Presenting at PEVOC II: An International Voice Conference
by Linda Gates

My interest in attending PEVOC II this summer in Regensburg, Germany was due to its focus on the theme of "The Singer/Actor's Voice". Since this is an area that isn't addressed much at conferences and one that I feel needs to be, I was very interested in attending and presenting a paper. After some initial confusion, not so much due to language, as terminology (what is a Congress presentation? or a Poster Programme?), my paper on developing pedagogy on the singer/actor voice was accepted for presentation.

PEVOC II stands for the Pan European Voice Conference and is Europe's answer to the "Symposium on the Care of the Professional Voice" sponsored by the Voice Foundation of America. The Symposium, which was once held every summer at the Julliard School in New York and now takes place in Philadelphia, was multi-disciplinary and known for bringing together voice scientists, voice doctors, singing teachers, theatre voice teachers, singers, and professional voice people in many areas to explore the care and training of the professional voice. While many Europeans had attended the Symposium in America, the expense and logistics of travel increased the need for them to establish a conference of their own. PEVOC II was the second international voice conference. The first, PEVOC I, was held in London two years ago and the next one, PEVOC III, will take place in the summer of 1999 at The Hague, The Netherlands.

Having attended several voice Symposia at the Julliard School in the 1980's, I was familiar with the format. Papers and demonstrations take place from about 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with breaks for lunch and coffee. A wide variety of presenters, ranging from voice scientists, otolaryngologists, opera teachers, speech therapists, specialists on "belting" and a wide spectrum of other professionals concerned with the voice, present their papers accompanied by slides, projections, films, recordings and sometimes live demonstrations. The presentations are lively, provoking heated discussions, while some presenters, especially the scientists, can get so caught up in thickets of figures or intricate charts and graphs, that one is led to the conclusion that the quality of the boredom is also part of the experience. There is something for everyone concerned with the voice and attendance at the Symposium of the Care of the Professional Voice was an experience that I always found extremely worthwhile despite some tedious moments. PEVOC II was no exception.

One of the differences was the change in venue. PEVOC II was held at the Klinikum, a hospital situated high on a hill overlooking the old city of Regensburg. It was my first experience of a conference held in a hospital with patients dressed in hospital clothes mingling with those attending the conference. No one, including the patients, doctors and nurses, seemed upset with the presence of so many voice professionals and the atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. There was an excellent and sympathetic support staff to help the conference goers and the auditorium was quite spacious and had a full range of audio visual support systems.

While the presenters at the conference came from all over Europe as well as Australia, Malta and Israel, the presentations were all in English. The variety of accents was a field day for dialect coaches like me.

Some of the highlights of the program were by fellow VASTA members. Catherine Fitzmaurice delivered an excellent presentation, The Acting Voice as a Therapeutic Tool, and Katherine Verdolini's paper, Skill Acquisition Principles Applied to Singing Education and Voice Therapy, was very well received. Other memorable presentations were Mary Hammond's, from the Royal Academy of Music in London, A Holistic Approach to Integrating Singing into the Acting Voice, and a workshop by J. Lieberman, an Osteopath from England on his specialty Laryngeal Manipulation.

In addition to the intense work at the conference, there was a lively and interesting social program. In the evening of the first day of PEVOC II, there was a welcome reception by the Burgermeister of Regensburg for all the participants at the conference in the Old Town Hall, The Reichsaal. After speeches in German, there was entertainment, the highlight of which was a concert of whistling by Professor Tamas Hacki, the organizer of PEVOC II. Professor Hacki was accompanied by a small band of professional musicians and his delightful and very professional performance brought the house down. There was a moonlight dinner cruise down the Danube the next evening, with vast amounts of good German food and beer.