

THE BRITISH VOICE ASSOCIATION

COMMUNICATING VOICE

 **BVA**

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featured in this issue
BVA Rock & Pop Day 2011

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The President's Letter

By Tom Harris MA, FRCS, Hon. FRCSLT

As Confucius (and your previous president, John Rubin) have wished us in the past “May we live in interesting times”, as your new President I am happy to report that we still do.

I was honoured and delighted to be elected to the post as I have had an interest in the promotion of the multidisciplinary approach to all aspects of voice since its very early days. The BVA was yet to be hatched, but we had a small collection of voice professionals and enthusiasts called “The Voice Research Society” who were enthusiastic to gather and exchange voice related knowledge and information. How things have changed and grown since then.

I am happy to report that the BVA membership continues to grow as it has done year on year, slowly but surely as we have become an acknowledged resource for all things vocal. The website has been revamped over the last two years and we owe a debt of gratitude for this to our webmaster, David Siddall, and to Kim Chandler, Head of the Communications Working Party, who coordinated the work. We have a slowly growing number of downloadable information leaflets and more are planned. “Ask the BVA” also remains busy and continues to handle approximately two enquiries per week from all over the country. The enquiries have touched on many topics relating to voice disorders and we have had some lovely feedback from people who have felt helped and supported by the information we have been able to give them.

The finances of the charity remain sound, and we remain viable despite the continuing difficulties in raising charitable funds from external sources. The assets that we have continue to come from membership subscriptions, but even more importantly from the events which we put on and which continue to be very well attended. For all the mountains of work that this entails we are all hugely indebted to the Education Working Party, ably led by Sue Anderson, our Company Secretary, Kristine Carroll-Porczynski, Jackie Ellis, the BVA's Administrator, and all the others who give so much time and effort. Without them the BVA would have become insolvent and disappeared years ago.

This year we are not holding a single all-encompassing “Choice for Voice” event for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the diary-squeezing Olympic fun and games in 2012. We hope to continue to run this event biennially again in the future, re-starting in 2014, all being well. However, the Education Working Party is, as ever, bulging with a plethora of ideas and have again come up with a very busy year of events to whet your appetite:

15th January 2012 we start the New Year with the “Voice & Brain” study day at Park Crescent Conference Centre, which looks to be a topical, stimulating and popular event. Starting on the same day and continuing through to May, we have Fundamentals of the Singing Voice. This highly successful course is run by past BVA President Linda Hutchison in conjunction with the City Lit and is now in its fifth year.

February brings another of the popular Accent Method courses, this time in Birmingham. In March we plan to tackle the tricky subject of the ageing voice in our study day at the Royal Northern College of Music entitled “Weak, Wobbly or Working? The multidisciplinary management of the Ageing Voice”; 16th April brings World Voice Day again and as part of our contribution for 2012 we plan a light-hearted look at the Olympics of Voice. There will be a practically based Acoustics Meeting on 20th May which will include papers from the three finalists for the Van Lawrence Prize. The winner will be decided and the judges will present the award. If you are

thinking of putting in a paper you are still in time, although please do so now before the deadline of 23rd January 2012.

The AGM meeting for 2012 will be held on 1st July before the Study Day entitled “From Pathology to Performance”. The theme of the day will be based around the multidisciplinary management of performers as they travel

along the road to recovery from a vocal problem or injury back to successful performance. There are plans for a September meeting on the Classical Singing Voice and in November we are hoping to run another of our popular Stroboscopy Workshops. I think this exciting programme makes it possibly the busiest year of BVA educational events that I can remember. Many of these events are already up on the BVA website, so please take a look and put them in your diaries.

If you are reading this, you will probably be one of the many who look forward to their regular browse through what members of the BVA have been up to over the recent months. Lynne Wayman and John Baines do an amazing job persuading people to put pen to paper to write articles, book reviews and reports of meetings and to provide photographs of the action. If you have any burning voice related issues you would like to share with others, do contact Lynne to see if it would be suitable for the Newsletter. Don't forget our Journal, Logopedics, Phoniatrics Vocology, either. Remember that the Editors will be happy to consider audit reports or interesting case studies as well as research papers.

As many people will already know, I recently retired from running what used to be the Sidcup Voice Clinic, (although, of course, I still remain busy in independent practice). When the Sidcup clinic closed, we were lucky enough to have the support of Lewisham Hospital, who took the clinic on and where it now continues under the excellent guidance of ENT surgeon Tony Aymat and Speech and Language Therapist, Rehab Awad. However, this has brought home to me just how important it is to have a “succession strategy” in life. Sara and I were in at the inception of the BVA and already many of those who started with us have either retired or are nearing retirement. At present, of course, we have enthusiastic and dedicated members of Council and the Executive who continue to move the BVA forward, but unless others are prepared to join them and learn the ropes to take over as they move on, the BVA will not be able to continue to flourish. Although I recognise that it is always hard to find that extra time to work for a charity, especially in this day and age, the work is extremely rewarding both in terms of the experience it gives you on many professional fronts, and also in terms of the people you meet and with whom you work. These contacts from other disciplines have greatly enriched my working life and have fundamentally changed the way in which I approach the rehabilitation of vocal problems over the years. I very much hope that you, the members of the BVA reading this, will consider joining the BVA Council in the future and help to guide and develop it so that it can continue to serve the next generation of voice professionals and patients. You won't perhaps get material riches by doing it but you will certainly get a wealth of knowledge, experience and friends in voice to make it worthwhile.



Tom Harris, 'The Machine'

Rock & Pop Day 2011



Organisers Dane Chalfin and Kim Chandler



Dane's shoes!

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Cover photo: Mary Hammond and Vanessa White of 'The Saturdays' at the BVA 'Rock & Pop Day' 2011.



Reviewed by Vicky Silva and Alison Place

Vicky Silva, Head of Vocals at Tech Music School writes:

A sunny Sunday morning found me strolling from Turnham Green Station towards Chiswick High Road past the dog walkers and joggers at around half past nine in the morning on September 25th this year; heading for a pub!

No, not an admission of early morning drinking, but a gathering at the Headliners Comedy Club room at the George IV pub, venue of the British Voice Association's Rock and Pop Interactive day.

The programme looked to be jam packed with a variety of informative and interactive activities and we weren't to be disappointed.

After an entertaining opening address from the BVA President Tom Harris we got down to business with Daniel Zangger Borch and his excellent demonstration of rhythmic singing and time keeping. He explained that because of the time it takes for the impulse to get from the brain to the larynx, (12 ms I believe) we need to think ahead of the beat in order to keep in time. That's all very well but it's no excuse that despite the pride I have in my time keeping, whilst we were shifting where beat '1' of the bar was, I was the one who clapped and went 'boom!' when no-one else did; loud, confident and wrong!

Then Mary Hammond interviewed Vanessa White of 'The Saturdays'. Despite all the bad press there is about 'pop singers', I was very impressed at how scrupulous she was about training and taking care of herself and her voice.

We had a short break with refreshments (guiltily sneaking some chocolate muffins which glued my jaws together) which allowed us to catch up with friends and colleagues before Maureen Scott showed us how to achieve some pop and rock voice qualities which not too long ago might have been considered as injurious to the voice. It's a testament as to how far we've come in exploring how the voice works and how to achieve musical effects safely, that onsets and colourations are considered a part of the vocal technique armoury, as opposed to, when I was training, the equivalent of "George, don't do that".

Simone Niles presented a fascinating treatise on neuro linguistic programming; which if I boil it down correctly can be summed up as saying something in a positive way can have a neurogenic effect and set it into action. We need to apply this to our goal setting and practice techniques if we're to get the best out of the often limited time we have to make sometimes odd noises in the cause of voice improvement. An eye opener for me (who feels no shame about singing in the bath, on the tube, in the street) as I forget how hard it is for some people to get motivated or who can't practise as much as they'd like because they don't want to disturb neighbours and loved ones. Making sure you practise effectively and with purpose is very important.

Deliberately placed before lunch rather than after was some wonderful video footage of how the larynx works during rock and pop situations, research undertaken by Sue Jones. If I eat cheese late at night I can still see these images of vibrating vocal equipment and saliva in my dreams...

After lunch, President Elect of the BVA Kim Chandler entertained us with some in depth research on which scales are currently being employed in contemporary songs. She played us some phrases and had us guessing which scales were being used. She even discovered a new one! I'm not going to spoil any future lectures of hers by telling you what it is!



An excellent day, brilliant people! Learnt a huge amount! Loved the Master Class! Looking forward to the next one...

Nathalie Gunn, Drama Graduate



John Rubin's talk on Stage Noise and Hearing Loss was a salutary reminder of how easy it is to damage one's ears. I've been known to carry ear plugs in my handbag in case of an auditory emergency, but I was surprised by the recommended time exposure allowances to decibel levels. I think we're all aware of the dangers of exposure to overloud electronic music but to discover that hearing loss appears to be greater in classical musicians than in rock musicians was a bit of a shocker. Not so much of a surprise was the noise protection advice to 'keep other musicians away from the drummer! I've never understood why vocalists have to be plonked right in front of an array of cymbals!

Dane Chalfin was on top form with his master class. The Emergency Voice Doctor zooming in literally with the sound of a plane going down to find the placement for distortion for a student was excellent stuff. It's always good to hear a well-respected exponent of the vocal craft saying things that you agree with wholeheartedly.

After a short Q & A the final guest took the platform. Mark De-Lisser and compatriots treated us to a triple E performance; an Exhibition of Extreme Emotion. It's hard to express how powerful an effect his work on getting expression into words and music was, particularly after about 7 hours perched atop a bar stool! Ably abetted by Kirsten Child and Holly Petrie, Mark demonstrated how the thought informs the voice and after we all sang a beautiful arrangement of Amazing Grace, the event ended with more of Mark's choir members singing a rousing version of Jesse J's Price Tag to bring the day to a close.

After all that time (and those bar stools) you'd think we'd be out the door in a flash, but no, we lingered, chatting and catching up. 'Oh Happy Day'...

Classical Singer Alison Place writes:

It seems that this event has outgrown its Chiswick pub venue. There was twice the number of delegates than for the inaugural event two years ago. There were many vocal coaches, ENT specialists and, of course, performers in the genre but, as a minority of perhaps one opera and session singer, I approached this event in a mood of grim determination to learn something new, rather than in the anticipation of enjoyment.

I did learn a great deal, and most of it was presented in a



thoroughly engaging and entertaining way. I particularly enjoyed Maureen Scott's canter through specialist vocal techniques, many of which I am going to find useful in my own teaching, and which was illustrated by helpful sound clips. John Rubin's presentation on hearing damage was fascinating, and praiseworthy for its beautiful lucidity. As this science is relatively in its infancy, I am glad that the research is in such capable hands. There was good practical advice in addition, such as which frequencies to avoid, safe length of exposure, and resting time. I was interested to learn that classical musicians show, overall, more auditory damage than rock musicians, possibly because of their punishing work schedules. Sue Jones's videos of the larynx in operation during normal and extreme vocal use was also riveting and useful although, being rather squeamish, I was glad that it had been scheduled before, and not after, lunch. This was particularly useful in conjunction with Maureen Scott's technical information about positions of the larynx during various techniques.

We all felt grateful to Kim Chandler and Dale Chalfin for their



contribution to this presentation as the singers enduring tubes up their noses and down their throats.

Mary Hammond conducted an interview with Vanessa White of The Saturdays, who proved a most engaging interviewee, and whose grounded and sensible attitude towards her hectic professional life would have been inspirational to aspirants in the audience.

Simone Niles had a short slot to deliver an inspirational talk on the psychological aspects of motivation and goal-setting, and it was simply too full of excellent content to summarise, but I'm sure that her new book, due out in January, will be well worth reading.

The panel discussion, near the end of the day, threw up many intelligent questions, intelligently answered; mostly on technique and vocal and hearing damage.

There were two sections of the day which I personally did not enjoy at all, but I suspect I was in a vanishingly small minority. The first was Daniel Zangger Borch's class on rhythm and ghost notes. I was surprised that pop and rock musicians would need rhythmic instruction at this extremely basic level (I remind myself that I'm used to sigh treading Harrison Birtwistle) and the glottal attacks in the Ghost Notes sent my larynx into total spasm. The fact that the sound system was at a painfully high level did not help.

The other was Mark De-Lisser's class on expressiveness in Gospel singing, where I heard a succession of mere tricks and clichés. Fortunately my depression was lifted by the delightful, upbeat number with which a group of his singers finished the day.

I have left until last the hosts of the occasion, Kim Chandler and Dale Chalfin. The timings and organisation were excellent, and they presented all the speakers with a great deal of charm. Kim herself gave a presentation of the scales and modes most to be found in this genre of music. I gather that it started as a light-hearted piece of research, and is gathering material rapidly. I shall be very interested to hear what emerges from this interesting research.

Dale Chalfin gave a series of mini-master classes, demonstrating, under the jokey exterior, a serious, extremely capable craftsman at work. The most interesting aspect of this section was to underline what all the vocal coaches had stressed throughout the day, and what was most interesting to me as a classical singer. That is: before using techniques such as distortion, belting, flipping into falsetto, twang, and so forth, the voice must be fully supported by the muscles of the chest and abdomen, there must be a consistent air flow, and the vocal folds should be closing properly.

I was surprised that there were not more attendees from my branch of the profession. When it happens again, I do hope more opera and session singers will be interested. The section on Hearing Damage applies as much to classical as to pop musicians. Even though I shall continue not to teach Pop and Rock techniques to my pupils, I now know where to send them if they want to go in that direction, and there was a great deal of technical material that will be of practical use in my own teaching. I found it very instructive, and mostly extremely enjoyable.



PEVOC 9

9th PAN-EUROPEAN VOICE CONFERENCE

Marseilles, August 31 - September 3, 2011

Report by Dane Chalfin, Industry Vocal Coach and NHS Voice Rehabilitation Specialist

PEVOC9 proved to be so popular that it was oversubscribed by almost 200 delegates. Sadly this meant moving the venues, which were quite far apart and this meant delegates had to walk back and forth between two centres several times each day in quite high heat. The workshop rooms were not air-conditioned, the AV support was problematic and generally the organization was poor. Having said that, the plenary sessions were very good even if the rest of the content was generally repetitive and of a lower standard than I would expect from a conference like this. Also the lack of practical sessions is an ongoing problem I feel we face in most academic conferences.

Jackie Gartner-Schmidt, the American Speech Pathologist, gave a very reassuring talk on vocal fatigue in Muscle Tension Dysphonia patients and why this terminology should be separated out from vocal discomfort, pain, etc. There is very little research into vocal fatigue and it certainly looks as though Jackie is on her way to remedying that.

I sat in on a very contentious session from a Dutch vocal coach that tried to apply Cathrine Sadolin and Julian McGlashan's distortion research into the Estill recipe-based system. Unfortunately, the pioneers in this field were not credited in the presentation and though their terminology was used, it was applied to different sounds, which caused confusion. Although I would love to see more cross pollination between organized pedagogies, this constant rebranding and renaming of existing work is taking us three steps forward then two steps back. It is confusing enough to the people who really understand the



research; I cannot imagine how overwhelming it is to young teachers and coaches.

The highlight of the conference for me was the live laryngeal dissections that took place in the cadaver lab. A small number of participants were able to watch as freshly harvested larynges were shown at various stages of dissection. As someone who teaches vocal anatomy and physiology regularly, it was especially exciting to see the muscles and cartilages in situ and life-size. I was particularly struck at the end of the session, when we were able to handle the larynges, at how small the range of movement between the cartilages actually is given how much change they result in vocally. As this practice is not legal in the UK, this may well have been the only opportunity non-medical practitioners would have to get this up close and personal with a larynx.

On the whole, PEVOC 9 was not the best conference I've attended, but this was mostly due to the organizational structure and the limitations this presented. However, as is always the way at these things, I learned a tremendous amount from my colleagues in the bars and restaurants after the program finished.

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF PEVOC9

By Phil Jones

Pevoc 9 was combined with the meetings of the European Laryngological Society, The European Academy of Voice and the European Voice Teachers Association (EVTA): I am not sure how many delegates there were (over 500 I think) but it was very successful and so the venue had to be moved to accommodate even more delegates than they initially expected.

This is good and good to see lots of singers essaying a little science (if not too well at times but then early days). Obviously, lots of nationalities, so good to see it expanding. Unfortunately, it was moved to a hospital with building going on so it was a fair walk to the various lecture theatres scattered across the entire site which were largely not air-conditioned which is perhaps a

misfortune in Marseilles in early September.

Marseilles itself is not all that interesting but the Old Port (Vieux Port), where most of us stayed, is and I often had breakfast (and dinner) overlooking it. May be more interesting when the EuroMediterranee project is opened.

Undoubtedly the star attraction is all the restaurants around the Vieux Port – hundreds it seemed – and obviously starring seafood, not just but including bouillabaisse, Sue's highlight was sea bass in a sea salt crust.

The Gala Dinner was very enjoyable in the old Chamber of Commerce. A wonderful hall and meal (lunchtime cold snacks were less good esp for France.)

A slight down for me was that nearly all the surgery was on the Saturday for the ELS meeting, which is understandable, but meant there were times when I struggled to find something of interest – Dresden was better that way. Looking forward to Prague in 2013 and the beer!

Voice and the Brain

A BVA study day

Park Crescent Conference Centre, 229 Great Portland Street
London W1W 5PN

January 15th 2012, 9.30am - 5pm

The BVA presents four expert speakers to talk about brain functioning in relation to voice. Topics will include recent research into neural processing for both spoken and sung voice, brain plasticity and its role in rehabilitation and learning and gender differences between child and adult voices will be explored from an evolutionary basis.

Prof Sophie Scott (Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, UCL) will outline evidence from functional neuro-imaging about the ways the human voice is processed cortically. She will show important differences between the processing of speech and other sounds, and will demonstrate asymmetries between the ways that the left and right cortical hemispheres process the information in voices.

Dr Katie Overy (Senior Lecturer in Music Psychology, University of Edinburgh) will introduce us to the neural processing of singing. Singing is a fascinating human behaviour, and yet has received relatively little scientific attention to date. She will first discuss the nature of singing and then review recent research on the neural basis of singing perception and production, including a discussion of the experimental challenges as well as findings. This will lead to an assessment of the potential role of singing to support language skills, such as with dyslexic children or with aphasic patients.

Prof John Rothwell (Professor of Neurophysiology, UCL) will show how the adult brain is no longer seen as a static set of connections formed in infancy and fixed in adulthood. Training and rehabilitation can make use of this state of dynamic change. We are all familiar with the idea that different types of brain scanning can visualise patterns of activity in the brain. More recently, a new set of techniques has been developed that allows us to interact with activity in the brain in healthy individuals. These non-invasive methods can stimulate neurones in the brain in the same way as an electrical stimulus can activate a nerve in the arm and make the hand twitch. More importantly,

we can now use them to interact with the changes in organisation that accompany learning, potentially, for example, speeding up the response to retraining therapies for aphasic patients after stroke.

Dr David Reby (Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University of Sussex) will discuss expression of gender in the human voice: is there a "sex code"? Why are men's voices lower-pitched and more baritone than women's? He will be looking at the anatomical bases and evolutionary origins of the sex differences in the human voice; how gender, and related attributes, are expressed in children's and adult's voices.



EDITORIAL EDITORIAL EDITORIAL EDITORIAL

Recently 2 books were sent to me from a publisher asking for review; as these were concerned with the broader issues of music therapy it was difficult to find a reviewer. However, Jackie, our Administrator, suggested contacting BVA members to see if anyone was interested. The response was so overwhelming that I couldn't reply to all of you that showed such interest – so this is my big thank you!

From now on, when tomes appear on my doorstep, a request will be sent out to members. So if a subject is particularly close to your heart, here is your chance to share your insights. Likewise, when events are looming, a request will be sent to all delegates to write a full report on the Study Day/Forum etc or offer a perspective from their point of view.

This is particularly exciting as there are 2 interesting days

planned for early next year - Voice and the Brain in London and the Multidisciplinary Management of the Ageing Voice in Manchester. Articles are included about these days in the Newsletter.

The main feature of this edition is the highly successful Rock and Pop Interactive Day, where 2 delegates from completely different aspects of the singing profession share their opinions. This is multidisciplinary integration of the BVA at its best as each reviewer comments with honesty, openness and tolerance.

Our President, Tom Harris, outlines the new BVA year ahead, so with that in mind have a happy Yuletide and 2012 Communicating Voice.

Lynne Wayman, Editor lynne@lynnewaymanvoicecentre.com

Singing and Trying to be Heard

By Deborah Hudson

Singing is extended sound carried purposefully on the breath. It's an extension of an exclamation, and by exclaiming we can connect our breathing and singing technique. It's as simple and natural as an extended whoop.

The way we breathe is so important to our health yet it is very rare now that I come across anyone who is able to breathe deeply easily and freely. As a singing teacher the most common problem I am asked to fix, particularly among pop singers, is their inability to breathe deeply enough to support the voice. The so-called "front to back" or "diaphragmatic" breathing taught to singers is achieved by pulling in and releasing the low "belly" muscles as we do when we sleep. Once this technique is successfully mastered and a steady stream of air is produced for singing, the students often feel psychologically restored too. The body becomes toned instead of held and long-term posture problems can begin to be resolved. With this comes confidence, and with it the lowering of the speaking voice. In my view, every person should know how consciously to breathe this way and that all fitness programs should be built around it. Not because of a particular type of body fashion, seemingly designed to impede it.

Some new students arrive for help because they are constantly stressed. Often they have trained their bodies artificially to hold the belly "in", particularly if they are dancers. Others talk about holding the "core" although I do not know what that really means. In any event, the net result is that the belly has become stiff and hard and the breathing has to be from high in the lungs. I ask the students two simple questions. Who has told you to hold yourself this way? Why are you doing what you are told if it's so uncomfortable? Most, when they think about it, have no answer. Constrained or high breathing causes unnecessary stress and can hinder stage agility. The stressed breathing means of course that the tongue becomes stiff and thick, making the passage of air even harder. This in turn increases the sense of panic. Singing when panic stricken is very difficult.

So for the first few lessons students are asked to concentrate just on breathing and tongue exercises. Fortunately these are quite fun. Learning to blow raspberries is a pleasant challenge for some students – for example, I have been told that the French "never" blow them which is "proved" by the fact that there is no word for the noise! And I had an Arab student who said rather censoriously to me "we don't blow raspberries in the desert". But on the whole, the process of releasing the passage of air is a happy one, if quite hard work.

For my non-professional "shower singers" though, starting the singing process has had its own terrors, normally as a result of some ghastly childhood humiliation. Many people have come for lessons because they feel the urge to sing but are completely unable to do so. Most cultures require that children "pipe down" and it seems that indoor cultures (like ours in the UK) require greater volume control than outdoor ones. So, for all of us a general inhibition about noise making is imposed early on in our

lives. However, for many young children the defining moment comes when they are asked not to sing any more by teachers or family simply because they aren't singing in tune. Yes, it's painful to hear someone singing off key but there's nearly always a good and fixable reason for it and it's no excuse for preventing a child from singing altogether. I had a lady come to see me who wanted to know for definite that she couldn't sing, after having been told many years ago at school that she shouldn't. Well, of course she discovered after about half an hour of exercises that she could sing in tune after all. It was a big shock to her because she had spent the past 40 years of her life avoiding singing altogether. She hadn't even sung to her babies. And today young mothers I teach often worry that they can't sing well enough to go public – even if the public is less than one year old and haven't paid! Again, what they mean is they fear they can't sing in tune. As if their baby is really going to pick them up on it! We have programmes such as X Factor which delight in exposing those who can't sing in tune. I think Karaoke can induce out-of-tuneness not merely because the singers are often drunk but also because they are really singing to themselves, and as we know, the sound in the head is not the same as the sound in the bush.

Singing out of tune can be a result of hearing problems, but I have found that it can often be fixed not only by correct breathing techniques, creating space in the mouth etc but by teaching people how to listen. Some students have homework consisting of lying on the sofa and listening to everything and anything around them. It's a skill which is particularly useful for actors who suffer stage fright. It involves listening without the stress of having to respond in any particular way. This is useful if you are



frightened of saying the wrong thing. Once the listening has become pleasant then the student can begin to copy what he or she hears. And that can be anything at all. Gradually voice can be introduced and the student will learn to pitch all over again.

So much of my time I am effectively assisting people to overcome fear, stress and inhibition. These emotions do seem very much to lie at the centre of singing problems, ask any singing teacher. I wonder if, perhaps, more of the talking therapies would benefit from including some sort of voice training in their treatments. Freeing the tongue and presumably anything needing to be said, creating space to breathe properly and to calm down then showing the patient how to listen and therefore how to learn – surely this would be useful? I myself have trained several psychotherapists who found the exercises extremely helpful.

But why aren't the rest of us still singing? Is it that there isn't space for it in our lives? Since the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of noisy factories, workplace singing has gradually decreased. Agricultural communities lasted longer along with mountainous ones where long journeys on foot were enhanced by some good songs. Nowadays natural, spontaneous song is an increasingly rare thing to hear. Yet there is nostalgia for a time when all generations could join together and sing. Some cultures have managed to retain a song tradition based around ceremony but here in the UK it is pretty neglected. Christmas carols used to work reasonably well but those under 30 that I teach seem not to

know many of them. On the whole, it's mostly songs from films that the children want to learn. This is fine but it makes it harder to find that common thread, something that all ages can join in. The recent studies in Sweden proving pretty conclusively that singing to and with dementia patients actually achieves as much calm and engagement as drug therapy is reason enough for considering the importance of song and what we can all sing together. Here in the UK the therapeutic value of community singing is currently being assessed at the Sidney de Haan Centre in Canterbury where the long term goal is to have singing available on the NHS. Perhaps mothers and grandmothers can come to schools and teach the children the songs their mothers and fathers taught them. It's important.

Perhaps though, looked at a different way, we could see this singing dryness as a sign of the stability and success of our community. There appear to be no protest songs needing to be sung now in the clubs and bars; no songs of freedom and justice to be sung in our jails. Fortunately we don't forbid women to sing in this country, and we all have the power and freedom to speak our minds. But life without everyday singing would be awful. I'm with the Californian Indians who had a song for every bush and every tree on the way to the rivers. I can quite happily imagine the Dustbins from 97 song, or Dog Dirt by Lamppost song on the way to the tube! So when you have a moment, just sing something, anything and keep it all alive. Without a song there is no song, without a voice there is no voice.

Book Review

Sing Your Heart Out

Author: Deborah Hudson

(Illustrated by Tony Husband)

Published by: Schott Music Ltd

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ISBN 10: 1847612431

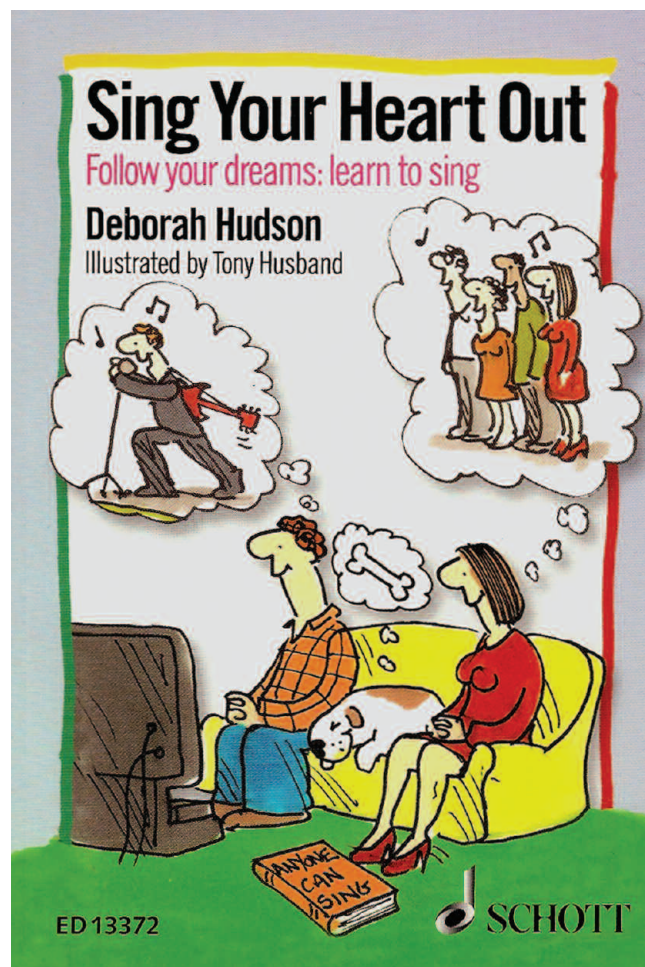
Reviewed by Katharine Lewis

This is a tiny book (literally!), well written and amusingly illustrated, and which I read with interest. There was a great deal of information packed into a small space.

I liked the sections on awareness (of surrounding sound, personal feelings etc.) and the chapter on the tongue was helpful.

The 'homework' sections at the end of each chapter have some useful exercises, though I am not entirely convinced by the idea of filling the bath with grapes and walking on them(!) and making strange sounds while out walking the dog might be a little daunting to someone shy about his or her voice.

A more significant reservation, however, is that it is, quite simply, very difficult to teach oneself anything to do with the body from a book. Instructions will always be interpreted from our own personal experiences and need a knowledgeable teacher to guide, monitor, and modify: though, sensibly, Ms Hudson does advise finding a teacher if there is a desire to progress further. My own work with hard-core upper chest breathers, for example, is that pulling in the abdominal muscles while exhaling does not always guarantee activation of the diaphragm correctly. And 'squeezing the back muscles' could lead to all sorts of problems if



interpreted too vigorously.

However this is a book worth reading and, hopefully, it will encourage more people to 'Sing their hearts out'.

Diary of an allergic reaction

By Karen Lane, Singer

Recently I suffered an allergic reaction, and as a professional singer the effect on my voice was a dramatic compromise of singing function. The sheer frustration of trying to sing in the days that followed prompted me to anecdote the experience.

Fresh from the BVA's AGM and Study Day on "Laryngeal Irritation", this issue was, I guess, fresh in my mind. I had never really been an allergy sufferer and in fact would probably consider myself not the most sympathetic person. Somewhat tired of hearing a multitude of new mothers spout "my son has a peanut allergy" – had made me a little cynical about allergies and their increase in the population of western countries.

However, about 18 months ago I had just arrived in Australia to visit my parents when 3 days in, and recovering from jetlag, I awoke unable to open my eyes with severe swelling and puffiness around them. This persisted for 3- 4 days and was not the most flattering look when meeting up with old friends and family for the first time in 2 years. After 4 days and downing several varieties of antihistamines my puffball face returned to normal.

Then, about 6 months ago shortly after I awoke, I had a bowl of muesli and 5 minutes later my eyes, mouth and back of my throat became incredibly itchy and within 5 minutes more, my eyes were closed, my throat was constricting and I was finding it increasingly hard to breathe. This was to say the least, slightly terrifying. As I struggled to breathe I collapsed on the sofa, took a load of strong antihistamine and was knocked out for about 2-3 hours. I slept heavily. When I woke I felt exhausted, cognitively drained and remained wiped out for days. It took again about 3 – 4 days for my puffy eyes to return to normal. Luckily I had no performing dates around this time.

In July I found myself performing at a lovely garden marquee event held at the Inner Temple. It was the usual corporate atmosphere, beautiful flowers, delicious food and champagne (I admit to one glass, after singing! A mistake since it is a well-known irritant). I was also offered several peaches from the fruit left over as I was leaving. Not having eaten much, I decided to eat one whilst driving home. Almost immediately my lips, tongue and back of throat became severely itchy. I could feel my throat swelling, but it was the itching that was most unbearable. The swelling was not as severe as my last attack and quickly I could tell it was residing, not getting worse – thankfully as I was driving! However the itching and irritation continued well into the next day and I felt as though I had an uncomfortable lump in my throat. This lump persisted for at least 24 hours and when I tried to practise the next day, I found my range severely restricted as well as my ability to project voice, which was hoarse.

Even two days after this relatively mild attack, my voice had not returned to its normal function. I felt not only uncomfortable in the throat but I had a certain tightness in the chest and my breathing was effortful and constricted. This brought to mind Glenis Scadding's discussion of the Unified Airway theory.

I sung my first gig 3 days after the allergic reaction. For the first two - three hours, I didn't have my full range, I had to work very hard to reach mid and upper- register notes and sustain them. Towards the end of this 5 hour gig (yes it was a long one) I felt my normal voice returning but the frustration and impact and possible loss of earning from the reaction, has forced me to take allergies more seriously. It took about two weeks for my voice to return to optimal function.

My awareness is now heightened and I think I know what to avoid in order to prevent a reoccurrence. From this personal experience, even a mild reaction can have moderate - significant impact on the voice. Thanks to the BVA study day and this first hand experience, my understanding of allergic reactions and their effect on the voice has increased. The implications for voice changes and the impact on professional voice users in particular, can be severe and I would urge all professionals involved in voice, to continue to take the impact of allergies on voice, very seriously.



Karen Lane is a professional singer and vocal coach. She trained originally as a SLT – in her hometown of Perth, Western Australia, before moving to Sydney to practise speech therapy and sing professionally. She lived and sang in Singapore for several years before moving to London in 1999, where she currently resides and is a private voice coach for singers and professional voice users. Karen has taught singing at the City Lit, Covent Garden, ACM – Guildford, and is currently an associate lecturer in contemporary singing at the University of Surrey.

More photos from the BVA Rock and Pop Day 2011



Weak, wobbly or working? The multidisciplinary management of the ageing voice.

This British Voice Association study day will be held on Sunday, 25th March 2012, at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. The day will deal with the ways in which medical conditions and physiological changes that occur with ageing can affect the voice. The most common voice problems of older people and the ways in which these problems can be treated, in the voice clinic and in the singing studio, will be explored. Evidence of the important positive effects of singing and vocal exercise will be presented and discussed.

The day should be of interest to singers and singing teachers, voice teachers, speech and language therapists, and ENT surgeons. Further information will be available on the BVA website shortly.

www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

Staffan Wilen and Alison Bagnall

It is with sadness that we note the loss of Swedish Phoniatician, Staffan Wilen in September 2011 and Speech and Language Therapist, Alison Bagnall in June 2011 who both contributed a great deal to voice work in the UK.

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diary dates

VOICE AND THE BRAIN

Sunday 15th January 2012
Park Crescent Conference Centre,
229 Great Portland Street, London
W1W 5PN

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SINGING VOICE 1 (10 sessions)

BVA Course in conjunction with
The City Lit, London
15th January - 18th March 2012
Fee £331.00. For further information
contact linda.hutchison@citylit.ac.uk

ACCENT METHOD COURSE

Monday 13th and Tuesday 14th
February 2012 plus Wednesday 20th
June 2012

The Priory Rooms Meeting &
Conference Centre, 40 Bull Street,
Birmingham B4 6AF

INTRODUCTION TO ACCENT BREATHING FOR SINGERS

(3 sessions + 1 follow-up)
BVA Course in conjunction with
The City Lit, London
19th Feb - 4th March & 29th April 2012
Fee £117.00. For further information
contact linda.hutchison@citylit.ac.uk

WEAK, WOBBLY OR WORKING? THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY MANAGEMENT OF THE AGEING VOICE

Sunday 25th March 2012 at the Royal
Northern College of Music, Manchester
Further details available shortly

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SINGING VOICE 2 (5 sessions)

BVA Course in conjunction with
The City Lit, London
22nd April - 20th May 2012 (this is only
open to people who have done
Fundamentals 1)
Fee £168.00. For further information
contact linda.hutchison@citylit.ac.uk

ACOUSTICS STUDY DAY & VAN LAWRENCE AWARD

Saturday 20th May 2012
Baden Powell House, London.
More information when available

Please see our website:
www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

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