

## **The voice and the ‘Shadow’: How does the use of voice in Dramatherapy enable greater expression of ‘Shadow’ aspects of the psyche?**

### **Introduction:**

During my ‘Sesame journey’, I experienced for the first time the powerful impact of the use of voice, and I became aware of its importance in my life. A workshop with Frankie Armstrong and a myths session, in which I participated on the following day, showed me how fervently I could express my feelings through my voice. But the more I probed my use of voice on various occasions, I came to realize that the experiences I found most interesting were, when I used my voice in unusual ways, uttering sounds considered in modern society as inhuman, or even “ugly”; sounds that may not have any cadence, but contain raw material for the human voice, its emotional core, devoid of any rhythmic synthesis. These are sounds uttered in a flash, with no cognitive component, triggered by a visual image or an audial sequence. While probing the figures I had chosen to represent during the course, within the context of the myths we enacted and in drama and movement sessions, I realized that there is something they all share: They all spring from the same ancient roots, the survival instinct, reverberating in all the sounds I uttered. This sound has not been embellished; it may be a scream expressing pain, a metal voice, giving vent to hatred, a strident expression of jealousy or a skittish voice in a silly mood. When I consider this phenomenon rationally, it seems as though there are within me two separate entities: One is a ‘persona’ that I present to society, hoping it will accept me and approve of me. The other entity, concealed within the deep recesses of the mind, preserves the repressed aspects of my personality and my past, or cravings I dare not realize, fearing that if they are revealed, they may threaten not only who I am, but also my immediate surroundings. This is the dark recess of the soul that Karl Jung termed ‘shadow archetype’.

In the course of the last year during the practicum, I became aware how difficult my colleagues and also my clients found it to express through voice the materials repressed in the ‘shadow’. On several occasions I ended up being defensive, because the sound I had produced elicited criticism, such as “your voice made me angry”, “I didn’t feel at ease when you uttered that sound”. This offended me momentarily, but also aroused my curiosity, and I began to wonder - does society consider it legitimate to use our natural voice, devoid of social constraints? And what is there about this cracked and abrasive yet human voice that appears threatening to certain people? What is the source of this threat? What can be done to turn the voice into a safe and effective tool revealing the inner journey, rather than “a devil”, threatening to swallow anyone crossing its path?

The personal process I had undergone this past year helped me understand that my voice serves me as a bridge between the conscious mind and the (unconscious) ‘shadow’; between my life today as a member of modern society and the life engraved within me as an element of human history,

that of my ancestors. Jung believed that there is a historical seal engraved in the psyche of every human being from the moment of birth, and called it the 'collective unconscious'. And indeed, if we all share the same human history, surely we all have the potential to voice those lost strands.

My study will open with a description of the way the voice served ancient societies for personal expression and ritualistic purposes. Then I shall discuss the social and cultural processes, leading through the ages to increasing and ever deeper repression of that voice into the shadowy part of our psyche. At that point the study will probe the concept the 'shadow archetype' - in the light of Jung's psychological perception and the way it is manifested in mythology. I shall dwell on the way Jung's theoretical model has served as a fruitful basis for research by professionals in the sphere of the theatre and of the study of voice today. In the last part of my paper I shall suggest that the 'shadow' voice can serve as a basis for the development of various methods, enabling its vocal expression within Sesame's use of the medium of the story, and Drama and Movement Therapy. I shall consider the extensive theoretical knowledge stemming from research of the voice to attempt to draw conclusions from relevant and significant experiences I had in the course of the year, leading to my belief in the therapeutic power of the voice.

### **The power of the voice in ancient times:**

Armstrong (1996:73) describes how, in ancient times, the voice played a significant role in tribal ritual. The tribe used voice and chants to mark their festivities, births, 'marriages' and mourning, and to lighten the burden of work in the fields. Pearce in his book mentions Sezekly, a philologist and archaeologist, who exposed ancient Aramaic texts, pointing to the importance ascribed by the people to voice as an inseparable component of the incarnation of divinity - quoting an ancient document: "In the beginning was the sound, and the sound was with god, and the sound was god" (Pearce, 2005: 158-9).

Ancient peoples also believed that, just as the god's voice had the power to create the earth, human beings were able to arouse their own creative powers by using their voice (Pearce, 2005:159). This also explains the importance they ascribed to prayer and religious chants, believing thereby to obtain the gods' blessing (Armstrong, 1996: 73). In ancient times, the people were also closely connected to the surrounding nature, and in particular to animals. They obtained food by hunting them, used their fur to keep warm, took them out to pasture and used their voice to communicate with them (Armstrong, 1996). Animals were an inseparable part of their environment, and the animals' instinctual behaviour surrounding them naturally became an inherent part of their life, and enabled them to give expression to similar experiences of their own.

"The language of the animals...the primary level of vocal expression (Pikes, 1994)...that longs to roar, snarl, holler...moan, cry and bay at the moan: in short to be the animals we are" (Newham, 1999:114).

During one enactment in a myths session, I was able to express profound pain and sorrow while impersonating a wounded buffalo, uttering desolate primeval sounds. I doubt I could have done it so authentically as a person. In an experiment in 1904, while examining the relationship between “sound reaction” and human behaviour, Jung proposed the hypothesis that in ancient times human kind used “non-verbal sound and sound associations” as a means of communication, and that language developed as a secondary and conscious process (Gwendolyn, 2005:28). Referring to the use of language in those days, he quotes Jung who asserted

“Language was originally a system of emotive and imitative sounds, expressing terror, fear, anger, love...sounds which imitate the noises of the elements: the rushing and gurgling of water, the rolling of thunder, the roaring of the wind, the cries of the animal world” (Jung, 1952: 12-14).

Jung believed that within every person there are ancient archetypal remnants, containing the primary instincts, characterizing human kind since the dawn of human history. He called this phenomenon the “collective unconscious”. Presumably, the development of oral language gradually reduced the people’s non-verbal repertoire. There is also evidence that the development of written language had further implications for the use of voice: For instance, the Pueblo tribe of Native American people of New Mexico believe that when human speech is translated into writing, it loses its power. That is why they preserve their language in its oral form only (Pearce, 2005:9).

### **Factors leading to the suppression of the authentic voice in modern society:**

The first sign of life given by a child at birth is vocal. The voice is the natural way of expressing its basic needs: through crying the child expresses hunger and discomfort. However, babies produce a much richer variety of sounds. Armstrong (1996:73) speaks about “primal curiosity”, expressed by babies by means of an abundance of chirping, gurgling, calls and shrieks. Newham (1992:324) mentions that babies play with their voice naturally, but personal and social factors subsequently limit their ability of vocal expression. The sounds that appeared so natural are repressed into their unconscious (Jung, 1906:385). In the next chapter I shall examine how social and personal factors, such as trauma, may constrain our voice in the course of time.

### **Social factors constraining vocal expression**

In the course of time, the society has undergone an accelerated process of change from a tribal society with emphasis on the collective experience, to a global and individualistic society. Pierce (2005:25) maintains that a few basic changes sufficed, such as in the composition of the food consumed, loss of the connection to the earth, the type of clothes worn, and the break up of the tribal collective, to lead

to change in human characteristics and vocal expression. In modern multicultural society, the power of the language of the majority suppressed the languages and voices of minority cultures. Armstrong (1997:45) describes how, in Wales, Ireland and parts of Scotland, the local languages were suppressed and English predominated. Pikes (1994:1,14) describes how in the course of time, concert halls and opera houses have turned into “industries or museums for culture” promoting professional singers, representing “the beautiful voice”, while ignoring people with voices uttering sounds on “the primary level of vocal expression”.

Women were subdued and their voice was also suppressed in the course of hundreds of years. The patriarchal society chose to ignore their voice in the home, where most of them worked. Women learnt that they should avoid using a voice reflecting power (Linklater, 2000:29). They were required to develop “a nice voice” representing femininity (Rodenberg, 1992:76). On another plane, Pikes (1994:6) criticizes the Church for creating a persona covering our faces with a mask, separating us from our body and voice, driving them into the “shadow”. He also cites Hillman (1977), who asserts: “Christianity cleansed the soul of its polytheistic imaginal possibility”. Moreover, demographic and industrial development have eroded natural resources and have separated us from our ‘native sound’ (Rodenberg, 1992:67). We have created a dependence on technology, manifested, for instance, in the use of the computer, and television turns us into passive consumers of visual and aural stimuli. Environmental pollution is constantly increasing, and with it the incidence of respiratory diseases such as asthma, causing harm to the voice (Pearce, 2005:26).

It is clear that in early childhood, our ability to express ourselves using our voice is subjected to the influence of our family. Pearce (2005:23) states: “We are influenced by the voices, pronunciation, vowel tones, sense of rhythm and energy of the people around us.” If, as children, we sense that people are not listening to us or disparaging our voice, we draw the conclusion that we have no right to express ourselves (Armstrong, 1996:74).

### **Trauma and its impact on the voice**

Many studies found a close relationship between trauma people have experienced and the ability to utter a sound. Jung worked with traumatized clients. Referring to the physiological effects of trauma, Jung called the throat “a ring of fear”, thus describing the locking of the throat muscles in its wake. Pearce supports this view, mentioning that in a state of stress or trauma, the muscles in the body tighten, impairing breathing, and the sounds we are able to utter become fainter (2005:28). There is also evidence that the systems in the brain, related to the storing of memories, do not function properly as a result of a traumatic event and later impair the ability to give verbal expression to the trauma (Casson, 2004:94). Rodenberg (1992:28, 89) describes cases of rape, when the victims reported they ‘froze’, preventing them from using their voice during their traumatic experience.

While participating in a Myths session, I relived an Israeli-national trauma, when I chose to represent a mythological figure that had lost its head. In this story, I was the head that was disconnected from the body, and I was incapable of producing a sound, even though I sensed a loud scream within me. It was only at the end of the activity that I was amazed to discover the direct connection between my choice of the figure and my traumatic experience of seeing a photograph of the severed head of an Israeli soldier, held up for all to see, during the war six years ago.

### **The ‘shadow’, and how it can be given a voice**

In the previous sections I dealt with the significance of the use of voice in ancient times, and the way social and personal circumstances led, in the course of time, to the suppression of both the tribal and the individual voice. This process was examined by many psychologists, among them Jung, who tried to understand what characterizes the domain where the suppressed materials are concealed. Jung called the dark place in the soul where that energy was arrested – ‘shadow’ (Storr, 1998:91).

#### **Part 1: The ‘shadow’**

Pikes (1999:54) quotes Jung, who asserted: “The shadow is the thing a person has no wish to be” (Jung, 1906:470). Stevens spoke about how important it is for us to be aware of the ‘shadow’ within our personality and to express it. He wrote:

“Without some acknowledgment of the devil within us, individuation cannot proceed: coming to terms with one’s own evil is the first...stage in realization of the self. True morality requires that the shadow achieve consciousness, because on that condition alone can an individual become responsible for the events of his life” (Stevens, 1982:241).

Jung believed that becoming aware of the materials in the ‘shadow’ is not only important for the individual, but involves responsibility to society within which we live. He maintains that if we do not deal with materials threatening us, they are projected on others and we ascribe them to them, thus sidestepping a genuine confrontation with our real nature (1903:87).

#### **Part 2: The breakthrough - giving the ‘shadow’ a voice**

Jung identified the potential within us to give the ‘shadow’ a voice. Newham (1992:324) describes a case study by Jung, in which a young girl declared she heard voices of the dead. When he observed her during a séance, Jung was amazed at the way she used different accents to represent the figures she encountered (1902: 3-50).

While Jung's direct contribution to research of the voice was limited, it was Alfred Wolfsohn, who focused on the way the human voice is able to give expression to the 'shadow'. During the battles of the First World War, Wolfsohn experienced their horror at close range. He heard the screams of his wounded friends, their groans, their shrieks of terror. Later he called them "voice in extremis". At the end of the war, Wolfson was diagnosed as suffering from shellshock, manifested in aural hallucinations. He believed that if he were to succeed in voicing the cries that were haunting him, he would be able to stop them (1992:325-6). He saw in Jung's psychological conception the basis for his research of voice. However, while

"Jung observed the way psychological images are expressed pictorially and linguistically, Wolfsohn was concerned with the expression of these images phonically, through voice without words" (Newham, 1992:329).

Wolfsohn believed that, if the voice really expresses "the true nature of the psyche in its entirety", it has the need to shout, to scream, to sob, and to express the ancient needs concealed in the 'shadow'.

Roy Hart, Wolfsohn's disciple, who founded an approach to the theatre based on his principles, described the way the voice helped him express the contradictions within his personality, when he told about his life:

"I'm a South African Jew. But it has been necessary for me to find even Adolf Hitler, a South African negro, a South African white man, and beside all the good, all the evil of the world in myself...realizing that the relation between the aggressor and victim is in myself" (Pikes, 1999:84-85).

Professionals, dealing with voice and aware of its archetypal significance, sometimes choose to work with voice devoid of verbal content. They believe that language is a secondary process that developed in the course of time and reduced the emotional repertoire, displayed by the voice in ancient times. Pikes (1994:10), similarly to Wolfsohn, believed that work with voice should not be verbal, and that it was important to produce the sound not from the head nor from the larynx, but from within the whole body, experiencing it the way our ancestors did. Armstrong also assists the participants in her workshops to experience the power of tribal non-verbal chants, issuing from the body as it moves. She believes that this helps not only to create a collective identity in the group, but also to express ancient components within our personality (Wales, workshop with Frankie Armstrong, July, 2006).

## **Ways to promote the use of 'shadow' materials vocally within the 'Sesame' approach to Dramatherapy**

In this section I shall attempt to present the potential in the expression of the 'shadow' vocally, by suggesting a variety of possibilities within the 'Sesame' approach to Dramatherapy. I shall integrate within my suggestions descriptions of formative experiences I had during my personal journey to investigate the 'shadow' through voice in the course of last year, in movement, drama and myths courses, and in a voice workshop with a Drama Therapy group I participate in for treatment. I shall also provide practical suggestions as to how work with voice can be integrated within Sesame sessions.

### **Voice and movement:**

One of the instruments we use in the Sesame approach is movement. It connects the body and the mind; thus, as soon as we are able to free the body from the dictates of expectations of a "perfect performance of dance movements", such as aesthetic considerations and rules of what is permitted and forbidden, we enable an abundance of feelings to express themselves through movement. This idea was expressed by Hobbs (2006):

"Like soul, Body and Voice are all one thing. This isn't spiritual singing, it's inspirational singing. A voice which exhorts the listener to not just get up and dance but to get up and be damned; to explode with the dark...explode with emotional and psychic charge: to embrace the extraordinary, to get burned up by it" (Hobbs, 2006:4).

Freeing the movement may sometimes arouse resistance, particularly among clients for whom it is a new method, and as therapists, we must find a way to help them cope with the difficulty. The Sesame approach, emphasizing work through symbols and metaphors, may help. When we succeed in arousing the clients' imagination and in encouraging them to create around them a world rich in imagery, their bodies and feelings will gradually be inspired by the images. An event I experienced may clarify what I mean: It happened during the voice workshop with Frankie Armstrong. In the course of my individual work with Frankie, I asked her to enable me, by means of the exercise 'call and respond', to raise elements from the 'shadow' within me. After some five minutes of vocal non-verbal dialogue, I stopped Frankie and told her that I am "faking the voices" and expressed my frustration at not being able to connect to my emotions through voice, as I had hoped. Then Frankie asked five people from the group who were observing me, to hold my feet firmly to the ground, to prevent me from moving. She stood far away from me and we started the vocal activity again. I shall not forget the feeling and the image of helplessness, when, weighed down in the depths by a heavy anchor, I am making in vain an all-out effort to move forward. In those moments my voice uttered the sounds I wanted to revive, the voice coming from the depth of my psyche, expressing frustration,

pain, anger and vulnerability. This experience helped me understand that obstinate attempts to knock squarely at the “door to the shadow” may be useless, while imagination and metaphor may be the password opening that door.

Another, even more basic question, has to be attended to: How necessary is vocal expression during activities emphasizing movement? Since the body is able to express human experience emotionally in innumerable ways, we may presume that the effectiveness of the voice is thereby dwarfed. However, in my view, this attitude leads to the loss of an opportunity to add another dimension to the use of movement to enable the psyche to express itself. Movement releases tremendous physical energy; we breathe quickly and heavily, and without realizing it we produce an abundance of sounds, attesting to the body’s efforts. What will happen if we encourage the clients to express the sounds more freely, to enlist them to intensify the experience of the movement? What will happen if we turn the groan, the grunt, the cracked voice into an experience, giving the clients the opportunity to wonder at the concealed elements in their soul, until now unexpressed? Giving vent to these sounds also opens a window to the ‘shadow’ materials and may lead to a creative and exciting inner journey.

### **Voice and drama:**

One of the ways to promote vocal expression through drama is by means of character work. This is brought about by visual stimuli, images, assisting in the forging of the figure’s identity. Subsequently, the use of voice can be encouraged.

One way of working on a figure is by means of an imaginary piece of clothing, worn by the participant, such as a hat or shoes, from which the figure develops. We experienced a similar process in one of our drama sessions, when, by means of guided imagination, we were asked to wear a pair of imaginary shoes, the choice of shoes being left to us. I remember that I wore shoes made of the skin of a deer, and when I began to walk in space and focus on my feet, I felt how I gradually came to wear leather trousers and an Indian tribal shirt. Then my body bent down close to the ground and became tense; I felt how the figure was gradually taking shape, and the story drew me in without any intention on my part, my consciousness widening to include the surroundings within which I was walking, a desert landscape, bare, with low vegetation, and I became alert, treading stealthily in pursuit of a quarry. And then, naturally, the sound burst from my throat, sharp, absurd, embodying not only my ancient nature, but also as a means of communication with the object of the hunt or with other members of the tribe, my colleagues, who did not know that - while they believed they were Cinderella or the giant looking after his garden - for me they were members of an enemy tribe, or participants in the hunt. Reflecting on the situation I understood that an affinity had been created within me with the archetype of a warrior/hunter, referred to frequently by Jung (<http://www.astralconnect.com>).

Sometimes, in particular when we are working with sensitive clients, uttering an “ugly sound” may cause them to feel exposed and embarrassed. We may relieve this feeling through working in a group. Such work removes the focus from the individual and enables him or her to become acquainted with other figures and a variety of sounds, produced by other participants. In her work as drama therapist, Casson (2004) found that “One feels less self-conscious/inhibited using the voice, if there is other sound: yelling together or at the same time drumming gives people permission to be vocally powerful” (Casson, 2004:98).

A personal experience I had this year within the framework of treatment via Drama Therapy, showed me the power of drama and voice in enabling the individual’s creative expression when part of a group. During one of the sessions we were asked to split up into two groups and create two different residential environments, where we wish to invite the other group. My group, an ancient tribe, created a village made of mud and a language containing just one word – “mud”. I discovered that apart from the humorous effect one can produce with a single word as a means of communication, the word was also able to create an authentic tribal identity, when all the members share a language and a way of life consisting of building mud houses, and yet each one has a specific character. The ability to create a collective identity, enabling a wealth of personal expression to its individual members, was the secret of the pleasure we derived from this exercise.

### **Voice and myths:**

One of my most formative experiences this year was my use of voice during the myths sessions. What was there in those myths we dramatized that had such an impact on me? It may be explained by the way certain myths survived for many generations and the importance ascribed to them by ancient cultures. Myths served human beings to forge an affinity with the gods, with the forces of nature and animals. At the same time they gave them a sense of cultural identity.

Myths teach us about human nature. This also makes them potentially very valuable as a therapeutic tool. It enables clients to express repressed emotions by means of significant figures that have stood the test of time, with human qualities that can help them express their needs in a totally sincere and secure way. In my case they also created a liberating distance from the burden of “the Conscious Eran, always aware, judging and criticizing”, and enabled unconscious materials to express themselves vocally in different and surprising ways by means of the various mythological figures I chose to represent.

However, I realized that many of my colleagues in the course, as well as the clients I work with, have a real difficulty to give full expression to their voice in all its nuances within the medium of the story. Smail (2005:33), the leader of the myths course in Sesame, and also Condaris and

Bradley (2005:34, unpublished paper) point to a similar phenomenon. When speaking of therapeutic work using myths, Condaris and Bradley maintain:

“Myth enactments give people a way to express the psyche. Participants may make sounds in warm ups, but in the enactment something happens and they remain silent” (2005:34).

In spite of the above-mentioned difficulty, I think that by means of persistence and creative work with voice, it is possible to revive the vocal potential of myth enactment in Sesame. To ensure this happens, we, therapists, must make it legitimate to use voice throughout the session. Using voice must be an integral part of drama, play and movement, complementing them.

Now I shall try to show how various exercises during a myths session may assist clients to develop richer vocal expression. The ways to do so are obviously innumerable; I shall focus on one particular plan, structured according to the Sesame session plans.

#### *Focus stage:*

Its role: This stage enables the group to converge in a circle and creates mutual awareness.

Possible exercise: at this stage we may pass around an object, for instance a table napkin, and encourage the group by using gibberish to express how they are feeling.

#### *Warm up stage:*

Its role: To warm up the body and the voice, and arouse the imagination in preparation for the main activity.

Possible exercises: Passing an imaginary object round the circle, while the participants relate to it, using drama and voice. Another exercise can create a dialogue using voice, and also movement between the participants' feet, in pairs or groups.

#### *The bridge-in stage:*

Its role: In a myths session the participants can work on an image from the story to be told and enacted in the main event.

Possible exercises: Creating group statues, representing images from the story (for instance, an old tree in a wood), and asking the clients to characterize the statues vocally. Another possibility, for instance in the story about Ali Baba and the forty thieves, is to generate the image of the cave vocally. The group creates the shape of the cave, and then all the participants in turn shout into it, while the cave echoes their calls.

#### *The main event:*

Its role: The clients are to choose figures to represent, likely to help them express unconscious components of their psyche.

Guidance: After presenting the mythological tale, the facilitator can instruct the participants to use only gibberish during the enactment. Any co-facilitators present should model the use of the voice in this way.

*The bridge-out stage:*

Its role: To provide an opportunity for replication of significant moments in the story, and gradual withdrawal from the story.

Possible exercises: In the wake of the story, one of the participants creates a statue with his/her body and expresses the emotion the story generated within him/her, or an image from the story that made a deep impression on him/her, and the group makes a circle round this person and gives voice to the statue. The participants may also draw or sculpt the image from the story and subsequently try to give vent to the sound the image generates.

*The grounding stage:*

Its role: To bring the clients back to the “here and now”, to the real room and the other people in it.

Possible exercises: To sing a song, containing the participants’ names. The clients can also be made aware of their real bodies (and thus detach themselves from the figure in the story) by knocking against various parts of the body and testing the sounds produced (a deep sound, a whisper etc.).

Notwithstanding the potential for the use of voice in this session, it is important to assess the clients’ ability to use voice and adapt the work accordingly. Sometimes a particular exercise may be embarrassing or threatening to a client. The work must therefore be adapted to the client’s personality, and the stage and aims of the treatment.

**Conclusion:**

In this paper I have attempted to show how the voice can serve as a meaningful tool to express materials concealed in the ‘shadow’ within our psyche. I mentioned how in ancient times it was used for personal and ritualistic expression, and suggested how personal and social processes gradually reduced the human vocal repertoire. Then I tried to explain the concept of the collective and personal ‘shadow’, proposed by Jung, and how modern approaches to voice wish to exploit it to legitimize vocal expression of the ‘shadow’ in modern society. In the last part of my paper I have shown how the Sesame approach to Dramatherapy, through the use of symbol and metaphor, provides opportunities to rediscover the authentic voice, and express it within the framework of movement, drama and work with myths. I explained how my personal journey through the Sesame programme contributed to my

awareness of the power of voice to express emotion, and of its potential therapeutic value, also for the clients we worked with as dramatherapists. I included examples of exercises stimulating the imagination and releasing the voice. However, I am aware that to attain these aims, other aspects of work with voice should be examined to enrich the Sesame approach. For instance, I would gladly continue my investigation to examine how using archetypes, such as ‘the wise old man’, ‘the hunter’ and ‘the mother’, might encourage richer vocal expression of the psyche. In my research I would like to focus on ways working with voice within the Sesame approach could alleviate the effects of P.T.S.D., or of profound anxiety.

Another question I wish to probe is how facilitators, by using their voice during the session, may foster the clients’ vocal expression (for instance, in the way they give instructions, tell the story, or guide the imagination).

I believe in the importance of integrating vocal work within the Sesame programme as a separate unit or by giving it more weight within existing courses. It would help students acquire a tool enabling them to become better dramatherapists and turn the voice into a powerful means of self-discovery by the clients.

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