

Editorial: What is New in Voice Training?

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(New) Voice Studies

Voice has returned to academic discourse with renewed force. 20th-century philosophical and critical debates generated important questions around speech, vocality and listening (particularly through the works of Lacan, Derrida, Merleau-Ponty, Ihde, Barthes and Kristeva), but the first two decades of the 21st century have witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of publications taking voice as their main area of concern and enquiry (Connor 2000, Cavarero 2005, Dolar 2006, among others). In the arts and humanities, voice-related publications in areas such as music and opera studies, ethnomusicology, literary studies, cinema studies, sound studies, theatre and performance, gender studies and dysfluency studies have been increasing in number and reach.

A similar plurality now marks the way voice is practised in performance, particularly in its entanglement with new media, new scenic and everyday architectures as well as new hybrid genres and aesthetics. Voice pedagogy a few years back may have presupposed the staging of vocality through canonical poetic text, contemporary scripts or musical theatre productions as the student's destination beyond training. This is no longer the case. The voicemap of contemporary performance regularly includes and requires a rich heteroglossia of languages, dialects and registers (see, for example, Robert Lepage's [Lipsynch](#), debbie tucker green's [Random](#) or Chan E. Park's [bilingual pansori](#)); technologically amplified, spliced, looped, lipsynched and modified vocalities (from [Miriama Young](#)'s compositions and installations or Complicite's [The Encounter](#) to [Marv Radio](#)'s performances); or, gender fluid and non-binary approaches to vocalisation (as in the new musical [BULLISH](#) by Lucy J Skilbeck, Taylor Mac's [24-Decade History of Popular Music](#) or [Contralto](#) by Sarah Hennies). The aspirational voicer at the heart of voice training imaginaries may still be a

Shakespearean actor or Broadway singer, but can equally be [Laurie Anderson](#), [Pamela Z](#), [Kate Tempest](#) or [Reggie Watts](#).

The emergent field of voice studies situates itself at the juncture of these practical and theoretical advances and advocates for research in and through voice that is markedly praxical, international and interdisciplinary in scope (see Kreiman and Sidtis 2013, Thomaidis and Macpherson 2015, Eidsheim 2015, Frühholz and Belin 2018). These studies have invited us to listen to voice anew: voice as that which encompasses and exceeds textuality and linguistic meaning-making; voice as embodied and materially intersubjective; voice as both individual and political, affective and ideological, semantically potent and pragmatically interpellated, demandingly present and abjectly haunted—as simultaneously knowable and perpetually undefinable.

In bringing the concerns of this new inter-discipline to bear on performance studies, this issue of *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training* proposes a timely re-examination of voice in performer training. The literature on voice, theatre and pedagogy is, of course, vast. In the case of *singing*, it is largely dominated by paradigms appropriate for operatic and musical theatre performance. In the case of *speech training*, areas that have been systematically explored include the pedagogies developed by an influential generation of mid-twentieth-century, UK- and US-based speech trainers—and, to a lesser extent, the voice practices pertaining to (post)Grotowskian lineages or the integration of first-wave somatics into voice work. While drawing impetus from these significant insights, the purpose of this special issue has been to lend an attentive ear to the transformations such established pedagogies are currently undergoing as well as to less widely circulated and emergent methodologies.

In other words, the issue asks: *What is new in voice training?*

New(?)

Two incidents that took place during the preparation of this issue might be helpful in listening-in to the reception of what is considered ‘new’ by the voice training community.

***Incident 1:** An intercultural voice studies pedagogue from overseas, whose work is located between near-extinct European traditions of polyphonic singing and Indigenous modes of knowledge through orality, approaches me after a seminar, having read the call for papers, and asks: ‘Are you sure that “new” is the right term for what you’re looking for? I mean, I understand why you ask the question, but at the same time don’t we recirculate and re-discover much of our knowledge about voice technique and training? You and I have noticed that there is a move away from anatomy- and physiology-based trainings towards ecological, vibratory and intersubjective pedagogies. But this is definitely not new. This is something that indigenous communities always knew.’*

***Incident 2:** I am attending the one panel on voice during the annual conference of a national theatre and performance association abroad. All three papers engage voice as material practice, question accepted understandings of vocal embodiment, and attempt to rewrite received histories of vocal practice in their geopolitical context. Two of the papers advance direct critiques to mainstream vocal pedagogies of the Anglophone world—not only because they no longer seem entirely relevant to the voice tutors’ studios, but mainly because of the colonial histories they have come to represent. The third paper completely does away with these practices and practitioners and is emphatically interested in a situated, regional understanding of theatre voicing. The panel is co-chaired over Skype by a UK-based voice trainer. After all three panellists have concluded, and following a lively Q&A, he is the last one to respond: ‘I was having a very interesting discussion the other night with one of the master trainers mentioned by our presenters, whose work has been absolutely influential to a*

lot of us. All I think I am trying to say is: by criticising these teachers' work, are we not in danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater?'

These two anecdotes exemplify anxieties around the purposes, scope, and function of the 'new.' If the 'new' is always-already known and is, in fact, a return to alternative or past knowledges (incident 1) or if the 'new' is a wasteful exercise in upturning and uprooting achievements that have come to inform the voice community's modus operandi (incident 2), why even make the claim that something 'new' can still be found? What value is there in such a claim? Who could benefit and to what end?

Such anxieties around the 'new' are of course valid and important to consider. However, it is also helpful to historicise them within the ways in which the 'new' has been galvanised in the context of European and North American modernity. Cultural geographer Ulf Strohmayer, for example, observes:

What perhaps unites most definitions of 'modernity' is an emphasis on the notion of the 'new'. Modernity is synonymous with change and thus becomes a declared enemy of traditions. This is the root of many subsequent binary distinctions that characterize modernity: the 'new' is explicitly set apart from the 'old'—and it is the distance between the two that acquires explanatory power. (2009, p. 472)

Similarly, scholar of modernity and sound studies Adrian Curtin reminds us that:

'[c]onceived in a flexible, relational manner, the term "modern" is a perpetually moving target' (2019, p. 23). Curtin continues by drawing on Décio Torres Cruz to foreground the intertwining of modernity with newness: '[each] modern creation that appears destroys its preceding tradition, and generates a new one, which, in its turn, will be obliterated by another new tradition in an endless series of interruptions and returns' (in Curtin 2019, p. 24).

In this sense, new voice training cannot only be demarcated as a return (incident 1) or an obliteration (incident 2). More importantly perhaps, new training is that which is necessitated by, and emerges as, an interruption. The term ‘new,’ then, is not taken here as an exclusively present-orientated delineation; rather, it is intended as a generative provocation. In this light, and to address this wider thematic area of research, contributors to the issue were encouraged to engage with topics and sets of questions such as:

- **Renewing voice training:** How are existing systems, exercises and practices reconfigured in new settings? How can we re-evaluate the foundational premises of voice training through recent discoveries in physiology and advances in critical theory? In what ways are such methods adapted, hybridised, repurposed, recycled, rethought?
- **New practices:** Which are the new approaches to voice, speech and singing training currently in the making? How do they depart from or extend current conceptualisations of voicing? What performance contexts are they designed for? How are they taught, recorded, written about and transmitted?
- **New documents:** Which practices of voice training have not been systematically documented and disseminated? Which practices have received less critical attention and how can new archives engage us in dialogue with them? What is the place of the ‘document’ in practice-as-research approaches to voice pedagogy?
- **The new voice coach:** Which are the new exigencies placed on coaches today? What challenges do they face? Which methodologies have been developed in response? How is voice training conducted beyond the conservatoire studio?
- **New contexts:** How is voice training taking into consideration gender, class and ethnic diversity? How is the pedagogy of speech and song responding to neurodiverse trainees? How are interdisciplinary performers trained in voice work? How is training

originally developed for artistic performance adapted in other contexts and circumstances?

- **New criticalities:** Which emergent critical methodologies can we deploy to critique voice training or to generate new approaches? How can voice training embrace ecocritical or new materialist strategies? What is the place of the expanding corpus of vocal philosophy in the studio?
- **New histories, new lineages:** What does new archival research reveal about the lineages and historic practices of voice training? How is the history of voice training rewritten? How are premodern forms of voice training revitalised in contemporary performer training?

Contributions

For a special issue that revolves around a purposefully wide-reaching question, it is only appropriate that the opening entry in the pages that follow is equally interrogative and plural. Five voice practitioners have formulated answers to the question ‘How are voice trainings adapted, recycled, transplanted and repurposed?’ US-based Rockford Sansom situates much of contemporary Anglo-American voice training in the lineage of pioneers Elsie Fogerty, Iris Warren, Clifford J. Turner and, later, Kristin Linklater, Catherine Fitzmaurice, Patsy Rodenburg and Arthur Lessac; he also questions attempts at formulating mono-directional genealogies, as in the case of teacher training certifications provided for specific strands of voice pedagogy. Abimbola Adetola Stephen-Adesina thinks through her approach towards recycling and repurposing Lessac Kinesensics Training (LKT) and Knight-Thompson Speechwork (KTS) in the Nigerian context, where the co-existence of Received Pronunciation with multiple indigenous languages is continually negotiated in the training studio. In the third ‘Answer the Question’ entry, Luis Aros proposes a brief history of middle-twentieth-century voice training in Chile and foregrounds transplantation and

transnational adaptation as the core of local practices of vocal hybridisation. Zurich-based Oliver Mannel, drawing on voice scientist Hellmut Geissner, reminds us that, in the German-speaking world, voice is etymologically related not only to ‘vox’ (vocal sounds) but also ‘votum’ (opinion, vote) and reclaims the potential of voice training to cultivate actors as politically-engaged public speakers. Sarah Weston, whose practice is rooted both in actor training and socially engaged theatre, references workshops with young working-class women in the North of England in order to recuperate pedagogy as a means of redistributing vocal production to those typically refused access to it.

The first article contribution to this issue extends these perspectives in its integration of geopolitical, class and gender positionalities. Beth Osnes, Chelsea Hackett, Jen Walentas Lewon, Norma Baján and Christine Brennan introduce readers to the SPEAK Vocal Empowerment Curriculum, developed by an interdisciplinary team and implemented at the MAIA Impact School, a Guatemalan all-girls school serving Indigenous youth. Further, they propose a composite methodology of assessing short- and long-term impact of the curriculum not only on vocal production and expressivity but, crucially, on understandings of civic advocacy too. In her *essai* on gender and pitch, Jane Boston embraces a similarly collaborative and cross-disciplinary approach. Boston first charts the long history of how gender conditioning has fashioned both the production and aural perception of pitch and, then, counter-proposes protocols of subversive de- and re-conditioning through a project delivered between a drama school voice training programme and a gender identity clinic in London.

The next section moves away from conservatoire-based voice training for actors and its current global and local circulation, critiques, re-imaginings or adaptations. It suggests that it is also high time to rethink pedagogies traditionally perceived as staples of experimental performer training. Anna-Helena McLean, former core member of Polish theatre company Gardzienice and creator of Moon Fool International Theatre & Music Exchange, asks how

Polish theatre training techniques can be re-contextualised for twenty-first-century training. McLean's Actor-Chorus-Text methodology revisits the concepts of mutuality and physiovocality and brings them to dialogue with her own music training, physiological insights on the international actor's toolkit, and a contemporary ethics of inclusivity. Theatre maker Gavin Thatcher and music director Daniel Galbreath's article further examines physiovocal approaches to voice. This time, actor training approaches to voice are tested against the background of interdisciplinary devised projects engaging opera singers. Thatcher and Galbreath reconsider manifestations of Cartesian body-mind dualism in classically-trained singers and locate their nascent training practice of the 'corporeal voice' within contemporary philosophical discourses on vocality and vocal embodiment. J. Ariadne Calvano and Rachel K. Carter's postcards also explore the continuum between physicality and voicing, and show how joined teaching between movement and voice classes can help find common ground *and* revitalise discipline-specific facilitation.

In her *essai*, Leah Lovett interweaves personal experiences of labour and parenting with practice-research in vocal devising. The piece traces links across antenatal techniques and breath support in established voice pedagogy as well as between birthing vocalisations and liminal voicing in the Wolfsohn and Hart traditions. The text analyses the making of a scored performance for a choir of male voicers responding to the voices of women in labour and argues for voice as possible social 'scaffolding' linking one's physiovocality to experiences beyond one's own vocal body. Singer, choral conductor and clinician Danielle Steele's article also advocates for radically inclusive pedagogy and a training less dichotomised across strict gender binary oppositions or disciplinary boundaries. With a key focus on voice modification for transgender voicers, Steele first reviews speech-language pathology (SLP) and music education literatures to highlight possibilities for convergence and cross-fertilisation. To this end, she works with and interviews SLP practitioners to

formulate a pilot study pointing in the direction of the beneficial impact voice and music training for pathologists can have on their voice modification clientele.

The two postcards that follow offer insights into the role of musical theatre training in UK Higher Education. Ben Macpherson's dialogic writing listens-in to how extended vocalisation and repertoire conventionally placed outside the musical theatre canon (such as Berio's *Sequenza III for Female Voice*) can expand music theatre vocal praxis. Annie Sanger-Davies, on the other hand, proposes serious play and co-creation as strategies for addressing issues around vocal confidence—and access to voice training and learning in the first place. Electa W. Behrens, rooting her writing in her teaching at the Norwegian Theatre Academy, finds further liberatory and revelatory possibilities through voice training in, and for, the dark. In preparing performers for the demands of working across aesthetic contexts and in line with a new materialist call for embracing ever-emerging, non-anthropocentric materialities, Behrens's case study and proposed exercises cultivate such an approach through sensitive listening to the self and the others, (de)composition and dynamic, non-visuocentric involvement with sound objects and actions.

Exploring transnational, transaesthetic and transhistorical contexts, the next couple of pieces interrogate 'new-ness' taking the long view on traditional performance practices. Australia-based Indian singer and researcher Charulatha Mani situates her *essai* at the crossroads of current research in historic voice and vocal embodiment. The piece presents findings from practice-research experimentation on pre-Romantic voice and constructs a pedagogic approach that yields discoveries from ways of phonation trained through South Indian Karnatik singing (specifically the technique of *brigha*) and subsequently applies them to Early Western art singing (*gorgie* ornamentation). In the article that follows, I work across my 2009 fieldwork and training in Korean *pansori* in Seoul and my recent training alongside a Franco-Korean series of YouTube videos (Bonjour Pansori) in 2019 to examine the interplay between preservation and renewal in a sung storytelling form that has been

acknowledged as an intangible cultural asset. I first address the lack in systematic interrogation of how conventional master-student training embraces recording devices and digital training by foregrounding the various ways in which pedagogy and technology intersect. Then, building on the examples of the YouTube channel and contemporary iterations of mountain training and deploying interviews with Korean singers and teachers, I propose a more complex and fluid understanding of the onto-epistemology of voice training and its modes of dissemination.

The visual essay by Italian musician, DJ and researcher Francesco Bentivegna continues the interrogation of technology and non-anthropocentrism but reverses its routine flow from human to machine. The first part chronicles the generation of speech synthesis technology on the foundation of human phonetic and linguistic capacity. The author, then, responds to the theoretical challenges posed by new materialism and the new demands placed on human performers cast to voice robots and machines. He devises and documents training sequences through which machinic voices become the tutors while human trainees emulate and aspire to the artificiality of their voicing. Mel Drake's *essai* investigates a pedagogic context that further expands the remit of voice training. Drawing on her work at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Glasgow, UK), Drake proposes strategies devised for the curriculum she developed as part of the BA in British Sign Language (BSL) and English for Actors. The piece follows her personal training and research and, in subsequent sections, showcases how principles extricated from Nadine George Voice Work formed the basis of her pedagogy with (and for) D/deaf trainees.

The closing section of this special issue embeds the 'now' implied in any discussion of new voice training within a broader temporal horizon. Stephen Kemble's obituary note pays tribute to the innovative strategies developed by the recently-deceased Cicely Berry, a hugely influential voice pedagogue who was the first to direct the voice and text department at the Royal Shakespeare Company. As a gesture to the future of voice pedagogy, seminal

figures in voice training and master performer trainers were invited to reflect on where they would want voice training to go next and the directions in which they would wish it to develop. Head of Voice, Text and Actors' Support at the Royal Shakespeare Company Kate Godfrey, founding member of the Roy Hart Theatre Margaret Pikes, Artistic Director of the African American Art Song Alliance Darryl Taylor, Karnatik master singer Subhashini Parthasarathy, Artistic Director of Attis Theatre Theodoros Terzopoulos, Director of the Grotowski Institute Jarosław Fret and Artistic Director of SITI Company Anne Bogart generously share their visions, hopes, aspirations and wishes in the form of postcards to the new voice trainings to come.

Finally, the Reviews Section curated by Chris Hay also furthers themes and topics discussed elsewhere in the issue. Intercultural sound studies scholar Marcus Cheng Chye Tan reviews Tara McAllister-Viel's *Training Actor's Voices* from the perspective of intercultural performer training and theatre-making, while voice trainer (and weight lifter/researcher) Sarah Holden-Boyd rethinks the somaticity of trained voice through her review of Claudia Friedlander's *Complete Vocal Fitness*. To cater for a multimodal approach to voice research, one that allows the material voice to reverberate through audiovisual media, further contributions have been presented on the [journal's blog](#). McLean, Mani and Bentivegna have archived and documented aspects of the practice discussed in this publication through videos, audios and hyperlinks accompanied by short exegeses. Petronilla Whitfield has created entries around her current research on dyslexia and neurodiversity. The hope is that this small online repository of vocal research will keep expanding even after the issue appears in print.

Charting new-ness

It would be disingenuous, if not counterproductive, to assume that a comprehensive answer to the question asked at the top of this editorial note could have been achieved by a single publication—however rich, diverse, plural and polyphonic. At the same time, not attempting

an answer would avoid acknowledging the work towards sensing and shaping the ‘new’ that these contributions collectively and collaboratively engender.

Here are, then, a few points and through-lines that emerge from a cross-reading of what follows and may help us draft some initial, localised responses to the question of ‘what is new in voice training’:

- Voice pedagogy is increasingly more aware of the dominant ideologies and power structures embedded in (and embodied through) voice training. De-conditioning, de-stabilisation, subversion, radical care and sensitive listening coalesce towards creating pedagogies that grapple more readily and responsibly with diversity, inclusivity and decolonisation.
- The conservatoire and the vocal studio are no longer the single or primary institutions of knowledge generation in vocal pedagogy. Workshops with amateurs or non-vocational trainees, school curricula, interdisciplinary rehearsals, practice-based research degrees, courses in antenatal breathing, speech-language pathology sessions, short- or long-term residencies, and eclectic or diffused pedagogy in the auto-didactic tradition, all pose urgent questions and provoke voice practitioners to reconsider and extend vocal praxis.
- US and UK drama schools, academia and teacher certification courses—while still flourishing and fostering multiple advances in voice pedagogy—are (prompted into) relinquishing their hegemonic grip as the geopolitically privileged sites where voice training is produced.
- Questions around the positionality of both trainees and trainers across categories of gender, sexuality, age, race, ethnicity, ability and class are gradually inviting a more intersectional re-examination of voice pedagogy. The white, mono-ethnic, mono-lingual, cis, young, abled, non-dysfluent and middle- or upper-class voicer (and listener/tutor) is urgently challenged as the normative aspiration (and imparter) of

training. This leads to a pressing call to perceive the identity and subjectivities of those involved in and affected by voice training as more fluid, processual and intersectionally plural.

- Anthropomorphic and anthropocentric presuppositions underlying existing lineages of vocal practice are expanded through new materialist, object-oriented and cyborg discourses and practices that call into question perceptions of the onto-epistemology of training.
- Alongside speech trainers and singing teachers, speech-language pathologists and clinicians, school educators, sign language practitioners, conductors, devisers, scenographers, choreographers, performance-makers, cultural theorists, applied and socially engaged theatre practitioners, all partake in the shaping of the 'new' in voice training. Further, transdisciplinary research and collaboration complement the model of the singular tutor as the sole author of vocal expertise.
- Voice training is not exclusively designed for actors and singers, but for various affiliated or previously distant disciplines and vocations. Furthermore, voice pedagogy is transplanted into other contexts and facilitates discussions and non-formal trainings in civics, empowerment and socio-political awareness.
- The methodologies integrated in pedagogy-based vocal research and its modes of circulation are increasingly plural and multifaceted: in situ and digital or online ethnography, interviews and questionnaires, self- and observer-led evaluations, Repeated Measure ANOVA, SLP assessments, studio experimentation, vocal autobiography, anecdote and essay-style reflection, dissemination through exegetic or phenomenological writing, images, diagrams, audio and video are just some of the means to re-vocalise research into and through vocal training.
- The separation between the voice theorist (for example: the sound or cultural studies scholar) and the practitioner (for example: the voice pedagogue or singer) is

becoming more porous and permeable. Being the researcher who conducts the artistic or pedagogic research while also theorising for/in/through this immersion in practice is less and less a rare occurrence. All contributions to this issue bear evidence to this rise of the voice practitioner-scholar as a key facet of current and emergent vocal praxis.

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