

More Melody and Harmony with Less Vocal Attack

Ingo Titze



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IN AN ATTEMPT TO MERGE MY CONTRIBUTION with the theme of “Your Voice Matters,” I take the liberty to reflect a little on my life story. I grew up in one of the worst times in human history, World War II in Schlesien, the eastern part of Germany, where the war raged between 1941 and 1945. Those were the first four years of my life. Struck by a small grenade at age four, I lost the sight in my left eye and was seriously wounded head to toe. My father Kurt was forced to fight in a war that he hated, but he had no choice. He miraculously returned from the killing fields of Ukraine and Russia twice, the second time as a wounded soldier shot in the knee. His brother Erich was shot and killed on day one in 1939, when the war with Poland broke out. We escaped East Germany as refugees (my parents, two older brothers, and I) and found a new humble existence in West Germany. Ten years later, in 1955, we emigrated to the United States. A sister, Gabriele, arrived two years prior to departure from Germany.

We loved America because men, women, and children collectively expressed joy in family life. There was harmony and always abundant hope for better times to come. My parents, aunts, and uncles had listened to radio broadcasts by Göbbels, Göring, and Hitler as these “leaders” tried to justify the need for war. Confrontational speech was cheap, and often outright ugly. There was always an enemy to attack with words. Hatred became the dominant emotion. The vocal attacks were often as painful as the physical attacks, as my generation ahead of me would recall.

For me, the recovery from the war as a child was filled with melody and harmony. My mother Marta and my Aunt Hanna sang to us regularly. They taught us songs of love and praise of God on a daily basis. The German folksongs stood in such contrast to the harsh speech on the radio. My older brother Götz taught us how to change the radio channel to listen to opera and lieder. I tried to play and sing most of what I heard on my little accordion. Pianos were too expensive and did not fit into our small apartments. Beyond the love of music, literature, and poetry, we developed a respect and love for divine guidance. Respect for God and Christ turned into respect for others. The kind words, smiles, and laughter of missionaries and soldiers sent from America overcame all the physical and emotional tragedy.

After nearly 65 years as a citizen of the United States, I see a gradual shift toward everything from which we escaped. Many children are no longer nurtured by their parents and family at large with melodies and harmonies. There is no time for it, nor is there community status for being a parent. The

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wisdom of the grandparents is dismissed. Analogous to the way propaganda radio had a grip on the “Hitler Jugend” in my birth country, America’s youth today are exposed to social media propaganda. There are growing conflicts of loyalty between home, school, and work—so much so that brothers and sisters have little to say to each other if their employers are not in ideological agreement. There is much concern about too much bullying in schools, but some interventions lead to justification of more bullying. In our leadership, the deference to a higher intelligence is waning. As a young physicist, I learned that scientific discovery was never embellished or used for power. We were taught to understate our results and were reminded not to engage in promotion of results that were more to our liking. Now that governments are once again becoming the highest authority, political parties use science, art, and humanity to fight for ultimate control of people. There is little left over to feed the heart and the soul.

Yes, our voices matter, but not if our words turn into swords. We need to use our training in diversity and inclusion to foster tolerance toward diversity of ideas, diversity of rewards, and diversity of effort and accomplishment. Society should not degrade toward uniformity, eliminating the discomfort of opposite viewpoints. We learn from contrasts, but in measured proportions. In music, dissonance means nothing in the absence of sonance (harmony and melody). A song with nothing but roughness and noise is painful to me. If we

first come together with a predominance of harmony, a little dissonance is refreshing and stimulating.

Acknowledgement

I thank my colleague Angie Keeton for a fruitful discussion on this topic.

Dr. Ingo R. Titze has served as Founder and President of the National Center for Voice and Speech since 1990. He was a University of Iowa Foundation Distinguished Professor of Voice, Speech, and Vocal Music prior to retirement from Iowa in 2019.

He has published over 500 articles in scientific and educational journals. His book publications include *Principles of Voice Production* (1994), *The Myoelastic-Aerodynamic Theory of Phonation* (2006); in collaboration with Katherine Verdolini, *Vocology: The Science and Practice of Voice Habilitation* (2012); and *Fascinations with the Human Voice* (2010), which is printed in eight languages. His research interests include biomechanics of human tissues, acoustic phonetics, speech science, voice disorders, professional voice production, and the computer simulation of voice. His formal training is in Electrical Engineering (MS) and physics (PhD).

Dr. Titze is a founding member and first elected President of the Pan-American Vocology Association. Other professional affiliations include the Acoustical Society of America, The National Association of Teachers of Singing, the American Speech Language Hearing Association, and the American Laryngological Association. Honors include The Gould Award for outstanding research in laryngeal physiology (1984), the Silver Medal Award from the Acoustical Society of America (2007), the Honors of the Association from ASHA (2010), and the Sundberg-Titze Award from the Voice Foundation (2020). He has administered and taught in the Summer Vocology Institute, the premiere Vocology training program, for 20 years. He has been married to Kathy Titze for 52 years, with whom he has four children and nine grandchildren. He remains an active singer.

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