-economic class enter into your voice? Do you control these influences?

7. AGE. How old are you? How old are you *vocally*? Do callers ask to speak to your parents? Do they call you sir or madam? Is your voice an accurate reflection of your chronological age? Of your spiritual age?
8. GENDER. Are you sometimes mistaken on the phone for someone of the opposite sex? Why? Do you feel your voice is insufficiently “manly” or “womanly”? Is the opposite true? Do people respond so strongly to your sexual stereotype that they assume you are far more traditionally feminine or masculine than you feel? Is your voice an intriguing, androgynous, confusing mix?
9. STRANGER ON A RECORDING. When you hear yourself on a recording, what exactly have you heard? If the voice on the machine isn’t what you expected, how is it different? How does it violate or reinforce your self-concept?
10. AN ACTING VOICE. Are you aware of differences from your private and even your public self when you act? Not conscious *characterization* decisions, but rather unconscious alteration in your vocal life when you hit the stage?

Again, jot down the answers that seem to have validity. Write sentences you could demonstrate in class that show you in each of the circumstances above. Trust yourself to sense which influences are strong.

The next step is to go back over your voice history and profile and confront what may be influencing you but shouldn’t. In Robert’s family, rewarded behavior was to speak in a carefully modulated voice; punished behavior was raising your voice. Robert got constant notes early in his work as an actor about needing to project. It was only when he realized that proper behavior in the Barton family dining room had nothing to do with what is needed in a thousand-seat theatre that he was able to let his voice out. Now you would think that anyone would know this, and in fact, if you had asked him he probably would have given the right answer: “Well, ummm, you need more volume in a theatre than in a dining room, right?” What he didn’t realize was that the old home habit was creeping *unconsciously* into the theatre. It didn’t work just to try to speak *louder*. He needed to track the specific bias (“People with class do not speak loudly”) that had influenced his choosing a small sound.

Rocco was a boy soprano, so when his voice changed, he fought to have the world’s lowest, most manly voice, because “real men” don’t have high voices. He forced himself into a narrow, constricted sound, severely limited his singing range, and took years to let go and let the high notes back in. He needed to *believe* that great male voices use pitch. What’s your story?



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**EXERCISE 1.2.3 TRACKING THE BLOCKS**

1. STILL WITH ME. Make a list from the categories in Exercises 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 of those influences you feel are still strongly with you. If nothing comes, you may want to start with a simple list of rewarded and punished behavior in your home, neighborhood, school, etc. and see where voice comes up.
2. IN THE WAY. Decide which ones may be getting in your way. Circle them, remember them, and be alert for the next situation in which you might want to stop and free yourself.
3. OH, YEAH. Be alert for other influences that did not come up right away but may pop into your memory now that the subject is there. Keep your list where you can add and review.

Note: don't try to place blame. People who influenced you to speak one way or another probably had no idea you would want to be an actor someday and were mostly (even if ignorantly) trying to help you to get on in life. Your voice isn't anyone's fault.

While sweeping the past, it is too easy to throw out everything, so take a moment to validate what is working and why. What has contributed to your vocal strengths? Honor the parts of your voice that work for you.



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**EXERCISE 1.2.4 KEEPING THE GOOD STUFF**

1. STILL WITH ME. Make a list of positive influences that are still strongly with you.
2. WANT THIS. Decide which ones you want to keep on board as a basis or firm structure for your future vocal work. Circle them, remember them, and be alert for the next situation in which you might want to stop and use what you know you have going for you.

**UNIT 1.3 Vocal contradictions**

As teachers, we constantly confront contradictions, such as an empowered feminist who uses a Barbie Doll voice and seems puzzled (and enraged) when she is not listened to, or a strong, virile male who has a tiny boy voice that, when he acts, makes him suddenly seem like a wimp. They have developed themselves in a certain direction without bringing along their voices.

*All I could think of was (in a Mickey Mouse voice) "I am the vampire Lestat!" I mean, he has the highest, reediest voice in the world!*

**Julia Phillips, original producer of the film *Interview with a Vampire* on hearing that Tom Cruise had been cast in the title role**

*I don't think I've ever fallen under the spell of an actor when the voice wasn't a big component. How is Tom Cruise going to say those lines? How is he going to exert the power of Lestat? Over and over in the book I say Lestat's voice was purring in my ear or that the voice was like roughened velvet, and here's this actor with no voice!*

**Anne Rice, author of the novel *Interview with a Vampire***

Disregard for the significance of voice is endemic in Hollywood. But it often doesn't much matter on film, because the visual effect is so much stronger than the aural. Projection is not an issue, and post-production sound treatments can work miracles: for example, the issue with Tom Cruise's voice was solved to some extent by the use of corrective Clearsound for electronic enhancement, which added reverb to Lestat's voice. It is possible to have an extremely successful film career without having much of a voice. However, when such stars venture into the theatre, the reviews are often devastating. Once they get onto a stage to speak or act, their voices come out to sabotage them in ways they probably never experienced before.

*The film actor hardly needs the voice. (He hardly needs the body, except to show himself off as a marvelous specimen.) The stage actor certainly needs all the vocal control, breath control, and vocal techniques available — he needs them all.*

**Laurence Olivier, actor**

Your voice may simply never have progressed along with your spirit and your mind. It may have gotten frozen at some point and failed to evolve. It may have gotten lazy. Or it may have moved in a different direction from the rest of you, so it sends off messages about the *other* side of you, the one you thought was gone, the dark, bad, scared, or unworthy side. We all are afraid that we may sound a certain way. One of the best ways to deal with this is laughter!

### EXERCISE 1.3.1 VOICES FROM HELL

1. Pick a word that describes what you are afraid your voice sounds like, either because you used to be this way or because it is a side of yourself you rarely acknowledge.
2. Finish the sentence: "I hope I don't sound like a \_\_\_\_." Here are some possibilities: "twit" — "bimbo" — "git" — "douche bag" — "sot" — "jock" — "clot" — "flake" — "pig" — "hick" — "nutter" — "snob" — "asshole" — "tool" — "berk" — "toff" — "actor." Yes, you can cite the names of people you don't admire, too as in "I hope I don't sound like \_\_\_\_."
3. If you're working with a group, write the term on a piece of paper or up on the board. Have someone collate.
4. Are there shared fears? These should be dealt with first. The class should try to identify what a "bimbo," or whatever, sounds like. Describe the components that seem to make up such a voice. With this and other exercises in this chapter, don't worry if you have the correct terminology. Just find some way to describe it that works for you.



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5. Those who feel they can do a pretty good bimbo should demonstrate. Last of all, the people who wrote the term should demonstrate and say why they think there might be some of that characteristic in their sound.
6. Now is the time for honest feedback. Is this merely a fantasy, or is there some truth in it? Is the actor's fear not noticed by others? Is there some other unfortunate cultural stereotype with which this person's voice flirts? Everyone should take a turn.



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### EXERCISE 1.3.2 VOICES FROM HEAVEN

1. Pick a word that describes what you *wish* your voice sounded like.
2. Finish the sentence: "I hope I sound like a \_\_\_\_\_. Here are some possibilities: "genius" — "hottie" — "brick" — "caring human being" — "take charge type" — "leader" — "real person" — "actor." You can also cite the names of people whose voices you admire.
3. If you're working with a group, write the term on a piece of paper. Have someone collate.
4. Decide which vocal characteristics are most coveted by the class as a whole and which are simply your personal aspirations. Let these images shape the positive forward-reaching part of your work.

Nothing in these exercises is ever nearly as bad as you think it might be. Even if you find out that you *do* sound like a dweeb, you'll discover that simply acknowledging it, then owning it, frees you. It is no longer a fear. It is simply a fact. And it is a fact that you are perfectly capable of changing. Or it is a fact that you are perfectly capable of accepting. If your voice needs to catch up with the rest of you, you have come to the right place.

## UNIT 1.4 Basic equipment

The hiding element of your voice can also be dealt with by three kinds of tools. We will pursue projects involving each of them:

1. A small hand **mirror**, which will allow you to see some of the tongue, teeth, mouth roof, and lip action involved in articulation. You may sometimes wish to work with a full-length mirror as well, but mostly you will focus on where you shape sound. You may also like to use the front-facing camera on your phone. After you get to know the organs and surfaces involved in speech, flossing may be less boring!
2. A small, portable **recorder**, which fits in your pocket and can be carried everywhere. You may also wish to work with video to observe your body/voice integration, but there is much value in spending time just listening to something that sounds like what others hear.

If you spend ten minutes a day (five recording and five on playback) for two weeks, you will start to own your voice at a much deeper level. That voice will begin to sound tolerable, and you will move swiftly ahead. Some systems allow you to hear yourself through headphones *while* you're speaking. That can teach you a lot. Record yourself in various contexts, talking out loud to yourself, shooting the breeze with roommates, reading a text (why not this one?), running lines, rehearsing a monologue you know well, doing cold readings from unfamiliar plays. Aim for an assortment of off- and onstage recordings.

Some of the material in this book is also recorded and easily downloaded from the book's website. Work along with the recordings whenever possible until you have mastered the exercise.

3. **Material** to work with. Many upcoming exercises will require classical and contemporary monologues or scenes to explore. Material on which you have already worked in other contexts is fine, because you are familiar and comfortable with the words, so you can address your voice and not fuss over what to say — just how to say it.

These three tools can do a lot to help you overcome the feeling that your voice is a stranger. If you can regularly see it, hear it, and work it with familiar words, you are on your way to knowing it.

#### EXERCISE 1.4.1 CHECKING IT OUT

Take a small mirror and just play with it reflecting your mouth for a while, noticing details you may have missed. Now study your lips, look at your teeth, note the alveolar ridge (the dental ridge at the front of the roof of your mouth behind your teeth), your velum or soft palate (the surface at the back roof of your mouth), the uvula (the soft palate's tail), and your pharynx (just behind the uvula). Just out of view are your glottis, epiglottis, larynx, vocal folds, esophagus, and trachea. There will be more on each of these in Chapter 2, but for now, check out everything you can see in order to familiarize yourself with the territory.

#### EXERCISE 1.4.2 RECORDING TIME

Pick a specific time of day for an entire week and record yourself in seven different contexts. Pick from the suggestions above. Don't erase anything, just move on. Each day, listen to the full recording. At the end of the week, listen to all seven sessions. It really won't sound so bad. You're getting used to it.





### EXERCISE 1.4.3 AUDITION UPDATE

A very common format for a prepared audition is for participating actors to present two strongly contrasting monologues, one of them classical, for a total of four minutes or less, sometimes with the option of adding a short excerpt from a song. This is a useful format for your first presentation in this class, because it requires considerable range and is a way of checking in or updating your classmates on where you are at this moment in your progress as an actor. It has the added benefit of giving you experience in an audition format you will probably wish to master. We recommend that the classical piece be verse, not prose.

1. Record yourself while you present and also the person(s) you may be imitating (see next section, Unit 1.5).
2. Even though the focus of this assignment is vocal, be sure to fully stage and commit to the physical lives of your characters so the voice comes from a totally organic characterization.
3. Restrict any feedback to the vocal components. It will be quite tempting to want to critique the audition as an audition, which can cause considerable digression. Save that kind of debriefing for outside of class.
4. Save this recording and keep referring back to it all term as you progress.

*I'm starting with the man in the mirror.*

**Michael Jackson, singer**

## UNIT 1.5 Imitators – a voice mirror

A human vocal mirror is better than a looking glass. It is one of the best ways to study what you do with your voice. Work with a partner or, better yet, in a foursome. In a group of four, couple A studies couple B and *vice versa* all term. You get two vocal mirrors, and you get to bounce your ideas off another observer/listener. The two (or more) of you will learn to **imitate** each other, so each of you can experience some of your vocal tendencies reflected back by someone else. It can be remarkably helpful to have someone *else* studying your voice and in turn to study theirs. Your listening skills and objectivity can take a giant leap. If you are outside a class situation, pick someone who makes you comfortable but doesn't let you off the hook, exactly the kind of person you might choose to play racquetball or run with daily, who will be fun but make it hard for you to miss. If you are in class, the best partners are those who have known you the longest, who have had the most opportunities to observe you in multiple contexts. Partner exercises and opportunities to imitate will be salted throughout this book.

Imitation is not just the highest form of flattery. It offers big pay-offs, because you get valuable information while honing your observation and auditory skills. Your sense of detail and nuance increases. Because you want to get the imitation right (let's face it, you don't want to come off as inept, plus you want your partner to get value so she will give it), you force yourself

to perceive with greater accuracy. You get to give generously to another actor in an honest way and are able to come to grips with your own tendencies. You learn to offer and to take potentially devastating information in a humane and accepting way.

*Imitation is love. So with an open heart and mind, I freely imitate other ways of being to gain greater understanding and appreciation of our world.*

**Christian Swenson, performance artist, creator of *Human Jazz***

Bring your recorder to class whenever your “subjects” present work and record them. Also record them by interviewing them, when they raise their hands and ask a question, when they are hanging out in the hall — in as many different contexts as possible. If your class does all the dialect, verse, elevated speech, and character voice assignments in later chapters, record your subject doing each and nail not only this actor’s basic voice but the actor discovering new voices as well.

After some close, intensive study, you will be ready for the following class presentations.

#### EXERCISE 1.5.1 MY SUBJECT IN PUBLIC

1. Enter the stage as your subject, with full physical characterization supporting the vocal.
2. Introduce yourself to the audience the way your subject would.
3. Make seven statements that are characteristic of the subject. Try for statements that capture this person in different circumstances and moods.
4. Make sure that you have demonstrated your subject’s tendencies in tempo, rhythm, articulation, pronunciation, pitch, volume, word choice, nonverbals, and quality.
5. End it the way your subject would, and exit.
6. Discuss as a group where the imitation was right on and where the observer needs to study more.



#### EXERCISE 1.5.2 SUBJECTS IN A SCENE

If you are working in fours, the A couple performs the B couple. If you are working only in pairs, person A and B play each other.

1. Pick a time, place, and circumstance where these two would meet and experience a strong conflict. It is important that they disagree strongly over some issue, so if you are Siamese twins you will need to explore where you are least matched.
2. Be sure to employ all the influences on the vocal life of the subject. Let those influences be strongly present in the scene. Let them feed the conflict. If one actor is free and loose of tongue, dropping four-letter words as casually as breathing, for





example, and the other is cautious to the point of using only elevated euphemisms to describe any basic body function, use this as a crucial part of the scene.

3. Be sure to record yourselves in rehearsal and offer strong, direct advice on how to get the voice better.
4. If either of these actors tends to change radically when they act, try to insert the actor doing scripted material at some point in the scene to demonstrate this alteration.
5. When the scene is over, share with the group what you learned as a performer and what you learned seeing “yourself” performed.

## UNIT 1.6 The voice recipe – nine ingredients

Just as there are certain ingredients used in every cake or wine, there are nine crucial ones for voice. These can be isolated and studied separately to help you to mix them better later. They overlap, intersect, and influence each other, but you can also work on them individually. The basic categories by which voice is analyzed can help you to move past cultural stereotypes (i.e. “voices from hell”) into a sense of how the voice actually works. If you come at your voice from these nine angles, it is not overwhelming.



### UNIT 1.6.1 *Tempo – your voice in time*

*Other terms used: pace, rate, speed, momentum*

Tempo is one of the easiest to recognize and hardest to change. Is your speech fast, slow, medium or variable? Does it change by circumstance or within any given statement? Do you speak, for example, very quickly for the first few words of each sentence and then s — l — o — w w — a — y d — o — w — n for the last few? You can see the many possible combinations beyond speedy or sluggish. Under what circumstances do you change? Most of us speed up when tense or excited, so you probably increase your tempo when you act or are trying to explain why you came in five hours later than you promised.

*You can tell how nervous I am by how fast I am talking.*

**Catherine Deneuve, actor**

UNIT 1.6.2 **Rhythm – your drum beats**

*Other terms used: beats, stress, pulse, emphasis, phrasing, pause, flow, idea groupings, accenting, stressing, length of sound*

If a drummer were following you around trying to get your vocal habits, when would he hit the drum, how hard, and with what part of the stick? Is your attack on words generally light or heavy? Do you stress certain ones? Do you never stress at all? Where do your pauses fall? Between sentences? After commas? Or in unexpected places like between adjectives and nouns or adverbs and verbs? ("I really . . . think we should all wear weird . . . clothes to the party.") Does the overall effect seem smooth, jerky, choppy, erratic, drawled, fluid, ploddingly predictable, or charmingly variable?

The great acting teacher Constantin Stanislavski maintained that tempo and rhythm were the most important aspects of acting; that if you get a character's timing you're almost there. Yet most of us get trapped. It is especially tough if you are a slow, heavy, predictable type and your character is a mercurial, lightning-swift magician of a speaker. An amazing number of rehearsal problems are solved once you find the tempo-rhythm of the character. Alas, we all have a strong tendency to impose our own rhythm on the role. Yet after wrestling with great frustration over certain speeches, you soon recognize that they just need to go faster or have stronger stresses and then it all falls into place.

Once you free yourself from your habitual timing, you can move on to the power of actually controlling time.

*One of the most useful effects I ever learned was holding spaces between words. When you . . . create that . . . empty space . . . in a . . . room, you create something . . . that needs to be filled. You have control. Everyone sits on the edge of their seats, trying to fill it in, but you are the only one who can fill it. It's dynamic. It's physical, not magic, but it appears to be magic!*

**Annette Benning, actor**

**EXERCISE 1.6.2 MY TEMPO/RHYTHM**

Describe your voice in each of the following categories.

1. **TEMPO.** What is your basic rate? If variable, when do you speed up or slow down within a sentence? Write a typical sentence using the example above to show visually how your tempo shifts.
2. **RHYTHM.** Write a new sentence with your stress/unstress patterns. Go back and underline where you tend to place particular weight. Write another typical sentence that shows your pattern of pausing. Draw lines between the words where you pause. Go back and do the same with the sentence above. Be prepared to demonstrate if asked.



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### UNIT 1.6.3 **Articulation – shaping the sound**

*Other terms used: diction, clarity, precision, intelligibility, definition*

Your articulation has little to do with how you pronounce a word (that comes up next) but how precisely, carefully, and crisply you speak each sound in the word. You may totally mispronounce a word and yet articulate it beautifully. You may be accurate in your pronunciation and drop the ball on articulation. This concerns mumbling, slurring, and stumbling or sluggish speech versus a precise forming of sounds. It also relates to how easily precision is accomplished. Many actors have been told to *work* on articulation, so they produce labored, self-conscious, plodding, joyless, very hard-working sounds, unrelated to conversation. Think of articulation drills the way a musician does scales, endlessly repeating exercises to improve speed, clarity, definition, and control.

When actors are told that they cannot be heard in a theatre, the problem is often not that they haven't been speaking loudly enough (*audibility*) but that they have not been articulating clearly enough (*intelligibility*). Articulation has all to do with consonants, and if they are clear it is often unnecessary to push the sound behind them.

*To a certain extent, vowels are the emotional component in word-construction and consonants are the intellectual component. The consonants create effects more than emotions.*

**Kristin Linklater, author of *Freeing the Natural Voice***



### UNIT 1.6.4 **Pronunciation – standard, regional, or eccentric?**

*Other terms used: dialect, accent, class, level of speech*

There is an accepted way to say any word in any place at any time. In Oregon, we pronounce our state's name O-ruh-gun, but many outside our region do not. Americans often pronounce Gloucester with three syllables, rhyming with *Rochester* instead of with *roster*. Is there really only one right way to say the name of a state or region? Well, there is an *appropriate* way, which is how the natives prefer it if regional, or how the dictionary presents it if universal, or how your character would say it if in a play. Pronunciation is not how precisely the word or sound is spoken but how close or far it is from what is expected. There are regional and ethnic accents, as well as pronunciations unique to any group or person. Robert persisted in calling soldiers "shouldiers" for much of his life. Rocco knew with absolute certainty that pillow was "pellow" and measure was "maysure." Pronunciation is discussed in terms of how close or far it is from what is considered standard. Most likely "errors" are to place emphasis on the wrong syllable, to add or subtract a syllable, or to substitute one vowel or consonant sound for another. While pronunciation and articulation are often confused, basically pronunciation is hitting the right chords, while articulation is hitting them skillfully.

*He could not frame to pronounce it right. Therefore, they took him and slew him.*

**The Bible, Judges 12:6**

**EXERCISE 1.6.4.1 MY ARTICULATION/PRONUNCIATION**

1. **ARTICULATION.** Describe yourself on a scale between crisp and slurred. Which sounds or words are difficult for you to articulate? Which sounds have you been told you drop or adjust? Yes, this is difficult, and you may need to ask others for help, but give it your best shot. You have to start somewhere.
2. **PRONUNCIATION.** Is your speech non-regional? If not, what are the influences that alter it? What sounds do you substitute for standard? Do you have any idiosyncratic pronunciations unique to you?
3. Write sentences to demonstrate your style. Typical personal statements, lines from plays, or quotations from others will serve.



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*Since studies show that most of us spend three-fourths of our time in front of the television set, why don't we all speak the same unaccented Network English? And where did all these Stepford Announcers come from? Or did they all have to undergo Accent Surgery as part of their contracts?*

**Alice Steinbach, author, columnist**

**UNIT 1.6.5 Pitch – notes on your sheet music**

*Other terms used: range, pattern, melody, inflection, intonation, intervals, median notes, key notes*



Is your voice higher than, lower than, or close to most others? Speechwise, are you a tenor, soprano, alto, baritone, bass, or wandering pilgrim? Do you lock your pitch in one place or use many notes? Most of us think that our voices are lower than others hear them, and that we are using more notes than others perceive. Most of us need encouragement to explore the top, bottom, and varying possibilities between, to free ourselves from the monotonous. We unconsciously place restrictions on the number of notes we use. To some extent, pitch is determined by the size of the vocal folds. Men's are often longer and thicker than women's, so their pitch is often lower. But all speakers have the capacity to use many more notes than they tend to employ.

Pitch is also analyzed in terms of exactly *where* it changes. If you always go up at the end of a sentence, you make everything sound like a question and come across as insecure and approval-seeking. If you always go down, everything sounds like a final pronouncement, a curtain line, a statement to end all others and not open to negotiation. You may also change pitch within a word, inflecting a vowel to produce interesting variations. Changing pitch on a vowel can make you seem sly, satiric, or playful. If your pitch changes are extremely predictable, you have a **melody pattern**. You hit the same notes on the scale over and over like an old familiar tune.

*She that was ever fair and never proud,  
Had tongue at will and yet was never loud.*

**Iago from William Shakespeare's Othello**





### UNIT 1.6.6 **Volume – filling space**

*Other terms used: projection, size, power, intensity, dynamics, audibility, loudness*

If you had a volume knob on your instrument, how skillfully and sensitively would you play it? Could you blow your listener out of the room if needed? Could you force an audience to listen intently because you have gone down to a careful stage whisper? Do you sense when a change of volume is needed? Voices thought of as having power can fill any room effortlessly. Some voices are simply larger than others, although this has as much to do with where the actor resonates as it does with simple loudness or softness. Are you sensitive to the needs and comfort level of each listener? Is your volume appropriate, predictable, adaptable, adjustable? Do you rely on volume to express emotional intensity? Are you pushing?

As noted earlier, in most theatre spaces, somewhat greater volume is needed than seems comfortably conversational for the actor, so the challenge is to keep the feeling of the speech easy and natural while getting the sound to the back of the auditorium. Almost everyone has a tendency when raising volume to automatically raise pitch as well. A rise in pitch communicates tension, so there is a built-in trap here, and the actor is always working on filling the space without getting stuck in their higher register. Recognition of the need to practice control in these areas is hardly recent.

*Volume, pitch, and rhythm these a speaker must bear in mind. Those who do usually win the prizes in the dramatic contests.*

**Aristotle, philosopher, theatre essayist (384–322 BCE)**



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#### EXERCISE 1.6.6.1 MY PITCH/VOLUME

##### PITCH

1. Where is your basic pitch compared with other people?
2. Describe your speaking voice as if you were a singer.
3. Which part of your range do you most often fail to use?
4. Write a sentence that is a typical statement of yours. On the line below, mark your pitch pattern, either with musical notes or as a wavy graph line. Do this with another sentence as well.

##### VOLUME

1. Where is your amplifier usually set?
2. Describe your sensitivity/adaptability to spaces and listeners.
3. Describe your biggest challenge with volume.
4. Illustrate your tendencies with a sentence (you may recycle old ones from previous exercises) by writing soft volume in small and loud volume in big letters.

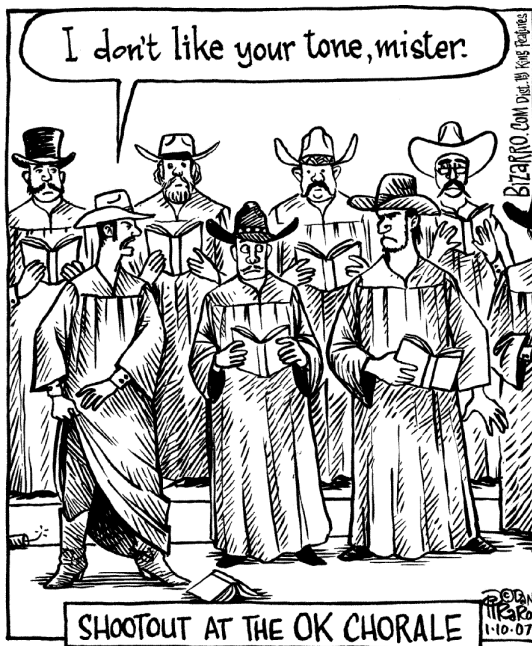


Figure 1.1 Shootout at the OK Chorale.  
Cartoon by Dan Piraro

### UNIT 1.6.7 **Quality – creating the sound core**

*Other terms used: tone, texture, feeling, resonance, placement, timbre*

If there is a single most important ingredient, quality is arguably it. When you produce sound it resonates or vibrates inside you, and where it resonates changes the sound itself. The overall impression or *feeling* of your voice comes from its quality. There are more ways to describe quality than any other ingredient. Voices are named according to:

1. Their **impression** on the listener (hard, mellow, harsh, husky, strident, light, dark, thin, full, hollow, muffled, bright, dull, flat, clear, tremulous, whiny).
2. The dominant point of **resonation** (nasal, sinus, pharyngeal, throat, mask, chest, head-voice).
3. Some **physical state** (breathy, hoarse, nasal, denasal — having a cold) that the listener perceives.
4. An **abstract** image (deep purple velvet, chocolate pudding, dry sherry) that tries to capture the voice's essence.
5. A **nonhuman** sound (like a musical instrument or sizzling bacon), based on the effect the voice has on the hearer.

While it may seem daunting that there are so many possible qualities, the very range of possibilities makes this area the ultimate actor's playground, the richest possible area to mine. Most of us get stuck in one resonant quality, instead of exploring all the tones we have inside. Every one of these qualities is available to you. When you resonate in several places at once, your voice can take on rich overtones, much like musical harmonies.

*Quality is that element which differentiates even voices of identical pitch and intensity.*

**V. S. Anderson, voice and speech specialist**



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### EXERCISE 1.6.7.1 MY QUALITIES

1. Where do you think you resonate most often?
2. From the terms above, describe your voice (1) by what others hear — the impression it makes on the listener; (2) by the dominant point of resonance; (3) by a physiological state; (4) in abstract terms (car, pet, color, fabric . . .); (5) as a musical instrument (remember you have an entire orchestra of stringed, woodwind, brass, and keyboard instruments to choose from); and (6) as some other nonhuman sound.
3. If your voice moves between several qualities, name them.
4. Which other qualities of voice are easiest for you to reproduce?
5. Which elude you?
6. Pick a sample sentence and if necessary punch up or exaggerate your fundamental quality.

*I collect words — they are sweets in the mouth of sound.*

**Sally Gardner, author**



### UNIT 1.6.8 **Word choice – your own lingo**

*Other terms used: language, vocabulary, idiom, slang, syntax, argot, jargon, vernacular*

Any statement that you make can range from guarded to blunt, formal to casual, elegant to profane, simple to complex, humorous to serious, flippant to earnest, depending on the words you pick. The size of your vocabulary determines the number of choices open to you. You will play characters whose word options are wider than your own, so you need to rise to the level of speech that the playwright has provided the character. Most of us, especially early in the morning, do not speak in brilliant rhymed couplets. You'll also play characters whose choices are narrower than yours, and you will need to understand the frustration they feel as they grasp for phrases that continually elude them.

How flexible are you? Can you indulge in witty, erudite repartee, if that is what is going on in the room? Can you get down and dirty if need be? Do your word choices easily change worlds? Do you pick up on fad or buzz words or tend to avoid language vogues? Do you use the jargon of a particular group (mechanics, computer nerds, slackers) no matter what subject is under discussion? Do all your words have meaning, or do idle phrases ("It was like . . . you know . . . so, just, like . . . well . . . really, really awesome . . . you know") take the place of punctuation?

Not only do you choose words, you also choose to place them in a certain order (called **syntax**). “To get to school, that’s where I’m off to,” versus “I’m leaving for school now.” Shakespeare was a master of syntax inversion. “Jack drew his sword” might be rendered as “His sword Jack drew” or “Jack his sword drew.” Are you flexible enough to embody syntax unlike your own? Do you enjoy exploring unusual sentence constructions?

You may speak in full sentences or in captions, like President George H. Bush: “The abortion thing. Big problem. Lotsa anger.” Since, in your onstage life, the playwright has made these decisions for you, the job becomes figuring out *why* she chose these words for this character, and then making them seem the most natural choices in the world when you speak them. What euphemisms do you use for sex, death, and relieving yourself? Did your great-uncle “kick the bucket,” “buy the farm,” or “go to his heavenly reward”? Do you excuse yourself to go to “the little girl’s room” to “powder your nose” or go to “the can” or “the loo” to “take a dump” or “park a coil”? If you disapprove of something, do you call it “inappropriate,” “bogus,” “hot mess,” “jank,” or “lame”? Word choice can show or hide a huge amount about of the real you and can be worn just like a mask.

*The true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them.*

**Oliver Goldsmith, playwright**

#### UNIT 1.6.9 **Vocal nonverbals – snap, crackle, and pop**

*Other terms used: noises, sounds, interjections, exclamations, paralinguistic vocal segregates*

We . . . ahhh . . . tend, as we’re (sigh) gathering our . . . ummmm . . . thoughts to . . . mmmm . . . (burst of nervous laughter) add a lot of . . . errr . . . noise . . . (clicking teeth), you know? Nonverbals are sounds that are not words, as opposed to verbals, which are. They fill our vocal lives, adding interest or suspense, letting us pause or stretch while we think of the next word or idea, helping to express an emotion that won’t come out in words, or just allowing us to let off steam. Groaning, growling, moaning, harrumphing, yawning, buzzing, humming, chirping, chuckling, purring, whistling, smacking, whimpering, popping, and sighing sounds all qualify, as do the above stalling sounds. Teeth clicking, audibly inhaling or exhaling, giggling, and shrieking also qualify. Think of yourself as having your own built-in percussion section, which accompanies and helps to shape your speech. If the main drummer simply hits where you emphasize syllables (your rhythm), what do the cymbals, castanets, bells, timpani, chimes, gongs, tambourines, maracas, and triangles (or for that matter the xylophone and glockenspiel!) do? What do your snares, congas, and kettledrums offer for support? When emotions run high or when you are feeling the live animal in you, you’re particularly prone to adding pure sounds of laughter, joy, fear, anguish, or anger (and erotic frenzy) between the words. Sometimes the noises take over and wipe out the words altogether.

Most of us use nonverbals liberally in offstage life, many too liberally. While some schools of actors (the Marlon Brandos and Mickey Rourke) seem to use more nonverbals than words, the rest of us, for some reason, get stingy and conservative onstage. The playwright rarely provides the nonverbals, because they are a crucial aspect of spoken, not written, language and are hard to get down on the page. So, it is up to you to find them. Acting seems too clean,





too uncluttered to be real without them, even in the classics. The work looks too slick and rehearsed. Adding them gives any scene a huge dose of reality. And there are many moments when we find a sound far more powerful (and honest) than a word

*In the twentieth century, mounting distrust of language has given rise to the nonverbal gaining priority in creating response in an audience.*

**Jacqueline Martin, author of *Voice in Modern Theatre***



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### EXERCISE 1.6.9.1 MY WORDS/MY SOUNDS

#### WORD CHOICE

1. Describe the kind of language you most often choose.
2. What are the circumstances in which it is the most difficult for you to adjust your word choice?
3. Do you have any favored slang or personal idiom?
4. How does your syntax vary from standard subject followed by predicate sentence structure? Give an example.

#### NONVERBALS

1. List all of them that you regularly use.
2. Go back and number them, with #1 being the most frequently employed.
3. Write a sentence, inserting your nonverbals.
4. Which sounds do you hear others employ but don't use yourself?

As you put all the voice ingredients above together, you create something expressed the way only you can manifest it. The way you shape each thought through a sense of what's important and what's thrown away, of where to breathe, what to stress, what to stretch, and where to rush on to the end. You can take any written statement, reveal the rich subtext within it, or alter it significantly by how you embody it

*Deep down inside I wanted to say it the way I was thinking it: "So . . . HELP me, God."*

**Bill Clinton, US president, on delivering the closing oath of his inaugural vows**



Figure 1.2 President Bill Clinton being sworn in at his 1993 inauguration. Courtesy, William J. Clinton Presidential Library

### EXERCISE 1.6.9.2 MY VOICE RECIPE

Take each of the nine categories considered so far. Come up with no more than one to three words to describe yourself in each and the shortest possible phrase to demonstrate. Devise a two-minute presentation, where you describe how to put together your voice. Talk about the product as a cook might discuss chocolate chip cookies or vegetable soup, as if you are sharing a recipe that will produce a tangible result. Use the material in Exercises 1.6.2.1 through 1.6.9.1 to help you to combine the following list of “ingredients” into a vocal concoction.

#### 1. TEMPO

What is your basic rate?

If variable, when do you speed up or slow down within a sentence?

Write a sentence using the example above to show visually how your tempo shifts.

#### 2. RHYTHM

Write a new sentence with your stress/unstress patterns.

Go back and underline where you tend to place particular weight.



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Write another typical sentence that shows your pattern of pausing.

Draw lines between the words where you pause. Go back and do the same with the sentence above. Be prepared to demonstrate if asked.

### 3. ARTICULATION

Describe yourself on a scale between crisp and slurred.

Which sounds or words are difficult for you to articulate?

Which sounds have you been told you drop?

### 4. PRONUNCIATION

Is your speech standard, regional, ethnic, or something else?

If not, what are the influences that alter it?

What sounds do you substitute for standard?

Do you have any idiosyncratic pronunciations unique to you?

Provide sentences to demonstrate (either typical personal statements, lines from plays, or quotations from others will serve here).

### 5. PITCH

Where is your basic pitch orientation compared with other people?

Describe your speaking voice as if you were a singer.

Which part of your range do you most often fail to use?

Write a sentence that is a typical statement of yours. On the line below, mark your pitch pattern either with musical notes or as a wavy graph line. Do this with another sentence as well.

### 6. VOLUME

Where is your amplifier usually set?

Describe your sensitivity/adaptability to spaces and listeners.

Describe your biggest challenge with volume.

Illustrate your tendencies with a sentence (you may recycle old ones from previous exercises) by writing soft volume in small and loud volume in big letters.

## 7. QUALITY

Where do you think you resonate most often?

From the terms above, describe your voice by what others hear:

- by a physiological condition.
- in abstract terms.
- as a musical instrument.
- as some other nonhuman sound.

If your voice moves between several qualities, name them.

Which other qualities of voice are easiest for you to reproduce?

Which elude you?

## 8. WORD CHOICE

Describe the kind of language you most often choose.

What are the circumstances that are most difficult for you to adjust your word choice for?

Do you have any favored slang or personal idioms?

How does your syntax vary from standard subject followed by predicate sentence structure? Give an example.

## 9. VOCAL NONVERBALS

List all of those you regularly use. Then go back and number them, with #1 being the most frequently employed.

Write a sentence, inserting your nonverbals.

Which sounds do you hear others employ but don't use yourself?

**Alternative assignment:** Randomly assign one of the nine categories we have just covered to each participant. Then have each person share their sample sentences or phrases as examples of their typical usage. Be bold and fun-loving about sharing your own tendencies. Unexpected bonus: the more mannered you are, the easier this assignment.

**UNIT 1.7 Your voice compared with your classmates' – the voice awards**

While this next exercise may seem potentially unpleasant, we can assure you that we have tested it with many different groups. All of them report having a great time. For those working in a class, it gives a sense of perspective and a chance to get outside your own voice and to consider the entire group. Numerous students say that they have been able to accept their vocal characteristics for the first time through this exercise, because of the healing power of humor. Remember that laughter is the great lubricant of life. In numerous cases, students have somehow managed to be in denial about tending to be strident or nasal or even resonant until being selected as the "most" by their classmates. Even if they suspected the tendency on their part, it is quite possible that they did not realize they had developed it more than others in class. For some, the knowledge was there, but they were waiting for confirmation before being motivated to take action. Once they had accepted the "award," not only didn't it seem so bad, but most were also able to move swiftly to change if they so chose. This exercise is also an excellent way to make certain you understand all the terms in the last section. To vote intelligently, you must comprehend each category.



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**EXERCISE 1.7.1 THE VOICE AWARDS**

1. Someone in class open this book and arbitrarily pick a short paragraph to read aloud. Everyone in the group takes a turn reading it. Listen for the differences.
2. Pick a topic on which everyone can expound. Each person has twenty seconds to describe, for example, "The weirdest thing that happened to me last week," or "Who I think is the hottest human alive and why."
3. If you have not recently heard each other perform scripted material, have each person present a short monologue or, better still, two strongly contrasting monologues (as in Exercise 1.4.3).
4. Now take ballots home and vote for each other in the following categories. You may vote for yourself. You may vote for the same person many times. As with any awards ceremony, sweeps are always possible:

TEMPO AWARDS: Fastest — Slowest — Most Varied — Most Consistent

RHYTHM AWARDS: Most Predictable — Heaviest Contrasts — Most Fluid — Least Expected Pauses

ARTICULATION AWARDS: Most Crisp — Most Slurred — Least Consistent — Most Labored

PRONUNCIATION AWARDS: Most Standard — Most Unusual — Most Regional

PITCH AWARDS: Highest — Lowest — Most Use of Range — Least Use of Range — Most Melody Pattern

VOLUME AWARDS: Loudest — Softest — Most Varied — Most Space Aware — Least Space Aware

WORD CHOICE AWARDS: Most Formal — Most Casual — Most Slang — Most Unusual

NONVERBAL AWARDS: Most Vivid Laugh — Most Stalling Sounds — Least Use — Most Unusual

QUALITY AWARDS: Most Mellow — Most Nasal — Huskiest — Breathiest — Most Strident — Most Harsh

5. Add other awards if you like, pick hosts and presenters, and find tacky awards. Things that are really bad for the throat are good, as are treats where at least the first four ingredients are all forms of sugar. The teacher or a teaching assistant should collate the ballots.
6. Open envelopes and cheer for the winners. Give a brief acceptance speech that is *extremely* mellow, nasal, or whatever it is you win.

Use the information you get to grow. Some important factors to consider as you debrief: What if you received some awards that seem to contradict each other? What if you received none at all? Which awards were you expecting but didn't get? What were the biggest surprises? How close was your own ballot to the award winners themselves? What does this say about your ear at this point? How can your knowledge of the "mosts" and the "least" in your class help you to listen more carefully in the future?

**Alternative assignment:** If you are working alone, you could still benefit from filling out a ballot based on your perception of any group (co-workers, club members, etc.) of which you are a member, since it raises your powers of observation and perception.

*Your voice is a very powerful weapon. When you are in tune with the cosmic breath of heaven and earth, your voice produces true sounds. Unify body, mind, and speech, and real techniques will emerge.*

**Morihei Ueshiba, founder of the Japanese martial art of aikido**

## UNIT 1.8 The cave – your voice's home

Your body is the mixing bowl or oven where the ingredients blend and bake. You should consider the following aspects of the body.

**Body concept:** How great or distressed you feel about how you look can strongly influence any sound you make. To what extent are you at peace with your body? Or are you always trying to adjust, hide, or ignore some part of it?

**Posture:** How you stand, lean, tilt, and sit changes sound. Where you are centered, how aligned your spine is, and how collapsed, twisted, or asymmetrical or closed-in your body is in repose can block or free the passage of air and stop or release the free flow of sound. The relationship of your head to your torso is particularly crucial to this connection.



**Expression:** Any habitual way you place your face, such as jutting your jaw forward, flaring your nostrils, sucking in your cheeks, or pursing your lips, will influence your speech, because you must always undo or alter this expression in order to completely shape certain sounds. Your facial muscles could be fighting you or helping you.

**Breathing:** the capacity to take in air swiftly and deeply and then let it out slowly and unobtrusively is important to acting, particularly in long, demanding monologues. If you now inhale and exhale almost exclusively in your upper chest or thorax, your breath is shallow. If you breathe down to your abdomen, it has greater depth. Some knowledge of your habitual patterns will help to shape your goals for expansion.

*The first question I ask myself is: Does this actor have any breathing difficulties? Not where or how he breathes, but can he breathe?*

**Jerzy Grotowski, theorist, director, actor trainer**



### EXERCISE 1.8.1 THE CAVE'S EFFECT

Go back over your answers to each of the voice ingredients and consider ways in which your body may directly influence your choices. Try to identify the specific effect that your body concept, posture, expression, or breathing habits have on each of the nine ingredients. Add these to your list of what to observe and consider for change.



### EXERCISE 1.8.2 COMPARING NOTES

If someone has been assigned to imitate or observe you and you them, switch papers (from your Voice Recipe assignment, Exercise 1.6.9.2), and share any differences of opinion. How was your own perception of you different from that of your imitator? Listen carefully to determine where your impression of your voice may differ from that which others have.

## UNIT 1.9 Ownership – an end to denial

For better or worse, your voice is the one you've got. Your voice can be improved, but you won't progress until you own what you have now. You could deny it, just as you could deny that you're fat, paranoid, lazy, or stubborn (or svelte, centered, industrious, or flexible) no matter how much accumulated evidence may have told you otherwise. Some of the information now emerging is not what you might have hoped. Your voice is so much a part of you, and yet has been outside your daily consciousness, that it is somewhat like having a long-lost relative show up at the door. You may be embarrassed at how the relative dresses, belches, or wipes his hands on the tablecloth, but that doesn't change the fact that he's yours. True friends are those who love you unconditionally — in fact they love you partly *for* your faults, quirks, and peculiarities, because they all make you *you*. Take this attitude towards your voice. You need

to get to know it, accept it, and love it for what it is. Once that has been accomplished, you will know what you absolutely need to change. And you will know what you can live with just fine. The next set of exercises help to give your voice a concrete representation, something that can be put on the wall or the refrigerator, and something with a name.

### EXERCISE 1.9.1 DRAWING AND COLORING YOUR VOICE

1. Take out a sheet of paper and draw your voice. Never mind any logic. Of course you don't know what it looks like. You may decide to make it a cartoon figure, a stick figure, an abstract blob, an animal, a car, or some combination of things that don't normally go together. Just let your imagination run wild. Trust your intuition.
2. Find some crayons or markers and color what you've drawn, or start over using the colors this time to create the shape.
3. If you feel extravagant, you could add construction paper, glitter, or cotton balls, anything that might appear at the grade school art table.
4. Bring your masterpiece to class and share it, describing why you think you made some of the choices that you did. Then take it home and place it where you will see it every day.

### EXERCISE 1.9.2 NAMING YOUR VOICE

1. Give your voice a name. Consider names for a few days, probably more the way you would name a pet or a boat than a child, something that allows you to feel affection toward it without making extraordinary demands.
2. Aim for a name that has some of what your voice is now and some of what you want it to become. Look at the picture for inspiration. What should be the name of that *objet d'art*?
3. Keep this image in mind when you interact with your voice in future activities. Share your voice's name as the last part of your presentation after you have shown your drawing.

### EXERCISE 1.9.3 TALKING TO YOUR VOICE

1. Go one step further into whimsy and address your voice occasionally as you walk past the painting: "Hey, BUBBA, how's it goin'?" "Yo, LUCILLE, soundin' good today, babe." "Good morning, REGGY, how's the best, most brilliant voice anybody ever had? Hmmm?"
2. Talk to the voice inside you when you are out and about in the world, possibly when you want something: "Now SLICK, this show lasts three hours and I want you to stay strong for me, OK?" "Hey, SHEILA, you're soundin' kinda hoarse. Everything all right?" "BORIS, if you don't give out on me tonight I promise you a full day's rest tomorrow. Deal?"
3. Don't be altogether surprised if you get an answer.

Thus far our work has been about recognition and acceptance. We have focused on offstage tendencies, only using onstage ones when they contrast with those you use in life. You may have gotten some feedback that made you anxious to change, but remember, you do not *need* to change at all. Many actors have distinguished (and lucrative) careers with limited, mannered, predictable vocal lives. In fact, some of the most beloved actors are easy to mimic and narrow in vocal scope. But why not try to have the most unlimited, unpredictable, and awesome voice on the planet? Why not try to open your range of expression before deciding to narrow it? Why not give your voice every chance to expand your horizons?

It is also important not to lose what you have. Robert used to work for an acting program that had a class in “blue collar,” a course designed to help students play factory workers and grocery clerks, because the actors had worked so hard on getting rid of those qualities in order to equip themselves for the classics. They had loosened their roots and, without meaning to, had lost touch with their heritage. So it became necessary to relearn. The point is to *add* new options to your repertoire without *losing* old ones. You don’t need to get rid of anything as you add. You simply want more *control* over your options — the power to take any given voice component into or out of play, at will. And you want your whole past to be readily at your disposal, because at some time it will serve you well.

As you find out how many parts of the voice can stand to grow, don’t get discouraged. You can do this. You will do it! Will you ever be able to have the kind of voice that gets a review like this one?

*He isn’t the most compelling looking king in the world, but when he speaks he sounds like an avenging angel. With an instrument like that he can play anything!*

**Kenneth Branagh actor, as described by critic Pauline Kael**

Remember that everyone starts somewhere. Kenneth Branagh did not emerge from the womb sounding that way. In fact, here are the “avenging angel’s” notes from his voice teacher after giving his first Shakespearean speech in his first year at college:

*Horrendously stiff jaw there, Ken. That’ll lose you all vocal flexibility if you’re not careful. You’ve got to work on that sibilant “s.” Also those dreadful dark Ls are letting you down badly. Don’t want to be a “regional” actor, do we? The hollow back is really, really a problem. It’s affecting your rib control and contributing to that annoying sailor’s roll walk you’ve developed. I think also if you can manage to even out those vowel sounds, you’ll do yourself a big favor. Can’t have kings sounding like peasants, can we?*

OK, next?

**Kenneth Branagh, quoting Robert Palmer of  
the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art**

Does your king sound like a peasant? It may be that all that stands between you and the throne is a few years of training.

## UNIT 1.10 Electronic voices

In addition to being onstage, on film, and off, we now experience voices in yet another dimension — disembodied electronics. You may not have thought much about your own voicemail message, heard largely by your circle of friends, but as part of this ownership process consider the impression it may leave on a perfect stranger. And what if that stranger is an agent, casting director, producer, or anyone else who may be considering the possibility of offering you gainful employment?

*With voicemail and cold calls, they can't see you, so the tone of your voice is extremely important. You need to sound authoritative, engaging, and extremely animated.*

**Frances Cole Jones, communications consultant and author**

Hopefully, you have already figured out that those extended musical interludes or comedy riffs that seemed delightful at one time can irritate callers in a hurry. If you were to work closely with consultants like Frances Cole Jones, you could be asked to consider a range of possibilities to get your outgoing message to work for you. You might be guided to try recording while standing and smiling in order to give your voice warmth and energy. If that does not do the trick, you would be asked to experiment with both posture and facial expression, including trying to look at yourself in the mirror and interact with your own image positively while speaking. You might be instructed to inhale before you start recording (not once you are recording), which can assist speakers in resonance and support. You would certainly be told to eliminate any ambient background noise and to triple check that any key information (such as an alternative number to call) is crisply articulated and slow enough that there is no chance at all for misunderstanding. Your photo (if you are an actor) and resumé (if you are anyone in the job market) are hugely important, because they often precede you and are your first impression. The same is true for your recorded voice.

### EXERCISE 1.10.1 ELECTRONIC ANALYSIS

1. Listen carefully to any audio components that connect you with the outside world, not just your own outgoing phone message but recordings that are parts of any sites you may have.
2. Go through the voice recipe one ingredient at a time and ask yourself if that one is where you want it to be in terms of a first impression.
3. For at least four ingredients, do some tweaking and playback to determine if the adjustment makes the sound closer to who you want to seem to be.
4. Experiment with the techniques in the paragraph above to determine which may produce a positive impact.
5. Listen to messages of friends and ask yourself, if you did not know this person, would the message in any way mislead you, or does it reflect them positively and accurately?
6. Make a point when you first encounter someone by phone message or call, and then meet them later, to analyze how close your initial impression was to the total person.



Already you know your voice better. You are ready to expand your playground, add new tricks to your bag, and open up new vocal possibilities. That is what the rest of this book is about. You are embarking on a great adventure that will probably make you *more* you and reawaken your sense of joyous discovery as you unearth all the voices inside you, waiting to be released. Throughout all that follows, remember that it is the love of shaping sounds that is the core of an actor's growth.

*If you speak words with affection and penetration, then you have a chance of becoming a great actor.*

**Constantin Stanislavski, actor and teacher**

### UNIT 1.11 Warming up your voice

Now that you have more of a relationship with your voice, it is time to nurture that relationship. True ownership involves taking care of what you own. Your voice is a sensitive instrument, and while it need not be coddled, it does require warming up before being stressed by intense or aggressive use. We might get by in our daily lives without any warm-up, but the vocal demands of an acting career are just as extreme as the physical demands put on an Olympic gymnast. A routine warm-up can get you mentally focused, muscularly limber, emotionally available, and vocally responsive.

The warm-up series that follows is a good place to start. In the next chapter, we will deal with more long-term ways to nurture your voice, but for now we will focus on preparing it for immediate challenges. As you gather experience with the subject you will want to adapt this series to focus on specific issues, or to tailor it to prepare you for a certain kind of role or challenge. It may look like a lot of material, but it should take no more than fifteen minutes to do the whole routine at first and as little as five once you have it down. It's a good idea to practice it before any acting class, performance or rehearsal.



LISTEN

#### EXERCISE 1.111 VOCAL WARM-UP

1. **THE PRUNE.** Lie on your back with your arms and legs uncrossed and loose. As each area of the body is named below, tense it up while keeping everything lower on your body loose and relaxed. The tension will accumulate, moving from head to toes, before you finally let everything go and float from the release. Each tensing is more effective if you imagine you are tightening that area of the body to protect yourself from some shock.
  - a. First, tense all your *facial* muscles inward toward the center of the face, as if it were rapidly withering and drying up like a prune.
  - b. Tighten the surrounding *skull* as if it were suddenly locked in a vice.
  - c. Shoot the tension into the *neck* as if it were in a brace and frozen in place.
  - d. Grip the tension into the *shoulders*, locking at the shoulder joints. (Remember, everything below the *shoulders* is still loose.)

- e. Tighten the *upper arms* — both sets of biceps and triceps.
- f. Tense at the *elbows*, locking the elbow joints.
- g. Shoot the tension into the *lower arms*.
- h. Lock the *wrists* as if they were tightly bound.
- i. Tighten the *palms* of the hands as if catching a ball.
- j. Draw the *fingers* halfway into a fist that will not complete itself but remain suspended and partly closed.
- k. Tighten the *upper chest* and *back*, then the
- l. *Stomach* and *lower back* as if protecting against a blow.
- m. Tense the *hip joints*, which are then locked.
- n. Tense the *groin* and *buttocks*.
- o. Stiffen the *upper legs*.
- p. Lock the *knee joints*.
- q. Draw the *lower legs* taut.
- r. Lock the *ankles*.
- s. Stiffen the *feet*, extending the *toes*.
- t. Point your toes at the wall opposite you.
- u. Final position: Pull up with the center of your body toward the ceiling, so that your torso lifts off the ground and your body is supported only by the back of your head, your shoulder blades, and your heels, as if your whole body were drying up like a prune. Hold; then
- v. Release, letting it all go, as if you're sinking into the floor or floating in the air, but in no way confined any more by gravity. Relax and savor the sensation of easy released floating.
- w. Repeat the entire exercise more quickly, remembering to keep everything loose until its turn: tighten face, head, neck, shoulders, upper arms, elbows, lower arms, wrists, hands, fingers halfway into fists, upper chest and back, stomach and lower back, hip joints, groin and buttocks, upper legs, knee joints, lower legs, ankles, feet, point toes; pull body up towards ceiling; release; and savor.

2. **THE DRAGON.** As you float, relaxed and easy, begin to observe your breath. Note the rate, depth, and ease of the way your body breathes itself, without needing to change the breath in any way. Feel the incoming breath warm your body. Imagine yourself to be a resting dragon with fire breath that gently warms you. What parts of your body are involved with the breath? Can you feel your lower ribs and back warming and moving? Easily float your knees upward and place your feet flat on the floor in a comfortable position. Feel the small of your back stretching out and your spine elongate. Imagine your spine is thick hot syrup that has splashed on the floor and is now spreading slowly and easily in every direction. Do you notice any change in the breath?
3. **THE ACCORDION.** Continuing in the same position, imagine your spine as an accordion or concertina, stretching to its full length but still undulating gently and under



no pressure. Imagine air whirling gently around each of your vertebrae as they all ease apart. Imagine that your head is miles away from your tailbone as the two ease gently in opposite directions. Note the depth and expansiveness of your breathing.

4. **THE BEANSTALK.** From your position on the floor:

- a. Roll easily to one side, pull your knees into your chest, and roll over onto your knees.
- b. Squat back on your heels, curled in a ball with your knees in your chest. Feel the small of your back expand and contract as you breathe.
- c. Begin to grow from this position like a beanstalk. Place your hands on the floor, and keeping your head low, straighten your legs, lifting your hips up.
- d. Hang over from the waist with your knees relaxed and very slightly bent. Feel your spine lengthening downward. Keep your head, neck, and arms loose and limp. Don't hold your breath.
- e. Slowly, easily, begin curling upward, floating each vertebra of your spine up into line with the one underneath. Be sure to let the head, shoulders, and arms remain limp, keep breathing, and don't grip the buttocks or abdominal muscles.
- f. When your spine is fully vertical, float your head up onto your shoulders. Think of your head as a balloon floating high above the rest of your body, which hangs comfortably from the balloon. Keep your knees relaxed, feeling your breath deep in your body as you relax your abdominal and buttock muscles. Imagine that your feet are many, many miles away from the balloon. You should feel that your posture is terrific but was achieved without effort and can be maintained without strain.

5. **FULL BODY YAWN.** Stretch yourself into a huge full body yawn, luxuriously expanding out in all directions.

6. **LUNG VACUUM**

- a. Drop over again and let your spine hang easily as in position 4d.
- b. While hanging over, fully release all the air in your lungs, exhaling as completely as possible — and then even further. Imagine that you need to rid your lungs of harmful fumes and replace them with clean air, but that it will work only if you're totally empty. (If this is being done as a group, each actor should proceed individually at his or her own rate with no group coordination.)
- c. Make sure that your footing is solid, with your knees slightly bent. Roll back up, floating your spine back upon itself as before, but without breathing in. Keep air out as long as you can manage it. (Note: Do not try to do this in sync with others in the group. This is not a competition, and lung capacity varies even among those who are similarly fit.)
- d. When you're all the way back up, effortlessly float your elbows above and in front of your shoulders. Let the rest of your arms be slightly bent and limp.

Then allow the air to sweep in, feeling it pour almost to the end of your fingertips and toes. Drop your arms and breathe out easily.

- e. Take a moment to restore the natural rhythm of your breathing. Repeat the Lung Vacuum sequence at your own rate.

7. **NEUTRAL VIBRATION.** Stand relaxed and easy. Feel your jaw relax open, with your lips slightly parted and your tongue relaxed and touching the back of your lower teeth. Soften your knees; relax your abdominal and buttocks muscles. Begin an easy sound on any pitch, using the vowel sound “UH” as in *hut*. Feel this as a vibration rather than listening to it as a sound. Observe that you can focus the vibration by removing any breathiness, and thus feel more vibration. Let this come out at an easy volume — don’t push. Breathe easily and deeply as often as you need to. Note the parts of your body where you feel the vibration: Chest? Back? Abdomen?

8. **STRETCHING.** Continue the neutral vibration throughout this next series.

#### HEAD

- a. Keeping your head facing forward, gently tilt it toward one shoulder. Think of keeping your neck long, not pinching the side closest to the shoulder but opening and lengthening the opposite side. Repeat to the other side.
- b. Turn your head as far to each side as possible, looking back over your shoulder.
- c. Gently dip your head in an arc: side, forward, and up the other side several times. (Don’t drop your head to the back, and remember to keep your jaw loose and open, and to maintain the neutral vibration throughout.)

#### SHOULDERS

- a. Lift your shoulders as high as you can. Then, let go and drop them. See if you can get a second release as well by letting go of any inadvertent holding. Repeat.
- b. Stretch your shoulders forward and back, then in circles, being sure to reverse directions.

#### RIBS

Maintaining the vibration, place your right hand on your hip, stretch slightly forward and up and across to the right, reaching out with your left hand as far as you can. Remember to breathe. Don’t hold your breath. Repeat twice to each side.

#### FACE

Stop the neutral vibration. Stretch your face by exaggerating the action as you repeat “EE” as in *heed*, “OO” as in *hoot*, “AH” as in *father*, and “OO” again. EE — OO — AH — OO. Start slowly, then build up speed.

LIPS

Burr your lips while sirening your voice as high and low as you can.

TONGUE

- a. Keeping the tip of your tongue touching the back of your lower teeth, push it curling forward as far as you can. You’re trying to get the deep back part of the tongue as far up and forward as you can. Start this slowly, then flex it more rapidly.
  - b. Roll your tongue on the words: breeze: bRRRRReeze — print: pRRRRRint — grab: gRRRRRab — crisp: cRRRRRisip — drip: dRRRRRip — trip: tRRRRRip.
  - c. Stick your tongue out and write your name in the air with the tip. Make a different sound as you do each letter.
9. **HUM.** With your lips together, teeth apart, and tongue tip lightly touching the back of the lower teeth, hum gently, feeling the vibrations in your face. Move the hum throughout your whole range, from the cellar to falsetto and back again randomly. Roll down through your spine, hang over, and roll back up again while humming through your range.
10. **INTENSIFICATION.** Pick a note in your mid-range. Using the vowel “A” as in *had*, start as softly as you can and slowly intensify the sound to about *half as loud as you might be able to make it*, then slowly return to very soft. Repeat this on various pitches scattered throughout your range (be sure to include your falsetto).
11. **FINISH.** Roll down through your spine and quickly come back up again. Do a full body yawn with sound.

Do a brief self-inventory. What feels different now that you’ve completed this process? Do you sound different? Has your posture changed? Has your mood shifted? Are you more awake? What is your energy level?

**Table 1.1** Warm-up key

WARM-UP

- 1. **THE PRUNE:** lie on back; tense body from top down; hold; release; savor; repeat.
- 2. **THE DRAGON:** incoming breath warms your body, knees up, feet on floor; feel ribs, back, and spine warm; spine long and melting.
- 3. **THE ACCORDION:** spine undulating gently.
- 4. **THE BEANSTALK:** roll over, squat, feel small of back expand with breath; grow up by lifting hips, roll up spine, head floats up like balloon.
- 5. **FULL BODY YAWN:** Stretch in a huge full body yawn, expanding in all directions.
- 6. **LUNG VACUUM:** hang over from waist; exhale completely; roll up; float elbows up; allow air in; drop arms; rest; repeat.

## WARM-UP

7. **NEUTRAL VIBRATION:** stand; mouth open; vibrate on “UH” as in *hut*.
8. **STRETCHING:** (while vibrating) **head**, tilt to shoulders, turn to sides, dip in arc; **shoulders**, up/drop, forward/back, circles/reverse; **ribs**, reach forward, up and across body, change sides, repeat; (stop vibration) **face**, EE-OO-AH-OO; **lips**, burr and siren through range; **tongue**, curl tongue forward in pulses, roll tongue on words like brrrreeze, write name in air with tongue.
9. **HUM:** siren through range, roll down and up spine while humming.
10. **INTENSIFICATION:** on “A” as in *had*, on variety of pitches, stretch voice from soft to medium loud and back.
11. **FINISH:** roll down and up spine; full body yawn with sound.

Could you lead this warm-up? Of course! Take turns leading, and later adapting and changing this warm-up. Work with a partner if you like. You can’t claim to really know an exercise until you can pass it on.

Table 1.1 is a condensed version of the warm-up with just a few key words to help you to remember the sequence. Make photocopies of this. Put one in your wallet, paste another in the cover of your script, anywhere handy so you can grab it and never have an excuse for not doing a warm-up.

## UNIT 1.12 Mini warm-up



OK, we lied. You might genuinely have the excuse that you have very little time or are in a public space where you are reticent to call attention to yourself by getting down on the floor, swinging through space, and making highly conspicuous sounds. For example, if you are waiting near the back of the theatre for your turn to audition, you might wish to avoid distracting or disturbing those who are auditioning ahead of you. In such cases, we recommend the following Berlitz Mini Warm-up for Busy People in the New Millennium, which can be done sitting in a chair.

## 1. PRUNE

Progress from face through toes in the same sequence as above. This time you will probably end up somewhat bent into your center as the tension accumulates. End up with your shoulder blades pulled back and finally lifting up on balls of feet. Then release and sit completely relaxed.

## 2. DRAGON/ACCORDION

Imagine that your tailbone sinks into the chair below you as your head eases up and forward out of your torso and your spine undulates freely. Take three deep breaths, allowing your spine to elongate further on each, air seeming to whirl around each vertebra.

## 3. BEANSTALK/LUNG VACUUM

Dip forward in chair while blowing out air, ease back up to full seated position, holding air out until you must inhale, feeling as if air goes all the way to the tips of your fingers and toes.

## 4. NEUTRAL VIBRATION/STRETCHING

You can keep your volume quite low while performing the sounding parts of these exercises.

Relax your jaw (massaging it if needed) while uttering the “UH” sound. Continue the “UH” with your head tilting to each shoulder, then turned around to each side, and finally raising and dropping your shoulders.

## 5. AWAKENING THE ARTICULATORS

- a. Repeat EE-OO-AH-OO three times, allowing the lips to stretch fully.
- b. Make the BRRR sound while allowing your pitch to go up and down like a roller coaster.
- c. Let your tongue explore the area outside your mouth and then spell a word of your choice with it.

## 6. YAWN-SIGH-HUM

Do each of these soothing activities in sequence, repeating until you feel a sense of relaxation and freedom from vocal tension.

**UNIT 1.13 Other short warm-ups**

If you are particularly pressed for time and space, do a personal inventory or diagnostic regarding what you feel you need most to be relaxed and ready vocally. If you feel tension in your neck and shoulders, select head rolls and shoulder lifts. If your jaw is particularly tight or clenched, spend time massaging it gently while encouraging it to drop and open up. Once you have mastered the warm-up sequences above, get in the habit of determining where you feel the greatest need for and benefit from a particular activity, then focus on that.

**Terms to remember**

<b>articulation</b>	<b>phrasing</b>	<b>rhythm</b>	<b>vocal nonverbals</b>
<b>identity</b>	<b>pitch</b>	<b>syntax</b>	<b>word choice</b>
<b>melody pattern</b>	<b>pronunciation</b>	<b>tempo</b>	
<b>personality</b>	<b>quality</b>	<b>volume</b>	

## Summary

You have examined five reasons why the voice seems so elusive and have devised a strategy for getting to know it better. This includes (1) accepting that you are a vocal infant and treating your voice with loving patience; (2) exploring your own vocal history; (3) creating a current vocal profile of yourself; (4) tracking vocal blocks as well as positive influences; (5) facing vocal fears and contradictions through laughter; (6) employing basic equipment — mirror, recorder, and familiar scripted material — to help you to see and hear the organs of the voice; (7) becoming a vocal mirror, imitating at least one other classmate and being mirrored and imitated in return; (8) breaking the voice down into nine basic ingredients for deeper understanding; (9) putting these ingredients back together for your own unique vocal recipe; (10) placing your voice in comparison with those of your classmates; (11) examining the influencing effects of the cave in which your voice lives; (12) making your voice more tangible by drawing it, naming it, and even talking to it; and (13) becoming more aware of the impact of your recorded voice on first-time listeners. You have learned to have complete ownership of your voice by beginning to take care of it, by warming it up effectively prior to challenging use.

By approaching the voice from so many perspectives, yours will no longer be a stranger.



## CHAPTER 2 HEALING YOUR VOICE

<b>2.1 The Voice Doc and the Voice Shrink</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.2 Vocal health – caring for your voice</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.3 The Voice Shrink: vocal use – how behavior affects voice</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>2.4 The Voice Doc – a medical perspective</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>2.5 Healing breathing – the source of sound</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>2.6 Healing tempo – your voice in time</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>2.7 Healing rhythm – your drum beats</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>2.8 Healing articulation – vocal dexterity</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>2.9 Healing pitch – notes on your sheet music</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>2.10 Healing volume – building a bigger voice</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>2.11 Healing quality – finding the sound core</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2.12 Owning anew</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Terms to remember</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>108</b>