

Voice and Soul—The Alfred Wolfsohn/Roy Hart Legacy

By Linda Wise

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The voice: a war-stricken heritage

Without war, Alfred Wolfsohn might have become another man. He was only 18 when he was conscripted to the front line in 1914 and what has been called his “descent into hell”ⁱ.

“ We are in a foreign country. Here in this foreign country are trenches, trenches are everywhere. I am living in these trenches. Every now and then the darkness of the night is lit up very light—strange stars made by man. Shells burst right and left. I throw myself to the ground, my hands are clawing the earth. Often someone next to me is hit. Each time I am astonished that I have been spared!
Barrage all around me. The guns from which it is coming are manned by four or five Frenchmen. I don’t know where they come from, I don’t know who they are. They don’t even know they can easily kill me. It’s no good shouting: Jean Baptiste—Maurice—Pierre—I have done you no wrong, what do you want from me?
I keep crawling.
The hours pass. The fire is getting stronger and my peril greater. I pray to God but He doesn’t hear me. From somewhere I hear a voice shouting.
‘Comrade! Comrade!’ I close my eyes, shaking with terror, thinking: how can a human voice utter such a sound, a voice in extremis “

“ the year was 1917, we were entrenched somewhere at the front, we did not know where; under heavy bombardment. At long last came the relay. Heavy rain had turned the trenches into swamps of mud and in a short while I became trapped in it. I called for my comrades to help but no one heard and soon I was quite alone. Hour after hour, inch by inch I crawled back. After a while I heard a voice nearby moaning incessantly:

Help, Help. I fought a terrible struggle with myself: should I try to crawl to him or not. I did not do it. After an agony of more than twenty hours I reached a reserve dugout. I do not remember what happened after that except that I learnt later that I had been hit and buried by a grenade and that I awoke the next morning in the cellar of a house in St Quentin, amongst a heap of corpses.”ⁱⁱ “

Alfred Wolfsohn emerged from these war years suffering from shell-shock, post trauma syndrome, and plagued by aural hallucinations. One voice in particular echoed through his mind with an ever-increasing sense of guilt—that of the soldier he had failed to help. In spite of psychiatric help nothing would stop the cacophony of screaming and groaning soldiers. We do not know the exact chronology of events that lead Wolfsohn to want to sing, but, according to Sheila Braggins, one of the few remaining pupils of Wolfsohn, the desire was born during a journey to Italy after the warⁱⁱⁱ. He began to work with singing teachers and voice specialists; one worked in the line of primal screams, another worked with music and “vocalises”—but his voice did not improve and his symptoms remained. Whilst in hospital he had begun to read some of Freud’s writings and was convinced that if he were able to re-find and release the emotion of the sounds of those voices in himself he would cure his symptoms. He began to create what could be called his own ‘vocal exorcism’, studying literature, philosophy, ancient myths, the scriptures, psychology—anything to do with the human being—in an attempt to understand “the mystery behind the human voice”^{iv}. He began to work with other singers—often singers who had problems—adopting the same approach as he had used for himself:

“ It was not their voice that was suffering but their **soul**. “

The seeds of the idea that the voice is an audible vision of the soul were sown.

A passionate lover of opera, Wolfsohn developed his method from a very musical basis, using the piano as a support for his vocalises and exercises. He began to imagine, in his inner ear, a voice that could sing all the parts of The Magic Flute—male and female.

For a Jew, life in Berlin became too dangerous, and, in 1938, Wolfsohn fled to Britain. He was interned as an “enemy alien” but later volunteered for the Pioneer Corps which had a company for “aliens and other undesirables.” Around 1942, he was invalided out of the army and the following year was given permission by the British Home Office to give singing lessons. By this time he was reading Jung and the language of psychoanalysis filtered into the singing studio—animus and anima/ consciousness/psyche/ shadow/projection. These concepts helped to articulate his idea that “the voice is the muscle of the soul”, and gave another vocabulary to relate the evolution and revelation of the voice to the singer. The link between voice and soul was not new since as early as 1839 Longfellow wrote in Hyperion:

“ O how wonder is the human voice!
It is indeed the organ of the soul. “

What **was** new was the recognition that psyche plays an indissoluble role in the revelation of the voice in all its full register—from Bel Canto to Hell Canto^v.

The group of students grew, and many artists, philosophers, scientists came to visit the studio, now known as the Alfred Wolfsohn Research Centre. Alfred Wolfsohn died of tuberculosis in 1962. Written on his tomb in Golders Green are Nietzsche’s words:

“ Lerne singen, O seele. “
(Learn to sing—O my soul!)

He has been named “the Prophet of Song”^{vi} but for me it is essential to see singing, the singer, and the song as a metaphor in order to begin to understand Wolfsohn’s work. He wrote:

“ let me underline that when I speak of singing I do not see it only as an artistic exercise but as a possibility and a means to know oneself and to transform this knowledge into conscious life.”

It is not important to speak about where he was born, where he lived, and how he died all that matters are his IDEAS.^{vii}

Not without some trepidation, he was fully aware that his ideas would be developed and changed, and he was also aware that Roy Hart, of all his pupils, would be the one who would have the widest impact.

From war wounds to guru

Roy Hart certainly took Wolfsohn’s ideas and developed them into an empirical, societal, living experience. He had abandoned a promising career in the theatre to dedicate himself completely to Wolfsohn’s work. A gifted actor with a strong natural voice, a leader with a lot of charisma, he was also driven by a passion to come to terms with what appeared to him to be contradictions in himself. Unlike Wolfsohn, he was not a prolific writer, and, in fact, the few pieces of writing that remain under his name were mostly written by his wife, Dorothy Hart. His early diaries reveal a sensitive, gifted but very lonely student. It is not surprising, therefore, that the one area where he shone—theatre—should become the basis of his philosophy, and that a great part of his life’s work was an attempt to bridge the separation between the artist and his private life. Life or Theatre—Wolfsohn’s ideas that we find in another form in the paintings of Charlotte Salomon.^{viii}

During the period from Wolfsohn’s death in 1962 to the creation of the Roy Hart Theatre in 1969, there was a definite shift in the structure of the work from the intense one-to-one teacher/pupil relationship to a more collective “group” experience guided by Roy Hart. The “singing lesson”^{ix} was always present but expanded to group rehearsals, discussions, meetings, and public presentations. More and more people were attracted to the studio and, though Roy Hart would say that he never sought to be the leader of this group, it is obvious, in retrospect, that there was little place for a collective leadership. This too was a movement of the times—it was the sixties—people everywhere were looking for masters and for an alternative in living. Subtly, the language and the philosophy behind the work on the voice began to change:

“ Most of these people were not naturally gregarious or prone to follow a leader: yet they chose to subject themselves to each other and (as some at first thought) to me, but in fact both they and I are subject to the creative research we do—to the principle of the eight octave voice. We find that any normal human voice, male or female, usually reckoned to have a range from two to two and a half octaves, may be extended, with training to six or more octaves, gaining in expressiveness and emotional content in the process. This cultural-philosophical system of voice training is an empirical lay activity. To my mind its most interesting

aspect is the emergence of genuine family relationships and of a growing social awareness among those who adhere to the work.^x “

To subject oneself to the principle of the “8 octave voice” was also to subject oneself to what became known within the hermetic circle as the “idea.” Like many groups at that time there was a strong hierarchical circle towards the centre, but Roy Hart was very consistent and he never excluded anyone who wished to work with him—so long as it was on his terms.

“ I was interested in the relationship between the actor and his personal life. I became concerned with the relationship between the voice and the personality. I could not develop an attribute so specifically human as the human voice without studying life itself—deeply. Singing as we practice it is literally the redemption of the body. The capacity to ‘hold’ the voice in identification with the body makes biological reality of the concept ‘I am.’ Because I had learned to hold myself in sound I found I was able to hold others as a leader in concentration. Concentration is the summoning of the whole body in one effort: True concentration is prayer. It is because we explore every human impulse and raise it to the level of conscious artistic expression that our work contains the seed of its evolution. “

This paper ends with a quotation from Nietzsche:

“ And this secret spake life herself to me. ‘Behold’, said she, ‘I am that which must ever surpass itself...’ “

In 1956 the Science correspondent for the Observer had written:

“ Mr Wolfsohn does not regard the voice as a delicate plant to be carefully cultivated, but rather as a potential athlete in need of strict but thorough strenuous training. He uses a kind of assault course technique and the voice certainly seems to be capable of putting up an astonishing performance. “

Likewise, Roy Hart’s work took on a hugely striving heroic dimension, and physical effort and sweating engagement forged the bodies and sounds of his followers, but engagement was not limited to the singing studio; it was required 24 hours a day. In one of his frequent demonstrations he describes his work as a:

“ biological education of the personality.

The different members of my community attack with the utmost effort of body and will the different centres of energy—a form of shock treatment for the cells.

I had to educate my voice to produce at will a great variety of timbres and nuances that relate to immediate experience rather than an acted simulation of experience. My life’s work has been to give bodily expression to the totality of myself. This means bringing an enormous unconscious territory into consciousness. I have often referred to my art as ‘conscious schizophrenia.’^{xii} “

Roy Hart was a virtuoso of the voice but ironically for someone who was so gifted at holding his group together, he was unable to hold the artistic relationships he created with some of the most famous contemporary artists of the time. He would break relations over moral and financial issues, which he described as questions of integrity:

“ It is my attitude to my art that is more revolutionary than the particular sounds that fellow artists find they can copy or embellish.

I believe that what I do with my voice is the point of balance between machine and mysticism. Stockhausen, Henze and Maxwell-Davies all had an immediate, unconscious strong response to my voice: they felt a tremendous something speak to them, but I know that none of them really grasped the significance of that something. They have not the psychological experience to do so. “

Roy Hart Theatre 1968 - 1989^{xiii}

In 1969 I was an aspiring actress studying at the Royal Scottish Academy of Drama. I received an invitation to the Roy Hart Theatre’s performance of *The Bacchae* at the Roundhouse, in London. Fate had it that I was performing in the same play at the same time. My personal experience with *The Bacchae* had been one of my most interesting theatre experiences but two events blurred the pleasure I had from the performance. The first was that my director had a nervous breakdown—ostensibly because of the material of the play—and the second was that I had been sent by the director of the Academy to see a voice therapist.

According to the staff of the academy I had severe voice problems, which manifested themselves during the performance. I was vexed because I had heard, during this production, sounds that had never fallen from my mouth and had also experienced a sense of wild depth that seemed to me in complete accord with the contents of the play; I was, after all, playing a deranged follower of Dionysus who leads her colleagues to murder with the tearing apart of Pentheus! The well-placed voice seemed to me to have no place here—and neither had it perturbed my director. On the contrary, he had encouraged me to go as far as I was able in the direction of releasing energy. But now he was being cared for in a psychiatric hospital. I attended my first appointment with the voice therapist. She placed a bone prop in my mouth and asked me to say AHH. With my arrogant youthful convictions I felt she understood nothing—and I took the plane down to London.

I had no pre-conceptions and could never have anticipated what awaited me. I walked into a studio hidden in the recesses of a Sports Club in Hampstead and discovered an amorphous mass of groping beings making a polyphony of all the sounds that were causing my “severe voice problems.” The impact was enormous; here were 15 to 20 bodies deeply engaged in emitting all the sounds that had been forbidden to me. I understood what I had intuited—that there is a difference between a broken sound and a broken voice. Two days later I resolved that this voice research would be the subject of my university thesis, and I changed the entire orientation of my career.

Voice and Soul

The concept of singing has evolved enormously over the last 30 years. There has been an explosion of scientific, spiritual, psychological, and ethnological research in voice. When I began to study with Roy Hart, we were considered “voice freaks.” The sounds we discovered or uncovered have gradually entered into the world and are no longer shocking; and thanks to many advances we are able to know much more about the physiology, and what is actually happening to the vocal folds and the larynx when we emit certain sounds.

Now, 30 years since Roy Hart’s death, I find it helpful to work with the idea that there is a place, a geography for the voice, determined by the anatomy of each individual; his or her lungs, larynx, diaphragm, vocal folds, palate etc. I like the precision of anatomy and very often use this in my work, as I might encourage students to work with techniques like Feldenkreis and Alexander, but still, with all this knowledge, I often hear, “I do not know where my voice is.”

Somewhere the connection with me/my voice has not found its inner imaginative space. I have an image of *La Bocca della Verità* in Rome. The open mouth that defies one to place one’s hand inside, and which will reveal whether or not you are being/speaking/manifesting the truth. Why do we attribute all that pours forth from an open mouth to have a capacity for revelation? It is as if, by wanting to expose the voice to the light of consciousness, we seem to expose the most dark, the most deep, the most hidden, and, by implication, the most authentic, the most true, the most sacred. What or where is this place of revelation where the invisible becomes voice? This place where impalpable air becomes tangible sound. Could not this be called a search for soul?

I co-direct with Enrique Pardo a company called Pantheatre, named after the mythical figure of the Greek God, Pan. Shortly before putting an end to his life, Socrates is supposed to have addressed a prayer to Pan, the famous Socratic prayer, which goes:

“ Beloved Pan and all ye other Gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inner soul so that inner and outer man can be at one. “

What did Socrates mean by “soul”? He used the word *psyche*. The connotations and prestige of the word vary enormously with the times, and the places. In the last 50 years or so, in the Anglo-Saxon world, “soul” has become a best seller. look at soul music and the explosion of books titled with soul. The philosophical and cultural references with which I feel closest, and which have most influenced my own use of the term, are associated with the re-visioning of psychology undertaken by James Hillman in his work and writings.^{xiii}

James Hillman was director of studies of the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich in the early 1970s, where, together with a circle of collaborators, he founded the post-Jungian current of thought known as archetypal psychology named after Jung’s notion of archetype. Hillman elaborated an extraordinary opus around the notion of soul, using both the Greek mythologies of Psyche and the Latin concept of Anima in his commentaries and in the links he makes with Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophies.

There are three aspects in Hillman’s phenomenology of soul that are of particular importance here.

First is his work on the personification of soul found in Anima, the Anatomy of a Personified Notion. For Hillman, soul is personified in the figure of Psyche, especially as she appears in the myth of Psyche and Eros.

Second is his differentiation between soul and spirit exposed in his essay, Peaks and Vales. Spirit aspires to move upwards away from materiality. It seeks the pure and rarefied air of peaks, the “high” of detachment. Soul, or Psyche, is drawn to descend into the vales of worldly experience; it is attracted by the downward deep entanglements with Eros: the experience, the tears and pleasures of connection (Hillman: The Myth of Analysis.)

Third, archetypal psychology links soul-psyche with imagination, perhaps, in this context, the most important. Images come from soul. Soul is the crucible where experience becomes matter, releases emotions that “matter”, connect, “have meaning”, and can be transformed into images, or, in this context, I would say “sound images.”

The roman word for soul/sense of soul—is *anima*. One could speak of *anima* as that which animates: in other words a soulful voice is one which is animated by the singer and which animates the listener. I often ask myself: can one be objective about the voice? When your “soul” is moved, can I be sure that mine will be too? Alfred Wolfsohn asked the same question ...and Roy Hart implied an answer by writing of his work under the title: The Objective Voice.

There is no doubt that, for Wolfsohn and Hart, singing included a transcendental dimension based on a physical, lyrical, athletic, muscular “going beyond” one’s possibilities... and my education was in this mindscape. As I have said, it was a truly heroic proposition built in their time, but, when I met James Hillman in 1980, I discovered a perspective that made sense to me and which has probably influenced more deeply the philosophy of my work today than the notions of “eight octave living” and “consciousness” that were Roy Hart’s philosophical concerns^{xiv}. In many ways, it seems to me that Roy Hart was closer to the teachings of Gurdjieff.^{xv}

“The Voice is the Muscle of the Soul”

If you are what you sing. If your soulful dimension, or definition of your personality as soulful can be measured by your voice, then what you cannot voice could be named as unrealised, soulful potential. The notion of an eight-octave voice is an allegorical formulation of this ideal. Within such a mindscape, the voice, and singing, become a vocation, a spiritual journey, an initiation.

But sometimes one’s soul needs to let go of heroic strivings...

Psyche in the Singing Studio

Little whimpers of being, not making.

One day I was waiting for a new student, a singer with one of the most reputed madrigal choirs in Paris. I found, standing on my doorstep, a little man with glasses and a briefcase. I thought he was a member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and was about to say that I did not have the time to speak with him, when he thrust out his hand and announced his name: my new student. He came in, took off his coat, folded it neatly on his knees and sat bolt upright on the sofa. We talked for a while and then I invited him to work. He removed his shoes, placing them neatly next to his briefcase from which he removed a little brown note-book. He asked if he could take notes. I answered that normally I discouraged people from taking notes whilst they were working but if he felt he needed to he should. He nodded and placed his note-book in his pocket. We began to explore some sounds which he seemed to hold for inspection and then would transfer to his note-book. Once transcribed, the note and book returned to his pocket. I was fascinated by the precision of his inquiry. His voice was very melodious, almost liturgical in its purity. As we moved into the higher ranges, the notebook sometimes did not return to his pocket, and then the whimper happened. A tiny little choke of sound where his voice shifted off the note. His face creased. Puckering into a look of total disbelief, and an indecipherable expression like a child who has just tasted something he has never eaten and cannot yet decide if it is good or bad... then a full, complete smile spread from his face to his toes. The little upright man let go and collapsed onto the sofa, falling back into the cushions.

“I think I needed a place for that little voice to speak,” he said. He paused and then wrote vigorously in his little book. I could not follow his imaginative note-taking but I continued to work with his voice. He continued to take notes. Sometimes less, sometimes more. Until suddenly, one day, the note book disappeared. Was he, as Jung says, “letting the little voices speak?”

Mnemosyne

Sara came to work with me first in her late forties—a delightfully vivacious woman with a passion for the theatre. She had the kind of timbre in her voice that held the traces and scars of life. It was not broken and yet sounded with minute slides and breaks of continuity—a voice brimming with undefined emotion. It was not surprising, therefore, that at a certain moment, tears began to flow. What was surprising was the fact that these tears, leading to sobs, would always return on a specific note—the E above Middle C. Not a semitone up or semitone down. It was impossible for her to sound on this note without emotion taking over. In order to be able to continue working I would find strategies to avoid the note until one day I decided that I would sing it instead of leading her with the piano. For the first time she was able to sing the note at the same time as allowing her tears to flow. She was no longer overwhelmed. Over time and months the passage became easier and she could sing the note like any other. It emerged in our talks after the work that her daughter had been a pianist and had died at the age of 18 in very violent circumstances. Was it possible that this terrible memory was held into the vibrations of this one specific note? Was it the timbre of the piano? Was it all of this, a conjunction of psyche and soma—the resonating note specific to her physiology, personality and voice typology?

Emotion is a subject of considerable controversy when it comes to singing. Some teachers refuse to acknowledge that there is the need to work with it and will talk of the voice as an instrument separate from the person. The capacity to feel, to express and to transmit clearly what one feels is an art, and this art as expressed in being able to let go of emotion is one of the major reasons people give for wanting to work on their voice. Being able to feel, and to express one's feelings was a large part of Roy Hart's training, and until I came to this work I had no idea of what feeling one's voice could mean or indeed that the feeling of one's voice or one's feelings can also direct a way of working.

Sound Breaks

There is often emotion where registers change. It is in these areas that the voice may begin to wobble, to lose its centre and a sense of vulnerability may often follow because the singer is no longer able to sense the space, or feel the affirmation that comes when the voice is clear and strong. When we sing in a more classical mode this vulnerable space would not be the space into which we would go; for we are seeking a stable, homogeneity in the voice. But literally, and metaphorically, there are bridge areas, vulnerable passages, changes of mode. Where there is confidence we can move right into them and explore their imaginative landscapes.

There is a huge fear of allowing the sound to break—particularly for a singer who has trained for many years to avoid breaks. If the singer can relax and accept a break, the sense of instability can give way to a sense of pleasure at the freedom of moving between spaces. Fear leaves as familiarity with a constantly-moving centre becomes a pleasure, and an art, as we can hear in the yodel of Bavaria, or the songs of Siberia, North Africa etc. The problem lies with the fact that when the voice leaves its central axis the person begins to feel "lost," "unstable," and unable to find security in the infinity of changing viewpoints. The most simple glissandi may generate this sense of instability.

Boundaries

Recently a highly sensitive and intelligent psychoanalyst came to work with me because his clients had difficulty in hearing him. He has a naturally musical voice and a gift for improvising melody, but he is touchingly shy and can never sing towards me. Most often he will turn and look out of the window. He struggled for weeks, unable to let his voice slide or sigh. Finally, he explained to me that, for him, what was so intimidating was allowing himself to let go into a place with no boundaries. For him boundaries are essential in his work with psychotic patients.

Very often, trained singers are unable to slide between the notes and the physical and psychological changes of mode or register pose problems. For one very gifted classical singer, whom I shall call Marie, an extended glissandi was so destabilising she ended in tears; she lost her musical reference points and so could no longer channel her voice. This is the other extreme where boundaries chain us psychologically and imaginatively. Marie was a musicologist. She had perfect pitch and a beautiful voice. A gifted musician who played the violin and the piano. She watched tetanised as young, inexperienced beginners found their own music and improvised freely, whilst she was blocked by her gift to hear the notes. She could not work without naming the notes in her mind whilst she was singing: DO SI Re Mi bémol etc She needed to shift her music from her ear to the sensations and vibrations of her body. Engaged with her physical body, she let the centre of her concentration shift, but was still moving in the waters of extreme vulnerability like a new-born foal taking its first steps. For someone with her experience it takes a lot of courage to move into such areas of vulnerability and ...failure ...but something was pushing her to seek change.

Masters and Mentors

They say that behind every great singer is a great singing teacher. Il Maestro, the guiding mentor is part of the mythical landscape of voice teaching. The relationship between pupil and teacher can be fraught with complexes, and transference and counter-transference. As one colleague wittily said:

“The note is played on the piano but chained to the note is the master!”

When we allow singing considerations to move beyond technique into the realm of psyche/soul the implications of personal relationships become more complex. Alfred Wolfsohn and Roy Hart moved deeply into personal and erotic engagement with their pupils—both men and women. I am not saying that the engagement was always literalised but the model of teaching was one in which were boundaries often crossed. The interaction between Eros and Psyche—which James Hillman considers to be the central “Myth of Analysis”—pervaded the singing work.

Descent to the underworld

Recently I have followed the journey of a woman who had a beautiful singing voice. She lived through the process of losing a much longed-for baby. Her constant hospital visits for treatment transformed into the nightmare of discovering that she had lymph cancer. She fought for her life and continued to sing all through her chemotherapy treatment. Side effect followed side effect like enforced early menopause and losing her hair, and “losing” her voice. I have never experienced such dramatic changes in a voice. Her voice literally plunged to the depths from never having been comfortable below middle C. She could only groan on the deepest of bass sounds. Her vocal folds were undamaged by the treatment but, when she regained some voice, we had to work with an emotional vibrato that de-stabilised everything except her very deepest notes. Her voice seemed to tremble with a voiced fear that made her husband ask her not to sing. I tried not to think of recovery but of coming to terms with another way of being, another way that she might sing. There were days when I am sure we both despaired. She found her path. Five years later she is singing as she never sang before; trusting her intuition, her body, and knowing that she has changed profoundly in order to become someone, and to sing in a way she had never imagined.

Gender questions

A high-ranking business executive was sent to me by one of his childhood friends. He had great difficulty in sounding the lower ranges of his voice. It seemed to cause a lot of pain, whilst the higher ranges and particularly the more archetypal feminine sounds gave him a great sense of pleasure and elation—almost euphoric. One day, a beautiful soprano sound emerged in his voice, and, for the first time, one could say he sang “in tune.” The sound prompted him to tell me the dream he had had the night before of a rather kitsch blue Madonna that you might find in a baroque South American church. For him she was the voice that sang “in tune.” She was melodic and warm, and sensual. In his next lesson his voice dropped easily to comfortable warm, deep tones in the lower range. The journey of this man has been quite moving. The contract between us was unusual. The chauffeur would wait downstairs, the mobile phone would be left on, and his impeccably pressed suit would remain buttoned and belted until he could bear it no longer. His voice was tight and small and one could say that it had become a cultural social front, product of his “persona”, the required voice imposed by the required character held in between almost invisible lips. In spite of his powerful position he had no inner sensation of his size and on the opposite scale the tiny letting go of a sigh became a huge trauma—a letting-go of the brilliant, high-achiever for a moment. After six months of work he would arrive telephone-less, chauffeur-less and dressed in a T-shirt. His mother no longer recognised his voice on the phone. Over this year of work he was also in therapy recovering from a suicidal depression. This year of metamorphosis led him to uncover, affirm and come out with his homosexuality.

I revolt at any facile diagnosis that the higher registers of a man’s voice reflect his femininity and vice versa, but I observe the impact of sounds that go beyond a person’s social voice. One male student I had literally blushed each time his voice entered into more archetypal female sounds. At these times I think, “Tread carefully for you tread on dreams.”

These sounds, as indeed do all sounds, come with images with which the singer needs to come to terms if he is to stay with them. We all have sounds that we cannot accept easily and often it is a deep work of letting go into the imagination to allow ourselves to enter certain audible images.

Loss of Soul

Alfred Wolfsohn felt that he had lost his soul during the First World War. There are times that one is confronted with the sense that the soul has left the singer. Last summer I worked with an opera singer. She was born with a naturally beautiful voice. She had been “discovered” by her teachers, and, from the age of 13, was trained to stardom. At 25 she had a breakdown and lost all

sense of direction and the clarity of the path constructed for her over the past 18 years. I met her when she was already in therapy—a therapy that had restored her self-confidence and an idea of who she was, but a therapy that had not restored her wish to sing. She came to my classes with great trepidation. She did indeed have an amazing voice—full, generous, supple, expressive and with a very clear technique. She knew what she was doing. But, it is true; there was no joy. I felt that I could make all kinds of propositions that she would follow like a good soldier and that it would mean nothing. After a week of work, we were beginning to know each other, and I began to introduce her to an exercise that I use in which the singer takes a journey, trying, as far as he or she is able, to follow the path that his or her voice wants to take. Gail, as I shall call her, began the work as conscientiously as she always did, and it was clear that everything in her body and voice was seeking to excavate down—and that everything in her training was seeking to elevate her voice. She worked patiently and very slowly until her body began to relax and she found the channels she was searching for. Of course, her emotion was great, not manifested with tears. I can only describe it as if her whole body was “blushing:” as if in this slow descent she was bringing to the surface the blood of a hidden passion. When we advanced further to work on her music she sang with such beauty that she suddenly stopped in the middle of her song. “I am singing from my soul,” she said—that so familiar but unfamiliar place.

The Roy Hart Theatre Diaspora

Roy Hart was often asked if he would write a book about his work. He would turn to those around him and say: “You are my book.”

When he died there were over 40 members of the Roy Hart Theatre. Approximately 20 of them are still working in the domain of the arts, and the voice work has been experienced by thousands of students all over the world. It was slow in coming but gradually there was a recognition that one cannot hold a work like this into a status quo—it is a living moving process—and in my view it is right and necessary that each person who studied with Wolfsohn and Hart can only develop his or her own work in relation to this experience.

A few days before his death Roy Hart asked me to replace him in a press conference in Austria. A request from Roy at that time was more like an order, particularly to someone as young as I was. He wanted me to go to the conference and to announce, “I am Roy Hart.” I refused, at the time out of modesty, but in fact it was a decisive moment. I was not Roy Hart and neither did I aspire to be him.

I am sure that if you asked each person who had worked with Roy Hart about his or her current work and philosophy, the replies would be very different. So where is the “book,” the connections that link us to the “master”? I would call it an attitude to the voice. One that takes into account and respects the psyche of the “singer.”

We are working in the fields that lie between science and faith—the space where imagination lies. Where we become something else because we have learned to suspend our disbelief.

The fear of the imagination and opening into unimagined possibility is great, and as Alfred Wolfsohn would quote: “God curses us by making our dreams come true.”

ⁱ Pikes, Noah. *Dark Voices—the Genesis of Roy Hart Theatre*. Spring Journal Inc. 1999—the most researched book on the Wolfsohn/Hart legacy currently available.

ⁱⁱ Wolfsohn, Alfred. *Orpheus, oder der weg su einer Maske*,—written around 1938—English translation Marita Gunther

ⁱⁱⁱ Braggins, Sheila. *Alfred Wolfsohn: The Diary of Events 1896–1962*.

^{iv} Hamsun, Knut. *Mysteries*.

^v Nick, Hobbs. Lecture on Captain Beefheart—Pantheatre, Paris 2004.

^{vi} Newham, Paul. *The Prophet of Song*, biography of Alfred Wolfsohn.

^{vii} Braggins Sheila. *The Diary of Events 1896-1962*.

^{viii} Salomon, Charlotte. *Life? Or Theatre? A play with music*, title that Charlotte Salomon (1917–1943) gave to the approx. 780 paintings in which she fictionalised her own life. Jewish Historical Museum.

^{ix} The ‘one to one’ lesson—teacher/pupil that Alfred Wolfsohn practised.

^x Hart, Roy. *How A Voice gave me a Conscience*, 1967—paper delivered at the 7th International Congress of Psychotherapy in Wiesbaden

^{xi} Hart, Roy. *The Objective Voice*

^{xii} For full accounts of the creation of the Roy Hart Theatre see:

- Pikes, Noah. *Dark Voices*.
- *The Vocal Vision—views on voice*, edited by Marion Hampton and Barbara Acker, published by Applause
- Roy Hart Theatre Archives: <http://www.roy-hart.com>

^{xiii} Hillman, James. For the references of books and articles, see: <http://www.mythosandlogos.com/Hillman.html>

^{xiv} Monleon, José. *Let there be Consciousness Tonight and Forever*—interview of Roy Hart by Madrid 1971

^{xv} Gurdjieff. *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. Ouspensky. *In Search of the Miraculous*.