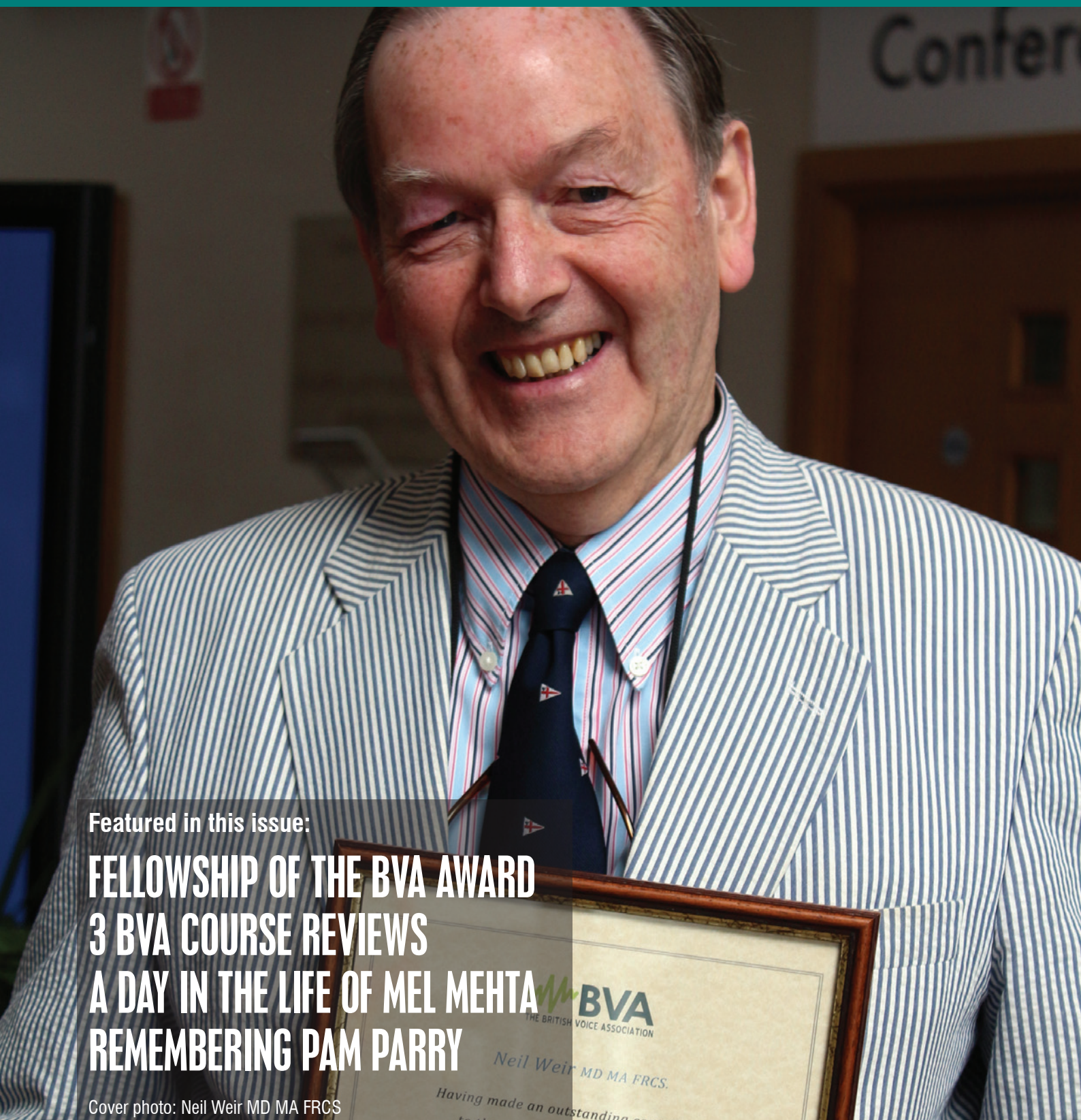


THE BRITISH VOICE ASSOCIATION

COMMUNICATING VOICE

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 **BVA**



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REMEMBERING PAM PARRY

Cover photo: Neil Weir MD MA FRCS

www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk

FELLOWSHIP OF THE BVA AWARD

NEIL WEIR

MD MA FRCS. Consultant ENT Surgeon

Speech given by Tom Harris

It is hard to know exactly where to start. Consultant ENT Surgeon, a tireless worker in both Otolaryngology and Laryngology, medical historian and innovator. One of the co-founders of The British Voice Association as well as the Britain Nepal Otolaryngology Service. A man given to looking for the best possible solution to knotty problems, given the circumstances of the time.

A recent example: Having discovered whilst on holiday that deafness was the single greatest disability in Nepal. Neil founded, and is still a director of, the Britain Nepal Otolaryngology Service (which I note was the winner of the BMJ Group Awards in June last year). At the time, there were no doctors or funds to deal with ear disease anywhere in Nepal. So, in addition to giving his own time and expertise, he set up a training scheme for community ear assistants (CEAs), who are health workers trained exclusively in ear disease.

But I digress. In about 1982, distinguished members of CoMeT and the IALP wrote a state of the art world report effectively saying that since the death of Sir Victor Negus, Britain had become something of a black hole as far as voice research and interdisciplinary voice care was concerned. This was something of a red rag to a bull, the authors clearly didn't know of two recently set up multidisciplinary voice clinics – one in Oxford and the other (Neil's) in Guildford...

We ran the first Multidisciplinary Voice Care Symposium which turned out to be a huge success – and then someone uttered the dread words "what we really need is a multidisciplinary



Tom Harris and Neil Weir

voice society..." We the organisers of said symposium said "NO WAY. It'll be a huge responsibility and never-ending work". Well, we were right about the second bit... Voice then became flavour of the month and lots of people wanted a conference of their very own. But of course there were simply not enough people doing clinical voice work in the UK to make more than one conference per year economically viable.

Enter Neil "the negotiator" Weir. In partnership with Graham Welch and Gunnar Rugheimer, he organised a truce and the following amalgamation of societies which was to become the British Voice Association.

Without Neil's work and skills, NONE of you would be sitting here now, and your jobs would have nothing like the skills and knowledge base that are now at your disposal.

Your election as Fellow of the BVA is the highest honour that the Association can bestow. We are all aware that the Association owes its very existence to your efforts, for which you have our undying gratitude, Thank you very much.

BVA PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2014

This year the BVA working parties and council have continued to successfully deliver the high standard of educational programmes and day-to-day running of the BVA that we have come to know and appreciate. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Council of Directors and the working parties for their hard work and contribution in a year that has seen changes and challenges in our financial choices. The BVA is moving forward and changes are afoot to enable the future to grow and provide excellent education, communication and sharing of voice knowledge among the BVA membership and the Voice community.

The Education Working party have once again provided an

excellent selection of well received courses for the membership and wider voice professional world. This year including 'Voice and Pod Casting', 'Accent Method', 'Lend Me Your Ears', 'Voice and Brain', 'Rock and Pop', 'Voice Science for Choirs', 'Weak, Wobbly or Working?', 'Voice Clinics Forum', 'Irritant Issues', 'My Tongue Goes Where?' and 'Recovering Voices' to be held after the AGM. Our sincere thanks go to Sara Harris who has tirelessly led the Education Working Party and coordinated the ideas and opportunities over the last 3 years. A recent membership survey regarding the delivery and topic areas for future programming has resulted in excellent feedback to shape the next few years. Thank you to the membership for your contributions.

This year we bid farewell to the LPV Journal amid much discussion. This has moved the BVA out of a risky financial situation and has given us the opportunity to consider academic literature and reflection on research from the Voice world that the BVA will make accessible to the membership. We extend our sincere thanks to Lesley Mathieson for her consultation and valuable contribution in this process. More to come so watch this space...

As regards to membership and course fees, the BVA Council decided to leave these unchanged for the next year. We have considered further benefits of membership and are looking at changes to the website (member only area). Thank you to David Siddall for his work on the website and professional advice. The social media sites: Twitter and Facebook - set up by Kim Chandler, our Communications Lead, have been a growing area of interest. The BVA has received over 1500 contacts / views to date. New leaflets have been published in the last year and added to the BVA's growing library of resources, 'What is Muscle Tension Dysphonia?' and 'It's Official Singing is Good for You' (available in hardcopy from the BVA office and in pdf format on the BVA website). Thank you to Sara Harris, Sara Caldwell, Jenevora Williams and Kristine Carroll-Porczynski for their work in producing these.

Hopefully some of you reading this have considered contributing time and expertise in the running of the BVA or serving on the Council of Directors. I have just completed six years on the Council and would thoroughly recommend the professional and personal opportunity. The BVA Council meetings and Education Working Party meetings continue to take place, free of charge, at the Institute of Education. Many thanks to Rebecca Moseley-Morgan for arranging this venue. We do have members living a distance from London and with electronic communication options we can more easily achieve quorum and work around our busy professional lives, not least to mention saving travel costs where possible. The amendment to the 'Articles of Association' listed in the 'Notice of Meeting' was approved at the July 2013 AGM to allow meetings to be held using electronic communication.

The BVA's financial position continues to need careful planning to enable the organisation to remain viable and present in the future. John Rubin has served as Treasurer this last year and has been looking at ways to support the BVA's future. We have received ideas including fundraising opportunities and I

encourage members to share any ideas for fundraising events or opportunities they may have that the BVA could explore. 'Give as You Live' (www.giveasyoulive.com) initiated by Kim Chandler is still active and we hope members will remember this when shopping online (perhaps while Christmas shopping?!).

The study day after the AGM is hosted by the outgoing president. I felt 'Recovering Voice: the Transition from Injured to Well' is a topic that would bring all the professional backgrounds of the BVA together. In my role as a Speech and Language Therapist working in a busy Voice Clinic and individually with voice disordered clients, I find many different reasons for clients becoming 'stuck' in their recovery process or difficulty achieving their full vocal potential. I am looking forward to hearing speakers who have agreed to share their expertise and the ensuing discussions. The programme will include the prestigious Van Lawrence Prize presentations, 3 papers selected from a group of research of high standard and announcing the winner on the day.

At this point I would like to remember Pam Parry who many will know passed away this year. She has been an inspiration to us and contributed on so many levels within the BVA and will be missed. Our thoughts are with her family and friends. The BVA Council is discussing ways in which Pam's contribution can be recognised and remembered.

I would like finish by thanking my colleagues at the Royal Derby Hospital where I work and within the BVA for their support during this last year. There have been financial threats to both the stability of the BVA and my place of work, and I pleased to say on both accounts we are not only surviving but also succeeding! I have been fortunate to have excellent colleagues whose company and professionalism it has been a pleasure to work alongside that has enabled me to do this role in a very challenging year. I wish the Council and Executive well in the next year and in particular Kate Lewis who will be your new President and hope you will support her in her busy new role.

Kate Young handing over the Presidency to Katharine Lewis



BVA COURSE REVIEW

MY TONGUE GOES WHERE?

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ARTICULATION ON VOICE, RESONANCE AND PROJECTION WITH DR. RON MORRIS, SPEECH PATHOLOGIST AND SINGER

Saturday, 29th March 2014
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow

Report by Moira Little

Moira is a Clinical Voice Specialist

Having heard Ron Morris in London in 2011, I eagerly signed up for an encore in Glasgow, and was not disappointed! As a Speech Pathologist and singer, Ron is perfectly placed to deliberate on the finer points of the tongue in influencing articulation and resonance. After defining “articulation” (in this context, both the physical act of making speech sounds and how those sounds are used to convey meaning) and how articulation can directly impact on voice quality and tone, Ron described the components of the articulatory system he was going to cover: vocal folds, velum, tongue, teeth, alveolus, jaw and lips. He then proceeded to describe the muscular composition of the intrinsic and extrinsic tongue muscles and how the interdependence between the tongue, jaw and soft palate can affect voice quality. Some time was spent on describing “The Two Position Jaw”, position one being slightly open and position two where the “bulge” of the temporomandibular joint can be felt, where the jaw moves not only downward but also forward, which is not conducive to good singing because of the tension created, with “space” being created at the front rather than the back of the oral cavity. He therefore challenged the conventional singing advice of “open your mouth wide” and replaced this with “open your mouth the right amount”. He also challenged the advice to improve diction by overworking lip movement (which results in an impression of the chimps in the PG tips advert!), replacing this with advocating better tongue placement. Ron also has issues with the “smiling school of singing”, as smiling can tighten other articulators. Ron commented that although the soft palate is the “dopey” cousin of the vocal family, 60% of singers can elevate their soft palate to command, a much higher percentage than in non singers.

Ron went on to describe how consonants are described in

“It is unusual to find an academic who can perform to great effect and with consummate ease... his demanding daylong solo presentation was most generous in its content.”

terms of voiced/voiceless, manner and placement, as they interrupt the airflow. Vowels can be described in the vowel quadrilateral, which is useful for “mapping out” sounds and he showed some excellent schematic dynamic diagrams of vowels being produced, demonstrating for example how the tongue rises for “ee” but lowers for “ah”. He discussed the work of Wood, who categorises vowels in terms of POINTS of constriction, with tongue height a secondary marker. Ron prefers “target zones” to “constriction”, and these can be palatal, velar, uvular or pharyngeal. Further schematic recordings showed these “target areas” for different vowels, which can affect the quality of the vowel. Tongue root tension can reduce the space in the hypopharynx, so the body and back of the tongue should be relatively high when singing, to keep the tongue root free.

Ron stressed the importance of using auditory analysis, visual observation (from the front and side) and palpation to diagnose such speech sound “inefficiencies” as tongue blade articulation, rather than tongue tip. This does not matter so much for speech, but in singing can affect voice quality, particularly if the lower jaw protrudes forward to compensate, affecting resonance at the back. He went on to describe how to remediate this, using simple articulation training to establish new motor patterns. Correct tongue and jaw placement can be followed by nonsense syllable drills, before introducing words and phrases. Ron stressed the need for regular practice until it becomes a new habit (“the vocal tract loves habit”) and until the person “cannot do it wrongly”. He also stressed that other singing techniques such as breathing, support and posture must be solidly established prior to articulation work.

In the afternoon workshop, Ron worked with 2 singing students and 2 voice students from the Conservatoire, diagnosing and working on tongue blade articulation and compensatory lower jaw protrusion on fricatives such as “s” and “sh”, by putting a finger on the chin to keep the jaw back, to access resonance at the back. He also demonstrated how to remediate tongue root tension, singing with the tongue protruded, to “turn off” tongue root tension. He did this in combination with work on airflow and using the waistband “breathing out team” of muscles.

Discussion included the ability of singers to “fiddle the acoustics”, but Ron argued that if the tongue height is right and if the pharyngeal targets are set up correctly, there should be no need to modify vowels on different pitches. He also questioned some of the acoustic research, which has been carried out on “trained” singers, who are often actually keen amateur singers rather than professionally trained singers.

Ron’s strength is in making his delivery not only entertaining and informative, but also very accessible to his audience, with plenty of anecdotes and helpful illustrations and demonstrations.

A wonderful day!

More on ‘My Tongue Goes Where?’ from James K Boyd

James is a Performer and teaches Singing and the Alexander Technique

The prospect of a BVA Study Day with an Australian counter tenor talking about ‘My Tongue Goes Where?’ was too good to miss, and so it proved. The BVA Roadshow had taken some time to bring Dr Ron Morris North of The Border, but there

was a warm welcome awaiting at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow.

During registration there was the all-important time to renew acquaintanceships, meet colleagues old and new, and welcome those among some forty attending, from as far afield as Canterbury, Achnasheen and neighbouring Denmark. In the absence of his usual presenting partner, Consultant ENT Surgeon, Declan Costello, Ron Morris (recovering from laryngitis and with a poorly prepared radio mic/speaker system) took his audience through the principal functions of the tongue and jaw, keeping in mind the minimal role of the latter in speech and singing. I tell all my students that the jaw is really only useful for eating and biting people. Ron further reminded us, using excellent screen graphics (also present in distributed notes) of our vocal instrument and the significance of resonators and their effect in varying sound quality of the eventual product from lungs and vocal folds.

Most of his remarkably representative, predominantly female audience would, in their differing disciplines, have covered these physiological topics but certainly not as presented by Ron Morris. In Part 1, 'Resonance and Vowels', the audience was not only being enlightened but entertained by this erudite Australian. We discovered more of his inherent performing skills as we went into Part 2, 'Articulation and Consonants'. Here Ron's work with children, and the deaf, was evident in his use of strategies for countering the consonantal problems often established at an early age and presenting frustrating difficulties for those of us who teach singers to think. Ron illustrated how use of articulation drills and nonsense syllables, combined with careful attention to reasoned jaw and tongue placement, can bring about noticeable improvement and progress towards

more musical phrasing.

In Ron Morris there is a singer with a clear understanding of articulation and consonants, and of their place in establishing vocal line. This was demonstrated after a "small-plate" buffet lunch, as it is known in the catering trade, when Ron set to work with four RCS student performers. In the workshop, firstly with two young singers and without recourse to other than had been discussed in the morning sessions, Ron enlivened their performance with attention to each student's use of their instrument, increasing their awareness of what was happening to tongue and jaw. With light touch and side and frontal observation, Ron was able to gently facilitate an easing of jaw and facial musculature resulting in more open, or mature, tonal colour thus providing a secure basis for all that follows later in embracing style and interpretation. The same process was then applied to performance by two drama students of excerpts from Shakespeare, and resulted in a noticeable increase in intensity of their delivery. Two transatlantic accents performing Shakespeare and being coached by an Australian - it doesn't get much better!

It is unusual to find an academic who can perform to great effect and with consummate ease. Ron Morris is very comfortable with an appreciative audience and his demanding daylong solo presentation was most generous in its content. He was prepared to question received wisdom, not just because he is from Australia, but because he has real working knowledge of the nuts and bolts of an instrument that we rarely see or touch. This BVA Study Day was much appreciated and good value thanks to Ron Morris.

Ron Morris with students



BVA COURSE REVIEW

FAIR EXCHANGE

Sunday, 11th May 2014, Birmingham Conservatoire

By Kelly Anne Sharp

Kelly Anne is a Singer, Voice Coach for sung and spoken voice at Voice Work and qualified SLT

The sub-title of this course, 'Voice Teachers and Speech Therapists explore their professional boundaries and share skills and techniques', was one that immediately peaked my curiosity. With multiple interests as a qualified Speech Therapist, Voice Coach and also as a trained performer, I went along on Sunday 11th May 2014 to the Birmingham Conservatoire to see what information could be explored and shared between us. The Birmingham Conservatoire was a lovely venue and the organisers had even arranged for us to have representatives from the venue for the day to assist us in finding our way around.

Melanie Mehta gave an introduction to the day's proceedings and rightfully predicted that with a small group of us in attendance, we should be able to fit a lot in to the day. The day was split into two, with presentations in the morning and case studies after lunch.

The first presentation encompassed all three areas of my work and passions - a SLT in collaboration with a Voice Coach working together with performers. It was aptly named 'Building Bridges' and was jointly delivered by Amanda Carr (Speech Therapist at University Hospital, Bristol, with a keen interest in working with performers) and Carol Fairlamb (Head of Voice at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School). They discussed working with performers in training and the various issues that affect their voices. It is great that the students at Bristol Vic are not only getting their training from such a passionate voice coach but also help is at hand, when required, from a specialist Voice SLT with an interest in working with elite vocal performers. Their presentation discussed that this collaborative approach is thought to be an effective way of not only remediating students' voice issues, but also in going some way to prevent any pathologies occurring. That is, the healthy voice use message is being reinforced by the SLT whilst taking care not to undermine any of the vocal concerns amongst the students, or 'over-medicalising' their issues and perhaps worrying them unnecessarily!

Jenny Nemko works as a 'Voice and Professional Development Coach'. Her presentation on 'Voice Work for Academics' covered her work with lecturers, the types of issues they faced and how they worked together on overcoming such issues. One of the

"The sub-title of this course, Voice Teachers and Speech Therapists explore their professional boundaries and share skills and techniques, was one that immediately peaked my curiosity."



Jenny Nemko

issues she mentioned was that some lecturers are younger than their students and this can at times be intimidating for her clients. Therefore, a lot of the work covered in her sessions is about building confidence. I was really pleased to hear Jenny speak as I have found that a lot of the work I am doing now as a voice coach is very similar and I often struggle to give a name to what I do! I could relate to how she helps her clients work on their 'challenges' in the lecture theatre, building and enhancing their professional lives so that they can feel confident about themselves, enabling them to continue educating, informing and inspiring others.

Stammering and voice was the final presentation, delivered by Nicola Gorb (Highly Specialised SLT, Voice & Dysfluency, Great Ormond Street Hospital and Private Practice). Nicola covered the basics of stammering, how emotional health is affected and how expectations from clients/patients impact on the outcomes of various therapeutic techniques. Nicola's work draws on various therapeutic techniques such as Mindfulness and ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy). Again, low confidence and self-esteem issues came up in her presentation, highlighting that the work of SLTs and Voice Coaches have a similar core approach, but work from different areas of the spectrum from severe pathology to healthy, enhanced voices.

After lunch, case study work was done in mixed groups (SLTs, Voice Coaches and singers). We were asked to discuss the key challenges of the cases, then to explore one exercise per discipline and one exercise as a whole group that would benefit the client in the study. After the allotted time, we all came back together to present our findings. There was much fun in this part of the session and exercises were shared and discussed. The main comments were that people were pleased to know that others are doing similar types of work in their discipline, for example using a whole body approach. It was pleasant to know that we are doing similar exercises across disciplines with the same knowledge even when slightly different terminology was being used.

To conclude the day, we all seemed to have similar thoughts that the models of approach to therapy and coaching are similar. Both

disciplines work through an assessment process to discover areas of strength and need, and then begin work to remediate or enhance voice/vocal performance. Many of us also do regular review work to monitor change and it was thought on the day that our work is so similar that it was often difficult to distinguish between disciplines, except in cases where serious vocal pathology is apparent. We discussed as a group that it is the background knowledge (ie. whether we are trained in a medical or performance approach) that gives us our main differences in the way that we approach the issues that are presented to us.

Karen Lane gives her perspective

Karen is a Voice Coach, Singer and SLT

Carol Fairlamb (Head of Voice at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School) and Amanda Carr (Lead SLT Voice, University Hospital Bristol) presented "Building Bridges". A student-centred collaborative approach to voice work. They looked at traditional differences with regard to the way in which SLTs work (mending disordered voice) and voice teachers work (strengthening normal voice) and discussed how we could come together and learn valuable ideas and practice from each other. Whilst the voice coach can integrate recommendations from the ENT and SLT to help educate students about voice care and promote healthy practice to ensure longevity for the professional actor/singer. Collaborative voice clinics put the student/client at the centre of the work whilst the skill sharing can be rewarding and valuable for all those involved.

Jenny Nemko presented a specific case study where the client had become incredibly stressed by a demanding lecturing role and was finding the everyday stress of work a daunting fear-filled prospect. Jenny aimed to increase the client's self confidence by combining her voice work with a referral to her GP for CBT therapy. Voice work included education on how the voice works, balancing body and breath, developing vocal variety, pace, projection and the power of silence. This was combined with positive thinking, NLP and Alexander Techniques.

The final presentation was by Nicola Gorb, a SLT specialising in voice and dysfluency. Her interest and studies in psychotherapy and her clinical hypnotherapy qualifications have informed her work with voice clients and people who stammer. Nicola gave a dynamic update on stammering. She shared some case study videos of clients who stammer and an overview of therapy approaches such as block modification, avoidance reduction and vocal fold management. She discussed the need for education around the anatomy and physiology of the voice, developing kinaesthetic awareness, awareness of muscle tensions and experimenting with voice articulation and resonance. From my perspective, her talk specifically highlighted the importance of breath work with people who stammer as well as humming/ resonance work and freeing the voice, or whole body work (Christina Shewell/Rodenburg, etc). It struck me that people who stammer could have similar needs to that of a voice client. Again she highlighted the importance of considering psychotherapeutic approaches such as CBT, NLP, Hypnotherapy, Mindfulness and ACT.

5 MINUTE INTERVIEW

NIMESH PATEL

Consultant ENT

1. **When did you join the BVA?**
10 years ago.
2. **How did you find out about the Association?**
Colleagues.
3. **What led you to become a member of the Voice Clinics Working Party?**
Desire to contribute to the discipline and the BVA.
4. **How many meetings do you attend each year?**
1-2 BVA. Many other non-BVA meetings.
5. **What are your duties?**
Advice/debate ideas/ liaison with British Laryngological Association.
6. **How much time do you spend with your commitments to the WP in a week/ month?**
30 minutes a month.
7. **Why do you do this?**
See 3 (above)
8. **What advice would you give to new members wondering whether to put themselves forward for nomination to Council or offering to help with a BVA Working Party?**
The BVA needs your support; it will be more relevant to you if you are involved.



Nimesh Patel

9. **In a few words sum up how the BVA benefits you.**
Great way to learn from the huge wealth of diverse experience of the membership and council. Lively intellectual debate too. Excellent invited speakers.

BVA COURSE REVIEW

THE ACCENT METHOD

28/29 May plus 17 Sept 2014, Baden-Powell House Conference Centre, London

By Lucy Sealy

The Accent Method is a holistic therapy regime designed to co-ordinate respiration, phonation, articulation and resonance to produce clear and well modulated speech. It originated with Danish Phonetician, Svend Smith, and is widely used in Scandinavia and on the Continent. It is an effective rehabilitation technique for voice disorders and stammering, and has also been used as a valuable method of vocal training for healthy voices. Recent research shows that it is also effective for developing the dynamic range in performers. It is one of the few techniques that has been well researched and has a good evidence base.

Spending two days of my precious half-term with Sara Harris (Speech and Language Therapist) and Dinah Harris (Singing Teacher) and a group of voice practitioners of varying disciplines, has been extraordinarily relaxing, rewarding and highly informative. I arrived on day one with some knowledge of the Accent Method (courtesy of an introductory workshop given by Sara and Dinah for the Association of Teachers of Singing - AOTOS). It was enough to entice me into signing up for the BVA's 3 day course broken down into two consecutive days and 1 final day in three months time. I ended day one knowing that I had learnt more but not entirely sure what, how or why and, more importantly for me, was this going to be a practical method for me to use with some of my pupils, if not all? By the end of day two, I knew that I would, but I also knew that I had to do quite a bit of work on myself before I could. I also needed to slow right down. The Accent Method cannot be rushed, hence my slight uncertainty at the end of day one. It is about re-discovering your breath; listening to it; feeling it; sensing it and allowing it to occur without interference. I can concur that, for the singers in the group, this was harder than it sounds as, initially, the AM requires no effort at all. Forget about expanding your back and supporting every sound; we all had to re-find our natural elastic re-coil and just let it do its own thing. Of course, Sara and Dinah were not dismissing our combined years of technique but, rather, were encouraging us to peel back the layers and re-condition the muscles from the starting point. It was incredibly restful and, I might add, got rid of a headache I had developed earlier that day - quite a feat for a migraine sufferer! Sara and Dinah took us smoothly through theory, evidence, knowledge and practice. As a mixed group of singers, singing teachers, SLTs and others, there were, quite naturally, some aspects of the day's event which appealed more to some than others. Singing teachers generally felt more relaxed when 'in practice' than 'in theory', and, luckily for them, there were far more practical sessions than theory sessions. I think it was important to have both. Sara and Dinah provided a gentle pace, full of warmth and understanding which allowed for an infusion of information within an extraordinarily calm ambience. Their combined knowledge and practical



Sara Harris

experience gave the group an in-depth understanding of AM and they shared this freely and without restraint. I look forward to developing the AM myself over the next three months. With the added aid of a CD given to all and diagrams to help with the rhythmic drumming, I have no excuse but to discover the ability "to turn the tap on and leave it running" and enjoy "the squeeze of pleasure and delight". Any trouble-shooting will, no doubt, be fixed on day three with equally humorous and charming anecdotes.

BVA Study Day: Sunday 12 October 2014

VIBRATO!

The Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road
London SW7 2BS 10.50am to 5pm

Early bird rates – before 12 Sept

Members £95, Non-members £120, Students £50

Standard rates – from 12 Sept

Members £110, Non-members £135, Students £65

REBECCA MOSELEY-MORGAN

Voice teacher & voice researcher

TOM HARRIS

ENT Surgeon

DINAH HARRIS

Voice clinic singing coach and
Royal College of Music vocal
professor

SARA HARRIS

Specialist speech and language
therapist

RENEE TIMMERS

Senior lecturer in psychology of
music, University of Sheffield

RALPH ALLWOOD

Choral conductor and founder of
the Eton choral courses

LINDA HIRST

Mezzo-soprano and head of
vocal studies at Trinity Laban
Conservatoire

JAMES WEEKS

Conductor of EXAUDI vocal
ensemble and composer

MICHAEL EMERY

Senior producer at BBC Radio 3
including the BBC Singers

Subject to confirmation

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MEL MEHTA

BSc (Hons), MA (Voice Studies),
MRCSLT, MHCP

Specialist SLT and Voice Teacher of the
speaking voice

As most people say in these articles, each day is very different from the rest and mine is no different in that aspect.

Since 2003 I have been combining my work as a Specialist Speech & Language Therapist (SLT) in Voice with working as a Voice Teacher (VT) of the Speaking Voice, specifically working with acting students at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) in the Baron's Court area of London. There has always been a strong tradition of speech and language therapy at LAMDA and when I started, there were 3 of us – a bigger team than some NHS departments I hear some of you exclaim! Now, I'm the only one but I am in touch with my colleagues around the country for those moments when you think "hmmmm, not sure....".

My day starts with either a mad dash into the shower and a run for the train or with a trawl through emails/texts which have come in to see what needs to be attended to. I am a freelance worker based at home in terms of my administration and preparation, one of the juggles is the sorting out the demands on my time in both work and play. Until a couple of years ago I was working as a SLT for two days a week at Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation Hospitals Trust in conjunction with my other work.

My time is impacted upon by which term it is in the academic year, and which projects are being undertaken at LAMDA. A busy day may start by taking classes on pure voice which is my speciality. This includes areas like alignment, breathing, resonance and safe shouting (the current project with the 1st years). Each year group is divided into 2 halves and half have a class for 1.5 hours in, say, Voice whilst the other half have a class in, say, Movement and then there is a 15 minute break and the classes switch. So, I teach the same class twice but it is very different as you can imagine due to the different personalities in the group and the fact they have just come from a different discipline. The break can sometimes be spent chatting to students who have queries about the class just gone (if they didn't want to raise the question in front of the others) or specific vocal issues they may be having. At the beginning of the academic year, all the new students attend a lecture given by me entitled "Health & Wealth" when vocal hygiene is promoted and the importance of their voice for their future careers is stressed. I do include some "nasty" pictures/photos and videos in the presentation and often, 2 or 3 years later when they graduate, they will tell me that this is the thing they remember the most from that first week! There is a potentially difficult path to tread here. Whilst we want our students to take responsibility for their voice care and use, we also understand that they will be using their voices extensively within their training and also in their social lives, and so one doesn't want to stop them expressing themselves or feeling like their voices are too precious, thereby holding back on their personalities, but conversely, we need the students to



Mel Mehta

understand that they are vocal athletes and "no voice – no job" which also includes talking to agents, casting directors, venues, fliering (Edinburgh Festival for example) etc, the list is endless before you even get to the performance stage. We encourage their daily voice use to be as healthy as possible so that they can step up to the demands of rehearsals, different spaces as and when needed. However students want it all and now, and so the team involved with the students will work to help them maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of their own voices, to find a free voice and a voice which is theirs. As I will say to them "let the voice support your acting choices so that the work isn't a veneer, it's part of you". They then have to trust the work.

Lunch break is an hour (ha ha!) Sometimes, during that time, I will undertake a Voice Therapy session with a student who has been identified as needing additional input. This may range from work on their articulation or with some identified vocal pathology. LAMDA have always been so supportive of students in this area. If we have major concerns about the vocal quality of a potential student at the audition stage, we will have a chat with them and then may decide to ask them to attend their local Joint Voice Clinic (which is strongly recommended and the reasons explained to them) prior to them commencing their training, bringing with them any pictures and/or reports/letters from the clinic. We don't exclude them but explain that we need to know so we can facilitate them getting the most out of the training. Often students will not disclose recent vocal issues they have had or a previous diagnosis. Whilst we understand the many reasons for this, we try and encourage them to tell us so that we don't waste any time trying to find the most appropriate treatment for them.

The afternoon may entail teaching another class from a different year group or course or seeing students on a one to one basis. I am very lucky to get the opportunity to do this as LAMDA timetable in one to one work/tutorials with many of the year groups and so I get to meet with many of the students to discuss and work with their voices whether there is a perceived issue or not. This backs up the work they do in their classes

and they are encouraged to bring any questions or challenges as well as undertaking exercises which I feel will enable them to find a free, open, efficient and effective voice for their life long career – whatever that might be. Again, the afternoon is divided into two blocks of 1.5 hours and then there is a 30 minute break for dinner. The evening slot runs from 6-9pm with a very short break. I may be working with a class or one to one tutorials. If I'm doing a "night shift" as we call that slot, then I usually get out of the building by around 9.20pm and make my way to Charing Cross station (usually via a sweet shop for a boost!) and hopefully get the 10pm fast train home. Most times my husband can meet me at my home station and so I get home around 10.35pm.

Occasionally I get asked to attend other training establishments to work with students on a one to one basis if a particular vocal challenge has arisen. It's fascinating going into other schools and learning about the other courses and ways of training.

I have a small private practice consisting mainly of young actors or singers (in training, just about to attend training or who have never trained) or anyone who needs help with things like tongue & jaw tension or have other issues. I always have a chat first to see if I'm the right person to help them, if not, I

can usually find someone who is better able to help or I may feel that they need an ENT check up and will point them in the direction of their local Joint Voice Clinic.

As an amateur singer myself, I have a specialist interest in working with classical singers and students on their speaking voices. We all know how important that is and I encourage them to use what they know from singing and transfer it to the spoken voice.

So, on the days when I'm not working until 9pm, I get home and usually have some practice to do myself or sometimes I just glaze over and watch some useless TV. There maybe reports to write or letters/emails about other people I've been seeing. As a member of the BVA Education Working Party, there are sometimes things to do if I am involved in organising one of the forthcoming courses and I am a member of the Committee for a local musical club and so again, there may be a job or two to do there.

Bed calls, I'm bad at going to bed and often stay up into the early hours not achieving very much and hence the dash to the shower and train due to oversleeping... I think this is where we came in...

PAM PARRY

BVA Members share their memories

I worked with Pam on the BA Acting (Collaborative and Devised Theatre) pathway at Central School of Speech and Drama. What struck me about Pam's work was that in addition to being very skilled at developing the voices of actors in training, she actively embraced and acknowledged the skills that were already in place. This was such a powerful way of building confidence in this sometimes challenging subject area for actors. She is greatly missed.

I miss her warmth, listening ear and good humour so much.

Deborah Garvey

Pam's beaming smile was nearly always the first thing I saw on arrival at conferences, quickly followed by her warm embrace. She was such a vibrant and engaging personality, as well as being thoroughly professional when communicating her vast knowledge of voice to others. She gave encouragement and inspiration to all who came into contact with her, and we have truly lost a shining light from our

vocal community.
Alison Sutton

I'm just looking over the list of amazing people in your email and thinking that Pam's reach and influence is far and wide. It will continue.
Noel McPherson

Loss is always overwhelming, but more profound at significant times of year such as this.



Pam Parry

What stays with me of her is her wonderful sense of humour, a fabulous gift. *Emma Winscom*

I am so sad at Pam's loss, as I know we will all feel. She had a quality of such sunlight in her. It was entirely due to her that three years ago I was able to sing solo in front of 100 people for the first time in my life. And I know she has touched many lives in similar ways. *Christina Shewell*



SINGING: Personal and performance values in Training

Peter T Harrison

Dunedin, ISBN 978-1-78046-006-2

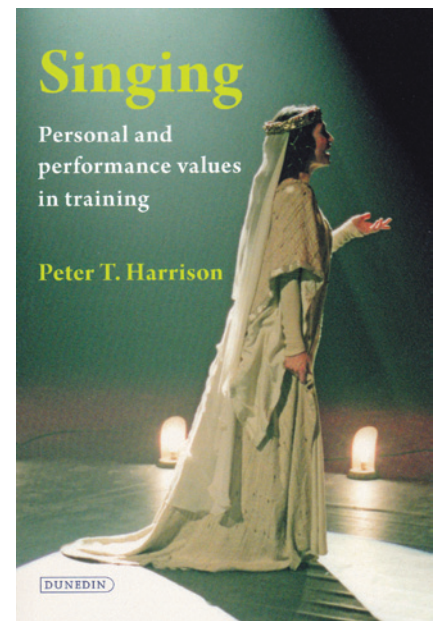
Reviewed by Dr Cate Madill

Singing is the most passionate form of conscious verbalised communication in the human species. It is therefore appropriate that a book on the singing voice be filled with passion – and this book is. *Singing: Personal and performance values in Training* is not for the faint hearted or those looking for a middle road. It is not a follow-by-numbers instruction book or a scientifically based explanation of the singing voice. It is a bold and decisive statement in which Peter Harrison puts pen to a deeply personal manifesto – an unashamed call to arms of what he feels should be occurring in the psyche, the mind, the heart and the life of every singing pedagogue. In every page there is a heartfelt claim about the singing voice; the condition and needs of the singer; the vulnerability of the developing singer; the appetites of the listening public that shape the singing landscape; the common science that informs and can mislead; the singing teachers and institutions; or, the meaning of what it is to sing. Myths are challenged, sacred cows threatened, and the gauntlet thrown down to many deeply held beliefs.

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1, *The Singing Voice*, includes consideration of a holistic view of the voice, the body and the self. In the section on *Physical Structure*, anatomical and physiological aspects of the mechanism are lyrically described;

unfortunately, these descriptions are reliant on older anatomical references and personal interpretations of scientific findings, which compromise the authority so firmly stamped throughout the text. His proposed translation of singing style to psychological function will be questioned by many; however, the section on false perspectives and misperceptions will resonate with many readers. Part 2, *The Work*, and Part 3, *Conditions*, are much clearer recommendations for singing teachers working in singing schools or working with singers in more traditional training contexts. In Part 4, *The Enshrining of Values*, Harrison focuses on the challenges and difficult questions with which singing pedagogues must wrestle. This section of the book, more than any other, calls us forth and demands accountability, integrity and deep self-reflection – the preparedness to take account of deeply held beliefs and allow some current knowledge to shine an intense and piercing light upon what we think we know. This is to be applauded and such courage revered. Harrison sets a high bar for the profession of singing pedagogues – to rightly honour the magnificence and complexity of what it is to sing. Such a worthy, yet Herculean, task will inspire and enthuse many readers.

Harrison's journey to achieve this vision is not without its pitfalls and distractions. His unfortunate lack of reference to what is a large, and in many cases compelling, body of recent scientific evidence in the areas of voice science, motor learning, psychology and systems theory, to support his ideas is disappointing and leaves a sense of opportunity lost. For example, the clarion call to train the singer to really hear and listen to the sound and the message, rather than focus on technique, is well supported



by the recent insights in motor learning in voice training. He confesses his ambivalence to scientific knowledge and investigation early in the book; however, scientists have been the sentinels of objectivity in this very passionate world, and are worthy of more than the lip service afforded in this edition.

That being said, this book is well overdue in the singing literature as it places the need of the singer, or singing student, at the centre. It challenges singing pedagogues to take moral inventory of their motives, the ethics of their behaviour, their attachments to schools of teaching, their knowledge of the vocal system, the place and use of science in an artistic expression that is fundamentally individual and unique. Harrison acknowledges that the reason we sing is to communicate the heightened emotion and passion that only the sung message can convey. Whether you agree with him or not – if you read, and reflect upon, his words you'll be a better singing teacher for it.

RESEARCH NEWS: Vocal Health of Choral Singers

Have you ever wondered what is happening to the voice of the average choral singer during rehearsal? Is the rehearsal paced to allow the singers adequate recovery time? What effect does different repertoire have on the health of the voice? Is Rock more tiring than Verdi? How many singers are even singing the right voice part in the choir?

A research team linked to York University will be undertaking a project to unravel some of these mysteries: Professor David Howard, Dr Gillyanne Kayes, Dr Jenevora Williams, Dr Helena Daffern with Dr Christian Herbst joining us from Salzburg.

The methodology starts with a simple survey of choral singers. We are hoping for thousands of responses to this, is takes about 90 seconds to complete and will give a baseline

for more detailed assessment of voices. If anyone has contacts in amateur choirs, please can you forward them this link? <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ChoirSinging>

The next stage will be to work with three choirs, hopefully a ladies barbershop group, a rock choir and a choral society. The singers from these choirs will fill out a more detailed vocal health survey. Twelve singers will volunteer to be recorded, aurally and with a laryngograph, for the duration of a rehearsal. They will also visit a hospital ENT clinic for a nasendoscopy examination. This will give a large amount of detailed information from which we hope to gain more insight into the vocal activity and the vocal health of these singers. We will have some answers within a year, and probably many more questions.

CHORAL PEDAGOGY

3rd Edition

Brenda Smith, DMA, Robert
Thayer Sataloff, MD

Plural Publishing,
ISBN13: 978-1-59756-535-6

Reviewed by
Dr Gillyanne Kayes

Given the explosion of interest in singing generated by TV programmes such as *The Choir*, *The Voice*, *X-Factor*, *Pop Idol* and the *Glee Project*, the opportunity to review this 3rd edition of *Choral Pedagogy* is timely.

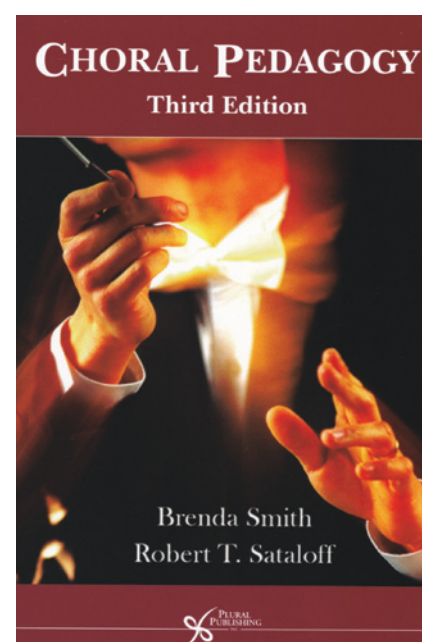
The book is aimed primarily at the amateur choral singer, choral leaders, educators and choral conductors. The vast majority of choral singers are untrained and non-professional, therefore reliant on their conductor for vocal guidance. The authors stress that the tasks and responsibilities of the choral conductor are different from those of an orchestral conductor, since the former must “incorporate healthy vocalism in each rehearsal” and learn to use their own voices well. Choral conductors also need to be good communicators, ensuring that language and terminology is appropriate to the group they are working with.

The second section of the book deals with vocal health and pedagogy. Care has been taken to explain the principles of vocal function in user-friendly language via a series of questions as sub-headings; similarly for the chapter on medical care of voice disorders. A new and extensive chapter on hearing loss offers a clear and accessible exposition of the hearing system, and an informative section on different categories of hearing impairment. A chapter on seating problems is short and sweet but worth attention with its practical (and inexpensive) suggestions for eliciting a more forward sitting posture to avoid back pain and maximise breathing efficiency when seated for rehearsal. The chapter on choral pedagogy and vocal health gives sound advice and specifics on appropriate warm up and cool down exercises for choirs. It is also encouraging to see a chapter on the ageing voice, with suggestions for ways to adapt music, part singing and pitch range for older singers, to keep

them active in the choral community. As a genre-eclectic teacher, while I might take issue that the goal of healthy singing is the “achievement of a flowing legato line” I was happy to see a clear directive to conductors of separating the tasks of rhythm and melody in music learning, this advice given in chapters on training for adults as well as children. I was very much looking forward to the new chapter on Singing in the 21st century, hoping for an exposition of different musical styles and how these might be achieved in ensemble singing. The main focus of this chapter, however, was on the effect of TV programmes listed at the top of the review, now prevalent across much of the globe. Many vocal educators will applaud Brenda Smith’s point that the notoriety which such programmes can afford overshadows the reality of healthy singing. In particular, there is a real danger of exploitation of the marketable skill of the talented child singer.

The final section of the book deals with the vocal approach to choral music. I particularly liked the chapter on voice building for choirs, which gives a range of exercises for specific situations in response to questions used as sub-headings. There is also a chapter on rehearsal techniques, similarly structured, offering an excellent resource to choral conductors.

Overall, the book is well-written, clearly structured and packed with information, definitely a useful resource. There is however a caveat: I felt there was an underlying assumption throughout the book that the best – and healthiest way to sing – is to develop the timbres of Western Lyric singing (only without the vibrato!). In the concluding chapter on lifelong singing, we are told that “the hallmark of the bel canto ideal is longevity”, leaving the reader to wonder if the opposite is also true. I particularly took exception to Vincent Oakes’ advice to develop children’s voices with a ‘pure’ and ‘natural’ tone especially when the exercises offered for this purpose make it clear that the required tone is that of ‘head register’. Given that here is currently a renaissance in choral singing, with many of the choirs wanting to sing show, rock and pop music I had hoped that, in the 21st century, a more inclusive approach to genre might have been reflected in this text.



diary dates

VIBRATO!

12th October 2014
The Royal College of Music,
Prince Consort Road, London SW7 2BS
Often mentioned yet seldom discussed, this study day offers a comprehensive and frank exploration of vibrato in classical singing. Speakers and singers will dissect how and why vibrato happens and its role in clinics and teaching studios. There will be examples of, and discussion about, vibrato in the context of solo, ensemble and choir music making (*see also page 8 of this issue*).

VOICE CLINICS FORUM 2014

Fri 21st November, 2014. The Governor’s Hall, St Thomas’s Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road. London SE1 7EH

Topics under discussion include: the multidisciplinary management of post operative patients (including voice rest/post operative voice therapy), the multidisciplinary management of chronic cough, Speech Therapy led voice services: the pros and the pitfalls and current trends in phonosurgery. Please note: these topics may be subject to change. We are also planning a session for recent audit/research papers. If you have anything you would like to present please let us know at: administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk.

See our website for more information and application forms (when available)

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Copy deadline for the next issue: October 15th 2014