

# Exploration and Utilization of "The Broker's" Voice in "Rhinoceros in Love"

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the theater actors' exploration and utilization of character voice on stage, with a specific example from the play "Rhinoceros in Love." The broker's role in the play is as a moderator, redefining the dynamics between the stage and the audience. Communication and exchange with the audience are accomplished through the voices of the theater actors. This research emphasizes the importance of theater actors possessing improved vocal conditions and a well-defined voice "image." The integration and unity of an actor's internal and external voice quality form the basis for shaping the voice "image." A compelling vocal performance adds depth and color to the overall theater actor image. This paper analyzes sound in four parts. Firstly, it examines the background and significance of the research topic, highlighting the distinctions between contemporary, pioneering drama performances. Secondly, it explores the "hardware" of voice, encompassing the unchangeable conditions such as the theater performers' understanding of the broker's voice pronunciation and their embodiment of character roles to captivate the audience genuinely. Thirdly, the paper delves into the "software" of voice, addressing variable conditions that demand scientific training for theater actors. This includes the development of sound processing skills and stage design, ensuring seamless and natural integration between actors, the audience, and the stage. Finally, it discusses the future trajectory of theater actors, emphasizing the importance of extensive rehearsal and correct scientific voice usage, particularly in long-term and high-frequency performances. This comprehensive analysis contributes to the overall focus of this paper.

**Keywords:** voice vocalization; voice processing and design; voice use; voice reflection

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

Sound is an art form that can convey a wealth of information. On stage, the language of performance relies to a great extent on the use of voice to express and convey messages. Performers not only rely on physical actions but also utilize their voices to shape the characters they portray<sup>[1]</sup>. The study of sound varies across different artistic fields. In music, melodies are conveyed through sound, helping the audience understand the narrative behind a song. In film and television, voice actors often dub previously recorded works to bring the characters to life more authentically.

Similarly, in stage dramas, sound plays a crucial role. Different characters require distinct voice expressions and treatments, allowing a more accurate portrayal of their roles. Regardless of the field, voice is important, enabling literary artists to create character images that align closely with their backgrounds and distinctive personalities.

In contrast to traditional drama, Chinese avant-garde theater has, to some extent, challenged the framework of traditional realist structures, ushering in a dramatic revolution. The open stage style used in these productions captivates the audience's attention. Among the innovative directors who have successfully combined value and innovation in China's pioneering drama, Meng Jinghui stands out. His stage design and actors' performances differ significantly from traditional drama ones. Meng Jinghui has incorporated remarkable sound design into his productions, creating an immersive sonic experience. This paper takes "Rhinoceros in Love," directed by Meng Jinghui, as a case study and examines this scene's sound design.

### 1.2. Significance of the study

In stage language, sound assumes a significant role in accurately conveying the process of sound

generation and reception to the audience<sup>[2]</sup>. Sound is an essential element of stage performance, and the audience's ability to understand and interpret the performance relies, to a certain extent, on the performers' effective "encoding" on stage. This can be observed in the case of Steiner and Salvini. The voice is a crucial performance component in theater, representing the characters' distinctive personalities. Through playing "The Broker" in "Rhinoceros in Love," I have gained a deeper understanding of the exploration and utilization of voice during this period, from the initial rehearsal three months ago to the final stage performance in front of the audience.

Additionally, Stanley argues that simple and elegant language possesses musicality and can effectively convey ideas and emotions, emphasizing the importance of language<sup>[3]</sup>. Accurate language usage enables the audience to understand the portrayed characters on stage better, bringing them not only spiritual pleasure and enjoyment but also a sense of immersion and the rhythm of the play. Theater actors can effectively portray nuanced character images when they understand how to utilize their voices accurately. This skill is not only an essential requirement for theater actors but also contributes to the overall evaluation of the production<sup>[4]</sup>.

Traditional theater, vocal performances, and radio and television have extensively explored the concept of "voice portrayal" in literature and information. However, these discussions often lack specific applications and fail to sufficiently address the practical aspects of individual voice practice. In the context of contemporary pioneering theater, such as the play "Rhinoceros in Love," the role portrayed by the writer serves as a basis for further examining the utilization of voice. The pioneering theater discussions presented here focus specifically on this character and highlight the expanded possibilities of voice usage in this field.

## **2. Voice "hardware"-pronunciation of the agent of rhinoceros in love**

### ***2.1. Characterization of brokers***

"Rhinoceros in Love," written by Liao Yimei, is a noteworthy representative work within Meng Jinghui's pioneering experimental theater. It has gained popularity through numerous performances across various cities, alongside more than ten similar pioneering plays<sup>[5]</sup>. Over twenty years have passed since its premiere in the summer of 1999 at Beijing's China Youth Art Theatre. There have been six different versions of the play performed by various actors. As a classic within pioneering theater, it explores the theme of love and aligns with the characteristics of the contemporary era. The humorous and captivating dialogue is a hallmark of small contemporary theater. As the broker, I possess an active and lively demeanor. In the second half of the play, Hong Hong, my best partner, joins me in hosting the "Olympic Guessing" lottery program. On the surface, it appears as serious hosting, but it is a comical "farce of self-expression." Maintaining consistency in language, speech pace, and rhythm is essential for both of us.

### ***2.2. Voice morphology of the broker***

The broker's voice speech needs to be carefully shaped, especially when combined with the program host. Voice speech refers to a person's linguistic expression, representing their language ability and reflecting their communication skills, social interactions, as well as their perspectives and positions.

To begin with, accurate pronunciation of syllables is crucial. This accuracy is based on the standard and norms of Mandarin pronunciation. Achieving harmony and coordination of syllables is also important, which can be enhanced through practicing recitation and improving the sense of language rhythm. Additionally, training in using onomatopoeic words can be beneficial. Lastly, achieving harmony in rhyme and tone is essential. Rhyme and tone refer to the tonal aspects of speech. This requires careful sound processing and matching. Each Chinese character has one syllable and four tones. Skillful processing and matching of these tones can create a rhythmic and flowing sound, achieving coordination and harmony<sup>[5]</sup>.

### ***2.3. Mental processes of pronunciation***

"Learning by mouth and ear" refers to the tendency for people to focus on learning the physical movements of articulation organs without giving sufficient attention to the psychological processes involved in articulation. Although the movement of articulation organs is an external manifestation of

the pronunciation process, it is not the key aspect. It is only one part of a more extensive process, which includes complex psychological activities that are often ignored or overlooked.

Pronunciation involves different psychological stages, each worth exploring and pondering. As a relatively complex organ, the human brain has a limited understanding of these stages due to a lack of research methods and practical knowledge. Based on existing research, the psychological activity involved in pronunciation goes through the following stages: language organization in the brain, transmission of language codes to the cerebral cortex, nerve centers transmitting signals to the articulation muscles, and nerve stimulation driving the articulation organs to produce specific movements.

### 3. Stage sound processing and design - sound "Software"

#### 3.1. Environment analysis and role establishment

In theater performances, sound enhances the audience's understanding of the environment and setting and expresses the play's time, place, and overall ambiance. In "Rhinoceros in Love," the unique artistic color of Meng Jinghui's pioneering drama is created through the combination of music, human voices, lights, and stage design. The use of sound in this production is particularly evident during the scene where Ma Lu stands alone on a stage filled with cardboard boxes, while the music and lighting create a captivating atmosphere. As the melody of "Glass Woman" plays, Ma Lu's heavy breathing and Ming Ming's obsession with Chen Fei are expressed through his monologue. The music, lighting, and language intertwine, elevating the emotional expression and allowing the audience to empathize with the characters. In this way, sound creates a deep connection between the audience and the performers, enabling genuine emotional communication and a proper understanding of the drama's content.

In "Rhinoceros in Love," the broker's character assumes the role of a program host in an active Olympic guessing game show. The broker's communication style should align with the identity of a "master" and be consistent with the hosting partner, Hong Hong. The communication between the hosts, such as warming up the audience and introducing the game, requires careful attention to sound and language. In theater performances, sound is crucial in conveying the environment, atmosphere, and overall dramatic effect. The stage's impact is not limited to visual elements but is enhanced and completed through sound. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of this concept.



Figure 1: Characterization of the agent in the play

To shape the character of the broker effectively, it is vital to portray a strong resemblance to a real broker, as previously discussed. In specific performance situations where the broker is required to deliver the wrong script, conveying a sense of nervousness is important, thus creating a tense and embarrassing atmosphere. Alongside the nuances of the voice, careful attention to sound effects on stage is crucial for enhancing the overall effect. Techniques such as staccato or trembling can amplify the impact further.

Regarding volume, maintaining a high tone during the opening lines, such as "Olympic guess," "everyone good," and "I am everyone good like good like good like good like the host," is essential. Additionally, coordination with other actors plays a critical role. Through the vocal delivery, the audience should be able to intuitively grasp the show's current environment, time, and location. This understanding, in turn, allows for the provision of necessary context and explanations for upcoming scenes, firmly establishing the broker's role as the host.

### ***3.2. Storytelling through plot narration and development***

The role of the broker in "Rhinoceros in Love" plays a significant part in adding color to the production. Its distinctive character, hosting style, and driving force behind the final "five million" award winner contribute to the plot's further development. This involves character dialogues, psychological activities, and the inclusion of various voices to support the overall atmosphere. When these elements complement each other, the plot becomes more vivid and realistic, contributing to effective character development. Sound in theater performance serves the fundamental purpose of aligning with the plot and advancing its development. The audience can better understand and experience the plot by utilizing sound as an aid.

In the "audition" scene, the actor playing the broker portrays multiple roles quickly, requiring skill in mimicking certain life sounds. For example, in their interaction with "stars" Hong Hong and Li Li, the actors must employ different voice rhythms to express distinct states. In the face of the director, the broker demonstrates a desperate yet assertive tone, exemplified by the line, "We are professionals," delivered forcefully, confidently, and rapidly. On the other hand, when responding to Li Li, the broker may adopt a softer and more comforting tone, accompanied by onomatopoeia such as "hey," which blends laughter, persuasion, and a hint of helplessness.

Precise observation of life and attention to detail are crucial for the actor to successfully imitate sounds such as a child's cries, an ambulance, or even mundane activities like smoking, drinking milk, or peeing. The actor's ability to recreate these sounds depends on their familiarity with real-life examples and capacity to entertain the audience. Exaggeration of onomatopoeic expressions can make the sounds more pronounced and substantial. For instance, using a thicker tone for a baby's cries or a sharper, more intense voice to convey a father's excitement. The scenarios portrayed in the play are generalizations of the author's life experiences, and the creation of the characters' voices allows the reproduction of these scenarios. The story can be told through sound, and the plot can be narrated effectively.

### ***3.3. The ideal target and heartfelt delivery in depth***

The sense of object is a crucial element in theater that bridges the communication between actors and the audience. The audience's liking or enjoyment of a performance primarily stems from this "sense of object," which can be described as "pro-people." This is an essential quality that theater actors must cultivate to connect with the audience effectively.

When entering the theater, one can immediately feel the proximity between the audience and the stage. The audience is close to the stage in the first row, with some even seated on the stage floor. This allows the audience to experience every moment, including the heartbeat and deep breaths of the performers. Therefore, in "Rhinoceros in Love," the broker must possess a strong sense of objectivity and execute their role based on audience interaction.

For instance, after a hot song and dance performance, it is crucial to maintain the energy and keep the stage from cooling down. The objective is to make the audience eagerly anticipate what comes next. This requires actors to see the audience, have faith in their hearts, and believe in themselves. In a program or variety show with nearly a hundred people in the live scene, it is necessary to have a vivid imagination and increase excitement to convey messages to the audience effectively.

Specificity is vital when it comes to the sense of an object. Only by being specific can the audience resonate with the performance. One way to achieve specificity in understanding the audience is to "know yourself and know your enemy." This entails theater actors trying to learn more about and become familiar with their target audience. Specifically, in the case of "Rhinoceros in Love," where the play appeals to many young people and students, expanding one's knowledge and understanding of their life and experiences is vital. It is important to note that even when guests or special visitors are in attendance, the sense of object must always exist in the actor's heart. By keeping it at the forefront of

their minds, telepathy can take place, allowing for a genuine connection and eliciting a response from the audience.

#### **4. The way forward for theatre actors - voice sustainability**

##### ***4.1. The use and training of the voice of the theatre actor***

To use theater actors' voices, combined with the "Rhinoceros in Love" agent "audition" scene, actors must have better physical fitness and voice training abilities. The intensity and tightness of each line, along with the coherence of high-intensity actions, require the agent's role to not only complete lines like "say it clearly," "say it completely," and "say it in full," which refer to the so-called "voice training," but also the role itself is a form of "voice training."

Now, let us discuss the benefits and assistance provided by voice training. In short, voice training can develop the voice position of theater actors, including vocal resonance and vocal positioning. Furthermore, voice training enhances theater actors' voice penetration and endurance, resulting in a bright, penetrating, and expressive voice.

Firstly, the author combines practice to highlight the first step in voice usage and training: breath. All the functional activities of the human body rely on breathing. Therefore, proper breath support is necessary to produce a scientific and expressive voice. Breath refers to inhaling and exhaling, and training the breath involves focusing on its length, strength, and elasticity. Breath control extends from the internal body and progresses from shallow to deep breaths, encompassing a soft-to-rigid expression of energy.

Secondly, the author combines practice to address the second step in voice usage and training involving movement. Any action on stage exists within a state of movement, and the vocalization process also requires movement. Stage voice is not merely a simple use of the vocal cords to produce sound. It involves using a variety of forces within the body to maintain technical balance. Movement generates energy, and as the amount of movement increases, the energy in all areas also increases accordingly.

In summary, voice training plays a significant role in developing the voice position, enhancing voice penetration and endurance, and preparing actors for their roles' physical and vocal demands. By focusing on proper breath control and optimizing movement, actors can develop a strong and expressive voice that effectively conveys their characters to the audience.

##### ***4.2. Reflections and enlightenment on the voice of the theatre actor***

Mastering vocal skills by actors in drama requires a significant amount of exploration, analysis, and contemplation. After playing the broker roles in "Rhinoceros in Love," the author has summarized the following points regarding the voice of drama actors.

Firstly, theater actors should focus on improving their ability to express emotions and shape the voices of various characters. Different roles require voice characteristics that reflect the character's age, personality, occupation, etc. It is essential for actors to closely match the character's current mood while also considering the unique voice traits that suit the role. For example, the broker may have a humorous, witty, youthful, and lively voice, while Malu could have a shy, old-fashioned, deep, and powerful voice.

Secondly, retaining a certain literary and artistic training level is crucial for theater actors. Acting is the art of studying and portraying people. Humans are the most complex entities. As Stanley expressed, actors should pay close attention to their words, as the play's essence and the character's spirit reside within them. Through deep thought and intellectual reflection, words with substance are articulated, conveying a rich depth of emotion, thought, and feeling. By cultivating this depth of inner understanding, actors can transform empty words into meaningful expressions, much like a ball filled with mercury that moves slowly. By combining acquired knowledge with daily life experiences, actors can extract and refine the best forms of artistic expression from their surroundings.

Lastly, cultivating good music and physical training is essential for theater actors. This ensures that their stage performances exhibit comfortable body language, suitable and precise rhythm, and line delivery that aligns harmoniously with their voice. To convincingly portray a character, actors must not only focus on their internal expressions, such as lines and character traits but also on their external

image and physical expressions. People have unique postures, appearances, walking styles, and behavioral habits. Thus, solid music and physical training are necessary to develop these aspects. Ultimately, theater actors must combine foundational skills with theory and practice, continuously improving their self-expression and ongoing knowledge acquisition.

## 5. Conclusions

A minute on stage and ten years off stage, as an undergraduate studying the arts, everything requires solid and steady footing, countless hours of practice, and trial and error. During the exploration and utilization of voice, the author has gained a more comprehensive understanding of the role played by the broker in "Rhinoceros in Love." This role serves as a prime example, highlighting the striking variations in the voices of different characters. Consequently, it emphasizes the imperative for theater actors to seamlessly integrate their pronunciation with the specific roles they portray, effectively conveying the true essence of these characters at the vocal level. Each individual has their unique pronunciation, also known as the "hardware" of their voice. These inherent qualities and voice characteristics cannot be fundamentally changed and differ from person to person. Theater performers must accumulate sufficient reading and mastery time, becoming familiar with external environmental conditions associated with different roles and stage backgrounds. Such external factors contribute to each character's overall sound and voice quality, which we refer to as the "software" of the voice. Integrating these external conditions with long-term practical experience is crucial, complementing scientifically appropriate voice training methods. This combination is essential for theater actors to employ and develop their voices effectively.

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