



Royal Conservatoire
of Scotland

GROWING VOICES

**Nadine George Technique:
The evolution of its influence
in training and performance**

**Compiled and edited by Professor Ros Steen
Head of Research and the Centre for Voice in Performance**

**“YOU HAVE TO
EMBODY YOURSELF -
LIFE WITH WORK
IS THE REALITY.”**

Nadine George



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Principal's Foreword

I feel totally engaged with the work that follows. My immersion in it has been intensely intimate and personal and I am certain that the world would be a better place if this voice work and the practice it involves were to become universal. For the work contained in these pages maps the most important journey of human life on earth: the journey to the centre of self.

The first time Nadine George worked with me a light bulb went off in my head. The electrical shock of the voltage charge was transformational as I reached far into my gut to find my head. Nadine made me realise what I had inside me. She helped me look deep inside my brain to find the simplicity I needed to articulate the role that had been thrust upon me as Principal by a determinant roll of the dice. It was an intense moment that brought personal enlightenment.

Nadine's inspiring work on voice made me realise that her previous work with Roy Hart, the motivation behind Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, had spirited into existence a core methodology of self-determination that ran through all the principles of conservatoire education. Everything hung on the *voice*, that *individual voice*, whether you expressed it through playing harp, piano, violin, singing tenor, acting, dancing, lighting, prop making, costume making, designing, directing, film making. It also made me develop my understanding of Jacques Lecoq, seeing his *tout bouge* terminology from a totally different perspective as something which could be applied across all art forms.

Nadine helped bring fresh thinking to our conservatoire as we continue to adapt to the challenges that we face as human beings in the changing environments of the twenty-first century. She helped to catalyse change within our culture and our understanding of why we do what we do: her work wholly underpins our new curriculum. And it is this work that is celebrated in the pages that follow.

Professor John Wallace CBE
Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
 Conservatoire Rìoghail na h-Alba

Section 1

GERMINATION

**“Most days now I had a curious feeling in my heart:
 a sense of near-excitement tempered with something
 like fear, or perhaps even something close to lunacy.
 I felt I had the potential to do almost anything . . .”**

From *Super Girl* by Ruth Thomas,
 Literary Fellow, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Prologue

Professor Maggie Kinloch

Almost seven years ago, when Professor Steen and I first discussed the idea of Nadine George as an International Fellow, in our wildest dreams we could not have imagined the transformational impact she and her methods would have on our voice work, on the culture of our institution, on our practice-based research and on our core pedagogy. Her work sits firmly at the heart of our performer training now, our voice staff are all trained in her practice and our pedagogical approach has evolved as a consequence. However, her impact goes way beyond this core aspect. Our work in the relationship between voice and body has grown and the way in which we have been able to 'fuse' her work with that of our other Fellows, the Lecoq family, has seen a transformation in philosophy of performer training. Further still, through Professor Steen's personal research with this work, we have been enabled to contribute to the transformation of Scottish theatre practice. And finally, Nadine has offered one-to-one sessions to so many staff, the Principal and myself included, and this has changed a fundamental cultural understanding of the relationship between the voice, the body and the soul. Nadine and her work have transformed us; she is very much part of this brave new Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and I shall be forever grateful to her for that gift.

Professor Maggie Kinloch, Vice Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Proper sowing

Take no thought of the harvest, But only of proper sowing.

From *The Rock* by T.S. Eliot

Professor Ros Steen

Sometimes bombshells take a little time to explode.

I saw Nadine George from the Roy Hart Theatre yesterday ... I gave her your name and she might contact you ... I thought you might like to be in touch.¹

So scribbled Cicely Berry at the bottom of a letter of thanks to me as the sponsor of her Fellowship from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD), now known as the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS). A little later, Nadine wrote her own letter of introduction explaining that she had been a founder member of the Roy Hart Theatre in France and one of Roy's original pupils. Now she was returning to this country 'to teach and perform in my own language' and was interested in giving a workshop for our students.

There had been a previous Roy Hart workshop at the Academy led by alumna Linda Wise who, as it happens, had been a fellow student of mine on the School of Drama's DSD course.² Although I had found the work interesting it remained tangential to my teaching. When Linda decided not to give further workshops at the School it left the way clear for Nadine to approach us. But although Nadine and I were in correspondence about the matter, it was not until she based herself in the UK in 1990 that she taught her first workshop at the School. She had already begun to develop her technique at the University of Birmingham out of the European-based work she had studied with Roy allied to her British classical voice training, and her workshop was therefore very different in content and feel from Linda's.

If I had known that an explosion was about to take place in my life, I might have recorded the date in my diary. I did not and it remains lost in time. The experience it detonated, however, was unforgettable. I watched Nadine work with my students and by the end all I wanted to know was how to do what she was doing - because she was reaching the parts other voice work wasn't reaching and opening my students in a way I knew should be possible and now was.

1 Cicely Berry to Ros Steen, 5 July 1987. Berry had been one of George's teachers when she studied at Central School of Speech and Drama and along with Gwyneth Thurburn had been an important influence on her. She was Head of Voice at the Royal Shakespeare Company at that time.

2 We both studied on the Diploma in Speech and Drama (DSD) course at RSAMD from 1969 to 1972.

The following year she returned and I had my first lesson. I didn't understand the work exactly - well truthfully I didn't really understand it at all - but I knew it was crucial to me because it *was* me. It was as simple - and profound - as that. The connection between me and my voice was raw and pure, unmediated by thoughts of what I should sound like or was trying to sound like or what other people told me to sound like. It was the physical expression of myself and my creative energy made audible, linked directly and artistically to the speaking of text. I later wrote:

*The work, and through it my relationship with Nadine herself, changed my understanding of voice, my understanding of how to teach and, perhaps most crucially of all, my own understanding of who I was.*³

In 1992, an international voice seminar called *Theatre Voice* was organised by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and both Nadine and Jean Moore (my Head of Voice) were invited to be on the faculty. They met in person for the first time and Jean gave Nadine's work her fullest support by inviting her to become a regular guest lecturer, conducting a fortnight of intensive workshops annually which later expanded to six weeks. This regular commitment meant that Nadine's work at the School could be built slowly over an extended period of time alongside the voice department's mainstream British voice teaching. For Nadine:

*... having taught there and worked with Ros and Jean, I knew that they had created a very good and serious voice department and I hoped that my work could slowly be integrated into the department's teaching.*⁴

Nadine had founded her own organisation now known as Voice Studio International in 1990. The first workshop for teachers was held in 1996 and I was invited to participate. I worked alongside colleagues from Sweden, Denmark and France. At the end of the first day I wrote in my journal:

It is clear that a great feeling of respect for us all underlies the day. It is the first time I have been to something like this and not felt my own experience slightly diminished by being on the receiving end of the knowledge.

The workshop proved pivotal. It not only began to consolidate my prior experience of the work from my own and the students' lessons, it started to crystallise my understanding of the work through conversations with Nadine in which I tried to pin down in words what she inherently knew and understood by instinct.

It's a role I continue to occupy and such discussions have characterised our relationship ever since:

Me (being practical): What do you mean when you say 'an opening'?

NG (pause): Well, you're asking a very important question. I'll have to think about that.

3 RS testimonial, Voice Studio International website: <http://www.voicestudiointernational.com/index.php/testimonials/>

4 From an early version of *My Life with Voice*, Nadine George, 2005.

After the workshop I felt I had reached the point where I needed to integrate this work into my own teaching. After an excellent foundation year in mainstream voice work with Jean Moore and an introduction to Nadine George Technique (NGT) by Nadine herself, the first-year acting students came to me in their second and third years where I taught them the work mediated by my own experience and practice. Consequently, when Nadine returned to teach the cohort she could go more deeply into the technique while continuing our conversations as to how the work should be integrated into a conservatoire setting.

At the same time I had begun to research and develop my own approach to the work in professional theatre contexts, focusing on the use of the vocal technique as a medium of rehearsal in a range of seminal Scottish theatre productions such as *Knives in Hens*, *Heritage*, *Solemn Mass for a Full Moon in Summer* and *Black Watch*. This innovative voice practice led to the evolution of the role of specialist voice person into creative collaborator in production and even co-director.⁵ In 2003, I started a voice research workshop group for professional actors in Scotland. Many of the group have been members from the beginning and work alongside their younger counterparts sharing the depth of their embodied knowledge and understanding openly and without a sense of ego. Written and verbal reflections about their continued experience of the process and use of it in their professional careers have added immeasurably to my practice and research of the work's application to theatre:

*Someone spoke of how, when using the voice work on our own ... it seems so much more limited than what we achieve in our group workshops. It feels to me like we each have a palate of colours and textures which we use when we speak, work, communicate with others, perform ... and in the workshop we take out our palate and refine it, alter it, develop it so that next time we engage in our 'routine' vocal practice we are equipped with something different (and hopefully deeper and more interesting) without having to give it any thought.*⁶

In 2006 - the year the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) was established - the Voice department at the Conservatoire evolved into the Centre for Voice in Performance, the national centre of excellence for the teaching, practice and research of voice in performance. At the heart of the Centre was the adoption of NGT as the core vocal practice on all of the School of Drama's performance programmes: Acting, Contemporary Performance Practice, Musical Theatre (BA and MA) and Masters in Classical and Contemporary Text. The RCS, the first conservatoire in the UK to pioneer Nadine George's technique in its voice curriculum, was thus also the first to establish it as its mainstream practice and the focus of its practice-led research. As a result voice teachers have come to observe and study our work from Australia, South Africa, the USA, Sweden and Canada and we have become leaders in the discourses of vocal pedagogy and voice research.

5 For a fuller discussion see a range of research papers on the Centre for Voice in Performance website: <http://www.rcs.ac.uk/aboutus/research/centreforvoice/research.html>

6 Email from David Gallagher to Ros Steen, 20 May 2012.

Two years later, in 2008, Nadine became the first International Fellow in Voice at the Conservatoire⁷ and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in formal recognition of her service to the arts; in particular for the rigour, depth and complexity of her lifelong contribution to international work on the human voice. In addition to her master classes for students she now worked with a range of individuals within the institution - including the Principal - and with cross-curricular groups of staff, thereby facilitating a closer integration of voice with other performance training disciplines. This was to make a significant contribution to the Conservatoire's new curriculum with its emphasis on collaboration, artistic innovation and social responsibility - the Conservatoire having further benefited from Nadine's research of her work in Art and Health contexts.

The Centre's work was introduced to Croatia and Germany, the latter through my regular teaching visits from 2001 onwards. Staff continued to train in the work individually and as a team, which led them to examine and research their vocal practice, disseminating their findings through a range of research papers, conference presentations, keynote addresses and study days. Current staff research includes the connection between NGT and EMDR⁸ and their roles in the prevention of performance stress; the integration of classical voice singing training, Estill training and NGT in the evolution of new musical theatre pedagogy and the application of the Centre's voice work to the director's creative process and rehearsal performance practice. Work on the latter was also undertaken at Harvard University when John Tiffany, a long-term collaborator, invited me to join him during the period of his Radcliffe Fellowship.⁹ Staff have been interviewed for the research of others, have continued to act as vocal consultants for theatre, film and TV, have directed productions, been guest lecturers and master class leaders, worked with the Scottish Judicial Skills Committee and led a raft of workshops and short courses for theatre professionals, performers, teachers, young people, female academics, housing association members, business men and women, National Health Service managers, insurance brokers and computer designers, among others. After the work was introduced on the Romanian Cultural Institute's summer programme for professional actors, one participant declared simply, 'After this, there is no other way to work.' Centre staff members have worked with new and established writers on the development of their scripts, collaborated with Scottish Music colleagues, visual artists, musicians, movement practitioners, Scots language specialists and a full gamut of performance companies from NTS to amateur dramatic societies.

7 International Fellowships are given to internationally renowned artists who teach and work with students over a period of years.

8 Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing therapy, used in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

9 John Tiffany, then Associate Director of the National Theatre, was a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University from 2010 to 2011.

In 2012, in conjunction with the International Centre for Voice and the Scottish Drama Training Network, the Centre held *Shifting Landscapes: Changing Standards in Accent Training*, a research and study conference day for the voice profession. Over 50 people from around the UK attended a series of presentations, discussions and practical workshop sessions. Feedback was hugely positive. One typical response was 'absolutely excellent conference, relevant, interesting, brilliantly organised - a class act'. The Centre, comprising four full-time members of staff and three part-time teaching associates, continues to act as a voice 'hub' or networking and reference point for other colleagues teaching the work or actively interested in it.

This is the 'how' of what happened in Scotland. The 'why' of Scotland - why the voice work took root in Scottish soil - is more complex. Certainly it is significant that, historically, Scotland allied itself to Europe rather than England. In this context it is interesting to note Nadine's observations on coming to work in Scotland:

*When I first came to Glasgow I could feel it wasn't England. The city had a European feeling about it. Also, at one time, Scotland was a Catholic country, and I could feel the historic French influence. This was very interesting and thought provoking - it linked with everything I was doing ...*¹⁰

Later she went on to say:

*What has also interested me is working with Scottish actors, who perform in Scots as well as English, and these actors can move as dramatically from one ... to the other as the Danes can between Danish and English ... when they [Scottish actors] perform in Scots they come close to their roots and therefore the root and body of the voice.*¹¹

Native Scottish students, just like their English, Irish, European, Asian or American counterparts who study here, learn to nurture and value their own unique voice. Received pronunciation (RP) is a useful tool for the actor - one beneficial accent among many - but it is neither the most important accent nor the 'neutral' means of good voice production some would still have us believe. The root of the voice is inseparable from the complete expression of the human being to whom it belongs and must be valued without judgement.

In its first manifesto, Artistic Director Vicky Featherstone wrote that the National Theatre of Scotland should not be 'a jingoistic, patriotic stab at defining a nation's identity through theatre'. Instead:

*it is the chance to throw open the doors of possibility, to encourage boldness.*¹²

10 From an early draft of *My Life with Voice*, Nadine George, 2005.

11 Ibid.

12 The National Theatre of Scotland's Manifesto, 2006: www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/content/default.asp?page=s7_7

She might equally have been describing the technique.

The last voice must go to one of the newest - a first year student in her first term encountering the technique for the first time:

It's strange to me that we each have these true, organic voices that so often get suppressed or contained through fear of exposure. It reminds me of the majority of our training - the truth is simple and covered in layers of defensive, emotional protection, however the process of accessing this vulnerable part is complex, specific and requires practice. Watching [fellow students] access their true voice through the singing work ... was moving and terrifying in equal spades, we are unused to such passionate resonances in daily life. The voices were so commanding and truthful that I too felt changed as a viewer.¹³

For someone else, a little bombshell had just been dropped.

Professor Ros Steen is Head of Research and the Centre for Voice in Performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. She is an accredited NGT teacher and a vocal consultant for theatre, film and TV. Her research has been published nationally and internationally.



Reflections on the Centre for Voice in Performance

Dr Anna Birch

The Centre for Voice in Performance is a busy and vibrant hub for the training of actors and performers at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The holistic approach to voice offered at the Centre has a specific resonance with the requirements of both performers and individuals who want to develop their personal creativity. Working through the medium of the voice, the Centre offers a technique which is body centred and organic to open up the potential for improved creative expression on a number of different levels. Their research shows how increased confidence in the voice leads to improved creativity and self-expression.¹⁴

By modelling new possibilities for the role of the voice specialist, the Centre engages in a contemporary world where interdisciplinary practices and artists' collaborations have 'real world meaning'. Roland Barthes in his essay titled 'The Grain of the Voice' spotlights the interesting intersection between the 'grain' of the voice and the materiality or physicality and 'voluptuousness' of singing.¹⁵

The materiality of the voice is nurtured at the Centre for Voice in Performance; even the accent and dialect work of the Centre uses a holistic approach to develop accents, refusing to undervalue the richness and variety to be found in each voice. Here, all voices hold the potential to become a celebrated force for good. In this context the voice can be said to have 'grain' perhaps in the terms used by Roland Barthes where the focus is on the materiality and physicality available in the human voice. Although he is speaking about singing, his words resonate in particular with this spoken technique which has sung sound at its centre.

The professional role of the Centre for Voice in Performance is evidenced by the involvement of the Centre in innumerable professional theatre and film productions in Scotland and beyond. I was lucky enough to attend the first night of *Sex and God*, a new play by Linda McLean for which Ros Steen worked extensively in the development and production phases.¹⁶ This exemplified the emphasis on the physicality of the voice work:

*You know, it's never, 'Oh I think I have a character who I need to get to this place to do a thing ...' it's keeping up with what the character's telling me and the effect it's having on these other ones ... and that's what I see animated after the voice work.*¹⁷

14 Ros Steen, Earthing the Electric, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*. Vol. 3, Issue 3, 2012, pp. 375-388.

15 R. Barthes, *Image Music Text*. London: Fontana Press, 1977.

16 The play was produced by Magnetic North and opened on the 27 September 2012 in Glasgow before touring throughout Scotland.

17 Interview of Linda McLean conducted by Ros Steen, 14 September 2012, during rehearsals of *Sex and God*.

The chorus of female performers was remarkable in its synthesis of voice and physical performance. The empowered ensemble demonstrated how a performance training where the voice work is embodied and holistic can seep into the fabric of the production to produce a living organism, a breathing whole:

*Imagine a string quartet, but with actors instead of musicians. In place of a score, a set of overlapping monologues. As they riff on similar themes, they could be from a family of musical instruments, each with her own timbre and pitch, but each part of the ensemble. Phrases echo like a melody from one performer to another, sometimes dissonant, sometimes in harmony, taking on different meanings according to their setting. That's what Linda McLean's beguiling new play for Magnetic North is like.*¹⁸

It seems then that the research and development undertaken by the Centre into the possibilities of NGT is deeply interdisciplinary and highly creative. Recently I heard a profoundly deaf actress describe her experience of finding her voice for performance through working with Ros Steen using the technique. Another example of interdisciplinarity is a voice piece created collaboratively by composer John de Simone and actors Lynn Kennedy and Martin McBride featuring words by the writer A.L. Kennedy.¹⁹

This range of application invites us to celebrate the benefit of NGT and those experts who continue to develop the technique through their own personal practice, characterised by their desire to share their expertise so widely and generously.

Dr Anna Birch is a Lecturer in Research at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and co-editor of *Performing Site-Specific Theatre: Politics, Place, Practice*.

18 Review by Mark Fisher for the *Guardian*, Tuesday 16 October 2012.

19 Dr Simone was awarded his PhD from RCS in 2012; both actors graduated from the RCS in 2012. A.L. Kennedy experienced the technique through working with Ros Steen and wrote about it in her essay *Proof of Life*.

Grace Chilton

One of the reasons I came to drama school was to expand what I did as an actor and not get stuck in being good at one thing and then doing that same thing over and over and over again. Having studied NGT over the past three years, it's clear how full voice work²⁰ for me has been a huge part of learning how to do that. I've both seen and experienced how the technique can help to emancipate actors and help them connect to themselves, the text, the dramatic space, their partner and an audience. I'm grateful for having encountered the technique and am certain that I would be a very different actor if it hadn't been a part of my training here.

Some of the times I have felt most free as an actor have been when working with the vocal qualities. Perhaps this is because full voice work bypasses the head and creates a connection straight from the body to the text, which stops you limiting yourself because of your own perceptions of who you are and what type of actor you are, as well as potentially blocking your connection to what's actually there in the moment. Full voice work helped me find unpredictability and a sense that anything could happen; it's all too easy to know the outcome of the text and play that outcome when in fact there are so many other possibilities. Ros frequently said, 'Work with where you're at', which I never quite understood at the time as I was constantly trying to be better. However, working with NGT has helped me understand how to work in the present moment, which is at the heart of acting. Indeed Declan Donnellan writes in *The Actor and the Target* that there's no such thing as a bad actor only a blocked actor and I have found NGT invaluable in learning how to unblock myself.

The atmosphere in the rehearsal room is crucial if a company is to be able to generate creative work together. I think the more focused and connected actors are to one another, the higher the chances of producing a good quality of work. The breathing work we do as part of NGT really helps to create that sense of ensemble and also develops a respect and sensitivity towards the work of others. During the master class Nadine gave us last year²¹ she used the warm-up work to create such a focused and stimulating atmosphere that many people discovered things in the work that they hadn't found before simply due to the heightened level of focus. This lends so much more substance and detail to what you are doing. It also means that people are really listening to one another and working as a collective which I think is the only way good theatre can be made. Robert Redford is quoted as saying, 'A lot of what acting is, is paying attention.'²²

20 "Full Voice" is a term George uses to describe the biggest possible vocal sound that is supported by breath' (see R. Steen and B. Wright, 2008. *Double-hinged Doors: The RSAMD's Voice Work in Training and Theatre*, p. 2. <http://www.rcs.ac.uk/aboutus/research/centreforvoice/research.html>).

21 The master class took place on 24 February 2011 at the RCS with second year BA Acting students.

22 Paying attention quotes, 14 May 2010: <http://www.inspirationfalls.com/paying-attention-quotes/> (accessed 14 December 2012).

A key lesson for me was when we worked with Ros in the New Athenaeum Theatre, our 350-seater proscenium theatre.²³ I realised then how much energy you need as an actor in order to fill such a large space otherwise it swallows you up, and equally how much you can distance an audience if you bring too much energy into the space, pushing the audience away. Full voice work has been essential for me in developing the right balance of energy to fill a space and this connects directly to fully grounded stage presence. The breathing work in particular taught me both how to release unnecessary physical (and consequently psychological) tensions and help me find the centred place from where I can work.

Through voice work, I've learnt hugely about presence and connection to text, and have become more uninhibited and unrestricted as an actor. Rather than having been taught a system or methodology, I'm thankful we have been taught a technique and a structure which we can take forward independently into our own artistic development in the future.

Grace Chilton is a final year student on the BA Acting programme at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

23 This is the RCS's principal venue for plays, musicals and operas. Its stage is as large as that of the London Palladium.

Jane Vicary

My route into voice work has been a circuitous one following a degree in Theatre Studies and English at Lancaster University. I taught drama in Adult Education for many years on a part-time basis whilst bringing up a family and running a business dealing in art and antiques with my husband.

I had been 'vocal' from an early age; my parents found me elocution, piano and singing lessons from the age of five onwards with one of those old-fashioned teachers who was a stalwart of the local church. She talked of intercostal muscles and rib reserve breathing and made me place my hand (much to my horror) below her ample bosom in order to feel the effects of the diaphragm! I also learned to 'speak well' at a time when a regional accent was a bar to moving socially onwards and upwards during the 1960s and 1970s and that was probably the main reason my parents had found Doris M. Ashworth. I rediscovered my singing voice in my late thirties when I joined a choir and, encouraged, took singing lessons again. I started to be given solos and became more interested in the voice. I began to be asked about doing voice work with actors but felt that I didn't know enough and so eventually my voice journey led me to the MA course at the Central School of Speech and Drama.

After graduating from the MA Voice Studies course in 2003 I felt a long way away from being an expert in voice despite being equipped with tools such as knowledge of vocal anatomy, an understanding of vocal practitioners and their methods, teaching experience in drama schools, a dissertation and, finally, a certificate. But I was still searching on my vocal journey and I still felt vocally 'lost'.

An application for work in the voice department of Royal Conservatoire of Scotland led me to reconnect to the work of Nadine George, which I first encountered whilst studying at Central. I had come across the voice legend Roy Hart and was curious to know more about this charismatic, driven and unconventional teacher, when Nadine came to teach for a day on the Voice MA. Suddenly, there in front of me was someone who had known him, worked with him, and been part of a most extraordinary moment of 'voice history' in the twentieth century. Hart in his turn had been taught and mentored by Alfred Wolfsohn, another extraordinary man who had developed vocal techniques which had grown out of his experiences in the trenches during the First World War. There is a direct lineage of vocal practice from Wolfsohn, to Hart and to George which is both humbling and thrilling - to stand on these giants' shoulders!

The story of Roy, his company, his tragic death and the work of his followers 'spoke' to me and unearthed a deeply buried childhood memory: of watching television (a BBC2, 'Monitor' type programme) with black and white images of a man singing and sounding extraordinary music. I *think* this was a 1960s film (I haven't tracked it down) made of Roy Hart performing *Eight Songs for a Mad King* by Peter Maxwell Davies and that image had burned itself into both my visual and auditory memory to be unearthed nearly forty years later - dragged, as it were, from my unconscious to my conscious mind. No wonder I was drawn to the work of Hart and George. No wonder this work resonated for me.

While I didn't get the job I made a valuable connection to Ros Steen and the Centre for Voice in Performance. Ros instinctively felt that NGT was what I had been searching for as a philosophy and approach to voice. She suggested I did one of Nadine's international voice workshops over the summer and, thankfully, I did. It was revelatory in its simplicity, its profundity and its effect. I felt that at last I had found some connection to voice work that resonated with me physically, intellectually and spiritually.

The following September I began working at the Arden School of Theatre in Manchester. The School was very supportive of my teaching NGT as the core voice work for both the BA Acting students and the BA Musical Theatre students. A colleague who had worked at Arden from the beginning told me that she felt Arden had never got the voice work 'quite right'. A vocal philosophy or approach had never been embedded in the syllabus and she felt that the voice work had not been as effective as it could have been when compared with other drama schools. For the last five years I have embedded the technique in my teaching at Arden and have seen real changes and results in the students - changes that were seen by other members of staff who both saw and heard the quality of the voice work. They saw that the students were able to stand confidently in themselves connected to a grounded and centred physicality; they heard a new richness and resonance in the vocal tones and a more embodied connection to language. The students also became passionate about the voice work and began to understand how important it was to their training:

I think I experienced a very 'out of mind but very much in body' moment doing this for the first time. Feeling earthed and grounded in my physicality from doing voice work was a new thing for me when you taught us this technique in first year. Now I find I am more aware of the placement of my voice, not only in an acting situation but in everyday life too.²⁴

In October of this year I became Assistant Head of Voice at ALRA²⁵ North and am incorporating NGT into my teaching there too. I hope to further develop my practice here by continuing to work and collaborate with NGT practitioners as well as other teachers who bring different and varied approaches to voice and breath work.

Throughout the last five years I have continued to work with Nadine both in the London workshops and at the vocal training events held at the Conservatoire. These opportunities to consolidate and extend my understanding and teaching of the technique have been invaluable, vital in fact. It has also been inspiring to feel connected to a centre of excellence at the Conservatoire and to other NGT practitioners who are supportive and generous in sharing their knowledge, practice and ongoing discoveries.

My circuitous voice journey continues. It is a journey of discovery and learning and one that will always be indebted to a remarkable woman - Nadine George.

Jane Vicary, formerly principal voice tutor at the Arden School of Theatre, is currently Assistant Head of Voice at ALRA North.

²⁴ Rachel Lissaman, who graduated from the Arden School of Theatre in 2012.

²⁵ Academy of Live and Recorded Arts.

Scott Gilmour

I joined the BA Musical Theatre programme at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2009. However, I had previous experience of Nadine George's work from my year spent at Langside College.²⁶ Initially, I took the work as a method for grounding myself to access heightened text more clearly than I had before. However, repeating the learning process again with Centre staff but with Jean Sangster in particular helped me discover just how much the work had impacted on me. I began to see my voice as a way to connect everything else and unlock this massive power that I'd been unaware of previously.

It was towards the end of my first year that I began to realise Nadine's work transcended a 'classroom technique'. I began to see the reason it was having such a profound effect on my performance was because it was having that effect on me, as a person. I began to feel braver and, more importantly for me, capable of making these brave connections within my work. This allowed me to experiment with different material, specifically within musical theatre.

The four qualities voice work has hugely impacted my process as an actor. I started noticing the energies present within me, my peers, my characters and, eventually, within music itself. As a musician, I became aware of the male and female qualities of the voice existing within music and that connecting to this would help me engage more deeply with sung text.

The more I have allowed myself to embrace the work the smaller the divide has become between spoken and sung voice. Both are released using our body and rely on the same energies and muscles but I think we can detach from song because in musical theatre there are potentially more limitations on our acting. We must adhere not only to the given circumstances of the text but also to the restraints of the composers' music. Applying Nadine's technique to song is an ongoing discovery for me but when it works best, in my experience, it is because of the level of truth experienced in the performance. Ultimately, Nadine's work has given me courage to find truth within the words given to me as an actor. If that same truth can be found within the notes of a song, the same connection can be made.

26 Langside College is a Higher and Further Education College in Glasgow. Students on its Acting and Performance courses are introduced to NGT as part of their Voice curriculum.

I have also seen the work transform the relationship among an ensemble of actors. Working with my class and using the voice quantities as the foundations of rehearsals took to a different level not only our individual connection to character but our connection as a company to somewhere it had never been before. When it came to performance, even the relationship to the audience was affected. It showed me that the more the work is acknowledged and practised as a full company's process, the stronger that process becomes. This leaves me to speculate how powerful it would be to access a piece of musical theatre in this way, connecting the musicians and actors as a company using the voice.

I graduated from the Conservatoire in July 2012 and am lucky to currently be touring the UK in a one-man adaptation of *Everyman* with Splendid Productions.²⁷ Now that I have left an educational environment and am managing my practice as an individual, I am grateful to have forged this from Nadine's work. It not only gives me a solid technical base to access text and music but it gives me courage to stand as a new graduate in a world of experience, so the work is still affecting me practically and personally.

Nadine George is a woman that I consider myself honoured to have met, let alone worked with. Her work settles and challenges me all at once. It confirms my strengths, debates my weaknesses and lets me continue to develop every day that I engage with it. I believe our understanding of the voice is what will allow our craft to endure, as it has done, and I am forever thankful to Nadine for bringing me, and many others, closer to that.

Scott Gilmour graduated from the BA (Musical Theatre) programme in 2012. He is currently touring throughout the UK.

27 Splendid Productions is a London-based touring theatre company which specialises in creating professional, political theatre for young people: www.splendidproductions.co.uk/

Joe Arkley

I first met Nadine George in 2005 at the end of my first year of acting training at the Conservatoire. At first I didn't take her seriously; however, as the session progressed she made me realise how incredibly held and serious I was as an actor. She has the incredible quality of making herself the most fearless person in the room and has a natural sense of play.

I remember performing a scene from *The Seagull* with my fellow student Zac Blinston. She mouthed the words along with us and beat out the rhythm by punching the air. She commanded me to act like a ferret and to bite Zac if I felt the impulse.

Out of context this paints Nadine as a bit mad. However, for me her session was one of the most vital workshops I ever had at the Conservatoire. She changed my perspective on how to use my voice by ditching the cerebral, academic approach and rooting everything into my body. We approached text like athletes rather than English Literature students. Shakespeare no longer appeared daunting to me as we worked on the text in a visceral, muscular way.

By the second year I remember working on a speech from *Richard III*, 'Was ever woman in this humor wooed?' As I performed the speech she would cajole and provoke me throughout and made me concentrate on the spirit and psyche of the character. The text eventually took care of itself as she whipped us all into a frenzy of power and deceit. The whole class had a chance to perform the speech and by the end we were buzzing through laughter and possibility because of Nadine's fantastic workshop.

A few years later I joined the Royal Shakespeare Company. Cis Berry asked me who taught me voice at theatre school. When I informed her that it was Ros Steen and Nadine George she said, "You lucky bastard! You've got nothing to worry about."

She was right. I was incredibly lucky to work with two such brilliant voice teachers. Ros and Nadine always approached voice work from an actor's perspective rather than an isolated discipline in itself.

I still use their warm-up exercises for all my shows. Most recently I performed at the Southwark Playhouse, which is a dark cavernous space with terrible acoustics. The piece was staged in traverse and was the most physically and vocally demanding job I've ever done. Never had Nadine's work been more vital to me. Her method helped me to negotiate the tricky space and enabled me to enjoy it rather than being inhibited by it.

Nadine blew the doors off of my reserved manner and made me *become* an actor rather than impersonating one. I will always be grateful for working with her and hope to do so again in the future. She's a remarkable talent and her technique a remarkable technique.

Joe Arkley graduated from the BA (Acting) programme in 2007 and worked at the Arches, the Traverse Theatre and the Gate before joining the RSC ensemble 2009-11. He is currently on a European tour of *Titus* directed by Lu Kemp.

Section 2

SELF-CULTIVATION

**Go to your bosom; Knock there,
and ask your heart what it doth know**

From *Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare

Mark Saunders

The Centre's emphasis on the connection of voice to body lies at the heart of an actor's training. In working with Ros Steen on the Voice and Movement programmes we were able to encourage the students to see the incredible, inexhaustible play to be had between the two. When co-directing Greek tragedies, I equally saw how powerful the synergy could be. An embodied voice was the only way that these archetypal, elemental stories could be told, and indeed why they are still told today.

Mark Saunders is Head of the Masters in Classical and Contemporary Text for both the Acting and Directing strands as well as a Jacques Lecoq-trained movement specialist.

Alasdair Hunter

I've been using the vocal warm-up every day with my cast and making lots of discoveries! My particular reflections at the moment are into how it builds ensemble spirit especially amongst performers who may not otherwise share the space with certain members of the ensemble during the play itself. Starting off the day with that level of respect for the work and for each other has really built a wonderful atmosphere throughout rehearsals.

Alasdair Hunter graduated from the Masters in Classical and Contemporary Text (Directing) in 2010. He is currently an Associate Director at Perth Repertory Theatre.

Helen Mackay

In August 2012, I did a reading from the Bible at my friend's wedding. The church was full of people who have been my friends since I was a child. I was overwhelmed by the comments from them on how much my voice had changed and how the speech had really touched them. They commented on the fact that my voice seemed lower and 'smoother' and one person said that they were not interested in the Bible but couldn't help being drawn into the meaning of the speech by the way I emphasized certain words or sentences. For me this really sums up that NGT is much more than simply exercises that strengthen and warm up the voice! It has changed my voice and me in many ways.

I trained at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland from 2006 to 2009. During that time I was lucky enough to work with Nadine George herself in all three years as well as have weekly classes with Ros Steen, Bill Wright and Jean Sangster from the Centre. I always enjoyed and had faith in the work and made a series of discoveries, discoveries which I still continue to make and which take me on to a new level each time.

Since graduating, I have worked across Scotland with theatre companies including Eden Court Theatre, Inverness, Dundee Repertory Theatre, Aberdeen Performing Arts, Perth Theatre and the Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh. I have worked on three Highlands and Islands tours and three number one venue Scottish tours; I have also recorded radio plays for BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio Scotland. I have found in the jobs that I have done that voice is not focused on in the rehearsal room. You block the show, you learn your lines and what they mean, you know what your objective is and how you feel about the other characters on stage ... This may be fine for opening night when you are nervous and you 'feel it' but the above is just not enough. I have learnt that 'feeling it' every night would be dangerous and exhausting. Thank goodness this is where the voice work takes over.

I do the breathing work and the voice qualities every day. They continue to strengthen my voice and my connection to the breath with the text. I walk on stage from a calm place and know that my voice is connected to my body. However, this is simply the very first level of a much more complex process.

I remember near the start of my training being very frustrated that I couldn't be on perfect form every day. I had no idea how to recreate a performance without running on adrenaline. One day I could do a speech with passion and the next I couldn't. Ros used to say, 'Work from where you are today.' At the time I couldn't understand this - why couldn't I find the connection to the text every time? Gradually as I grew as a person and connected with the voice work on a deeper level, this statement became clearer and is now how I approach each day as an actor. The days when you are tired or not well or wish you were anywhere but the theatre are the days that all the work starts to become clear.

During rehearsals for the last show I did with Aberdeen Performing Arts, *The Cone Gatherers*, I came in half an hour early every day and went through the vocal qualities and used full voice to rehearse the text before everyone else came into rehearsals. I did the same before every performance and the sound and microphone engineer said that my voice was always the clearest! For me, this work gets me through the tough days and boosts the good days. I could not go on stage without having warmed the breath and gone through the vocal qualities - I would be like an empty shell and nobody wants to pay money to watch an Empty Performance.

The voice work continues to excite, surprise and improve me as an actor. I am so thankful that I have this weapon in the battle of theatre and I am brave enough to use it, even if no-one else in the room is. When there is more than one person in the company who is trained in NGT it really is wonderful to be able to do the work together and I often find that after a few weeks other people begin to ask if they can join in. I watch other actors spending the first hour of a rehearsal 'warming up' whereas I am focused and ready to go. So often time is allocated for a physical warm-up each morning or before a performance and I long for the day that a director allocates the same time for NGT.

Helen Mackay graduated from the BA (Acting) programme in July 2009 and went straight into a national touring production of *The Silver Darlings* directed by Kenny Ireland for Aberdeen Performing Arts. She is currently appearing at the Traverse Theatre.

Mel Drake

When I first encountered the work of Nadine George I was at a crossroads in my life. Personal circumstances had left me shaken with a lack of confidence and in addition to this I had left a secure job in order to pursue the MA Voice Studies course at Central School of Speech and Drama. I felt disempowered and vulnerable. As a trained actress I had past experience of voice work but teaching drama for over ten years had taken me away from using my own skills and I needed a refresher before commencing my course in London.

I contacted Ros Steen and asked if she would work with me. Thankfully she said 'yes' and something along the lines of, 'the voice work I do is different from the usual, come and have a lesson and see what you think'. That lesson changed my whole perception of what voice work could be and how it could move a person forward. The strongest memory was of accessing my own power. Not just the power of my voice but the huge force of power that was within my body. It was frightening, exciting and empowering all at the same time and from that moment I knew that this work was different from voice work I had experienced before. I continued to work with Ros over the next few months and began to trust myself and her more each time. The insecurities I had arrived with slowly started to disappear as the work emphasised what I could do, not what I couldn't - an important feature of the technique.

NGT has a unique structure which remains constant throughout the vocal exploration and offers safety in the knowledge that there are no surprises, allowing the individual's focus to be deeper and more immediately engaged with the work rather than their having to understand and negotiate a series of different exercises. The structure is something my present students often comment on as being particularly useful to their development because they are able to monitor their own progress over a number of weeks; they have also commented on the security the structure offers, affording them the freedom of further depth and exploration. Subsequently confidence develops which allows the individual to be present in any given moment.

In 2008 Ros introduced me to Nadine George and I have worked with her regularly in Voice Studio International workshops since our first meeting. My voice work has developed since then but more importantly I have continued to grow as a person through the work and through the relationships I have made with Nadine, Ros and many other practitioners from around the world. The empowerment that is created by the voice work is further enhanced by the connection between individuals. There is a sense of mutual respect which emerges from a shared experience and a deeper understanding of what it is to be human. The regular workshops allow our skills to be extended and shared in a supportive and non-judgemental atmosphere, and experiencing the work allows us as practitioners to be more aware of the creative process it can tap into, as well as the questions it might raise.

In London, on the MA Voice Studies course, I experienced the work of many other leading voice practitioners and experimented with different exercises and styles of voice teaching, many of which were interesting and useful, but none as holistic in

their approach. I continued to reference the work with Ros, and my own vocal journey was greatly enhanced by her continued support, guidance and conversations. It was important to me that voice was part of the whole being, accessing a deeper place than technical exercises could.

This approach was something my research at Central School of Speech and Drama confirmed:

The voice work has allowed me to access not only a range of vocal expression I had not experienced before, but an insight into the character's humanity and emotional life. All this, without strain, mental effort and meticulous text work - it comes from the body and the sounds of the body. It uses the actor (and the person) as a whole and as a result gives you a whole sound. After a session I feel strong, intuitive, grounded, connected and free to play: essentials for any actor attempting to breathe life into a text.

[Vivienne Bell - actress]

Another major observation of my research, having focused on two test groups (one using traditional vocal techniques and one using NGT) was that the NGT students had become overall more confident, empowered and self-assured through the work.

My choice to return to Scotland was based on my desire to become part of a voice community where I knew that I would be able to grow surrounded by supportive colleagues and friends who shared a mutual understanding and language. This meant that when I was offered the teaching of voice on the Acting and Performance course at Langside College, Glasgow, from my colleague Lorna Penney, the transition allowed students to continue the work that she had built up over several years as I knew and understood the process they had been through. I have since continued to develop my work and have introduced the teaching to the students on the Performing Arts courses at Dundee College. In my capacity as a freelance voice coach I have been able to work with members of the public, professional voice users - such as teachers, doctors or barristers - to run workshops and to link the work into professional theatre. I am very fortunate to be continually supported by my colleagues in the Centre at the Conservatoire where I work on a part-time basis.

With all this in mind, my own personal journey since encountering NGT has been immense and continues with each daily challenge. I would therefore like to thank Nadine for her generosity in sharing the work, for all she has enabled me to do thus far, for helping me to develop as a person, for her friendship, and for her continuing support in my own personal journey as a teacher of her technique.

Nadine often says, 'this voice work will change your life'. I am happy to say that for me this has genuinely proved to be the case.

Mel Drake is a freelance Voice teacher and an associate teacher of the Centre for Voice in Performance. She has taught at a number of leading UK drama schools and colleges.

Jack Lowden

Since I graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2011, I have found the work on voice to be even more valuable. I am, at time of writing, playing Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire*, directed by Edward Hall, which has now opened in the West End after a sell-out run at the Hampstead Theatre. Originally the production was built and devised for the very intimate space of the Hampstead Theatre so I was able to use a more 'natural' tone and volume of voice which I greatly enjoyed. Since transferring to the Gielgud Theatre, a much, much bigger space, I've had to adapt what I was doing. This was the same for *Black Watch*, which I performed in for the National Theatre of Scotland prior to *Chariots*.

When I started out at the Conservatoire, I was self-conscious and so initially I didn't let myself explore the potential of my voice. I was more comfortable using other accents because it wasn't 'my voice' and always thought if I need to be heard I'll just speak louder. Obviously, however, it wasn't that simple. For me, voice - and acting - cannot be purely technical and I think that's what the voice work actually taught me: you can have techniques and exercises to fall back on but ultimately your voice, like your acting, has got to come from you. The second you start to treat your voice and yourself as two different entities is the second that technique alone will be visible on stage.

While playing Eric Liddell, a very confident person and a great orator, I use my own voice and accent. I can ground and channel my core voice for the character and know that my voice, while 'bigger' on stage, is still completely believable.

Jack Lowden graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2011 with the James Bridie Gold Medal for best actor. While still a student, he joined the National Theatre of Scotland's production *Black Watch* to take the lead role. He is currently starring in *Chariots of Fire* in London's West End.

Lorna Penney

I have been exploring NGT as a personal practice and one of my core teaching practices since 2006, when I reconnected with Nadine George at a Glasgow workshop having first been introduced to her work as a student at the RSAMD.²⁸ I completed the MA Voice Studies at Central School of Speech and Drama in 2004 and by 2006 found myself feeling completely disconnected and distant from my own voice; thus my whole expression felt compromised. So I embarked on a quest to reconnect, rediscover and refind my 'lost' voice. I was fortunate to be able to take a weekend workshop with Nadine and found that the atmosphere the space offered enabled me to safely hold the question of my own 'lost' voice.

What had happened for me during my time at Central was that I had become overwhelmed by the theory of the voice in a way that was too much for my system to integrate during the intensity of a year-long Master's programme. My practice with NGT, by myself, as a shared practice with colleagues and during workshops with Nadine herself, has enabled me to find the means to embody my theoretical knowledge of 'the' voice through a deep commitment to my 'own' voice. I consider this to be clearly demonstrated in my vocal anatomy teaching where I am encouraging the students to research their own bodily responses first and then we find out what the 'scientific theory' can add to our understanding; this means that the questions are coming from their bodily reality and real desire for information rather than a dutiful response to my imposed questions. In breathing terms, for example, working with my own psoas muscle in an experiential way has transformed my understanding of the fascia connections through my torso; so that when I am teaching about the three-dimensional movement of the diaphragm this is not head based knowing for me but a lived reality in my own body. I am literally teaching from my own freer, fuller, easier breath connection, and this type of integrated and embodied transmission feels both authentic and sustainable.

I consider my teaching work to be as enjoyable, inspiring and invigorating as it is because I have found a means to root it in the reality of my own personal practice. This means that my research is ongoing and comes directly from a conversational dialogue between theory and practice so that any conclusions I am drawing or offering are robustly interrogated and fully realised. What I mean by this is that I am not offering in my teaching what I know intellectually, that is, what I know 'about' the voice: rather I am offering what I know 'from' the voice and in particular what I know from my own voice.

Essentially, what I feel connected to as practitioner of NGT is whether I am using my creativity constructively or destructively. This acts as a touchstone for me in my personal practice and in supporting others in their practice, keeping me authentic and allowing me to be courageous with my own edge, my frontier. The gift of this way of working is that it allows me to confront myself with generosity and thus be able to grow, develop and transform. So the 'losing' of my voice has resulted in a letting go of an old way of being and in my voice now I hold the possibility of what I am becoming... my voice quest has been reframed and continues to inspire, provoke and demand my full commitment!

Lorna Penney is a freelance Breath-Body-Voice practitioner and an associate teacher of the Centre for Voice in Performance. She has worked in a variety of contexts and formats since 1997, most recently in Croatia and France.

28 Lorna Penney studied from 1993 to 1996, gaining her BA (Dramatic Studies).

Bill Wright

It is 2010, and in my head I am in a scene from the film *Inception*. While I'm standing in a room in Kilburn working on *Deep Male* with Nadine George, the van is tumbling over the edge of the bridge and time has slowed down; inside the van people are in deep sleep, dropped into another time dimension, into the dream world, into the unconscious, the spinning top whirls, and the sound I'm producing vibrates through my being into the space all around me, I'm falling through time, I'm tumbling over the edge, back into my history, I'm doing this through sound only, an all-encompassing roar that shuts out the room and into a total head-rush, I want to keep on it forever, and when I stop, there is an instant comedown into a lost and tight space. My stomach muscles are closing up in a reaction, deep breathing and no words. Utter despair. The floor flexes, space and time moving together. Breathe. I'm trying to work on relaxation. I'm trying to open into dramatic possibilities. Later that day, working on the text from Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, I try to tap into the sound, to find the sense of abandonment that Helmer experiences when Nora announces she is leaving him and the children: 'Noraaaaah'. Nadine tells me I have never been so transparent in my acting, nothing concrete, nothing fixed.

It is this cross-pollination of research into voice and working on text that I find so fascinating and satisfying when working with Nadine and her technique, trying to find a way into the heart of the text, trying to let the body and voice lead the head, to let the body and voice find a response to the text. We talk a lot about being open, or about opening, through the chest, through the back, through the heart. Yoshi Oida quotes Peter Brook as often saying:

*Be open, be free. Don't be disturbed by anything.*²⁹

Oida goes on to say:

*... this sort of freedom is very difficult to achieve in practice. Your concentration must not be locked into any one idea or situation. It must be free to go anywhere. If you rigidly fix your concentration in one specific place, all the other possibilities become empty and lifeless. Keep your concentration wide and fluid. Then you can be truly open.*³⁰

Approaching the voice work without expectations, approaching the text without a preconceived or intellectualised idea of the character, trusting in my creative self, relaxing, looking for transparency, all with the goal of becoming 'truly open'. The work on opening yourself through the chasm of sound, working without judgement on these sounds or openings, has been hard, painful and difficult, frustrating, enraging, empowering, joyful, magnificent, despairing, physical, blank and time-stopping. Out of my head with my own voice in the space, my own being in the space. Being me.

Bill Wright is a Lecturer in Voice at the Centre for Voice in Performance and an accredited NGT teacher. He is also an actor and director.

²⁹ Y. Oida, *An Actor Adrift*. London: Methuen, 1992.

³⁰ Ibid.

Section 3

NEW HYBRIDS

**Now I am ready to tell how bodies are changed
Into different bodies.**

From *Tales from Ovid: 24 Passages from the Metamorphosis* by Ted Hughes

Liz Mills

I met Ros Steen in 1995 and have since corresponded, met at conferences and shared research writing. In what amounts to less than a handful of encounters Ros Steen has left her mark! Three Ros things from this extended period of time remain luminous for me. The first is her positive response to curiosity, the second her fierce advocacy of personal identity reflected through dialect and language and the third a question that she floated more than once: what does contemporary voice work mean for actors now in our current context? I had an unexpected opportunity to spend a day in Glasgow and without hesitation she invited me to join her and Nadine George in their research work. The work was generously shared and my response valued. This rich moment of exchange spilled over into my own voice practice as I became curious about how my students inhabited their pitch range and the meanings they attached to what Nadine calls the male and female voice in each of us. Ros-like dialogue about the relevance of contemporary voice practice is present in my ruminations on voice. Her commentary on the Scottish language has resonance for me in South Africa where post democracy the greater project is still one of figuring out identity with its contours in sound and language both complex and keenly felt.

Liz Mills is a freelance Professional Voice Practitioner, formerly Senior Lecturer at University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Andrew Panton

In the three years Nadine George has been working with our MA and BA Musical Theatre students, we have seen not only an exciting and tangible shift in both spoken and singing voice work, but a psychological shift in the way our professionals in training think about their daily practice. This work complements and enhances existing musical theatre vocal techniques, creating on our programmes what is emerging as a new, dynamic and powerful voice practice. Our pedagogical ethos is about sustainable careers in musical theatre and related industries. Nadine George Technique not only enhances our students' working processes but has changed the way we envisage, deliver and prioritise our voice work.

Andrew Panton is the Artistic Director of the MA and BA programmes in Musical Theatre as well as a professional director and choreographer.

David Higham

Nadine George's work with the Musical Directing students has proved significant to the development of conductors and piano accompanists by connecting their work to their breath and body. Through the technique, the tangible links between conducting and the personal exploration of pulse and breath has meant that they can access material from a calm and grounded place. Finding their own connections to the four energies (especially the lower male quality), whether through voice or through a keyboard instrument, also provides a starting point to work with piano accompaniments from a place of truth before texture and stylistic range is used to colour the material. Nadine's work is particularly exciting in this area as it underpins all the technical work conductors and accompanists have to undertake.

David Higham is a Lecturer in Musical Theatre and Programme Co-ordinator for MA Musical Theatre (Musical Direction).

In June 2012, John Tiffany came to speak at the *Shifting Landscapes* voice conference held at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The following is an edited extract from his speech.

John Tiffany

Coming from a small village in Yorkshire where I never really met anybody who did not have my accent, I had quite a journey because I went to school where everybody spoke the same way as me and then I went to Sixth Form College in Huddersfield where people started speaking a bit differently and I started getting in with the theatre lot and when you're in with the theatre lot you think you have to speak in a particular way because you want to come across as clever and this is not a clever accent. So you evolve that but at the same time you don't want your family to think that you are changing so you end up having a voice at home and you have a voice with your pals in the theatre; then you come to Glasgow to university and no-one understands you really so you have to evolve your voice again and then you decide that you want to actually be a theatre director, and theatre directors have *authority* so therefore they speak in a particular way, so you end up with lots of different versions of yourself that you kind of oscillate between, depending on how you want the world to interpret you at that particular moment; because it is not just about the story that you give when you open your mouth, it is the assumptions that are made by the world outside that decide whether that story is something that I want to hear.

So then I started to work at the Traverse, working with new writers, and I had the good fortune of working with Ros Steen, who has been a lifelong partner in crime and inspiration, and because, obviously, I was working in different accents in Scotland and those writers were writing in particular voices, you think that voice work is about technique, you think it is about getting the accent right.

Then something changed because I directed a show called *Greta* (set in Peterhead, north of Aberdeen) and I started to realise that we are totally shaped by our environment and our landscape in terms of the way that we speak and there is a huge root there and there is a huge power that a particular accent has because it tells a history, a shared experience.

I went to work for a company called Paines Plough. I started to listen to - and this was a massive turning point for me as well - Melvyn Bragg's *The Routes of English* on Radio 4 years ago, which I became obsessed with because it was all about I speak therefore I am. I think there is something really emotional about the fact that your voice tells your people's story. So I came up with this project called *This Other England*, and it was definitely a response to *This England*, this idea that Shakespearian RP was in any way telling our story because I was working with all these writers who wanted to use different voices to tell different stories.

Then I came to work at the National Theatre of Scotland and the second show I did was *Black Watch*, which Ros and I worked on, and because I met those boys very, very soon after they had come back from Iraq and we interviewed a lot of them, I felt it a real duty to get their voice right because this was their story.

It is during the time of the National Theatre of Scotland that I have been privileged to work with Ros and Jean and have started to do all the voice work that Ros has been doing from Roy Hart through to Nadine George. Ros started to get us directors to work with that technique and that opened a whole new thing which has been amazing - the voice, the communication, the vibration and resonance and the energies. All that opened up something else. I took a sabbatical at the end of 2010 for a year and went to Harvard, to the Radcliffe Institute, which has kind of changed my life. They invite forty people every year from all walks of life, from all over the world, so I was there with neuroscientists, child psychiatrists, artists, composers, mathematicians. My research project was called 'I Speak Therefore I Am' and I wanted to get further and further into linguistics and the whole idea of the voice telling a story.

I worked with the postgraduate actors at Harvard, ART (American Repertory Theatre) and we did a project called *I Speak Therefore I Am*. Ros came over to do this work with them. It was incredible and it was life changing for them. We looked at what is called their home dialects, and America is very interesting - I think we are a bit further ahead - because they are terrified of their home dialect as they call it, terrified of it. There was one - and I will finish with this - there was a beautiful, beautiful actress who was from Trinidad and Tobago who in a way I suppose I could absolutely identify with it. She totally covered up because she did not want to sound black in any way so she absolutely cultivated this voice that had no character. It was beautiful but it had no character. One rehearsal I said what is your favourite play and she said *Macbeth* - Lady Macbeth - and I said have you ever done any Shakespeare in your voice. She said, what do you mean my voice; I said the voice you grew up with; she said, do you mean my black voice, my Trinidad and Tobago voice? 'Your voice, your voice that is your mum and dad's voice when they shouted you to come in for your tea.' And she did 'The raven himself is hoarse' in Trinidad and Tobago and she did it in the show and she was so proud. It was not just about her using her voice - she was doing one of the best speeches ever written in the English language in her voice and something connected and she did not care about the assumptions that were being made. She was just telling that story with her kind of pride and her brilliance.

John Tiffany is an award-winning director who was Associate Director of the National Theatre of Scotland until 2012. His Tony-award winning Broadway production of *Once* will open in London's West End in March 2013 while his acclaimed production of *Black Watch* continues to play all over the world.

Neuroscience and the Nadine George Technique

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more so that we may fear less.

Marie Curie³¹

Hilary Jones

Serendipity is one of my favourite words and describes perfectly the moment five years ago when I chanced upon an article entitled 'Too Jung to Die' in which jazz musician James Brown chronicled his salvation through EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) - a technique developed in 1989 by the American psychotherapist Francine Shapiro. Brown's narrative chimed with my own experience of, and research into, Performance Stress - the extreme fear that prevents an artist from performing (and which too often causes them to abandon their careers). David Grand, pioneer and leading EMDR exponent states:

*A performer suffering from performance anxiety shows the same neurological effects found in those experiencing a traumatic event.*³²

Yet the one thing that had repeatedly struck me over my years of teaching at the Conservatoire was how rarely our acting students seemed to suffer from what Bill Nighy recently described as:

*... real trauma - it's like being very ill ... you suffer shortness of breath, your body temperature changes, your movement is very treacly, you're very, very thirsty, you're light-headed - even more highly strung than usual - all kinds of things that suggest you're not very well. It's very, very scary and I feel as if I'm in a hostile parallel universe.*³³

NGT has much in common with other voice systems: floor-work to release extraneous tension, attention to postural balance and a reconnection back to the energy of a deep and rooted breathing mechanism. What makes it unique, however, is the constant reference to the engagement of the visual field and it is this specific component that provides the link to EMDR. Shapiro experienced her own moment of serendipity when she realised that her emotional distress disappeared as her eyes moved rapidly and spontaneously from side to side. Her theory - supported by controlled case studies -

was that eye movements were related to the desensitisation of traumatic memory and that engaging bilateral stimulation unlocked the processing part of the brain so that it made sense of, evaluated, and moved on from, the traumatic experience.

So my question after reading Brown's article was: if the bilateral movements of EMDR can process trauma, does the vocal-visual connection in George's technique work on the same principle? Initial conversations with the Harley Street Trauma Centre appeared to confirm my hypothesis. Phase One of my research was implemented and analysis of the findings discussed with both Ros Steen and Nadine George. NGT was also interrogated alongside the protocols of, and current research into, EMDR, and some striking parallels emerged between the four key sections of NGT (floor-work, walking and circle work, the four voice qualities and the transference of the energies into text) and the four stages of EMDR.

Preliminary findings suggest that NGT works on three levels:

- it facilitates the processing of prior trauma - a key factor in the resolution of performance stress particularly in the light of an evidenced increase in the number of students entering higher education with declared mental health issues
- it allows the actor to embody a character's vulnerability and harness the emotional demands to serve the acting intention
- it helps build resilience necessary to survive an often unforgiving industry.

Phase Two of the research will examine the body/mind response during NGT using a sequence of physiological tests identical to a study on EMDR carried out by a team of neuroscientists in Sweden in 2008.³⁴ The results will then be mapped against the findings to establish correlates. Neuroscience is currently unlocking some of the most extraordinary facts about the human voice; we now know that the whole of the human brain lights up when we speak in an accent and that the motor cortex of an actor's brain is completely engaged when text is spoken (even if the actor is completely still).³⁵ So can we re-wire the brain through the vocal connection to process stress? Now, it would appear, is absolutely 'the time to understand more so that we can fear less'.

Hilary Jones is a Lecturer in Voice at the Centre for Voice in Performance. Her research interest is Performance Stress and she has presented her work on EMDR and NGT at a number of conferences including the British Voice Association.

31 As quoted in M. A. Benarde, *Our Precarious Habitat*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1973.

32 Quote from David Grand's website: www.biolateral.com (accessed 18 December 2012).

33 Interview with Bill Nighy on Radio 4's *Front Row*, August 2011.

34 U.O.E. Elofsson, B. von Scheele, T. Theorell and H.P. Sondergaard, 2008. Physiological Correlates of Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing, *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* Vol. 22, pp. 622-634.

35 Professor Sophie Scott, Professor of Neuroscience, University College, London, speaking at the British Voice Association conference, 15 January 2012.

Nicholas Bone

Standing up from my chair in a Glasgow rehearsal room, with the sunlight filtered through stained glass windows immortalising the great deeds of Glaswegian shipbuilding, I was about to discover the truth about something I had long suspected - that Nadine George's work on voice is transformative.

I first encountered Nadine's work through Ros Steen, who was voice director on a production of *Skunk Hour* by Rob Fraser which I directed for lookOUT theatre company in 2001. I was intrigued by the way it seemed to connect the actors to the text so well and I asked Ros to work on a production of a Linda McLean play called *Word for Word* with my own company, Magnetic North. Again, I was conscious of the connection the work seemed to build between the actor and the text. I was also astonished by the extraordinary sounds the actors produced: several times I literally felt the resonances of an actor standing next to me as they worked up and down the octaves with Ros.

I could see and hear the difference the work made but I only came to understand what it was that made the work so effective that day in Glasgow when I stood up and faced Nadine over the piano. I don't think any amount of hearing others do the work can fully prepare you: it's one thing to watch the warm-up and hear the difference in the voices as a session progresses but to hear and feel the extraordinary resonance and connection in your own voice is quite different. The first session I did with Nadine was overwhelming: to experience the sounds that the human body is capable of making is extraordinary. Later, Nadine explained the work's origins in the sounds that Alfred Wolfsohn heard in the trenches of the First World War and it made sense: once you have uncovered the possibilities of the voice it is impossible to step back from that knowledge. I have witnessed only a very few actors back away from it, as if they refuse to accept the possibilities that they have uncovered - on these rare occasions it feels to me like a lost opportunity.

I have been fortunate enough to work several times with Nadine, and I can honestly say that it has changed the way I work as a director. Working on the murder scene from *Macbeth* with her that first day in Glasgow was transformative both because of what it uncovered for me about my voice and what it revealed about acting. In the face of her distinctively firm but encouraging entreaties, it is impossible to refuse: when she says, 'It's marvellous what you're doing, but use a bit more voice', you know that you have no choice but to find more voice, even though it seems physically impossible. And of course you discover that you *do* have a bit more voice and then a bit more still.

For me, quite apart from the work she does on embodying the text through voice, one of the most important aspects of her technique is the way the full voice work removes the 'acting' from acting - the physical effort of using full voice on, say, the scene between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth immediately after the murder of Duncan, removes any tendency to add anything superfluous and yet seems to open up infinite possibilities for performance. What more could a director ask for?

Nicholas Bone is Artistic Director of Magnetic North Theatre Company as well as a freelance theatre and opera director. He is particularly interested in the processes of cross-artform collaboration and creative development.

Kate Sketchley

From the very beginning of the year, my experiences with NGT have really defined this programme for me. Firstly, coming into the programme, I had never learned a method of vocal work in its entirety; I had only ever picked up bits and pieces from different directors and colleagues. This technique gave me a full vocabulary with which to assess my voice and body, my progress in breath work and how that affected my voice and body, and it gave me a whole new method of approaching text and character. Secondly, it has shown me that my work on voice is an ongoing process. I will never be 'finished' with working on my voice, because I am always experiencing new things and changing as a person, and that informs my voice and body. Finally, and most unexpectedly, I found that NGT connects very strongly with my personal philosophy regarding psychology.

Having come from an academic background and studied psychology, I had seen more and more evidence for the interconnectedness of the brain, body and mind. For example, there has been a shift in the understanding of brain function. For a long time, theories of localisation (specific, defined areas of the brain are responsible for different functions) were at the forefront. However, with the development and refinement of the technology used for scans and dissections, as well as more in-depth research, it became clear that, although there are certain areas of the brain which tend to process certain things, the brain as a whole is highly interconnected. Sensory input from the eyes and ears is processed in multiple areas across the cortex, all connected to each other and to other areas, for example, areas that process memory or emotion. When a specific area of the brain is damaged, it has been found that other areas will change and grow to compensate for whatever function was lost. All of this understanding of the structure and function of the brain led me to see the brain and mind as the same thing, and to see the mind as integrated with the physical body. That view has been cemented by my experiences with NGT and especially by my discussions with the instructors at the Conservatoire, both in my research and in my own classes and rehearsals.

I feel very lucky to have come to this particular place to be taught this particular method over the last year; the effect it has had on my personal philosophy and especially my professional practice has been unexpected and very welcome. I had first been drawn to Glasgow and Scotland because I did not want a purely traditional training, which I would be more likely to find in London. I have found that Glasgow is a centre for some very exciting work that perhaps is not as encouraged in other places. NGT's focus on the individual and his/her connection between mind and body allows, in my opinion, for far richer work, which can only strengthen an actor's understanding of the self as well as any character played. Despite the resistance it still seems to be meeting, there is a growing body of research and work in a variety of fields which supports the concept at its core: that the body and the mind are wholly integrated and therefore the voice cannot be treated as a purely physical tool but as a method of exploring the self, and applying the knowledge gained to ensemble, character and text.

Kate Sketchley holds a BSc in Psychology from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. She graduated with Distinction from the Masters in Classical and Contemporary Text (Acting) in 2012.

The work of Ros Steen and its influence on my own work

Nicola McCartney

I first worked with Ros Steen in the spring of 1996 when I directed the national touring version of *Trainspotting* adapted by Harry Gibson from the novel by Irvine Welsh. I was immediately struck by the fact that I had found a kindred spirit when she came in to work on dialects with the cast.

Ros's unique approach to the work of Nadine George has had a profound impact on my own writing. She has worked on many of my plays to date since that first meeting in 1996. It has deepened my understanding of the necessity of dialogue having a physical impulse in the body of the writer, an energy; of the written script being almost like a type of musical notation which the actor then plays through the instrument of their own energy, voice and body. This very much affects how I now submerge myself in the energy of the character to write. It has also made me very conscious of when dialogue is not rooted in a deep impulse. I think it has made me a better writer. Her influence has encouraged me to become more adventurous and theatrical in form and structure, pushing further my experiments with simultaneous scenes, chorus and the notion of 'soundscape' in my plays.

I made a decision that the best way to understand this work was to do it myself. As a director I began by joining the actors in the work in rehearsal. This absolutely deepened my comprehension of and sensitivity to the energy needed to both write and perform my own writing. The more I did it, the easier it became to access it when writing. I then became part of a small group of directors who met regularly with Ros to do the work ourselves. Finally, I did a three-day workshop with Nadine George in spring 2010. I still occasionally meet with Ros to have a one-to-one session which I find especially useful when 'stuck' in my own writing process. It helps me find the impulse again.

Having worked with Ros as an observer and a researcher, reflecting back to her on her work through the Centre for Voice in Performance at the Conservatoire, I have come to view the creative process of the playwright and the actor as the same but in reverse: the dramatist finds the words to express the impulse; the actors work back from the words to find the impulse which originally was born in the body of the playwright. This understanding has affected me not only as a playwright but also as a director and a dramaturge, developing my vocabulary for working with both actors and playwrights respectively.

Nicola McCartney is a playwright, director and dramaturge. She is currently a Lecturer in Writing for Performance at the University of Edinburgh and her current commissions include the National Theatre of Scotland, the Abbey Theatre and the National Theatre.

Section 4

REGENERATION

A wild goose never laid tame eggs

Scottish Proverb

Deborah Richardson-Webb

We have long been concerned with the ecology of performance on the BA Contemporary Performance Practice programme; the relationships between things matters to us very much. In Nadine's work there is no separation between body and voice, breath and sound. Her embodied holistic practice has enabled countless CPP students (and indeed the staff team) to locate and develop the critically embodied voice.

Deborah Richardson-Webb is Head of Performance Pedagogy and the Contemporary Performance Practice programme.



Amy McLachlan Sayer, Peter Lannon and Rosie Reid

You are held by your skeleton, rooted into the warm soil
 You are calling to the ancient mother
 You are wrapped in red velvet
 You are standing on the top of a mountain, as one with
 the clouds.

It feels like you are glimpsing a fraction of what you could be,
 if you let yourself.

I used to think of my voice as a tool.

It was something to be honed and perfected - beaten into the required shape in order to hit a note or speak in the right accent or create the right sound I needed in order to express myself.

I began my training hoping to master my voice - to be able, at the end of my four years, to manipulate and control it in the 'right' ways.

Thankfully, the relationship I have with my voice has changed enormously since then.

Over the past few years I have had the privilege of receiving Nadine's voice training and the effect it has had on my artistic development is immeasurable.

The voice training asks you to look inside yourself, and I think this fundamental aspect of the work runs parallel to the ethos of contemporary performance.

It too asks the question - what makes us human?

The innate power of Nadine's vocal training invokes a feeling of complete connectedness: to yourself, to the earth on which you stand, to the atoms of the cosmos of which we are all a part, of where we have come from and where we shall all eventually return.

The Contemporary Performance Practice programme encourages its students to grow into autonomous artists with a unique voice.

The Nadine George technique suits this approach perfectly, and has become invaluable to my development as an artist and performer, a central part of my personal daily practice, and has massively shaped the way I think about the potential of the human voice.

When devising theatre it is often difficult to decide how best to engage your audience but Nadine's voice technique really allows you to be brave, to use your core being, use your voice.

The combination of technical rigour with the emphasis on physical embodiment of the true voice fits perfectly with the creation of new work.

I've been constantly surprised at the effects the technique has had, on myself and the other students in my cohort. As well as practical research and vital preparation for performance, the technique has resulted in moments of startling emotional depth.

In my experience of the technique I have always felt it has encouraged me to discover depth within my work and feel embodied in the performance of it.

As a performer that performs devised and often autobiographical text, I would say the technique - and the embodiment it has given me - has allowed me to find myself as an artist, as a human being, as a voice.

The technique has allowed us to connect more deeply with that emotional centre than any other practice I have encountered, and this has made it of enormous importance to me, both artistically and personally.

After every voice workshop I have had, I have felt like I have just emerged from a ritual, that my state of consciousness has been heightened, widened, refined.

The voice is so much a part of who we are, who we perceive ourselves to be, how we would like others to perceive us, and this technique allows a space in which to discover our true voice, and therefore to better understand our own sense of self.

Amy McLachlan Sayer, Peter Lannon and Rosie Reid are final year students on the Contemporary Performance Practice programme.

Jean Sangster

NGT for spoken voice is the core technique taught on all performance programmes in the School of Drama at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. For the past fourteen months I have been researching it as a learning process. My investigation has revealed that the structure or form of each lesson provides the student with learning opportunities that are rich and complex, allowing them to develop a truthful, significant and relevant connection to themselves, their voices and their artistry.

It is generally understood that deep learning as elaborated by Biggs in his SOLO Taxonomy (2003)³⁶ promotes understanding and application for life. It involves the critical analysis of new ideas which are linked to already known concepts and principles and this leads to understanding and long-term retention so that these concepts and principles can be used for problem solving in unfamiliar contexts. NGT form³⁷ facilitates learning about the voice and self on the level of deep learning. Being able to go beyond what's being taught and deal creatively with new situations describes Biggs' fourth and final level of understanding - extended understanding.

NGT form involves learning a structure or pattern of activities which is repeated each session. Behaviourist learning theory³⁸ focuses on the significance of repeated activity accompanied by positive reinforcement, a key motivator, as being central to successful learning. NGT lessons are highly structured and sequenced so learning builds up over time enabling the student to develop through their own progression. Learning through repetition of a pattern of activity is also supported by Cognitive theory³⁹ where knowledge is acquired through the outcome of an interaction between new experiences and the structures of understanding that have already been created.

A strong sense of ensemble is created by NGT. This resonates strongly with Lave and Wenger's theories of Situative Learning and Communities of Practice:

*Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor ... people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.*⁴⁰

36 www.johnbiggs.com.au (accessed 18 December 2012).

37 For discussion of the form see N. George, 2005. *My Life with Voice*. In M. Rees, ed. *Voice and Speech Review: Shakespeare Around the Globe*, Cincinnati, OH: Voice and Speech Trainers Association, pp. 33-42.

38 See, for example, M.K. Smith, 1999. The Behaviourist Orientation to Learning, *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*: www.infed.org/biblio/learning-behaviourist.htm (accessed 18 December 2012).

39 Ibid.

40 Wenger, cited in M. K. Smith, 2003, 2009. Communities of Practice, *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*: www.infed.org/biblio/communities_of_practice.htm (accessed 18 December 2012).

Social negotiation is also part of the constructivist learning which takes place in NGT where the ensemble's awareness of each other is nourished and respected.⁴¹ More importantly, NGT reflects constructivist learning's emphasis on the understanding which occurs within individuals as they shape their specific learning journey thereby acquiring ownership of the journey in the process.

Finally, among other learning theories⁴² NGT operates within Gardner's Multiple Intelligences.⁴³ Six of Howard Gardner's 7 *Multiple Intelligences* are accessed in each NGT session - Linguistic, Musical, Bodily Kinesesthetic, Spatial Visual, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal. In particular, NGT, by affirming the crucial importance of Intrapersonal learning, is unlike other ways of learning where:

*The matter of feelings is something which has not been sufficiently explored by the developers of theories of learning.*⁴⁴

During the fourteen-month period of my studies for a Post-Graduate Certificate in Higher Arts Education, each piece of research and reading into Learning Models and Theories has provided endorsement, understanding, clarity about and inspiration of this spoken voice technique. The remarkably bountiful diversity and quality of learning opportunities that it offers underpins why this work on the human voice is so successful, rewarding, exciting, life affirming and ultimately life changing. Potentially, the complexity of the learning experience is also a reason for the many and diverse challenges encountered in NGT work by both learners and teachers. Armed, however, with an increased knowledge of the learning theories inherent in a NGT lesson, the teacher is better equipped to make students' learning in spoken voice even more effective and rewarding.

Researching the technique in this way has allowed me to contextualize it within the overall student experience. Now I hope to take my findings forward through pedagogical discussion, debate and practice both within the Conservatoire's new interdisciplinary curriculum⁴⁵ and as part of the Centre's wider discourse and knowledge exchange platform.

Jean Sangster is a Lecturer in Voice and Musical Theatre for the Centre for Voice in Performance where she also teaches Scots Language and Literature.

41 C. Tuncer, 2009. Learning and Teaching Languages Online: A Constructivist Approach. *Novitas-ROYAL*, Vol. 3(1), pp. 60-74: <http://www.ingilish.com/online-learning-constructivism.htm> (accessed 18 December 2012).

42 Cf. Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains: <http://www.businessballs.com/bloomstaxonomyoflearningdomains.htm> (accessed 18 December 2012).

43 A. Chapman, 2003-2009. Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences: <http://www.businessballs.com/howardgardnermultipleintelligences.htm> (accessed 18 December 2012).

44 P. Race, 1998. *The Lecturer's Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Assessment, Learning and Teaching*. Abingdon: Routledge.

45 The new curriculum retains the best of the RCS's existing learning and teaching, including the highest quality specialist training, high contact hours, professional partnerships and performance opportunities, but also takes it to a new level, with even more opportunities for choice and flexibility, trans-disciplinary learning and collaboration, autonomy and self-reflection.

Margareta Unné Göransson

For several years I have attended Nadine George's workshops in London on Voice and Shakespearean text. It all started in 1992 when Malmö Theatre Academy at Lund University in Sweden sent me to the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon and their seminar *Theatre Voice 1992*, hosted by Cicely Berry. There I met Nadine George for the first time and Ros Steen from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Then, in 1999, I attended my first London workshop with Nadine and once again I met Ros - a starting point for our ongoing communication and co-operation.

Until quite recently Sweden had no education for teaching theatre voice. Voice teachers at the four national theatre academies in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Luleå had to build their own education. I started out as a speech therapist but changed direction after a couple of years. Now I have taught voice for the theatre for more than thirty years, constantly developing my work through national and international workshops on acting, voice, text and movement, gaining accreditations as a Feldenkrais teacher and voice teacher of NGT. I have also been fortunate to work at a very good theatre academy with many inspiring colleagues.

Since 1999 Nadine George and her technique have had an important influence on voice work in Sweden. Several of the voice teachers at the academies have been trained by her. She has also given quite a few workshops for actors and acting students around the country. For me, personally, NGT has become a valuable addition to my regular voice work at my Academy.

The contact and discussions with Ros Steen led to a teacher exchange through an Erasmus agreement between our two schools in 2009, which made it possible for me to visit the Conservatoire and the Centre for Voice in Performance, both to teach and to follow the voice work. I could then hear, see and understand how embedded the Nadine George technique for working with voice and text had become in the teaching of the Centre and the Conservatoire. The voice teachers have all taken part in workshops with Nadine George. This clearly gives a common vocabulary and understanding irrespective of what part of voice work you are teaching - basic voice, singing, accents, text. I could see that this type of integration gives strength to the voice work and it gives the students a good structure to lean against.

I also had the opportunity to discuss the research work done at the Centre with two of the voice teachers, Ros Steen and Hilary Jones. Their research connects directly to the work of Nadine George: Ros is investigating NGT in working with directors and writers, and Hilary, NGT and how to manage performance stress. These discussions and reading about their research have inspired me to start my own research work on Feldenkrais movement and voice. I want to see if and how the Feldenkrais method can support NGT and how this can be brought into the acting work.

In addition to following the voice work at the Conservatoire I have been able to see the result of NGT as an integral part of the rehearsal process of two professional theatre productions, where Ros Steen was in charge of voice and text. In June 2012 I saw *Macbeth*, staged by the National Theatre of Scotland, Alan Cumming playing all the parts. It was a moving piece of work, where breath and quality of voice were of specific importance. Furthermore, I have seen *Black Watch*, on DVD, also by NTS. I was impressed by the 'largeness' and the energy of the play regarding the text, the theatre space, the movements, the voices. NGT clearly gave a firm base to work from in these two productions.

A former teacher of mine once said that if you dig one deep hole where you stand you are more likely to find water than if you dig several small holes a little bit everywhere. I think you can draw a parallel to NGT at the Conservatoire - through the consistent work of Nadine George and her colleagues the students and actors have the opportunity to dig deep into themselves and find their true vocal and creative potentiality.

Margareta Unné Göransson is Senior Lecturer of Voice and Speech at Malmö Theatre Academy, Lund University, Sweden, and an accredited NGT teacher.

Joyce Deans

On the evening of 13 November 2007 Nadine George and Fay Lecoq met for the first time. This *rencontre* took place in a Parisian restaurant over dinner with Ros Steen and myself.

Both Nadine and Fay were about to become International Fellows. Both women had a longstanding relationship with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland through the work of Voice Studio International and École Jacques Lecoq.

The relationship between these two women flourished, with Fay participating in Nadine's two-week International Voice workshop in the summer of 2009. The workshop had a profound effect on Fay. She talked of having rediscovered her creative voice, connecting Nadine's work to that of Jacques Lecoq. Nadine begins with the voice, Jacques with the body.

The Nadine George technique and the pedagogy of Jacques Lecoq are the underpinning approaches to Voice and Movement work on the Conservatoire's BA Acting Programme, with students and graduates increasingly aware of the connection between these two disciplines. On a personal level, having studied at the Lecoq school and subsequently worked with both Ros and Nadine, the connection between the two approaches is evident.

In 2009 Ros and I embarked on a practical research project exploring the connection between the two techniques. This research culminated in an article published in *The Moving Voice - The Integration of Voice and Movement Studies* 2009. The areas investigated were the correlation between Lecoq's *Les trois étages* and Nadine George's four vocal qualities, and Lecoq's neutral mask and Nadine George's real voice. From our own experience we suspected there was a direct connection between the two techniques; however, it was only through practical, physical and vocal exploration that this connection could be clearly evidenced.

As Jacques Bourgaux said following a workshop with Nadine in Paris in 2008:

*The two methods have the same starting point ... you must begin with the physical ... having experienced something profound, from the depths, you must ... dive in to see where it came from, how it was born and what relationship it has with the surface ... and it is the technique which allows you to come back to the surface.*⁴⁶

This synthesis of voice and movement directly connects with, and underpins, the Acting programme's approach to the study of acting. In discussion with current students and graduates they talk of 'both techniques as revealing the essential self'. This precisely echoes our Stanislavsky based approach to the study of acting.

Both Lecoq and Nadine George are more than proponents of particular techniques or pedagogies; they advocate a philosophy of truth seeking ... the essence of acting.

Joyce Deans is Head of Acting at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. An actor and director, she also studied with Jacques Lecoq in Paris.

In 2012, Ros Steen took part in the development and rehearsal process of a new play by one of Scotland's foremost playwrights, award-winning Linda McLean. Produced by Magnetic North Theatre Company, *Sex and God* toured throughout Scotland and was a resounding critical and artistic success. The play was described by critic Mark Fisher in the Guardian as 'as beautiful and delicate as a chamber concert', and its four actors, who were likened to a string quartet in terms of their ensemble, undertook NGT vocal work daily throughout the rehearsal period, joined on different occasions by director Nick Bone and Linda herself.

Linda McLean

The voice work that we did before rehearsals was so much more than a vocal warm-up. It's quite hard to describe what happens in the room. Initially it appears that four actors go through a process of preparing their bodies and then their attention and finally their voices, for lines of dialogue but that doesn't in any way describe the power of what actually happens. When they sing the piano notes the whole room is filled with an immense sound that's synchronistic and individual at one and the same time. Some power and energy that hides in the crevices of the body is liberated and the air in the room literally trammels with it. When they speak the lines of dialogue they are enlivened, and not by some actorly technique but by a focus and breath you equate with a fine instrument. *Sex and God* is a play that has four women on stage all the time, speaking across each other, to each other, sometimes speaking the same words at the same time or slightly off-time. It depends absolutely on attention to detail and clarity but more than that it requires every actor to be able to work across levels. Not only do they have to carry an energy from their own previous speech across time and space but they have to keep that energy alive and accessible for the rest of the cast. If they drop it, we get lost. To an observer, it looks as though they are holding each other in some invisible way with an unshakeable faith that makes their performances truly mesmerising. It was as if they'd found a way to be the theme of the play.

Linda McLean is a playwright. Her other plays include *Shimmer, strangers, babies* and *Any Given Day*, which received its US premiere in San Francisco in spring 2012.

⁴⁶ A French actor who trained at École Jacques Lecoq (1978-80) and subsequently with Nadine George.

Susan Worsfold

Scotland is NGT rich. And I feel privileged to be in Glasgow where I am surrounded by the practice. Through Nadine's continued commitment since 1990, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has been the creative hub for the bedding in and growth of Nadine's work in Scotland and it is from this home, this community, that many of its infinite possibilities have grown.

There are now several accredited practitioners based in Scotland teaching the work, all of whom originally connected with NGT through the Conservatoire. This has led to a number of Further and Higher Education institutions embracing the technique, which has ultimately generated an intercollegiate practice and alumni who subsequently meet at workshops produced by Nadine's own company, Voice Studio International (VSI), the Conservatoire and freelance practitioners.

Beyond the Conservatoire, contemporary performance makers, actors and directors are taking NGT into their own practice as they develop their artistic careers. I have recently seen an all-female production of *Richard II* directed by an alumnus of the Masters in Classical and Contemporary Text where NGT was the basis for warm-up and developing the ensemble.⁴⁷ During the course of my own work I have witnessed NGT being used in Scottish theatres, having heard the NGT warm-up tones threading through from a rehearsal room or from backstage pre-show where actors are preparing before they open themselves to their audience.

NGT work is far reaching, and individuals who connect with the technique are regularly seeking further exploration. As Administrator Scotland for VSI, I was often contacted by ex-Conservatoire students, from within our borders and abroad, eager to find out about VSI workshops and the possibilities for their continued connection to the technique. I also organised workshops for the *Diaspora* project,⁴⁸ produced by the National Theatre of Scotland in partnership with the Conservatoire, where Nadine delivered workshops to Conservatoire students and professional actors and directors within an international platform.

However, beyond the theatre environment, we have developed NGT specifically within the Arts and Health sector in Scotland.

Nadine has always had a desire to work with those who are vulnerable in society, especially those children who have lost the ability and the will to speak due to trauma. It is here in Scotland that we were encouraged and supported to develop NGT work in this important area. Through relationships with Creative Scotland,⁴⁹ we set up a

47 Alasdair Hunter, who graduated from the MA Classical and Contemporary Text (Directing) programme in 2010, directed the production with students of the University of Cumbria at the Stanwix Theatre, Carlisle, December 2012.

48 *Diaspora* was a partnership project which brought together international theatre practitioners and Scottish artists to collaboratively share, discuss and demonstrate their practice. The practitioners worked with students from RCS and professionals from the theatre sector and the outcomes were shared with an industry audience.

49 Formerly the Scottish Arts Council.

series of workshops which started in 2009 and have since continued annually with senior artistic and medical practitioners working in the Arts and Health sector. These practitioners work with sensitivity, an in-depth practice and an understanding of what it is to be vulnerable. Their compassionate connection to humanity is heard and felt clearly through their connection to breath, voice and how they stand in the world. These workshops have fundamentally reinvigorated Nadine's artistic practice and vision and brought about questions as to how, in the twenty-first century, theatre can do the same.

As I travel across Scotland with NGT, I am also aware of further groups who have come into contact with the many practitioners, now based here, who offer the support, freedom and creative resonance that the work brings. NGT has connected to people across Scotland in many different ways. There are those who are stepping in to the whole form and sequence of NGT and those who receive it through translation - a mix in practice, an understanding of the principles and through talking to those inspired by it. Police officers, activists, musicians, teachers, lawyers, choreographers, business leaders, young offenders, primary school students, producers, fitness experts and people experiencing autism, physical difficulties and learning difficulties have all connected with NGT in some way.

My own journey with NGT highlights its clear local-to-global opportunities. I met Nadine at the age of 18 as a first year student at the Conservatoire and in this initial meeting experienced a profound sense of coming home. I feel blessed to have continued my practice closely with Nadine for half my life and to have grown my work with NGT in Scotland. This has enabled me to continually develop my understanding and exploration of NGT with students, theatre professionals, the public and private sector and my own work in the arts and health community. I am truly inspired by the international perspective that NGT offers - through my VSI colleagues in London and Paris and with similar communities across Scandinavia, Central Europe and beyond, where Nadine has also developed NGT.

So, the community is growing and in many different directions. The possibilities for NGT are endless.

Many of us in Scotland are indebted to Ros Steen for her courage and creative will in forging Nadine's work in Scotland and mainstreaming the practice within the Centre for Voice in Performance, enabling us to come in to contact with the source of this great and life affirming work.

As with Shakespeare himself, it is the sign of a truly great artist when their work can hold the interpretations of many and when their form can translate to a variety of environments, settings and needs. It is a profound testament that NGT form can remain consistently whole, undiluted and indeed healthier, for all the rivers and interpretations that run from it. This is what Nadine and her work have achieved. And Scotland is much richer for it.

Susan Worsfold is a director, an accredited NGT teacher and associate of Voice Studio International. She is an associate teacher of the Centre for Voice in Performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Epilogue

Hugh Hodgart

The integration of the Nadine George Technique into the training of our performers (in Contemporary Performance Practice and Musical Theatre as well as Acting) has had a most profound effect on our students' development as self-confident, open-minded artists able to flourish on entry into our challenging profession. In fact the work of the Centre for Voice in Performance is regularly cited by our students as being the single most influential aspect of their education and training.

Students and staff alike have been inspired by Nadine's warmth, generosity and unique insights, and I am not only indebted to her for her commitment to our work at the Conservatoire but also to the indefatigable Professor Ros Steen and her team of exceptional teachers who keep the NGT flame burning brightly for the benefit of increasing numbers of practitioners in the UK and further afield.

Hugh Hodgart is Dean of Drama, Dance, Production and Screen at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

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WAS MY
MISSING PIECE
OF THE JIGSAW.”**

Professor Ros Steen



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