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## Reflection on the Santorini Voice Symposium

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Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature, Volume 44, Number 1, March 2011, pp. 162-163 (Article)

Published by Mosaic, an interdisciplinary critical journal

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mos.2011.a418768>



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**O**ne day, while we were rehearsing a work for tenor and orchestra (I am in the orchestra), I not only took notice of the tenor's voice but also was moved by how he used his whole body as he sang. As he took a breath for his next phrase, his whole back, buttocks, legs, shoulders (and probably his feet too) were involved and alive. He also sang without any extraneous movements; everything was essentially given to his voice production. So I thought, wouldn't it be great if I could do this same thing on the violin? For, we are not usually trained to free up our bodies and play music. Instead, I have given years trying to perfect my *martele*, play in tune, learn my concertos, etc., thinking, overall, about how I'm using my fingers, wrists, elbows, neck and shoulders; locking my knees, my lower back pain, and holding my breath were never considered.

How does Kristin Linklater's work speak to the musician? Do our voices, our notes and words, coincide as performers? How can we as instrumentalists connect with our voice; how can we (re-) gain an unhindered, free voice? The work gets deeper as I wonder if I'm *finding* my voice. Or did I forget my voice? Where and when did I leave my voice?

If I perform a work, my playing must say something, have sense and meaning as an interpretation. I think that being free in our bodies and allowing ourselves to play unfettered by our hyper-critical and judgmental mind can greatly help us with musical performance. Whatever composer I play, I try to connect with his/her style and particular sound; and while I do try to discover the composer's intent, I want to enrich the work with my own voice.

My week with Kristin Linklater in Santorini made clear to me how many of my goals as a performer are tied to her project of finding and freeing our voices. Through the group convened on this Greek island, I experienced that I could leave fear behind and begin feeling and expressing my voice—my “I,” the “me”—openly to others. I worked on letting go of the fear of being judged and criticized by myself and others. There was a lot of baggage to let go! This load of fears is precisely that which hinders the freedom of the musician's voice. It is the beginning of a long path ahead.

I once saw a recital of Jesse Norman's. She sang a program of French, German lieder, and American songs. Before she started each work she took a moment and then took a stance. Her face and body took on a very distinct expression. She became the work she was about to perform. One knew immediately whether it would be a French, German, or American piece. She conveyed an idea of what the work was about even before she started singing it!

—Aurora Manuel