

Exploring Lifestyle Guidelines Outlined in the Pedagogical Texts Utilized by Pre-Professional Actor Training Programs

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A Review of Existing Literature

The Sleep - Anxiety - Dysphonia Cycle

- 70% of college students report sleep problems¹
- Poor sleep quality is often caused by rumination on negative thoughts and excessive worry^{2,3}
- Anxiety can cause sleep loss and sleep loss can cause anxiety and high academic stress correlates to poor wellbeing and sleep⁴
- Individuals with higher levels of mental illness, such as anxiety, were more likely to report a voice disorder and vice versa^{5, 6}

1: Kloss et. al, 2016 2: Liu et al, 2018; Shallcross et al., 2019; ; 4: Almarzouki et al., 2022; 5: Willinger, Volk-Kernstock and Aschauer, 2005; 6: Anand, Bottalico and Gray, 2021

“Teachers who reported stress at work were more than twice as likely to report voice disorders...teachers who reported having slept less than 6 hours per day were almost twice as likely to report voice disorders”

“Relationship Between Sleep Quality and Stress with Voice Functioning Among College Professors:
A Systematic Review And Meta-Analysis”, Journal of Voice, A. Carrillo-Gonzalez, M. Camargo-Mendoza, and L. Cantor-Cutiva

Vocal Injuries, Student Performers, and Stigma

- Singers and actors feel pressure to be at peak vocal performance consistently^{6, 7, 8}
- Vocal injury or fatigue can cause loss of work and income^{8,9}
- 50% of first year graduate acting students present with laryngeal abnormalities¹⁰
- Voice teachers are often the first line of defense against misinformation about vocal health and injury⁸

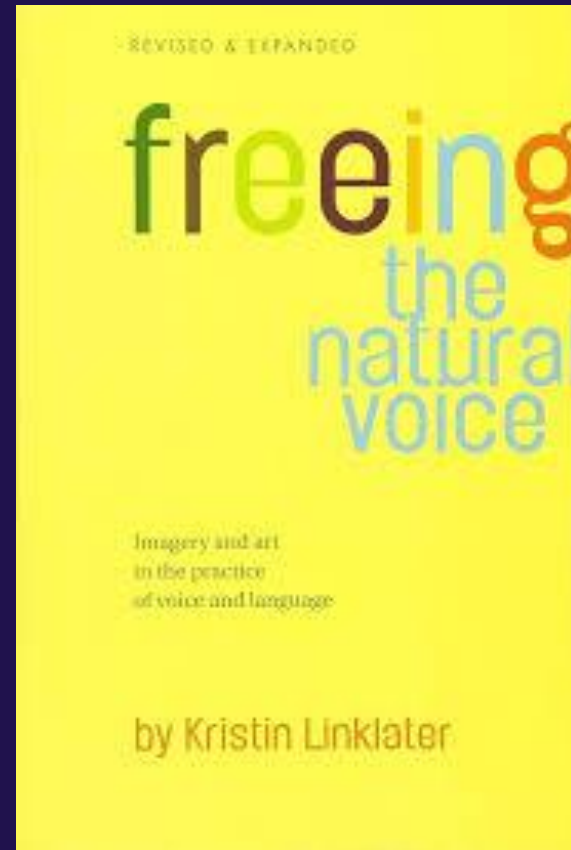
60%

of students who were dealing with vocal injuries during their undergraduate years felt stigmatized by their training programs⁸

The Texts

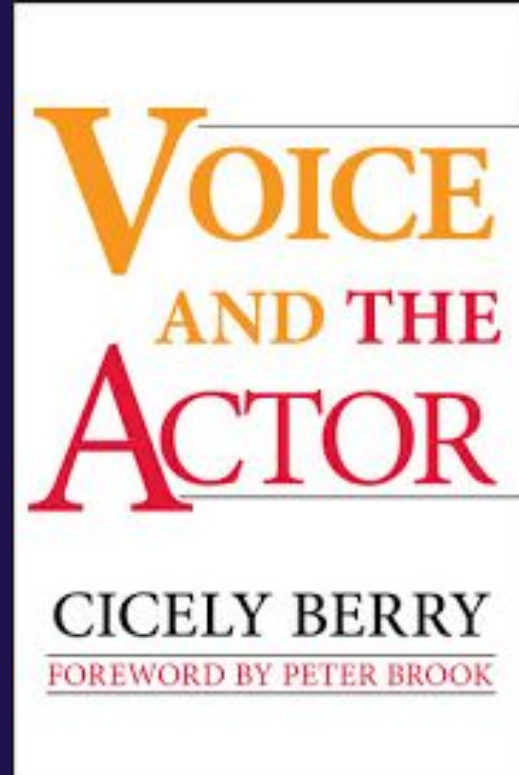
“Freeing the Natural Voice” by Kristin Linklater

- Published in 1976, updated in 2006
- Trained at LAMBA with Michael MacOwen and Iris Warren
- Taught voice at the Guthrie Theatre, Stratford Festival, NYU and more
- Founded Shakespeare & Co. in 1973
- “Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice” in 1992



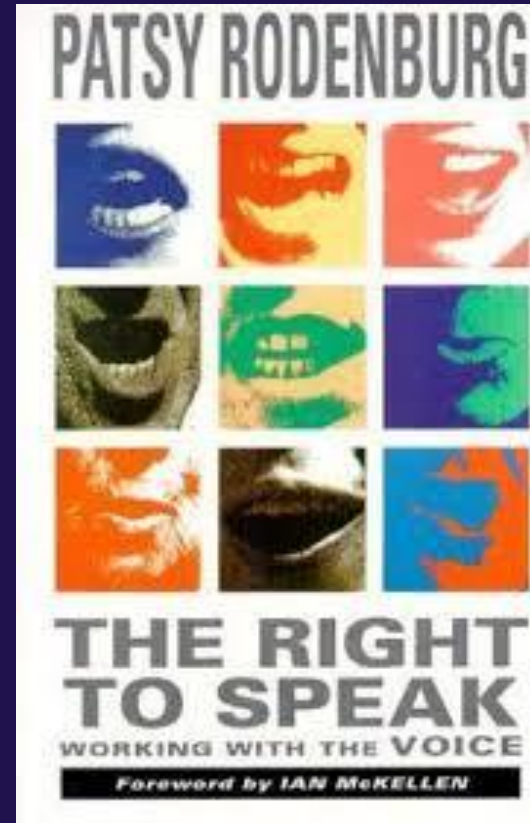
“Voice and the Actor” by Cicely Berry

- Published in 1973
- Trained at Central School of Speech and Drama under Elsie Fogerty
- Voice Director for the Royal Shakespeare Company; worked extensively at Theatre for a New Audience in NYC
- Other texts include
 - Your Voice & How to Use it
 - The Actor and the Text
 - Text in Action
 - WordPlay



“The Right to Speak” by Patsy Rodenburg

- Published in 1993
- Trained in Voice Studies at the Central School of Speech and Drama
- Head of Voice at Guildhall School of Music and Drama; former Head of Voice at Michael Howard Studios
- Worked with RSC, Royal National Theatre, Moscow Art Theatre, and more
- Other texts include
 - Speaking Shakespeare
 - The Actor Speaks
 - The Need for Words



Structure of the Texts and the Mind-Body Connection

- What is the voice and how does it work/not work
- Series of Exercises
- Sensitive Nature of the Voice (connection to the self)
- The Right, or Freedom, to Speak
- Connection of mind-body-spirit
- Relaxation of the body to relax the mind

Mental and Psychological Considerations

“Deep in the unconscious mind, the animal instincts to respond emotionally to stimulus is largely conditioned out of us as children” - Kristin Linklater

Location, Family, and Upbringing

- Dialects and location affecting not only how one speaks, but how one's voice is perceived
- Linklater makes no note of dialect in her work
- Voice teachers should be aware of sensitivities regarding dialect and “speaking correctly”

Psychological Trauma

“There are breath and voice exercises I can guarantee will have eighteen out of twenty five students in tears within five minutes. Voice work can be that powerful....Habits in the breath and voice...can be either superficial or chronic. They can also create themselves as a means of blocking the memory of a painful and intimate horror. When that block is gradually eroded through proper relaxation, breath and voice work, then memories long encased will inevitably spring forth.”

Patsy Rodenburg

Considerations of Each Text & Conclusions

- Intended Audience of Each Text
 - Publication Date
 - Limitations of their own medical/psychological knowledge
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- Only Rodenburg made acknowledgement of any physical illnesses or limitations; Rodenburg went the most in depth about psychological limitations

**Where does that leave us
as voice teachers and
interpreters of pedagogy?**

Areas for Further Exploration

- How can we combine vocal health with vocal production?
- How can teachers, who are not medical professionals or speech pathologists, best support students in vocal injuries and illness?
- How can voice teachers in training programs advocate for the physical and mental health of their students?
- What is the connection of other lifestyle factors, such as diet and exercise, on vocal production?
- How can we integrate physical and mental wellness into vocal wellness?
- How can we reduce the stigma of vocal illness/injuries and be a safe space for our students?

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