

### Vision Separates, Sound Unifies

We live in a visual world perceiving objects and others as separate from ourselves. I see you or this thing as separate from me. When we listen to music, sing or hum, sound surrounds us, enters us and moves us in some way, altering us for a time, perhaps forever. Thus the power of the human voice, the source with your presence of your identity.

Your voice is your own complex, ever-changing note through which you are recognised and enable others to understand you and your actions. Your voice and your presence are your primary means of expression as daily, whatever you do, you explore and fulfil your need for communication — narrative and consequence - the story of your life. From this understanding, professionally trained Voice Coach Susan White creates Voice Days for people to recognise vocal sound, to 'hear what they hear'. Then, to apply this understanding to their own vocal expression.

'As we mature we become creatures of habit, both physically and vocally — far removed from the freedom of movement and expression we have enjoyed'. Through physical awareness and release of tension we can re-capture natural, non-habitual expression, which fosters our confidence and is recognised immediately by others. The appropriate mix of passion, imagination and reason produces an abundance of vocal variety, which we under-exploit everyday. A sense of inner ease settles from finding greater choice over the ability to inform, impassion, query, ask, doubt, decline, accept, reassure, complain, motivate, persuade, extol, reprimand, comfort, agree or joyously celebrate!

Sound is a more profound medium than the visual despite its power to dazzle, distract and entice. Disproportionately people spend much energy, in some cases becoming obsessed with how they or certain things look. The Cult of Celebrity provides extreme examples. Others have become interested in developing their speaking voice to listen, communicate and connect with eloquence and ease. It is the difference between exclaiming an ex-pression, 'Look at me!' or exuding an im-pression on the sensibilities of others through your voice.

Susan's profile as a Voice Coach unusually spans the Arts, Education, Theatre, Charities and everyday people, Audio Books, Radio, plus specialist experience of 3D professions: architecture, engineering, sculpting, landscaping — visual design of all creeds. Besides professional voice training from The Guildhall School of Music and Drama and The Central School of Speech and Drama, Susan has been influenced, in a practical sense, by shadowing renowned teachers. Rather than seeking notoriety, Susan focuses on how to enable others from a belief that we need to remember how to listen profoundly to truly hear each other. This becomes increasingly important as television, text and email prevail in a predominantly visual world. Still to be persuaded? Recall being in love, or missing a loved one through absence or bereavement, we catch ourselves saying, 'I just wanted to hear your voice ...'

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Croak, croak ... sore throat ... how did it come to this? Well, how far back do we have to go? First we - that's you, me, all mankind, stood upright. If that were not enough, then, through our upright bodies, language evolved and ... escaped. How we speak really does not bear thinking about! Waste-filled gas leaves my lungs, propelled by a co-operation of muscles. I interrupt, only temporarily, my involuntary breath-for-life mechanism to disperse, like pollen on the wind, a meaning that has arisen from an impulse to speak. Inside my throat, jettisoned air molecules are mugged, crashing one into another; their cries amplified in throat, mouth and nose; chopped and shaped by lips, ivory teeth and wet tongue to form sound-shapes. Away these travel to tickle your inner ear, provoking ripples of vibration through your body, which you interpret as images within your own in-house, art-house cinema of the mind. Incredible.

People who rely upon speaking for their career or job - teachers, doctors, barristers, counsellors, information-providers, call-centre workers - soon come to appreciate how the voice can tire. It takes more than will to keep a voice healthy. Obvious recommendations overlap with sound advice for overall health: sufficient regular sleep and a balanced diet. It is also essential to have a fine awareness of your physical state at any time. Whilst this sounds obvious or easy, many people have become remarkably cerebral and analytical, somatically detached. How do you answer the following:

- ★ Are you aware when you are just starting to tire, or only when you are exhausted?
- ★ Are you aware when you are hungry, or perhaps just thirsty?
- ★ How do you satisfy your body's many calls for water?
- ★ Do you sometimes confuse your body's signals for water, food, sleep or just a stretch?

To develop our voices we have to become aware of our physical presence and our *habitual* use of our bodies, before we even start to 'hear ourselves as others hear us'. Many people are surprised that vocal development starts in the physical and how far their *habitual* use has changed from original, *natural* use. True communication is wordless, residing in the underlying expression of our whole *per-sona*. Yet, most people prepare by focusing upon 'what' to say, rather than 'how' to say it.

Received wisdom advises not to strain our voices by speaking above noisy classrooms or over loud music, but what to do when that is our working environment? Professional voice coaching aids the individual to re-discover breathing in more natural rhythms than modern life demands, whilst enabling, from a grounded and tension-free centre, a vocal power which is effective through its very resonance, support and carrying power. This prevents strain within the sensitive vocal mechanisms of the larynx (or voice box), so that loss of voice, hoarseness, harshness, breathiness, lack of power and strain can be addressed before more serious conditions occur.

Relaxation is the starting point: an alert relaxation, not collapse. The pace of present-day life frequently demands an endurance of high-energy, followed by the collapse of down time. Few bodies can sustain 'marathons at 100 metres' pace, without collapse and burn out. As a consequence, when asked to relax, people often adopt a collapsed physique, which prevents natural rib-lung movement, in turn making breathing shallow and ineffective. Natural alignment is essential: for how we stand so we will breathe and, how we breathe so will we speak. Most people are unaware of their habitual tension.

Why leave it until the warning signals are inhibiting your speech, when a clear understanding of best vocal use, with practice, can enable you to speak with eloquence and ease?