Uncover the Voice that Nature Intended

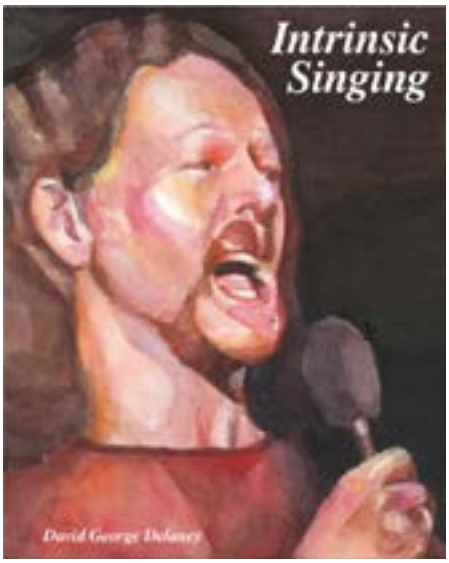
An Interview with David George Delaney

By Jeffrey Kinnunen, Certified Rolfer™, and
David George Delaney, MA, LPC, Certified Advanced Rolfer

Jeffrey Kinnunen

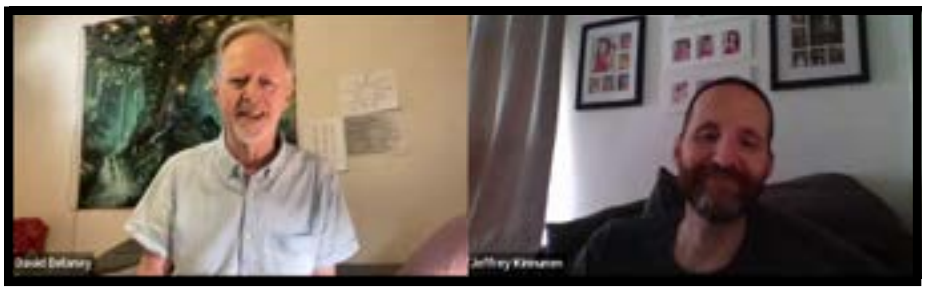
David George Delaney

ABSTRACT *In this interview by SFI Journal editor and Rolfer Jeffrey Kinnunen, New York Rolfer™ David George Delaney discusses the release of his book* Intrinsic Singing *(2024). Although the book primarily aims at singers and actors, Rolfers and all somatically-minded people will benefit from its message of authentic self-expression. Delaney draws from his decades of experience delivering Rolfing sessions to professional singers and actors, as well as his training with his singing vocal instructor Margaret Laughlin Riddleberger (1924-2009), among other modalities. Delaney reflects on the impact Rolfing® Structural Integration had on his own voice and body.*



Front cover of *Intrinsic Singing* (2024).

Jeffrey Kinnunen: Congratulations on your book that came out this year, *Intrinsic Singing* (2024). Thank you for agreeing to the interview to talk about this achievement and your Rolfing® [Structural Integration] practice in New York and Colorado. Let's start with what readers need to know: How can people purchase it? And who do you see as the target audience?



David George Delaney and Jeffrey Kinnunen enjoying their conversation over Zoom on June 23rd, 2024.

David George Delaney: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your interest in my book, and I look forward to talking all about it. Sure, let's start with where to get it; both the printed and e-book versions can be purchased at my website: https://thesingerscenter.com/shop/.

The primary target audience is singers and actors who perform live. However, anyone can benefit from this book if they find the embodiment of singing to be an engaging interest. This book has to do with being a human being, expressing yourself, and doing it in a way that is nurturing for both yourself and, if you're performing for other people, the audience. Somebody recently wrote to me, "This book is not just for intrinsic singers. It's for people who want to live intrinsically."

JK: That's really good.

DGD: Another comment I've received is, "This book is for anyone with an expression system. And that's all of us."

My intention in writing this book was to share with other people what I have learned on my journey as an actor who wanted to sing in my, let's say, God-given voice – the voice that nature gave me. It's about being an authentic human being. That's the heart of what the book is about.

JK: What was your original inspiration for beginning and sitting down to the writing process?

DGD: Two things. One, Margaret Laughlin Riddleberger [(1924-2009)], my singing voice teacher. I know she would have wanted to publish these ideas herself, it just never happened. So, I did it for Margaret and for her teacher, who she called 'Teach'. Second, I was thinking of all the students who have worked with me and these two women; for decades these two ladies were sharing this foundational knowledge from the Bel Cantos Italian School of Singing. This knowledge needs to be passed on.

When you have this knowledge, you've got to share it with other human beings who could benefit from it, because life is not a bowl of cherries all the time. We all need help from each other at different times, for different challenges.

My expertise that I've developed is multilayered. I have essential tools to help a singer ascend in their skills as they relate to singing, especially when they are stuck or hit a plateau in their development. Some of the services I offer singers are:

- Rolfing® Structural Integration and other modalities to free their body, which is their instrument.
- Training and conditioning the intrinsic muscles (the singing muscles).
- Teaching precisely what the vocal apparatus and expression system are and how they function.
- Training what I call 'the singer's state', as well as the 'listening posture'.
- Helping to renormalize trauma that is a block to free human expression.
- Non-linear neurofeedback brain training to skillfully deal with performance anxiety, and to address other issues that interfere with our development.

I'd venture to say that artists need something to commit to that's nurturing and benefits the world. This is what led me to make what I hold as a vow to do this somatic, voice-centered work and make it more widely available by crafting a book. I have challenges, just like anybody: I'm dyslexic. Yet, when it comes to this work and this book, the Universe seems to be behind me, because generally, it flows along. That's the heart of it. This book is part of my path, my being deeply engaged in passing my knowledge of it to those performing artists or developing artists who will benefit from it.

Oddly enough, this renowned psychic said to me, "You're going to write a book. Oh, wow! There's going to be a lot of light in that book." And at the time, I thought, "What?" But over time, sure enough,

David George Delaney: My intention in writing this book was to share with other people what I have learned on my journey as an actor who wanted to sing in my, let's say, God-given voice – the voice that nature gave me. It's about being an authentic human being. That's the heart of what the book is about.

DGD: As I look back, life has been a very slow process; first, wanting to be an actor; then Rolfing [Structural Integration] came along, and it all had to do with me standing up on my two feet and becoming the person I was meant to be. I'm seventy-two this year, and I just now feel like I'm finally coming into my own, as who I'm meant to be.

writing became the thing I needed to do next. I'd tell myself, "Okay, David. It's time. Just sit down and don't worry about 'perfect'. Just write." The editor I worked with initially called the first draft a *hot mess*. But I was paying her to be honest and put some order into it. And she actually gave me the opening line of the book with that first edit.

My artistic partner, Loraine Masterton, also deserves editorial credit because she took on the project. From the first draft onward to printing, she did an incredible job with my material.

JK: Editorial support makes excellent books. It must have been nice to have that additional support in your world.

DGD: I need it. I depend on other people in my life. It's just the way it is, in singing, in editing, in life.

JK: When I was reading your book, it struck me that Margaret seemed to have a real gift for intuiting some aspects of somatic practices. Were you studying voice with Margaret before you experienced your first Rolfing Ten-Series™? And tell us about how you found your Rolfer, and then became one yourself.

DGD: I found Margaret through my professional network; I was looking for a singing voice teacher and she had quite a professional background. Theater agents in New York City started bringing her up from the Washington, DC, area, where she lived, to work with their professional clients. I got an audition appointment with her, and I detailed in the book the instant potency in meeting her; she used to say that working this way could cause a hurricane in your head. Boy, could it! I was attracted to working with her immediately, the work she taught and the discipline. So, I was deeply engaged with her work by the time I experienced Rolfing sessions. At my singing lesson just after my seventh Rolfing session, she was flabbergasted. She instantly recognized that something dramatic had happened.

I learned about Rolfing [Structural Integration] for the first time through Matt Chait, who was my acting teacher at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. I held him in high regard and respected his opinion. One day, I overheard him telling two other actors about his Rolfing experience. So, for me, learning about Rolfing [Structural Integration] came from my work as an actor. And so, from that point onward, it was always in the back of my mind. And then my friend and theater colleague Tom Sparber said, "Singers love Rolfing." That cemented it.

Tom knew Patrick Clough, a senior Rolfer in New York who had studied directly with Dr. Rolf, [(1896-1979)], and he was able to call him to make an appointment for me the next morning at 7:30am. [For an article about Patrick Clough, see page 6.] It totally changed my entire being; it woke things up in me that had been asleep because of the environment I was raised in. Sometimes, it's fair to use the word 'traumatized' about old packed-away issues; experiencing Rolfing sessions woke up things in me that had been dormant. It inspired me so much that I became a Rolfer, and it has always been a big piece of my work in the world, especially working with singers.

Working with Actors and Singers

JK: When you became a Rolfer, did you see yourself as somebody who would specifically work with singers and actors? Or did you see yourself as a practitioner who'd be open to all clientele, but then they tended to be performers?

DGD: I was specifically interested in working with actors and singers. The experience I had that day of my seventh session, absolutely changed how I lived in my body and everything was different. Like I say in the book, it led me to use the least amount of energy in my vocal emission. I was getting the most out of my voice after that, the maximum resonance, and it was effortless.

That seventh session was a magical moment. It was one of the big moments in my life that put me on a new course that I had not anticipated. Then I realized, "Oh yeah, I used to massage my mother's feet, and it really helped her." Hands-on work comes into your life in a particular way. For me, there were memories of me using my hands to help people feel better, while not knowing what I was doing. When I became a Rolfer, I realized, "Okay. This was in the works. I just didn't know about it." I can now see why Advanced Rolfer Michael Salveson told my best friend that I had the thing they cannot teach. It just all of a sudden showed up in that moment of the Seventh Hour.

It took about six months after completing the basic Rolfing Ten-Series for me to finally get it. I remember the night, it was a Friday night, it hit me, "Oh, I'm going to be a Rolfer." It hit me literally like that. I called the Rolf Institute® [now called the Dr. Ida

Rolf Institute®] the next Monday morning. And it was almost a five-year process from that point to get into class because I had things I had to accomplish. I had to finish my bachelor's degree because I had been in the military for four years, and I had to complete that commitment.

From there, I took a physics class at Baruch College which I heard that Dr. Rolf had recommended. I completed massage therapy training at the Swedish Institute of Massage and Allied Sciences, studied with Advanced Rolfer and anatomist R. Louis Schultz [(1927-2007),PhD], specifically learning about fascial anatomy and movement. Also, I studied at the Laban Institute. Lastly, I was granted my massage license in New York.

JK: The Seventh Hour is a potent session to experience. I wonder if there are any experiences you would be willing to share that initially caused you to be inhibited in your vocal performance?

DGD: A lot of it had to do with where I was raised. It was a pretty aggressive place and time. I wasn't a fighter. I'm the oldest of eight. Now, from my scientific studies over the years, I have learned about primary and secondary defense mechanisms that develop around childhood traumas, defense mechanisms that protect us from those traumas. I had many experiences where the world was not safe.

As I mentioned, I am very dyslexic, and when I was in elementary and high school, nobody knew that word at all. I remember a ham-fisted lesson that included writing at the board; you got shamed when you weren't doing it well. I had a lot of those kinds of experiences. Then, I went to a Catholic school. I found that to be brutal, just the whole environment. All these things fed into the experience of the neighborhood that I was from; there was a lot of aggression and fighting. It was not safe.

We are who we are when we're born, and then all these environmental experiences add up and accumulate into who we become. I was quite inhibited, and I had low self-esteem. I didn't speak up for myself. As I look back, life has been a very slow process; first, wanting to be an actor; then Rolfing [Structural Integration] came along, and it all had to do with me standing up on my two feet and becoming the person I was meant to be. I'm seventy-two this year, and I just now feel like I'm finally coming into my own, as who I'm meant to be.

JK: In your book, you write about authenticity and vulnerability while singing. The listener won't necessarily know *why* one singer sounds authentic and another does not; authenticity in voice is something we can all perceive.

DGD: Yes, authenticity is something we find within ourselves. We're all mammals, we are social creatures, and have instincts about how we express ourselves and reveal truth. That's what I've been learning to work with all these years as an actor and a Rolfer, bringing forward innate instincts. Authenticity is an innate part of you and each of us. It's who we are. When we tap into this quality, it allows us to be here in this moment and thrive in our lives. It includes an element of self-nurturing.

When I first started as an actor, I was not good at bringing my authenticity forward in my voice, but I had an instinct toward it. I had these habits and customs that I picked up from my family and the world I was raised in. We're all dealing with that, we usually don't even know we have these acquired behaviors and habits.

Our Intrinsic Voice

JK: What is 'intrinsic singing'? I'm a non-singer and I think I understand what you mean, but please tell us about the nuance you teach in your book.

DGD: Let's start at the heart of the matter: your singing voice is the same as your speaking voice, the salient difference being how much air is being dosed at any given moment. When a person is singing, they can be using up to 100 feet per second squared more air than when they are speaking. We use about one foot per second squared when we're speaking.

Intrinsic singing is about working with the intrinsic musculature as a unitary experience. The intrinsics are involved in producing your singing and speaking voice. Extrinsic musculature is the big muscles engaged for our bigger movements, like the trapezius, latissimus dorsi, and quadriceps, but they do not initiate anything. Our culture is so enamored with extrinsic muscles. Intrinsic muscles are our deepest structures, at our core. Intrinsic muscles are involved in our survival, how we express ourselves, how we relate to each other, and they are the emotional musculature.

Intrinsic muscles also relate to the intrinsic nervous system (also called the enteric nervous system). As I mentioned in the book, it is an aspect of the central nervous system that we can volitionally awaken and integrate into our kinesthetic embodiment. Thus, we can experience ourselves not as a bunch of parts but as a unitary organism in partnership with the Earth's gravitational field and the Universe. In physics, the Universe is described as one field of light or vibration. I partially learned this in the martial art T'ai Chi Chuan, which I have been practicing and teaching since 1985.

However, our voice has a lot to do with our ability to thrive; it allows us to do this thing called cortical recharge. Cortical recharge involves recharging and invigorating our central nervous system with our voice. I'd say communicating with our voice comes naturally first, but secondarily, cortical recharge is a critical precessional effect of our voice, as Buckminster Fuller [(1895-1983), American architect and futurist] would explain it.

Unresolved trauma can be very small things that are too much for an individual to handle at any particular moment. The body gets frozen, and becomes blocked until we can come back to it and unravel the experience safely. I like to think this is unpacking the gift in the problem. For me, working with voice and embodiment has always been about discovering these frozen aspects that are causing flexion (shortening) in the intrinsic muscles. When the body is carrying fear, there is imbalanced flexion-extension. Our global balance has been lost, and thus, more energy is demanded to maintain equilibrium in gravity.

As Rolfers, we encourage the body to return to its elastic and functional nature. Every body is unique and has their own level of body tension. And so, we all must find our own way. Margaret had a good instinct for these things. She was able to say to me when I sang for her in the audition, "That's not your voice." That feedback made me think, "Wow, what a place to begin." *That's not your voice*.

Truth is, I knew that deep down. I loved Anthony Newley, a British Broadway actor and singer, and American Singer-Songwriter and guitarist, James Taylor. I was copying them and putting them together in my singing style but did not realize it consciously. Each of us will have a unique set of challenges in order to progress on our individual path. Finding *my* voice rather than singing

like others, is what I needed. It was valuable that Margaret was able to call it out. She began helping me realize that I was indolent; indolent was part of my defense mechanisms. It came from not wanting to tap into painful experiences, a defense against remembering undigested experiences. This biological default is a survival tactic that protects us, yes; yet defense mechanisms get in the way of our authentic expression.

JK: When you listen to someone speak, can you hear these defense mechanisms as holding patterns in the sound of their speech?

DGD: Sometimes, that is possible to a degree. When I work with people, applying Rolfing® Principles of Intervention with their body as it relates to their voice, then I will become aware of blocks. Any inhibition or block may affect the quality of their voice since the substance of our voice is bone vibration in the skeleton. People are not likely aware of these kinds of blocks. Since our body is fully elastic and adaptable at birth, we know that dynamic relaxation is the state we are meant to live in as adults, always. However, we lose it slowly by being socialized into Western culture. This will directly impact our vocal emission.

I've studied and taught other somatic approaches, like Chua K'a Bodywork®. This modality proposes that fears are held in particular zones in the body. I teach singers how to release that fear in their own bodies. For instance, the front of the neck is where we carry guilt, and that's where your larynx is, so that's going to impact a person's voice. The back of the neck, in the Chua K'a proposal, is the fear of being in the incorrect psychological position. In the discipline of Chua K'a, the muscles in these zones are part of what is called the *muscles of initiation*, and they need to be dynamically relaxed and elastic at all times, adaptable to whatever's needed.

If there's a limitation in the voice, it becomes very obvious immediately. I know exactly what to do for that person if they have an interest in their intrinsic voice. I had to do this inquiry. It wasn't even a choice; it was just part of my life path. This was part of how I was waking up as a human being in this life.

JK: Do you have an opinion about the artificial forms of voice we hear more and more these days? It's so common that the voices we hear in our society are manipulated, autotuned, and electronic in some way. Does that alter the perception of voices for each of us? Maybe it distorts what singers feel they're trying to achieve?

DGD: I see what you're saying. Based on my studies, there's nothing that compares to the beauty and richness of the human voice. It is a healing tool that we have as human beings, and so we're looking for what's totally authentic and what's in the way of that authenticity. In some circles, it would be called your vocal signature. Your vocal signature is that unique voice that is like no one else in the Universe. That's where my interest lies.

When I'm with somebody, I wonder about them, and I have these questions in my mind: Where are they locked up in their body? What's blocked? What aspects are isolated from the rest of the body? What's keeping the beauty, uniqueness, and power of their voice from being effortlessly emitted into space?

Plus, we're still viewing the world in terms of linear physics, even though we live in nonlinear space-time. We still have this very mechanical view, like the lungs are pumping the air, pulling it in, pushing it out. And it travels over the larynx. The voice doesn't actually work like that; this conventional physiological view of the human voice is too oversimplified. The reality of how we vocalize is way more complex, and yet, for the human experiencing it, it is way simpler.

Nonlinear physics means the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. That's the case with our voice. Our voice is a beautiful, embodied example of that.

At the Heart of the Voice is Beauty and Spirit

DGD: Voice and the beauty of music are the heart of living for me. I sing what I find beautiful. It's what keeps me going, keeps me motivated. I think each and every one of us has the experience of depression, anxiety, and fear; being human is just this way. For me, the path toward an intrinsic voice allows me to be as alive as I can be in any given moment. When I'm with clients or students, I always listen for: Where's the block? Where's the fear; how can we free that up so that this person's spirit can soar?

Your voice is your spirit made visible.

I love this statement attributed to the musician Hazrat Inayat Khan who was a Sufi teacher. That's exactly what it is. All I'm looking to do is help a person to free their body/psyche so that they can emit their spirit into the world. There's nothing more freeing than doing that. That's my direct experience. When I'm on stage, performing, and it's going well, I've never felt any freer than in those moments.

JK: In your book, you commented that if you're sitting in a restaurant and speaking normally, your voice projects so much that people around you might ask you to keep it down.

DGD: Yes, that's true.

JK: I have that experience often. Your book got me thinking about that.

What should a person do when they strain their voice? Coincidentally, last night, I strained my voice, trying to speak louder than the music at my uncle and aunt's fiftieth wedding anniversary party. The music was loud, and I started to cough. How would you approach that kind of problem?

DGD: Right, I understand. Sometimes a person can feel injured after one experience of misuse. Everybody's totally different and unique, so in a way, it's not possible to say there is one way to address vocal strain. There are myriad of ways to strain our voices as well.

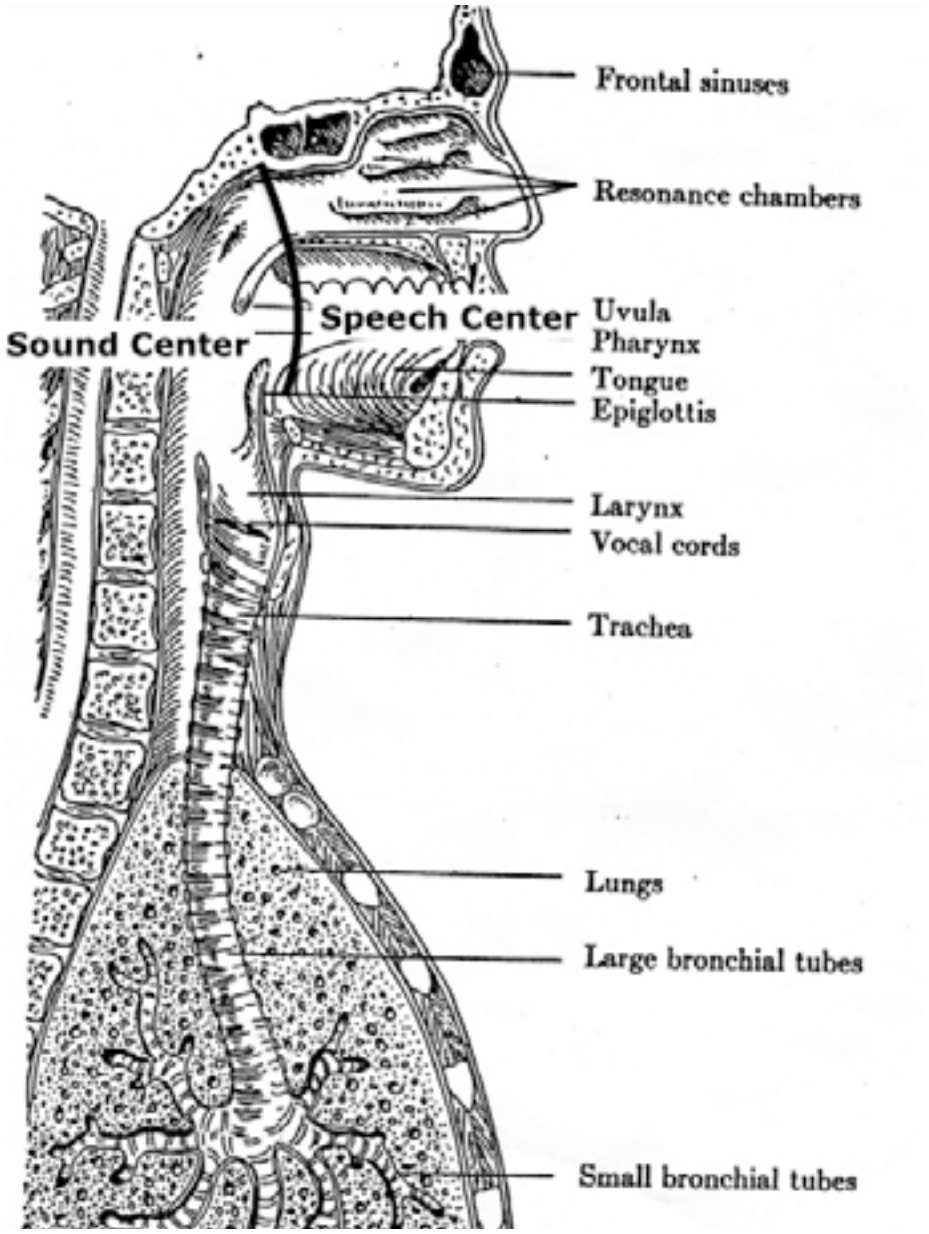
My approach starts with working intuitively. Generally, I also start with helping my clients understand the physics involved in the voice, to give an overview of the anatomy and functionality. We Westerners need to understand the science in order to take the intervention sessions seriously; there's no escaping that step in my experience. For clients, the session needs to include some history of what is going on in the body, science about the tissues, and physics of what is actually happening.

When people understand what we know in terms of scientific principles, they are open to some trial-and-error work in their session, some field testing we could call it. Together we look for what works for them. They become invested in their body opening to being more three-dimensional.

Next, I teach people about sensing how their intrinsic muscles naturally function. When they have a sense of that, then they can extend their voice, while maintaining that state of dynamic relaxation. For an intrinsic voice, we're looking to get their

Think about this: we are the first one to hear our voice when we sing. We hear it through bone conduction. That's the beautiful energy that we are tapping into when we emit sound with our voice. And we're able to touch other people with our voice as well.

David George Delaney



The speech center and the sound center are located close together. Image courtesy of David Delaney.

body functioning three-dimensionally and unitarily.

When we find this level of being, we're able to emit *our* voice into space. That is where the magic comes in. We're not looking to vibrate *inside* ourselves. That will happen naturally based on how the larynx relates to the cervical vertebrae and the skull. When we vocalize, the bone conduction of sound happens ten times faster than the air conduction of sound. This is a part of the physics that people need to consider and experiment with.

I find that what I need to teach is self-observation. I'm working to open the body up and then help them observe what they're doing differently in the transition as speaking becomes singing. When we initiate speaking, it's exactly the same way we begin singing. Most of us don't pay attention to our voice with that kind of detail because of habits and customs that we absorb from the world. These habits have interfered with the process of attention.

I'm helping someone observe the moment of initiation when going from their speaking to their singing voice. If there is a competent voice, not so blocked, then to sing, they will use sensory motor skills to pay attention at the moment they start singing. We want to bring the authenticity of their speaking voice into authenticity when singing.

It could be said that when we speak with authenticity, the ground beneath is unified; we can access ourselves. But the minute we start to sing, there's suddenly a gap between two land masses. We need to bring them back together. Hands-on intervention is a big part of it because helping people let go of subconscious fear they're carrying can be done this way. Once their tissues start to relax enough, thus allowing the body to function more instinctively, then those intrinsic muscles can do what they're instinctively meant to do. It is incredible how they function, almost magical. Not quite magic, because we do understand how the body produces sound, but then to listen to how much it communicates, that is profound. Our goal is what we call *sonic return* in the space in which we are singing.

JK: Some singers speak English with their regional accents, like when English is not their first language. Their speaking intonations or affectations have an accent that is like a fingerprint of who they are, but then when they begin to sing, their voice sounds totally different to me.

DGD: Yes, exactly. And I don't say that's a bad thing if that's what a performer wants to do. For some people, that is what they do with their voice. We do that as humans, we want to project a particular kind of voice or personality, and it aligns with our customs and habits. We acquire behaviors from those around us, and that's fine; it's a part of our journey. I'm not saying that it is bad at all. I see uniqueness as a positive thing. Everyone uses their body differently, so our singing voice is way more complex than we'd usually think. It is a big part of what makes us complex as human beings.

When I succeed in getting people to pay close attention to their bodies while transitioning to singing, eventually, they will discover their habitual tendencies. I then encourage them to let go of holding patterns that the person doesn't even know they have. Much of this also has to do with the ear, because neurologically we now know that it's the ear that speaks, it's the ear that sings.

Listening is a very sophisticated survival action. We wouldn't be here as humans

if we didn't have very highly developed listening abilities. We also know that the ear can shut down because of something that's too big for us to handle emotionally and psychologically. Sometimes, it doesn't reopen once the perceived danger has passed. That's the difference between the ear and the eye. You can get something in your eye, and once it's cleared and given a moment to recover, then you open it back up, it will work. The ear is a different thing.

From our very beginnings, as children, we have been listening. Even in utero, we've been listening. The auditory system is one of the first systems that comes online gestationally. The auditory system is fully functional before five months of gestation. And listening is essential for survival, and also creativity, society, and innovation. It's all about taking in the world and learning about the world, what attracts us to nurture our organisms, so that we can function in the world. By understanding this vibration, we call it sound, which is vibration; it is the basis of life, and we come to have a place in our world with the sound that we make.

The Universe is one big vibratory field, and we're a part of that. Our human needs include being able to share our own unique way of being, relating, and living in the world. To me, that's what singing is all about.

JK: I read that there are changes in the quality of our voices as we age. Hormones affect our voice over time, for example. Do you still feel like you're learning about your voice after all these years of helping others with theirs?

DGD: Absolutely; aging is like that, especially in our technological world. Life is overwhelming, life is intense, and we have habits, customs, and ways of protecting ourselves when it's all too much. To me, that's part of learning about ourselves as humans. In singing, it's learning about how to be fully human because that's what you must be able to do to stand up in front of other people and sing with your heart open and fully exposed.

When I performed my one-person show at the Avalon Theater in Manhattan, it was me in front of the musicians for an hour and a half, that wasn't easy like falling off a log for me; not at all. It took me more than ten years to be able to both get up there and be virtuosic in how I was performing.

DGD: Absolutely; aging is like that, especially in our technological world. Life is overwhelming, life is intense, and we have habits, customs, and ways of protecting ourselves when it's all too much. To me, that's part of learning about ourselves as humans.

Delaney's One-Person Show

JK: Could you tell me more about your one-person show? How did that come to be?

DGD: If you worked with Margaret, 'Mizzar' they called her, she insisted that you develop a one-person show. No matter what else you were doing. This included her Broadway people and all sorts of people in the entertainment business; you had to be working on your one-person show. "That way," she'd say, "*You can always do your show*." It would make no difference what the venue was. She hewed to this line; it was the only way to develop and mature in your work, by regularly being out in front, performing material that you were passionate about.

The one-person show is a great way to do that. It took me a long time to achieve the confidence and courage to do that. It was a great opportunity. I freaked out right before the curtain was about to open for that show. I talk about this in the book. I had to work with my nerves because once that curtain came up, I couldn't let any of that stuff get in my way. In a one-person show, you owe something to those who paid and are sitting, waiting to be entertained, or at least engaged, if not transported.

It was a great vehicle for me as a human to have to do that one-person show because I can be very indulgent. With a project like that, you can't be indulgent. You must be completely committed to that moment; the program is underway, songs are coming up next, and every one of them is challenging material. You must meet your moment.

You don't get up on stage and do things that aren't difficult; that's the whole point of it. I had already gone to professional acting school, and I had been in shows. But me as a solo performing artist was a whole different thing, and it made such a big difference in my life. It was so valuable to be on this journey; I came to see it was a seminal part of my big challenge in life. At some point it became very clear. I must not dodge it.

JK: That is fascinating; it was part of accepting your own voice and being, but also just staying present.

DGD: Absolutely, while under pressure, *that's* what life's all about. Even now, at seventy-two years old, I don't feel like I'm in charge. I must adapt to the energies arising in my life and energies that are coming my way. It's the same thing when you're on stage. You get to the point where you're never doing it the same way every time. You are so much in the present with the material that you can trust that other things will happen that you could never have anticipated.

This is what instinct is all about. We need pressure. Neurologists say that challenge

keeps us evolving as human beings. Without enough challenge, a person will deteriorate. That's what I think about: You're either ascending or descending neurologically each day. There is no neutral. Even if you put the car in neutral, it's still burning gas.

JK: In learning to be a better listener, what have you learned about yourself?

DGD: It's been a long road, but now I feel part of the world; I don't feel separate as I had in the past. By listening, I learned there's a lot going on in my head, and that is keeping me from being in the present moment. I would be catastrophizing about the future. There was mulling and dredging about the past. All of that is not being in the present moment. What I've learned over the years is that a lot of the time, I'm not in the present moment.

When you can be present in your lower belly, what I called the intrinsic nervous system earlier, and consciously remain there while breathing, you can have a dramatic experience of yourself all at the same time. You feel like you're part of the Universe and that you're a unified being. You're not separate from it. That's been a long path for me to get to this, where I can volitionally choose to do that moment to moment, to moment.

JK: You've opened my mind up about what singing is.

DGD: Think about this: we are the first one to hear our voice when we sing. We hear it through bone conduction. That's the beautiful energy that we are tapping into when we emit sound with our voice. And we're able to touch other people with our voice as well.

JK: Who do you think of as an exceptional singer?

DGD: I love Sammy Davis Jr. [(1925-1990) American singer, actor, comedian, and dancer]. He really understood his voice completely. It was incredible how he used his voice, just the way nature designed it. He knew how to use the least amount of breath for the most resonance every time. He had been performing on stage since he was a kid; he had the 10,000 hours of practice toward his mastery. When you're in front of an audience, you're not just rehearsing; you've got to give it all you've got. He made his performances that kind of experience. I loved him for that reason.

There are some beautiful voices that I hear these days. We have come a long way from the mechanical singing training that dominated the field even a few decades ago; it certainly was more regimented when I was trained in the 1970s and 1980s until I met Margaret.

It can be nerve-wracking to perform in front of an audience; it's very scary for some of us. Most of us have various inhibitions and our own version of low self-esteem, apologizing for ourselves and looking for love in all the wrong places. It's quite a process to be in front of others.

You do not want to be thinking about how you're doing it. You just want to be totally connected and focused on what you're singing and how you're feeling about it, what you wish to convey. It's about wanting to share with other people. That's what's really happening when performers are singing. It's about the sheer joy of singing. It's not about thinking of the past or the future, it's all present moment, the eternal now.

As mentioned, there is a survival process that's always going on underneath a person's vocal performance, and that's the stuff we must get to with singers, the subconscious stuff they're unaware of; usually that's what is blocking them from going to the next level.

Humans are not machines; we're organisms, and organisms are way more complex than machines.

And remember, hearing music and listening to music are not the same thing. Hearing is a passive act while listening involves will. We use our will to listen. Choosing to listen to something specifically is a survival strategy. We hear a noise in the environment, our nervous system orients, and we listen. When we lived in the wild, without listening, we'd be dead. The saber-tooth tiger would have us for dinner. Listening is very well honed in us and it's an act of will.

We are all hearing all the time, but musicians must develop a musician's ear where they *listen* to a very sophisticated degree. That skill gives you the instinctive ability to deliver music because you love it, you're not thinking about anything else when singing, and you're sharing this with other human beings. It doesn't get much better than that.

JK: I appreciate your enthusiasm for the subject of singing. If there are readers that are interested in learning more about your work, beyond reading your book, what would you suggest?

DGD: I invite them to reach out to me, I love these conversations with colleagues. I love sharing. I'm an educator as well as an artist. I love speaking with people who are seriously interested in these subjects. Write to me at david@thesingerscenter.com.

JK: I so appreciate your time today, David. Thank you for sharing your work with us here in SFI Journal.

DGD: It was a delight; thank you, Jeffrey.

David George Delaney is an actor who sings and trains singers in the Bel Canto Physiological approach. Delaney is a graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Manhattan and a member of the American Academy Actors Society. He holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and has numerous certifications in somatic therapeutic interventions. He teaches Psychocalisthenics®, Advanced Psychocalisthenics, and Chua K'a Bodywork® through his Arica Institute Sponsorship (see HumanPerformanceAssociates.com). Psychocalisthenics offer the best scientific approach to exercise he has found to date.

Delaney has taught T'ai Chi Chuan Yang Short Form since the early 1990s and teaches the Listening Posture and the Singer's State in workshops and private training. He is a level four Tomatis® Consultant in Audio-Vocal training. And for the Zengar Institute he is an Advanced Trainer and representative for the NeurOptimal® Non-Dynamical Neurofeedback training systems.

Jeffrey Kinnunen is a Certified Rolfer, American College of Sports Medicine Certified Clinical Exercise Physiologist, and American Council on Exercise Certified Health Coach. Kinnunen strives to facilitate positive outcomes with his clients.

Reference

Delaney, David George. 2024. *Intrinsic singing.* Self-published.

Keywords

voice; performance; singing; vocal training; embodiment; self-expression; authenticity; dyslexia; Rolfing Structural Integration; body awareness; alignment; emotional release; physical touch; trauma; intrinsic singing; listening; hearing. ■