In the summer of 1990, I traveled to Mars Hill, North Carolina as an initiate into the Alfred Wolfson/Roy Hart approach to voice training. Unbeknownst to me at the time, it was the beginning of an odyssey that would change the direction of my teaching and my life in the professional theatre, re-arrange my professional priorities, stir up my personal life and light a fire in my soul. During the past seven years I have followed my heart - and my voice - continuing to study with a wide variety of Roy Hart teachers, from Maine to North Carolina, Boston to New York City and, of course, the Roy Hart International Arts Centre in Malerargues, France.

This past summer I returned for the third time to Malerargues, this time to serve as a voice/text coach for an international company of actors gathered together to begin the training that will lead to a production of Euripides' *The Bacchae* in the summer of 1998.

The company to date includes: the artistic director of the Desdemona Theatre in Denmark and six Danish actors, seven Swedish actors and a choreographer, three French actors, a French percussionist and composer, one American actor, three actors from the Roy Hart Centre, and myself, as voice/text coach. What we have in common is a familiarity with the Roy Hart voice work, a strong background in physical theatre, a love for Greek theatre and a hunger to combine these elements to tell a powerful theatrical story. The actors range in ages from 23 to 73 and speak a wide variety of languages. Although the play will be performed primarily in English, we will include numerous other languages and alter those choices dependent upon the native language of the country in which it is being performed.

We gathered together in July for two weeks of intensive workshops to enter into each others’ training methods, begin the process of developing an ensemble, and start the work of shedding new light on a 2000 year old play. We took group singing lessons with Roy Hart teachers: Carol Mendelsohn, Saule Ryan and Rossignol, physical training with Ann-Sofie Noryd of Sweden, acting/ensemble work with Barbara Simonsen, our director, while I provided daily classes in body/voice/text work. English is a second language for all except five of us. Hour after sweaty hour, we laid the foundations of a physical/vocal training which would provide the way for us to communicate body to body, body to voice, impulse to text, searching out the journey from a primitive impulse to a coherent theatrical moment expressed through the body and voice of the actor.

In addition to our work, we took full advantage of our glorious setting in the Cevennes Mountains in southern France - eating and drinking together (it was France, after all), shopping in the local market, hiking in the mountains, swimming in the river, and after long days of work and leisurely dinners, we would share our national folk songs - in the original language, of course.

Next summer the company will meet again in Malerargues for two months of training, rehearsals and performances. Following the opening at the Roy Hart Centre, *The Bacchae* will travel to Denmark, Sweden and other European countries.

In addition to work on *The Bacchae*, I taught voice/text classes to students at the centre, studied privately with a few of the teachers in residence, performed some of my original theatre pieces, attended performances, and enjoyed the company of many of the fascinating people who come to the centre for the summer fiesta of study opportunities. July and August are the busiest months at the Centre with Roy Hart teachers arriving to offer a wide range of classes and workshops to an exciting array of international students. Workshops are also offered in the fall and spring, and if you find yourself in France, there are many teachers in residence all year who are available for private work.

For information contact: Roy Hart International Voice Centre, Chateau De Malerargues, 30140 Thoiras, France. Tel: 33 4 66 85 45 98 Fax: 33 4 66 85 25 57

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Giving Voice Festival
(continued from page 9)

On April Fool’s Day, during New England’s worst snow storm of the year, I escaped on one of only two flights leaving Logan airport for London on route to the 5th annual Giving Voice Festival. This year’s festival took place in Aberystwyth on the beautiful shores of the Cardigan Bay in west Wales - a truly extraordinary setting. The Festival theme: ‘An Archaeology of the Voice’, was a genuine ten day celebration of the voice in performance, with over twenty-five international guest teachers offering a unique variety of workshops. Special performances ranged from the Babi (Grannies) of Bistritsa, singers of Bulgarian folk song passed down orally through the female line, to Vietnamese-born, Tran Quan Hai, world renowned musician and scholar with formidable knowledge and practice in overtone and harmonic singing.

In addition to selecting from two to three day major workshops, the participants had the opportunity to gather each morning for the “Common Ground” warm-ups with Frankie Armstrong and Joan Mills, and again in late afternoon for international songfests led by Venice Manley. Following the dinner hour, the major workshop leaders offered one hour sessions of their work to allow all of us at least an introduction if we had not selected their workshop. And if this wasn’t a full enough day, many evenings were filled with inspirational performances.

Following is a brief description of the workshops I selected. I found my two major workshops to be quite different in demand of expertise. Michele George’s workshop on ‘Ancient Greek Theatre’ was provocative and interesting, and geared toward the less experienced performer, while Irina Raspopova’s ‘Giving Voice in the Russian Traditional Song’ was extraordinary in the depths and demands required of the participants. For three days we learned the very specific techniques for singing the highly-ornamented, polyphonic songs of Russian peasant life, complete with dances! She was assisted by three experienced trainees and an interpreter who offered inspiring demonstrations along the way. Finally, I had the unique opportunity to work with Tran Quan Hai, the celebrated musicologist from the Musee de l’Homme in Paris. During his public demonstration of overtone singing, I was selected as a volunteer - “no former experience, please” - and Tran led me through a series of ‘voice moves’. In no time at all I was singing two tones simultaneously! He’s an amazing teacher, warm, generous and full of humor.

The overall tone and success of the festival is set by Project Director, Joan Mills and her assistants. The atmosphere is open, inviting, non-competitive and the approach to the large group warm-up and singing sessions is lighthearted and fun. The variety of workshop offerings is extensive, inspirational, and challenging; the tone, refreshing. The timing of the festival each year follows Easter making it a difficult time for many of us to get away. However, if it is at all possible, it is more than worth the trip! For further info. contact: Centre for Performance Research, 8 Science Park, Aberystwyth, Wales, SY233AH. Tel: 44 1970 622133 Fax: 44 1970 622132