

all the *law's* a *stage*

Using *Vocal Techniques*
From *Theatre* to
Improve **Presentation**
And **Public Speaking Skills**

2016 Capital Area Legal Writing Conference
Stephen Paskey ■ *SUNY Buffalo Law School*

Evaluate A Speaker

- Close your eyes & just listen
- Open them when I tell you to
- **Is the speaker ...**
Intelligent? Competent?
Credible? Likeable? Effective?



Your reactions?

- *Intelligent?*
- *Competent?*
- *Credible?*
- *Likeable?*
- *Effective?*

Why do we care?

*Lawyers **speak more frequently** than we **write**, to varied audiences*

- Clients & prospective clients
- Supervisors & colleagues
- Opposing counsel
- The media
- The public
- Students
- Judges, juries, agency officials, & other legal decision-makers

Three Attributes of Delivery

VERBAL

*The words
you say*

VOCAL

*What you
sound like*

VISUAL

*What they
see*

In More Detail

Vocal

- Volume
- Energy
- Tone
- Pitch
- Clarity
- Pace
- Emphasis
- Expression

Visual

- Posture
- Facial Expressions
- Eye Contact
- Movement
- Gestures

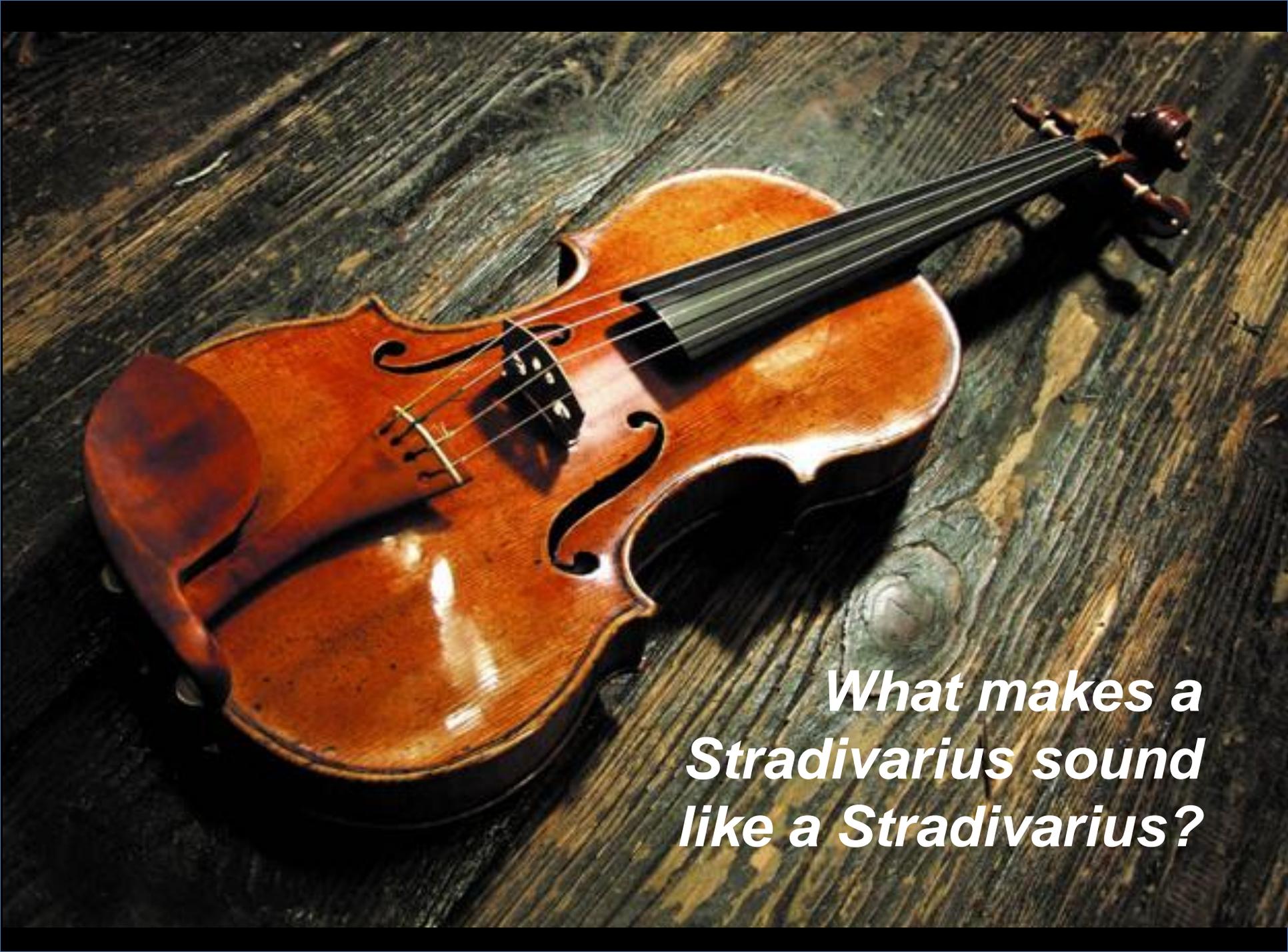
Plus attire & appearance

Verbal

- Jargon
- Filler
- Wordiness
- Transitions
- Colloquial words
- Weak words
- Respect-robbing words

And more

how does
the voice
work?

A close-up photograph of a violin resting on a dark, textured wooden surface. The violin is positioned diagonally, with its body on the left and its neck extending towards the top right. The wood of the violin is a rich, warm brown color, showing some wear and a glossy finish. The background is a dark, weathered wooden plank with prominent grain and knots. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the curves of the violin's body and the texture of the wood.

*What makes a
Stradivarius sound
like a Stradivarius?*

The Individual **Parts ?**

**Vocal folds, lungs, trachea,
larynx, diaphragm, nasal
cavity, tongue, lips, hard
palate, soft palate ...**

Or the **entire** body?

Theatre Voice Exercises

- ***Stance and relaxation***
- ***Breath***
- ***Pitch***
- ***Tone***
- ***Volume & Energy***
- ***Articulation (Clarity)***
- ***Expression & Emphasis***

STANCE

- **A effective voice begins with a relaxed body & good posture.**
 - ***Take a grounded stance***
 - ***Relax larger muscles: shoulders, arms, torso, head & neck***
 - ***Relax facial muscles***

TAKE A STANCE

Feet	hip width
Weight	evenly distributed
Knees	slightly bent
Spine	straight
Shoulders	down & back
Arms	loose at sides
Hands	relaxed
Head	balanced & up
Face & jaw	relaxed and slack
Mouth	relaxed & open

RELAX LARGE MUSCLES

Yawn and stretch

Arm swings

Drop down

Shoulder raises

Head rolls

RELAX FACIAL MUSCLES

Scrunch & release
Kiss & grin
Motorboats
Raspberries
“Tongue gymnastics”

BREATH

- An effective voice is grounded in proper breathing.
- *Imagine filling two spaces – using both your ribs and your diaphragm.*

BREATHING 101

Take a grounded stance.

Breathe in through your nose. Picture filling a vessel with air. Fill your abdomen, then your lower ribs, then up to your chin.

Hold for a count of three.

Exhale slowly through your mouth.

Keep your ribs expanded. Tighten your abdomen as if you were doing a “crunch.”

Lower abdominal muscles should come in first. Picture rolling a tube of toothpaste.

PITCH

- An effective voice is grounded in a natural pitch that varies with meaning.
- *But what is “pitch”?*
 - *The frequency at which you speak; high or low; similar to a note in music*

FINDING YOUR PITCH

Stand in a relaxed posture.

Breathe in deeply and make the sound “ah.”

Gently go up and down the scale.

Don't force anything; don't tense the muscles or strain.

Find out how high and how low you can comfortably go. Then, find the middle where you feel most comfortable.

That's your best voice.

FINDING YOUR VOICE

**Intone the phrase “doe ray me.”
Intone the numbers “one,” “two,” “three.”
Do it again, and add “four.”**

**Pause to breath, and then speak your
opening without thinking.**

***“May It please the court. My name is -----,
and I represent the plaintiff, -----.”***

DEVELOP FLEXIBILITY

Say “mah,” and as you do take your voice smoothly from low to high on one note, then from high to low.

Make a conscious effort to speak rather than sing.

Repeat, varying the pitches on which you begin and end, until you can do this with ease.

BROADEN YOUR RANGE

**Recite the phrase below at a medium tempo.
Then repeat it, first faster, then slower.
Do this repeatedly and vary the pitch patterns.
Be spontaneous and read for vocal effect.**

**Never, oh never, the fatal endeavor,
the ties that they sever, the fatal endeavor,
the true tried tricycle,
the tricycle tried and true.**

TONE

- An effective voice has a resonant tone.
- *But what is “tone”?*
 - *The “quality” of the sound; whether it’s “thick” or “thin,” “rich” or “shrill.” It’s the difference you hear when a piano, a flute, and a violin all play the same note.*

ROUNDING VOWELS

Yawn on a long AH sound, feeling the arching of the soft palette in your mouth. Do this three times. Repeat using OO and EE. Aim for a full, round, rich sound on each vowel.

Intone these lines:

No no no no no

Nee nee nee nee nee

Moo moo moo moo moo

Mah mah mah mah mah

No moo nee mah (3 times)

ARTICULATION (Clarity)

- An effective voice has precise articulation.
- *But what is “articulation”?*
 - *The clear, crisp, accurate production of consonant sounds*

TONGUE TWISTERS

A box of biscuits.

A box of mixed biscuits and a biscuit mixer.

**A big black bug bit a big black bear and the
big black bear bled blood.**

**Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager
managing an imaginary menagerie.**

**Any noise annoys an oyster, but an noisy
noise annoys an oyster most.**

VOLUME & ENERGY

- An effective voice has energy and the appropriate volume.
- *Consider the room, the audience, the circumstances, and your message*

“THROWING” THE VOICE

Have two students stand 3 feet apart & give one a small ball. Tell them to toss the ball back & forth as they say **“May it please the court.”**

With each toss, they should take a step or two back until they’re as far apart as possible.

With each step, they’ll need to throw the ball harder **AND increase their volume.**

Once they’re at full distance, tell one to speak and throw as if they’re 3 feet apart. Then, have them come together again, and tell one to ***imagine*** ***throwing and speaking as if they’re 20 feet apart.***

EXPRESSION & EMPHASIS

- An effective voice uses variety for expression and emphasis.
 - *Volume; Pitch; Pace; Pauses*

“May it please the court.”

EMPHASIS 1

Read the sentence below in a monotone.

**Then, read it again repeatedly
and experiment with emphasis, using
pauses and varying the volume,
pitch, and pace.**

**She took that guy
to the party
and she left alone.**

EMPHASIS 2

**Choose any short text and
read it for emphasis,
using pauses and varying the
volume, pitch, and pace.**

**(For today, use one of the short
soliloquies from *Hamlet*
on the handout.)**

Three Attributes of Delivery

VERBAL

*The words
you say*

VOCAL

*What you
sound like*

VISUAL

*What they
see*

Do They Enhance or Detract?

- *Stance* – upright, relaxed, balanced
- *Eye Contact* – with everyone
- *Expression* – relaxed, natural
- *Gestures* – defined, relevant
- *Movement* – Purposeful
- *Appearance* – neat, appropriate

The “TED Talk” Study

- 760 volunteers watched a selected group of TED talks and rated the speakers

*Half watched with the volume **on**; half with it **off***

Key Points from the Study

- *The ratings from the two groups were the same*
- *How* you say it matters
- “*Jazz hands* rock”
- *Scripts kill* charisma
- Smiling makes you look *smarter*
- You have *seven seconds*

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

VERBAL

*The words
you say*

VOCAL

*What you
sound like*

VISUAL

*What they
see*

presence
and the
second
circle

Three Circles of Energy

- *First Circle*
 - Energy falls inward
 - Passivity, resignation, disengagement
- *Third Circle*
 - Generalized outward energy
 - Speaking to everyone
 - Controlling superiority
 - *We sometimes need either first or second.*

The **Second** Circle

- Present, engaged, connected
- An exchange of energy
- The circle of equality
- A sense of absolute presence

**patsy
rodenburg**
*why I do
theatre*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=L9jjhGq8pMM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9jjhGq8pMM)

Finding the Second Circle

- *Focus on one person at a time*
 - One *topic* or *sentence* per person
 - Project a *focused* outward energy
 - Focus eye contact, attention, breath, voice, volume

Thank you.

[He bows.]

STEPHEN PASKEY

SUNY Buffalo Law School

sjpaskey@buffalo.edu

716-548-0253