

# COMMUNICATING VOICE

SUMMER 2016  
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The journal of **the british voice association** – the UK's voice for voice



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*Cover photo: Ed Blake at the Association's 'Voice and the Neck' Study Day – Sunday 8th May 2016, London.*

## EDITORIAL

World Voice Day was celebrated, as always, on April 16th this year and reports of events held by British Voice Association members from within the UK, Germany and Australia, feature in this edition. It's exciting to see the diversity of the material involved which included concerts, Master Classes, presentations and film.

My contribution for 2016, in my capacity as a Singing Teacher, Vocal Coach and Vocal Rehabilitator is a short video featuring my work with a client, talking about my approach and tips for keeping the voice healthy. Take a look at: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=QFtajV2ZXw8>

Here's hoping that more members are inspired to plan ahead for the 2017 special day in the world of voice.

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# The President's Address



Being President of the British Voice Association has been a totally humbling and slightly overwhelming honour and privilege. This organisation helped me meet the colleagues, mentors and friends that have helped me grow as a practitioner for the last decade. I met people like Tom and Sara Harris, Nick Gibbins and Tori Burnay because of my involvement in the Association. These guys and so many others have given me extraordinary amounts of time and guidance that has been priceless. This networking, mentorship and sense of community is really at the heart of the Association's offering to members. I feel this is a key part of the message each one of us needs to be sending to new and developing voice practitioners.

It's no secret that our membership is retiring faster than it is replenishing. That breaks my heart. Consumer data from the Higher Education Authority is showing that 18–25 year olds' consumption habits are changing. Ten years ago they reported celebrity endorsement as being a key part of their buying. This year they report that their key influences are longevity, experience and personal recommendation. Kids are getting smarter. We need, and I mean every single one of us, not just Council, we all need to sell this organisation to the next generation of members based on our longevity and experience. Our members are our most valuable assets. We need to be unapologetic about letting people know that the Association's membership is the cream of the crop in multi-disciplinary voice; that our members bring together an unfathomable level of talent, skill, drive and curiosity. Every young voice user or voice practitioner should want to be a part of that: to learn from the experts, to grow meaningful collaborative relationships and to make lifelong friends in the process.

Every member shares the responsibility of growing our membership and moving our organisation into the future so that it can do for the next generation of Voice, what it has done so well for all of us.

DANE CHALFIN

# VOICE & THE NECK

## Report by Deborah Hudson

This stimulating study day combined an examination of the mechanics of sound making with an exploration of how the function of the body as a whole influences how we perform.

The first speaker was Nick Gibbins, Consultant ENT and Voice Surgeon, from University Hospital Lewisham. His lecture explained the mechanics of the voice, covering Anatomy, Movement, Interactions and Physiology. Since our afternoon session would include a workshop on Palpatory Laryngeal Assessment he explained in more detail the workings of the extrinsic muscles affecting the larynx and vocal folds. These he grouped into three main areas: those attached to the floor of the mouth and base of the tongue, those attached to the base of the skull and those onto the vertebrae with the respective functions of elevating or depressing the larynx and of holding it back. I found this description very useful. He often referred to the need for surgeons to “keep things simple” (which really is a most generous understatement!), making me feel much better about finding the complexities of our muscle structure pretty daunting. He then went on to talk about the different wave forms and resonating areas that make our sound unique and how we create the famous “singer’s formant” where (on a good day!) a singer can ping their voice out over an orchestra. Ultimately, as Nick pointed out, the skill for a professional singer is reliably to co-ordinate everything including tongue position, shape of the larynx, the onset, glottal attack and offset etc. It was great to hear such a supportive approach to singers’ difficulties, recognising how a tiny vocal problem makes the difference between being able or not being able to work. Finally, he touched on those patients who present with a vocal problem that is actually being caused by something sited further away in the body. For these, albeit uncommon situations, he personally recommended a Kinetic Chain Assessment.

This clear and open approach was very much appreciated and led nicely into the lecture by Ed Blake. Ed’s physiotherapy practice, specialising in musculo-skeletal voice



Nick Gibbins and Sara Harris – palpatory assessment

disorders, is well-known to my singing students as most of them spend too much time on their laptops and mobile phones. Ed always treats the presenting problem first but if it doesn’t go away, he looks along the causal chain to find the primary trigger. He stressed the importance of muscle balance and how posture and training can affect it.

For example, in order to achieve consistency in performance it’s necessary to repeat the same action. This can lead to a muscle imbalance. Although the body is brilliant at compensating for a given time, after a while the muscles will complain. For singer’s in particular, most problems occur because of a high larynx. The muscles above the hyoid can tighten up and those below find it hard to compensate resulting, for the singer, in the loss of the high register. Ed pointed out that there are tell-tale patterns of pain. For example if there’s (not sharp) pain while swallowing which goes up into the head and temples it’s likely to be the result of strap muscle tension.

The larynx is very vulnerable to changes in head and neck positions. The most common problem is the forward chin caused by staring at mobiles and computers, driving, high heels, costumes, raked stage etc. This forward posture causes the tightening of the sternocleidomastoid (SCM) muscle setting off a tension chain resulting in the vocal folds being unable properly to stretch. Stimulating the SCM can work in the short term to remove the vocal range restrictions. Longer term the body must be allowed to re-balance between performances through specific exercises and rest. Ed also touched on the importance of regulating sub-glottal pressure. Too much can cause the SCM to tighten up in strain. In my experience unsupervised training at the gym can be a big



Palpatory Assessment workshop

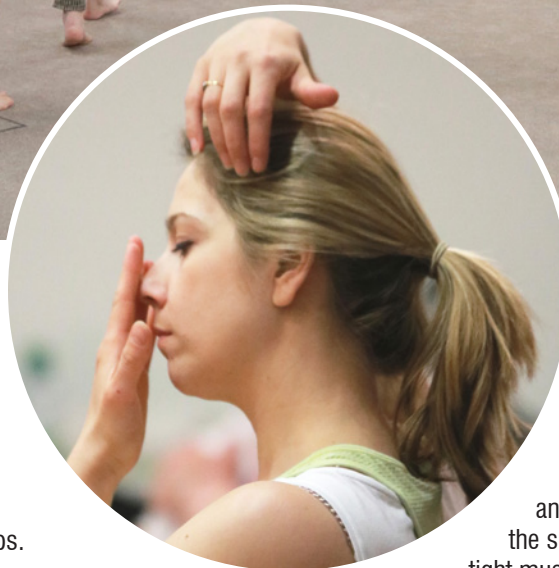




(above) Mandy Demetriou  
Movement Workshop

culprit! At the end of this excellent explanation of how we use and abuse our muscles I was struck by how much we expect of those tiny vocal folds.

After lunch the afternoon session was divided into three experiential workshops. The first I attended was the Palpatory



(inset left) Feldenkrais exercise

Assessment with Nick Gibbins, Sara and Tom Harris. We worked in pairs and our first direction was to look for any obvious asymmetry in the jaw and neck position. My partner, it seemed to me, had a perfect neck and no tension at all! No jaw rigidity and the suspensory muscles seemed fine. A tight muscle feels hard and lumpy. I felt my own neck for the hyoid. Horror! Perhaps I did not have one! With a bit more prodding and some help

from Nick I was able to find something which I think was the hyoid. Singers do have strong muscles around the hyoid so it can be harder to find. My speech therapist partner's neck continued to be perfect, there was the hyoid no problem. So then we tried wiggling the larynx and learned that those clicks are a healthy sign. We were warned where not to press and how to feel for the muscles at the sides of the head without squashing anything important. Sadly, the time was very soon gone. I could have spent much, much longer getting to know how everything feels and am tempted to do some further training.

My next workshop session was with dancer, teacher and choreographer Mandy Demetriou. We started with some stretches and gentle movements to her specially selected sound tracks. She introduced us back into the world of fun and playfulness so necessary to liberate the creative juices. Mandy is herself an inspiration. Having suffered a broken back she trained herself back to health and is an amazingly energetic, supple and understanding teacher. She coaxed us all into become more expansive in our movements and more graceful, bringing the whole body back into harmony, expressivity and balance. We came out feeling refreshed and liberated from that singers' bane – the overcritical mind. Our final workshop was with singer, teacher and



Anita Morrison



Feldenkrais practitioner Anita Morrison. With her calm tones Anita introduced us to the idea of noticing, questioning and registering sensations. This Mindfulness of movement is fundamental to the Feldenkrais approach which seeks to encourage confidence through gently experimenting how the body feels as it works in different ways. There were some very interesting exercises including one where we were invited to draw a circle round the index finger using the head. At a time when we are always trying hard to get something “right” the idea that all discovery is good is very refreshing. I really enjoyed this day and many thanks to all those who made it happen.

## Further comments from REBECCA SCHWARZ

There were lots of key moments, and a fair few a-ha moments but I was particularly excited about learning to palpate a larynx.

Nick Gibbons demonstrated the techniques on Sara Harris, instructing us on how to put the palpated person at ease like standing behind them, never putting both hands on their throat but if you need to, never apply pressure on both sides at the same time. That said it did look like Nick was strangling Sara but she didn’t seem to mind.

Then it was time for us to do the palpating and my bravado disappeared. I felt really shy. The person I sat next to, Tim, said he would let me go first so I cleaned my hands and tried to pluck up courage. However Sara came over and said Tim should go first as he was an Osteopath!

After a morning of sitting I was more than ready to get physical in the afternoon sessions. Mandy Demetriou was so enthusiastic and encouraging you couldn’t help but go with the flow. As the session progressed I could see even the most reticent participants getting involved and by the end we were making movements that felt attractive, and



Mandy Demetriou

responsive to the music. Since the course I’ve used some of the exercises to warm up my choir especially the idea of using the weight of our head to increase the stretch. I hope, when I gain more experience of teaching these, I will be able to convey them with the same amount of élan as Mandy.

The forum panel (left-to-right) Tom Harris, Sara Harris, Anita Morrison, Mandy Demetriou



# WORLD VOICE DAY 2016

World Voice Day celebrates healthy voices and highlights the importance of voice at work and in society – it began in Brazil, then spread to the USA and all around the world. Every year this Association produces a voice information leaflet for World Voice Day, this year's focuses on less common vocal problems such as vocal fold cysts, sulci and scarring, the effect these problems have on the voice and how they are diagnosed and treated – the leaflet is available in printed form and also as a download from [britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/free.htm](http://britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/free.htm). Details of the Editor's contribution to World Voice Day 2016 can be found on page 2 (Editorial).



## Oxford, UK

By Rebecca Mosely-Morgan

On Sat 16th April we celebrated with an evening entitled 'Where Singers and Scientists Meet' at Oak House, Kidlington near Oxford. The evening opened with supper and a chance for all the guests to chat with the speakers and to browse the BVA leaflets which were on display.

I opened the evening with a talk entitled 'a nugget of science' in which I examined 6 scientific facts and the how they had transformed my teaching methods.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Declan Costello who showed video footage of live stroboscopy and spoke about the most common problems that could occur with the vocal folds. For many of the guests, this was the first time they had ever seen any images of the vocal folds and they were absolutely fascinated and asked Declan many questions after his talk.

After a short break, I welcomed my final guest, mezzo soprano Sally Burgess. I interviewed Sally about her amazing career, and in particular about how she looked after her voice and how it stood up to the

Rebecca Moseley-Morgan



Declan Costello

rigours of performing a demanding role.

The evening concluded with Sally giving a truly inspiring masterclass with 3 young singers, Thomas Edmonds (tenor), Shelly Cox (mezzo) and Camilla Jeppeson (soprano).

Sally Burgess





## Lancaster, UK

For World Voice Day this year, Kelly Anne Sharp and Ben Hennessy-Garside teamed up to deliver a workshop in Lancaster entitled “Learn Voice on World Voice Day” Kelly Anne and Ben are two independent voice professionals local to Lancaster (Lancashire, UK). During the event, they covered the following:

- Warming up and cooling down.
- How to “support” the voice.
- Vocal health, care and maintenance.
- Creating different vocal sounds.

### Who they are:

Ben Hennessy-Garside gained his degree in Music Production in 2006 and a PGCE in 2008. He’s been a music educator ever since, working with classes & in one to one settings. Alongside looking after his son, he is currently a lecturer in voice, working with undergraduates at Leeds College of Music.

Kelly Anne Sharp began her career as a drama voice coach and singer, gaining qualifications in music theatre in 2000 and a degree in Speech and Language Pathology in 2009. She now has over 22

years experience of coaching voices in creative and corporate settings and is the director of Voice Work.

### Examples of feedback received on the day:

*‘It was great! Coaches are very friendly, welcoming and fun! I felt very confident and comfortable, I even sang in front of strangers and I never ever do that!’*

*‘Ben Hennessy-Garside and Kelly Anne Sharp created an open and relaxed atmosphere that enabled all participants to have a go.’*

*‘I feel I will take away something that will facilitate me to improve my overall singing ability and guide me in the direction I wish to go.’*

*‘I have learned that I am not tone deaf... Really enjoyed today – I will practise the warm up/down.’*



## Hampshire, UK

### By The Igloo Choir

The Igloo Choir is part of Igloo Music UK, and we sing together for pleasure, stress relief, health, friendship and creativity. We write our own songs together collaboratively, and perform at charity and community events. We celebrated World Voice Day at The Spring Arts and Heritage Centre, Havant, Hampshire, UK.

We invited members of the public to join us for a rehearsal and celebrated the sound of the human voice, by learning from scratch an a capella vocal arrangement of The Pink Panther theme tune, made

entirely of nonsense words. This was musically, vocally and mentally challenging! At the end of the day, the choir gave a short private performance of our original works to our guest members. All participants were exhausted by the end of it, but had a great time and great sense of achievement.

*“Very friendly and enjoyable”* Anna, guest member

*“Sounded great - I really enjoyed it!”*

Viv, choir member

*“Everyone worked very hard as the content was much more challenging today - the harmony intervals are tricky and having no words at all is very hard for some people! We had a great day and were thrilled to welcome some guest singers with us”.*

## Hamburg, Germany

### By Craig Lees

For World Voice Day 2016 I was invited to present a workshop on Primal Sound & Choral Pedagogy at the Hamburg Symposium at Deutsche Stimmklinik in Germany. Other presenters included Professor Marcus Hess (who also organised the event), Cathrine Sadolin and beatboxer Tobias Hug.



The feedback from the workshop was overwhelmingly positive and I have made some great connections with singers, teachers and SLT professionals.

# WORLD VOICE DAY 2016

# Melbourne, Australia

By Leslie Cartwright

I am a Voice teacher at the National Theatre Drama School where we train professional actors in an accredited, three year, full-time program. We celebrated World Voice Day with first year actors in a special, two-hour session. Starting with a warm-up that focused on spontaneous, creative vocal response; followed by giving voice to (reading aloud) a selection of excerpts by Australian writers; and in the final component, addressed voice care, particularly in relation to acting. The students were most interested in the Vocal Health and Voice Care aspects.

# Harrow, UK

By John Ling

Harrow Philharmonic Choir organised an open choral afternoon on 16 April, devoted to a rehearsal and then a performance of the Mozart Requiem. Over 60 singers attended; the four soloists gave their services free. It was an enjoyable and rewarding occasion.



# WORLD VOICE DAY 2016

## Revised Advertising Policy

Once a British Voice Association meeting is underway on any one given day, flyers and pamphlets for courses or materials in which that day's speakers or delegates are directly involved may be displayed (preferably on a separate table or at least a separate section of the registration area to separate them from Association materials). Otherwise flyers and pamphlets for non Association courses or about non Association materials should not be displayed at Association meetings but they can be put into delegate packs for a fee (as materials were at the PEVOC meeting).

All non Association materials (about products, courses, publications and suchlike related to the field of Voice) can henceforth be emailed to the Association membership through the Association office. All such emails will be sent from the [advertising@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](mailto:advertising@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk) email address.

Association members will have a preferential rate for such emails, that rate currently being set at £75. The rate for non-members, will be £150. Materials should be submitted electronically to: [administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](mailto:administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk) and will be reviewed for compliance (that they relate to the field of Voice). Emails will take place at a rate not to exceed 1 per week.

When an institution/person wishes to advertise a position vacant on this page, advertising will consist of an email of their advertisement to all Association members. The cost for this will be £185. Corporate members of the Association will be able to avail themselves of this positions vacant facility without charge. Emails will be sent once. All such emails will be sent from the [advertising@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](mailto:advertising@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk) email address.

Should anyone wish the Association to post materials to all UK Voice Clinics, the charge for that will be £125. A sufficient quantity of flyers will need to be supplied to the Association. Flyers in a delegate pack at Association meetings can be inserted at a charge of 60p per flyer and a sufficient quantity of flyers needs to be supplied to the BVA in timely fashion.

## FORTHCOMING ASSOCIATION EVENTS

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

### THE ACCENT METHOD: A 3-day course

Wednesday 13th July and Thursday 14th July 2016 plus Thursday 5th January 2017 – The Priory Rooms Meeting & Conference Centre, 40 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AF.

The Accent Method is a holistic therapy regime designed to co-ordinate respiration, phonation, articulation and resonance to produce clear and well modulated speech. The aim of this course is to set out the rationale, on which the Accent Method is based, to allow delegates to experience the technique themselves and provide them with practical skills and tools to bring into their own area of work.

### METHOD IN THE MADNESS: An introduction to research and audit

Saturday 24th September 2016 – Baden Powell House, 65-67 Queen's Gate, London SW7 5JS

Multidisciplinary study day suitable for all those working with voices who are interested in carrying out research or in auditing their work.

### VOICE CLINICS FORUM 2017

Friday 13th January 2017 – The Governor's Hall, St Thomas's Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7EH

Topics in planning include: A Debate: *This house believes that professionals working in a voice clinic should demonstrate fulfilment of a set of core competencies – the case for and against*; A multidisciplinary panel discussion of four difficult cases and their management and *vocal biomechanics: are vocal gestures meaningful? If so, which ones and why?*

Further information and booking forms also available from [administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk](mailto:administrator@britishvoiceassociation.org.uk)