

Article by Enrique Pardo ([unedited version](#))

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Figuring out the voice: object, subject, project.

Performing strategies in the use of extended voice range techniques in relation to language and texts.

You cannot speak or sing a text without using your voice, but the simultaneity of voice and words does not necessarily imply they convey the same message, share the same sources of emotion or intelligence, or manifest these synchronically. Voice and words can certainly betray each other, and the ear can be a bitch to the voice. You can use your voice without words – though this often seems to be problematic within a self-conscious environment of performance, as if only words justify voice production, while pure voice involves awkward forms of regression or eccentricity. The complexity of the cohabitation of voice and words is amplified when the voice is allowed its full potential.

Current *Pantheatre* voice training and research programmes propose a double aim:

1. To teach and research extended voice-range techniques, adapting to each participant's vocal experience, physiology and artistic goals.
2. To explore principles and strategies for the integration of extended voice range techniques into different performing contexts (participants come from very varied backgrounds with very varied projects, ranging from opera to physical theatre – to non-performing applications.)

The systematic exploration of the “extended” possibilities of the voice as instrument is to a large extent a development of the voice work pioneered by Alfred Wolfsohn (1896 – 1962), Roy Hart (1926 – 1975) and the Roy Hart Theatre¹.

¹ For a deontological position on the claim and use of these names as working ‘labels’, see Linda Wise’s presentation of the *Pantheatre / Roy Hart Two-Year Voice Training Programme*: <http://www.pantheatre.com/2-program-acts.html> . For historical material, see, Noah Pikes, *Dark Voices- The Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*, Spring Journal Publications, USA, 1999; Paul Newham, *The Prophet of Song: The Life and Work of Alfred Wolfsohn*, with an introduction by Marita Günther, London, Tigers Eye Press, 1997; for archive material, see Paul Silber’s www.roy-hart.com .

Once an extended potential of the voice is acquired, or at least confronted, this training raises fundamental artistic questions about the purpose of its use. The focus is then not so much on the interpreter as instrumental artisan, as on the artist and her or his choices in terms of esthetics and poetics, the principles and strategies that question what the performer is “giving voice” to.

This article addresses a particular aspect of the voice training and research programmes: the use of extended voice range techniques in relation to the inclusion of texts in performance. It does so mostly using a performing model defined as “choreographic theatre”, a label clearly related to what “physical theatre” has come to describe in the UK and in the USA, but which better suits the implications of the of movement / texts / voice synthesis.

A Technical Euphemism

First, a preliminary description of what is understood here by “extended voice range” techniques, specifically within the tradition of Wolfsohn and Hart. The background to Wolfsohn’s writings and Hart’s practice is steeped in their time’s philosophical ethos. Wolfsohn, in the 20’s and 30’s, was at the crossroads of German romantic humanism² and the enthusiastic first waves of psychoanalytic explanations, which he applied to a psychosomatic view of voice dysfunction and, more generally, to his understanding of the social repression of the expressive voice. Hart’s teaching developed these perspectives in the context of the 1960’s and of that period’s radical approach to theatre and community. His was a philosophy of personal transcendence transmitted through a Socratic style of teaching and developed within the hermetic context of a theatre community. The root metaphor of their approach to the voice was the notion of *singing*, with as broad a physiological and metaphorical understanding as possible. Involving self-confrontation and self-knowledge through expression, its motto could have been: “You are, or you become, what you sing.” The singer pits her or himself against the notion of an “eight octave voice”, a concept meant to include the full range of human potential. To speak therefore of “extended voice range” within this tradition could be said to be an academically correct understatement; Wolfsohn, and certainly Hart, would have spurned such a label as a technical euphemism.

There are also cultural and religious backgrounds to these stands and to the eight-octave notion. Both Wolfsohn and Hart were Jewish and brought to the work resonances of the “manly” religious humanism of Jewish cantors. The *Roy Hart Theatre*, on the other hand, which assembled itself in the 60’s in London, was composed mainly of Anglo-Saxons. Hart

² See “Myth, Modernity and the Vocalic Uncanny” by Steven Connor, in *Myth and the Making of Modernity, The Problem of Grounding in Early Twentieth-Century Literature*, P.214, Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA 1998 – for a perspective on the importance of the figure of Orpheus as the mythical voice of this period.

himself, born in South Africa, was very keen on the British model. He trained at RADA and changed his name from Ruben Hartstein to Roy Hart. This had significant impact, especially the protestant liturgical predilection for communal singing and the religious connotations carried by the act of singing, which can transpire as an iconoclastic sublimation of the voice and the spiritual importance given to the act of singing, leading in some historical instances to an ecstatic yearning in voice expression.

This is how the voice work is presented today, some 30 years later, in the Paris-based Pantheatre/Roy Hart voice training, which I co-direct with Linda Wise:

Before becoming a controlled musical instrument, or the modulated support of language, the voice is a fabulous means of expression, linked to our innermost impulses. Each sound, from the most ethereal sigh to a wrenching scream, from the highest coloratura to the lowest of growls, must claim its place in our artistic imagination. To extend the expressive fields of the voice requires a certain courage of extroversion, but it also renews the very notion, the very pleasure of "singing."³

The Dionysus Metaphor

Hart spoke, often with a challenging attitude, of his work as “embodying” C. G. Jung’s concept of “shadow”, both personal and cultural. In his view, singing tackled physically an embodied “audible shadow.” His was an assertive inclusion of alternative sounds, giving voice to the raw, the ugly, the dark, the hateful, the violent and even the inhuman. His work produced a range of extraordinary sounds uninfluenced, it would seem, by the emerging fascination with exotic ‘anthropological’ voices that emerged during the 70’s, from Tibetan monks and pygmy peep-sounds to Balinese rhythms or Balkan singing.

Within a mythological metaphor, such a discourse on “shadow” speaks for a *Dionysian* conception of music⁴.

Mythologically, the “Dionysian” voice was excluded or culturally marginalized when his half-brother Apollo tricked and triumphed over the Dionysian satyr, Marsyas, flaying him to death for having dared voice an alternative to his own canons of beauty and to his *detached* singing voice. Apollo declared himself the winner of this contest not because he was considered by the judges to be the better player, but because he could play the lyre and sing at the same time, while Marsyas’ instrument was a double reed flute. This was clearly not the original point of the competition (and King Midas got

³ Presentation in www.pantheatre.com

donkey's ears for protesting!), but Apollo's alibi for his superiority, the detachment of singing from the expressive instrumental body, is of crucial cultural and esthetical value, particularly relevant to notions like embodiment, identification, disassociation, which we will discuss below. Today, one can hear this "flayed" Dionysian music in the broken voices that rise in the shadow of *bel canto* canons where, even though the song might be speaking of the most tragic pain or broken heart, the singing voice remains untouched in its textural body, detached, pure and virginal in its conception of itself as a servant of music. These excluded, marginalized voices are, for instance, the broken voices of blues, jazz, country and rock, and the territory of musicality that rose within America's black culture, giving a new voice to the word "soul."⁵

A Dionysian conception of theatre was central to much of alternative theatre of the 60's and 70's, as it was to Hart's conception of an "eight octave voice." Provocation (*pro-voce*) was of the essence of such enterprises, and their revolutionary corollaries bring up images like those of Dionysus *Bromios*, the earth shaking sound-maker, seen by his followers as a kind of terrorizing liberator. This mixture of terror and liberation was one of the most explosive ideological cocktails of the period, both in terms of political upheaval and, perhaps more relevant here, in terms of doing violence to oneself in order to move, grow or evolve towards a liberated, ideal or "individualized" self. We see this vividly in the convictions of those who, throughout the 20th century, dreamt along with Nietzsche's "pre-tragic" meta-myths of Dionysus, a Dionysus presented in *The Birth of Tragedy* in strong opposition to a "post-tragic", discursive and language-based Apollonian theatre. Nietzsche exalted the fantasies of a lost pre-tragic communitarian, dithyrambic ur-theatre⁶. He also heralded the developmental fantasies of a lost childhood unity destroyed by the civility of language. The revolutionary sixties in many respects branded language itself as *the* enemy. It was seen as an Apollonian construct of cultural repression, while the voice was seen as a "primal" alternative. An early Roy Hart Theatre performance literally waved a banner proclaiming: "Language is dead, long live the voice." There was defiant talk of "pre-verbal" sounds and the period saw the rise of many of today's ur-therapies, the most emblematic of which might be Janov's *Primal Scream* and *rebirthing*. The voice, the scream, was seen as the liberator of repressed expressivity and of creative madness, breaking down social and artistic barriers.

Roy Hart often mentioned the notion of "conscious schizophrenia" as one of the aims of his work. In 1967 he performed Peter Maxwell-Davies' "Eight Songs for a Mad King," a remarkable performance and an emblematic prism for many of

⁴ On Dionysus, see especially: Rafael Lopez-Pedraza, *Dionysus in Exile, On the Repression of the Body and Emotion*, Chiron Publications, Illinois, USA, 2000. *Masks of Dionysus*, Thomas H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone (Editors), Cornell University Press, 1993.

⁵ This perspective is developed in Noah Pikes' article "Giving Voice to Hell", in *Spring Journal* 55, Connecticut, 1994.

⁶ See, *Myth, Art and Illusion in Nietzsche*, by Paul Poellner, in, *Myth and the Making of Modernity, The Problem of Grounding in Early Twentieth-Century Literature*, edited by Michael Bell and Peter Poellner, Editions Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA 1998.

these ideas. Through his charismatic presence and extraordinary voice Hart made himself the embodiment of a Dionysian King Self, echoing and, inevitably, defying in terms of “who is more conscious than whom?” some of his peer kings philosophers of non-sanity, from R. D. Laing and Timothy Leary to Gilles Deleuze. The late Carmelo Bene was another such kingly voice, a *monstre sacré*, furiously anarchic, voicing the period’s zōe or irrepressible life force.

From identity to poetics: “I am Dionysus...”

In the very first line of Euripides’ *The Bacchae*, we hear Dionysus make a claim to recognition based on his version of his original identity. Dionysian “theology” is in many respects that of the herald and revealer of identity, the emblem of a conception of core subjectivity, of mythically ‘true’ selfhood, which includes the ambivalent implications of “*in vino veritas*.” Hence the importance of the notions of identity, subjectivity, and ‘true self’ to a theatre that wishes to ‘re-member’ Dionysus, seeing him as the god of theatre. “Dionysus re-membered” voices the mythical longing for inner unitarian identities, for the return of a self-preserved in primordial memories, of a rooted, embodied integrity. In it we see the utopias of individuation suggested by many of the adjectives given today to the voice: the “free voice”, the “natural voice”, the “whole voice”, the “organic voice.”

Orphic traditions elaborated a counter-narrative in the myths and legends of the *dismemberment* of Dionysus. In these versions, Hera’s jealous revenge turns on Zeus’ offspring. She orders the Titans to destroy the bastard baby Dionysus. The Titans turn up with titanium-white faces, lure the *bambino* with toys, and tear him to pieces, which they then boil and eat. This eucharistic myth proceeds to a resurrection: Dionysus’ heart comes through unscathed, and from it, Apollo puts Dionysus back together again, ‘re-members’ him. The central operation in this rendering of the Orphic story is the tearing apart of the ludic unity of the Dionysian baby-self by the Titans, who are given the epithet of *technos* in Greek mythology, a supposedly heartless technical principle. After this rending, if one has not, as it were, ‘lost heart’, Apollo and all that this god signifies in terms of giving form, or, here, in terms of “giving voice”, reassembles what I would call “the body of image”: a specular, linguistically elaborated form that recomposes and re-presents (per-forms) the myths at play. In theatre terms, subjective identity and the fusion of actor / person / character are dislocated, deconstructed, and reassembled into complex images.

Freeing the Voice – for language, from language

The fact that the human species ‘performs’ its capacity for articulated language *through the voice* has immense implications. One of the main tasks seems to me, at least from a performative perspective, to break out of the boundaries of restricted and restricting cultural attitudes towards the voice, questioning the cultural patterns through which we voice emotions and thoughts. Paradoxically, some of the preconceptions I find most restricting and difficult to deal with today are precisely those which come from ‘voice liberation’ movements of the last twenty years, some of them inherited directly from the Wolfsohn / Hart legacy. We encounter voice practitioners, which seem to take the voice so literally that a kind of *iconodulia* sets in. The voice becomes a *panacea*, an exclusive ruling idol, and singing a form of pious, conservative ritual. Their manifestos, often because based on what I have called “ur” Dionysian premises, end up being sentential dictates and devotional rituals⁷.

It seems to me essential to return over and over to the central fact that humans use the voice for linguistic live communication, the “performative linguistic act”⁸, and that language was probably fashioned by the interplay between brain and voice. Contemporary science provides pointed speculations on how humans ‘freed’ the voice in order for it to become instrumental to language⁹. This was a physiological ‘liberation’ that allowed the original acculturation of the voice, something that many contemporary therapies want to compensate for when they speak, inversely, of freeing the voice from the cerebral constrictions of language.

The need for linguistic communication instrumentalized the voice, taking advantage of its versatility and, presumably, its longer reach in the air, longer than hand sign language. To polarize matters in this line of thought, one could say that the linguistic brain took over, *usurped*, the articulative capacities of the voice for the sake of speaking, superimposing the dominance of the mental matrix of semantics on its expressive (singing) nature. Human reflective listening when speaking was put at the service of semantic effort in overwhelming proportions and, as a consequence, we rarely listen to our speaking voice when composing and speaking our thoughts. It is from this gap or split that two of the key philosophical concepts in Hart’s work raised: *consciousness* and *embodiment*, cohering as an amplified experiential awareness and rootedness of one’s voice in one’s body. These concepts were fundamental, albeit with different understandings, to many artist-prophets of the period, in the wake not only of psychoanalysis but also of figures like Gurdjieff.

⁷ I must pay homage here to the relentless restlessness of Roy Hart at this level. His last performances with the *Roy Hart Theatre* (*Ich Bin*, and *The Economist*, 1974 – the very titles merit an article each!) were the strangest sermonizing oratorios, mixed with Broadway quotations and optimism. They were generally cold-shouldered by critics who seemed far more intrigued by the sectarian intensity of the group and its “guru.” Some even saw in these performances a betrayal of the voice in favour of an allegorical, didactic enterprise!

⁸ As defined by Stephen Karcher whom the author wishes to thank for his inspiring collaboration, especially on “the mantic voice.”

⁹ The scientific speculations I am referring to are for instance the paleontological and neurophysiological reconstructions of how humans reached a vertical posture, re-aligned and ‘freed’ the larynx, achieved a considerable mobility of the jaw and a great versatility of lingual and oral muscles, allowing for greater phonic nimbleness and differentiation of vowels and consonants – and

Melodrama and Melodia

A working distinction I favor when dealing with voice and language, or when differentiating the singing voice from the speaking voice, is the one between *melodia* and *melodrama*. I translate *melos* as the structural song i.e. as *cadence*, from *cadere*: falling, landing and consequently, bouncing, taking off. *Melos* as cadence reveals the broad architectural “*envolées*” (flights of fancy) of a project, the scaffold of its design, and its grounding points, the points where it grounds its meaning and from which it takes off again. This working etymology allows for both a structural and an ontological sense of grounding. To rephrase it in rhythm-related terms: *melos* is something like the human para-sympathetic system, ruling the long term, underlying rhythmic patterns of a project, the deep motivating factors that manifest and shape its display. With this understanding, *melodrama* becomes the deployment of the dramatic construct, of its performative ‘points,’ the points that are being ‘made’. It taps into deep emotional factors, organizes the frequency and dynamics of their manifestations, and above all it gives it a voice. It fosters comment (*cum mens*), an accompanying mind.

For performers who have trained in extended voice range techniques, the temptation is great, given their expressive potential, to give precedence to the voice as such, to the vocalic claim, i.e. to the proclamation of what “giving voice” in itself means, rather than reining in vocal expression and allowing language to have, as it were, the last word. The prevailing model in *melodia* is the operatic one. Opera works with the interplay and fusion of language and voice; though in its realizations, the text becomes a *pretext* for vocal expression, depending not so much on an informative discourse but on music, on onomatopoeic, emphatic, illustrative amplifications, on variational figures and effects. It is a performing mode that uses minimum information to develop maximum emotional impact. Commentary is absorbed, fused (and sometimes defused) into the expressive body of the music.

The working notes that follow specialize in what I am calling *melodrama*, a non-operatic use of words, or more precisely, in a non-operatic use of the voice with words. The aim is the (*melo*) *dramatic* separation of the voice of information and commentary from the voice of *melodia*, and even more from the “Dionysian greed” of the eight octave voice. This brings us back to Apollo’s earlier victory, which he declared on the basis of his detached voice, although what I mean here by separation and what I will analyze in terms of disassociation does not imply *an attitude of detachment*. It is not a search

how this process paralleled the development of cerebral volume and complexity. Interestingly our auditory capacities seem not to have kept up with these improvements.

for Apollo's voice¹⁰, especially given the contemporary prejudice, which sees his point of view and hears his voice, as cold, affect-less, emotionally distanced, the voice of a heartless civility that "shoots from afar."¹¹

Quite the contrary, what I seek is maximum *melo-dramatic* emotional involvement. The aim is to articulate the emotional voice, to include the plurality and the emotional impact of the eight octave voice in a physical theatre that composes with image and language. We try to "figure it out", and in a sense, give the eight octave voice a voice, one that does not swallow image, in the manner of the authorial voice of a text that seeks to rule image and interpretation in literary theatre.

Disassociation

It should be apparent from all this that the key working principle is *disassociation*, a notion and a craft that needs careful qualification. A first analogy can be made with the type of technical disassociation required of the two hands in piano playing: voice and language considered as two 'hands', trained to perform in separate, autonomous, differentiated rhythms, dynamics and styles. This is often worked on through a set of exercises that has come to be called "the oranges" exercises, because they make use of hand gestures that parallel the miming of cupping, grabbing, and squeezing of oranges in order to extract, when including words, their 'semantic juice' (*jus de mots*, in French.) These are corporal exercises that aim at disassociating the syntax of the text from the musical / energetic / emotional score of the voice as well as from the score of body moves and gestures. Movement is, of course, essential to this work, as is a visual reading of image. Think, for instance, of the way Italians use their hands when they speak. Body gestures constitute the third element in a disassociative training. It brings in a third hand into the piano playing analogy: voice, language and movement.

Vocal / linguistic disassociative training starts with rhetorical exercises. The written cadence of a text is in its syntax, which proposes a specific organization of breathing, phrasing and dramatic emphasis. Disassociation exercises concentrate on how *not* to be drawn into emphatic coincidence with this organization, how to work against or outside the textual rhetorical syntax, how to afford the means, for instance, of ex-centric or ex-huberant readings, the means to produce renderings which avoid, counter, transgress the prescribed syntactic patterns. A simple example is learning how not to pause to breathe on commas or full stops, how to bridge, overlap and disjunct the text's phrasing and rhetorical construction. Such disassociative tactics, which start off as a systematic disjunctive training, something like syncopation in

¹⁰ For two outstanding insights into Apollo, see Charles Boer, *In The Shadow of the Gods*, in, Spring, An Annual Of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought, Spring Publications, Dallas, 1982; especially: *Apollo's Slave: Shadows at Delphi*, P.142; and Marcel Detienne, *Apollon le couteau à la main*, Editions Gallimard, Paris 1998.

music, soon open to much more complex levels, particularly in terms of hermeneutics. They question the authorial voices and the implicit cultural projects and interpretations that texts propose.

Contra-diction

Disassociation is an awkward and even contrary tool. It opens the way to the strategies I describe in terms of *contra-diction*, tactics which question and rebel against the implicit 'dictions' of texts, that counter the dictates and dictatorships of the authorial voices of literature. At the heart of this is the question of who 'owns' the voice of a performance. Much of this work is about dismantling and subverting the text's literary in-voice, its claim for illustration and emphasis. The primary authority is usually the author, that is, the author's presumed voice or the cultural voice we think the author would use or would want to hear, either the author's didascalical voice that seeks to direct the director, or a cultural cliché that echoes the text's authorial voice in the mind of the actor or director¹².

Contradiction involves cultural resistance and rebellion: fighting for voices that can wrench the text away from 'the book', away from literary and literal versions. It often leads to work on sub-versions and per-versions. The paradox is that texts surge with potential when this happens; they fight back in unsuspected ways, reveal unexpected meanings and a hermeneutic liberation takes place: autonomous voices come to life. The work explores these autonomous, contradictory voices, physically and culturally, and the figures that carry them, "figuring out the voices" and their 'counter dictions'. It is very much a question of who speaks the text, of who owns the speaking voice, not allowing cultural or psychological truisms to take over. A very important part of this type of training involves character work: finding the characters whose voices affords the most qualitative *contradictions*, those who can voice the richest sub-versions and commentaries¹³.

These shifts of points of view often invoke "voices from hell," returning ghosts who bring a 'postmortem' intelligence to texts, quoting, echoing and subverting textual facades to give voice to radically different mythopoetic perspectives. These under or otherworldly excursions often seem necessary to test, temper, and inform naïve adhesions to cultural standards. The root etymology of *education* would be appropriate here: to lead out, hence to separate, to distance. These *voice*

¹¹ Modern dance, especially in the 80's, often resorted to such tactical clashes, clearly concerned about its own political voice (and maybe even about the reasons for its vocal silence): the dancers' high seriousness and abstract choreographies took place while a detached, cold-shower reporter's voice detailed the latest death tolls in wars, famines, and other socio-political disasters.

¹² Within this perspective, Samuel Beckett is the ultimate dictator; the paradox is that his theatre proposals can be seen as an authorial tracking down of the sub-text voice of theatre.

¹³ At this stage some performers might want to use this work to return to classical renderings, to return to literary characters with, as it were, "more character".

moves detach the dreamer from the dream, deconstructing a priori subjective truisms (“being true to one’s self”) or cultural ones (“being true to the author’s intentions.”)

Voice and context

Disassociation must be tested in context. It must be worked within ensemble structures, where the protagonist voice is immersed in complex images with multiple subjects, as in dreams when we start with *two* subjects:” I dreamt that I ...” The protagonist voice is here the person voicing the text, the voice-person through whom text is brought into context (*per-sonare*.) This is a double-edged honor. Its first pitfall is that a protagonist voice is naturally prone to excess self-involvement, to an inflation of emotional self-feeling that can blind and deafen it to con-text in a kind of autistic excess of musical or dramatic abandonment. A voice in context is forced to detach and listen, to observe, to serve, to relinquish or adapt its project. It opens the subject, faces and “figures out” the object, including the object of its own presence on stage. Con-text demands presence of mind. The voice is forced to listen, to be circumstantial to both text and context, to be pertinent, especially if it wants to be im-pertinent, if it wants to deliver a commentary that incides with relevance, intellectual and emotional. The second pitfall is that voices “fall for” texts, falling extremely easily into emphatic illustration. In ensemble work the principles of disassociation and contradiction build strong enough contexts so as to resist the impact of text, and the fall into collective illustration. We ‘set up’ and ambush the texts so that they do not automatically take over voice and image.

Hearing Voices

Because the voice is usually understood and lived today as a personal matter (“It is me, it is my way of being me in my going out from myself”¹⁴), as belonging to the notion of subjectivity, it is attached to an activating subject and is linked with acting, reacting, acting out: the active tenses. Its physical and inspirational sources are considered to be inner and personal; its dynamic and functionality is therefore outwards, fundamentally “ex” – ex-pressive. The cultural relativity of these conceptions parallels the one of “soul” to which it is often linked: a favorite quote of Roy Hart’s was “the voice is the muscle of the soul.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck, A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, P.4, Oxford University Press, 2000.

¹⁵ On the question of the voice’s ownership and of inspiration, and on the pivotal mutation caused by the voice of Judeo-Christianity, see Steven Connor’s magisterial survey in *Dumbstruck, A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, above. On the concept of soul, and indirectly of its voice, see the work of James Hillman, especially his *Anima, An Anatomy of a Personified Notion*, Spring Publications, USA 1985. It is my intention to bring these and other points of view together in a future *Myth and Theatre Festival* dedicated to “The Myths of the Voice”.

We compensate for the predominance of an active, subjective, expressive conception of the voice through exercises that accentuate the importance of listening, of objective prior informative intake, where the accent switches to “in-” words. The aim is a voice that listens, that perceives and therefore that can integrate itself into a contextual image. The working principle being that you can only ‘ex’ (give, express) what you have previously taken “in.” The quality of listening becomes crucial, prior. We are in the world of *in-spiration*, in terms of in-breath and inspiring before expiring, expressing, voicing. Voices are too often in a rush to produce, to fill time and space with the body of their expression. I sometimes insist on breathing in through the nose, not out of some technical preference, but because breathing in through the nose is slower, more sensitive and discriminatory than the mouth’s ‘gulping’ intakes. Inspirational listening becomes akin to the subtlety of scent. If you ‘listen through the nose’, maybe, as James Joyce put it in *Finnegan’s Wake*, “O you’ll nose it, without warnword from we.”¹⁶

Heros and Heralds

Protagonist voices, because they are the standard bearers of text, too often fall prey to heroic missions and assume dramatic priority as the heralds of literary authorities (hero and herald – *héro* and *hérault*, sound the same in French.) Hence a whole set of strategies that upset and offset textual protagonistic rhetorics, *antagonistic* strategies that are coupled with the notion of *submission*. When the protagonist as hero yields and gives in, loses, submits, he or she sheds the mantle of missionary rhetorics and allows for the hermeneutics of *sub-missions*, understandings and interpretations that rise from the sub-text. Exercises here range from explorations of direct speaker / listener duos to speaking in complex ensemble compositions. One particularly simple structure exemplifies this: the speaker addresses the text to a moody listener. The voice is made to depend on the listener’s ear, on its quality of listening. It must listen to how the other listens. The primary focus is on how the listener ‘lends an ear’ - or doesn’t, in which case finding a way to speak crucial information to someone who does not want to hear it. Delivery is made subservient to the mode of reception, in a wish to contextualize the voice, especially when it is dealing with text.

Concepts and Strategies in Ensemble Training

The following are some further concepts and strategies used specifically in ensemble training with voice and language:

¹⁶ Quoted in, David Miller, *Christs, Meditations on Archetypal Images in Christian Theology*, 1981, reprinted by Spring Publications, USA, P. 76. A mythopoetic study of the voices of the red-nosed clown (Silenus) and of the perfect white-clown-teacher (Christ.)

Negative listening - at work in the above example, is used in ensemble work at all levels. This working principle is correlated to Keats' poetical notion of "negative capability." If you move in to interpret an image you risk diminishing its poetical impact and the audience's metaphorical freedom. With texts, this requires full listening without falling prey to the text's in-voice, to its summons or *convocation*: the implicit voice the text wants you to come up with, the pre-ordained vocation it gives you. This is especially relevant in the relationship between text and movement, but also applies to voice and to music.

Cultivating Insecurity - essential for heroes and heralds. Mythology's arch hero, Herakles, never made it to Parnassus, the Olympian high school of poetics, because as a kid he slaughtered his piano teacher. Consequently he had a lot of trouble with the relativity of metaphor, absurdly sure of himself. *Cultivating insecurity* calls on strategies that unsettle protagonist voices, especially when they take on didactic stances and speak down to audiences as teachers, facilitators, know-it-alls, or brutish iconoclastic know-nothings like Herakles. Nor does cultivating insecurity spare the actor's narcissism as a paragon of being, feeling and expressing.

Interdiction - moves us beyond contradiction into another arsenal of authoritarianism and the realm of the suspended sentence. An interdict leaves the protagonist speechless; it breaks in and stops its flow of diction. The voice is arrested, held for questioning. What is important here is the actual capacity to be arrested, especially in mid-sentence, and the capacity to take in the impact and meaning of that which arrests you, the external, contextual factor that interrupted, interpellated, broke into your text.

Distraction - "stealing the show" away from the protagonist voice, often in the manner of *la spalda* in Italian *commedia* clown work, which, by distracting, is actually 'shouldering' the protagonist to give her or him a break, a breather. This is akin to the art of *quite* in bullfighting, micro-distractions of the bull's eye, buying seconds and refocusing the confrontation. *Distraction* also helps change the subject. It can lead to sometimes-essential destruction. These moves imply a dynamic of humiliation of the protagonist voice. The winners are, paradoxically, the voice, the text and the actor, who are freed from excessive cultural expectations and responsibilities.

Counterpoint – if the text makes a point, why the redundancy of making the same point with the voice? This use of counterpoint is analogous to musicology; it involves cross-references, crossing narratives, styles and dynamics, and if necessary double-crossing. If a text comes with a strong project, counterpoint "sets it up," sets up an ambush that might confuse and steal it away from its literary course and discourse. This work is also described as "crossing dreams." It cultivates the difference / indifference tandem; it may lead to *ignoring*, a variation on *docta ignorantia*, and to the 'cultivation' of insensitivity and other principles of cultural iconoclasm.

Conversion – in the late 19th century amphitheatres of psychiatry, hysteria was called "the syndrome of conversion." A key word would be uttered which provoked spectacular somatic manifestations. The meaning and affect of the word

was 'converted' into vocal and physical theatrics. Conversion evokes paradigmatic changes, changing religion or falling off your high horse. We work here with associative disassociation: word and voice are separated, carrying two differing versions of the same reference. To "refer", and all the *pherein* family of words including metapherein, metaphor, describe etymologically a transport, a displacement of meaning. They also imply an underlying poetical and psychological coherence, be it hidden, cryptic, condensed, inverted, perverted, etc.

Repression / Impression / Depression - the 'pressure' words, of which: *expression*. Expressive pressure on the voice / text coupling can be so strong that the actor can no longer be *impressed*. He or she turns off the capacity to listen and risks losing contact with context. Manic expressive freedom is the best way to get lost and fall prey to the 'nasty wolf' of literature. To be impressed is also to be arrested – and inspired. If necessary, *depression* must be called in too, so that cultural expressive pressure can be deflated.

If the use of law enforcement terminology here is tongue in cheek, the use of psychotherapeutic references is less so. The connotations of *disassociation*, for instance, in psychotherapy, carry a heavy and difficult shadow, implying massive resistance, cutting off, schizoid indifference and alienation. I bring them into theatre in order to work with the body of resistance they represent to authorial versions. But the strongest area of influence here derives from dialogues with colleagues in the field of archetypal psychology on the poetics of counter-transference¹⁷. They emphasize dealing with the plurality of voices that come up as you are listening to someone speak, including your own affective reactions, and the tone in the person's actual voice, while you are taking note of the *prima face* textual information being conveyed.

Tragic Freedom

Most of the strategic schemes I have described subject the protagonist voice of the text to forceful contingencies; rather than imposing its subject, its subject is sub-jected. The 'winning' alliance and identification between the actor as herald, supposedly the most important subject-informer on stage, and the literary subject, the grammatical and fictional subject in the text, is broken into, disassociated. Their voices are made to yield, lose, submit, and they find themselves in the lowest hierarchical position, both in terms of the contextual fiction and in terms of staging, placing, attitude and initiative. In ensemble work, the actors are often told: we want to hear the voice, but not necessarily see the speaker; we want to see the dream, but not necessarily the dreamer. Paradoxically, it is when this degree of mythopoetic (dis) integration and open quality of project and projection is achieved, that "the voice is free." This take on the protagonist voice reflects, in my view, the fundamental scheme of tragedy. It is through complete loss and the realization of what that loss implies, be it

mortality, destiny or the implacable psychological dimensions of what the gods mean, that the tragic individual can voice his or her realizations: rebellion, insult, mourning, madness, beauty...

The quality of this voicing resides in the conjunction and disjunction between subjection and subjectivity, in the 'meta-junction' between being subjected to tragic objectivity while realizing its impact on one's subjectivity. The key word is "realizing": realizing the metaphorical reality of the reality you find yourself voicing¹⁸. The question is not only "do you realize what you are saying?" in terms of personal experience, but rather in terms of how text and context engage in a dialogue, as it were, over and above your head. "Realizing" gives voice to both emotion, whatever the sources and associations of that emotion might be, and to the contextual intelligence of text.

Enrique Pardo, Paris, October 3rd, 2002

¹⁷ Some of these are: James Hillman, Nor Hall, Patricia Berry, Jay Livernois, Paul Kugler.

¹⁸ Tragic realization can also be elaborated in terms of the baroque notion of *disenchantment*. Given the 'singing' essence implied in enchantment, we are confronting the paradox of a *disenchanted eight-octave voice*; but then *quality of paradox* is in many respects the core of the work I am describing. See my "*Pantheatre: Archetypal Riddles, Baroque Solutions*", in *Sphinx* 1, London 1988.