

THTR 342a: BASIC VOICE
Course #: 62933R
Units: 2
When: FA 2021 — MW — 12:30 – 1:50 pm
Where: PED 207
Instructor: Brent Blair, PhD
Office Hours: TH 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM, by appt
Office: MCC 121b
Contact Info: bblair@usc.edu; (323) 356-2552 (cell)
Estimated response time = 48 hours.

Course Description

This course is an examination of the individual voice centering on resonance, tone, flexibility, and support through dramatic selections for transmitting meaning and emotion of character.

It will also introduce the student to the mechanics of the voice and provide the tools for a fully embodied vocal warmup.

Course Philosophy

This course follows a progression of exercises developed by Kristin Linklater as outlined in *Freeing the Natural Voice*, a required text for the course, designed to help students develop an understanding of their individual voice and discover ways to release it from habits that can hinder spontaneity. In order to explore the connection between voice and self, the class will be encouraged to arrive at a common vocabulary for the workings of the expressive voice. Once the class agrees on a model for how the voice works, they can set to work exploring how it does not work. During the first semester students will explore the contribution of the entire body towards the free release of the voice, and observe personal barriers to this release. Course work will include student-led warm-ups, reading assignments, individual work and a group autobiographical performance collage at the end of the semester.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this semester, students will:

- gain access to a more open and less effortful physical body to support vocal production
- find a subtler and more responsive relationship to free breath and imaginative / emotional thought
- explore fuller and purer vibration in a more expressive and less effortful way
- increase awareness of how resonating chambers support range of thought and emotions
- expand breath capacity to gain access to a more powerful, less effortful voice
- develop a playful in order to acquire a fuller and freer 3-4 octave speaking range
- increase expressive power of articulation in spoken text with more vulnerability and less effort
- understand the reasons behind, and be able to clearly execute, all voice exercises learned in class
- plan and implement a full vocal warm-up

Blackboard

All content, announcements, and assignments are exchanged via this site. Please observe and adhere to submission deadlines and protocols for all written assignments.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Freeing the Natural Voice, by Kristin Linklater (2006 edition, the “yellow book”), Drama Publishers.

Occasional articles, poems, etc. available for free download through Blackboard.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Weekly Reading reflections

Each week students will read from the book, Freeing the Natural Voice (FNV). They are expected to write a brief paragraph-long reflection directly addressing the text from their personal experience. The purpose is to inquire into the work, not just to summarize what you have read.

REFLECTION PAPERS MUST BE IN THE FOLLOWING FORMAT:

1. MS Word attached with this title:
2digitweek#.surname.assignment.docx – so: **“01.blair.FNV1-10.docx”**
2. Header clearly identifies the assignment: i.e. **“FNV pp. 1-10”**
3. Body of response includes **DIRECT QUOTE** from the reading to which reader is responding
4. Submit via **Blackboard ONLY** (This is a **PAPERLESS CLASS**. No hard copies, please.)

Weekly Experiential Reflections

1. Reflection papers are assigned each week and designed to respond to a particular exercise done during class. They are typically due the Tuesday after the Thursday class in which the exercise was experienced.
2. Reflection papers must be submitted in MS Word attached with this title:
2digitweek#.surname.title.docx – so for me: **01.blair.myvoice.docx**

FINAL RIVER STORIES EXPERIENCE:

DUE on the day of the final exam

The final class will be a shared online performance of content devised during the last part of the semester, based on autobiographical information designed to present the student’s authentic experience through primarily the means of vocal/emotional communication in short formats for the rest of the class. Three formats expected include “six words”, “brief poem”, and “brief song”. More to be revealed in class on this exercise, but for now students should know that this performative experience is intended to evaluate their understanding of the vocal instrument as a conduit for authentic, spontaneous, human experience. This invites an emotional courage and clear expression through the vocal instrument. Lastly, it is a given that the texts used for the performance will be known thoroughly and not read from in scripts or hand-written notes on the day of the sharing. Evaluation is based on the threefold criteria of vocal ease, clarity and freedom; emotional accessibility; and textual preparedness with rigorous critical understanding of the story.

Grading Breakdown

Attendance and Participation	10%	A = 94 – 100
Weekly reading reflections (2-3 paragraphs)	15%	A- = 90 - 93
Weekly class activity 1-2 page reflections	20%	B+ = 87 – 89
Voice warm-up, self-evaluation	10%	B = 84 – 86
Mid-point simple text work	10%	B- = 80 - 83
Midterm exam	15%	C+ = 77 – 79
Final River Story Performances	20%	C = 74 – 76
Total:	100%	C- = 70 – 73
		D = 60 – 69
		F < 59

Assignment Due Dates & Grading Timeline

No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and teacher. Assignments are due on date listed in the syllabus. Late assignments up to one week will be accepted at 50% of the credit, and will not be accepted after that except in cases where the instructor has been notified and agreed in advance. Every effort will be made to return weekly assignments to the student within two weeks, midterm within three weeks.

Promptness and presence in Class:

The nature of this work is such that even if we are meeting at physical distance and with masks, any class missed by one is a loss for all, as it is collaboration that provides the canvas for most of the learning in this course. Therefore, the only excused absences are extreme illness (accompanied by physician's note), bereavement leave, **or suspicion of COVID-19 (See "Health and Participation in Class" for details)**. Tardy attendance if less than 15 minutes will result in half point deduction from the attendance grade for the day. A tardy arrival of more than 15 minutes will result in no points for attendance recorded for the day.

Attire:

Students should wear loose, comfortable clothes -- shorts or sweats, and loose t-shirts or tank tops, etc. Be prepared to work barefoot, in stocking feet or with ballet slippers or the like. You may want to have a towel or blanket ready for floor work, and a small container of water.

Do not show up in: tight jeans, belted trousers, skirts (unless over leotards), dresses, good nylons (unless you don't mind working barefoot in them), or any other hindering garments. We will do a lot of moving and getting on the floor, so be prepared. Coming unprepared to class may result in being counted absent.

Health and Participation in Class:

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment:

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown (For details, see the page on Blackboard)

1	Week One	Introductions & background of voice work	Aug 23 & 25
	<i>Experiential</i>	Class exercises to better know ourselves, know our voices; how voice works, doesn't work	
	<i>Written</i>	"My voice" reflection journal (1-2 pages) Title your submission: 01.surname.myvoice.docx	Due Aug 30
	<i>Read (and submit one paragraph personal connection to this passage)</i>	FNV pp. 1-28 Introduction, How voice works / doesn't work Title your submission: 01.surname.fnv1-28.docx	Due Aug 30
2	Week Two	Physical Awareness	Aug 30 & Sep 1
	<i>Experiential</i>	Class exercises to assist with alignment of spine, relaxation of muscles	
	<i>Written</i>	"My stance in the world" reflection journal (1-2 pages) Title your submission: 02.surname.mystance.docx	Due Sep 6
	<i>Read (and submit one paragraph personal connection to this passage)</i>	FNV pp. 29-42 Workday One: Physical Awareness Title your submission: 02.surname.fnv29-42.docx	Due Sep 1
3	Week Three	Breath Awareness	(No class Mon Sep 6 – Labor Day) & Sep 8
	<i>Experiential</i>	Class exercises to explore the natural and habitual rhythms of breath, release, depth	
	<i>Written</i>	"My breath dance" reflection journal (1 – 2 pages) Title your submission: 03.surname.mybreathdance.docx	Due Sep 13
	<i>Read (and submit one paragraph personal connection to this passage)</i>	FNV pp. 43-64 Workday Two: Breathing Awareness Title your submission: 03.surname.fnv43-64.docx	Due Sep 8
4	Week Four	Breath (Cont'd) & Vibration Awareness	Sep 13 (No class Wed Sep 15)*
	<i>Experiential</i>	Class exercises to explore clarity, resonance, and awareness of vibrations in body.	
	<i>Written</i>	"Voice and will" reflection journal (1 – 2 pages) Title your submission: 04.surname.voiceandwill.docx	Due Sep 20
	<i>Read (and submit one paragraph personal connection to this passage)</i>	FNV pp. 65-86 Workday Three: The touch of sound Title your submission: 04.surname.fnv65-86.docx	Due Sep 15

* EDI @SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training Wednesday, September 15, 2021

As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, some workshops will be offered to faculty and staff and to students. Competencies that will be included: Anti-Racism (Faculty/Staff) and Equity Mindedness (Faculty/Staff), and then Theater Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent (Students, Faculty/Staff). More details will follow. NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort.

5

Week Five Vibrations into Basic Text**Sep 20 & 22***Experiential*

Class work explore connecting breath, vibration, and vulnerability to spoken text.

Choose and prepare a short text piece from the list of texts on Blackboard, for work in class: GROUP A.

Prepared for work on Sep 20

Evaluation I on Wed Sep 16

Self-led warm-ups, covering material experienced so far in class, 1-2 pg reflection

Due Sep 27

Title your submission: **05.surname.warmup1.docx**

6

Week Six Embodying and Imagining the Text**Sep 27 & 29***Experiential (NO WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS THIS WEEK)*

Class work explore connecting breath, vibration, and vulnerability to spoken text.

Choose and prepare a short text piece from the list of texts on Blackboard, for work in class: GROUP B.

"If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people." (Virginia Woolf)

"A good book reads you." (W.H. Auden)

"Stop speaking the text; let the text speak you." (K. Linklater)

7

Week Seven The Channel: Jaw**Oct 4 & 6***Experiential*

Class exercises exploring jaw tension and techniques to release this.

Written

"Grin and bear it: jaw challenges" reflection journal (1-2 pages)

Due Oct 11

Title your submission: **06.surname.jaw.docx**

Read

FNV pp. 129 – 138 Workday Five: Freeing the Channel: Jaw ...

Due Oct 6

Title your submission: **06.surname.fnv129-138.docx**

8

Week Eight The Channel: Tongue**Oct 11 & 13***Experiential*

Class exercises exploring tongue tension and stretches to release, free mouth cavity

Written

"Lump in my throat: tongue challenges" reflection journal (1-2 pg)

Due Oct 18

Title your submission: **07.surname.tongue.docx**

Read

FNV pp. 139 – 160 Workday Six: Freeing the Channel: Tongue ...

Due Oct 13

Title your submission: **07.surname.fnv139-160.docx**

Midterm Exam (Available after 10/06/21)**Due Wed, 10/20/21**

Title your submission: **07.surname.midterm.docx**

9	Week Nine The Channel: Soft Palate	Oct 18 & 20
	<i>Experiential</i> Class exercises to explore limitations in the back of the throat; stretches, openness	
	<i>Written</i> “When I’m open...” reflection journal (1-2 pages) <i>Due Oct 25</i> <i>Title your submission: 07.surname.softpalate.docx</i>	
	<i>Read</i> FNV pp. 161-172 Workday Seven: Freeing the Channel: The Soft Palate <i>Due Oct 20</i> <i>Title your submission: 07.surname.fnv161-172.docx</i>	
10	Week Ten Lower Resonators: Chest, Mouth, Teeth	Oct 25 & 27
	<i>Experiential</i> Class exercises to explore pitch and resonance in areas of chest, mouth & teeth	
	<i>Written</i> “Masks that reveal and conceal” <i>Due Nov 1</i> <i>Title your submission: 10.surname.channelresonators.docx</i>	
	<i>Read</i> FNV pp. 187 – 198 Workday Ten: Developing and Strengthening... <i>Due Oct 27</i> <i>Title your submission: 10.surname.fnv187-198.docx</i>	
11	Week Eleven Blending Lower Resonators: Triads, wings	Nov 1 & 3
	<i>Experiential</i> Class exercises to explore the blend of lower resonators towards free and embodied expression	
	<i>Written</i> “My voice rainbow” <i>Due Nov 8</i> <i>Title your submission: 11.surname.rainbowvoice.docx</i>	
	<i>Read</i> FNV pp. 199 – 212 Workday Eleven: Releasing the voice from the body <i>Due Nov 3</i> Review “Intermission Workout”, do on your own or with a friend <i>Title your submission: 11.surname.fnv199-212.docx</i>	
12	Week Twelve Breath Power	Nov 8 & 10
	<i>Experiential</i> Class exercises to explore power of breath in intercostals, pelvic floor, etc.	
	<i>Written</i> “The power of my voice” <i>Due Nov 15</i> <i>Title your submission: 12.surname.powerofmyvoice.docx</i>	
	<i>Read</i> FNV pp. 213 – 244 Workdays Twelve & Thirteen: Breathing Power <i>Due Nov 10</i> <i>Title your submission: 12.surname.fnv213-244.docx</i>	

13

Week Thirteen Upper Resonators, Full Range**Nov 15 & 17***Experiential*

Class exercises to explore upper range in sinus, nasal and skull resonators

Written

"The range of my experience"

*Due Nov 22**Title your submission: 13.surname.rangeofmyexperience.docx**Read*

FNV pp. 263 – 293 Workdays Fifteen – Eighteen: Nasal, Range, Skull...

*Due Nov 17**Title your submission: 13.surname.fnv263-293.docx*

14

Week Fourteen Articulation**Nov 22 (No class Nov 24 – Thanksgiving)***Experiential*

Class exercises to explore jointed-ness in language and ease of articulation

Written

"My articulate voice"

*Due Nov 29**Title your submission: 14.surname.myarticulatevoice.docx**Read*

FNV pp. 295 – 323 Workdays Nineteen, etc.: Articulating the voice...

*Due Nov 22**Title your submission: 13.surname.fnv295-323.docx*

15

Week Fifteen River Stories**Nov 29 & Dec 1***Experiential*

Class exercises to explore personalization of voice and connection to text.

Written

River story journals for in class work only

FINAL EXAM**Monday, Dec 13, 11 am – 1 pm, PED 205***Experiential*

River Stories Group Performance – 3 genres each: 6 words, autobiographical poem ("My voice"), and song.

FINAL EXAM, MONDAY, DEC 13, 11 am – 1 pm, PED 205

SDA Productions, ISP's, and Extracurricular Activities

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

Statements on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

As voice teachers at USC's School of Dramatic Arts, we ardently stand for and strive to align ourselves with principles of anti-racism, anti-oppression, inclusivity, and equity in the classroom and on our stages. We stand in support of Black Lives Matter and the voices of BIPOC artists. We seek to educate not as privileged experts, but as facilitators whose hearts and minds are concerned with our students' health and well-being both as individuals and collectively. We encourage and celebrate students who speak out as advocates for themselves and others. We recognize systemic racism as part of our culture and so we seek to uplift our students to be the voices of change and the bearers of the torch for a new generation, a generation that does not seek to deny its past, nor to downplay the serious challenges of the present, but to face those challenges with resilience and bravery.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

<p><i>Counseling and Mental Health</i> (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling</p> <p>Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.</p>	<p><i>The Office of Student Accessibility Services</i> (213) 740-0776 https://osas.usc.edu</p> <p>Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.</p>
<p><i>National Suicide Prevention Lifeline</i> 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org</p> <p>Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.</p>	<p><i>USC Campus Support and Intervention</i> (213) 821-4710 campussupport.usc.edu</p> <p>Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.</p>
<p><i>Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) -</i> (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault</p> <p>Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.</p>	<p><i>Diversity at USC</i> (213) 740-2101 diversity.usc.edu</p> <p>Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.</p>
<p><i>Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)</i> (213) 740-5086 Title IX – (213) 821-8298 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu</p> <p>Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.</p>	<p><i>USC Emergency</i> UPC: (213) 740-4321 HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu</p> <p>Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.</p>
<p><i>Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment</i> (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298 usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report</p> <p>Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.</p>	<p><i>USC Department of Public Safety</i> UPC: (213) 740-6000 HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu</p> <p>Non-emergency assistance or information.</p>

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university’s site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Course evaluation:

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students’ experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.