

September 12, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

I attended a Mini-Workshop led by Allison Hetzel on August 8, 2019 at the VASTA Conference held in Orlando, FL. The title of the workshop, Creating Voice, Breath, and Body Connections was based on Hetzel's years of training with Catherine Fitzmaurice and the Presence work of Patsy Rodenburg. A good deal of the workshop dealt with Fitzmaurice's ideal of being able to both see, imagine, and feel the breath of the actor.

The workshop began with Hetzel using a tinger to "Chime In" the participants—inviting participants an opportunity to focus on breath and come to Presence. Hetzel remarked that she often uses the chimes to bring individual's into focus.

Next participants formed a Breathing Circle where they placed hands on their neighbor's lower back ribs while looking at one another in order to feel the full swing of the ribs.

Then partners were asked to observe each other. Each partner put hands on their partner's ribs after consent and suggestions about where each person was comfortable being touched. Each partner was asked to share a memorable moment from their life or a short story while the other partner observed their breathing. The listening partner shut their eye as they listened in order to see, feel, and imagine what was being shared by the other attending only to breath. They were asked to connect images and speak the images to their partner's eyes.

Hetzel then asked for observations about what each saw, felt, and imagined. Many of the participants noted the engagement of abdominal support muscles when their partner was speaking—especially in heightened moments. The final discussion centered around how trainers might use these simple exercises in the classroom.

Allison was poised in the workshop space and used a pleasant, persuasive, and resonant voice. I gained an insight especially into Catherine Fitzmaurice's suggestion of the power of seeing the breath while feeling it.

Sincerely,

Marlene Johnson

Marlene Johnson
Professor of Voice, Movement, and Acting
Department of Theatre
University of Alabama Birmingham