

Your Voice Is a Muscle the Size of a Box

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The larynx, colloquially referred to as the “voice box”, is an organ located within the upper part of the human neck that assists in the processes of breathing, producing sound with which humans typically communicate, and protecting the trachea and lungs against the intake of beverage, food, and other such undesired substances. A multitude of vocal folds lie within the structure of the larynx, indispensable to the production of the human voice, as well as for the manipulation of the pitch and volume of the voice, both prerequisites for phonation, during which vocal folds produce certain sounds via irregular spurts of vibration. A given sound is conceived via manipulation of the larynx in order to produce a noise of a certain pitch, which then proceeds to pass through the vocal tract, and is configured in a unique manner depending upon the respective positioning of the tongue, lips, oral cavity, and pharynx, or the part of the mouth between the oral and nasal cavities, creating the vowel and consonant sounds that have been strewn about the human languages of the world, as well as tone, vocal stress, rhythm, and other such forms of linguistic prosody. Although the exact process of said phonation is currently somewhat nebulous even among those within the appropriate fields of physiology, types of phonation were, among phoneticians such as Peter Ladefoged, most acutely represented as points along a continuum, with phonation with an open glottis, or an uninterrupted airstream, referred to as voiceless phonation, that with the glottis closed mid-way, or with maximum vibration of the folds of the vocal cords, referred to as modal voice, and that with the glottis closed entirely, or with a blocked airstream, referred to as a glottal closure. Galen of Pergamon, a Greek physician, surgeon, and philosopher who operated as such within the realm of the ancient Roman Empire, once, and prior to all other recorded instances of such, described the larynx as the “most important instrument of the voice”, and thus, whether with intention or not, alluding to the complexity and pertinence of the organ in regards to human expression, communication, and sense of self that would persist for the millenia following his remarks.

The projection of the voice depends upon the strength, clarity, and significance of a given voice, and is a technique employed to command immediate attention, and, in certain circumstances, reverence, and is used either by those in the field of instruction, such as a professor in the midst of a lecture hall occupied by a significant number of pupils, or by those engaged in the live performing arts, such as an actor regarding an auditorium occupied by hundreds of theatergoers, upon whom their attention is unyieldingly captivated by. Theaters in Ancient Greek societies, for instance, typically consisted entirely of stone, had seats arranged in a half-circle which surrounded the stage, the rows of seats ascending as they grew further in proximity from the given stage, and the stage provided for performers being somewhat concave in nature, all of which served to benefit the acoustic nature of the voices of the performers, aspects of the characters regarded as tantamount to the performance as the backdrops crafted or the gesticulations carried out, with even the very masks typically worn by performers believed to have been so exaggeratingly sculpted so as to lend further weatherliness to the voices of the actors, allowing them to be further carried. The practice of one throwing their voice also is of relevance to the practice of ventriloquism, an artform which was more concretely established in the midst of travelling fairs and market towns of mid-eighteenth century England, depicted in