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The human voice is my subject. The theme of this Teachers' Academy meeting is story-telling, and I suspect that I have been invited to speak to you because the manner of the telling determines whether a story is successfully communicated or not and historically it is the human voice that has done the telling. I am particularly pleased to be with you in Sofia because I was involved with ELIA in the early days and because I had the distinct honour of being awarded a doctorate by NATFA in 2005. Both of those events were due to recognition of the paramount importance of voice in the art of performance. Thank you.

Mine is an old-fashioned presence here - highlighting the long old tradition of telling stories verbally, vocally, and in the flesh. Now, in the 21st century, we can highlight dozens of different media that function well and reach millions with their messages, their stories, but, here, at this Teachers' Academy, I assume that I'm surrounded with fellow teachers who still do most of their teaching in a room, in the flesh, talking, talking, talking. If this is so I know that you understand me when I say that we carry on the old tradition in our daily story-telling with our students.

The human voice was and is the prime medium for such vital communication - and it tells its own story. The words we use may be powerful, poetic, informative, but it is our voices that carry our foundational identity, it is our voices that command the attention of our listeners, draw them in, alert them to the veracity and value of our messages. And yet our daily voices may have been distorted by unconscious habits of inhibition, imitation and protectiveness. Our story-telling may be compromised by a faulty medium of communication.

We are born with the birthright of a voice with 3 or 4 octaves of speaking notes that can express the full gamut of human emotion and all the subtleties and nuances of thought. It can accurately reveal our psyches - our inner world. This is clearly a dangerous instrument! Inevitably we acculturate ourselves to fit into a society that cannot tolerate such communicative openness. Thus, from childhood, we have adapted and modulated our voices in order to accommodate social norms. Throughout our lives our voices have been conditioned by who we are in our multifarious interactions and if we pay attention to the breath and resonance that create the sound of our voices we may be surprised to realize how much influence the first ten years of our lives have had on the way we speak now. "In my beginning is my end" and "In my end is my beginning" says T.S.Eliot as if he were speaking about voice and story-telling. From the supreme story-teller, William Shakespeare, comes:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,

Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Shakespeare's Jaques in *As You Like It* tells a sweeping story. And, following the rules of rhetoric, it starts with an introductory title which is followed by a beginning, a middle and an end. But the rules can always be broken. Here's another story that eschews all rhetorical rules:

I'll tell you a story
Of Jackanory
And now my story's begun
I'll tell you another
Of Jack and his brother
And now my story's done.

That leaves a lot to the imagination. It's cheating really as a story - but it's evocative. What on earth happened between those brothers? Did Jack's brother silence Jack's voice? How? Like so many cute little children's rhymes, if you hang in there for a moment the story opens into a ghastly funhouse of mirrors.

Stories are meant to have a beginning, a middle and an end. "Once upon a time" is the classic beginning - then follows challenge, conflict, transformation - and at the end "they lived happily ever after." That's how it used to be with story-telling. But that kind of certainty has become suspect. We don't believe in happy endings any more. (Unless, that is, we are fans of romance novels: the formula for those is classic and has been snappily condensed into - "Boy meets girl. Holy crap, shit happens! Eventually the boy gets the girl back. They live Happily Ever After." Nora Roberts, who is America's Supreme Romance Novelist, sold 8 million books in 2008 and makes 60 million dollars a year following this formula - see *June 22 New Yorker*.)

As a teacher, and not a romance fan, I know that our stories are truest when they unravel, disintegrate, wander off into the distance and sometimes meander back with a new start. Teaching is a never-ending story. We know what we initiate in the classroom or the studio or the workshop, and we may even witness a blossoming middle to the story, but the end is endless.

From this point of view we are lucky - we can let ourselves off the hook as we offer techniques, analyze traditions and inject stimuli that we earnestly hope will spark the creativity that will surely form the next generation of story-telling. I may not understand their stories but that doesn't matter. That's not my responsibility; nor is it my responsibility to pontificate on the purpose of art - though I often do. I am struck,

however, by the massive change in subject matter that has come about even in the last 100 years. I recently attended a performance of Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony written in 1910. A huge orchestra and a huge chorus singing Walt Whitman's huge words.

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining,
I think a thought of the clef of the universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

Vaughan Williams meets Walt Whitman in an excessive, extreme and wildly emotive expression of man's search for the meaning of Soul and Nature.

In the English-speaking world by and large we don't do Soul and Nature any more. We do Consciousness and Environment. Language has been pared down, made practical, utilitarian - and the arts are asked to be reflective of a technological, often cynical 21st century. Texting has signaled the death of the vowel with all that that implies for our poetic yearnings. Neuroscience is our new Savior and the brain gurus are shining their headlamps into the amygdala, the hippocampus, the anterior superior gyrus and the cingulate to catch a glimpse of that elusive thing called consciousness. Our brains are changing.

Science deals with the physics of life and right now neuroscience is exciting physics. But it doesn't deal with experience. Only artists can do that. And I firmly believe that so long as artists continue to tell the story of human experience they will be in the vanguard of our never-ending quest for the meaning of life. They might even manage to preserve the poetic language of the soul. Human consciousness has evolved (with the help of science) and artists must use it to develop more and more artistic languages that can articulate the full extent of our humanity. Those languages (music, visual arts, verbal arts) can only communicate fully if they are authentically rooted in individual experience. As teachers of the future story-tellers we must not only express ourselves from our own deep authenticity but awaken those depths in our students. Our responsibility is to help them find their own true voices metaphorically, metaphysically and physically. Only from that deep root can the tree and branches of our communal consciousness grow with healthy purpose.

I train teachers of voice - basic voice - mostly for actors but it's the same voice whether for actors, or singers, or teachers, or public speakers of any kind. It's the human voice. Which we tend to take for granted as a given part of us, like long legs or short ones, or blonde hair or brown. And yet our voices are much more revealing of who we are than our legs or our hair. Our voices are made of breath, vocal folds, and resonators that are part of the body. Our breath is born in symbiosis with our emotions and carries the imprint of our identity. The larynx and the resonators develop habits of personality - they are our 'persona'. Consciously or unconsciously those who listen to us when we speak are reading us, categorizing us, judging us, accepting or rejecting us through the sound of

our voices, as much as through the words that we speak. 'Per' and 'sona' - through sound. This also means the mask that the ancient Greek actors wore. My persona is my mask. My personality is how I behave according to my interactions with other people. My voice is exquisitely conditioned to a multiplicity of social prevarications. The question is: can I choose to drop my mask, my persona, and let my voice pick up the living impulses of who I am and what I care about in my intrinsic identity. As a teacher, who is it that enters the teaching arena? Whose voice am I speaking with? A teacher's voice or my own?

The word 'voice' is used metaphorically in many of the arts. The 'voice' of the poet, the writer, the composer, even, I think, the visual artist is synaesthetically discussed. Frequencies of colour reverberate with the frequencies of sound and energies of visual form are seen in poetic and language forms. A lyric poem written in short lines and short verses evokes a voice:

I felt a funeral in my brain,
 And mourners, to and fro,
Kept treading, treading, till it seemed
 That sense was breaking through.

And then I heard them lift a box,
 And creak across my soul
With those same boots of lead,
 Then space began to toll

As all the heavens were a bell,
 And Being but an ear,
And I and silence some strange race,
 Wrecked solitary here.

Emily Dickinson's voice is unmistakable and her favored lyric form is true to her voice and energy. Gerard Manley Hopkins broke open all received forms with a voice equally unmistakable, a voice supremely relevant to the early 20th century:

I CAUGHT this morning morning's minion, king-
 dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
 As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
 Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of; the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

There's rhythm and music and image and color and action in both these poems as they deal, in wildly different forms, with the soul.

In the English language the voice soared in the Elizabethan era, was still charged with passion in the time of the nineteenth and early twentieth century romantics but by the end of the 20th century the voice had become largely utilitarian. Good for satire, for commercials, for cynicism.

Emotion can be there but must be undercut with knowingness:

A single flow'r he sent me, since we met.
All tenderly his messenger he chose;
Deep-hearted, pure, with scented dew still wet -
One perfect rose.

I knew the language of the floweret;
'My fragile leaves,' it said, 'his heart enclose.'
Love long has taken for his amulet
One perfect rose.

Why is it no one ever sent me yet
One perfect limousine, do you suppose?
Ah no, it's always just my luck to get
One perfect rose. *Dorothy Parker*

And:

The day he moved out was terrible
That evening she went through hell.
His absence wasn't the problem
But the corkscrew had gone as well. *Wendy Cope*

The exciting thing that can happen when language is held close to the chest and kept on a tight leash is to feel how it can intimate the unfathomable depths of the sub-conscious mind. Samuel Beckett is the great theater poet of the 20th C. His voice is also unmistakable. He is the master of bleakness and of fundamental optimism:

I would like my love to die
And the rain to be falling on the graveyard
And on me
Walking the streets
Mourning the first and last to love me.

And from the end of *Texts for Nothing No. 6*:

And yet I have high hopes, I give you my word, high hopes, that one day I may tell a story, hear a story, yet another, with men, kinds of men as in the days when I played all regardless or nearly, worked and played. But first stop talking and get on with your weeping, with eyes wide open that the precious liquid may spill freely, without burning the lids, or the crystalline humor, I forget, whatever it is it burns. Tears, that could be the tone, if they weren't so easy, the true tone and tenor at last. Besides not a tear, not one, I'd be in greater danger of mirth, if it wasn't so easy. No, grave, I'll

be grave, I'll close my ears, close my mouth and be grave. And when they open again it may be to hear a story, tell a story, in the true sense of the words, the word hear, the word tell, the word story., I have high hopes, a little story, with living creatures coming and going on a habitable earth crammed with the dead, a brief story, with night and day coming and going above, if they stretch that far, the words that remain, and I've high hopes, I give you my word.

One has to listen in for one's true voice in order to tell a true story. Listening in to the voices of those who have told good stories, stories that last, can tune the ear and awaken the soul. If the voice that tells the story has no connection to the soul - (should I say "to individual consciousness"?) it is arid and meaningless. How do we listen in to the sound of the 21st century soul? Can we teach techniques and skills to transmit it? I do my best - I teach breath and voice.

It doesn't all have to be solemn, and because parody and comedy are essential variations in story-telling I cannot resist making some new lyrics for Shakespeare's tune.

The first six lines are the same as before:

And then the whining school-boy, backpack, iPod,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful rap-song
Made to his mistress' buttock. Then a banker,
Proud of cooked books and clever like a fox,
Jealous in business, sudden and quick in stock quotes,
Seeking the bubble goal of billionaire
Even in the hedge fund scam. And then the chairman,
In fair round belly with good lobster lined,
With eyes severe and hairpiece neatly stuck,
Full of wise tales and googled instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd retiree,
With medication near and prostate cured,
His iPod still well-saved, a world away
From his shrunk brain; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

I'd like to end on a soulful Whitmanesque note. This is what I dare not say in so many words to my 21st century students - it's addressed to their voices which are the messengers of their souls:

Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking like mere brutes?
Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!
O farther farther sail!

O farther, farther, farther sail!

We must not deny expression to our big passions but we have to find new forms to contain them.

You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
 You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
In order to arrive at what you do not know
 You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
 You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
 You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres
Trying to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate—but there is no competition—
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

T.S. Eliot