

## Part III

### Vocal and somatic listening in training

#### Chapter 9

#### (Re)considering the role of touch in “re-educating” actors’ body/voice

Tara McAllister-Viel

##### Abstract

Recently, voice trainers have been (re)considering the use of touch within the voice studio, specifically within multicultural classrooms. If there are benefits from the use of touch, what are they and what are tutors missing if they ban touch from their classrooms as a means of avoiding the complex issues it brings into the voice studio? One aim of this chapter is to examine the concerns I have surrounding the use of touch in my teaching, particularly focusing on the multicultural and diverse training environments in which I work. I do so by offering an alternative approach to traditional practices that use touch as a corrective model through object-body observation. Using Jeungsook Yoo’s approach to meditative practices in her Korean actor training as a departure point, I interweave Asian modes of training with adaptations of Anglo-American voice practices. The conceptual model for what touch and feeling can do and how it can do “it” is augmented. Touch and feeling are no longer located to individual investigations of physiological function, but open up to include ways of “forming one body” (Leder, 1990, 156) with others, leading to more connected communication and empathetic listening.

The use of touch to train actors’ voices in popular voice pedagogy is an accepted pedagogical tool within [the US](#) and [the UK](#) acting conservatoires. Influential master voice trainers, Cicely Berry, Kristin Linklater, Michael McCallion and Patsy Rodenburg, all use touch in their practices (Berry, 1973, 63–64, 79–80; [McCallion, 1988](#); [Rodenburg, 1994](#); Linklater, 2003; [McCallion, 1988](#); [Rodenburg, 1994](#)). The use of touch increases a student’s awareness of excessive muscular contraction, or “tension”; which inhibits the process of vocalization, by directing her awareness to a certain part of her body/voice and keenly observing the student’s

behavior (McAllister-Viel, 2019, 1, 43–46). This fundamental observation becomes the foundation for the next step: learning how to release this “tension” and “re-educate” the body/voice by substituting inefficient or “habitual” muscular usage with more efficient usage.

This learning process is also the necessary preparatory work for further learning. Linklater wrote:

How do you *teach* relaxation? By touching the pupil’s body and feeling whether the muscles are responding to the messages being sent to them. How do you induce a new use of the voice? By taking hold of the body and moving it in new directions which break conditioned, habitual movements.

(1976, 4; 2006, 10–11)

The use of touch to heighten a student’s awareness of her “conditioned, habitual movements” has a variety of influences but one influence I would like to examine for the purposes of this chapter is the adaptation of FM Alexander’s approach, the Alexander Technique, into popular contemporary voice training. Linklater wrote: “His [Alexander] influence is clear in much of the voice work that has developed since then” (1976, 2). Alongside my actor training, which included the practices of Berry, Linklater, McCallion and Rodenburg, I had the privilege of three years private Alexander training. From my experiences, I have adapted my understanding of Alexander’s “hands-on” approach in my teaching practice, as well as adapted my understanding of touch in training actors’ voices from the approaches of master voice trainers. Simultaneously, I trained in a variety of Asian modes of practice at the Asian/Experimental Theatre program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, which included understandings of the use of *ki* [energy] as awareness within Hatha yoga (Wu style), *taiqiquan*, *kalarippayattu* (a traditional Indian martial art), and later in my career Korean *p’ansori* (a traditional Korean vocal art form), and Zen meditation at Hwa Gye Sa [temple], both in Seoul, South Korea. Over the course of my

career, I have looked for ways of interweaving Anglo-American voice training with my understandings of the Asian modes of training in both my acting technique in performance and my teaching practice (McAllister-Viel, 2019).

I teach in a variety of different multicultural and multilingual contexts in which I sometimes struggle to find word choices and/or translations during my instruction to articulate *the experience of experiencing* an exercise. Alexander had identified the issue of language in his practice. Edward Maisel, editor of Alexander's collected writings, suggested that the practitioner introduced his method of touch as "directing awareness," because verbal instruction when teaching the experience of experiencing was inadequate. Maisel wrote:

Initially, Alexander had attempted – in words, futile words – to teach the new feeling by *telling* his pupil how to attain it [ ... ] But instead of relying upon words in situations whereof one cannot speak, might there not be some other form of communication? Might it not be possible to impart one's message in some other way? In meeting and solving this problem, Alexander developed a means for conveying kinesthetic experience – which is perhaps the most valuable part of this work.

(1969 [1974], xxix, original emphasis)

I sometimes do away with language instruction during an exercise or support my verbal instruction with role modeling of behavior and touch to bring focused attention to a student's conscious awareness of her vocal function. Another reason I use touch in my classrooms is because the ephemeral voice can be realized in concrete ways through touch and this can help students who might find voice difficult to pin down. Students can locate "voice" by mapping, through touch, the vibrations over the hard surfaces of their bodies (e.g. secondary resonance or "bone conduction"). Voice can be realized through touch as vibration. Touch grounds voice in

body, and this helps realize a major principle in contemporary, popular voice training, often characterized as “embodied” voice.

### **“Re-educating” body/voice**

I have struggled with using touch in tandem with Alexander’s concept of “re-education” ([1910] 1918, 107) of the body/voice, a major principle underpinning his use of touch and a concept also adapted by many contemporary voice trainers. The student begins training by examining “conditioned, habitual movements” (Linklater, 1976, 4; 2006, 10–11). McCallion warned that in the beginning of training, “the first problem is that because what we do is habitual, it feels right, and so is difficult to detect as a wrong” (1988, 8–9). The student brings into the voice studio habits that feel “right” but are “wrong,” setting up a way to understand muscular usage within a right/wrong or good/bad binary, which I find problematic. The student learns that she must initially distrust what feels “right,” or distrust her embodied feeling. She cannot “trust [her] judgement,” but instead she must rely on “some external and trustworthy guide?” (Linklater 1976, 4–5). In my experience, this adaptation of “re-educating” the body/voice undermines student agency, her responsibility for her own learning and her confidence in coming to know her body/voice.

Recently, voice trainers have been (re)considering the use of touch in training actors’ voices. Master voice trainers, David Carey and Rebecca Clark Carey, discuss problems with the use of touch in their voice training texts, *Vocal Arts Workbook and DVD* (2008) and *The Verbal Arts Workbook* (2010). In their 2008 publication, they wrote:

Until recently, this training culture assumed that it was acceptable, for example, to require students to wear specific types of clothing, to work in bare feet, to touch each other [ ... ].

However, in our contemporary context of multiculturalism and diversity, many of these practices are rightly being questioned.

(Carey and Clark Carey, 2008, xvi)

In dealing with this issue in class, Carey and Clark Carey suggest: “If it is inappropriate to ask students to touch each other, feel free to be creative with those exercises which require it – or simply don’t do them” (2008, xvi). Not using touch in teaching is always an option, but what are tutors missing if they ban touch from their classrooms as a means of avoiding the complex issues that touch brings into their classrooms? If tutors find value in teaching through touch, how might they “be creative” adapting touch in the voice studio?

Master voice trainers Micha Espinosa and Antonio Ocampo-Guzman point out in their writing the “complex relationship most Latinos have to the physical body” that they argue is not being addressed in most popular US actor-training programs (2010, 151). In an interview, Espinosa discussed some of the questions that guide her use of touch in studio:

I am aware and structure my courses or classes with an understanding of my situated perspective and the cultural context [ ... ]. Even if there is a culture of touch [in the classroom] there is a tremendous amount to learn. What do I represent? What are the power structures at play?

(2019)

For voice trainer Electa Behrens, who teaches in English within multilingual classrooms at the Norwegian Theater Academy/Akademi for Scenekunst, the question that guides her use of touch in studio becomes

how do we make space for and respect cultural difference and at the same time invite sensual strategies? [ ... ] Not just say ‘no touch,’ but rather ask; who touches? How? When? And celebrating the diversity of response touch offers the voice

(Behrens, 2019)

One aim of this chapter is to examine the concerns I have surrounding the use of touch in my teaching, particularly focusing on the multicultural and diverse training environments in which I work. In the first half of this chapter, I investigate the ways touch is used in popular, contemporary voice practice, as a departure point for how I have, in the past, adapted practices to my multicultural/multilingual classrooms. I begin with those aspects of prominent approaches that I have struggled with, prompting me to look for additional ways to address the use of touch and feeling in my teaching. Specifically, I examine the following:

- the student can touch the surface of the skin, and may feel activity underneath the skin, for instance, the way the muscles contract and release, but many other functions integral to voicing happen within the depths of her body where touch cannot reach and where feeling is elusive. How might “touch” and the “awareness” brought about by touch and feeling be understood more broadly than simply skin-to-skin contact through a corrective method?<sup>1</sup>
- Part of the training of contemporary practices asks the student to observe her body as an object (e.g. object-body) through a Western biomedical model. But within my multicultural/multilingual classrooms, not all students understand their body only through this model; they bring in other mappings of the body through diverse world views. How might this popular approach interact with other understandings of body/voice to include various body knowledges?
- The messages that touch sends to the learner are delivered through “feeling,” which some master trainers rightly find problematic, in part because the feeling of touch is subjective and culturally influenced. However, relying on anatomy and physiology to carry the messages of

touch invests in the body as a stable site for learning. How might multiple interpretations of the experience of experiencing touch offer greater agency to the multicultural/multilingual student in her learning journey?

The second half of this chapter attempts to articulate my ongoing explorations interweaving well-known, contemporary Anglo-American voice training with certain Asian modes of training, specifically in regards to the role of touch in learning. The focus here is to propose alternative ways of addressing bodies/voices and touch within multicultural/multilingual classrooms. I propose that cultivating focused awareness through breath/ki and applying it to touch can help the learner understand “outside” and “inside” (e.g. “object-body” and “subject-body”) in a more joined-up way. By applying meditative breathing methods to touch, the student magnifies her awareness of her musculature in the beginning of the training. However, through long-term practice, she can shift from muscular awareness to a cultivation of ki as awareness.

One benefit of adding meditative practices to current, popular voice practice is to reach more diverse student populations within multicultural/multilingual classrooms that many voice trainers feel are not being satisfactorily addressed ([Burke, 1997, 58, 61–62](#); [Brown, 2000; 2001, 124–128](#); [Espinosa and Ocampo-Guzman, 2010, 150](#); [Ginther, 2015, 41–60](#);

[Klemp et al, 2015, 82–90](#)

). Another benefit is that the conceptual model for what touch and feeling can do and how it can do “it” is augmented. Touch and feeling are no longer located in individual investigations of physiological function, but open up to include ways of “forming one body” with others, leading to more connected communication and empathetic listening.

Ultimately, this chapter hopes to add to ongoing discussions within popular contemporary voice training about the role of touch as a pedagogical tool within [the UK](#) and [the US](#) acting conservatoires.

## **Touch as “universal” human experience**

Within many popular voice-training exercises, anatomy and physiology is the foundation for shared phenomenological experience (McAllister-Viel, 2019, 21). Rodenburg wrote: “The biology, mechanics and hydraulics of the human voice are the same everywhere” (1992, 107). The body becomes the site for the voice, the producing mechanism for sounding and voicing and the kinesthetic awareness of physical acts which influence the training of voice. In short, body mediates the experience of experiencing voice. Berry wrote: “That is why I said that our common ground was the experience of the voice through the movement of muscles” (1973, 14). Exercises can transfer between bodies during training because it is assumed that the bodies involved have the same materiality which makes transmission of skills possible. Touch, as a pedagogical tool within this conceptual model, helps work towards a necessary reduction of experience between bodies and acts as a founding principle for transferring technique from one body to another. The transmission of skills is successful when learning outcomes can be seen, heard or felt.

This is also one of the ways in which voice is understood as “embodied”. For Linklater, “[t]he voice is forged in the body” (Linklater, 2016: 59). The voice is “embodied,” literally “in” and “of” the body. When this singularly body is understood through anatomy and physiology, conceptualized through a Western, biomedical model, it can be hard to integrate other world views of body/voice. Phillip Zarrilli noted:

We organize ‘the world’ we encounter into significant gestalts, but ‘the body’ I call mine is not a body, or the body, but rather a process of embodying the several bodies one encounters in everyday experience as well as highly specialized modes of non-everyday, or ‘extra-daily’ bodies of practices such as acting or training in psycho-physical disciplines to act.



(2004, 655)

If a student has “several bodies” she encounters through an ever-becoming process of her “everyday experience” as well as during training, “extra-daily bodies of practices,” then, relying on anatomy and physiology as *the* singular body of reference during training is inadequate. Additionally, the information gathered from touch is not necessarily understood in the same way between all those who are touching the same thing. How a student organizes “the world” through her body affects how she experiences that “world” through her senses and how she understands or “reads” the “sensing/experience”. Zarrilli wrote:

The Latin sentire means “to feel.” To be sentient is to be open to “feeling,” that is, to “sensing” and thereby experiencing “a world.” But precisely how many senses there are, how they are understood, and how a “world” of sensing/experience is defined varies widely across cultures, histories and religious-philosophical perspectives.

(2016, 121)

When body/voice is universalized and trained through object-body exercises, the experience of experiencing body/voice is problematically universalized.

### **Inside/outside**

According to Linklater, in the late 1930s, Iris Warren, her former voice tutor at LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art), added a psychological understanding to physiologically based voice exercises. She wrote:

the voice exercises remained, but were gradually altered by the shift from external, physical control to internal, psychological ones. The criterion for assessing progress lay in the answer to the question ‘how does it feel?’ rather than ‘how does it sound?’

(Linklater, 1976, 2–3)

By the 1970s, acting training had been characterized in popular voice texts as processes that were either outside/inside or inside/outside (Linklater, 1976, 3; 2006, 1–2; Berry, 1992, 288; Rodenburg, 1992, 113; McAllister-Viel, 2019, 8–9, 68–71). This referred to the differences between the technically proficient British actor (outside-in approach to acting) who trained to embody muscular skill in contrast to the psychologically motivated, emotionally driven American actor within American Method approaches (inside-out approach to acting). This characterization set up a way to think about voice training as a divide between the technique of the body/voice and its outward appearance and the expressive body/voice driven through internal psychological and emotional motivation, “the need to communicate” (Linklater, 1976, 12) or the “need for words” (Rodenburg, 2001).

As an actor trained in both the US and the UK, I have some understanding of this inside/outside binary. This way of thinking about embodied skill was challenged when studying Zen meditation in Seoul. I began attending Zen meditation classes for foreigners soon after I arrived in Seoul in 2000, while teaching voice training for actors at The Korean National University of Arts (KNUA), School of Drama (2000–2005). Part way through the meditation class, the class would break and take tea in an adjoining room where we could put questions to the monks in English, Danish and French about our experiences, an extension of the Dharma talk.<sup>2</sup> When we drank tea from our small cups, we were asked to be attentive to the journey of the tea as we drank it, to focus on the experience of drinking tea, and not drink the tea thoughtlessly.

In my “beginner’s mind,” this meant increased sense of awareness of how I drank tea, the temperature of the tea, the flavor, the texture of the cup at my lip, the action of my tongue and throat as I swallowed, and the warm feeling as it travel<sup>ed</sup> down inside my body to places I could not touch with my hands but could feel inside. At that time, I focused on how the tea journeyed from outside of me to inside of me. Zen Master Seung Sahn in dialogue with his students (recorded and compiled by Stephen Mitchell) instructed: “Where is inside? Where is outside?” The student answered: “Inside is in here; outside is out there”. Seung Sahn replied: “How can you separate? Where is the boundary line?” The student answered: “I’m inside my skin, and the world is outside it”. Then Seung Sahn said: “This is your body’s skin. Where is your mind’s skin? [ ... ] Don’t make inside or outside” (1976, 19–20).

I took this lesson from my meditation practice and brought it into my voice classrooms at KNUA. How might I help my students understand a spectrum of ways of perceiving touch beyond the binaries of inside/outside, good/bad, right/wrong that I found so problematic? The use of touch as “directing awareness” satisfies the need to find technique in the body, how to direct one’s awareness to the muscles so that their behavior can be observed, felt and changed, if necessary. This kind of “awareness” of how the muscles work anatomically and physiologically is different from how I have experienced ki as awareness in Asian modes of training. Integrating adaptations of Alexander’s “directing awareness” from voice training with my own training in meditation practices made it possible to knit together ways of shifting awareness through the use of ki cultivation. Understanding ki as awareness opened up possibilities of the use of touch as well.

## **Breathing and being breathed**

I started by adapting a traditional exercise from Cicely Berry's practice my students already knew – the first exercise from her first book (1973, 23). Berry instructed:

Lie on the floor on your back with your buttocks flat. Feel the back as spread as possible. Crook your knees up a little apart, aware of them pointing to the ceiling. This should help to get your back flat. Do not push it down by tensing, however, just get it as flat as you can. Try to be aware of your back spreading over the floor, and not sinking down into it. Let it spread. Let the shoulders spread, try to feel the shoulder joints easing out, and not cramped in. It helps if you allow the elbows to fall away from the body, with the wrists inwards [ ... ]. Now think of your back lengthening along the floor---become aware of your spine and try to feel each vertebra slightly easing away from the other. Feel this right to the base of the spine--- to the tail in fact. Allow the head to lengthen out of the back.

(1973, 23)

The teaching language in Berry's exercise is similar to Alexander's "orders," asking the student to feel the back spread, the spine lengthen, etc. Also notice her use of the teaching word "aware". She asks the student to "feel" and become "aware" of certain sensations. Here, touch, such as how the back touches the floor and/or the feeling of the back spreading along the floor, is used in order to increase the student's kinesthetic awareness of the experience of her body's function, in this instance spinal alignment. Touch, and the awareness it brings, is an external, outward experience brought into the internal reasoning "self" of the student.

In order to move the students' awareness from their observing mind on an object-body to sensing ki within the body, I ask the student to become attentive to her back. First, I ask her to focus on her experience of her back as it rests on the floor. She may notice the messages that touch delivers from her back touching the floor. She might notice the temperature or the hardness of

the floor against her back. She might feel uncomfortable and need to shift to make herself comfortable. Next, I ask her to become aware of her back by “breathing into her back”. She may notice the back of her ribs spread along the floor as she breathes. So far, her observing mind has reflected on the anatomy and physiology of her body as an object. Next, I ask the student to continue to breathe, increasing her awareness of *how* she is breathing. This exercise takes a long time. The more she breathes, the more she is likely to notice her breath. At some point during the length of this process, she may get bored and her mind may start to wander or she may “zone out”. But I keep asking her to stay aware of the breath.

Actor/trainer Jeungsook Yoo, who integrates her meditative practice with her acting practice, points out that the request to focus on the action helps to give the mind something to do and keep it from wandering. In her case, when asked by a director or trainer to put her awareness “in the soles of your feet” or in “the center of your palms,” she directed her awareness to that part of the body and observed it. She wrote: “In both cases, these instructions provided a specific aim for concentration so that the practitioner’s mind does not need to wander. It knows where to go.

Therefore, the awareness functions as a magnifier to gather the concentrated mind” (2018, 71).

By instructing my student to stay aware of her breath or her back on the floor, her observing mind has something to do. But the student must stay with this task. She must (re)commit to this action each time it happens – to commit to being attentive and not allowing the mind to wander.

This description of attentive awareness could also apply to a characterization of Alexander’s “orders” – how a student learns to become consciously aware of parts of her body by being attentive to its movement. In Alexander’s training model, the observing mind consciously controls the physical matter of the body. So too, for Yoo: “I directed my awareness to the part of my body and observed it [ ... ] awareness was perceived as a mental activity” (2018, 71). At this

point, interweaving meditative practice and “directing awareness” is possible because they seem to share a similar beginning. Also, through repetition over a period of time, the student is giving her body the opportunity to teach itself how to breathe in this position – how to breathe “efficiently” under these conditions. Efficient muscular use is a value shared by Alexander practice, its adaptation into Anglo-American voice training and my experience with meditation: breathing should not be effortful.

At this point, there is a “temporal gap” (Yoo, 2018, 71) between the observing mind and the act of cultivating ki as awareness while becoming immersed in the act of breathing. This is where the different practices begin to diverge. Yoo wrote:

As I repeated the exercise, the gap disappeared. Once I put my awareness on the centre of my palms, it senses that the awareness is touching it as a form of ki, and I sense the ki of the centre of my palms. The awareness as a magnifier itself is experienced as a ki. As a result, awareness comes to have a double meaning: both a ‘mental’ function and ki. This magnifier can be located depending on our intention, and therefore we can send ki to a specific place.

(2018, 71)

**For Yoo, this discovery in her training led her to conclude:**

It shows how awareness, more than other states of mind, can be shaped. We can modulate its direction, location, size and it is immediately accompanied by ki, which contain information about other states of mind. In this way, awareness is an initial method to build the route in space for moving ki.

(2018, 71)

In Alexander's training model, the observing mind consciously controls the physical matter of the body. Although Alexander characterized his training as "psycho-physical" and insisted on a non-separation of "'mental' and 'physical' operations (manifestations) [ ... ] of the functioning of the human organism" (1924, 29–30), this is not the same as a symbiotic relationship between mind and body. The premise of "re-education" belies the assumption that mind and body are ontologically separate and points to the way in which mind and body have been traditionally understood in the West as dualistic.

Within Yoo's conceptual model of training "mind" through body, she develops ki so that wherever mind goes, ki follows. This understanding of "mind" is different from Alexander's conscious-controlled behavior (McAllister-Viel, 2007, 105). Conscious bodily movement is a key difference between Eastern and Western practices (Yuasa, 1993, 28). In Western practice, like Alexander's process of "re-education," the "mind that is subject dominates and moves the body that is object," but in Eastern "body-mind oneness" there is no longer a felt distinction between "the mind qua subject and the body qua object" (Ibid.). A level of body/mind integration is assumed at the beginning of training. The function of training then is not to create a body/mind relationship, but instead to train towards further levels of integration (Kasulis and Dissanayake, 1993, 303; Sellers-Young, 1998, 177).

While the student continues to breathe, I ask her to imagine that the floor is an extension of her ribcage; the floor is not "outside". She is breathing the room. As Yoo points out, there may be a temporal gap between the observing mind and the act of cultivating ki as awareness while becoming immersed in the act of breathing. Through attentive repetition, the student can slowly release her observing mind and, in the act of breathing, release the feeling of the floor beneath her, the weight of her body, noticing how the ribcage rises and falls. She can begin to soften her

focus. She is working towards a feeling of *being breathed*. She is working towards the deeper levels of bodymind integration and ki cultivation. Sometimes a student reports after the exercise feeling very warm on a floor that was previously cold against her back, or feeling like she is light and floating when previously she noticed the heaviness of the weight of her body on the floor. Her experience of touch and feeling is changing, not through touching her muscles and observing their behavior but through bodymind immersion of a task.

### **Forming “one” body**

The benefit of thinking about touch departing from the binary of outside/inside is that the student moves from objectifying her body and its experience. Her “self” is not a psychological, internalized place in binary opposition to her outside material body. This act of attentiveness is a kind of “extra-daily” training. The daily acts of drinking tea or laying on her back breathing extend beyond the daily experience of those acts when the student is trained to focus her attention on the immediacy of the experience, the moment-by-moment ever-becoming action. The student is asked to remain present in the *here and now* of the experience. It is difficult for the learner to remain in the moment because there are distractions, mind wanders or the student “zones out” and becomes inattentive. She must work towards softening the hard line between perceiving her “self” apart from her environment (inside/outside), and instead expand her awareness. As Yoo noted, “the concept of awareness [is] enlarged” (2018, 71).

Students can then work towards “forming one body” (Leder, 1990, 156). Effortful action gives way to an overall feeling of effortlessness – being breathed as much as she is breathing. Leder characterized the process in this way:



Physiologically, respiration stands at the very threshold of the ecstatic and visceral, the voluntary and involuntary. While we can modulate our breathing at will, it is primarily an automatic function [ ... ]. Watching breath come in and go out for minutes or hours, one is saturated by the presence of a natural power that outruns the “I”. Breathing simply happens and happens and happens. There is no need for willful management; all is accomplished without effort on one’s part.

(1990, 171)

**The doer of the action and the action merge into one. Leder wrote, using his understanding of Wang Yang-ming:**

We form one body with all things not simply because we share the same ch’i [ki]; we also do so by way of an expansive awareness through which we incorporate the surrounding world [ ... ]. As subject, I do not inhabit a private theatre of consciousness but am ecstatically intertwined, one body with the world [ ... ] interconnectedness is innate.

(1990, 158–159)

**Forming one body emerges from an already present sense of oneness with the world, and is “evidenced by the human propensity for compassionate identification [ ... ]. Our consanguineous relation with all things finds expression in intuitive empathy” (Leder, 1990, 159). This kind of empathy and the way in which to deepen connection is different from McCallion’s understanding of empathy as an “inside” versus “outside” training (e.g. mimicry). McCallion wrote:**

The interesting thing about the process of empathy, as distinct from mimicry, is that although you are working initially from your perception of externals, of how the body moves, how the voice sounds and so on, the straight imitation of these externals is only a means to achieving

some interior knowledge of who the subject is; you have to feel at the end of the process that you know how to behave as the subject in all circumstances. This may not *be* so; but the character must *feel* that complete to you.

(1988, 188, original emphasis)

Mimicry is discouraged and is characterized as an external action, an outward appearance.

Empathy is characterized as an internalized understanding, or psychological motivation, that triggers emotional response. But how does the student bridge the distance between “working initially from your perception of externals” to “*feel* at the end of the process that you know how to behave as the subject?” “Forming one body,” as I have experienced it, can help students build that bridge in part because it moves the student away from “inside” and “outside” to become “ecstatically intertwined” with the world.

Placing Anglo-American prominent contemporary voice training on a continuum of training with meditative practices is one way in which different trainings from different world views might interact in the voice studio. Touch and feeling move from observing the body as object towards blurring the distinction between “outside” and “inside”. The feeling of “myself” breathing gives way to “being breathed” – outrunning the “I” of ego-identification. The feeling of empathy with others “forms one body,” leading to a feeling of connectedness in studio training that can become a template for “connectedness” with an audience during performance. “Awareness” magnifies the experience of experiencing and “is the initial method to build the route in space for moving ki” (Yoo, 2018, 71) not only within the student-actor, but between the actors and the audience during performance. Ki is a tactile, felt experience between actor and audience, and at the highest level forms one body between performer and spectator.

## (Re)visiting touch

When training actors' voices through adaptations of Alexander's "re-education," the body of the student is understood through a Western biomedical model and is touched on the outside in order to feel how the muscles contract and release. This physiology is understood as the same or similar to all learners because the material of the body is understood as the same or similar in all learners. The student learns to release muscular contraction through the information touch brings. The muscle is taught the feeling of "release" through the observing mind.

The use of touch in "re-education" is a corrective model of experience. The student is asked to notice an "incorrect" or inefficient muscular use, or "habit," and replace that behavior with more efficient muscular use or better "habit". Because the student is advised not to trust themselves to decide if muscular contraction is "natural" or "habitual," or in short, good or bad muscular usage, the power to interpret experience lays with the teacher as a guide. This power dynamic can curtail a student's agency and undermine her confidence.

The advantages of touch in this approach are many, not the least of which is Maisel's observation that verbal instruction is like sending a kiss by messenger,

[t]he experience he [Alexander] sought to impart was one which by its very nature eludes utterance [ ... ]. How do you convey a new feeling, a new pattern of physical sensation, to a man [sic] who has never known it?

(1969, xxvii)

For Alexander, touch was a technique that helped him solve this problem and for some of my students in studio the method of laying hands on their own body, or having others lay hands on them in this way is unproblematic. But for those students and teachers who want to use

touch “in a generative exercise which explores how the performer with agency can employ touch to release their own, very unique creativity, association and voice” (Behrens, 2019), adapting traditional methods embedded within popular voice training is necessary. What is offered here is a small contribution to an ever-growing body of work by voice trainers seeking to address diverse populations in their classrooms.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Maisel insists that “[t]he Alexandrians reject all forms of physical manipulation [ ... ] likewise reject corrective exercise as a path to good use of the self” (1969, xxvi).

<sup>2</sup> The “dharma talk” at Hwa Gye Sa sits within the tradition of Korean Seon (zen) which is an interpretation of Buddhism distinct from the meditation traditions of Japanese Zen or Chinese Ch’an. Part of a beginner’s meditation practice includes instruction through a question/answer format. For the beginner, this is intended to strengthen her “sensation of doubt” which “is the indispensable core of hua-t’ou meditation through hearing an exposition of the enlightened man’s understanding” (Ku San, *Nine Mountains*, 3, 1978, 3). Ku San wrote that if the dharma talk is not understood with this purpose in mind, “it will be easy to dismiss these discourses as paradoxical or incoherent nonsense, rather than seeing them for what they are in reality – advanced meditation directions” (Ibid.).