
"Jo Estill is an internationally recognized teacher with a unique approach to vocal quality. Her system, broken down into simple steps, leads to mastery of an amazing array of qualities—all produced with ease and comfort. You can even belt without any strain."

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For more information, see the www.VASTA.org site or contact Barbara Acker at Dept. of Theatre, ASU, Tempe, AZ 85287-2002, Barbara.Acker@asu.edu, (480) 965-2696.
conference has concurrent sessions scheduled, meaning that there are two different talks going on simultaneously in the ballrooms, and you must choose which one you attend based on the title of the paper. Each day has an umbrella topic, such as Basic Science, one or days that are of special interest to them.

This may be a good time to mention the fact that the presentation of the material can be a little daunting to the non-scientist. The presentations are mostly summaries of research studies geared toward other scientists. Most days you are seated for every presentation. They are 15-30 minutes each. They all use slides. Most of the presenters are researchers and scientists, and they are not necessarily trained speakers. There are slides and videos of bloody surgeries. There are graphs and statistics and numbers. Some of the talks have titles like “Experimental Verification of the Quasi-Steady Assumption for Flow Through the Larynx.” Do not be afraid. If I don’t know what most of the words in the title mean, I just go to the talk in the other room.

Then, there are the workshops. The workshops are a much-beloved respite of hands-on, practical, experiential training, right smack-dab in the middle of the comfort zone of most VASTA members. In fact, many of the workshops are led by VASTA members. Workshops are 45 minutes each, and there are usually five time slots for workshops with about seven to choose from at each time. Of note is the fact that most of the Voice Foundation attendees are less familiar with the actual training aspect of voice than are most VASTA members, so some of the workshops are taught at a slightly less advanced level than the typical level of presentation at VASTA conferences. Regardless, they are always my favorite part of the Symposium.

On the first day and evening of the symposium there are usually introductory overview sessions about anatomy and physiology of voice. These lectures can be exceptionally helpful to non-scientists. They remind you of what you know about anatomy and physiology (and perhaps go even deeper), providing a helpful framework for the upcoming talks. There are also special lectures, panels and poster sessions scattered throughout the Symposium as well as a gala dinner with entertainment. Everyone who sings at the gala must present a scientific paper at the Symposium.

In terms of planning, the schedule is available in advance, so it might be useful to study it beforehand to choose the talks that you want to attend. You may even choose to attend only the last two days (usually the pedagogy and workshop days) and skip the heavy science if you’re not interested in that aspect of voice. There is time set aside for questions during the conference, so if there are topics that you already have questions about you can prepare them in advance so you are ready to ask them when the time arises. Also, it is usually heavily air-conditioned in the hotel, so if you are sensitive to cold you might want to bring a sweater for the sitting-still days.

The Voice Foundation Symposium can be an eye-opening experience yielding useful and interesting information for voice practitioners. And to be honest, even with a science background I still occasionally feel the desire to lay down with a wet cloth on my forehead due to information overload. And knowing that I am not the target audience for some of the talks allows me to plan accordingly and not be surprised when the content sails over my head. Next year seems like a good opportunity to check it out for those so inclined. Hope to see you there!