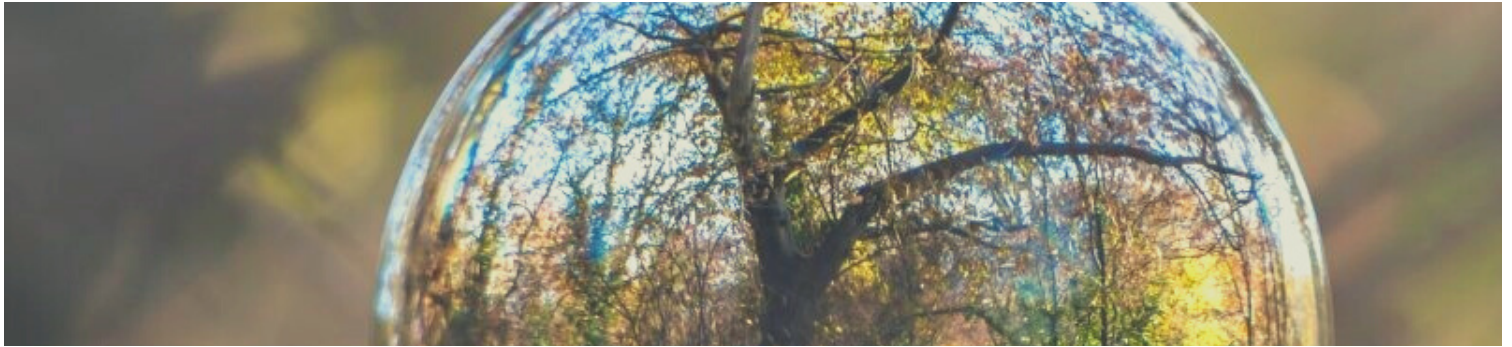


Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework



From Chaos to Form

Fitzmaurice Institute Research Studies Team: Ellen Foyn Bruun, Adriano Cabral, Amy Chaffee, Kris Danford, Rachel Hirshorn-Johnston, Lee Su-Feh, Roger Smart, Lynn Watson

In the summer of 2020, the Fitzmaurice Institute held an online summit titled "[Breathing is Meaning](#)" that featured explorations of Fitzmaurice Voicework (FV) from a wide variety of perspectives, touching on artistic creation, social justice, research, performance, imagination, pedagogy, and practice. To commemorate the event, teachers of FV were invited to write personal reflections on summit presentations. By this call, the Research team wanted to inspire FV teachers not only to share their work, but also to value shared reflections and documentation. Several of the pieces appeared in the November 2020 Fitzmaurice Institute newsletter and are reprinted here.

The Research team is pleased to present this collection of texts that stem from each writer's personal experience during the online summit.

As a team, we have seen in our processes of moving from 'chaos to form,' parallels to what we know from our shared practice of FV through Destructuring and Restructuring. As Fitzmaurice practitioners, we draw on curiosity about breath and moment-to-moment observations of breath, leading to a palpable physical connection with a sense of spontaneity – of chaos – that is self-guided. This chaos effectively rattles open doors to the creation of form in a range of ventures involving work, play, and daily life. From the perspective of FV, investigation of form is referred to as Restructuring. As we see it, this is how this collection of 'summit stories' may be understood. The authors and subjects offer a broad view of the range of forms that emerge from generative chaos that is explored through Fitzmaurice Voicework.

Key aspects of the Research team mission are to support and share reflective practices and new knowledge related to FV. The notion of research is broad for us. Alongside empirical research, we cherish the subjective aspects of voice work and arts practices.

– Lynn Watson, Research Studies Director & Ellen Foyn Bruun, Associate FV Teacher, December 17, 2021

Breathing, Feeling, Moving/Centering Practice led by Lee Su-Feh and Perry Piercy

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Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework



Daydrie Hague

Invitations and Inspirations: FV Summit Reflections on the Breathing, Feeling, Centering and Moving Practice Sessions

by Daydrie Hague

On each day of the Fitzmaurice Voicework Summit, participants were offered the opportunity to engage in two 15-minute centering sessions: Breathing, Feeling, Moving Practice led by Lee Su-Feh, and Breathing, Feeling, Centering Practice led by Perry Piercy. The personal reflections submitted here are individual in style, but capture a sense of shared experience through a connection to breath, sensation, play, and transformation.

In contemplating Perry Piercy's practice, Julia Moody cites a heightened awareness of connection to others, sorely missed in this time of COVID,

through a deeper connection to breath. Allison Hetzel, Jeremy Sortore, and Michelle Lopez-Rios all speak of Lee Su-Feh's practice as an invitation to engage, moment by moment, in the dance of breath, presence, and possibility. Each writer acknowledges the gift of these practices in a particularly challenging time.

Breathing, Feeling, Moving Practice - Day One Audio-led session by Lee Su-Feh

by Jeremy Sortore

On day one of the Fitzmaurice Voicework Summit, Lee Su-Feh created an auditory gap in my day for the emergence of movement, breath, sensation, and play. She used the language of invitation and curiosity to lead my eyes away from the two-dimensional world of my computer screen into the three-dimensional space I inhabit with my body, and from that physical space into a sensate inner space of seeing/feeling and being.

Su-Feh spoke of "openings"—pleasure, ease, comfort, curiosity, desire—and obstacles—pain, resistance, tightness, blockage,



Jeremy Sortore

numbness, boredom, frustration. She invited me to notice the way one opening can lead to the next, like an itch leading to an expanding sequence of pleasurable scratches, and with a beautiful cactus metaphor she noted the way that softening around an obstacle can make room for new openings as well.

This exploration included movement in space, movement of the breath, and above all movement of my awareness. With each shape change, I experienced breath shifts and a "new landscape" for pleasures and obstacles. Su-Feh's invitation was to meet her voice with my own, move into pleasures and yield around obstacles, and discover a "territory" for play...to "touch objects, drink water, eat food" and continue in dance and voice for as long as I desired throughout my day.

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

Day 2: 15-minute audio-led Breathing, Feeling, Moving Practice with Lee Su-Feh

by [Michelle Lopez-Rios](#)

In this 15-minute recorded practice, Su-Feh led participants through a series of opportunities to practice awareness and curiosity within the body and within the space. The constant invitation to tune in to what the individual might need at any moment and the gentle reminder to listen to the impulses from within were nicely balanced. The journey started with sensation in the body, carried through to the surrounding space, and closed with the individual's state in the moment.

The practice began by rubbing the hands together to create energy and heat. This energy was then transferred to the face by holding the eyes. It was a welcome feeling in a time of so much computer strain and amidst an online conference. Then the focus turned throughout the entire body. As the loose feeling (or wobbly as Su-Feh called it) swept through the body, she extended the invitation to "Sniff the floor with your feet." This was a welcome opportunity to experience the relationship between the ground and the body in a fresh and playful way.



Michelle Lopez-Rios

Su-Feh then encouraged the listener to see far and see near. This brought focus into the specific place at the specific moment. There was then an invitation to send the curiosity throughout the body, investigating things within the self and saying hello to things in the room. Once again creating an awareness of self and self in a particular place. There was a suggestion to, "allow something to happen, because it is already happening." This was a lovely invitation to connect to authentic impulse. The continuous invitation of curiosity and ability to listen within flowed through.

The awareness of the individual's state in the moment of that particular day in that particular place played throughout the entire experience. There is the breath that is always there, though sometimes not even noticed. And the floor that is always there, but sometimes not noticed. The gentle reminders of curiosity and play were

opportunities to feel the breath drop into the body and feel the connection to the ground. There was freedom to move and notice what is happening in the body, what the body wants, what the body needs, and what the body will naturally do on impulse.

The practice was playful and mindful. The gentle guidance offered so many possibilities and no restrictions. The gentle awakening from within ended (well, more like paused) with an awareness of the individual's state as they transitioned to the next activity in their day. The practice of gratitude connected each moment as tiny discoveries unfolded. It was a journey of discovery within the body and in a particular place. It is with gratitude that I reflect on this generous offering.

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

Day Three: Breathing, Feeling, Moving Practice with Lee Su-Feh (15- minute audio-led session)

by Allison Hetzel



Allison Hetzel

I had the pleasure of experiencing the Breathing, Feeling, Moving Practice with Lee Su-Feh. This was a 15-minute audio-led session on Day Three of the Fitzmaurice Voicework® Summit and was just what I needed. Also, taking a break from screen time has been something I have been seeking since our world has shifted to ZOOMing our days away. At the beginning of the offering from Lee Su-Feh, immediately, I was drawn into a new realm; her voice and energy created the gateway for my short and much-needed journey.

Immediately as we began, I felt a connection to powerful images shared in this guided practice. I felt a strong sense of my breathing with a full rib-swing sensation, followed by walking in a grounded manner. The presence of Lee Su-Feh was profound and her guidance was freeing as she offered choices and allowed participants to create freely during exploration, enabling me to follow what I wanted to experience. When I did find a physical obstacle,

her sense of spontaneity helped me find the energy to conquer the fatigue I was feeling this particular morning. Soon my lack of energy was filled with a feeling of lightness as I found freedom in the explorative dance I was creating in my living room, fueled by the buzzing vibrations of the lawn-mower outdoors circling my house. It was my soundscape, and it was a nuisance as the audio session began, but it soon became music creating a rhythmic structure for my breath, body, and mind to follow.

This dance was a new exploration of seeing and feeling my breath and body. I try to stay active walking, working in the yard, swimming, and hiking when possible. Unfortunately, my activity had been lacking as a result of tendonitis in my feet; stiffness and achy feet led to tight joints throughout the body. My knees, hips, shoulders, and neck all needed tension released. Lee Su-Feh invited me to see and feel my feet. I realized that I needed to breathe into these areas of tightness and ask the stress to

leave my own body. Coupled with the gentle movement, I soon felt a great sense of opening within my body. My muscles and joints were humming, my breath was dropped in, lungs filling and ribs still swinging, and I had quite literally found a way to breathe through my pain, fatigue, and fear—quite an obstacle to overcome.

This experience was a lovely surprise, a release of held, painful tension. Movement, stretching, and walking has always been one of my favorite ways to destructure, and I have not been taking the time to do this. Instead, I had been rushing around as a result of stress and the COVID blues. The Fitzmaurice Voicework Summit gave me a reason to pause and permission to focus on myself during a time when the world around me was not making sense. I enjoyed each session led by Lee Su-Feh, as there is a sense of kindness and comfort in being guided through each of her audio offerings. I felt this final segment was just for my enrichment. However, this segment was shared with others across the globe taking part in the Summit—my personal experience was a communal virtual gathering created by the Fitzmaurice Institute.

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

A reflection on
Perry Piercy's
15 minute session
at the beginning of
Day One

by [Julia Moody](#).



[Julia Moody](#).

Perry Piercy's gently offered acknowledgement of country and links with ancestral roots set the tone for a subtle, centring, satisfying 15 minute connection amongst we people dotted around the world. She guided us through our bodies into a linking with breath and energy that was invaluable. I am sure I wasn't alone in realising what I had been missing through this Covid time: a sense of connection with others, with concepts bigger than my immediate environs and ultimately, connection with my breath.

Perry Piercy used image and sensation and the gentle rhythm of

her delivery to give us all a flow through the earth to each other. The choice of the tree metaphor was exquisite as was her skillful guidance. An accomplished teacher, Perry spun time, so much so that the 15 minutes went into a no time zone of pulse and blood and breath.

It was a truly wonderful gift of a session.



Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

Constructing the Holistic Actor

Michael Morgan

Director of Social Justice,
Professor, UC Santa Barbara,
MS in Oriental Medicine –
Acupuncturist

Hosted by Micha Espinosa

by [Karen Kopryanski](#)

Michael Morgan describes his work as Director of Social Justice for the Fitzmaurice Institute as “collecting and cultivating projects that have to do with marginalized groups of people and issues relevant to justice...leveraging our skills as artists and voice teachers to help people who don’t always have the privilege of entering institutions of power.” More than ever in American history, his role with the Institute is vital, and the work he does with incarcerated youth has tremendous power to bring about positive change.

During this session of the Fitzmaurice Summit, we were invited to get to know Morgan and his work through conversations about projects with incarcerated and homeless youth, about connections to Fitzmaurice Voicework (FV) through the merging of eastern and western philosophies, and current writing projects that explore the role FV can play in trauma-informed narratives.



[Karen Kopryanski](#)

Espinosa began by asking Morgan what drew him to FV. He spoke about his own personal evolution and interest in the crossroads between east and west. What FV does, he said, is “open space where intersections and dialogues can happen....where there is a place for inquiry and not just for closure,” and this philosophy is evident in multiple facets of his work. He spoke of the importance of working with youth, in particular, since the transition from child to adult is “ripe with possibility” and potential.

Morgan’s projects with marginalized youth include [The Odyssey Project](#) and [The Trojan Women](#), where he works with incarcerated male and female youth, respectively, and [Going Home](#), which focuses on homeless youth. [The Odyssey Project](#) sprang from an impulse to address how youth of color are disproportionately policed, brutalized and incarcerated. “Because I’m not a therapist,” Morgan said, “I wanted to pull in my own resources, which are in the realm of voice. Having a voice means having a choice.”

He formulated these experiences as leadership projects, inviting a sense of agency through artistic self-expression. Using the template of Homer’s [Odyssey](#), youths partner with students from UC Santa Barbara and recreate the story from their own perspectives, “rewriting their lives through a heroic lens instead of a criminalized one, seeing their lives as heroic, and all of their mistakes....as part of their power, their learning, their becoming.” As the youth examine Odysseus’ character flaws, they begin to realize that if he had choices, so do they. The project draws on the interests and strengths of the participants, whether that be music, writing, acting or dance, and often incorporates elements of martial arts and mask making.

During the creative process, Morgan remains alert to opportunities for somatic practice, but approaches the work from the perspective of listening. When youth are open to trying out floor exercises or breathwork, the experience springs from a willingness to discover their own bodies as a new source of brilliant energy.

At this point in the session, Morgan shared a short, powerful documentary on the project, directed by Mark Manning ([The Road to Fallujah](#), [The Cost of Silence](#)), that he hopes will enable the work to move beyond the prison community

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

by [Karen Kopryanski](#)—continued

and into places where policy change can begin to happen on a much larger scale. The state of California, Morgan notes, spends more each year to incarcerate youth than they do to send them to college. (On a personal note, if Morgan was open to training others to apply his process to their own communities, I would be the first person in line.)

When asked what he thought FV could offer the public in the face of the pandemic and the chronic problems of racism and police violence, Morgan directed our attention to FV's therapeutic roots, which channel our attention toward presence. The current confrontation between long-established forces and the desire to heal trauma mirror the micro-encounters happening in our own bodies. Shiatsu, one of the strands of FV, uses touch at points along the meridians, which Morgan describes as "currents of energy which ignite us and flow." Much to my delight, he then offered to teach us shiatsu techniques to destructure the face, and I have returned to these exercises often since.

Destructuring the Face

(Warm up the hands periodically. If they get too hot, shake them out to cool off.)

1. Warm up the hands, and feel the warmth of the palms on the face.
2. Circle a knuckle into the valley of the temple, with eyes closed if you like. You may go a little deeper into the temple, gently and slowly. Let a little sound arise from the temple. When you are ready to release, lighten up slowly.
3. Press thumbs to the inner corners of the eyes, where the eyelids come together at the nose; take note not to press into the eye itself, just at the corner point.
4. Take a journey with your fingers around the eye orbit with pressure away from the eye (not into the eyeball itself). Release sound as you release energy. On the lower orbit, use the index finger to press down. Find the natural little divot on the bone directly below the pupil. Add sound as you press gently.
5. Warm up your hands and cup your eyes, sending energy there. Feel a connection and imagine breath and energy arising from the solar plexus into the cups of your eyes. Lift hands just a tiny bit away from the face to experience the warmth of the energetic connection.
6. Relax the arms and shoulders for a moment.
7. Use the backs of the thumbs to press into the crease on either

side of the nose and rub vigorously up and down. Then press thumbs into the top of the nasal-labial groove.

8. Close the lips and make large circles with the mouth, one way, then in reverse. Use fingers of one hand and tap around the mouth – in one direction and then reverse. Yang energy is in the center of the upper lip. Yin energy is below the lower lip in the dent of the chin. Allow sound to arise.

9. Flick your ears forward rapidly with your fingertips.

10. Cup palms over your ears, and use your fingertips to tap on the base of the skull (which Morgan termed "pounding the celestial drum"). Hum to enjoy the resonance of the sound, then open the mouth into sound. Lift hands slightly away from the ears and feel the breath and energy radiate around your head.

Morgan is the author of [Constructing the Holistic Actor: Fitzmaurice Voicework](#), and has an article currently in peer-review for the Voice and Speech Review, entitled "Navigating a Trauma-informed narrative in FV and Finding your Voice in the Theatre."

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

“Friendship isn’t a big thing, it’s a million little things.” Session by Jeff Morrison

by [Amy Chaffee](#)



[Amy Chaffee](#)

It was deeply pleasurable to watch my friends Micha Espinosa and Jeff Morrison have an hour-long chat. They have a deep friendship dating back more than 20 years to when they were beginning work as Fitzmaurice Teachers. And both have been Lead Teachers chosen by Catherine Fitzmaurice to teach many subsequent certification groups. The breadth of their conversation in the Fitzmaurice Institute Summit of 2020 was wide and their familiarity together allowed them to dive deep. Seeing their joy in discussing their lives' work, both seemed invigorated and exuberantly passionate on the topic. Their connection to the material engaged me, and hearing their stories that I already knew but re-discovered anew eased me into a soft sigh of satisfaction.

The first half hour of discussion covers Jeff’s entry into the work and both Micha’s and Jeff’s mutual need to find this work in their early careers as actors.

They swiftly break down the difference between “Restructuring” and the more generic term, “Breath Support.” An important delineation

Jeff makes is that while there are MANY forms of structured breathing – Yoga, running, sports, etc., this particular form of structuring breath that we do in Fitzmaurice is the best suited for expression. This ties beautifully with his end description of our global outreach efforts, “We teach liberation of breath and voice, so that the practitioner can liberate the person.”

I deeply appreciated when Jeff referenced Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s seminal text “Flow,” and most of his description of the body functions of breath connected to the mind and imagination together follow Csikszentmihalyi’s ideas. He brings this back to a full circle at the end of the discussion with his favorite quote, which is from Chap. 11 of the [Tao Te Ching](#) (trans. Steven Mitchell): “We join spokes together in a wheel but it is the center hole that makes the wagon move; we shape clay into a pot but it is the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want; we hammer wood for a house but it’s the inner

space that makes it livable. We work with being, but non-being is what we use.”

Jeff goes on: “We can’t just work with the feely feels, but we can’t just work with the technical things trying to get it all right! The point is not to get it right but the point is to express something. Connection is happening, contact is happening, expression is happening.”

Perhaps my two favorite moments of the whole hour came at the very, very beginning when Micha says, “Hi... My name is Micha Espinosa.” And in that ellipsis... Jeff jumped in with a very familiar, “Hi!” as though he assumed she was speaking with him conversationally, but Micha goes on to a formal introduction. It was awkward and unusual and gave me a sweet surprise breath – maybe because I know them both so well. And yet, it felt like a perfect intro to the work – the structure of Micha and the playful freedom of Jeff’s informality. To be honest, I have watched that top moment ten times, and each time it strikes a smile and a sweet exhale.

My other favorite moment came in the last ten minutes of the hour when Micha puts Jeff on the spot to describe what “Breathing” means in the year 2020. He is clearly caught off-guard and Micha even begins to backpedal. However, Jeff ends up speaking feelingly and with eloquence of how “I can’t breathe” affects us all. I honestly got teary listening to him.

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

by Amy Chaffee—continued

Although Jeff speaks from deep knowledge about the physical side of restructuring, complete with a powerpoint demonstration and great visuals, he is at his most powerful when he speaks at the end of their discussion about systemic racism and breathing: that some people feel they have the right to take away people's breath and voice. Not just metaphorically but physically, by cutting off their breath and killing them. His statement on this is simply unsurpassed. I will not record it here because he should be watched and listened to directly, not received secondhand.

He induced me to stop my breath – to look at my own responsibility for creating this connection into the emotional and metaphysical side of breathing with my own students and clients.

As Jeff points out, we have phrases in our society like, “Oh, that took the wind out of me,” or “Oh, you take my breath away.” These are not because someone physically did something to you, but you had an emotional experience.

Jeff says that breathing is “the first thing you do when you come into this world, and the last thing you do when you go out.”

He also shares something he speaks to his students about: “Everything you experience emotionally in your life from good to bad, large to small, is first

experienced through breath. When you get angry it changes your breath, when you get sad, it changes your breath. Between COVID, protesters being tear-gassed and the murder of George Floyd, it's an intense time for breath.” I found this deeply moving and it made a lot of sense for my breath, as a COVID survivor and political activist.

To paraphrase Jeff, our scope of practice is circumscribed. We cannot guarantee any outcomes in terms of people's improved respiratory health when we do Fitzmaurice Voicework; we are not respiratory therapists. But the way that we work with breath has an effect on the experience of yourself, the connection to your own body, and an effect on the awareness of your own body. It can simply have an effect on your calmness. The excitation of the fight/flight/freeze experience through destructuring can sometimes lead to a profound rest/digest experience. And these are things that are very difficult to articulate but Jeff does a lovely job. “The sense a person gets of landing in and experiencing their own body. The sense of well-being in this moment gets turned way, way up. Our sense that the world is going to hell, but right now in this moment, in my own body, for these three breaths, for these five breaths, for these five minutes or these ten minutes, it's not even that

'I feel okay,' it's that 'I feel myself.'”

I know this sense deeply, as I came to Fitzmaurice Voicework mid-career at the age of 42. I know what he means when Jeff describes that we feel present with ourselves in this work, which is restorative and grounding. While this is most dramatically felt in the destructuring, the restructuring work can also lead to this. The experience is that “Okay, these crazy things are happening to me but, okay, I'm finding my spine, I'm feeling my breath and I'm visualizing what's going on inside of my body. I'm making a choice to engage with my self, my thoughts and my feelings in this way.”

It was interesting that Jeff does not discuss all the elements of Restructuring (he never mentions “focus line” at all, nor the element of listening). But, he does acknowledge that the energetic work and the physical work must be taught separately, but are inextricable from each other in the experience. They trade off and co-exist simultaneously, which leads Micha to sum up in one phrase, “Breathing is Meaning.”

I would add that in addition to friendship, Breathing is not one thing, it is a million things. Each one, a new moment in time to experience and be present in, for good or ill.

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

Sara Matchett

by [Brienne Taylor](#)

I sidled up to my desk, fresh brewed coffee accompanying, plugged my headphones in, and tuned out the noises of daily life. I was ready to connect and consume the wisdom of summit day three. Click 'play.'

Upon introductions, the very first thing Dr. Sara Matchett (1) does is take a moment to invite Benjamin Mathes (host), myself, and all global participants into her life, her home, and her [relationships](#). This simple act of permission to enter fully into Matchett's space resonated to my very core. I had been working diligently, as so many others have, for nearly half a year to simultaneously maintain work and personal lives, all from a home-base, and keep them separated. This open invitation from Matchett granted permission for public and private elements of our lives to overlap. I removed my headphones and let the noises of my home into my experience.

Dr. Matchett led us through her journey into the work, beginning with her foundations in the Sanskrit tradition of [rasa](#) (transl. taste, juice, flavor, essence), a concept of Indian arts. There are nine patterns, or rasas, that evoke change in the individual's emotion, body, and breath:



[Brienne Taylor](#)

1. Love/Lust
2. Bravery
3. Wonder
4. Laughter
5. Peace
6. Fear
7. Anger
8. Disgust
9. Sadness

Matchett's coalescence of the rasa practice into her creative work led to the realization that breath is how we choose to navigate the world. She invited participants to embody one of the patterns, permitting self-discovery of the breath pattern, facial shift, and body alignment. The integration of the entire body anatomy and physiology is foundational to the rasa theory: [it is the role of the performer to create the rasa in the body of the audience](#). Here is a key element to Catherine Fitzmaurice's offerings: the concept of mirror neurons, that our bodies are the primary recipients of the performance we are witnessing.

Studying Fitzmaurice Voicework® through the certification process continued drawing parallels with the

rasa patterns for Matchett. The connectivity of breath to emotion, as a catalyst and a releaser, is re-examined through the lens of Fitzmaurice Voicework®, rooted in adaptation of both Eastern and Western world traditions. In this moment, I experience a deep sense of legacy: here I am in the same virtual space as my teachers, Catherine Fitzmaurice, and all the ancestors who had studied the breath before; but also with students and teachers of the work I had never met, [my](#) students, and a vast community of the curious who will all take this out into the world with them – a moment of past, present, and future aligning. Mathes made the observation that it seemed "the more ancient the practice, the truer it is."

Mathes and Matchett led participants to the analogous nature of breath and empathy. A common theme of the summit, in tandem with our current global state, was to define empathy as a key to our vitality, freedom, and well-being. Matchett specifies empathy as a space where the individual is able to connect their breath to another, to mirror their physical space and energy, and, with our human intellect, gain insight to their full experience. She likens it to bearing witness. Mathes grew the idea into 'with-nessing' or

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

by Brianne Taylor—continued

listening with the whole body, being present. (2)

This is the work Dr. Matchett does with her company. It should be acknowledged that the material often confronted and explored in "The Mothertongue Project" and referenced in this article includes potentially sensitive and disturbing issues such as sexual violence, gender targeted violence, pregnancy and birth trauma, marginalization practices, and other similarly sensitive issues.

Over twenty years ago, she began a collaborative piece with a fellow graduate from University of Cape Town entitled What the Water Gave Me. The performance blended storytelling suffused in ritual with audience participation, yielding powerful reactions from audiences. This project was the first of its kind in the early years of "The Mothertongue Project." Since that inaugural production, Matchett has used performative art to rigorously examine what passages of rights exist in the absence of formal rights and to dismantle those divides. In questioning the imposed rights from a societal structure of greater influence versus the ways in which those rights have been adapted and passed on by the affected peoples, various possibilities are raised for a framework to bridge the two options. Matchett found a large yearning from participants to share stories of teenage pregnancy,

having a child, and/or 'becoming' somebody. Her work has led the collective to scrutinize the intersections of HIV and gender violence, examining the recurring atrocity of gang-rape against women through the groundbreaking performance of Walk. (3) The cohort consists of professional actors and community members who work together to create and tell these stories. Performances take place in site-specific locations to avoid passive spectating, bringing the stories of people who have been marginalized to an integrated experience in locations where these events frequently take place.

While Fitzmaurice Voicework® and rasa practices ultimately can be liberating, the work can open the individual to a vulnerable state. Matchett guides her actors through understanding that as performers, their emotions and experiences are going to surface; it is the mastery of craft to learn how to manage them. She takes a moment here to acknowledge how hard, how dark, how challenging this is. And I am humbled by the care she holds for these women, resonating with the skilled acting teachers I have had in my past, cautioning me as a teacher with my current and future students, once again tethering me to the depth and responsibility of legacy. As these women of the collective find trust in the work, they are able to confront the constant fear they are experiencing as victims, which has

held them in unremitted disconnect from their bodies. Through this self-confrontation, they are granted their autonomy again, ceasing to attempt prolonged invisibility, and liberating their right to express what they are feeling. They experience seeing and being seen. Mathes offers the observation that the work Matchett is doing is "ushering one into the sense of their own being."

This is, after all, the very seed of activism. To know oneself wholly is to experience more fully, to allow a deeper understanding of others through empathy, to make space for and instigate change. For Matchett, this work grants an anchoring, but also a freedom. She is able to make change in her culture and directly in her community. This work has brought her "home." The thought she leaves us with, grounding me in my presence in both my work and personal life, is that through the passage of vulnerability, this work grants limitless availability.

1 Head of Theatre at University of Cape Town; Artistic Director of The Mothertongue Project (<https://www.mothertongue.co.za/>); Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework®

2 Benjamin Mathes, creator and founder of Urban Confessional, refers to his Free Listening program as "free with-ing" or being fully present while listening to others.

3 This work was created in response to Maya Krishna Rao's The Walk, a response to the gang-rape and murder of Jyoti Pandey in 2012, and was initiated upon the gang-rape and murder of Anene Booysen the following year in 2013. <http://mothertongue.co.za/index.php/productions/past-productions/walk>

Summit Stories

Fitzmaurice Voicework

Joanna Cazden "The Nature of Empathy"

by [Teresa Spencer](#)

Joanna Cazden's Fitzmaurice Voicework® Summit Presentation "The Nature of Empathy: Body and Brain, Classroom and Performance" Reflection by Teresa Spencer, Assistant Professor, Towson University

Before I watched Joanna Cazden's Fitzmaurice Voicework® Summit presentation, "The Nature of Empathy: Body and Brain, Classroom and Performance," I read her essay published in the [Voice and Speech Review](#) in the summer 2020, "My Journey to Now." (1) In this retrospective, Cazden tells the story of her career's evolution from artistry to scientific exploration to a merging of the two. Cazden is known in the Fitzmaurice community for her clinical expertise as a Speech-Language Pathologist, and how deftly she is able to reinforce artistry with science, and vice versa. Her life's work is deep and broad, with intersections of theatre training, protest singer-songwriting, feminism, and clinical practice and research, and reading Cazden's personal telling of this journey gave me inspiring context for receiving her teaching.

Her presentation was structured as a conversation with



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Lynn Watson, a Professor of Theatre at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, also known for interweaving the scientific and the artistic: she co-led the first fMRI brain imaging study of Fitzmaurice practitioners. (2) For an illuminating hour, anchored by Watson's questions, Cazden offered an inquiry into three phenomena that are central to Fitzmaurice Voicework – empathy, sympathy, and compassion – and shared how recent advancements in neuroscience shed new light on these experiences.

Cazden began by suggesting working definitions of empathy, sympathy, and compassion. The definitions and use of these terms are inconsistent in the literature, but there is a broad agreement about the underlying concept: the three distinct components of what Cazden and some others include in the broad term of empathy. Also, whatever terms are used, these states are mutable and overlapping. So these definitions are not absolute, but are a useful way of organizing our understanding:

- empathy: the embodied response to other people's emotional experience. "Your feeling is in me."
- sympathy: the cognitive or imaginative response to other people's emotional experience. "I feel as if you were me."
- compassion: the motivation or decision to act to relieve other people's suffering.

While philosophers and artists have for millennia investigated the distinctions and boundaries between these three states, it has only been in the last few decades that brain imaging has advanced enough to suggest that different neural pathways may indeed underlie these experiences, even as they influence and regulate each other.

Cazden explained that the embodied response, [empathy](#), takes place in the brain in the [resonance circuit](#). The resonance circuit creates physical mirroring between two people in measurable ways, from synced heart rates and pupil dilation to breathing patterns and body posture. Daniel J. Siegel, MD, coined the term – and emergent field – [Interpersonal Neurobiology](#) to describe the complex autonomic coordination that happens between human beings in relationship or communication with each other. (3)

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Siegel’s research measures wisdom that Fitzmaurice Voicework has long explored: our ability to sense others is deeply intertwined with our ability to sense ourselves. Cazden shared a quote from Siegel: “People who are more aware of their bodies have been found to be more empathic. When we sense our own internal state, the pathway for resonating with others is opened as well.” (4)

As Cazden pointed out, however, a crucial part of this process that is particularly salient for teachers and clinicians is the ability to maintain boundaries. As we sense others, we must be able to discern whose feelings are whose. When these boundaries are overwhelmed, people experience burnout, numbing, or post-traumatic symptoms.

Also important for teachers and clinicians to understand is that the resonance circuit is strongly influenced by our identification with an in-group versus an out-group. As Cazden put it, we all instinctively recognize, “Who’s my tribe, who is in my den?” This is not a conscious or intellectual boundary; it is built-in to our nervous systems and our bodies are more primed to pick up their feelings as opposed to others’. We can try – at a more conscious level – to treat everyone the same, but that is a different phenomenon.

So Cazden contrasted the embodied state of empathy with

the more cognitive state of sympathy. Using different brain circuits than the empathic response, the sympathetic response is a thinking or imagining process rather than an autonomic process. Scientists term the human brain’s capacity to think about and understand others’ internal states, the theory of mind. This process involves guesswork, and is naturally influenced by our existing cognitive structures: our beliefs. In other words, our cognitive biases, shaped by our very early training, religion, politics, stereotypes, worldview, etc., powerfully determine how we do and do not sympathize. As with empathy, our capacity for sympathy is influenced by in-group and out-group membership.

In the classroom or studio, Cazden stressed, this means that verbal communication skills are imperative. Our sympathetic response can give us faulty information, and we must check our assumptions about other people’s internal experience against their actual experience, as they share it with us.

The final state Cazden explored was compassion—the decision to take action based on our felt or imagined sense of how someone else feels. The experiences of either empathy or sympathy can trigger compassion, but scientists have found that action is more likely to be triggered by positive or hopeful feelings than by suffering or distress.

Cazden pointed out that the common belief that if artists could only make people care more, feel more, with their work, then viewers would take action, does not seem to bear out in the science. For some, the empathic response to suffering becomes overwhelming, and they shut down. There seem to be different brain circuits responsible for the tendency to activate and help, versus the tendency to withdraw, and different people may tend more strongly towards one or the other response. (5) This is not a question of conscious ethics or values, but rather neurobiology.

However, there is some fungibility between the two. The more we make deliberate choices to take action, the more we experience empathy and fellow feeling. As Cazden put it, the ancient wisdom from many religious traditions of service as spiritual practice is supported by neuroscience. (6) The more we activate ourselves to respond to others, the more able we become to respond.

She stressed, however, a sense of humility around how we understand our own empathic or sympathetic response to others and how we activate our compassion toward them. Boundaries are individual, as Fitzmaurice Voicework seeks to honor. Cazden related this to Catherine Fitzmaurice’s teaching

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“Crea y Transforma” - Catalina Medina

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around instructional touch. If a teacher offers touch to a student, it is not to push energy into them or pull energy out of them, it is simply to be present with them. Cazden said, “in that shared sense of presence, something can change, something can be created.”

1 Cazden, Joanna. “My Journey to Now.” Voice and Speech Review, 2020, DOI: 10.1080/23268263.2020.1776473.

2 Watson, Lynn, et al. “Fitzmaurice Voicework Pilot Study with fMRI.” Voice and Speech Review, 13:2, 2019, 152–172, DOI: 10.1080/23268263.2019.1558992.

3 Cazden recommended the publisher W. W. Norton & Company’s growing library of books on Interpersonal Neurobiology. Many are authored by Siegel.

4 Siegel, Daniel J. (2010) Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation. Bantam. p.62

5 Ashar YK et al (2017) Empathic Care and Distress: Predictive Brain Markers and Dissociable Brain Systems. Neuron 94(6):1263–1273.e4. doi: 10.1016/j.neuron.2017.05.014.

For further reading and a reference list shared by Joanna Cazden, see Appendix.

“Crea y Transforma, Somatic Energy Healing” was the topic of the Day Two Summit conversation between Fitzmaurice Voicework Lead Teacher, Lynn Watson, and Associate Teacher, Catalina Medina.

Medina opened the hour-long interview with where she was in the world. She smiled and shared that she was in her beautiful homeland, the mountains of Colombia. Medina seemed at ease in her skin, radiant in her red sweater, connected with her breath, and excited about the topic she and Lynn were discussing: her journey with the healing qualities of the movement of energy and voice through Fitzmaurice Voicework.

Her Journey: Living is a creative act. When we tap into the transformational energy of creativity present in each moment, we truly connect with the power of what it is to be present. Medina’s pathway is a fine example of living creatively in the moment and the transformation that emerges from that.

Medina’s interest in people and cultures led her to earn a degree in anthropology and, after that, to formally study theater. The two are natural partners, as both anthropologists and actors must cultivate a deep awareness of the

human experience. She spoke of the development of the actor’s voice as a deeper dive into the layers of what it is to be human.

After her undergraduate studies, Medina found that her interests in anthropology, theater, and voice naturally came together in the larger body of her work with war refugees in Colombia. Listening, being with, and empathy threaded her interests together. As a child, Medina had been curious about silence and about deep listening to what silence can hold. Working with the refugee populations, however, she encountered silence being used as a tactic of oppression. If an oppressor can take away an individual’s voice around a traumatic event, the oppressor can shape the event in a way that suits the oppressor. Employing theater as an avenue of expression, the voices of the refugees, once silent, began to speak, at first as whispers. Medina found that voices became more confident as breath meeting voice gave expression to the trauma rooted in bodies.

Medina then received a Fulbright Grant to earn an MFA in Theater from Temple University. Through her

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voice teachers at Temple, she first tremored and began her studies of Fitzmaurice Voicework. At first, her body was rigid with the stress of moving to and living in a foreign land. Medina also discovered that her body had empathetically taken on armoring subsequent to her work with the refugee groups.

“Four months,” she shares, “four months...after I started to do them, I finally tremored.”

The time it took for the tremor to allow energy to move through her body’s armor reveals an inherent truth of energy: it wants to move. The dynamic efforts of Fitzmaurice Voicework keep knocking at the door of an individual’s blocked energy until finally the door opens. Medina speaks of the effects of the dynamic efforts on her body: “Fitzmaurice Voicework allowed me to breathe again.”

After Temple, Medina went on to become certified as a teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework where she dove deeper into what it was to be present, in communion with others, listening. She experienced the healing that comes with breath, sound, and voice merging as energetic movement. She worked more closely with Fitzmaurice Teacher and ThetaHealing Master, Terry O’Connell. Through her work with O’Connell, Medina learned the sensitive balance of bearing witness to the trauma of another without

absorbing it into her own body. This is a key element of voice and energy work: the awareness of holding what belongs to you while remaining empathetic to the experience of another. Working with Catherine Fitzmaurice and Terry O’Connell brought Medina healing and a way out of her habitual fight or flight patterns.

Returning to Colombia after receiving her Teacher Certification in Fitzmaurice Voicework, Medina used her new knowledge to offer healing and transformation to others. With Fitzmaurice Voicework, she now offers a pathway to wholeness and a chance to experience being someone outside of the confines of job titles, cultures, and traumas.

Medina talks about the pulse of creativity that courses through our bodies and our lives. She speaks of the movement of breath into voice as an unfolding of that transformational creative energy. Each moment we are present to our breath, and present to others as we enter into experience with them, we cultivate a practice of awareness that has the power to move us out of a habituated fight or flight response and into more presence, more empathy, and more compassion.

Catalina Medina’s work is beyond inspirational. It is timely and

important. Working with the curative and transformational qualities of voice and somatic energy, she offers healing and wholeness to the people of Colombia and now the world through the internet. After hearing her story, I feel an urgent call to action to continue to use Fitzmaurice Voicework as a pathway to wholeness for myself and others during this time of widespread political unrest, social inequity, and environmental destruction. This mantle feels very heavy, yes, but it’s not hopeless. Ultimately, this brings home the fact that healing and transformation come from within. With guidance, we all have the power to access it.

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Fitzmaurice Summit 2020 - Day Three Helena Walsh interviewed by Benjamin Mathes

by [Shannon Holmes](#)



[Shannon Holmes](#)

Reflection by Shannon Holmes

On Day Three of the Summit, we were privileged to hear insights on Acting and Fitzmaurice Voicework by Helena Walsh in an interview with Benjamin Mathes. Helena is an Associate Teacher of FV, an internationally recognized voice and acting coach and is, additionally, the owner of The Helena Walsh Voice and Acting Studio (1) in Dublin, Ireland. Benjamin Mathes is also an Associate Teacher of FV and the founder of the Urban Confessional: Free Listening Movement (2) as well as the owner of the Crash Acting Studio (3) in Los Angeles, USA.

Helena and Benjamin's conversation began with remarks comparing Fitzmaurice Voicework to Jazz music. I suggest that likewise, their lively and inspiring discussion was much like a couple of seasoned jazz musicians engaged in a series of vibrant and animated improvisations. These two voice practitioners riffed off each other's shared passion for acting and voice and drew us, the audience in to share the intimate exchange. Helena observed that like jazz, FV can build resiliency and the ability to respond

to what is offered in the moment, adding that as performers we must have responsibility or the actual "ability to respond". She emphasizes the importance of developing attention and perception by grounding the self in the sensational or the responses of the body. By becoming intimately attuned to the self through embodied listening to one's impulses, Helena explains, the actor may open up the ability to access an embodied imagination. This, she continues, allows the actor to cultivate their own 'inner acting studio'.

On the topic of how receptive FV is to integrating other training methodologies within its practice, Helena's background, which includes training in an extensive range of techniques and methodologies across a diverse range of disciplines, allows her to speak from a place of profound experience. Among her varied certifications and experience she has extensive training in Roy Hart Voicework as well as significant training and certification as a Human Empowerment and Resiliency Organic Intelligence® Consultant (5), working

and researching anxiety, stress and PTSD.

Roy Hart Voicework emerged from the vocally centred experimental theatre collective founded by Hart (1926–1975) in the late 1960s. Inspired greatly by his own teacher Alfred Wolfsohn (1896–1962) who developed a radical new singing method after being profoundly influenced and emotionally affected by the sounds his fellow World War I soldiers made while they lay dying on the battlefield, Hart carried forward Wolfsohn's work which centred on the search for methods that could enable a fuller spectrum of vocal expression, allowing the total self or soul to be manifested through their voice. The Roy Hart Centre in the South of France runs workshops and advanced training. There are no set or prescribed exercises in Roy Hart Voicework; rather, it has been passed experientially from practitioner to practitioner. The individual teacher's approaches may vary widely, yet they all focus on the emotional and sensorial, most often challenging the student's preconceived notions on what their voice is capable of.

Organic Intelligence combines theory and clinical practice as a means of human empowerment, resiliency, and compassion and may be used to resolve the effects of stress and anxiety. While not an acting or voice-centred practice, Helena's training as a Human

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by Shannon Holmes—continued

Empowerment and Resiliency Organic Intelligence® Consultant enables her to intertwine these practices in her voice teaching so that the students may find a sense of stability. They may achieve this in part by anchoring their individual lived experiences to find connection to their authentic voice.

Considering her significant experience in both these disciplines, it is, therefore, from a highly informed position that Helena speaks about how the structure Catherine has built Fitzmaurice Voicework on is a stable yet flexible base. She explains how it allows for a broad range of divergent training methodologies and techniques to be woven in and through it – depending on the unique needs of the individual student. Building a stable structure on which the actor can rely is paramount in Helena's teaching as she speaks of the process of acting: moving from body, emotion, sensation to expression.

When speaking of training methods within the actor's process, Helena is clear on her stance of freedom in the performer being directly informed by rigour in one's practice. True to two of the most basic and salient tenets of FV: freedom and focus, she advocates for the development of a heightened attention, through an alive, alert, stillness or focus in order to listen

to what is happening in the moment and thereby respond with a free and expressive voice. Helena encourages students to aim for an embodied attention coupled with embodied intention in their expression. She is steadfast in her belief that rigour comes from a place of devotion to the practice. A space for growth is cultivated by incorporating deep listening, ritual and reflection.

Benjamin's interview with Helena allowed us not only to gain insight into the innovative approaches of one of our most inspired contemporary acting and voice coaches, but also allowed us an intimate and invigorating discussion between two of the most creative leaders working in our discipline today. Benjamin and Helena fully embody their work, communicating with passion, honesty, empathy, all grounded in a commitment to support and empower actors.

- 1 <https://www.helenawalshempowermentstudios.com>
- 2 <https://unitedandtogether.com/012-free-listening-benjamin-mathes/>
- 3 <https://www.crashacting.com/>
- 4 <https://roy-hart-theatre.com/>
- 5 <https://organicintelligence.org/>

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Appendix

THE NATURE OF EMPATHY AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR VOICE WORK

Joanna Cazden, MFA, MS-CCC-SLP

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Appendix

EMPATHY AND VOICE WORK

Joanna Cazden, MFA, MS-CCC

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