

The Singer's Library

More New Editions with New Additions

BY BRIAN MANTERNACH

In a second edition, two voice professionals include information on effective voice use for a variety of circumstances.

All people who rely on their voices, whether for professional or avocational use, understand how debilitating it can feel when vocal health is compromised. Not only is it a frustration, but it can also lead to canceled gigs, missed work, and lost income.

Authors Kate DeVore and Starr Cookman understand this reality as well as anyone, given their unique backgrounds. DeVore is a theatre voice, speech, and dialect trainer based in Chicago, where she works with a range of clients from actors to executives. She is also a trained speech-language pathologist who has worked at medical voice centers. Cookman is a speech-language pathologist as well and an assistant professor in the Division of Otolaryngology at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. Besides her academic and clinical work, Cookman is also a professional singer—a mezzo-soprano who specializes in jazz.

The two combined their expertise in 2009 to publish *The Voice Book: Caring For, Protecting, and Improving Your Voice*. The authors discuss below how the book, recently released in a second edition, has evolved in the 11 years since its first publication.

What should those familiar with the first edition of *The Voice Book* expect to see in the newer release?

Starr Cookman: In the 2020 edition of *The Voice Book*, readers will find additional information about the role of both the diaphragm and pelvic floor during respiration; downloadable audio files (the first edition came with a CD); information about menopause and voice; updated metaphors, vocal health advice, and references to keep up with ever-changing technology;

an extensive explanation of semi-occluded vocal tract phonation, or “straw phonation,” with both an exercise section and a section providing rationale for these exercises based on anatomy, physiology, and acoustics; an expanded and updated section on hydration; and updated references.



Brian Manternach

In the years since the first edition was published, has there been new voice research or are there new understandings about the voice that necessitated updates to the book?

SC: Absolutely. Voice research is constantly contributing to our understanding of the inner workings of both normal and abnormal voice. Not only do we want to help our readers stay current, we also want to spark creative innovation, building on what we know so far.

Over the years, readers frequently commented that our book makes difficult concepts easy to understand. As new techniques, such as semi-occluded vocal tract exercises, become widely used, we want to explain both how to do these exercises and, more importantly, why these exercises have a positive effect on phonation. Our goal is to promote a dynamic and more effective use of the technique rather than someone blindly following a set of steps, unaware of why they are doing so.

One unique section of the book addresses “vocal image” and how we can use our voices

Book Review

The first goal of *The Voice Book: Caring For, Protecting, and Improving Your Voice*, Second Edition, as stated by the authors in the introduction, is to help readers begin—or continue—their journeys toward efficient, strong, and effective voice use while minimizing the likelihood of vocal injury and fatigue.

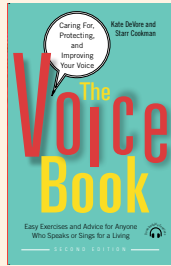
This is accomplished by presenting information that merges art and science while also incorporating the authors' varied and extensive backgrounds as voice professionals.

Authors Kate DeVore and Starr Cookman articulate the irony that vocal education for singers often does not include training the speaking voice, even though speaking habits will obviously have a direct impact on the singing voice. Similarly, they point out that many people who rely on their voices for a living (teachers, clergy members, politicians, etc.) have a limited understanding of healthy voice use and voice practices and generally seek information only when they run into vocal difficulties or distress. As such, *The Voice Book* focuses heavily on voice care and efficient vocal practices.

Appropriate for a wide-ranging audience, *The Voice Book* may be especially important for singers. While covering expected topics like breathing, phonation, and resonance, DeVore and Cookman also provide extensive tools for releasing habitual tension, establishing optimal alignment, freeing the articulators, and preventing vocal injury. Additional sections on speaking to large groups, adjusting voice use based on the acoustics of specific rooms, and enhancing vocal image are invaluable, especially considering that these topics are not often covered in traditional singing voice pedagogy texts.

Although the book does not contain singing vocalises, the vocal exercises it does include can be used to explore a wide range of sounds and can easily be modified into sung melodic patterns.

The new, second edition of *The Voice Book* provides well rounded information on the myriad ways in which the voice can be used. For that reason, it can fill a gap in singing training that will help readers find their most efficient and authentic voices. —*Brian Manternach*



tension, and how these behaviors relate to various areas of vocal (and overall) image.

Clearly, those actions are applicable across the board. That said, there are elements of singing that are more prescribed and inflexible than conversational speech—such as the specified pitch and rhythm, when and how long it's acceptable to pause for an inhale, the style of singing, and vocal placement. So while alterations in vocal range, variety, or quality of resonance, for instance, are obviously less possible (or desirable) for most styles of singing, the overall concepts definitely apply across the board.

A bonus feature of the book is the inclusion of audio tracks that accompany the chapters (available for download at the Chicago Review Press website). While it's fairly common for voice textbooks to offer an audio component, your recordings demonstrate both efficient voice use that can be emulated but also inefficient voice use to avoid (pitch too low, too much tension, throat clearing, etc.). Why did you feel it was important to include the inefficient demonstrations?

KD: There are two main reasons we wanted to include the samples of less-efficient behaviors. First is ear training. Even though we are heavy handed in our suggestion to focus more on physical feelings than sound as folks explore the exercises, it's also true that people do still heavily rely on what they hear. And because the book is a resource for teachers as well as the end voice user, we wanted to help readers identify the sounds of these potentially deleterious behaviors.

The second reason is related to a concept known as negative practice. This is a term from the field of psychology that reflects the idea of purposely practicing a behavior you want to change with awareness and understanding of how it is not the new, target behavior. For example, in working with someone who typically uses extraneous throat tension for voice production, once they have an ability to produce voice in a more efficient way, it can be helpful to have them go back and forth between the “old way” and the “new way” of making voice. This allows them to feel the contrast, identify the differences between the two techniques, and learn how to shift from the old behavior to the new one. So there is value in understanding what you are *not* aiming for.

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to help project confidence, charisma, power, approachability, or trustworthiness. Do you feel these techniques apply primarily to the speaking voice or do they work equally well in the singing voice?

Kate DeVore: They absolutely apply to singing as well as speaking. Many of the elements of those traits that we discuss go beyond voice to overall presence. We explore physicality like eye contact, ease of breath, facial expression, posture, openness, and physical