

VOCAL LIVES: CRISPNESS AND CURITY

Vowels

- Avoid flat vowels (by working to limit nasal tone) Relax the jaw -pan, back, rat, can, hand, etc.
- Selectively sigh on a vowel to achieve a lyrical or emotional effect. -"I love you" I mean it"
- Honor each sound. Do not swallow or omit sounds. -*tuh* for *to*, *fer* for *for*, *n* for *and*, *kin* for *can* etc.
- Do not substitute triphthongs for diphthongs -danger words: now, sound, vowel, town, extend
- Do not substitute "ah" for "aw" (all, law, chalk, taught); oh for oo (poor); i for e (get, pen, men, length)
- Use the liquid u (ew) in words like duke, tutor, tune, stupid, Tuesday, astute, attitude, etc.
- For words with optional pronunciations, choose the more musical (either becomes eye-ther)
- Avoid adding unneeded vowels -mischievous, athletic, burglar, business, lovely, ticklish, disastrous

Consonants

- Clean and sharpen consonants. They are like swift conversational weapon. Do not bludgeon but "dart."
- Spend time and attention on terminal consonants. We drop them classical characters use them to cap off their points.
- Pronounce the h in words beginning *wh* (say hw) -where, white, which, when, what, etc.
- Do not swallow syllables -as in jewel, cruel, duel
- Avoid the sound "chew" when connecting "can't you," "don't you," "did you," "what you," etc.
- Give multiple consonants more weight to keep them from getting lost -tempt, hold, belt, band, first, depths
- Do not drop middle consonants in words like recognize, realize, accidentally, different, interesting, etc.
- Do not substitute voiced for unvoiced consonants in words like little, better, accept, oaths, dirty
- Let the tip of the tongue, the lips, and the teeth do all the work -do not overwork the jaw

Sound

- Expand your vocal resonance by exploring the full range of resonating space you have. Go for variation.
- Explore pitch, from the top register to the bottom
- Avoid sounding phony or British (or phony British) -bean for been, agayn for again, ahsk for ask, etc.
- Identify regionalisms in your own speech that may distract. Cleanse it.
- Remember to include nonverbal vocalizations (gasp, sputter, grunt, sigh, moan, squeal, belch)
- Experiment with *singing* the line a little more. Dip and glide.
- Concentrate on rooting the sound to attain power without stridency. Don't screech or whine.
- Be consistent in pronunciation (esp. with names).
- Aim for the fullest, richest sound and greatest variety.

Phrasing

- Relish the progression of "lists" of words. Build with them. -"I hate, loathe, and despise you"
- Practice delivering each line with finality, as if it were a curtain line.
- In long speeches, speak longer on a single breath to avoid chopping up the thought
- Pick out the target words that need greater emphasis and give less emphasis to the connective words
- View punctuation as a traffic signal for clarity.

In General – Sight and Sound

Stillness and economy of movement alternate with bursts of physical boldness you can do absolutely nothing and still pull your listener deep into your consciousness. You are also able to reach out to the back of the theatre and embrace everyone there in energy and power. You speak clearly, crisply, and cleanly, giving maximum attention to consonants as *shapers* of sound. Listeners never have trouble understanding you, yet your speech does not seem affected. You are able to speak at greater lengths, with more complexity and authority.

PHYSICAL LIVES: DIGNITY AND SIZE

Sitting

- Furniture is intended for you to exhibit yourself. Perch on the edges. Keep your back straight.
- Descend and ascend by using the legs
- Keep legs uncrossed
- When seated, arrange yourself in an asymmetrical pose
- Do not wiggle or shift

Connecting

- Instead of leaning to make points, rise up to them, *lifting yourself into the action*
- Do not punctuate each crucial turn of phrase with a forward jerk of the head (chicken neck)
- Let your head float high above your body like a balloon; keep shoulders relaxed
- Decide to be taller than your scene partners
- You do not need to look at other actors whenever you speak or listen -your focus is intense but may be directed to ideas and images as well as the person The speaker needs to be upstage
- Once you connect with another person (in any way) sustain it fully instead of backing off quickly.

Gesturing

- The space is large so the full extension of your arms and legs in any direction is required
- Do not let arms swing listlessly or drop to the side. Maintain an energized and ready wrist; move arms frequently up and out so your meaning can emerge.
- When in repose, imagine an air space under the arms giving them a sense of relaxed readiness.
- Use body language to clarify the text
- Save symmetrical gestures for moments of ceremony
- Allow big gestures to unfold by slowly (in an energized way) returning to a neutral position.

Moving

- When crossing into another person's space, use clean strong invasions.
- When you walk, keep the torso relatively motionless and let the hips do the work. Do not sway left to right; rather, maintain a strong forward rotation.
- Imagine you're being drawn by two pulleys, one attached to the top of your head and the other to your chest.
- Think in terms of gliding rather than clomping. Lift the upper torso.
- Move backward in curves (to avoid tripping over your own clothes or wounding with your weapon)
- Relationship of head to body should be the head floating high above the rest of the body.
- Learn to do less and allow more, so that your movements are not labored but inevitable.

In General Space

Personal space is larger. You need more room just to stand, sit and move. Your concept of self radiates, sparkles, and flashes; when you make an entrance, you fill a void. When you invade another's space, you usually do so directly and suddenly, without hesitation or sneaking around. Space is there for you to take.