

# Speaking As A Woman

by Alison Laing



A  
Guide For  
Those Who Desire  
To Communicate In A  
More Feminine Manner

*Speaking  
As A  
Woman*

*Alison Laing*

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*Alison Laing*

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## **Preface**

**S**omehow, for me, speaking to others when I am in female attire, is a little like going swimming for the first time each summer. I put on my bathing suit and go sit by the edge of the pool trying to get up my courage to jump in. The longer I wait the more I dread the shock of the cold water (even in a "heated" pool). Finally, by either wading in an inch or so at a time or by simply taking a spontaneous plunge, I find myself in the water. Knowing how to swim or being in a shallow area of known safe depth relieves me of all fear. And, unless the pool is exceptionally cold, I can soon splash around and have a good relaxing time.

The purpose of this book is to provide understanding and techniques that will assist those persons, born as males, to overcome any fear they have in speaking to others as females, especially in the outside pool of life.

During my early attempts at passing, I discovered that by talking in as feminine a manner as possible I received greater acceptance by those around me than I did by remaining silent. By plunging into the pool, I had to learn to swim, perhaps not in Olympic style but good enough. Later, I began to study how the voice worked and what more I could do to improve my abilities to speak as a woman. There is very little written for the lay person on this subject. Virginia Prince has several pages on this subject in her book "How to be a Woman though Male". I enrolled in the Fantasia Fair Workshops conducted by Dr. Reinhardt Heuer, Associate Professor and supervisor of the voice clinic at Temple University, Philadelphia, and attended seminars conducted by him

***This book is dedicated to Ariadne Kane of the Human Achievement and Outreach Institute, who was the first person to reach out and welcome me to the community of Transgendered Persons.***

***Thank you Ariadne.***

*Alison Laing*

at group meetings in the Philadelphia area. This book represents a compilation of all that I have learned on this subject. It is presented in a manner that I believe will assist the average TV/TS in achieving at least some improvement in their verbal communication skills and provide them with enough confidence to "jump in!"

I am indeed fortunate to live in the Philadelphia area so that I was able to take advantage of Dr. Heuer's proximity. A special note of thanks goes to him for his caring help that he gives transsexuals in his Temple University program and the sessions he conducts at *Fantasia Fair*. He was also of great assistance in reviewing this manuscript and providing much of the information on the mechanism for the generation of speech.

Most important, I have had the good fortune to know JoAnn Roberts and to take part with her in the founding of The Renaissance Education Association. She has set an example of being able to use her crossdressing experience to help others in many ways yet at the same time have fun, and maintain a positive attitude. She is always available to assist her sisters in what ever way she can. She has been of immense help and encouragement, specifically in preparation of this book and in general helping me get the most from my crossdressing experiences. I am also indebted to JoAnn's wife, Betty, for assistance in drafting this manuscript and preparation for "typesetting."

Finally, I must express my gratitude to my dear spouse, who has already demonstrated the ultimate in love and understanding, for her assistance in preparation and editing and providing me with a beautiful and wonderful role model.

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## **Introduction**

**A**ll dressed up, and you look perfect. The make-up is smashing, the hair beautiful, the dress, shoes and purse make a striking ensemble. Your lovely nails and jewelry set off the overall effect of being a most beautiful woman. You even have the walk and gestures down perfectly to the raised pinkie. But open your mouth and suddenly the illusion is shattered, or at least you feel it is! Of all the aspects of creating the perfect feminine impression, the voice is considered the most difficult to achieve. With an understanding of what can be done and a lot of practice, patience, confidence, and at least a little audacity, most of us can achieve a feminine vocal style that will complete our desired feminine image.

The first thing we think of in making our speech more feminine is pitch. Unfortunately without surgery, this is probably the one thing we can do the least about. On the other hand, pitch is only one part of the complex system which influences the apparent gender of speech. Inflection, intonation, intensity, resonance, vocabulary, sentence structure, as well as the non-verbal aspects of communications, (facial expression, gestures, body language, and attire) are all important and these are aspects that we can do a great deal about.

What follows is a discussion of each of the major parameters that influence the apparent gender of a speaker and what we can do to make our speech more feminine.

## How the Voice Works

**I**n order to effect the desired modification for more feminine speech it is necessary to have a basic understanding of how the voice works. The mechanism for generating speech is relatively simple but, the processes that affect the resulting tonal quality, pitch, and specific characteristics peculiar to each individual are quite complex. Figure-1 illustrates the basic elements for generating speech.

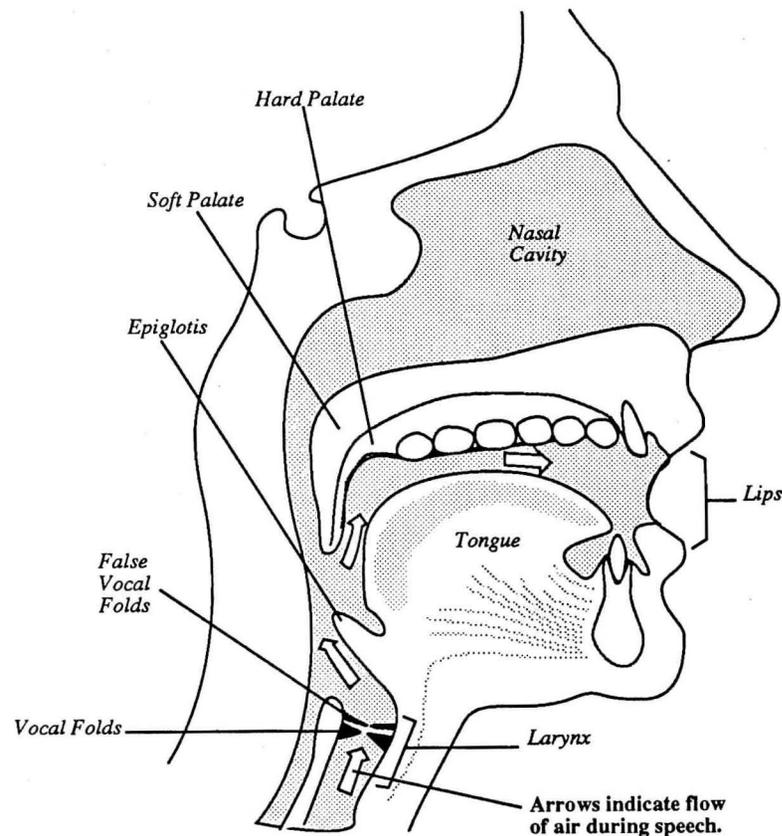


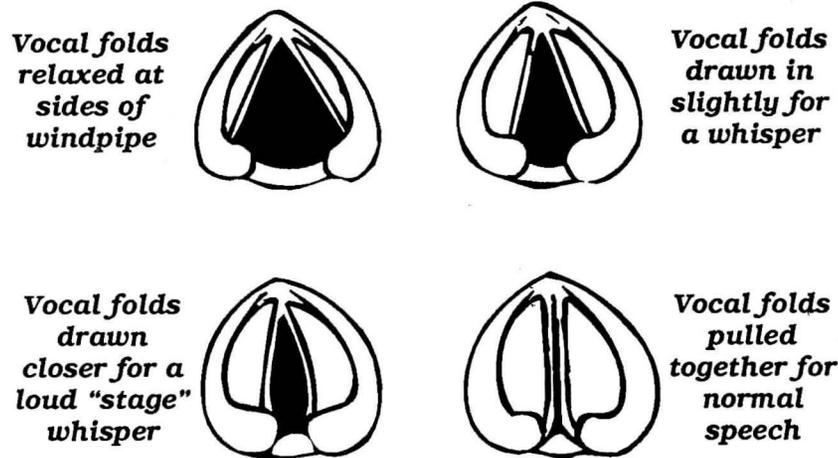
Figure 1: The basic mechanism for speech.

The lungs provide the air power (wind) that cause the voice box (larynx) to vibrate (generating a buzzing sound) which, passes through the throat, oral cavity (mouth) and for some sounds, the nose. Movements of the tongue, lips, jaw and palate change the shape of this resonating hollow tube to modify the buzzing sound produced by the larynx into various sounds recognized by listeners as speech.

Our lungs, the source of the wind, act like bellows. As the diaphragm is contracted, it lowers itself in the chest cavity causing the lungs to expand, drawing in air. By relaxing the diaphragm, it recoils back to its higher resting position, increasing the pressure inside the lungs and forcing the air in the lungs up through the larynx and out the mouth. The rate at which air is expelled by the lungs is controlled by first, a braking action by the rib muscles to prevent the air at high pressure from rushing out and, near the end of breath, by the abdominal muscles pushing out the final portion of the breath. Our lung size determines how long we can continue to speak on one breath. Our control of the larynx determines how loud a sound we produce. Singers, especially operatic performers, practice to achieve rich full voices through proper breathing and control of laryngeal tension and placement in the neck.

The larynx is a complex structure in the throat in which the vocal cords (actually "folds") are situated. The larynx is (in men) a triangular shaped passage protected by cartilage. In women, the larynx is more horse-shoe shaped, rounded in front. In most males the peak of the triangle is quite prominent and is referred to as the Adam's Apple. This section of our anatomy is sometimes called our wind pipe. The vocal folds are two

membranes enclosing delicate muscles, Figure-2.



**Figure 2: A cutaway view of the vocal folds.**

The vocal folds are attached to the front of the inside of the larynx and along the sides. They are also attached to two movable cartilages (arytenoids) at the back of the larynx. The space between the vocal folds is called the glottis. When we breathe in, the two movable cartilages are moved away from each other opening a "V" shaped glottic space to allow air to freely move in or out of the lungs. When we wish to speak, we bring the two cartilages together and tense the muscles in the vocal folds. This brings the two folds together in the midline and closes the glottic space. Air from the lungs now cannot pass through the larynx unless it pushes the flexible vocal folds apart. Since the folds are elastic, they spring back to the midline, only to be forced apart again by the air pressure from the lungs beneath them. This vocal fold vibration creates the sound from which speech is made. In men these vibrations occur about 100 times a second; in women, 200 times a second. The

muscles in the larynx can make the vocal folds longer and thinner or shorter and fatter. The longer and thinner the folds, the faster the vibrations and the higher the pitch of the sound. The shorter and thicker the folds, the lower the pitch of the sound. Our ability to lengthen and shorten the vocal folds allow us to have a vocal pitch range of about an octave and a half. The pitch of the sound is related to the mass of the folds.

Speech sounds that make up words are produced by changing the shape of the mouth, tongue and lips. Vowel sounds are made by dividing the oral cavity into two connected parts by shifting the bulk of our tongue and by using our lips to round or flatten the opening of the mouth. Consonants are produced in various ways which either constrict the resonating tube or place obstructions in the way of the air flow. This creates noise from the turbulence of the air passing through the constrictions (such as the /s/ sound) or plosive noises (such as the /p/ sound) caused by the air forcing open the obstruction. Half of the consonants are called voiceless consonants because the voice is not used in their production.

The final resulting vocal characteristics for any individual are a complex combination of the physical structure of the many parts of the voice mechanics (lungs, larynx, vocal folds, mouth and lips) and the voice styles and speech patterns we learned to imitate when we began to speak as children.

The female voice differs from that of the male primarily in the size and density of the vocal folds. During puberty the male growth hormones cause an increase in larynx growth resulting in the deeper voice and large

Adam's Apple. Males who fail to achieve a mature male sexuality, for what ever reasons, often retain a feminine vocal pitch. In addition to the pitch, female voices are different because genetic females tend to have smaller features in other areas including lungs, mouth and lips. Finally, females learn to speak "female talk" as children and, therefore, in addition to a physical difference, they usually have a different manner of speaking.

While we cannot, without surgery, significantly change our vocal folds, we can learn to control and effect a more feminine manner of speech.

## Vocal Range and Pitch

As discussed, the normal range or pitch of a voice is a function of the length and thickness (mass) of the vocal folds. Yet most humans can produce a large variation in range. Figure-3 shows a musical scale with the typical speaking voice ranges and singing voice ranges.

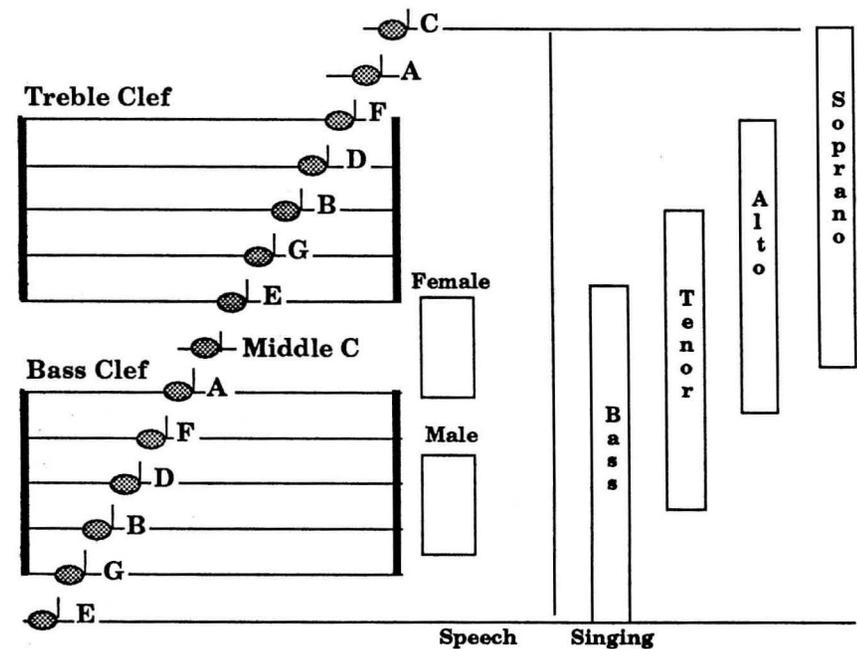


Figure 3: The range of the human voice

The normal vocal range for all human voice types spans nearly four octaves of the musical scale (an octave represents the eight basic notes; do, re, me,fa, so, la, te, do). However for the purposes of speech, the male and female each use only a portion of an octave and are approximately an octave apart.

Both males and females have a typical range of about one and a half octaves. Only a small portion, however, is used for speech. Males tend to use three tones during speech — a middle tone for most of the time and one lower and one higher to indicate termination of a declarative sentence or of a question, respectively. Females, on the other hand, use at least a four note range and especially expressive women or feminine speakers, with melodic voices, may range over a span of five or more notes.

It is interesting and important to us to know that there is quite an overlap between the male and female range. A good male tenor can easily handle the range of many of the songs being sung by popular female vocalist. A male tenor, however, will probably not sound feminine. The major difference, of course, being the many other aspects of vocal characteristics that effect the apparent gender of speech (and song).

It is possible for most males to raise the pitch of their voices to the level that is close to normal for feminine speech. Unfortunately, such a rise can produce, in some individuals, a very strained and artificial effect. This rise can also be accomplished using a falsetto voice but this may sound even more artificial. So, what can be done by the male in affecting a more feminine vocal range? The first trick for a male emulating the vocal range of the female is to only raise the pitch to that level which feels and sounds appropriate. A 170 pound female does not sound like a nine year old girl. Many larger women have rich mellow voices (just listen to television star Bea Arthur on "Golden Girls").

The second trick is to use a greater span of pitch variation. This means that when you select a new level for practicing feminine speech leave room for at least a note (if not two) for those melodious excursions to higher pitches without reaching the strained level.

You can begin your practice right now by selecting a "feminine" sentence with which you are comfortable, such as "That's a nice dress she is wearing". (We'll be changing this sentence as we go along). Say the first four words in your regular pitch, several times over. Now, just as you would do in saying the "do, re, me" scale, raise the pitch of the word "that" a couple of notes "That, That, That". Now say the sentence in your normal manner but starting at the new pitch. If your voice cracks or sounds strained as you raise and lower the pitch when you say this short sentence, you have started at too high a pitch. Try again, but start a half note lower. Once you find a starting note that allows you to say these first four words comfortably, try it with the rest of the sentence. Then compare it with your normal speech. Hopefully there is a slight but significant raising of the pitch. You need to select a starting pitch that will permit you to go higher later in the sentence without straining so you can add the "quality" of feminine inflection and intonation which we will discuss next.



## Voice Quality

**S**o, we've raised our pitch and added feminine intonation and inflection and our voice still sounds fairly masculine. What we must now address is voice quality which includes the intensity, resonance and projection. Males who tend to be larger in frame than most females, have a larger throat and oral cavity in which the voice can resonate and a larger mouth from which sound is projected. There are a number of things that we can do about this. The easiest, and the one that provides the most effective results is to quit speaking "from the chest" and the "deep throat" and try to speak with your voice high in your throat preventing any resonance of the lower frequencies. The attempt to raise the pitch naturally accommodates this to some extent. Next we can reduce the effective size of the oral (or mouth) cavity by keeping our teeth closer together and our lips tighter by "smiling". This latter technique will contribute to our over-all feminine appearance as well.

Now, try our practice sentence without the inflection and intonation (unless you're really comfortable with that) and try speaking it first in your natural quality and then by moving the generation of the words from the chest to the top of your throat. Next, add the smaller mouth – i.e. closer teeth and the smile. Give this a try with our practice sentence. Isn't it amazing what this does! If you do not seem to be experiencing good results try saying "who" - high pitch, with some inflection like "↘", dropping in pitch and intensity. First try this with a puckered fully open, rounded lip pattern. Then repeat the "who" with only a slightly opened tight lipped smile. It's actually harder to project with the tight lipped smile.

Moving the sound production from the chest to high in the throat is not as easily demonstrated in text but you can get the sense of it simply by raising the pitch. You may feel that your Adam's Apple is physically moving up when you do this. The fact is, it is moving up! Put your fingers on your throat as you do this exercise

Another approach used to increase the apparent feminine quality of a speaker is increased "breathiness". Referred by some as the "Marilyn Monroe" technique, it has limited usefulness in as much as it limits intensity to the point that you must be right next to the listener and at the extreme, it connotes a style usually reserved for only the most "intimate" situations. The technique for accomplishing this sexy, throaty effect is to speak at a low intensity but literally push more air through your throat. This, as you will see, is merely combining a loud whisper "with your voice". The genesis of this effect is rooted in the fact that sexual excitement causes physical changes to the female voice resulting in a huskier quality. So, there is a real basis of this effect being considered "sexy".

## Words & Sentence Structure

**A** talk given at the 1987 *Fantasia Fair*, by Dr. D.K. Abbass, an anthropologist at a New England university, pointed out that women have learned to speak a different language especially when talking to other women. It is also obvious that the women's role in our culture has effected the way in which they speak, as well as the words they use.

Let us examine the words associated with more feminine speech. First, females tend to be more expressive and therefore have a more colorful vocabulary for descriptions and superlative terms for intensity. A typical male may see several ladies in "red", where a more feminine person sees them in "rose, scarlet, cerise, and crimson". Back to our practice sentence. "That's a lovely dress -". Instead of "lovely" the male might say "That's a good looking dress" or "a nice dress" or even possible " a beautiful dress". The feminine person might say it's a "gorgeous" or "marvelous" dress. Table 1 (next page) lists a few examples of comparative masculine to feminine words and phrases. The choice of words is not really black and white and will certainly vary from person to person. There are, of course, cultural, social and regional differences.

If you decide to select a real female as a model for your speech patterns and vocabulary, make sure she sounds feminine. The current trends are resulting in a greater blurring of the male - female vocabulary. Female newscasters appear to be trying extra hard to speak in a masculine (or at least neuter) style.

**TABLE 1**  
**Comparison of Masculine**  
**and Feminine Vocabulary**

<b>Masculine</b>	<b>Feminine</b>
Pleasant	Charming
Pretty	Lovely
Nice	Sweet
Great	Fabulous
Different	Quaint
Skinny	Slender
Fragile	Delicate
Mean	Nasty
Big	Large
<b>Cultural Nouns</b>	
Finger Nails	Nails
Shorts	Panties
Underwear	Lingerie

The prototype female also structures her sentences differently from a male. This particular trait is also beginning to disappear, but at least for the next decade, emulating this trait will be effective in creating a more feminine style. Women are more grammatically correct and polite in their conversation. They often add "politeisms" and qualifiers to their sentences. In the case of our practice sentence we can add "That's a lovely dress she's wearing, *isn't it?*" Often the female statement may start with a question such as "Don't you think that's a lovely dress?" Table 2 (next page) provides some examples comparing masculine to feminine statements, with add-on qualifiers and politeisms. Note that what is a statement in the masculine is converted to a question or request in the feminine. The feminine statement is also not as positive except when an emotion is involved; the statement then becomes an exclamation.

An accent, different from that of the local environment, will help mask residual masculine speech characteristics. This is especially true of a British accent when coupled with the British manner of speaking, which tends to be very polite and feminine in comparison to American English. A Southern accent has a high degree of melodic variation and an Eastern European accent can be made to permit a good deal of articulation with minimal projection.

These accents need to be reasonably genuine or they will detract more than they add. It helps if you were raised in an environment where the accent was prevalent or you know a woman to use as a model. The language of males and females is probably still markedly different in cultures where women's liberation has not made major progress.

**TABLE 2**  
**Comparison of Masculine to**  
**Feminine Idioms**

Masculine	Feminine
Let's go.	Shall we leave? Can we leave now?
Thanks a lot.	Thank you very much.
'Jus wanna cupa coffee.	I would like a cup of coffee, please. or May I have ...
Table for two, please.	May we have a table for two?
Where's the men's room?	(Can you tell me) Where is the ladies' room?
I need change for a dollar.	Would you please give me change for a dollar?
That's a cute kid.	Isn't she a pretty child?
This has a strange smell.	Doesn't this have an unusual odor?
I like chocolate.	I just love chocolate!
It's nice out.	What a beautiful day!

## **Speaking & Electronic Devices**

**F**or would-be women desiring to sound feminine, the telephone presents the most difficult challenge. None of the visual attributes of the speaker are available to contribute to the apparent gender, meaning that only the audible aspect can be used to impress the person on the receiving end. As if this were not enough of a handicap, technology has conspired to make it even harder. The telephone systems have been designed to optimize the quality of transmission in the range of frequencies (i.e. pitch) of the male voice. Further more, the system tends to filter out the higher frequencies that would accompany feminine speech. Even quite genuine females with low pitched voices are on occasion addressed as "Sir" by the mistaken other party. This presents the ultimate challenge but it can be met by using all the vocal skills discussed and one little trick. The vocal techniques include the higher pitch and an emphasis on the inflections almost to the point of exaggeration. The melodious variety with ample sprinklings of feminine words and phrases will at least let the other party know that you desire to be considered female. The "Marilyn Monroe" techniques also appears to work surprisingly well. The "breathiness" produces enough higher frequency overtone to get through.

There is one other technique which invariably seems to work in establishing a female image in the listener's mind. It is to let your first utterances be a melodious "Hello" followed by, "This is Ms. Elizabeth Jones." Try it! It works! Believe it or not the other party is not about to challenge you. The visual aspects (even if the five o'clock shadow is at seven) have zero impact on the other party

who now must judge you by what you say reinforced by how you say it. Passing over the phone is it's own special thrill! Wait until you get your first "Yes Ma'am" over the phone. The techniques discussed here will also work with recording devices. So don't be afraid to leave or send a message on tape.

**Yeah! I said "MS!" Gwendolyn Jones, thank you.**

## **Voice Surgery**

**S**urgical procedures for helping male to female transsexuals have been developed that will achieve a pleasant and natural sounding feminine voice. The technique, called Vocal Cord Modulation, was developed by physicians in Japan and is currently being performed by Dr. Toby G. Mayer of Beverly Hills, California. The approach taken does not require cutting the vocal cords as did earlier, riskier techniques. In this process, cartilage that exists behind the cords is made into elongated "shoe string" tissue. This cartilage is tied to the upper and lower extremities of the vocal cords, raising the pitch.

The operation is done with the patient under local anesthesia. The patient selects her pitch by counting aloud while the surgeon tightens or loosens the strings until the desired pitch has been obtained.

The healing produces a hoarseness that persists from two weeks to six months depending on the use of the voice. Recovery requires the patient to remain silent for two weeks after the operation to accelerate healing.

In spite of the ordeal of silence, the procedure is recommended by those who have had it. They feel there are many advantages. You may chose you desired pitch. The surgery prevents slipping into a masculine vocal voice as the base registers have been eliminated. The unnatural falsetto is unnecessary.

This procedure coupled with thyroid cartilage (Adam's Apple) shaving (reduction) cost \$2,500 in 1987.

## **Non-Verbal Communication**

**I**f it looks like a duck and walks like a duck, even if it barks like a dog, it must be a duck - a strange one albeit. Of course if a furry tail or pointed ears are showing then one might think it really is a dog in ducks clothing. So to reinforce being accepted as feminine when speaking, we need to address our non-verbal communication skills as well as the verbal.

Psychologist and Sociologists have discovered that a major portion (30% to 50%) of real communications is non-verbal. And so it is with apparent gender. Among the important non-verbal communication skills that we must address to project our feminine image are our facial expression, hand and arm gestures, body language and posture. (We are not going to deal with makeup, manner of dress, and general appearance, all of which are critical of course. Read and practice "Art and Illusion" by JoAnn Roberts).

Women do move differently from men. Some of this difference is due to real and natural physical differences; some is learned and cultural. Most women have been conditioned since childhood to be graceful in movement. For example, a pliant wrist, moving slowly, presents a more feminine gesture than does the stiff almost jerky motion as one reaches out for an object. Exaggeration of the feminine movement produces a "limp wrist" which will be equally as distracting in a woman as a "stiff wrist". There are some males who have either consciously or subconsciously learned to emulate feminine movement and in some cases to the extreme thus appearing as exaggerated mimics.

For an understanding of feminine movement, study real women in the work place, at home, and in public. Watch how they walk, how they sit, how they ascend and descend stairs, pick up and carry packages. Note how most movements are relatively smooth and minimized; arms are kept close to the body; legs together, at least from the knees up. Virginia Prince in her book "How to be a Woman though Male" provides some good pointers in the general areas of feminine body movements.

In this publication we will direct our attention to movements associated with speech and communications. Just as the feminine speaker uses a greater variety in vocal range and emphasis than masculine speakers do, her facial expression and gestures are more pronounced, almost exaggerated when compared to most males. If you observe genetically genuine women in their normal feminine roles, you will notice that their conversation is often accompanied by animated motion of the hands, movement of the facial features and head, and frequently varying their total stance! For some, it is as though there is a "sign language" that is added just in case you do not hear or understand the spoken words. The motion of the hands keeps "time" with the talking, much like the arm of the orchestra conductor. Business women, female newscasters and more withdrawn or mature women tend to de-emphasize this characteristic, so do not use them as role models. Watch the young vibrant sales clerk at the jewelry counter or the secretaries at lunch. Let us examine some of the basic physical expressions and movements that will add credibility to our efforts in appearing more feminine when we speak. Most important is the smile. As mentioned earlier, it is both an aid to the audible

effort as well as a way of exhibiting a comfortable and pleasant attitude. While a smile is not always appropriate, it works in so many cases that it is something you should make a habit of using for most all conversation. Even a silent smile at the right time can disarm a staring, questioning observer.

There are many parts of the body that are used by feminine speakers in their communications. The most emphatic ones being those that relate to the face and hands. The lips have already been mentioned but it is the eyes, especially when emphasized with makeup, that are of special importance. For example, the position of the eyebrows constitutes a complex silent vocabulary all to themselves. Just as the raising of the pitch along with a questioning statement is distinctly feminine, so is the raising of the eyebrows. The lowering of the eyebrows can generate a frown of disapproval or hurt or, in conjunction with pursed lips, a pouting attitude.

You can practice eyebrow control in front of your mirror and if you work at it you may be able to achieve the raising of just one eyebrow which along with a tilt of the head and the right smile can project a decidedly feminine expression of "I've got a secret" or perhaps "Do you approve of me?"

The position of the head is another way in which the feminine speaker can add emphasis to her statement. A tilt to one side, the raising or lowering of the chin all conotate different attitudes. Sometimes the head may tilt right to left and back for certain emphasis. Specific examples of head position will be provided later in this section along with combination of facial expression and hand gestures.

In the musical *Kismet*, the hero "Haaj" relates in a song "Gesticulate" the importance of the hand to the poet appealing to the Wazir not to punish him by hacking it off. The hand as mentioned earlier is almost a necessity for speaking for some people (men and women). It is said of some that if their hands were tied behind their backs, they would not be able to speak!

If you are fortunate to have either slender fingers, or beautiful nails and can sport some attractive rings then you can use this feature advantageously. If your hands are rather large use caution in being overly dynamic in their use. In any case you must make sure that hand motions are graceful, free and appropriate. The extended pinkie is usually appropriate, but not to be exaggerated. The arms are kept close to the body and the hands, though animated, are not flailed wildly.

Some etiquette dogma stipulates that a lady never puts her hand to her face. This probably is intended to restrain temptation to scratch or rub the nose or probe the nasal opening which is impolite for either gender, in the presence of others. However, there are many feminine hand or finger to face gestures that are very effective. The single finger (pointer) to the side of the cheek or to the lips lend special meanings. The fist under the chin along with a frown indicate "deep thought" or concern. By raising the eyebrows you can indicate puzzlement or "What do I do next?" with this gesture.

Finally, there are several specific gestures which are so decidedly feminine that you must develop a few for your repertoire, just to help you feel feminine. These relate to your feminine apparel. This class of movement

include such things as foundling your pendant or pearl necklace near the lower throat; extending you hand, palm down fingers spread and examining your nails. (This displays a negative attitude or "I don't really care about - whatever.") If you can be graceful, there are many movements relating to grooming you hair, twirling a side curl, or patting the waves in the back that are very effective.

As you can easily see the variety of combinations are endless and only you can work out which ones will fit your personality and style. To get you started on practicing and in seeing how effective non-verbal communications can be, we will set up some good examples.

Seat yourself comfortably in front of a large mirror. Tilt your head slightly to the left. Place your left forefinger (pointer) to your lower cheek (jaw). Raise your eyebrows and lower your chin. Open your mouth with round puckered lips and voila! Does not this project a feminine "Who? Me?"

Now bring the left hand forward about six inches out in line with your left cheek, still forming an "O" with the thumb and forefinger, extend the little finger allowing the middle two fingers to arch gracefully. Tilt your head to the right. Relax the eyebrows and form a big but closed-lip smile. Doesn't this say "Perfect!" Now say that word in your most feminine style, with a higher pitched "purr" sliding into a lower pitched "fect" maintaining the broad tight lipped smile. And if you have it all together you are on your way to being a lot better (if not perfect) feminine speaker.

## The Proper State of Mind

**T**rying to remember and apply all of the different principles and techniques to achieve effective feminine verbal communications is not an easy task. Somehow, if you are to engage in natural and intelligent conversation, you must allow all this to become second nature. In the movie *Some Like It Hot*, Jack Lemmon, playing Daphne, had to keep reminding himself, "I'm a girl; I'm a girl." He had to work hard to keep himself in the proper state of mind. This should be an easy task for those of us who chose to assume this role. Most of us, however, have initially limited our efforts to our appearance. Our self vision may, at best, include our movements in addition to our attire. We must expand our self image to include our way of speaking. We need to think of this as an additional dimension of the "total woman."

There seems to be only one sure way to capture the total feminine character and that is by practice; frequently and for as long as possible. Speech therapy programs, like the one Dr. Heuer conducts at Temple University, are usually available only for transsexuals and others who will be living in a female role full time. The training and conditioning of such programs are designed to develop permanent changes in voice patterns to the extent that they become more than second nature; they become natural.

Switching vocal styles is not easy. It may not feel natural. You may find yourself having a difficult time "getting into character." One way to accomplish this is to do it a little at a time; first with pitch, then with

quality, intonation, inflection, etc. You may find it helpful to actually start talking to yourself during the "make-up" and "dressing" process. Eventually, by the time you are putting on the final touches, you should be in the proper vocal character.

Staying in character is another problem you must deal with. It seems that as long as we are involved in activities usually reserved for our feminine selves or dealing with generalities, there is little problem staying in character. But, if the conversation turns to male self interests (say cars, work, or business) we can slip out of character, without realizing it. Again, practice helps, or avoid such subjects. Another approach is to maintain a detached attitude about the subject even to the point of referring to the male self in the third person. (This last technique is not recommended as a long term solution, but only until you become comfortable speaking of male self interests in your feminine role.)

Just as it took time to learn about selecting and wearing the proper attire and how to achieve effective makeup, you cannot expect to acquire a feminine vocal style overnight or just by reading this book. It will take time and practice; you will learn by trial and error. Given enough time and practice, you will eventually find yourself moving into your feminine state of mind and vocal character with ease. Then you will be able to go forth, not only dressed as a woman, looking like a woman, feeling like a woman, but also *Speaking As A Woman*, as well.

## **Postscript**

*JoAnn Roberts*

**T**here has been movement away from “women’s” language due to the increase in feminist ideals among a majority of today’s women. As women have moved into jobs traditionally held by men they have learned to use “neutral” or “men’s” language in order to be taken seriously. Many women have learned to be “bilingual”, i.e. use neutral speech at work and women’s speech in personal conversations.

Robin Lakoff, in *LANGUAGE and Woman’s Place*, says, “the overall effect of ‘women’s language’ (meaning both language restricted to women and language descriptive of women alone) is this: it submerges a woman’s personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself strongly, on the one hand, and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it; and when a woman is being discussed, by treating her as an object ... but never a serious person with individual views.” This is a pretty strong indictment against just what this book is trying to teach you.

Nevertheless, this book has its place and is sorely needed. Simply be forewarned that until you develop your own style of feminine speech, you may be accused of “perpetuating the stereotype.” Your best teacher is the world around you. Observe how women act in real situations and try to copy those actions as best you can.

I thank Alison for her tremendous effort in putting this book together. I am certain it will become a milestone in the history of the gender community.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: References**

Private Communications, Dr. Reinhardt Heuer, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

*How To Be A Woman Though Male*, Virginia Prince, Chevalier Publications, Tulare, CA (1971 & 1984)

*Mouth Sounds*, Frederich R. Newman, Workmain Publishing, New York, NY (1980)

*Femininity*, Susan Brownmiller, Linden Press/Simon & Schuster, New York, NY (1984)

*LANGUAGE and Woman's Place*, Robin Lakoff, Harper & Rowe, New York, NY (1975)

*Art & Illusion: A Guide to Crossdressing*, Second Edition, JoAnn Roberts, Creative Design Services, King of Prussia, PA (1988)

## **Appendix B:**

### **Castrati, Male Sopranos & Falsetto**

The voices of males and females are essentially the same at birth and for the first ten to twelve years or so. When the male reaches puberty, however, he begins to generate male hormones which, among other things, changes the physical structure of the vocal membranes. This change results in a lowering of the natural vocal range for males.

We have all heard, perhaps with envy, the beautiful bell like soprano voices of boy's choirs and laughed at the young teenagers whose voices crack in the middle of a nervous recitation. By the age of fifteen, most young men have completed their vocal transition and are clearly tenors or basses. However, nature (and man, as we will see later) can contrive to prevent this normal development of the mature male voice. A common phenomena that can interfere with this natural course of development is undescended testicles; this prevents sexual maturity from occurring. In this modern time, physicians can usually perform simple operations on the young boys so affected, correcting this defect. Occasionally, for various reasons, the operation may not be performed or it may not work. There are also other illnesses and accidents which can injure the testicles, and prevent the generation of the voice changing hormones. There are apparently other rare physiological phenomena that cause otherwise fully mature males to have voices in the female range. Accordingly, you may experience hearing adult men speaking in a feminine pitch. Usually, you quickly adjust to this as these men avoid the other feminine vocal traits. On the

other hand there are professional female impersonators, who by practicing the other feminine characteristics along with naturally high pitched voices, can be extremely convincing; so much that the audience may refuse to believe the person is really male. (There is one F.I. with a high pitched voice who majored in voice in college but discovered that the public was not ready for a male soprano).

Historically, male sopranos were produced by castration of young boys with exceptionally beautiful voices. Castration has been performed as punishment and for the creation of eunuchs since ancient times. By the 1600s it was definitely being done primarily to produce sopranos for the Church choirs. Pope Clement VIII (1592 to 1605) preferred eunuch voice to the falsettos'. By the 1700s it is estimated that four thousand boys were being castrated in Italy each year and 70% of all male opera singers were castrated. The last known Italian Castrati died in 1922.

The falsetto voice is produced by using only part of the voice membranes. For males, the vibrating portion of the vocal membranes is controlled to approximate that of a female. Most of us can do it naturally; but we all recognize that in spite of the higher pitch it does not provide a convincing imitation of the female voice. The male falsetto was and is still used as a alternative to "castrati" in religious music. More recently male falsetto has made a comeback in some of the new musical groups.

*Alison Laing*

## **Appendix C:**

### **The Speech Program at Fantasia Fair**

One of the best opportunities available for professional training in feminine speech is the program in Speech Improvement conducted as part of *Fantasia Fair*. Each October, the Human Outreach and Achievement Institute conducts the popular ten day *Fantasia Fair* in Provincetown, Massachusetts. In addition to numerous fun and social events, it includes professionally conducted sessions on a variety of topics. The Speech Improvement Workshops are conducted by Dr. "Bud" Reinhardt Heuer of Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There are two programs, basic and advanced. The basic workshop consists of four one and a half hour group sessions which cover relaxation and articulation techniques and conversational style. The advanced workshop consists of six hours of private, individual instruction. The costs of these workshops in 1988 were: \$100 for the basic and \$135 for the advanced. For more information on these workshops and *Fantasia Fair* write:

The Outreach Institute, c/o P.O. Box 11254,  
Lincolnia Station, Alexandria, VA 22312.

*About the author*

*Alison Laing*

*The author has been passing (or at least "getting away with it") in public for years, traveling and conducting business as a woman. In addition to her own studies and readings, she has taken speech workshops and attended lectures with Dr. "Bud" Heuer of Temple University, at Fantasia Fair and at Renaissance meetings.*

*Alison is one of the founding members of the Renaissance Education Association, Inc., a national educational information resource for all transgendered people. At the time of this writing she is the Managing Director of the national board.*

*While some of the terms and usage presented by Alison are drawn from Dr. Heuer, the overall approach is essentially her own.*



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