

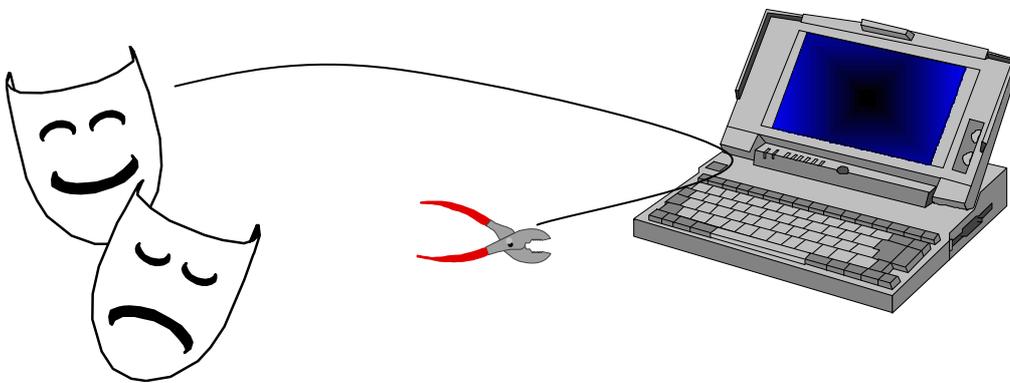
Christian GUÉRIN

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR VOICE

(THE VOICE OF PROFESSIONAL SPEAKERS)

Teachers, business workers, lawyers, actors, singers, politicians and “the others”

Translated by Yves BADIOU



Handbook of vocal Technique to
Improve YOUR Working Tool

**UNDERSTAND - PLACE - TONIFY - PROTECT-
THE VOICE**

“... but your voice has nothing wrong! Your larynx is smooth and pearlescent. It is in a perfect condition. Rest your voice for a week and all will be well!”

A statement that I have heard several times from doctors that I consulted after having become voiceless or hoarse.

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UNDERSTAND

The root of all errors is to believe oneself as truth.

Preamble: why this book?

Three simple ten line considerations can explain why I wrote this little book, which addresses mostly those whose voice is a working tool: teachers, lawyers, actors, singers, politicians and sales and marketing people of all categories:

- Ending up in hospital when you are 20 years old with two nodules on your vocal cords and then remain chronically hoarse or voiceless from 20 to 40 years old leaves a scar in one's life. Especially when we don't understand what is happening, that we see our career as a singer disappear before our eyes and that no one can explain what is wrong with you, starting with all the doctors consulted in the hospital services specialising in the voice.
- Finding your voice again once you are 40 years old, after a "good" re-education and finally becoming an operatic singer but too late to make a real career out of it (5 years on the opera scene singing all day long, every day, all year with a strong intensity on two octaves without ever being hoarse again), to then start teaching for 25 years the vocal technique and singing, re-educating abandoned voices (sometimes from the medical profession) with lasting results; training speech therapists the re-education of the voice and learning in return that their patients have managed to find their tonic voice again, gives a certain amount of experience. Making sure that this technique can be passed on, even from a distance is reassuring. Having received through the internet for ten years, two thousand interested visitors from 72 different countries, thousands of sometimes desperate emails, lost in ideas passed on and errors of judgement whereas most often the answer is simple, thus has been my life.
- It is not without reason that my internet site is call S.O.S.VOIX (S.O.S.VOICE). "The most desperate songs are the most beautiful songs"... the poet said. Dealing with the voice and the songs, Musset was wrong! Having therefore managed through internet to help hoarse or voiceless people from across the world to rediscover the control of their voice, confidence in themselves, sometimes better still, what joy and what free and gratifying work when we have for so long spent days crying because we were no longer able to sing...

Does this mean that the medical profession is not capable of answering patients' voice problems?

Of course not, but not every problem is medical. I am not a doctor, the doctor heals, the surgeon repairs or reconstitutes, the speech therapist re-educates. However sometimes there is no need to heal, repair, re-educate, but understand, listen and adjust.

Two simple observations:

- The voice professional is confronted with difficulties well before the specialist doctor can diagnose a lesion or even a wrong functioning (dysfunctioning). How many hoarse or voiceless people have heard after a first appointment with an ENT specialist:

- “... but you have nothing wrong, I see nothing pathological in your throat. Rest, conserve yourself, conserve your voice.”... and the patient returns to “damaging” his voice.
- When an ENT specialist has brought a larynx back to a perfect function and when a speech therapist has brought it to an orthodox functioning, it is however not rare that the voice falls back into its bad habits of forcing. A relapse is quite common because the consequences not the causes have been treated.

Two extreme categories of voice professionals are easily observed:

- Those that can smoke a packet of cigarettes a day, often drink alcohol, sleep late and little, speak loudly in a lecture hall or on stage, whisper in an office, while their voice carries well and does not tire them. The more these people shout, the more voice they have. This is as astonishing (scandalous some would say) as those who eat ten cakes without putting on any weight.
- On the other hand, those who start the year with a tonic voice... until the first annoyance, or the first “I don’t know what”, whose voice then starts tiring at the end of the term, then at the end of the week, till it becomes the end of the day; until finding themselves the next morning with a sepulchral voice which does not carry any more, having to stop one week or more, be re-educated without great and lasting success and consider with despair changing career!!!

Of course these are extreme situations and we can observe all the intermediate categories. The reader will know where to place him/herself.

If the condition of your larynx is not yet or is not linked to the competence of medicine, I offer you two simple considerations:

- At the start we had one and only one body to control, and we received from our mother a healthy voice; apart from some exceptions; when a baby cries, we can hear him well and he does not become hoarse. Rare are those who need to complain.
- Reaching an adult age, we inevitably have the body linked to the way of life we lead (People who practise a sport every week can eat one more cake, those who eat too much and who do not move must carry the “burden”). It is the same for the voice which builds up muscles itself like the calves, the more we use it well, the more tonic it becomes.

Does this mean that when we are born we all have the means for a good voice, and that depending on what we do, it can evolve in a positive or negative way? From my point of view and experience, yes! The same as the rest of our body.

Here is an example that I experienced during my childhood and that scared me which was also my first experience with the voice:

In Normandy during the Second World War, we lived 30 meters away from a steel foundry and every morning at 6am, we were awoken by the thundering tenor voice of the factory boss. He gave the instructions for the day to an employee, above the sounds of a heating blast furnace. The noise was infernal, but for us 30 meters away it was only his voice that we heard upon awakening.

The worker, confronted to the same ambient noise as his boss, had become voiceless and

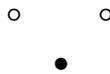
deaf!! In the same circumstances of adversity, one had managed to tone up his voice, while the other had lost it. The examples of this type are numerous.

Let us now talk about you:

Two paths are available to you in order to gain a tonic voice, depending on the state of your voice today:

- You carry within yourself a physiological vocal weakness, your voice has lost its capacities and has settled into this situation even during your holidays or after a long rest. Your larynx is maybe hurt or damaged. It is necessary therefore to address yourself to a specialist doctor, an ENT specialist or a speech therapist. After the necessary care, you may follow a re-education from an ENT who will bring your larynx to an “orthodox” state. From this point only will the work of placing your voice and protecting it start.
- You do not suffer yet or any more from any vocal physiological weakness. Your voice tires, loses its capacities, but medicine cannot diagnose any pathologies to your larynx. You are part of those to who the ENT doctor says: “But your larynx is in a perfectly healthy condition”, even though two days before you were voiceless or nearly. You may therefore start to work on your voice.

However, it is necessary to first of all go through an important stage: UNDERSTANDING what a voice is, how it works, how you mistreat it, when and why, when, why and how you should use it better. To put it in a nutshell, open your eyes, ears and mind... but not yet your mouth.



Professional voices during the XXth century

First of all a little history: Who talks or has talked about the voice; why are there so many different opinions on this important tool of communication?

There are a number of professions which refer to the voice: general doctors, ENT doctors, speech therapists of course, but also elocution, theatre, drama, acting teachers, poets and storytellers, artists and actors, vocal technique and singing teachers, choir or orchestra conductors, theatre directors, artistic directors and managers, psychiatrists, psychologists and behavioural psycho pedagogues, image consultants, teachers for communication and for speaking in public, sales and marketing people and teachers in all disciplines, lawyers and magistrates, tour guides and many more.

Everyone has a definition for the voice, an approach, references, convictions, vocabulary, a competence. Each person has a reason to claim a certain use of the voice, each one is probably right for his own part, but it is easy to bring forward the hypothesis that none is right. A voice professional wishing to understand or better control the functioning of his tool may risk being side tracked by diametrically opposite opinions, and this of course honestly. Therefore it is necessary to wipe the slate clean of everything and to advance with caution in your knowledge.

There are of course explanations to this situation. The language, the words, the communication, the artistic expression implicate too much the voice as a reflection of the personality and are a vehicle of expressed thoughts so that a confusion is not made between the means used to obtain the sonorous result and the use that we wish to gain from it.

Since the “homo erectus” saw his voice evolve from his new position, the use he had for it has amplified, diversified, complicated and improved. It is not in vain to remember that the larynx, as described by scientists, is only a sphincter which is used to close and protect the lungs from the unexpected arrival of food or drink having been swallowed the wrong way. It does not seem to have been made to produce such a diversity of sounds, inflections, pitch, amplitude, modulations, diphthongs. And it continues to evolve.

The most recent evolution of the control of our voice is maybe, in our western world, the acquisition by opera singers from the late XVIIIth or early XIXth century, this surplus of amplitude by the gesture of a protection of the functioning of the larynx called in French “quinte aiguë”(the highest notes), which hence opened up for composers the possibility of new range, which they largely used. The gesture existed before this period, but man ignored what he could get from it.

In this slow evolution of the voice, and which is still continuing, we can deduce that the difficulties of use are born at the same time as that of experiments in new sounds. We are currently assisting to it, through popular music, with the imitation by boys of hoarse voices like that of some musical comedy singers and the imitation by young girls of the excellent voices of North American singers whose voices are “truncated” by huge sound systems controlled by sound engineers. This makes singing teachers grieve and fills in the ENT waiting rooms. It is the same for those who look for a spoken voice which is “warmer or more convincing” resembling that of a cinema actor or of a television journalist. But not for everyone, or not always. What works for some, does not for others. The injustice has started. It lives on in appearance, but is it really an injustice?

Today, one such teacher will tire his voice in a classroom whereas he does not speak loudly. His colleague succeeding him in the same room will be able to shout all year round and for all his career without damage. It is the same for swimming teachers, sports coaches or door to door sellers, etc... Hoarse or tonic? Injustice again? Not certain. What was the situation in the last century?

Before the Second World War and until the fifties, glaziers, street merchants, street singers and carters or rabbit skin buyers walked through town shouting, singing, screaming. We inveighed in the countryside “at every possible opportunity”, from one hill to the other or on the market place, and the noise of the voices was not perceived (or less) as an aggression. We sang at cafes, between friends or during a Sunday roast with family, at church as well as during meals, in Lille like in Toulouse.

We sang in the streets, on town squares, carried on by “street singers” instructed by the editors for selling the “small formats” (booklets of words and music of current popular songs). It was necessary to give some voice, as there were no microphones yet. It is important to note that the microphone does not “give” a voice, it only amplifies the voice, all the voice, including its defects. It does not “replace” the voice.

A great orator was the one who could make himself heard in a meeting room or outside, whether he be a politician or a “tenor” of the bar. Teachers were listened to, respected, obeyed, and if they raised their tone, the pupils laid low.

In order to lead a good sale at the fish market or sell furniture at an auction, it was needed to have a voice which could carry well. Theatres were not fitted with a PA systems. Actors and singers managed to find a “certain way” to place their voices, which was called the French school, nasal, high and mannered, allowing the voice to be carried in all the room. This style allowed one to be heard well. It is today overseen (*It is possible to date a film only by the way the actors speak, says the speech therapist, Yves Ormezzano*).

Since the fifties, society has changed. The migration towards cities was important and the sound became noise, therefore aggressive. Electrical amplifications are everywhere, including in lifts. A house in which we live usually has a computer, two televisions and three radios if not more, each dispensing a mediocre sound quality (less than 5000hz) not very enriching for the ear and the volume of which nonetheless still needs to be checked.

Overcrowding in towns, especially in public transport and restaurants, with people we do not know, is sustained as an aggression, an inhibition of the free expression of the voice. Whoever speaks loudly is considered as a beggar, invader or badly brought up. The psychological pressure is placed upon everyone. Because of the objectives of necessary results (by bosses of companies, clients or ourselves), emerges stress, which is a destroyer of weak voices. Voices are for sure the same at birth but their use has changed. The perpetual use of mobile phones in public forces us to drop our tone. However paradoxical this may seem, not needing to or being able to speak loudly is a challenge for badly educated or badly placed voices. The number of people with voice difficulties at the end of a day, end of the week or end of the season has increased tenfold, whereas usually the more you use a muscle, the more tonic it becomes.

What explanation can we give? What is the evolution of the voice from childhood to maturity?

In utero, the baby has most probably acquired by the ear a range of sonorities from his maternal tongue. It is therefore prepared for the spectral or harmonic richness (Italian, Russian, American) or poorness (French, Arabic) of a language, provisionally at least. The child is born, knowing spontaneously how to scream and cry if he is cold, hungry or hurt but does not become hoarse. It then discovers the human relationship with the circle of people close to it (mother, father, family) with the value of the inflections (joy, tantrum, seduction, anger) and of the words (eat, sleep, drink, toilet, hug). In his first adversarial relationships (with other children or the authority of his parents), he discovers the importance of sonorous intensity (screaming, crying) and of its possible uses. He still does not have any voice problems. Then school arrives.

It is very instructive to have a walk through an area in town and to pass in a few minutes at the time of the break in front of a pre-school, primary school, then a secondary school and finish off by a high school. The different sound levels are edifying, from the thundering aggressive shrill sounds of a primary school to muffled ones in high school. How can we not contest the influence of society on a child's voice? The levelling is done from the bottom, not the top. The one who has too much voice, too much tone, too much strength, is snubbed in order to descend to the level of others. How many adults are stressed or full of complexes as early as childhood because they were told : “you speak too loudly, you sing out of tune, we only hear you, be quiet” while they simply and naturally had a well placed voice, and end up afterwards at the speech therapist. The society has started its undermining work.

Then comes the teenage years. To live, to find one's self, find YOUR personality, seduce, they all go through the image that your voice portrays. We will therefore listen to ourself (but

we hear ourselves badly), pay attention to the reactions of the “referents” (friends, girlfriends, the one we wish to seduce, but most certainly not the adults or the parents). And it is here that the new notion of the “media model” appears.

With the evolution of customs of the western society and especially the invasion of the audiovisual media, a certain fashion to imitate a certain type of voice has been born since the fifties:

BEFORE, we did not listen to voices on the radio and television as they didn’t exist. In order to be of good company, women had to have a small light and high voice, like a child-woman obedient to her husband. It was not well seen for a woman to speak loudly or deeply. A young girl often had the voice of her mother.

Men, on the other hand needed to have a voice with the force of authority. They therefore used it and did not take shade from having a high pitched “tenor” like voice, because it needed to carry and they did not hesitate to “raise their tone”. Hence, women sparingly used their high voices, whereas men speaking loudly and high, used their voices in the right way and there surely was less hoarseness of voices or fewer broken voices.

SINCE, high and clear female voices like the singers Mireille or Mademoiselle Chanel are not admitted any more, or make people smile. Worst, they cause people that cannot change them to feel complexes. A new fact comes and influences what we think of the voice. Answering machines and tape recorders allow us to hear the real sound of our voices, which did not exist beforehand. The first reaction is to dislike our voice as we hear it from inside and it sounds deeper than it is. Rare are the people who like to hear themselves.

The Western woman has not only conquered the sexual liberty since the sixties. She has conquered the right to lead a company, exercise whatever profession she may like, including those “naturally” assigned to men, take part in politics, express herself in public or in her private life, and all this in whatever way she wishes. This huge and rapid evolution (less than two generations) has allowed her to abandon the role of a silent and obedient woman towards her husband as was accounted for in the Napoleon civil code¹.

An odious person may say “ be beautiful and be quiet” and can hear himself being answered back “I am a responsible adult and I know who I am”. Couples that are single-parent or reconstituted have increased, are not banished anymore and have conquered respect. The woman sometimes needs or wants to have a voice of authority, let it be in her work or face to face with her obstinate sons.

We already knew of this situation in the matriarchal civilisations of American Indians and of the Caribbean, where woman searched for a deep voice (called from the chest) to talk with. The invasion of the audiovisual created models we also want to identify with. Catherine Langeais and Jacqueline Joubert with high pitched voices are replaced by Ruth Elkrief and Marie Laure Augry who speak with a chest voice. It has become “the fashion” to imitate the deep and sensual voices of Anne Sinclair or Christine Ockrent, of Macha Beranger or Amanda Lear. (You can listen to them on Youtube.com)

¹ Old article 214 from the French Civil Code: “... the woman fulfils her contribution (through marriage) by her activity in the household or her collaboration to her husband’s profession”.

Men have gone through a different evolution. In the political, social or professional discussion, they need to be more persuasive and convincing than pompous, melodramatic and

authoritative like in the past. They search for a deep voice, more “radio” like, closer to the human being, like “Bruce Springsteen” or Gérard Depardieu.

This idea is also conveyed by prescribers, recruiting agencies, publicists, public relations personnel and communication personnel in companies: diplomas are not enough to get the job for this and that post; to read an advertisement, be a switchboard operator, a receptionist, a commercial, a director of human resources, a building site coordinator, a teacher or weather presenter demands a certain voice... as it's said to be.

This brief description of fifty years of evolution may seem to certain young readers as “a little bit extreme”. To create their own opinion, they will therefore only have to watch black and white films, retrospectives of the early century or simply the actual images of neighbouring societies which still have these days such criteria's of “values” from before, including the chador and hence to listen to their voices.

The will that certain men and women have nowadays to modify the height of their original voice is the reason of many disappointments.

BEFORE media existed, the gentle and light voice of the woman risked little in breaking. Each one expressed themselves inside their voice, without forcing. The natural voice necessarily in the high pitch of a man allowed him to undergo such strong intensities through the means of a natural gesture.

SINCE, the person who does not like the height of their voice and who aims at changing it, will undergo a great risk, often leading to dysfunction. We will explain this later on in the book.

It is in this new context that the voice professional who questions his tool of communication will sign up. It would be illusionary not to take into consideration all these facts. It would be illusion also to imagine that your voice could be “placed back successfully” by the medical profession, like a physiotherapist treats a broken leg. This is, for a simple reason: the voice is not a physiological phenomenon but a physical phenomenon, which I will explain later. The therapist will only be a guide (which is already a lot), a counsellor, a pedagogue, but the practitioner of the voice, will be the owner of the voice, you.

Professions with a risk

Can we blame our profession in order to explain our voice problems?

What is a profession with a risk?: painter on the Eiffel tower, free diver, parachutist, formula one driver, these are professions with a risk in the sense that each person taking part in such a profession will endure the same risks.

Certain professions necessitate the use of voice more than others: lawyers, politicians, teachers, singers, comedians, sport coaches, life guards, fair or market traders and others. The people fulfilling these professions and finding themselves in difficulties because of their voice will generally accuse their profession or their work conditions.

However, the majority of people exercising such professions do not fall into dysfunction, we can maintain that they are not implied. They require the use of their voice but don't break it. These professions test their vocal capacity and help in the selection between those who resist and those who lose their strength. This is true. The proof?

In a same profession and circumstances, one will tire while the other not, one gains in power while the other loses it, one has more and more voice while the other has less and less. Better still: there is not a more testing profession for the voice than that of a singer. To sing on two octaves of range with an intensity comparable to that of others (100db), several hours a day, every day, all year round and for all his or her life, this is more or less the life of an opera singer. However it is in this profession that we find the best voices, the strongest, the most resisting and tonic as well as fewer voices in difficulty. They do however consult more specialist doctors, but would we be astonished to see sport persons even amateurs consult a sport doctor in order to have a better hygiene of their body?

Yes! You would say, but these singers are exceptions! Error: After having been hoarse and voiceless for twenty years in a row, I became an opera singer and have never been hoarse since because I had learnt. I have been in the company of the operatic and theatrical world for decades and not, as many doctors, just with those who have voice difficulties. Rare are exceptional voices.

The acquaintance of the lyrical world as that of the teachers has allowed me to confirm this approach: when you know something, you know. When you know how to do something, you do it. When we have tonic calves, we have tonic calves. The same applies to the larynx. I admit that certain opera singers have exceptional voices however their exception can be explained by two particular traits: a certain shape of cranium and their endocrinal system.

As for the millions of singers that go through their profession of "lyric" throughout the world, they have the same capacities as you and me, the same physical qualities but they... know how to use them.

So these professions require voice, energy, stamina, they put to test their voices and uncertain techniques.

Can we imagine taking up a sport without being sporty, go rock-climbing without good abdominal muscles. In all the professions cited above, a training of the voice should be established. It only exists for actors and singers... and still. It is for the governing bodies to care about.

- **People at risk**

So if it is not the profession that induces a hoarse condition, what about the people? All larynxes are not alike. Certain hereditary weaknesses are underlying and reappear at the first effort or the thousandth one. Certain pathologies are born from dysfunctionings.

The explanation might be morphological, genetic, endocrinological, physiological, psychological or social. It will depend on the therapist, doctor or speech therapist to look into why it may happen with the patient before starting a re-education, help him understand why and when he fell into the trap of a bad gesture, the vocal forcing. On this point we are most certainly not equal. The same being true for calves. From experience we can maintain that a good technique linked with a good and regular practice gives good results, whether we are gifted or not. No delusive excuses: on the exception for medical cases which are non remissible, **where there is a will there is a way**. It is not a question of becoming a champion but being able to place one's voice and to increase its tonus, as we do in tennis or golf when we learn a good stroke, for which we muscle ourselves up in order to repeat it a hundred or a thousand times.

The functioning of the voice

All the authors of the medical profession cited at the end of this book have explained the anatomy, physiology and pathologies of the organs contributing to producing a voice. I have no comments to make on their description and the medical approach. Reading these books is very formative and instructive for those of you who try and understand each word. It seems to me however that it is incomplete for the reader, particularly without hearing the sounds that describe the different criteria qualifying the voice, that the voice professional in difficulty needs to know.

In a non medical approach, let's clarify the phenomenon's of the voice from a voluntarily simplistic and musical point of view:



**What happens
when we blow in a
slide trombone ?**

Compressed air passing through the sphincter (mouthpiece) produces a sound wave, which develops acoustically inside a resonance cavity (body of the instrument) before spreading outside.

It is the same for a clarinet, panpipes or any other wind instrument.

What happens in the human body when it emits a sound?

Compressed air exiting (from the lungs) through the sphincter (Larynx), induces a sound wave which develops inside a resonance cavity (throat/mouth or cranium) before spreading outside.

The human body behaves like a wind instrument. Its voice is nothing more than a succession of phenomena obeying the universal laws of physics, created by a succession of gestures.

When a person speaks or sings, moreover if we want to analyse the functioning and dysfunctioning of the voice, it is necessary to dissociate:

1. All the physical gestures necessary to the production of the voice
2. The voice, only a pneumatic, undulatory and acoustic phenomenon,
3. The use a person can make of the results obtained, speech or song

This order is hierarchical and chronological. Blowing well in a bad instrument or blowing badly in a good one only produces mediocre sound results. It would be delusional to think or to hope to keep a good result from a bad gesture, as well as a good use from a bad voice.

Let us now look into detail; we can say that:

1. On the whole the gestures necessary to the production of the voice consist of:

- A. The compression of air in the lungs by the abdominal muscles (transverse, oblique and/or intercostal).
- B. Sealing of the larynx and its resistance to the passage of compressed air (resist a little but not too much).
- C. Maintaining a resonance cavity to the best acoustic results possible by using the muscles of the larynx, palate, face and the tongue.

AND THAT'S ALL...

If we were to replace the lungs by a scuba diving bottle, the larynx by the stretched opening of a rubber balloon and the oral laryngeal cavity by the wooden casing of a hi-fi speaker or an upside down jug, we would get the same result: an amplified sound.

At this point stops the human intervention in the gesture producing the voice. All the rest in general falls out of his will as well as his control.

2. The voice, pneumatic, undulatory and acoustic phenomenon

Three phenomenon belonging to the universal laws of physics follow this order:

1. The air from the lungs compressed by the abdominal muscles will try and escape from the larynx which tries to stay closed.
2. By expanding the walls of the larynx from the pressure, molecules of air (puffs) manage to get out by following each other at a certain rhythm and speed, thus creating a sound wave.

3. This sound wave then develops in intensity, energy and harmonic in the resonance cavity present, in this case the mouth.

Here stops the “voice” part of this triptych, otherwise the orator, not happy with what he hears in his ears, can correct it in a fraction of a second and improve its result,... if he knows how to.

If he is relatively happy with it, what does he do with it?

3. The use that an orator can make of the successive results obtained

May be completely different:

He intervenes (very) actively:

- By preceding the sound by a noise (consonants).
- By moving his tongue in his mouth to change the sound (vowels).
- By linking several series of sounds/noises or rather vowels/consonants. He will then create phonemes which, by regional or national convention will become words, giving a meaning to the succession of gestures, grouped together under the terms of words, sentence, tongue, language, word, communication of thoughts.
- By increasing or decreasing the intensity or the pitch of sounds emitted, he will “adjust” his sentences in order to give them a communicative expression (interrogation, exclamation, feeling, incantation or song).

You want to check?

EXERCISE:

Try to pronounce one after the other and by separating them one from the other

1. The following noises: *t,d,g,b,c,k,h* and *m* do not try and force them, you will not be able.
2. Then make the following sounds: *o,ay,i,o,a o*, here you can bawl.
3. Then in a different order, by mixing the noises and sounds, sorry,... the following consonants and vowels: *t,o,d,ay,I,g,o,b,a ck,h, o m e* “today I go back home”.
4. Finally give an affirmative or interrogative tone to this phrase by modifying the pitch of the last syllable. High for the interrogation and low for the affirmation.

You will realize that the speech is just a succession of actions producing noises and sounds made from your voice, which grouped together will give it a meaning. Mister de Lapalisse has surely said it before us, but it is useful to remind ourselves of it. In fact, if in this simple exercise you have controlled your gestures (or thought you did), you have not for all controlled the sonorous result, that you were able to notice at the same time as the people around you heard you and understood your message.

Of course, the control besides the emitted sound from the return to the ear, called “feed-back”, allows for the correction of one’s voice, tone, note, speed (of the sound) in order for the orator to believe they are leading their voice, whereas they are only correcting constantly and rapidly indeed, the inaccuracy of these acoustic phenomena. It is the same for a car driver who with his steering wheel thinks he is directing his car, whereas he is constantly correcting (quickly indeed and luckily) by small gestures the discrepancies of his trajectory due to the wind, a stone or the slope of the road.

In this way if the result is a bad sound, it will be necessary not to analyse your voice but your different “gestures” which produced it, in order to understand your eventual errors. Here is the aim of this exercise, to locate “at which moment” arises the error.



The balance in the functioning of the voice

Those who are equipped with a voice without any problems may ignore all their life the following chapter and possibly all this book.

However, the people with voice difficulties will probably never obtain a dependable voice and without straining if they don't worry about the quality of the sound of their voice and the balance of the functioning of their larynx.

Let us thrust forward a few facts in order to direct our thoughts:

We have said and shown that

- There are three parts in the production of the voice: the compressed air, the sound wave and the increase in noise. We can say in another way that there are three groups of muscles involved in this gesture; the abdominal muscles, the muscles of the larynx and the muscles of the mouth and face.
- A hoarse or voiceless orator never complains of having sore abdominal muscles or his zygomatic major muscles or his tongue!! He complains about his throat, actually his larynx.
- The larynx is therefore the weak link in the chain.
- Consequently, it is the larynx that we must protect from the errors of his "colleagues".

What may be these errors? In simple terms:

Too much or not enough

- The error from the abdominal muscle would be to push too hard or not enough, so pass on an air that is too compressed or not enough. How would a car behave if we were to follow through an acceleration with the release of the pedals every three seconds?
- The error of the face muscles would be to make too rich a sound or too poor a tone. Or rather to have rich and poor noises succeed one another. How would the same car behave if the road every ten meters was built with a succession of flat, uphill, downhill, flat, bump, pot holes, etc?

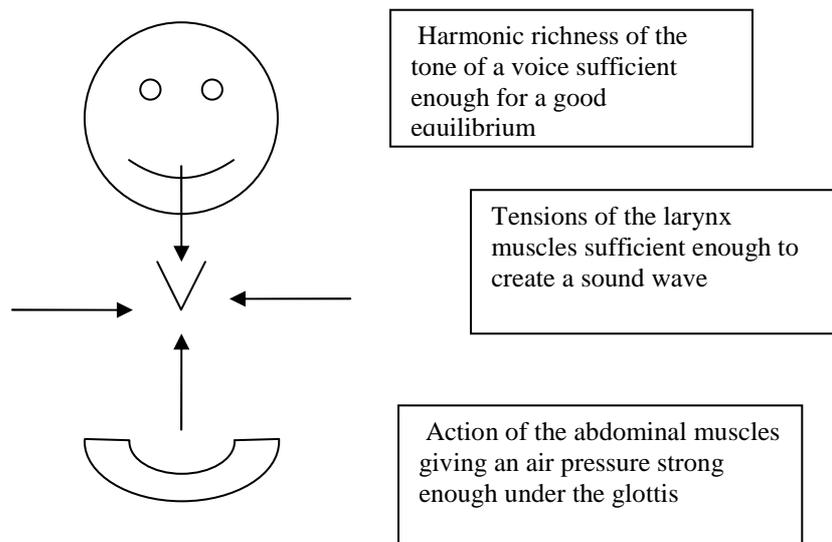
The engine of a car needs a certain amount of balance in its functioning: those that draw up the roads and calculate the acceptable slopes know as well as those who drive the cars.

It is the same for the larynx, especially for one that hasn't been toned up and therefore hardened to resist obstacles. The larynx needs to have a constant pressure of air (called, Sub-glottal pressure, SGP). It also needs to not be constantly confronted to a resonance chamber which changes shape (and so of consistence or resistance) every second. This resistance is called impedance (impedance brought on to the larynx, IBL).

This equilibrium exists, it is known, scientifically observed for several years (especially by Husson, 1960).

- It is conducted in permanence in a conscious manner by “those who know how”, Singers or orators (and you possibly tomorrow).
- It is also undertaken in all unconsciousness by those that are lucky enough to have a resonance chamber which naturally gives rich sounds.
- It cannot be employed without risk if your larynx is resistant and that you do not stimulate it in order to get strong intensities (but this doesn’t always last).
- The absence of this equilibrium is probably (and for me most surely) one of the components in the dysfunctioning of voices with a fragile and not very tonic larynx.

THE FUNCTIONING OF A VOICE IN EQUILIBRIUM



In this way the sounds produced are not all of the same “richness”. The sounds called “open” (/e/ in there, or /o/ in God, or /a/ in car) are dangerous for fragile voices. Singers and there ENT specialist know this explicitly or implicitly: an artist who sings “open” will have difficulties in achieving a career and is a regular patient of the doctor!

It must be noted that French is not an ideal language for toning up a voice as it contains many open sounds, no tonic accents and few stressed diphthongs. In certain regions of France and French speaking areas, we speak better than in other areas and we have less voice difficulties. But we will examine all this later on.

Does this mean that the reader will need to “modify” his voice, change his voice and therefore his/her personality, taking the risk not to be recognized, of not being “himself”? No, most certainly not but everything has a price. If the reader finds himself with voice difficulties, it must be that there is an error somewhere.

So during the training or (re)education of his voice, it will be necessary to return to what nature (or his/her mother) gave him/her. Improving his/her voice, tone, strength, amplitude. Only then with a tonic voice, will he/she be able to find the tone and height of the voice he/she wishes to have. When we have an ache in the lower back while playing golf or tennis, we start again with a physio’s exercises in “the trunk of the body”, in order to tone up our

muscles and then return to the unbalanced movements of the swing or serve. For the larynx it is the same thing.



The deterioration process of the voice

Understanding how a voice can deteriorate is essential in order to understand, afterwards how to get as far away as possible from the risks of deterioration.

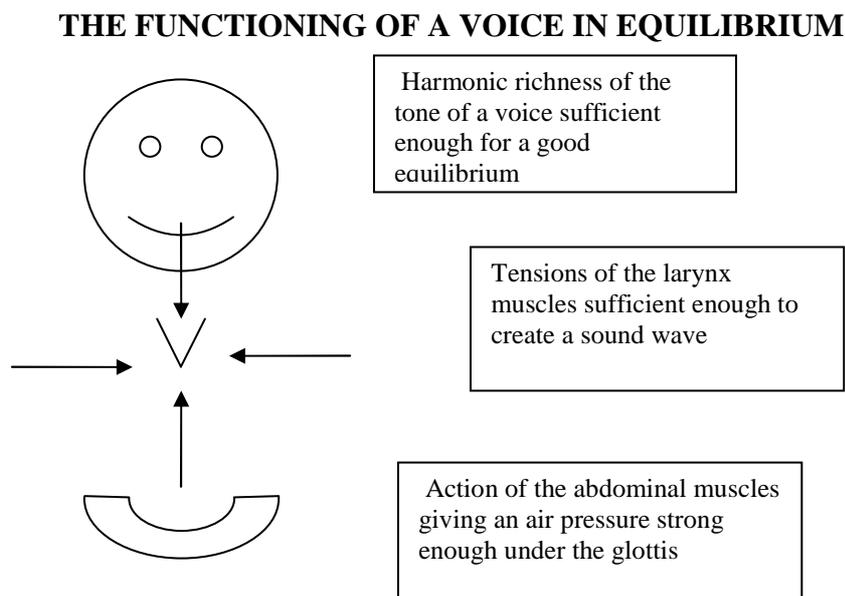
Ah, if only I were a small mouse, so that I could know when the deterioration of the voice starts, we can hear ourselves say!... except that this image is not right as the cat is already in the throat!!

On a more serious note, the Doctor Yves Ormezzano describes the beginning of the process of deterioration of the voice with pertinence as “giving a bad answer to a new event” and I suggest we keep this image.

Let us remind ourselves that our orator makes a succession of gestures in order to obtain noises and sounds, or consonants and vowels, well to speak. His larynx is in a good functioning state and the balance between air and sound (or air pressure and tone) is correct.

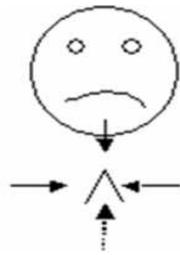
Then arises an event that causes an imbalance in the functioning of the larynx: we ignore for the time being which one, but we know the consequence: there can logically and mechanically only be four possibilities:

1. Not enough pressure (usually at the start)
2. Too much pressure (most often afterwards)
3. Too much tone (rare)
4. Not enough tone (very often)

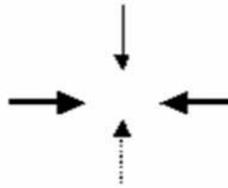


DRAWINGS OF INSTABILITY

1. Not enough pressure



Bad response



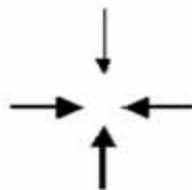
Result

If the air pressure is insufficient, the larynx will compensate, tire, congest itself and then is no more able to compensate and enters into dysfunctioning and lesions.

2. Too much pressure



Bad response



Result

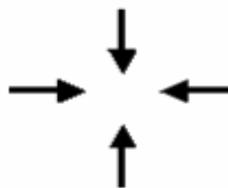
If the air pressure is too strong, the larynx will resist, tier, congest it's self and then is no more able to resist. An air leak sets itself into place and drops even more the quality of the tone.

The action of the air pressure on the larynx constitutes the near totality of the mechanical causes creating the tetanization of the larynx, which in order to continue to function nearly normally, will need to resist against this totally useless pressure. Rare are the people consciously capable of finding the right amount of pressure necessary and sufficient to produce a good sound. The work of singing, in this sense, is very useful because it brings the person to become conscious of the differences in gestures between “piano” and “forte” sounds. Before reaching this saturation of pressure, many people, nervous or under stress, will start by not putting enough breath to find a good functioning. It is then the case of a weakened voice in intensity and quality which will make them react and act upon their abdominal muscles by producing the wrong gesture: too much pressure.

3. Too much tone



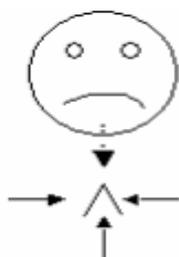
Bad response



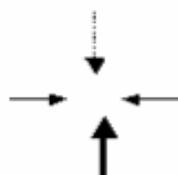
Result

Rare situation but it is the chain reaction to a amplified tone, the larynx contracts excessively, the necessary pressure increases, the muscles become tetanized.

4. Not enough tone



Bad response



Result

In reaction to a too feeble tone, which is slightly or not well heard, the first reaction is to increase the pressure of the air which only helps in increasing the instability. We then find ourselves in case number 2 with too much pressure.

These four possibilities combine in fact into two results of imbalance:

1. Too much pressure for the tone heard above or not enough tone for the pressure produced below.
2. Not enough pressure for the tone heard above or too much tone for the pressure produced below.

Hence in these two situations of imbalance, it will be the muscles from the larynx that will temporarily compensate, tire themselves until they can't anymore and let another event arise.

The sound obtained by the orator is not satisfying.

The orator only has two objectives: be heard and understood. Either he believes that he will not be heard enough, either he believes to have not articulated well in order to be understood. What simple knowledge has he of his voice and the changes he can bring? He knows or thinks he knows that when he pushes (the air) more forcefully, he can have a louder voice and when he articulates more with his lips, he can be better understood. This is not false but inexact.

To force on a bad quality sound, is like accelerating with a 2cv up a hill without changing down a gear. We consume more petrol, we saturate the engine and we do not go any quicker. To want to articulate more often changes the tone of the voice, and it allows to create more difference between the sounds, it is the **CONTRARY OF THE VOCAL TECHNIQUE**.

What happens in the head of the orator? He realises that his voice is poor.

In the second that follows, he has the intention to react. This reaction may also be bad. The **WRONG** answer will probably be an increase in the abdominal pressure with the aim of reaching a stronger sound or an increase in the articulation, in order to be better understood.

Why is this a bad reaction? Because the larynx will be even more stimulated in order to resist to this imbalance, will tire quicker and will cause even more of a drop in the quality of the sound. There will hence be a mishandling of the larynx. If the orator were to react again in the same manner to this drop in quality, he would continue to go round the vicious circle of vocal forcing. There will be overexertion and the use of an overworked larynx will rapidly bring about lesions.

Our technique will then be to

- Recognise the error in the gesture
- Know how to diagnose on the spot this error
- Give the **RIGHT ANSWER** to this gesture in order not to get carried into the dysfunctioning, the vicious circle of forcing and its consequences.

Let us question ourselves on the different events leading to such a situation:

We can classify these events into two categories, interior or exterior to the subject.

- Interior: an inhibiting, stressing or destabilizing psychological factor, tiredness, medication, lack of sleep, alcohol, tobacco, digestion, slimming diets, heart burn, a passing endocrinal or neurological weakness.
- Exterior: the heating, the air-conditioning, allergies, the telephone, the restaurant, the ambient noise, the acoustics of the room.

We will examine these one by one in detail later on and will study the response an orator must bring in each situation, which means the RIGHT answer.



The French language, singers and injustice

“The functioning of a sung voice does not differ fundamentally from that of a spoken voice, but constitutes an extension”. Benoît Amy de la Bretèque, Speech therapist.

First of all, a point which will not please (but tough luck!)

- Why is it that 90% of the operatic artists distributed throughout the French national theatres are not French?
- Why is it that 90% of singers from the French national music academy (as said from their own teachers) do not make a career in singing?
- How is it that the only National Centre of Professional Integration of Operatic Singers (in Marseilles) financed by the state’s funds releases only foreign artists?
- How is it that 90% of the distribution of roles in French works abroad (Carmen, Faust, Werther, etc) are not given to French singers?

There are thousands of types of singers or ways of singing throughout the world. Let us quote in our old France: folk song, Gregorian, religious or non-religious choir singing, pop, rock, jazz, musicals, operetta, operatic.

Whatever maybe the acoustic results of these different way of singing, and we know that they are different, it still consists of pushing compressed air through a sphincter and obtain the resonance of a sound. These gestures are the same for operatic as for jazz, pop as well as rap music, for a singer, an entertainer or a member of the comédie française. Only the results differ.

And these results differ a lot between all these different types but also from country to country.

Frequenting foreign countries offers a striking comparison: allowing for exceptions, French singers are not scheduled abroad as foreign singers are programmed in France.

Let us try and understand

A French peculiarity is to be pointed out:

French “voice” singers are born, originate or have lived their childhood in the south of France. No ethnic or cultural explanation resists to this observation; the music academies of Strasbourg or Lille are just as good as that of Toulouse or Nice and for 100 years we have enjoyed singing in Brest as much as in Biarritz.

Look at this map of France

Areas of childhood or birth of the 60 French speaking singers having built an international career over the last century.



Roberto	Alagna	Jean	Giraudeau
Colette	Alliot Lugaz	Andréa	Guiot
Martha	Angelici	Rudy	Hirigoyen
Francine	Arrauzau	Marcel	Journet
Gabriel	Bacquier	Jean Philippe	Lafont
André	Baugé	Michèle	Lagrange
Jeanne	Berbié	Albert	Lance
René	Bianco	François	Leroux
Ernest	Blanc	Germaine	Lubin
Anne Marie	Blanzat	José	Luccioni
Géorie	Boué	Mateo	Manuguerra
Roger	Bourdin	Luis	Mariano
Hélène	Bouvier	Robert	Massard
Jacqueline	Brumaire	Mady	Mesplé
Charles	Burles	Janine	Micheau
Paul	Cabanel	Solange	Michel
Charles	Cambon	Françoise	Pollet
Guy	Chauvet	Tony	Poncet
Michèle	Command	Lily	Pons
Rémy	Corraza	Gilbert	Py
Régine	Crespin	Jane	Rhodes
André	Dassary	Mado	Robin
Nadine	Denizé	Raphael	Romagnoni
Michel	Dens	Suzanne	Sarroca
Nathalie	Dessay	Michel	Sénéchal
Renée	Doria	Germaine	Taillon
Martine	Dupuy	Pierre	Thau
Franck	Ferrari	Georges	Thill
Alain	Fondary	Ninon	Vallin
Françoise	Garner	Alain	Vanzo

I have had the opportunity to discuss with the famous singing professor Richard MILLER about my observations stated above. He replied: but in Great-Britain, we can observe the same problem. There are regions which produce hardly any singers, the reason being of their pronunciation of English.

In my opinion the question that we should ask is not: why do Basques, Corsicans or people from Toulouse sing well, but rather: how is it that at Brest or Strasbourg men and women have lived most their life without detecting that they possibly have a voice for opera!! Therefore the manner in which we pronounce French would not help in the emergence of tone in a voice.

I would gladly bring this analysis of the observation that we make of foreign singers singing in French: they sing well in many languages, but when they sing in French, we cannot understand them anymore. Have they stopped singing well? No! I prefer accusing the French language, its absences of diphthongs, tonic and its open vowels.

Exercise:

Place yourself in front of a mirror, look at your mouth and pronounce:

“parmi nous” or the sounds A I OU

Follow through with

“I need you” or in Italian “Fa mi tu!”

Then repeat: “parmi nous”. Can you see the difference in gesture, the shape your mouth makes in order to pronounce these three phrases successively, with a good French, English and Italian accent? Well pronounce the French as you would the Italian or English, and your larynx will be better off at least during the period of re-education and toning up of your larynx.

From auditions of singers and orators in foreign languages, we can easily deduce the following observation: Italians and eastern European countries (Slavic speaking) provide the majority of opera singers: their language plays an important role in this observation. During their infancy, while the baby still only “babbles”, the sounds of a Russian or Italian baby are richer than that of a French one... unless this one is born in Toulouse.

Furthermore, it is not without reason that African-Americans have beautiful voices, like the Latino-Americans. I believe that it is not because they are black or Latinos but because they are American. Spain, Portugal and France do not produce a remarkable quantity of “voice singers”, neither does Africa.

It is not the same for the US, Mexico and all Hispanic American countries. The way in which they articulate English and Spanish allows the nice voices to emerge. The US produces more good English speaking singers than England. Latin America produces more good Hispanic singers than Spain.

As for the French it is the same. In Québec, there is an abundance of beautiful voices. In France, you need to cross the line Bordeaux-Gap in order to find some. Have a stroll in an international airport near the boarding gates of Air Canada and listen.

Go visit the Gouffre de Padirac in the Lot (France). Listen to the tourist guides that take you on the boat along the underground river. They are all from the region. None of them have voice problems during the whole season, and still the sound level is higher than that of a class of teenagers, the humidity is still constant, the echo permanent, the change in temperature with the outside is tiring for the tourists but not for the voices of these men.

What should we take from this observation, that people from the Lot region are from another race than you? No of course not, but as from their youngest age, they have been “bouncing their sounds!”, their voice is well placed and they do not have to make any effort. Listen also to rugby coaches or score callers at the Basque pelota. What a blasting voice!

We have just analysed what was a voice, how it was produced, how they function badly, for what reasons and in which circumstances they deteriorate. We have discovered how many people from different regions in France were lucky to speak as from their youngest age with an accent which brings out their tone, tones up their larynx and protects them from difficulties.

Finally and most importantly, let us remind ourselves that a voice heals each night, tones up and is maintained the same as the calves of a runner: the more we use them well, the better they answer, if we know how not to ask them what they can't do. On the contrary, the less we use them, the less we can get from them.

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TO PLACE ONE'S VOICE

Placing your breathing, your voice, enriching your tone and the range that your mother has passed on, toning up your larynx, learn to resist adversities, all this is possible through your personal work. BUT, it would be easier with the help or collaboration of a voice professional, a speech therapist, a singing or a vocal technique teacher. Remember this, and keep aside in a corner of your brain if you were ever to come up against a difficulty and an absence of progress: professionals are here to help you.

You want to try on your own? Very well then. First of all an observation:

You use your voice for approximately 15 hours a day. If you were then to do exercises every two days, or even five minutes a day, do not expect an impressive result! 5 minutes of doing well from 875 minutes of bad doing, the sum isn't there! It is a ratio of 6 to 1000.

What should you do?

The preoccupation of your voice should be at every moment.

You need to have AT LEAST three appointments per day with your voice: morning, noon and evening. Therefore by dividing your day into three periods, you will be able to progress quickly. You will most importantly avoid falling back into old habits of bad gestures, not noticing them, you will keep sinking yourself into vocal tiredness and realise that is too late once the harm is already done.

Your preoccupation will then be to:

- Do your exercises well (a few minutes each time).
- Keep an eye on the quality of your voice.
- React to the change in your sensations.
- Watch out for the traps concerning yourself.
- Know how to react to these traps.
- Know how to protect yourself in order to shout or speak louder.
- Correct your errors as quickly as possible.

Setting up a good blowing rhythm

WHY?

In the first cars, the petrol was installed above the engine and descended to the carburettor by the force of gravity, apart from when the road turned where petrol then became less available and the engine started to misfire. Since then a pump has been installed to bring the petrol in constant and regular waves. It is the same with compressed air tanks and demand valves for scuba divers, the same is also true for your larynx. In order to function well, it needs air, not

too much nor too little, at the right pressure but in a regular fashion. We breath 24h/24 since we were born and thankfully we can observe this without thinking. To the extent that we cannot really remember which muscles are used to breath. It must be stated that our breathing evolves with age, the tonicity of our body, the way we dress, our profession and various other components. It even changes during the day. BUT we all breathe in the same way at some point in our life: when we sleep.

For infants, children till the age of 3 or 4 it is their stomach that works. Then, as from starting school the stomach comes in and it is the chest that takes over. Sportsmen breathe well because as soon as they become out of breath during an effort, they realise that high breathing isn't enough to drop the heart rate, their diaphragm is therefore much more demanded. As soon as we lose musculature or that excess weight takes over, high breathing takes over.

Look at an infant crying. Look at a dog barking: there is little chance that one or the other becomes hoarse even though their cries can last and last as well as the fact that we can hear them from far away. Their chest does not raise, their lower stomach falls, expands and hollows all of a sudden with the cry. This is the joint action of the diaphragm to fill the lungs and the abdominal muscles to expulse the air. A perfect gesture that many adults have forgotten.

TEST

In order to see whether you are able to allow “compressible” air into your lungs, let us try a test: take a small or medium sized balloon, which ever. Sit down on a chair, catch your breath and try to blow up the balloon.

What is the result?

- You managed to transmit all the air from your lungs into the balloon and this one is now blown up? Well done, your gesture was good; you may go to the next part of the exercises.
- You manage to blow up your throat, redden your face but nothing happened to the balloon? Then you must start over the breathing gestures for the voice.

Let us check our knowledge on this point:

There are three different ways to breathe depending on the muscles used:

- By raising the chest
- By dropping the diaphragm
- By spreading the lower ribs

These are the different muscles that are called upon and sometimes we can combine two of these gestures without noticing. However one of these ways has no importance in the gesture of the voice: breathing by raising the chest. Indeed, once the air will have been brought into the lungs we will have no way of compressing it and let it out in a controlled and voluntary way.

There only remains two ways of bringing “compressible” air into the lungs:

- Either by dropping the diaphragm; when this one will have finished its downward movement, the abdominal muscles (transverse and oblique) will take over, compress the visceral mass which will push back the diaphragm, push up the lungs and therefore compress the air under the larynx (glottis), in the same way we push the piston of a bicycle pump.
- Either by spreading the floating ribs to fill the lungs and squeezing the ribs to empty them.

You are not convinced of feeling the right breathing? Let us meet up tomorrow morning in your bedroom, in your bed, before you get up, even before you sit up:

- On awakening, place your hand on your abdomen: you will feel your stomach rise and fall to the rhythm of your breathing and only your stomach, to the exception of your chest. Why is this? Simply because during the night, unconsciously you breathe as you did when you were a baby, with your diaphragm.
- You should then use this observation to try and keep this manner of breathing as long as possible during the day.
- The same night you will place a small rubber balloon on your bedside table (borrowed from children...), the following morning, after having realised your breathing was still abdominally controlled, you will try and blow up the balloon: isn't it easy in the morning!! Try in the afternoon and compare: without the abdominal breathing you can't easily blow up the balloon.
- You can manage but not at every time? So try and lie down on a couch or on the floor, with your arms above your head (in order to not have to breathe with the top of your chest): empty your lungs, slowly without rushing; then inhale a very small quantity of air with your diaphragm, and empty again your lungs. Get used to a small amount of air inhaled, at a steady rhythm, without violence or precipitation. If you place a book on your stomach, you should see it move up and down to the rhythm of your breathing.
- Once you have managed to control this breathing lying down, try it in a sitting position, first of all in an armchair, then on a chair; the important thing is to observe that it is not the top of the chest that fills the lungs but the abdomen by the drop in the diaphragm.
- It is most likely that during the day, in the morning maybe, you realise that this low breathing has left you and that you have started your high breathing again. This is unimportant: try and remember at which point this respiration left you: when you got dressed, when you left your home, when you met the chief of staff, or the one you love. Everything has an importance: we may be touching the reason why you have voice difficulties; understanding what bothered, stressed or inhibited you, will allow to rectify and protect this gesture of your breathing which is determining for the good functioning of your voice.

THE GYMNASTICS OF THE VOICE OF THE ORATOR AND THE SINGER

You want to improve or guarantee your voice performances? Here is a little simple gymnastics, to be done three times X three times, and this, three times a day. This will take 20 seconds at each time, so $3 \times 20 \times 3 = 9$ minutes on the 1440 you have each day. This is just so that you can build up a loyal gesture with your diaphragm in order to make sure it will work well in an adversity.

This is the ONLY VIOLENT GESTURE OF MY TECHNIQUE

You must exhale slowly for 18 seconds and only allow yourself 2 seconds to fill up your lungs by dropping the diaphragm. The exhalation is gentle, the inhalation violent. Of course, you must make sure that during these 2 seconds your chest does not rise. Once you will have done this exercise for a week, you won't have to be concerned with your inhalation. You have difficulties in realising this movement? Place yourself in front of your desk or kitchen table, approximately 50cm away. Place your hands on the edge, spread your feet 50cm apart and slowly step back until your torso is nearly horizontal. In this position you won't be able to breathe from the top and the energetic gesture of slackening your abdominal muscles will help lower the diaphragm.

- It is not the same for your exhalation! In this case, everything has to be organised. You must have realised that the more your voice tired, the less breath you had. In fact, you had the same amount of breath but you just used more and more. You must therefore accustom your larynx to be more energy efficient. It will make it just the more reassured and calmed.

YOUR BREATHING IS NOW IN PLACE?

We will check this:

Take some wisps of straws that we use to drink orange juice. Take some with a diameter no bigger than 5mm, rather less. This will allow you to accomplish a couple of exercises in order to control your breath:

- You should inhale without exaggerating and empty your lungs by blowing in the straw, without ever saturating it. Your breath lasts less than 10 seconds? Ouch, you are irritated, start again. Your breath last more than 20 seconds, it means you have inhaled too much air. Try and obtain a small breath which will allow you to blow for 15 seconds, no more, no less, and get used to this breathing gesture, where you use little air to breath out for 15 seconds through a straw, without ever over saturating it.
- Why? Because it is rare to have to speak for more than 15 seconds without having the possibility to catch your breath. Therefore it is not necessary to take more. It is even risky to take too much.

You have got used to breaths of 15 seconds without effort, without violence? Very good.

Now you should gradually reduce the time you have to inhale, from 4 to 3 seconds, then 2 seconds, until half a second. This inhalation gesture becomes more and more energetic, violent, even while the exhalation stays at 15 seconds, gentle and steady.

You are getting your opposite muscles, diaphragm/abdominals used to working together alternatively, without obeying yourself to a precise rule: quickly to fill up and slowly to empty.

It is important that even if you have half a second to catch your breath in a discussion or a presentation, you don't inhale by raising your chest, because you will lose the control of the good voice gesture.

Furthermore, you tone up your diaphragm by asking from it an energetic gesture, and you get your abdominal muscles used to modulating with a great progressiveness and a great delicacy their movement of compressing air, a guarantee of a healthy running of the larynx.

Your gestures of breathing and joining are now set into place. You have not made a sound yet but the instrument is now present, well organised, and if you continue in this way, never again will you tire from the larynx.

Creating a good sound without effort

We have present in our minds that our objective is:

- To make yourself heard, even from far away.
- To be able to speak for long periods of time and every day.
- Not to tire yourself or suffer.

In order to achieve this, we must start by adding, on top of the regular breathing that we have just obtained, a gesture from your larynx which achieves a sound "WITHOUT EFFORT". I must remind you that it is not your larynx that "makes the sound". The larynx is subjected to the passage of air and it's the air that makes the sound on passing.

Let us take again your 15 second exhalation gesture into a straw. During this gesture, after 3 or 4 seconds of exhalation, slowly close your larynx, slowly, delicately, in order to make a kind of "groaning" sound.

- You manage without any difficulties? Very well, you can move on to the next exercise.
- You cannot manage without a lot of effort? Start over ten times in a row, in the 10 hours of the same day. You still can't manage without providing a lot of effort? Continue all week. You need to be able to do it WITHOUT EFFORT. At the end of the week you should have done this exercise $10 \times 10 \times 7 = 700$ times.
- If you really don't have any luck and cannot manage? Your larynx is probably not in good health and I suggest you contact your doctor, ENT specialist and follow a re-education with a speech therapist.

Let us continue the exercises:

You have managed to create groaning sounds with your breath in the straw and without any effort. We will now modulate these groans in order to change them into more pleasant sounds, of better quality.

You will make siren noises in the straw, ascending and descending, like a wave on the sea; sirens of a higher and higher pitch, more and more free, more and more unrestrained but always without any effort and without getting irritated.

There reaches a point when you cannot go any higher without using force. So we will return back a little and leave the straw behind. How? The last siren contains a rising part and a descending part. Well in the middle of the movement, having arrived at the top most of the rising part, open your mouth and the straw will have become of no justified use. Your voice has come out on its own!

- You have inhaled with the diaphragm
- You have exhaled with the abdominal muscles
- You have closed your larynx slowly
- You have modulated the pitch of your sound
- DID YOU MAKE ANY EFFORT? NO!
- Your voice has put itself into place and not so badly!

Putting into place a good tone

Of course, a beautiful voice isn't here yet, but the gesture has put itself into place gently. Which is the most important.

Have you ever paid attention to the quality of Philippe Noiret, Michel Leeb's voice; the laugh of Patricia Kass, Henri Salvador or Muriel Robin, the tone of Charles Aznavour, Michel Sardou or Gérard Jugnot? All these artists use their voice every day, all year round during their life, and their tone never changes: it is in place. It is the same of course for professional singers (worthy of the name).

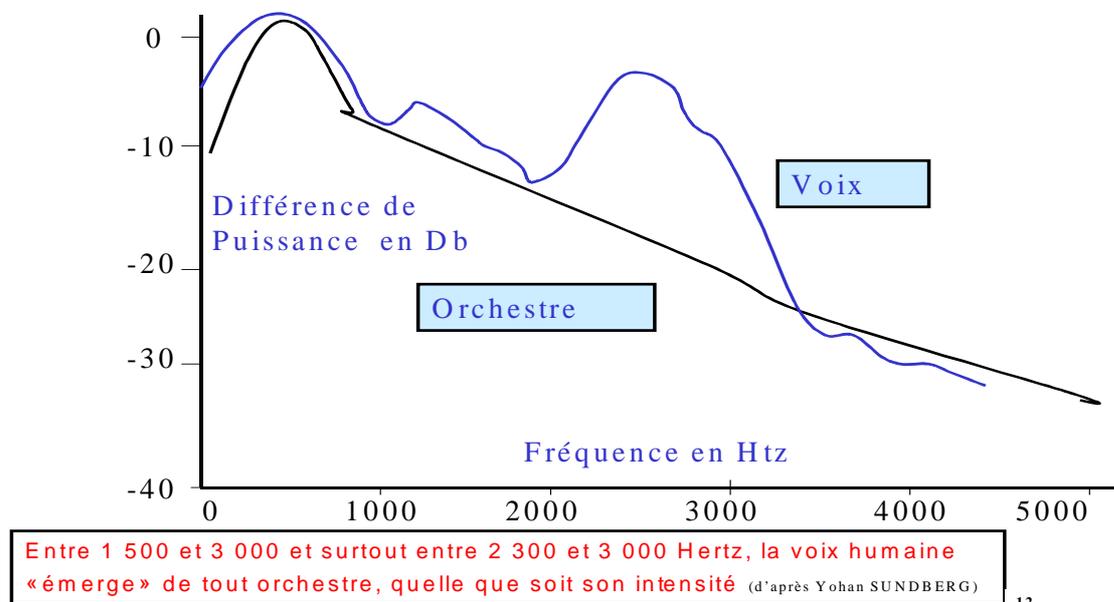
It is the same for certain people that you bump into in your life, stallholders, market sellers, whose voices "thunder" all day long. It is the tone of their voice that determines the qualities of resistance, audibility, aesthetic. Their mother transmitted them a beautiful resonance chamber and they "fell in it from the youngest age"! without trying to understand.

You haven't had this luck? You can however still obtain an excellent result, but by working hard, by training your ear to the quality of the voice and by modulating the shape of your mouth in order to obtain the best results possible.

STRONG INTENSITY OR AUDIBILITY?

The common idea is that we need to talk loudly in order to be heard. Wrong! Have you ever paid attention during a diner with 15 or 20 people, that certain people's voices are heard more than others, while they are not making any efforts? A person is sat far from you, your neighbour sitting opposite you is talking to you but you hear the other person!

Since we have known how to analyse the spectrum of a voice, we have observed that those voices have harmonics that are very rich, in the frequencies of 2000 to 3000 Htz which we call extra vocalic (above the frequencies of vowels). It is what we call the “singing formant” or tone of singers. Every singer and in general all the good and beautiful voices have these types of harmonics. It is not necessary to use force, look for intensity, the voice “emerges”.



Without wanting to rank with them, you can also improve your tone, obtaining a “maximum” with what your mother passed onto you and in any case a resistant audible voice, I can assure you! You can notably acquire the audibility of the singing formant, by learning to place your tone.

You know the difference between the sound quality of speakers from your car radio and those from your hi-fi. It is most notably a question of dimensions. It is the same for your voice. You need to enlarge your resonance chamber.

Your larynx constantly goes between the top and the bottom of your windpipe. Place your finger on your Adam’s apple and swallow your saliva: your larynx rises. Yawn for a long time: your larynx drops. You may fear that when you talk, your larynx stays in the high position. You can correct this position by exercising trying to keep it in a lower position, with the following exercise:

- You yawn for a long time with your finger on your Adam’s apple, make a deep tone for five seconds.
- You yawn for a long time and make a sound a little higher (the best, if you have a piano, is to increase by a semi-tone). Check whether your larynx hasn’t moved.
- You continue progressively yawning, a sound and checking. After five sounds, you make small siren noises as well as by checking that your larynx doesn’t move.
- If your larynx raised, come back a step with a lower sound. If it has not moved, continue to raise your sound.

- If you do this exercise twice a day, in ten days you have got your larynx used to maintaining its lower position. Your tone must then be better.
- You don't obtain a reliable result after a month's worth of daily exercises? I would consider then that you work with a speech therapist or singing teacher, nothing beats the eye and ear of a professional.

Your voice is slightly muffled, throaty, without harmonics? We are now tackling the most delicate part of the vocal technique, and I can't guarantee that you will manage on your own, without the help of a critical ear from a speech therapist or a singing professor. But it won't cost you anything to try.

Have you ever heard either in an airport, the hall of a hotel, a tourist site a group of Americans or Canadians? We can hear them from far away because of how much their voice "carries".

On the Cable TV channels CNN, TV5 or others, journalists have this slightly nasal voice typical of north Americans. Well, we are going to try and imitate them, not to have in the future the same voice, but to allow you to "find your voice".

Exercises for placing your voice THROUGH your nose:

- Think of Mickey Mouse and say high and loud: Yeh Minnie, O Kay, or make the sound of a simpering cat on a roof: Miiiiiiaou.
- Think of the President of the United States of America and say as he would: "God bless America!"
- Imitate Canadians and say "Mon pere il est Francais (mon paire il est frinsè).
- Have fun talking through your nose, it is not very pretty, but pay attention to how "sonorous" your voice is.

You have managed to speak easily "through your nose"? Very good, now we need to get out of it.

Exercise for leaving your nose:

- Pronounce "Ni" through your nose and follow through with another vowel, "out with the nose, Ni-oh, Ni-é or Ni-a".
- You can't manage? So, pronounce Non-A, Non-é, Non-o. The "n" and the "on" being in nasal positions, leaving should be easier.
- You have managed so continue in the same tone of voice: "Non-é-a-e-i-o-u-ou", with only the Non being through the nose.
- Get used to finding this projection of your voice through the nose then "out with the nose", without having any aesthetical preoccupation. The aesthetic will come later on. Speak high and loud by starting each sentence by a "nasal" sound, example: "nnné" "*My bonny is over the ocean*" and listen to how the following of the text remains in a good tone.
- After having got used to this gesture, you will only have to get rid of the first nné sound and you will speak in a good tone.
- You can't manage, get help from a speech therapist.

Keeping these good gestures while speaking

I will not tell you that it is easy to re-educate your voice on your own. I alone took 20 years to understand my own voice. When I started mending broken voices of others, I saw my clients coming back after a certain time, because what we had achieved together did not maintain itself once they were alone. Nature takes over, subsequently the bad habits come back, the traps of the voice pop up at the worst times and we find ourselves in the evening with a tired voice or one that does not carry any more. I know.

This is the reason why I invite you to meditate on these few observations, fruit of several thousands of successful experiences:

- Only a good gesture will keep a good voice.
- It is the association between your ear and your muscles that will allow this good gesture.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
- It is every day that you need to manage your voice.
- It is three times a day that you need to verify its state and acoustic sound result.
- Every day you start from scratch together: nothing is achieved, but nothing is lost.

Your voice is now of quality? We are going to make it resistant and tonic.



TONING UP ONE'S VOICE

What is toning up?

Let us talk firstly about your calves. What does it mean to tone up your calves? You decide to hike across Corsica next summer, the famous G20 and because it has been a long time since you have been sitting in front of the computer, you had better train at least 6 months in advance. You don't use the elevator any more, you go for an hour's walk every Sunday the

first month, then 2 hours the following month, the next month Sunday and Wednesday evenings.

At Easter you will go and walk for two full days, on the Pentecost weekend you will go walking all weekend, and will then be finally ready in July to hike across Corsica with a few pounds less. If by mistake you stop training in June, all the hard work will have been for nothing. Sports persons know the importance of this physical training well, which does not necessarily require a lot of effort, but a regular and slowly progressive request of the muscles.

Well it is the same for your larynx. If you want to talk all day long without losing your voice, if you are a teacher for example, contrary to what certain people suggest, you must not “save” your energy, but talk regularly, more and more and louder and louder, often sing but just a little, shout from time to time when you play volley ball or when you are on the beach, finally and most importantly not keep quiet. The muscles of your larynx, that we commonly call the vocal cords, need first of all a capacity of resistance over time, endurance actually. This tonicity joined to a gesture without any effort will help you get through days of conversation without your tone falling apart. This here is the objective.

Of course, you will need to have previously well “set up your voice”. A person that trains to walk with a bad stride, rubbing your knees together, for example, will find himself with sore knees. It is the same with your larynx. The nodules on your vocal cords are just the demonstration of a bad gesture repeating itself. We will therefore tackle these different stages one after the other.

Gaining breath

At the start of placing once again your voice, or a re-education, we believe that we don't have much breath. We produce sounds lasting only a few seconds, two or three at the most and we need to catch our breath again. Actually we still have as much breath as before but it is not used well. We close our larynx with too much energy and it demands too much breath to push apart its walls. The objective will therefore not be to catch one's breath, but reduce the pressure joining the vocal cords, all this by keeping the same sound quality.

Exercises:

First of all an exercise without any noise: close your larynx in order to stop air from escaping, breath holding. And then we reduce the energy of joining, while making sure that the joining is perfect and air cannot escape. You will observe in this way that it is possible to very gently drop the pressure and therefore diminish the flow of air. Do not try and work on the sonorous intensity but just that of the joining and the diminishing energy needed to achieve this. You should do this exercise ten times X ten in a row every morning. In a month's time your larynx will be like your calves!

Afterwards we must check this by making a noise with very little pressure, that the joining is good and that the sound coming out is acceptable. You will obtain very small groaning noises,

very small with a small intensity. That's great! If the sound is too loud, it means that you are producing too much energy. Lighten your gesture.

Developing the muscles of your larynx

What does it mean to develop the muscle?

Criss-cross your hands one into the other, push the right one to the left and vice-versa. Your arms don't move but in the effort you make, you build up your abdominal muscles. Blood flows to your muscles and feeds them. It is without violence, progressively and without an insurmountable effort.

How can a Wagnerian singer stay four or five hours on stage, singing on two octaves at an average of 100db every day of the week, of the season, of his life without ever getting tired. This is only because he has a resistant larynx to which he does not demand what it cannot give back?

You do not ask as much from your voice. Then it will be easier.

You have managed to obtain from your larynx that it joins with less energy, and even less and even less? You have therefore discovered that you can get from your larynx 2, 3 maybe 4 different degrees of joining, the last one being very gentle? Your larynx has now become more supple, light, delicate in its closing. We are now going to develop its muscle.

Exercise without sound

Start again your breath holding exercises without making a sound. But once you have delicately closed your sphincter, you "at the same time" push progressively on your abdominal muscles to release the air, and tighten your larynx so that it cannot escape. Each effort must last at least 3 or 4 seconds, no more.

In order to make sure your gesture is right, place your finger on your Adam's apple, which means through your neck, your larynx. Push with your abdominal muscles and you should feel that your larynx rises in your neck. It rises only a few millimetres, no more.

- Count to 4 and let go to breathe.
- Repeat 5 series of 10 in a row.
- Do it morning, noon and evening.
- Do this for a week.

Your larynx will have become more resistant, more tonic.

Verification

Make a very gentle sound, well toned with a light joining.
Increase the pressure of your abdominal muscles on the air in your lungs.

What happens?

- You don't perceive any difference in the intensity of your voice? This is premature, your larynx isn't yet toned up enough, return to developing the muscles for one more week.
- You heard a sensible rise in the intensity of your voice? You are on the right track. But never try and increase the pressure of your abdominal muscles on the air in your lungs if you don't hear an increase in intensity. NEVER, this is how you tetanise your larynx.
- Continue the exercise of developing your muscles. Isolate yourself (for your neighbours sake); try and make louder and louder sounds by always starting with a weak one, speak louder and louder, without ever forcing too much. All is a question of measure. Modulate your voice in pitch, intensity, make ascending and descending siren noises.
- You continue your exercises and your voice improves? That is good. Do you still feel hoarse? Come back a few steps, you are going too quickly.

Make your voice always audible, tonic and resistant

Three months of this daily work should have given you a tonic voice, which means:

- A well placed voice, well toned that can be heard without effort, even at weak intensities.
- A voice allowing modulation of height and intensity.
- A resistant voice to the tiredness of a day, a week.
- A voice susceptible to foil traps.

WHAT TRAPS?



PROTECTING YOUR VOICE

Know thyself

The description of voice traps that we are going to make, concerns all the people on earth. Not all of these will concern you! You will have to search, understand, choose those that concern you, recognise yourself and accept it. If there is a being to which you can't talk twaddle to... it is yourself. It is then your job to understand the answers needed for the traps, to remember them, and see them coming. No one can do it for you.

In general there are three categories of traps:

1. Psychological traps
2. Internal physiological traps
3. External traps

The psychological traps of the voice

Any emotion, fear, sorrow, affection, affliction, anguish, stage fright or stress may lead you to observe that you “are voiceless”. This list is not exhaustive.

This situation maybe just passing, regular or set in place, foreseeable or not circumstantial. It is the most frequent difficulty which is found for voice problems, and, paradoxically, it should be the easiest to fix, because there is no real disruption of the muscles or organs contributing to the production of sound. There is only a problem in your head...

We cannot get involved either in your emotions, nor advise you to not have any, nor help you to get out of your emotional, social, metaphysical, existential or other problems, BUT:

No situation of this kind can modify the pneumatically, undulatory and acoustic phenomenon of the voice. If compressed air can exit from your lungs, if your larynx is closed without violence, and if the sound wave that exits can develop in a well opened “resonance chamber/mouth”, the sound of the voice can be made whatever your emotional state.

So the answer is somewhere else:

Ask yourself:

Do I have the abdominal muscles sufficiently relaxed?

Do I have the larynx sufficiently relaxed?

Is my mouth sufficiently wide open?

In general, the psychological traps affect the control of the breath. The heart beats quickly, the breath is short, the larynx tightens, the sound is badly produced, and the fact that you hear that your voice is of a bad quality puts you on edge, leading in this way to the vicious circle.

Answer:

The answer must then be:

I relax my abdominal muscles

I relax my neck and my larynx

I open well my mouth

We will not solve your psychological problems and their consequences on your voice in three simple sentences. But when you find yourself in difficulties of this kind, isolate yourself, try and breathe with your stomach, make long lasting groans, feeble in intensities for a few minutes. This should help.

Physiological traps of the voice

They concern everything that will act on the three stages of the production of the voice, which are:

1. On the lungs, the air or its compression
 2. On the transformation of the air into a sound wave through the larynx
 3. On the expansion of the sound wave and its harmonics or its control
-
- 1) On the lungs, this means, too high a breathing rate, asthma, allergies, cigarettes, belts, trousers, skirts or dresses too tight which prevent the lowering of the diaphragm, obesity, a regular or momentary stomach too full, a baby for a pregnant mother, monthly periods, sore stomachs, colic or colitis, surgical interventions, appendectomy or caesarean, giving birth.

All these situations, may they be momentary or settled must be limited or passed around: you need to get compressed air underneath the larynx.

Faced with this kind of difficulties, it is necessary to look back in your mind how your lungs fill themselves with compressed air, with which muscles you can act in order to bring back the compressed air underneath the larynx, by well differentiating the two gestures:

- Filling the lungs with compressible air
 - Compressing the air in the lungs without violence
-
- 2) For the larynx the traps are sedative or hypertonic medicines, regular medications, unbalanced diets, tiredness, insomnia, alcohol, heavy meals, cigarette smoke, bad digestion, heart burn, soft and hard drugs, night life all exaggerations or excessive ways of life generating a nervous or physical tiredness.

The larynx in a good voice has to make no efforts, but you need to teach it from a healthy body. It is your job to notice the influences your way of life may have on the condition of your larynx. We know some singers that smoke a little. We do not know smokers that become good singers. If the possession of a tonic, resistant and audible voice is determining for your life, it is up to you to pay the price of the choices in order to protect the condition of your larynx.

Exceptionally if your larynx is weakened by a momentary tiredness , the excess of a day, a weakness, you must apply three requirements, three:

1. Especially, do not ask any efforts from your larynx
2. Especially, do not insist on any efforts on your larynx
3. Especially, do not expect any effort from your larynx

If you apply this rule, and you are content in gaining only WHAT your larynx can give you, then you will avoid the fall towards dysfunction, lesions and the loss of your voice.

- 3) On the resonance chamber the traps are a larynx in too high a position, the covering up of the palate in too low a position, the angle that the neck makes with the cranium, the

shape and the position of the tongue, of the mouth and the auditory acuteness. These traps are the most difficult to circumscribe until we have not learned how to “place our voice well”.

Try this example:

Position yourself with your head vertical, your neck nice and straight, your body stable. Take a deep breath and make a very long sound come out, an “Aaaaaaaaah” for 15 seconds for example.

During these 15 seconds, look at the ceiling by raising your head well, then your feet by looking down, smile, open your mouth, pout and then pull faces to your heart’s content.

Did you hear all the modifications of your voice? Repeat this several times on several vowels and listen to yourself. You will be able to observe how the position of your head on your neck is important, as well as the position of your lips. The sound does not have any discrimination:

- In a constant position, constant result
- In an inconstant position, variable results

External traps of the voice

These traps occur on two of the three stages of production of the voice, the air and the sound, by disturbing the gesture, its components or its perception:

On the Air: the difference in temperature and hygrometric degree (heating, cold or air-conditioning), the difference in atmospheric pressure in high mountains or the quality of the air may have an influence on your lungs or your capacity to compress the air like the allergenic elements in suspension in the air.

The answer is a preventive and protective reaction. Most importantly do not react by pushing more on your abdominal muscles, you would completely destabilise your good gesture.

On the sound or its perception by your ear, the trap is much more perverse: actually, your ear is not always reliable and therefore you should be suspicious. Everyone has tried to sing under the shower with joy. You find yourself with the voice of Caruso or Callas, but as soon as you get out of the shower or, worse, when you sing outside, the harsh reality is rushing back: you are not Caruso or Callas. It is your ear that has tricked you and made you happy under the shower, or rather the acoustics of the shower, but your voice, had not changed.

Try a second experience: place your hands behind your ears, in the shape of extra bells, as if you were wanting to hear someone in front of you better, and in a simple movement of your wrists, inverse the direction of your hands, place them in front of your ears as if you wanted to hear “behind yourself”.

And now, sing a tune, and repeat these two movements alternatively every 5 seconds. Do you hear the large difference in perception of your voice, by the simple modification of the wider bell of your ears and its orientation in front or behind them? Nothing more is needed to

disturb your voice. During the unconsciousness of a discussion, you do not think of the acoustics of the room in which you find yourself in. It only needs to be imperceptibly modified, so that in a reaction to keep the balance of perception, you modify your vocal gesture whereas you do not need to, and therefore bring your larynx into tension and tiredness.

Each room has its own acoustics, each place too, like your car, a phone booth or to the complete opposite a closed stadium. Sports teachers and sport coaches know, when they pass from an outdoor pitch to a closed room, from an outdoor swimming pool to a indoor one. Those who do not control their voices will suffer. Those who consciously or not have a well placed voice, in contrast will fortify their larynx by these acoustic modifications.

Many voice professionals suffer from these problems: lawyers go from their office to court, teachers from a small classroom to an amphitheatre or tiled laboratory, sportsmen from interior to exterior, actors and singers from an empty room with no set to a room full with a set which rebounds the sound and modifies the perception of their voice. Worst, singers and actors may be disturbed by the simple fact that they are wearing or not a wig, hat, microphone or other, as this will influence the perception of their voice. I do mean the perception, as the voice has not changed if the gesture is the same.

Therefore be suspicious of your ears. You may also be bothered by having to talk quietly on the phone in a very loud atmosphere (train station, metro, restaurant or airport).

If you feel your voice “going backwards”, your larynx rising, your vocal cords “titillate”, react on the spot: yawn several times in a row, in order to drop your larynx, push forward your lips like “Giscard” in order to enrich your tone, eventually you will speak louder (by placing the receiver of the telephone further away from your mouth), easier still you get close to a wall in order to better perceive your voice, or have a break and do not get worked up. Do not forget that the health of your larynx, on which depends the quality of your voice, is managed every day, and is started again each day from scratch. Manage well your day and do your exercises every morning.

Singing for one’s pleasure? Of course but...

There is no greater joy than singing. There is no better way to make your voice progress than sing: BUT it all depends on the amount of seriousness you do it. The voice will develop through the singing, its tone will improve, in intensity, in range (singing high or low), in resistance therefore in tonicity but you must not want to go too quickly. You must not “want to”, but “let it come”.

WHERE to sing?

Sing at home, with friends, under the shower, in your house, in your car but not loudly. Sing in a choir, in a group, but do not accept to be tired at the end of a session. Stop beforehand. Sing at parties, special occasions, but do not sing excessively to the point of finding yourself hoarse or voiceless the next day.

WHAT to sing?

Sing what you like, make yourself happy, as long as your voice “can” produce the necessary notes. If it can’t, if you have to “push” in order to get this or that note, be careful, you will pay a high “price”. Be careful of Karaoke which pushes you to sing what you like to a pitch that may not suit you.

HOW to sing?

Here is the problem! If you sing alone, and to the interior of your possibilities (of notes and intensities) even if it is not always “right”, this is not important. Make yourself happy.

If you sing in a group or a choir, pay attention at being in the right section, soprano, alto, tenor or bass, where you can easily produce all the notes that your conductor asks you. If some are too difficult, don’t do them. Never accept what your larynx has difficulties to produce. You will pay a high price for it.

On the other hand, if you sing to the accompaniment of a CDrom or a Karaoke, be careful. The tone of the tune may not be adapted to your voice and you will finish voiceless. If you sing with a musician, guitar or piano, it is up to him to adapt to the possibilities of your voice, and not you to adapt to what “he knows”. Moreover, be careful of microphones and sound systems that give the “illusion”, make you believe that you “can” and leave you hoarse.

Finally, singing needs to be learned. There are about as many singing teachers as there are singers, and there are many good ones for you. The criteria will neither be the price, nor the reputation, nor the titles, nor his past career. The criteria will be observed at the end of each lesson: have I progressed, did I like it, is my voice in good shape, yes, so I will continue with this professor. Go on, sing!

Manage your voice daily and all year round

You practically never have any voice difficulties? Then skip this chapter! You regularly have voice problems? Pay close attention to the following.

I am always perplex when a teacher contacts me end of October to tell me: “I am hoarse, every day at noon, or at the end of the day, or at the end of the week, I have no more voice!

What can I do?”

I start off by answering: What have you done for your voice since the 20th of August?

Is it possible to imagine a sportsman, professional or amateur, enter a competition without any prior training, without having prepared himself several weeks in advance? What happens to your calves if, after a month of complete resting, you try and run without having prepared yourself? Well it is the same for your larynx and your voice.

Therefore if your voice is fragile, if you are subject to chronic difficulties (which explains why you are reading this book!), I will indicate how you should “manage your voice on a daily basis”.

It is during the first hour of your day, as soon as you wake up, that you will determine the voice you will have for the rest of the day. Well managed, you will go right through the day

without any difficulties. Badly managed, you risk the wipe-out. This may take you an hour in the first days, and a minute as time goes on.

As soon as you wake up while you are still in bed, the first test that you should undertake is to “look for the sound of the little mouse”.

You will try very quietly to make the squeaking sound of a mouse, very sharp, very soft, very small, like when you were two years old, no more. Warn the “other” next to you, that he (she) must not be astonished, and here after also. You now have a meeting every day with the small mouse.

Two solutions:

- You manage well done, let’s move on.
- You do not manage? You will get up and go along with your occupations, BUT every 2 or 3 minutes, you will try and find that damned mouse.

Meanwhile, we will continue with the gymnastics of the voice: low breathing ten times ten seconds, and you groan, very small groans (once again let the other know). Yawn, ten times in a row if possible, groan and search for the little mouse. You manage to groan? Then you will groan more and more loudly until you reach this little mouse without any effort. If there is a need for an effort, wait 5 minutes before starting again.

You relax your neck, your shoulders, you swallow your saliva to raise the larynx, you yawn to make it drop. You undertake small breath holds without forcing, four or five times 3 or 4 seconds each, and you search for the mouse.

You will manage to find it if your larynx has become healthy again. You have finally found it? So you should have a stroll on your voice, make siren noises, sing small sentences but always without any effort and intensity.

You manage to stroll on the whole stretch of your voice or nearly? Very good. You are having your coffee, or under the shower. Make the most of your shower to search for your tone in the nasal form.

Sing a good song of Robert Charlebois or Céline Dion with a good Canadian accent; this will place your voice in the resonators. Sing with your chest, and a sentence with your head voice, but always without searching intensity and without any effort.

On the contrary, you will try and speak less and less loudly while keeping this slightly nasal tone. In order to manage this, you will wrinkle your nose, bring up your cheekbones by pulling a nice face. You manage to talk “nasally” and not very loudly? Well done! The velum obeys well.

Now you should tone up your voice without any effort, you will do ten “solid” breath holds, muscled, of no more than 5 seconds each, but by forcing on your abdominal muscles in order to let the air out, and by forcing on your larynx in order to stop it letting the air out, but without making a noise of course.

There you are, you are now ready to go, and your voice is nearly ready. Make the most of your walk in the street, the station, the metro, the garden to test the strong intensity (call out loudly to your friend, your dog, the person that splashes you, well just find a way!) Strong but short.

If during the day you feel your voice falling apart and your larynx starting to sting, isolate yourself, yawn, search for the mouse, yawn again, look for Robert Charlebois and talk a little bit louder while moving backwards.

And finally if all this seems too difficult, get into contact with a speech therapist on my behalf.

Learn to heal one's voice AND get it healed

I have spent twenty five years of my life, from 1956 to 1981 meeting up with doctors and ENT specialists in France. I was often hoarse, sometimes voiceless, incapable of singing for long periods of time, having chronic voice difficulties. Not one doctor was able to diagnose what was really wrong with my voice, not one, not even the most specialized one of them all, whom I venerate and to whom I said so later on. The first one examined me in 1956, with nodules on my vocal cords, then no more nodules which in turn went from red to pink to more pearly colour and once again red, etc... but nothing on my voice.

It took me a long time to understand the reason: if these important specialists, hospital chiefs of staff, authors of books, teachers throughout the world had not seen anything concerning my voice ... it was because there was nothing to see!

To heal one's voice, literally doesn't mean anything! We cannot intervene on a pneumatic, undulatory or acoustic phenomena. It would be better to say: "heal one's larynx".

Does this mean that at each time we have voice problems, we have to heal our larynx? NO, sometimes the larynx has no problem at all.

However many times we may consult an ENT specialist or a speech therapist, who will tell you: "your vocal cords have nothing wrong with them, they are in good health". However this does not stop you from having been hoarse the day before and become voiceless again the next day.

Let us remind ourselves that our larynx is "passive" in the successive phenomena involved in the production of sound, and that a good gesture, one from a good singer for example, demands NO effort.

Let us go through the process again:

For a reason X your voice suddenly becomes less efficient, less audible. You press on your abdominal muscles so that you can be heard making you and sense at the same time a stinging feeling.

As soon as you force on it, it is the larynx which suffers; it tires due to the wrong gesture. Nevertheless if you rest for a couple of hours or a night, nothing seems wrong.

The following day your larynx is once again in good shape. If you continue this poor gesture, your bad voice, the larynx will tire more quickly and congest and if you insist it will either hurt or distort itself. At this point a doctor could or should intervene. He will heal your larynx

but not your voice. Once you have recovered a perfect larynx, you still won't know how to use it and your voice will risk falling apart again.

How should we go about this? A simple answer:

Understand WHEN it depends on medicine,
WHEN it does not depend on medicine

- You shouted all night at a party, amongst friends or at the last football game and you are hoarse
- You drank, danced, laughed a lot in a smoky atmosphere and you find yourself voiceless the next day
- Your voice does not carry well but you are never hoarse
- You cannot raise the tone of your voice without feeling a stinging sensation
- You have become a teacher, salesperson and you are hoarse at the end of the week, term or year
- You sing in a choir and finish rehearsals with a stinging sensation

All these vocal problems ARE NOT dependent on medicine. You demand the resistance of your larynx because your voice is badly placed as your larynx is not tonic enough, but medicine will not help, even once it will have restored the health of your larynx.

As long as you do not clearly hurt your larynx, the doctor can't help in anyway because there is nothing "physiological" to diagnose. You must learn to place and tone up your voice.

- For years you have been hoarse upon awakening
- After a few minutes in a high voice, you are hoarse or voiceless
- However long your rest is, your voice is husky
- You need to catch your breath in the middle of a sentence
- You feel that talking leaves you more and more out of breath
- You do not achieve any modifications of the intensity by forcing your voice
- We hear air passing through the sound of your voice
- You only have a few low register notes of range
- You constantly suffer from your larynx
- You have a cold and a sore throat which leaves you voiceless

Your larynx is most probably in a pathological state which will necessitate an investigation from a specialist doctor, ENT specialist or speech therapist. Try and understand how, why, when all this has happened, you will need it in order not to relapse after a speech therapy.

To help diagnose over time your own voice, below you will find a table of observations that you must take note of, in order to control the state or the possible evolution of your voice: try and note the different parameters of your voice in order to find out which side you are on. Whether it be the good or the bad voice, so as to pin point what you must work on the most in order to improve.

VOICE	GOOD	BAD
Breath	Long, steady and without effort	Short, irregular and not controlled
Joining	Gentle, progressive and without effort	Violent, painful
Tone	Which carries without effort, from piano to forte	Doesn't carry well even in forte
Ambitus	Large without effort	Narrow and painful or difficult in the sharps
Mechanisms	Superimposable chest or head voice	Little or no head voice
Intensity	From piano to forte without effort	Little or no modulation, even while forcing
Resistance	Permanent without effort	Feeble, tiredness and pain
During an Effort	The voice emerges and becomes more tonic	Isn't heard any better and has to be forced

The pathologies of the larynx are numerous, complex, usually consequences of bad gestures rather than the cause of bad gestures. They can sometimes be important or even very serious and are out of the grips of my competence.

Only the medical profession will be able to guide you towards healing your larynx. But it depends here on pathologies of your body and not a wrong functioning of your voice. Even with a perfect larynx you can have a bad voice. Only a succession of good gestures will give you a good voice.

It is time to put behind us once and for all, the remedies of “the others’ grandmothers”. I was told that honey, milk, lemon, lozenges, raw egg, (and a raccoon would say a poet), would help in restoring one’s voice!! Really?

In my sense and through my experience, everything that enters through the mouth goes to the stomach and not to the larynx. Luckily! I don’t have the competence to appreciate this and that medicine. However a medicine, as effective as it can be, will heal your larynx but will not give you a great voice if you exercise a bad gesture.

I have seen singers silence themselves before singing, others sing before singing, some drink red wine before singing and others drink nothing. I have also seen some lose momentarily their voice because their “amulet” has been misplaced and others hop around their dressing room three times in order to ward off their bad charm. It is the same for orators. Believe me, nothing replaces a good knowledge of one’s vocal gestures.

All my wishes accompany you on this road the troubles of which I know so well.

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QUESTIONS / ANSWERS

- I am voiceless, Do you have a “trick” to make me sing tomorrow?

No

- Is honey good for my voice?

Think and answer on my behalf: Where does it go, to your stomach or on your larynx?

- My doctor has prescribed me one weeks vocal rest?

No, you may rest your larynx, but you will find that your voice will still be as badly placed at the end of the week.

- I lack breath to talk, I get tired.

I don't doubt it, your larynx consumes too much air maybe, but your breath has nothing to do with it. It is your larynx towards which you have to correct the consumption of air.

- My voice is too high, I am called me miss.

Your voice actually lacks deep harmonics. Your tone is badly placed. We have never called Miss Lucciano Pavarotti or Roberto Alagna.

- I do not like my voice. Can I change it?

Certainly not, but make it better, enrich it to make it more pleasant and agreeable, undoubtedly.

- One month after the start of classes, here I am once more voiceless!

What did you do in order to prepare your voice on the 15th of August? What would you say if Zidane had just entered the pitch 5 minutes after having come back from his holidays?

- My doctor tells me to conserve my voice and not sing.

The more you climb stairs the more your calves are resistant, unless you twist your leg at each step. It is the same for your larynx. The more you use it “well”, the more you will be able to use it. Everything has to do with progression.

- We can't hear me at the back of the class. How can I make it louder?

It is not a question of intensity but audibility. Work on the richness of your tone, not your strength.

- Why can my colleague speak and shout loudly without getting tired, and not me?

Thanks to his mother who has given him an ideal “acoustic” shape of his cranium.

You will be able to do the same, but you, will need to learn.

- Why do black jazz singers have such good voices?

Because they are American, not because they are black.

- Why do many singers have voice problems at the age of 40?

It's like slenderness: when we are 20 we don't always deserve what we have. At 40 we only get what we deserve!

GLOSSARY

Spread	Of a Voice : all the notes, from deeps to sharps that a voice can emit, whatever the mechanism.
Tessitura / range	All the notes on which a person can easily speak or sing (narrower than the spread).
Interval	Distance (in notes or hertz) separating two sounds, there exists 12 intervals of ½ a tone between two notes separated by an octave.
Ambitus	The interval separating the highest and the lowest note of a speech or a song.
Mechanisms	Mode of operation of the larynx (0,I,II,III or Fry, Chest, Head, Whistle).
Register	Mode of resonance of a voice (mixed, covered, open).
Sound	A wave being propagated in an homogenous environment heard by the ear.
Pure Sound	Simple sound emitted from a source without harmonics (diapason), vibration directly transmitted to the air.
Complex Sound	A sound full of harmonics
Harmonic Echo	A succession of multiple harmonics of a sound, at the origin of the organisation of western music.
Fundamental (sound)	Sound wave produced by a source, first and most importantly heard, described in hertz or notes.
Common Fundamental	Ambitus in which a person usually talks (hertz or notes).
Small passage	A zone of the tessitura where an acoustic modification of the voice occurs.
Large passage	Zone of the tessitura where the laryngeal mechanisms change.
Composition of a sound	
Frequency	Periodicity of a wave in one second (defined in hertz).
Wave length	Whether it propagates easily or not in the Pharyngeal cavity, Determines the vocal frequencies or extra vocals
Harmonics	Wave which has a frequency multiple that of the fundamental sound (hertz)
Formants	Specific filters to the shape of a resonance cavity highlighting one or several frequency waves
Vocal tone	Sound of the voice essentially composed of harmonics influenced by the position of the tongue (- 2000 Hz)
Extra-vocalic tone	Sound of the voice essentially composed of harmonics not influenced by the position of the tongue (+ 2000 Hz)
Singing formant	Resonance zone allowing the emergence of the voice above all instrument (2500 – 4000)
Height	Basis of a sound, one of the three simple definitions of a sound (height, tone, intensity)
Audibility of a sound	
Emergence of a sound	The faculty of certain sounds (voice, instrument) which are able to be recognized among other more intense sounds
Sonorous intensity	Quantitative aspect of a sound, qualified in db, which depends on the capacity of the larynx to resist to the sub-glottis pressure
Energy of a formant	Intensity of the activity of a formant defined in db
Scientific notions	
Air puffs	Group of air molecules passing through the larynx
Bernoulli effect	By penetrating in a homogenous masse of air, each molecule of air creates a wave which is transmitted to the following molecules
Venturi effect	By pushing back and passing through the larynx's sphincter, each puff of air creates behind itself an empty space which causes the vocal cords to approach
Auditory acuteness	Separating power allowing to distinguish inside a sound, several components, tones, frequencies, formants
Impedance brought back	Acoustic resistance of a sound rich in harmonics which equalises the Sub-Glottis Pressure and relaxes the larynx

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Solid musical and singing training

Solo singer at the age of thirteen. Studies in the theory of music, piano, trombone, harmonics, singing, orchestration, choir leader.

Obliged to give up his singing career

Hospitalized at twenty (double nodule on the vocal cords because of an error from the singing teacher). Chronic hoarseness for 20 years even though being followed medically.

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Specialized in the voice: the scientific research and teaching

Teaches the vocal and operatic technique at music academies. Has brought back since 25 years many teachers, orators and singers in difficulty to a quality, tonic, reliable voice that does not tire. Holds courses on Professional Training for ongoing singing teachers, choir conductors and speech therapists.

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¹ There does not exist, except error on my behalf, any pure form of teaching, school, diploma of vocal technique at least in France.

Christian GUÉRIN

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR VOICE

The author has lived the paradoxal experience of becoming an opera singer at the age of 40 after 20 years being chronically hoarse. Strong of this generative adversity of doubt and research, he started “repairing the voices of others” with outstanding results. For the last ten years he has been teaching speech therapists his method for reeducation, multiplying by hundreds this “transfer of technology”.

It is of the “non medical” part of managing your voice that this book covers, addressing teachers, commercials, lawyers, actors, singers, politicians and “the others”, who have voice difficulties.

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