

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

Can't
wait
to hear
you
with
Michèle Voillequé

Full Episode Transcript

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Your voice is unique to you. It grows as you grow. It changes as you change. If you're curious about the relationship between your voice and your body, your heart and your mind, welcome. My name is Michèle Voillequé and I can't wait to hear you.

One of my teachers told me that one of his teachers told him that the point is not to deliver a perfect performance.

The point is to learn to practice as perfectly as possible, so that good performances become inevitable.

I have really taken this to heart. and I have noticed that this is how my teacher has taught me, has tried to show me how to practice as perfectly as possible.

And, sure enough, good performances have become inevitable for me. And that feeling of confidence and mastery and certainty has really been life changing.

Not only has my singing and speaking voice become stronger, better, more versatile, but how I feel about my singing and my speaking voice has changed, and therefore how I feel about myself. How I treat myself has changed for the better.

I'm gonna be teaching a class starting in July for 12 weeks.

The class is going to be about how to warm up your unique voice. What these elements of perfect practicing are, and how you can apply them in your own life so that you begin relating to yourself consistently supportively, positively, so that your own performances become inevitably good.

Now, if your performances are already inevitably good, this class probably isn't for you. But if you have any anxiety at all about what your

Can't Wait to Hear You – a podcast with Michèle Voillequé

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

voice sounds like, or what could happen in the course of a song, or what might go wrong when you're singing or performing anything in public, keep listening.

So let's just, just explore for a moment in your mind the idea that a good performance from you is inevitable. It's just inevitable.

Imagine the confidence that comes with that. Just knowing that it's inevitable that whenever you opened your mouth to sing or to speak that you knew what was going to come out, or you were pretty sure, and you were pretty sure that if you didn't like what you heard, you could fix it almost immediately.

That empowerment, that confidence is just priceless.

If you knew that your performance was going to be inevitably good, you'd relate to your voice much more like a friend rather than something you needed to conquer or wrestle to the ground.

You'd treat your nervous system like it was a friend and not something you needed to medicate away, or wrestle to the ground.

You'd treat your physical body like it's part of the instrument that it is. Our whole self is the instrument when we're talking about our voice.

And if you knew your performances were inevitably good, you'd know that that's because you're in a good physical shape.

I don't mean that you can run a marathon. I mean that you know how to stretch your muscles. You know how to limber up, you know how to take a good breath. You know how to notice when there's tightness and you have some strategies for releasing it.

The most important thing, I think, about perfect practicing when it comes to the voice is understanding the voice in its component parts.

Can't Wait to Hear You – a podcast with Michèle Voillequé

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

Stepping away from the idea of “it's good if it sounds pretty,” – we want to make a beautiful sound, that’s true, but that's not the first concern.

Our first concern is how does the thing work? What are its component parts? How do they fit together and what could possibly go wrong?

So that we learn, as we are warming ourselves up, and as we're practicing, we learn how to troubleshoot the spots when it doesn't sound as good. And it's not just this black and white world of “it sounds good and I like it,” or “it sounds crappy and I don't,” and that means that today is not a day to be singing because I just don't like it.

So a brief overview of our component parts are the breath, which is separate from the space that we hold in our bodies when we're using our voices.

You can think of that as posture. There's a lot of negativity attached to the word posture. So I prefer to think about it as the space that I hold in my body – that’s more productive for me.

So we have the breath, the space that we hold in our body, the resonance we find in our head, and that's separate from whatever it is our tongue and teeth and jaw are doing to form the vowels and consonants.

When we can understand that our sound is the product of those things, of the relationship between the breath and the space and the resonance and our articulators, then when something's going wrong, I can teach you how to troubleshoot.

That gives you more confidence and that helps you practice more perfectly, and that contributes to your inevitably good performances.

There is a tyranny, too, about the word perfect, and I wanna say that this idea of “perfect practice” isn't about tyranny at all. It's not about beating yourself up. It's not about black and white. In fact, I would say it's about

Can't Wait to Hear You – a podcast with Michèle Voillequé

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

maximally allowing yourself to be yourself.

So part of what you'll learn in the class is how to have fun, how to find ease in what it is that you're trying to learn, how to find joy.

Because when we practice and we have fun and we experience ease and joy, that makes not just good performances inevitable, but easy, joyful, fun performances inevitable.

There's the added benefit that the qualities we need for perfect practicing are also qualities that benefit us in the rest of our lives, like, approaching a task with a sense of relaxation – not the relaxation that we're falling asleep, but relaxation that what's before us may be difficult, but we're not going to add stress on top of the difficulty.

We're just going to see that this is difficult and we're gonna do the best we can, and we're gonna be as relaxed about it as possible. We're not gonna beat ourselves up when it doesn't work the first or the fifth or the 50th time. We're just going to keep finding ways to breathe and relax and find another way.

Look for openings. How else might this work?

So that means when we're practicing well, we're also attentive to what's going on. We're not just doing exercises for the sake of doing exercises.

We're paying attention to the exercises and how they feel and how they sound, and, is this actually helping?

You might feel right now that you don't know enough to know whether something's actually helping. This is something that can be learned. This is something I can teach you. This is why I'm offering the class.

When we're perfectly practicing, we're also non-judgmental. We're allowing things to be. We're noticing rather than judging. We're calm

Can't Wait to Hear You – a podcast with Michèle Voillequé

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

rather than panicked. We have a sense of spaciousness in our body, but also our mind. We're curious about how things are going and what could we try next?

We're exploring. We're open. We're looking for fun.

We're prioritizing the process over the product, which really can be a tough sell, because when we're warming up, we often make sounds that are not very good. Like, that's part of the process. You don't get to only sound good, especially when you're warming up.

So it's important to learn to love the process. Get to know yourself. Know all of the strange and disappointing sounds you make when you're warming up so that you know to expect them and you know what helps them go away and, you know, when they tend to get better, what helps them improve, what doesn't help them improve.

And with that comes a lot of self-acceptance and appreciation.

And when you're in public and you're performing and you hear yourself make one of those disappointing sounds, if you've spent time with yourself consistently warming up, practicing well, attentively, you know how to deal with that.

You know the solution for that because you learned the solution for that in a calm, quiet, private environment, and now you happen to be in front of other people.

You've encountered a sound, a problem that you already know the solution for.

When we practice perfectly, when we warm up consistently, when we pay kind and considerate attention to ourselves, that's how we're able to change things in a performing environment, sometimes even before anybody else notices that something's gone wrong.

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

We can catch it and just adjust, and there's no drama because we've made a habit of warming up and practicing where we catch things and we adjust, and there's no drama.

So practicing perfectly isn't about tyranny. It's a process of deliberate exploration.

And that's what I want to teach you.

I haven't met my teacher's teacher, so I don't know that this is what was originally meant, but here's how I've come to understand it: our goal is not to give a perfect performance because perfect performances are not possible.

Not because we are imperfect humans, although that is true, we are imperfect humans.

Perfect performances aren't possible because we cannot control the world.

We cannot control the cell phone ringing, or the baby crying, or the metal water bottle that falls over or, even better, rolls down the raked floor of the hall. It's an amazing sound if you've ever heard it.

We can't control that.

Did that ruin a performance? I don't know. Some people would say maybe it ruined the performance, but did it throw the performer off? Yes, maybe a little, but the performer was able to recover because the performance is just us doing what we always do, only now we're in public.

So the performance cannot be perfect because even if we are perfectly prepared, there are just too many variables in the world that are beyond

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

our control.

What we can do is be ourselves, be our calmest, most radiant, most giving, most grounded, most artistic, most musical, most loving, most kind version of ourselves in public.

And when you practice that way, it's not a stretch. You're not trying to fit yourself into a suit of clothes you only wear twice a year. You're just being yourself.

So practicing perfectly is also a way of endeavoring to live perfectly, to live most honestly, most authentically. To be you.

This class is going to be on Thursday mornings at 10:00 AM Pacific on Zoom. And I'm going to teach you everything I know about Perfect Practicing, show you how to warm up your unique voice and and help you troubleshoot those spots that you've got questions about.

We're going to meet for an hour each week. The classes will be recorded, so if you miss one, or more importantly, if you want to go back and re-watch something, you can. They'll be posted in a private portal online so you can go look at them.

And we're going to work this out. We're gonna help you figure out how to treat your body with exquisite kindness, exquisite attention so that you can sound however you want to sound.

If you're interested in expanding the range of notes that's possible for you, this class will help.

If you're looking to feel more confident about your singing or your speaking voice, this class will help.

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

If you're looking to adopt a new warmup regimen, practicing program for yourself, this class will help.

If you're interested, all you need to do is send me an email letters@mvmusik.com. The link is in the show notes. Send me an email with **GROUP** in the subject line, and I'll put you on the wait list and make sure you get all of the details when they're available.

Again, the class starts July 16th. I'm recording this in early June, so you've got some time to think about it, and you've got some time to send me an email and ask me questions if you are wondering whether this would be right for you.

I've been teaching voice for almost 20 years now, and what I'm teaching in the group class is really not anything different than I would tell a private student.

But I want to teach it in a group because there's so much to be gained from watching other people learn, listening to other people's voices, hearing other people's struggles, and seeing for yourself how they relate to yours.

There's just so much power in learning in a group, particularly when it's voice, because how we learned to use our voice at all was by mimicking other people. So in this group environment, I am expecting us to be able to learn from one another's bodies, even though it's on Zoom. I have seen it happen before.

So this is what I have for you today.

Our goal is not to give perfect performances, but to practice as perfectly as possible so that good performances are inevitable, and I can't wait to help you on your own journey to inevitably good performances, beginning this July.

Ep #78: Sounding Consistently Good

Again, if you're interested in the class, send me an email with GROUP in the subject line letters@mvmusik.com.

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