Dear VASTA Members,

As we wade through these difficult times, the Voices of reason, comfort, wisdom, compassion, strength, and faith are all the more crucial to our very existence. The eloquence, the tone, the very phrasing of our leaders’ words and thoughts become paramount in the communications that literally involve the lives of everyone on this planet. We, as voice and speech professionals, know how powerful, how inspirational, how life-changing verbal expression can be when it embodies the spirit of our highest selves, the wisdom of the ages, and the eloquence of heartfelt experience. Let us never underestimate the power of our Voices. And let us never give up trying to Voice the words and perform the actions that will bring peace and prosperity to ourselves and to our brothers and sisters around the world. With this said, I wish to extend my joy of being a part of this organization, and to let you know that VASTA is still healthy, positive, and strongly committed to its growth and progress, even in these disturbing times.

So let me update you regarding our currently existing new additions, our works-in-progress, and our visions for the future.

First, I am so very pleased to announce that, if you log onto our website www.vasta.org, you will discover that we now have an official VASTA Medical Advisor. Yolanda Heman-Ackah, M.D. has agreed to respond to any of our vocal health questions free of charge. She has even established a special e-mail address for this purpose. Further information regarding this appears separately in this newsletter and on the VASTA website. What a needed and wonderful addition Yolanda will be to our resources. Hurray!

And just as times are changing, VASTA must also change to meet the ever-increasing demand of creating a harmonious global community. Thus, I and VASTA’s Board of Directors are making plans to extend VASTA even further to begin to try and meet some of our global challenges, to expand our visions and ways and means, and to integrate more disciplines into our repertoires of teaching and practice.

As a result, many of you have recently responded to a survey that included some questions regarding a VASTA Conference on a foreign soil. A large majority of your responses were excitedly positive, expressing a strong desire to travel, and to commune and share with our foreign members and their cultures. Though there is always the issue of timing and cost, given enough notice, I hope you will all begin saving your pennies, for it appears that we will be in England in the summer of 2005. The plan is to piggy-back with a European voice-oriented conference, giving our members the opportunity to
participate in two back-to-back conferences for the cost of one plane fare, and to network even further with the European community.

This will be the first step in an even larger conceptual plan to rotate our VASTA conferences between foreign shores, and piggy-backing with more than just ATHE here in the States. Which brings us to another of the questions answered by many of you regarding other conferences you attend, and other organizations to which you belong.

As VASTA plans for the future of its members and for those we hope to inspire and influence, it behooves us to reach out to some additional groups that can enrich our understanding and skills, and can benefit from our expertise. There are several organizations that desire our presence beyond just a few of us. I am currently exploring these possibilities, and will soon propose a viable conference rotation to the Board that may evolve into a five-year cycle of sorts, with ATHE still being a major and majority player.

Additionally, VASTA is beginning to restructure its budget a bit. Now that our Journal is becoming a stable bi-annual presence, we are thinking more and more how VASTA can financially contribute to the youth of our profession, and to the further training of our own. Establishing a VASTA Endowment has been a prominent goal of our 2005 Initiative established at our retreat back in 1998. As a result, we are taking major steps towards these ends which include the already established Kennedy Center/American College Festival (KC/ACTF) VASTA Award for Excellence in Theatre Voice. Initiated last April, we are giving this $500 merit award to an Irene Ryan finalist at the Kennedy Center on an annual basis. I believe this link with KC/ACTF to be an important one. And the Kennedy Center seems to concur. In the future, once the formal endowment has been established, we hope to fund more opportunities for our members and our youth, both of whom are the future of our profession. The above, along with our fledgling Mentoring Program, an on-line bibliography, and more opportunities for our members to present their work for all to see and hear are major VASTA priorities to be further explored, contemplated, and
realized. And all are in the works, alongside the maintenance and growth of our numerous other projects.

As VASTANS, we must always remember that even though we are a relatively small organization, our members impact literally thousands of students, performers, clients, and audience members on a daily basis. And as our needs, and the needs of our constituency change, the organization must adapt accordingly.

SOOOOOOO . . . expect more surveys! We need YOUR input, as YOU are VASTA.

In the words of Neil Simon’s Eugene Morris Jerome, even in the midst of looming war —

“Onwards and upwards . . .!”

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VASTAVOX ARCHIVES
By Eric Armstrong

To access the Vastavox Archives: go to: http://listserv.cwis.uci.edu/archives/vastavox/past_archives/ and systematically choose dates for archives (they’re roughly monthly). Once in an archive, you use the “Find . . .” command in your browser (command F on a mac), and search by title or person.