

# COMMUNICATING VOICE

SPRING 2018  
VOLUME 18, ISSUE 3

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on



The journal of **the british voice association** – the UK's voice for voice

**SPRING 2018**  
**VOLUME 18, ISSUE 3**

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*Greg Ryan, Musculoskeletal and Sports  
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# EDITOR'S RETROSPECTIVE...

## Lynne Wayman looks back over 11 years editing *Communicating Voice* before she passes the mantle to Geraldine (Gerry) McElearney.

With trepidation I took over from Gordon Stewart as editor in Autumn 2006 thinking I would, maybe, hold the position for 6 editions. However, the team began to grow as John Baines, my husband and professional photographer, offered his services and with the expertise of designer David Siddall we were able to format a publication that was flexible and more accessible to meet the needs of a changing BVA.

Throughout this time:

- 12 Presidents have shared their vision for the BVA through Reports and Letters
- The green and black format changed to colour in Autumn 2008 and the "new look" website and Newsletter appeared as an initiative between Dane Chalfin and David Siddall, in Spring 2016. The first online *Communicating Voice* went live for members in time for the Autumn 2017 edition
- "A Day in the Life" feature gave insight into the lives of our members and Voice Clinics
- *Rock and Pop Days* continued to flourish
- Reports included the *Van Lawrence Prize*, *Gunnar Rugheimer Lectures* and *Honorary Lifetime Membership of the BVA*
- *World Voice Day* on April 16th became an annual celebration in the Newsletter as reports flooded in of events held across the country and abroad
- There have been several *Book Review Specials* as members have given me positive feedback. Links have been made with publishers so we receive the books "hot off the press!"

## Questions for Lynne as outgoing Editor

*The magazine has changed visually over the years. Do you think its function has also changed? Is it still talking to the same readership?*

I think the Newsletter has always hoped to engage with its multidisciplinary readership, however this is a "big ask!" The various events that the Education Working Party organise are always included as is it important for members, who aren't able to attend, can keep up to date with research and current thinking. The Study Day "Chain Reactions" will have encouraged a different audience to perhaps a younger group attending "Rock and Pop" and the Newsletter needs to reflect this.

*Did you have a vision for *Communicating Voice* when you took the helm, and do you feel that you've achieved it?*

I wanted the publication to look vibrant (maybe dynamic) so people wanted to open it. Of course now it's available on line it will achieve a wider readership.

*To what extent is CV principally a vehicle for reporting on the BVA, and to what extent an opportunity to explore more broadly issues of interest to one or more of the organisation's membership groups? For example, when the film *The King's Speech* was released in 2011, CV gave it a lot of coverage – so, in other words, what do you feel is the right balance between inward and outward looking content?*

I thought that would interest people! I've tried several initiatives to encourage letters and comment from the readership so, good luck Gerry. CV is in trustworthy hands!

*Who would be your dream interview or guest editor? You can nominate anyone, dead or alive!*

The Lieder composer Hugo Wolf. I have studied many of his songs which I return to again and again. I've also paid homage at his grave in Vienna. He was a complex person who owned his own coffee machine which he hawked around when visiting his friends. As a fledgling barista myself I understand the logic of that.

LYNNE WAYMAN, Editor, signing off...



Newsletter editor of 11 years, Lynne Wayman, with her husband, professional photographer John Baines.



# CHAIN REACTIONS

Sunday 21st January 2018, London

Overview by FRED CHAPPLE, MA  
Voice Studies, Royal Central School of Speech  
and Drama, Voice and Acting Coach

*The effect of biomechanics on the larynx: problem solving in the voice clinic* was delivered by Nick Gibbins (ENT, Head/Neck and Voice, Consultant Otolaryngologist and Voice Surgeon at University Hospital, Lewisham) and Greg Ryan (Musculoskeletal and Sports Physiotherapist from Harley Street, London). The text of their first slide, *Thinking Outside the (voice) Box*, set the audience's collective brain cells in motion and created the first link in the chain reaction.

Nick has a specialist interest in the diagnosis and treatment of voice disorders and the care and management of the professional voice, including working with singers from the Royal Opera House. A member of the largest voice clinic in the UK, Nick works with the clinical team to investigate *organic dysphonia* (cysts, polyps, nodules and scars) and functional dysphonia (muscle tension, hyper function,

neuromuscular and psychogenic). Patients who present with organic dysphonia move from the pre-operative state, to surgery, to post-op speech therapy, to vocal rehabilitation coaching and singing teachers. Those who present with functional dysphonia may be guided towards speech therapy, laryngeal physio or laryngeal osteo. However, Nick has had a few patients for whom the treatment didn't work, so he wondered what to do next. He decided to go back to square one and asked the clinical team to think about two questions: *How is the larynx held in place?* And *what is the resting state of the larynx?* His request resulted in a research chain of investigation and this presentation.

A key slide in the presentation for me was a drawing of the larynx suspended in space, and attached from the base of the skull by way of the stylohyoid ligament and the stylopharyngeus muscle. The aesthetics of this beautifully drawn image moved me, and it reminded me of the fragility of our human voice production suspended, as it is, like an aerial trapeze artist, within a slowly moving performance space. In addition, the team also produced a vector diagram to indicate the force and direction of the intrinsic laryngeal muscles on the vocal folds; and of isometric muscular



(left) Greg Ryan and (right) Nick Gibbins

activity, and the directions of stretch that impact on the vocal folds. Both diagrams were very helpful in enabling us to visualise what happens as our lateral, transverse, oblique and posterior cricoarytenoid muscles move in different directions. However, when the diagram was set alongside photographs of actual vocal folds that have been pulled out of position by these forces, the move from diagrammatic models to reality was a sobering moment, and it set Nick's clinical practice, which is to release the tight muscles and 'reset' the larynx, in a sharp context.

Nick teamed-up with Greg Ryan to find out where the tension that causes these forces might lie. As a musculoskeletal and sports physiotherapist Greg draws on the ideas of *Connect Therapy* developed by Dr Linda Joy Lee; a patient centric approach that examines how different regions and systems of the body are all connected:

<http://www.ljl.ca>

Greg explained that in his work he looks for the 'primary driver' to find out how the patient moves, but also for how they feel. He knows that drivers can take many shapes and forms: they might be located in a distal region of the body that is in dysfunction, perhaps because of an old injury, or just movement habits overtime; and that the driver may, or may not, be painful; but crucially it is not functioning in an optimal way to support performance in meaningful tasks, such as singing. This was amply illustrated in pictures of dysfunctional and distorted vocal folds in the case studies. The driver, or co-driver, may also be a neurophysical driver and often is, but determining the driver profile means that Greg can treat the villain of the piece and not the victim, which is crucial to his approach. Looking at the case studies Greg presented it was clear that correcting and/

or treating/removing a primary driver has the greatest and lasting impact on the patient's singing.

'*Thinking Outside the (Voice) Box*' became a theme in the day. In *Singer's Gym*, Michael Dahl Rasmussen employed gym training to stabilize the body and work on flexibility and stamina of the torso. Whereas in *Sounding from the Whole Body* Barbara Houseman introduced aspects of Mindfulness to enable singers to pay attention to our bodies and be present in the moment we speak.

## Sounding from the Whole Body

### Barbara Houseman's workshop

Report by RACHEL BENNETT

Initially I had the impression that Barbara's enthusiasm and exuberance was quite 'out there' but once I settled into her style – it somehow felt appropriate – a high energy, pretty physical and practically based workshop. She moved with ease between the explanations and contexts of exercises and delivered practical opportunities – just long enough for me to grasp their purpose.

Her return to basics on various levels was actually refreshingly honest and I was reminded of my drama school training (at Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama)

There's a deal of common sense running through her work



Delegates



and she shared exercises for various purposes from long term muscle awareness to long term reduction of tension, but then also switched to fast exercises that would be super helpful in an emergency.

We began with a meditation and I loved Barbara's sense of linking this to the singer's body and an awareness of 'being in the moment' – so vital specifically for theatre or character song.

We were reminded of some sound breath exercises on the floor, involving a pelvic tilt, but with a very quirky Houseman take on the visualisation (the sense that the breath is squeezed out by core muscles – like toothpaste in a tube!).

Barbara's work with pelvic rotation was well placed with sound – a clear and detailed description of the loosening of the psoas muscle was involved. Her work on this muscle and its import for singers deepened and I learned more about the muscle's properties and their connection to emotion – either negative or positive – in the singer's body; this was an invaluable part of the session and Barbara offered ways into stretching it that were accessible and that are often found in general stretches such as lunges.

Barbara attached question time, but also packed in a lot of information, assuming our ability to retain the information but not over loading – this was a well-paced and demanding 'wake up' approach – I loved that!

We were able to work individually and also in pairs and naturally, as a group of voice and singing teachers/coaches and therapists, we grasped what we were observing in others and in our own vocal or physical responses; in that respect the workshop was pitched just right!



Barbara Houseman



Barbara's workshop



Her work on facial muscles and sound was effective and well detailed – again reminding me of some essential basics that never lose their value in the new trends.

In fact, Barbara's work is not in any way sensational – it's grounded, totally connected in a practical sense to the act of performance and it's accessible to teachers of varying experience.

Clearly voice therapists and coaches/teachers alike were engaged and thoroughly enjoying the session – the fun, in-depth and well-constructed ideas, allowing for clear connections between various sections and activities.

I feel confident in using the work in appropriate contexts and whilst I was already familiar with some of the work, Barbara's attention to detail and holistic approach brought a wealth of information to light for me.

## Singer's Gym

### Michael Dahl Rasmussen's workshop

Report by HELEN INGHAM

I'd carried my yoga mat on the train from Newcastle and across London on the tube, I was ready for the *Singer's Gym*. I am familiar with gyms, with yoga and with the voice, but putting them all together in the singer's gym intrigued me.



Michael Dahl Rasmussen



Michael's workshop

Having said that I was very reassured that the workshop was aimed at singers of all abilities!

We were instructed to find a space for our yoga mats in the main meeting room and awaited instructions. Michael introduced himself as a professional singer, actor and composer, and briefly explained the type of training he had received at The Anne Rosing Institute in Denmark. His '*Singer's Gym*' aimed to go deeper than Alexander Technique by looking at the whole body as a support for the voice. He encouraged all of us, from whatever background, to take an anatomy course. In practice, as a speech and language therapist, I have a very specific knowledge of how the larynx works, but Michael encouraged us to understand how it works within the context of the whole body. I have personally taken this to heart and now spend a happy hour here and there with a musculo-skeletal anatomical colouring book!

Michael described how he warmed up before performances and it was interesting to note that he listened to his voice for possible markers of tension (reduced range, changes in tone etc) and then worked on an area of the body that would reduce that tension. He said that as a singer, you know how to sing, you know how to reach those notes. The thing that stops you on stage is tension in your body.

So, we got down to learning specific exercises that targeted the muscles of inhalation; the elasticity of the diaphragm; the lower back; the oblique abdominals; the scalene and sternocleidomastoid muscles; the rhomboids and trapezius muscles; the pectoral muscles and the hip flexors.

Michael was a great teacher and ensured that we all understood the reasons for the exercises and executed them correctly. Critically he asked us to test our voices using a repeatable spoken phrase or pitch glide after each exercise. This was fascinating personally as I could hear more resonance after some exercises, feel more breath capacity for volume with others, and no change with yet other exercises. It was useful hearing the variety of feedback from the group members after each 'vocal test'.

I have personally incorporated some of Michael's exercises into my regular exercise regime. For me the stretches of the neck (scalene and sternocleidomastoid) and the pectoralis stretch bring great benefit to my posture. I firmly believe that as voice specialists, professional voice users and teachers of voice, we need to get to know our own voices and bodies before we can instruct others effectively. There is also a lot to say for implementing change in the voice via changes in the body. It is also often more accessible to some clients than focussing directly on the voice.

# INTERVIEW WITH BVA COUNCIL MEMBER & NEW 'COMMUNICATING VOICE' EDITOR GERALDINE (GERRY) McELEARNEY

By LYNNE WAYMAN

*How did you come across the British Voice Association?*

My first experience of the BVA was at the Mind, Body, Voice conference in January 2013 which Lynne suggested I attend. As I recall, it explored in some detail the complexity of relationship between the voice and other aspects of health and well-being. It was revelatory, and brought into focus for me so many of my own ill-defined thoughts and instincts.

*Can you offer readers a thumbnail picture of your career*

I started down the path of training to be a professional singer by enrolling as a degree student at the Guildhall School of Music. I was hoping to make a career in early music, which was starting to become quite mainstream, and the inherent possibility of combining both solo and ensemble singing seemed exactly right for me. Almost immediately, however, the wheels started to come off; I experienced a sudden, shocking onset of vocal difficulty, including dryness and significant discomfort. Singing



Gerry McElearney

became increasingly effortful and it was hard to keep up. Vocal growth and development pretty much didn't happen for me.

*continues on next page...*



I somehow limped through four years at the GSMD, but it was really, really hard. I had basic ENT investigations but aside from a dust allergy (treatment of which improved nothing) no diagnosis was made, and by the end of four years, I'd had enough. I was fortunate to land a lovely job at the National Theatre, but because of it, walked away from singing. I went on to work for twenty-plus years in a different industry and to all intents and purposes, didn't sing a note.

That all changed again a few years ago. I'd grown up in Nottingham and in 2011, decided to move back there. As Lynne was a friend and my former singing teacher she suggested I have a singing lesson and, to my surprise, I hadn't lost my voice entirely; I started to study again and eventually, began to teach.

*Were there any turning points, revelatory moments, any epiphanies on your journey to Damascus?*

Several! That first singing lesson in itself, which also began a voyage of discovery about vocal pedagogy; in particular, how much both the subject and community have grown in the time I was away from it. The first BVA conference I attended; a second, Irritant Issues: Reflux, Allergy and the Voice, which caused still more scales to fall from my eyes; and a one-day course I attended given by Anne-Marie Speed, who presented a brilliant distillation of vocal physiology which has given context and clarity to everything I've learnt about the voice, before or since.

*Most of us, leaving school, have an idea of what we would like to do with this empty space of years ahead of us. Ambitions, dreams, whatever? What were yours?*

Above all I wanted to sing. I was very interested in the historical and social dimensions of music too, so did consider a university education rather than conservatoire, but really I just wanted to spend all day, every day, singing, and specifically singing early music. Ideally, I wanted to be the next Catherine Bott or Emma Kirkby, ie. combining consort/ensemble performing and recording with solo singing, working with the best and brightest talents in that area of the industry. Music college looked like being the

best way to achieve that. However, I was also fascinated by the spectrum of subjects related to one of my A levels, Communications Studies, and always had half an eye on areas like arts marketing, design, that sort of thing. This proved to be very useful a few years later when I threw in the towel with singing.

*What might a working week or month involve for you?*

My work is currently settling into a pretty busy weekly routine comprising peripatetic school work in number of local primaries, and teaching in my lovely studio at home. Around that, and the small matter of raising three young daughters, I also try to fit a steady diet of work-related reading, listening and learning – I'm still frantically trying to make up for lost time – as well as making sure I sing. I'm part of a small local female-voice ensemble and that helps me to fulfil my chief love in singing: singing with other people.

*All of us, as editors, have had hopes that we might have a benign influence on the course of the newsletter. What are your hopes in that direction?*

The newsletter is just one outlet of the BVA's outward-facing communications tools; as a printed publication, I believe it fulfils a really valuable role alongside our web and social media presence, not to mention our events and information resources. My hope is that I can continue and refine this function, so that it continues to be regarded as a vital channel that enables ongoing sharing and learning within this extraordinary organisation.

*What are your interests outside of the work patterns, when you have time to indulge them?*

I think I'm at a stage of life where leisure is largely a thing of the past, but also – hopefully – of the future! I still love design and try to get to the V&A whenever I can, especially for the big fashion retrospectives. Otherwise, I feel lucky when I actually succeed in getting to the end of a good novel – I do miss commuting for the twice-daily extended reading opportunity it provided!

## FORTHCOMING ASSOCIATION EVENTS

See [www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](http://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk) for more details

### WORLD VOICE DAY 2018

Celebrated annually on 16th April

The Association encourages its membership to find ways of celebrating healthy voices in the work place and community and will be sending out the usual guidelines with tips on activities you can do to spread the word about how to keep our voices healthy. We are very aware that pressures of NHS work can make it difficult to find the time to arrange and take part in activities however, we hope our guideline tips and the inspiring reports will provide a stimulus to persuade you that World Voice Day is worth your support!

Find out more at:

[www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/worldvoiceday](http://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/worldvoiceday)



### BRITISH VOICE ASSOCIATION AGM – including presentation of the Van Lawrence Prize 2018

Sunday 9th September 2018

Baden Powell House Conference Centre, London

More details of AGM Study Day activities will be available at [www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/events.htm](http://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/events.htm) when finalised.

### Van Lawrence Prize 2018

**Call for Papers: Submission deadline 25th May**

Submission guidelines and more information about Association Awards and Prizes is available in the 'About us' and 'Members' Area' sections of the Association's website:

[www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](http://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk)

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