

EARTHING THE ELECTRIC: VOICE DIRECTING THE DIRECTORS

by Professor Ros Steen

The voice technique of Nadine George, the core practice of the Centre for Voice in Performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, has been used in the training of performers and within professional theatre productions in Scotland for over twenty years. This article documents the first stage of a long-term practice-led investigation into the application of the vocal technique to directors and the direction process. It charts the growth and development of an embodied understanding of the technique in the directors as creative artists and theatre collaborators, before going on to explain how that understanding has led to new investigations within current professional theatre practices.

We must unmask and be vulnerable all over again. (Chaikin 1972, p.26)

Introduction

Earthing the Electric is a research project conceived and led by the Centre for Voice in Performance of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (1) in conjunction with the National Theatre of Scotland and the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is Scotland's national centre for the teaching, practice and research of voice. The Centre's voice work is based in the technique of Nadine George of Voice Studio International. (2) This work is founded in the unique connection of the individual's voice to the self:

When I speak of singing, I do not consider this to be an artistic exercise, but the possibility, and the means to recognise oneself, and to transform this recognition into conscious life. (Günther 2002)

This quotation from Alfred Wolfsohn, from whom the work originates, reflects a connection between the voice of the individual and the writer that I want to make here. The objective of the research is to explore the application of George's technique to professional acting, directing and rehearsal performance practice. This is a long term practice-led research project and the paper covers the first phase (September 2008).

1. Formerly the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

2. Dr George is currently International Fellow in Voice at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. For an account of the technique and its evolution see <http://www.voicestudiointernational.com/>

<p>3.. Philip Howard, Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre and Ros Steen co-directed <i>Solemn Mass for a Full Moon in Summer</i> by Michel Tremblay for the Traverse Theatre and the BITE Festival at the Barbican Theatre in 2000</p>	<p>An invitation to deliver the keynote address to the International Centre for Voice (Steen 2006) prompted my reflective consideration of how differently vocal training had developed in Scotland since the introduction of George's technique in 1990. In <i>Seein Oursels As Ithers See Us</i> (Steen 2007, pp.285-9) I described the use of the technique in the professional rehearsal practice of three different theatre companies and later I traced the influence of this professional practice on actor training in the conservatoire. (Steen and Wright 2008 pp.5-7).</p> <p>The genesis of the project came directly from the work pioneered in professional Scottish theatre contexts, particularly at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, where the voice work had become a medium of rehearsal. This led to a new role for the voice specialist in production (see Steen and Wright: 2008 pp. 3–5) which developed further into co-direction between director and voice specialist. (3) After ten years of experimentation, both the Traverse and I were keen to move the work forward. Lorne Campbell, then Associate Director, raised the idea first during rehearsals for the <i>Tilt</i> trilogy (November 2006). We agreed to embark on an intensive research and developmental investigation called <i>Earthing the Electric</i>. The title comes from the belief that the grounding – the earthing – of the creative 'electricity' of the directors lies in the guidance of physical energy released through George's vocal technique. As Peter Brook suggests:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A great text, a great piece of music, a great opera score are true knots of energy. Like electricity, like all sources of energy, energy itself does not have a form, but it has a direction, a power. (Brook 1993, p.53)</p>
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<p>4. Dominic Hill was unable to take part. His place was taken by Nicholas Bone, Artistic Director of Magnetic North Theatre company. Ros Steen had previously worked on Bone's productions and he had also participated in Nadine George's workshops.</p> <p>5. For the first time, actors and directors worked side by side – and in front of each other – on all aspects of the process, led by me and George. The results remain to be fully written up but a sense of the second phase may be obtained from my short account of the work: http://www.rcs.ac.uk/aboutus/research/centreforvoice/research.html</p>	<p>The initial research question was: how could George's vocal technique resource the directors' own voices and vocabulary as individuals and collaborative artists, thereby enriching their physical and emotional understanding of acting, text and performance? In a second phase (January 2011), the same directors (4) worked with actors who embodied the vocal technique to jointly investigate new ways of using the work in rehearsal from this shared vocal practice.(5)</p> <p>While directors trained within the conservatoire sector may have some familiarity with voice work, the more traditional route into directing is a university education which often contains little or no compulsory voice study. I have often encountered the results of this absence of a practical understanding; for example an actor's vocal health issues, such as vocal fold abuse, may remain undetected until too late. On an artistic level, if the director is not able to work <i>in practice</i> with the expressive ability of the actor through voice, the specific text or character work undertaken in rehearsals may simply not be embodied in performance.</p> <p>All the directors invited to take part in the project had an established reputation in Scottish theatre, working in key institutions. Increasing knowledge of the technique and its application to their direction processes had implications, therefore, beyond personal practice. Privacy was agreed in order to allow for uninhibited exploration within a confidential context and the directors' comments are therefore anonymised.</p>
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<p>6. Formerly Artistic Director of Dundee Repertory Theatre and currently Artistic Director of the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow.</p> <p>7. Dominic Hill, in e mail correspondence to Ros Steen, regarding her work for the Ensemble at Dundee Repertory Theatre. 25 November 2005</p> <p>8. For me the two teaching methods start from the same fundamental principle—there is no point in putting psychology and emotion first. You have to start from the physical if you want to make conscious</p>	<p>The directors taking part in the research project were John Tiffany, Associate Director of the National Theatre of Scotland, Dominic Hill, then Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre (6), Jemima Levick, currently Associate Director of Dundee Repertory Theatre and Lorne Campbell, currently Artistic Director of Greyscale Theatre Company. The directors had all worked with me before and their interest in the vocal technique came from having witnessed its impact in their rehearsal rooms. As Dominic Hill commented: 'I know from what I have observed that your work has profound effects on the actors here'.</p> <p>(7) Working regularly with the directors had enabled me to develop the place of this voice work within different directorial processes. How the voice work might be integrated further was our common research purpose.</p> <p>Background</p> <p>The research project draws extensively on the work of Nadine George and my experience and practice of it and references Cicely Berry, Peter Brook and Jacques Lecoq. For all these practitioners, the primacy of the actor's body, voice and energy as a site of rehearsal is a vital part of their approach. The connections between Lecoq's work and George's have been explored elsewhere (Steen and Deans 2009). One actor, who trained in both techniques summed up:</p> <p>Pour moi les deux enseignements partent d'un même postulat: rien ne sert de mettre de la psychologie ou de l'émotion avant il faut partir du physique si on veut contrôler et pouvoir refaire...(8)</p> <p>George's technique arose from the desire to connect two different vocal</p>
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<p>choices and have the power to repeat'. Jacques Bourgaux, in e mail correspondence to Joyce Deans, 29 November, 2008.</p> <p>9. 'Having been trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama in the mid-forties, under that great teacher Gwynneth Thurburn, I was reared on the creed that good breathing was the foundation of voice work...That is why I always start with working the ribs'. (Berry 2008, p 165).</p> <p>10. In 'My Life with Voice', George (2005 p 37) describes how she changed Hart's musical terminology into Deep Male, High Male, Deep Female and High Female because 'these terms could be understood and applied immediately by the acting students to their work on voice and text.'</p>	<p>trainings. She initially studied with Berry at the Central School of Speech and Drama in the early 1960s, experiencing the British classical voice tradition with its emphasis on the technicalities of breathing (9) and the importance of language; for Berry, (2006, p.6), sounds are part of the 'deep intellectual content of language'. Whilst at Central, George encountered the vocal research work of Alfred Wolfsohn through his pupil Roy Hart. She began to research her voice with Hart, and in particular:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">the male and female areas of my voice and, therefore, of my personality and energy. I realised in working with Roy that all of these qualities [of voice] were linked to me as a human being...As an actress I had never seen the direct link between my voice and myself.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(George: 2005, p.34)</p> <p>The embodied voice with its male and female qualities (10) linked inextricably to the self, became, for George, the means by which an individual's unique creative energy could be contacted physically and channelled artistically. A founder member of the Roy Hart Theatre, she continued to work with Hart in France, researching the sung sound 'with the whole body, mind and soul' before returning to England in 1990, 'to see if I could find a way of linking the voice work that I had done with Roy with the work on Shakespearean Text that I had done before I met him' (George 2005, p.34).</p> <p>The technique George developed combined the European work on the integration of male and female energy within the expressive texture of the voice with the British voice tradition's emphasis on language. My contribution</p>
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<p>11. The Royal Conservatoire's Centre for Voice in Performance was created in 2006 for the teaching practice and research of voice in performance. At its heart was the adoption of George's technique as the core vocal practice within performance contexts. This led to co-direction internally with acting colleagues as well as further research with them (see Steen and Deans 2007, pp 148-152).</p>	<p>to the development of the work has been its introduction into professional rehearsal practice in Scotland as well as the establishment of its centrality to the training process of performers. (11)</p> <p>Berry's emphasis has also moved away from voice work as a training process for actors to become 'more deeply focused on the rehearsal process itself; I am convinced that this work on language, both hearing it and feeling it physically within our bodies, should become integral to this process' (Berry 2008, pp.2-3).</p> <p>Her view of the active nature of speech is reinforced by Walter J Ong, in his book <i>Orality and Literacy</i>:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Hebrew <i>dabar</i>, which means word, means also event and thus refers directly to the spoken word. The spoken word is always an event, a movement in time, completely lacking in the thing-like repose of the written or printed word. (Ong 2002, p.74)</p> <p>Berry (2008, p29) cites Peter Brook as 'an abiding influence' and she shares his belief that, 'the work is not how to do but how to permit' (Berry 1973, p3). To facilitate this discovery, Brook not only upholds the importance of commencing rehearsals with work on the actor's body and voice but goes further in suggesting that only by doing so can the body and mind become fully integrated :</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In my experience, it is always a mistake for actors to begin their work with</p>
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intellectual discussion, as the rational mind is not nearly as potent an instrument of discovery as the more secret faculties of intuition. The possibility of intuitive understanding through the body is stimulated and developed in many different ways. If this happens, within the same day there can be moments of repose when the mind can peacefully play its true role. Only then will analysis and discussion of the text find their natural place. (Brook 1993, p.108)

Setting up the Research Project: the electric circuit

Earthing the Electric seeks to:

- provide a rigorous laboratory environment for the advancement and further documentation of the work previously established in Scotland;
- explore the application of this particular voice work to the director's creative voice, the direction process, actor-director communication and the making of theatre;
- develop further the interaction and communication between the Centre for Voice in Performance, producing theatre company, individual artists and the wider theatre community;
- provide meaningful continuous professional development for its participants.

The methodology employed was a series of intensive, practice-based laboratories, formally documented by a research assistant. (12) Evidence

<p>12. The research assistant was Mary Wells, an actor herself, who encountered the voice work on her MA (Acting) programme at the RSAMD in 1998. From then on, she studied regularly with Nadine George as well as with Ros Steen.</p> <p>13. . 'I think we have come to the point where I need to participate in...the process in order to fully understand' (Dominic Hill, in e mail correspondence to Ros Steen 15 March 2007).</p>	<p>was also drawn from participant response, physical and verbal feedback, detailed observation, dialogue, reflective journal(s) and interviews. What the directors experienced was the driver for the specific research activities undertaken throughout the week. The directors' aim was ' [to clarify an] existing understanding of the [voice] work with a view to a clearer articulation of its intuitive nature and ability to liberate actors'. As recorded by Mary Wells.</p> <p>To further an understanding of the embodied vocal process which had been observed in actors, it was essential for the directors to experience the embodiment of their own voice with its mix of male and female qualities and connection to creative energy. (13)</p> <p>The specific goals of the research work were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to extend and enrich the directors' own practical understanding of the vocal technique; • to allow the directors to experience the range and extension of their voices by sound sung from the body in both male and female qualities; • to link the vibration, energy and quality of the sound directly to spoken text and explore its ability to release subconscious impulses and aspects of character; • to discuss the application of embodied understanding to the direction process. <p>The principal focus was therefore the vocal technique itself (14), the process usually undertaken by actors. This meant the directors had, potentially, to be</p>
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<p>14. cf for example, The American Directors project (ADP) which also aimed to enhance directors' understanding of how actors embody the text, but by means of Shakespeare's language rather than a vocal technique.</p> <p>15</p> <p>16.</p> <p>17</p>	<p>vulnerable. Accordingly, the work was conducted in an atmosphere of mutual support and artistic respect involving all the participants as, without such respect, 'it is impossible to work on a deep level with yourself and your peers' (George 2005, pp.36-37).</p> <p>In an early discussion, the directors talked about their role as directors which required them to be 'invulnerable'. They were articulate about the pressures on them to keep positive, to invigorate everyone else, to absorb blame and to fix things. Further, 'you are never allowed to crash as a director'. This can sometimes lead to working, however unconsciously, with a sense of fear. Working with fear is a fundamental aspect of George's approach as her technique demands that we look not just at directing, acting, voice, body or text but at ourselves.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">If you are not developing in your life as a human being then it is obvious that your directing or acting won't develop. So you keep doing the same thing because it works and it is safe. Tricking yourself that you are developing but deep inside yourself you know you are not..</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(22)</p> <p>By examining fear as part of the artistic process, the technique has the capacity to deepen the artistic level for voice person and director alike.</p> <p>In the following record, key moments of the project are highlighted, along with resulting reflection, on a day by day basis. This progression through a daily structure mirrors that of the technique itself where each moment of change is</p>
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the starting point for the next. Transformation and development accrue through each successive encounter of the vocal activity.

Day 1

The basic working model for the week was introduced and consisted of:

- initial discussion
- warm-up: floor-based breath and energy work in pairs followed by the continuation of that work in individual and group exercises undertaken in a circle, while walking, and in paired encounters. Vocal warm up in the four qualities of sound at the piano followed by speaking of the Shakespearian placing lines (23)
- individual vocal exploration in one quality per day followed by placing line
- individual articulation of the experience followed by comments and observations from others
- text work on monologues/duologues
- individual articulation of the voice/text experience followed by final comments and observations
- feedback discussion between research assistant and myself(24)

For the directors, the key activities of the first day were the extension of the vocal range and the immediate use of full voice to speak text.(25)

<p>18.</p>	<p>Beginning with the deep male quality, each director explored her/his own voice over a range of three octaves. The effect of exploring the voice in connection with the body's energy was palpable at a physical and emotional level, rather than an analytical one:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>A [My throat] felt huge, as if I had tonsillitis...[as if the] voice was coming from outside... [I felt]... fizzy.</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>D I felt there was a hole and I went underneath it.</i></p> <p>Many people are not used to experiencing their real vocal power and therefore do not recognise the voice as 'theirs'. However it can also be a revelation; 'I didn't know I could do that'.</p> <p>The vocal technique expedites the connection between an individual and her/his energy through a series of focused exchanges with others and the sound sung from the body in one or more qualities. This vocal exploration exposes the realities of the voice as one main aim is to prevent any attempt to shape, censor or judge the voice according to notions of what is acceptable. Each sound is admissible as an expression of the individual in that moment.</p> <p>When the placing lines are spoken, it is important to resist interpretation and speak directly from the body site of the sounded quality when speaking the line. (26) This was particularly challenging for the directors given that the primary focus of their job is interpretation. It required trust to open the voice from the body and speak from there, as opposed to leaping to the brain's</p>
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<p>19</p> <p>2021. George's vocal technique has also been used in non-theatrical contexts. The process an individual undergoes, however, remains the same.</p> <p>22. N. George, in e mail correspondence to RS. 13/4/2010.</p>	<p>conception of what the speaking should be.</p> <p>Shakespearian monologues were used, (27) marked up with George's system of notation.(28) In George's technique, text is built up section by section so the embodied voice can be repeatedly experienced and sustained. The process begins seated to facilitate focus on the vocal connection while providing a familiar and non-threatening position from which to operate. Each director in turn spoke in full voice and, where appropriate, was given simple physical and vocal direction to get into the energy connection. (29)</p> <p>The directors judged their attempts in full voice disparagingly as 'aggressive' and 'very loud'. Initially, the vocal range may initially flatten because the conscious interpretation which would colour the sound is eschewed:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">When I started working with the students on the text in this way, they...felt that they were shouting the text and not speaking it...however, they realised they ... were using their dramatic power, and they could see very clearly how this connected to the characters they were playing. (George: 2005, p.39)</p> <p>As arbiters of the nuances of interpretation and meaning the directors were reacting antagonistically to the initial absence of these characteristics in the voice. While they had found that going directly to the body's energy in sung sound confounded the image they had of their voice, they were not yet sure of the connection made to text.</p>
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<p>23. For a full description of the work see <i>My Life with Voice</i>, p35-39</p> <p>24. I also kept a personal research journal</p>	<p>Day 2</p> <p>There were two main points of note from the second day's work. The first was one director's question about the relationship between his personal vocal change and an audience. The second was the experience of the capacity of full voice to generate subconscious impulses and aspects of character.</p> <p>The directors continued to develop physically:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">B <i>[I felt] more in it...more channelled, the energy was less diffuse.</i></p> <p>and were more accepting of the extended vocal range:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">C <i>It was like a door opened and a whole orchestra of noise was in there. The long notes didn't feel like strain, they were connected to me.</i></p> <p>When the text was spoken in full voice, the directors now found 'it felt completely different from yesterday.'</p> <p>Aware of resourcing themselves as artists, the directors understood the personal benefit of the work though not, as yet, the connection between it and the audience. When sound and energy is fully vibrated through the words from the embodied voice, the transmission goes directly from the speaker to the bodies of the audience where it resonates physically. Understanding the importance of this transmission intellectually is not the same as experiencing it physically, nor the same as receiving it as the audience, which is the</p>
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<p>recording further thoughts on each day.</p> <p>25. "Full Voice" is a term George uses to describe the biggest possible vocal sound that is supported by breath.' Steen, R., and Wright, B., <i>Double-hinged doors: the RSAMD's voice work in Training and Theatre</i> p2. http://www.rcs.ac.uk/academy/centreforvoice/research.html accessed 4/10/2010.</p> <p>26. Each vocal quality is connected to a slightly different place in body. Once the physical vibration of a sound occurs it is linked to the speaking of a line of Shakespearian text from the same spot in the body. The Shakespearian line helps to bridge body, voice and text. For a fuller account of the process, and to know which Shakespearian lines are used, see George, <i>My Life in Voice</i>, p37 and Steen, <i>Helena, Hitler and the Heartland</i>, p46-7.</p>	<p>director's normal function. By repositioning the director as speaker, an embodied understanding of this vibration between actor and audience can complete what might otherwise remain only partially comprehended.</p> <p>The next stage of the spoken work takes the full voice/ text connection into standing position. The ocular-vocal connection is then explored. The speaker, now facing the audience, has to change eye focus and deliver the text to a specific individual on every phrase or thought. This directing of eye focus in flow with the text yields a strongly vibrated transmission to the recipient. For the speaker in that state of concentration the vocal power of the embodied voice directly contacts the feelings and thoughts of the character through the words:</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;"><i>B I seem to be getting bitter about this person [Lady Anne] but I've no idea who I'm talking about. I don't know the play but I don't mind...</i></p> <p>B was also aware of:</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;"><i>The amount of self-hate in the speech – the feeling of you can't hate me any more than I hate me.</i></p> <p>George adds:</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">Because the feeling connection to the character and the text is coming directly from the body, the actor can repeat it again and again,</p>
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<p>27. Richard III, Act 1 sc. ii 'Was ever woman in this humour wooed ... that I may see my shadow as I pass' and Queen Margaret, Act 1 sc. iii 'What, were you snarling all before I came ... thou detested'.</p> <p>28. In George's notation of a text a √ indicates a breathing point and a – indicates a breakdown of the text into its different sections or emotional territories.</p> <p>29. One speaker, for example, was asked to come forward with the voice rather than retreat into it while another was asked to smile while speaking.</p>	<p>developing it each time. (George: 2005, p.38)</p> <p>In Richard's monologue, one director found himself preening and showing off. At the same time, subconsciously, his hand moved to his left side as if gripping a sword handle and was used to steady his body which was at an angle. These unconscious movements had arisen organically from his energised speaking, suggesting the physical shape the deformity of this particular Richard might take. Another director became 'very funny and spider-like, mesmeric,' (30) through the embodied connection.</p> <p>Full voice had moved from 'noise' into more precise and detailed speaking. The voice/energy/text connection had given rise to a subconscious release of both the impulse for the words and aspects of characterisation which were simultaneously embodied.</p> <p>Day 3</p> <p>The key moment of discovery on the third day was the difficulty the directors had with the next stage of the process.</p> <p>As we saw, when the impulses started to come through the directors' voice, they prompted organic micro-movements in the body. The directors were therefore given the opportunity to explore movement in the space arising from the speaking impulse. This proposition coincided with where their prior knowledge of the work stopped.</p> <p>Suddenly, the directors felt 'like actors' who were 'performing' rather than in</p>
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the safer territory of an 'exercise' for the sake of research. Their categorisation of themselves as 'not actors' gave rise to a resistance which conflicted strongly with their desire to stay open in the process and not 'bail out'. They admitted that they had not sufficiently explored the proposition before voicing discomfort so 'we just need to do it and feel it so we can help actors do it.' However, 'You can't help but feel like a bad actor'.

Exploring text sitting down or standing in the space had been seen as 'voice work'. Moving was not so much an added physical action - 'It's only walking, why is it so hard' - as the crossing of a line.

Directors often start out in theatre by acting but switch to directing. However, they may be left with a residual sense of not being good actors. At the point of being invited to move, the directors' critical brain – that part that judges good and bad acting – had been allowed to take over from their body's intelligence, which they had experienced but not learned to trust.

This lack of ease with moving is equally felt by actors but that was difficult for the directors to recognise. After all, they said, it is what actors get paid for. Yet that doesn't necessarily mean their actors don't *feel* discomfort:

It is physically crippling as you feel that the most basic movement [is] like walking through tar. The self censor comes roaring in and takes over. (31)

When this was pointed out it seemed to surprise them:

A *It's never occurred to me that they [actors] might be scared of moving.*

I had not anticipated a problem as the directors, though standing still, had clearly been acting with the speech. Perhaps, as Wells pointed out, the directors just needed, 'her permission a little more to really emotionally go there and break through'. (32)

This was as far as the movement work was taken for that day. Attention was focused on a duologue (33) and the transmission of the vocal energy between two protagonists.

Faith was restored in the body connection and we agreed to return to the issue of movement the following day.

Day 4

We re-visited movement from the voice/text connection but within the bounds of a strict framework.

In discussion, it emerged the directors believed that actors generally needed a 'plan' or 'intention' *before* they could move suggesting a structure which the actors subsequently have to fill. However the directors were keen to investigate an antithetical way of working which required movement resulting from spoken impulse rather than conscious decision:

<p>30. Ros Steen's reflective journal of the research workshop.</p>	<p><i>C I feel we shouldn't [bring the brain in]... I really want to explore the possibility that I don't have to do that.</i></p> <p>especially as</p> <p><i>B I know how the other way works and I am really loving this journey to see where that takes me.</i></p> <p>We continued working on the duologues within the following movement parameters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one character walks forward, clockwise, in a circle (their 'orbit') while their partner does the same in an anti-clockwise direction (their 'orbit') • the 'speaker' can choose to walk as and when s/he wishes or stop as and when s/he wished • the 'listener' can do the same • the speakers begin in the full voice connection which, as they go on, can be reduced in volume <p>Pairs were alternated to give each director the opportunity to work with different partners. All played both male and female characters regardless of gender from their own vocal mix of energies.</p> <p>The set parameters rapidly allowed the rhythm of movement to affect, and be affected by, the impulse from the word. The bodies then began to 'think', that</p>
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<p>31. Mary Wells' reflective comment as recorded in her</p>	<p>is, the impulses became manifest physically and vocally, stimulating a heightened response between the partners.</p> <p>One director playing Richard, in responding to the new openings in the voice of the director playing Anne, found his voice no longer 'just booming'. His partner reciprocated in turn with a more instinctively nuanced response. Without any discussion of character, motivation or intention, a flow of interpretation broke through from their energy exchange. Wells observed that the directors had:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>struck two layers of the text... charm and a rape simultaneously. It [the scene] has a sweaty intimacy to it even at this stage.</i></p> <p>The director playing Richard commented:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>She became more evil, I liked her. I found a little boy in the scene with Anne ... the vulnerability came out, and it made me believe he had done all those things...</i></p> <p>Moreover, opening to the body's inspiration had led to a shedding of acting anxiety and a sense of pleasure:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A <i>[it] doesn't feel like scary acting ...I wanted to play with it more.</i></p> <p>Day 5</p> <p>The key discovery on the last day was how the technique could be equally</p>
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<p>research documentation.</p> <p>32. Mary Wells' reflective comment as recorded in her research documentation.</p> <p>33. Richard III, Act 1 sc. ii 68-124.</p>	<p>applied to contemporary writing. The directors were keen to see if 'non-poetic text' could be unlocked in the same way as classical text. A new script by Andy Duffy was chosen. (34)</p> <p>Having investigated all four vocal qualities, each director was asked to choose one s/he particularly wanted to repeat. In my experience, there are two factors governing these decisions. The first is a deliberate return to confront what may previously have been difficult. A, for example, went back to the high male quality because it was 'so hideous' before.</p> <p>This time round:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>A [the quality] felt much freer than last time, it felt there was a completely different spirit in it... it was amazing to hear the difference...</i></p> <p>The second derives from curiosity. Often, something is heard or felt in the warm-up which the individual decides to examine further. B, who had earlier touched something in the deep female quality which left 'the face feeling soft' - clearly an emotional opening - chose that quality in order to stay in the same connection.</p> <p>We worked on modern text in exactly the same way as Shakespearian. After full voice there was a new discovery - the connection between the voice work and dramaturgy:</p>
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B The dramaturge in me came right out there – but that wasn't a brain thing. On this line ... "hell" is in the vibration. I felt there was no need for the subsequent line, "this is hell".

Each director was allocated a particular monologue from the play. (35) and chose their own quality for sung sound work. To break fully into an integrated mind/body state, I used a method developed previously in rehearsal. This is a short-circuiting technique which plugs the text into the openings of the voice in the quality. The directors were asked to switch at speed between the sung note and text, phrase by phrase and sometimes word by word, until the energy of the voice broke open the text to release thoughts and feelings uncensored by a conscious urge to make sense of the words:

A You don't have time to think, after we had done the piano work you want to go straight into [speaking] it.

C The lack of thinking was interesting... A's had a sad, plaintive quality that came through from the tone. I thought B's was extraordinary because by doing it at that pitch there was a desperation to it that came through it from that note.

One director afterwards described the process of choice:

you asked us to be instinctive so that's quite hard – but it went like this. Read speech first time, think shit. You say to us choose a quality. I need crackle therefore /Ha/, high male because he is male. No I need

more crackle so female ... emotional crackle ... That's why I chose it as the first time I did it, it was like reading the yellow pages. I'll go for it! It's also the innocent boy when I say crackle, the choir boy that Mary Jane unlocks.

This language has been left as it stands to indicate how the director was now talking about character, significantly different from normal. The voice work had helped to extend a practical vocabulary while raising awareness of how actors constructively used the technique.

Conclusion

To give the directors a practical understanding of the technique was the first goal and this was significantly achieved. By doing the voice work themselves and experiencing first hand what they had witnessed in actors, the directors now embodied their understanding of voice. One felt, 'far more aware/considerate of nervous actors and their connection to their voice and of course the text'.

The second goal was to extend the vocal range in both male and female energies. Here, the directors were surprised and challenged by their perceptions of voice confronted with the realities it encompassed. One found her/his own voice much more 'balanced' and 'less of a squash' while for another the voice felt 'very vibrated all the way down me.'

The experience of extended voice led to a questioning of 'normal' vocal use:

<p>34. <i>Nasty, Brutish and Short</i> is a 'kitchen-sink' drama of a young man, his girlfriend and his brother written in a strongly demotic Glaswegian. The play premièred at the Traverse Theatre on 7/11/08.</p> <p>35. The monologues were: Luke's <i>Fuckin' whore cunt ... who fuckin' cares</i>, p84, Mary-Jane's <i>Think about her all the time...They've no right</i> p77-78 and Jim's <i>Right fucking space cadet ... and no to me</i>.p81</p> <p>36. What I do is along the lines of: in this scene this person is trying to achieve this, and the way they try to</p>	<p>C <i>how does this impact - the work on myself - in the rest of my life, not just in rehearsal.</i></p> <p>An important consequence of opening up vocal possibilities was an expansion the understanding of this process for actors:</p> <p>C <i>Nothing seems to help [the actor] immediately in the way the voice work helps.</i></p> <p>The third goal - the work's ability to release subconscious impulses and character traits from the embodied vocal connection - became manifest in the directors' own text work. This development led to discussion regarding the application of embodied understanding to the direction process (the fourth goal). The place of that understanding within a direction process which set store by intellectual discussion of the text and the actors' continuous conscious awareness of what they were doing was explored. The favouring of an approach to text which allowed intellectual processes to dominate (shared to a greater or lesser degree by all of the directors), was recognised as a constraint on actors, some of whom can feel uneducated or even stupid in the face of this approach. One director was honest enough to admit:</p> <p>A <i>[I] often get frustrated that actors don't connect as much to the cerebral process, ... I get cross when they are rubbish [at it].</i></p> <p>Another wanted to know how the voice work connected specifically to an 'intention-led' process. (36) S/he could not imagine an actor 'not knowing</p>
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is by a given strategy/series of tactics. It isn't imposed by me, it comes out of discussion. It can change – you can say that set of intentions is wrong and it's entirely different'. Recorded by Mary Wells.

what and why s/he is doing something' before doing it. Actors, however, can have another viewpoint:

There is that level on which we live where we deal with obtainable information and assumptions and we exchange with one another the currency of data. Then there is that other level, from which we also act, where there is no possibility of fixing conclusions or exchanging facts. In that creative stage the actor is in a bafflement which has no sophistication and no direct information. (Chaikin: 1972, p.26)

In pre-deciding intentions intellectually, the actor is left to find out how to embody and act out those decisions, often dividing body and mind. By contrast, 'intentions' can be released through a holistic energy connection. The directors' physical experience of that process invited them to consider this alternative approach.

One unexpected outcome was that two directors made the voice work part of their own research proposals. Lorne Campbell was awarded a Scottish Arts Council bursary to explore, in his words:

... how, within the structures and practice of British Theatre, a director can develop a non-intellectual language for directing actors and creating performance ... based around precepts of variation rather than rehearsed repetition. (37)

37. From Campbell's *Unleashed* bursary application to the Scottish Arts Council, 2009.

<p>38. <i>ibid.</i> The following year, he continued researching the work during the tenure of his University of Warwick/RSC Creative Fellowship.</p> <p>39. From John Tiffany's Radcliffe Fellowship research proposal, 2010.</p> <p>40. The work at Harvard was carried out in March 2011.</p> <p>41. From John Tiffany's Radcliffe Fellowship research proposal, 2010.</p> <p>42. <i>ibid.</i></p> <p>43. <i>I Speak, Therefore I am</i> played at the Loeb Experimental Theatre, Cambridge from March 25th – 28th 2011.</p> <p>44. Magnetic North Theatre Company http://www.magneticnorth.org.uk/ annually curates the <i>Rough Mix</i> project which brings together a carefully</p>	<p>I continued to work with Campbell on his voice and later led part of his project workshops which utilised the voice work to help 'keep performers in a dynamic creative state'. (38)</p> <p>In 2010, John Tiffany was awarded a Radcliffe Fellowship from Harvard University. His research proposal <i>I Speak Therefore I Am</i>, acknowledged the time constraints on directors which:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">mean that we often only scrape the surface of the possibilities of the voice and make quick decisions based on a character's provenance and personality in order to clearly communicate those facts to an audience. (39)</p> <p>I worked with him as a research partner (40) using George's technique 'which connects the actor's mind and voice so that they "flow"', (41) to research the voice's:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">complexities and possibilities to manipulate, deceive and communicate to an audience (42)</p> <p>resulting in the creation of a new piece of theatre. (43)</p> <p>Following on from the second stage of <i>Earthing the Electric</i>, the research will continue during 2012. I will work with John Tiffany and Alan Cumming on a one-man version of <i>Macbeth</i> for the National Theatre of Scotland as well as Magnetic North's cross-artform project <i>Rough Mix</i>. (44) The voice work will be</p>
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<p>selected small group of artists from different artforms – theatre, dance, music, film and visual arts – and offers each of them the opportunity to bring a project they wish to develop to a two-week workshop. Each edition of <i>Rough Mix</i> is given a particular focus by inviting an established practitioner to train the group in their particular specialism. The aim of this is to give the artists an opportunity to explore how a particular specialism can relate to their own practice.</p>	<p>a leading practice in each case. Dundee Repertory Theatre, soon to open a new experimental and development centre, has also invited me to continue researching there with directors and actors. For, as Peter Brook says:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There must be many efforts – all efforts create a field of energy, and this at a critical moment attracts towards it a solution. (Brook: 1993, p.118-9)</p>
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