

*Speaking
As A
Woman*

Third Edition

Alison Laing



Dedication

The first edition of this book was dedicated to Ariadne Kane, Executive Director of the Outreach Institute of Gender Studies who was the first person to reach out and welcome me to the community of Transgendered Persons.

This Second Edition I dedicate to JoAnn Roberts who encouraged me to write it in the first place and now to update and revise it. JoAnn has enabled me to share this important part of my life through numerous workshops as well as producing the video, "Speaking As A Woman." Thank you, JoAnn.

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Preface

Somehow, 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. 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 learned to swim, perhaps not in Olympic style but well 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 little written for the lay person on this subject. In 1986, I enrolled in the Fantasia Fair voice workshops which were conducted by Dr. Reinhart Heuer, former Associate Professor and supervisor of the (now defunct) voice clinic at Temple University in Philadelphia. I also attended several workshops conducted by him in the Philadelphia area.

Since that time, I have attended other seminars and workshops on speaking in a more feminine manner including those conducted at Fantasia Fair by Dr. Moya Andrews and Ann Fennell of Indiana University. This book represents a compilation of all that I have learned on the subject of feminine speak-

ing. It is presented in a manner that I believe will assist the average transsgender person in achieving at least some improvement in their verbal communication skills and provide them with enough confidence to jump in.

I was 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 gave transsexuals in his Temple University program and the sessions he conducted at Fantasia Fair. He, as well as Dr. Moya Andrews and Ann Fennell, were also of great assistance in reviewing this manuscript and providing information on special topics such as the mechanism for the generation of speech.

Most important, I have had the good fortune to know JoAnn Roberts and 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 whatever 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 cross-dressing experiences.

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.

Alison Laing
1997

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Introduction

All dressed up, and you look perfect. Your makeup is smashing, your hair beautiful, your 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. 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, a passable feminine 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 speech more feminine is pitch. Unfortunately, without surgery, pitch is probably the one thing we can do the least about. On the other hand, pitch is only one part of a complex system which influences the apparent gender of speech. Inflection, intonation, intensity, resonance, vocabulary, sentence structure, and nonverbal 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. But before we get into the actual speech work we will need to address the mental attitude it takes to make this work.

The Proper State of Mind

Before you even begin to work on the mechanics of trying to make your speech more feminine, you must first be in the proper mental state. As is the case in any task requiring skill, more than half the battle is having an internal mental image of being able to do it. If you are to engage in natural and intelligent conversation as a woman, you must allow this attitude, as well as the techniques you are about to learn, to become second nature.

In the movie *Some Like It Hot*, Jack Lemmon, as 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 a feminine role. Most of us, however, have initially

limited our efforts to just our appearance. Our self-image may, at best, include our movements in addition to our attire. We must now expand this self-image to include a new 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 vocal character and that is by practice, frequently, and for as long as possible. Many speech therapy programs are available only for those who will be living in a feminine role full-time. The training and conditioning of such programs are designed to develop permanent changes in voice patterns to the extent they become more than second nature, they become natural.

Switching vocal styles is not easy. At first, 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. If you are only a "part time" crossdresser, you may find it helpful to actually start talking to yourself out loud during your makeup 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 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 you may have to 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.

How the Voice Works

In 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 (page 8) illustrates the basic mechanism for generating 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 of the mouth. The rate at which air is expelled by the lungs is controlled at first by a braking action in the rib muscles to prevent the air from rushing out at high pressure 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 in one breath. Our control of the larynx determines how loud a sound we produce. Singers, especially operatic, practice to achieve rich full voices through proper breathing, 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. In men the larynx is a triangular shaped passage protected by cartilage. In women, the larynx is more horseshoe 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 area of our anatomy is sometimes called our wind pipe. The vocal folds are two membranes enclosing delicate muscles, inside the wind pipe (see Figure 2, page 8).

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 (ary-

Figure 1: The basic mechanism of speech.

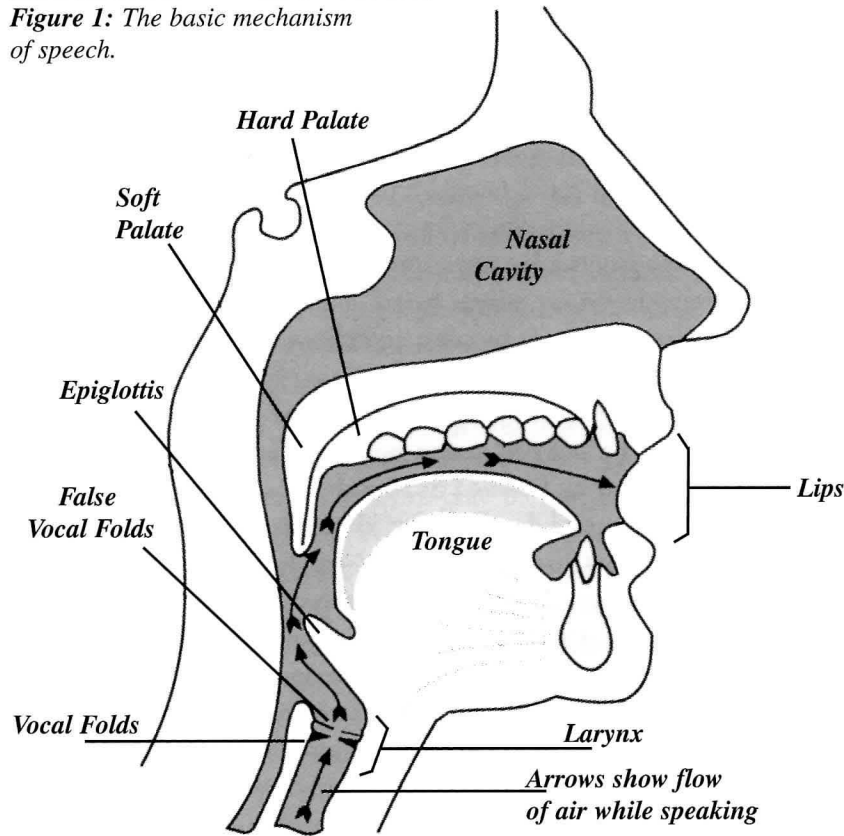
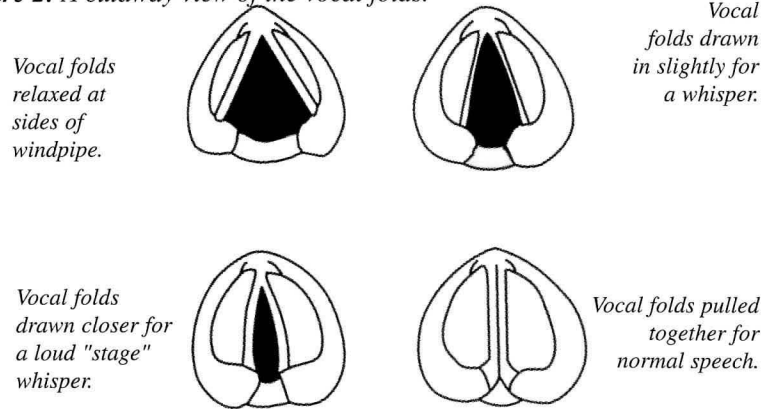


Figure 2: A cutaway view of the vocal folds.



tenoids) 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 "W" 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 mechanism (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 do not mature sexually, often retain a

feminine vocal pitch since the male hormones trigger the process that results in the physical changes that lower the natural pitch. In addition to the pitch, the female voice is different because genetic females tend to have smaller features 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.

Words & Sentence Structure

Much has been written over the last decade pointing out the differences in how men and women speak. We all know that women have learned to speak a different language than men and they use it especially when talking to other women. It is also obvious that the woman's role in our culture has affected the way in which they speak, as well as the words they use. If we are to work on developing a more feminine style of speaking we must begin by learning the "language" that women use. One cannot and should not practice the more feminine styles of speaking using a masculine vocabulary and sentence structure.

Let us examine some words associated with more feminine speech. First, females tend to be more expressive and therefore have more colorful vocabulary for descriptions and more superlative terms for intensity. A typical male may see several ladies in "red" dresses where a more feminine person sees them in rose, scarlet, cerise, and crimson dresses. Let's create a practice sentence: "That's a lovely dress she's wearing." Instead of "lovely", a male might say, "That's a good looking dress" or "a nice dress." He might also say "a beautiful dress." The more feminine person might say it is a "gorgeous" or "marvelous" dress.

Table 1 lists some examples of comparative masculine and 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 as well.

If you decide to select a real female as a model for your speech patterns and vocabulary, make sure she sounds feminine. Current trends are

resulting in a greater blurring of the male/female vocabulary. Female newscasters appear to be trying to speak in a masculine (or at least neuter) style.

Table 1: Comparison of Masculine and Feminine Vocabulary

Adjectives

Masculine

Pleasant
Pretty
Nice
Great
Different
Skinny
Fragile
Mean
Big

Feminine

Charming
Lovely
Sweet
Fabulous
Quaint
Slender
Delicate
Nasty
Large

Nouns

Dishes
Sheets and towels
Wash (or dish) rag
Finger Nails
Shorts
Underwear

China
Linens
Wash (or dish) cloth
Nails
Panties
Lingerie

The female also structures her sentences differently from a male. These differences are beginning to disappear but, at least for the near future, emulating this trait will be very effective in creating a more feminine style. A great example of the progression from the more masculine to the more feminine sentence is found in "Language and Woman's Place" by Robin Lakoff.

- a. Close the door. b. Please close the door.
- c. Will you close the door? d. Will you please close the door?
- e. Won't you close the door?

To take it one more step, a very polite and feminine way would be to say: "Would you mind closing the door, please?" You can see the progression from the direct request to the very polite plea.

Women are often more grammatically correct and polite in their conversation. They often add "polite-isms" or "tag questions" and qualifiers to their sentences. For example, if we take a practice sentence, "That's a lovely dress she's wearing," we can add the tag phrase "isn't it?" so that the sentence becomes, "That's a lovely dress she's wearing, isn't it?" Often, the female statement may even be presented as a question such as "Don't you think that's a lovely dress she is wearing?"

Table 2 provides some examples comparing masculine to feminine statements, with add-on qualifiers and polite-isms. Note that what is a statement in the masculine mode is converted to a question or request in the feminine mode. The feminine statement is also not as positive except when an emotion is involved the statement then becomes an exclamation.

Another way that women use qualifiers is to make sure the statement is not too positive. This is done by using words like "may," "might," "often," "usually," etc., and avoiding expression of certainty or absolute conditions. ("always," "never," etc.). Table 3 shows a few example of these.

Intonation and Inflection

Intonation is the modulation of pitch over a sentence or phrase. Inflection is a change in pitch of the voice within a single word. The more feminine voice tends to exhibit a melodic character; a raising and lowering of pitch both within individual words and in phrases and sentences. To illustrate this, and to provide a means of practice, we will first address intonation in our practice sentence. The typical masculine voice would say "That's a lovely dress" in one pitch and drop about one-half note to finish "she's wearing". We can represent this in this manner (with each syllable represented by a dash —).

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.
I jus wanna cupa coffee.	I would like a cup of coffee, please.
Table for two, please.	May we have a table for two?
Where's the men's room?	Where is the ladies room?
I need change for a dollar.	May I have 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	Don't you just love chocolate?
It's nice out	What a beautiful day!

Table 3: Use of Qualifiers in More Feminine Speech

Masculine	Feminine
This happens all the time	This happens most of the time
Apples are red	Apples are usually red
Fish stink	Sometimes fish smell bad
Women are bad drivers	Men often drive recklessly
That's nice	That is so nice
It's warm	It's very warm
She's pleasant	She's really very pleasant
<i>Women often put a special emphasis on the qualifier.</i>	
	That's sooooo nice.
	It's veery warm.

Masculine Intonation

That's a lovely dress she's wearing.

The more feminine vice would have a wide variation in intonation such as a raising pitch on "lov" and "dress". Thus appearing (using our "dash" annotation system):

Feminine Intonation

That's a lovely dress she's wearing.

Of course the "starting" pitch of the feminine version is several notes higher but the real feminine touch is this melodious emphasis not present in the masculine voice.

Now we return to inflection, the variation in pitch that we saw over phrases and sentences (intonation is applied to single words by most females). Inflection may be a simple sliding up or down or it may rise and fall and rise again in one word, particularly words that have complex structure, such as the contractions "That's" and "she's" in our practice sentence. Adding the inflection to words in our melodious sentence might be done by having "that's" sliding down to a lower "a" and back up to a rising and then falling "lov" to a lower "ly." Using our annotation of dashes but using to indicate a variation in pitch we now have:

Feminine Inflection

That's a lovely dress she's wearing.

You might try "humming" or "whistling" the sentence to see how much pitch variation the feminine voice can have as compared to the masculine voice. (Do not try to use a piano or other discrete tonal instruments for emulating this effect as we are dealing in fractional changes on the musical scale. A slide trombone or violin might work). This pitch variation, especially the range of variation, is an important aspect of creating the feminine voice. So, practice it but be sure that the pattern you use

makes sense and sounds reasonable.

One of the most exaggerated changes of pitch occurs in long lead in questions by women such as "Did you ever see any one as beautiful as she is?" Each of the first eight sound bits of the lead-in (Did you ev-er see an-y one) are dropped a quarter or half-tone, then it goes back up on the next seven. This is very apparent when listening to the questioning of a guest by a feminine speaking hostess on a talk show.

Descending/Ascending Intonation

Did you ev-er see an-y one as beau-ti-ful as she is?

One final point on this subject. The feminine style of speech uses the rising patterns more frequently than falling patterns and tends to end sentences at the higher pitch, almost in a questioning manner. In this case, even if the statement tends to be dropping in pitch, the last syllable in the last word would rise about a note higher. It will almost sounds like a bouncing "tonal" ball.

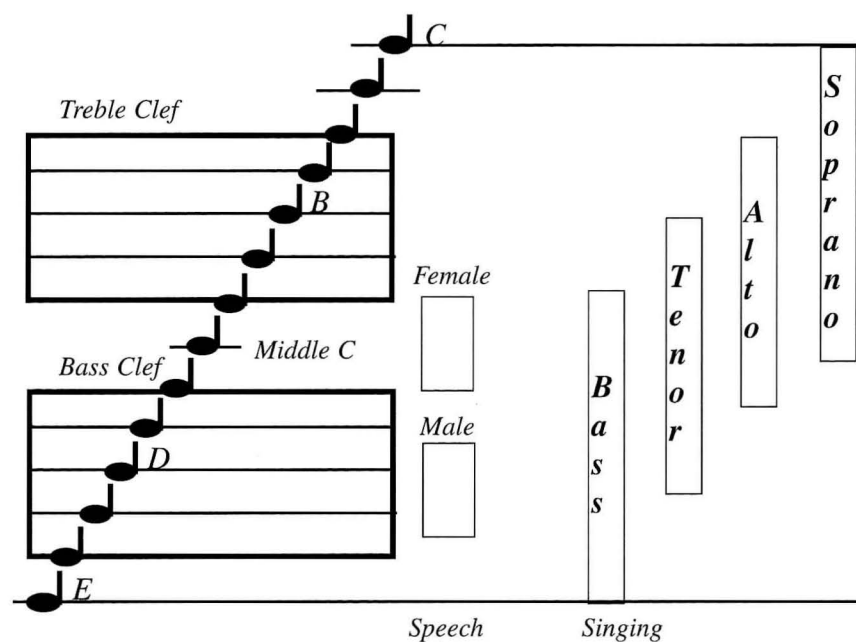
Vocal Range and Pitch

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 (page 16) shows a musical scale, with the typical speaking voice ranges and singing voice ranges.

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.) For the purposes of speech, the male and female are approximately an octave apart.

Both males and females have a typical vocal 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.

Figure 3: The range of the human voice.



It is interesting and important to know there is quite an overlap between the male and female vocal range. A good male tenor can easily handle the range of many of the songs sung by popular female vocalists. A male tenor, however, will probably not sound feminine. The differences, of course, are the 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 effecting 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 woman does not sound like a nine year old girl. Many larger women have rich mellow voices; just listen to television star Bea Arthur or actress Lauren Bacall.

The second trick is to use a greater range 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. Say "That, That, That" each time with just a little higher pitch. 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. You must be able to speak at a comfortable and natural level. 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 you will achieve 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 discussed.

Changing one's pitch is especially difficult for those of us who may be tone deaf, or simply not musically inclined. There is an exercise that has been developed specifically for this purpose. The exercise is based on the use of couplets of words that are representative of sounds where the first word is spoken at one pitch and the second at another, usually lower. The best example is "Ding-Dong." Another is "Clink-Clank"; even "Ping-Pong" is spoken in this manner.

To turn this into a training exercise in raising one's pitch, these couplets can be reversed in order, that is, say the lower pitched word first. Or you can make it a triplet saying the first two words in the original order but go back to the first word at the end, e.g., "Ding-Dong-Ding." In addition, the couplets can be extended to abstract words that create a mental image that seems to facilitate a pitch variation. The list of couplets on the next page will help you experience a routine increase of pitch. if you

Table 4: List of Couplets (1)

Low Pitch	High Pitch
Dong	Ding
Tock	Tick
Pong	Ping
Flop	Flip
Low	High
Short	Tall
Down	Up
Little	Big
Heavy	Light
Floor	Ceiling
Bass	Treble

(1) Adapted in part with permission from *Voice Therapy for Adolescents*, by Moya L. Andrews and Anne Summers, College Hill Publications.

exaggerate the difference it will help you feel your dynamic (pitch) range.

Falsetto

The falsetto voice is produced by using only part of the vocal 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.

In general, the use of a falsetto voice is not a good way of achieving feminine sounding speech. There are persons who do it and some have developed their "falsetto" voice to a quality level that makes it sound plausible. There are situations where you can slip into the falsetto voice for one bit of speech and it sounds appropriate. Good examples are the use of expletives such as "Oh!" and when you want to show significant emotion such as in "My goodness gracious". or "I bet she never went to a voice therapist!"

Voice Quality

So, we've learned feminine vocabulary and sentence structure, added feminine intonation and inflection, and raised our pitch but our voice still sounds fairly masculine. What we must now address is voice quality which includes 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 overall 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 (pitch symbol) 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 but it does seem to reduce the lower pitched elements.

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 inten-

sity 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 for this effect being considered "sexy."

Accents

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. The listener is more intent on listening to the words through the accent and will almost ignore the pitch. This was used quite effectively in Dustin Hoffman's portrayal of "Tootsie".

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. Another advantage of this approach is that the language of males and females is still markedly different in cultures where women's liberation hasn't made much progress.

Electronically Speaking

For 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 harder. Telephone systems are designed to optimize the quality of transmission in the range of frequencies of the male voice. Furthermore, they tend to filter out the higher frequencies that would accompany feminine speech. Even genuine females with low voices are

occasionally addressed as "Sir". There are devices that will electronically raise your pitch that can result in a plausible feminine telephone voice.

Without the aid of special devices, however, this challenge can be met by using all the vocal skills discussed and a trick or two. The techniques include higher pitch and an emphasis on the inflections almost to the point of exaggeration. Using a great deal of melodious vocal variety with ample sprinklings of feminine words and phrases will at least let the other party know that you desire to be considered female. Using the "Marilyn Monroe" technique on the phone appears to work surprisingly well. The "breathiness" produces enough higher frequency overtones to get through.

There is another approach which seems to work in setting a female image in the listener's mind. It is to let your first words be a melodious "Hello" followed by, "This is Ms. Elizabeth Jones." It works! The other party is not about to challenge you. Visual aspects (even if your five o'clock shadow shows at 7:00 AM) have zero impact on the listener who now must judge you by what you say, reinforced by how you say it. "Passing" on the phone is its own special thrill. The techniques discussed here will also work with recording devices. So don't be afraid to leave or send a message on tape.

Non-Verbal Communication

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

Psychologists and sociologists estimate that a major portion (30 to 50 percent) of real communication is nonverbal. And, so it is with apparent gender. Among the important nonverbal communication skills that we must learn in order to project a 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 the Art & 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 jerk-motion as one reaches out for an object. Exaggeration of the feminine movement produces a "limp wrist" which will be equally as distracting as a "stiff wrist" in a woman.

For an understanding of feminine movement, study real women in the workplace, 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. (JoAnn Robert's *Art & Illusion* covers these motions in detail.)

In this publication we will direct our attention to movements associated with speech and communications. Just as feminine speakers use a greater variety in vocal range and emphasis than masculine speakers do, their facial expressions and gestures are also more pronounced, almost exaggerated when compared to most males. If you observe genetic 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-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 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, eyebrows constitute 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 connote 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 book stipulate that a lady never puts her hand to her face. This probably is intended to restrain the 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 fondling a pendant or necklace near the lower throat; extending you hand, palm down fingers spread and examining your nails. (This might be interpreted as a negative attitude or "I don't really care about - whatever.") If you can be graceful, there are movements relating to grooming you hair, twirling a side curl, or patting the waves that are 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 nonverbal 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 this not 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) at presenting yourself in a more feminine manner.

Voice Surgery

Surgical procedures have been developed to help a male-to-female transsexual create a natural sounding feminine voice. One technique is called Vocal Cord Modulation. This technique does not require cutting the vocal cords as did earlier, riskier techniques. In this process, cartilage 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 oper-

ation 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.

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 and feel there are many advantages; chose your desired pitch; prevents slipping into a masculine voice; and unnatural falsetto is unnecessary.

Another technique developed in 1989 called Suspension Microlaryngoscopy is done with a laser. This technique vaporizes the top surface layer(s) of cells of the vocal cords leaving them thinner and tighter. This results in a higher speaking pitch.

Studies by Mount & Salmon, "Changing the Vocal Characteristics of a Postoperative Transsexual Patient," *Journal of Communication Disorders*, Vol 21. (1988), pointed out that simply raising the fundamental frequency is not enough. If the vocal tract resonance and other clues of speaker (sex) identification are not addressed, the person will sound like a high pitched man instead of a woman.

Personal experience has shown that the expense of voice surgery is often not commensurate with the result.

Final Thoughts

When I first begin working and studying the techniques for speaking in a more feminine manner, it was primarily to assist me and to help others to be able to "pass". Now that I have become more politically aware, I do not feel that this can or should be the primary purpose. I now feel that I do not want to contribute to a social system that is comfortable only with transgender people that pass.

While I do not see that we all need to be Gender Benders, I am quite happy to modify my speech in such a way as it makes me feel comfortable regardless of what the listener may feel about my real or perceived gender.

Do what you have to do to feel comfortable with yourself.

Postscript - JoAnn Roberts

There 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 needed by many. 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 was certain it would become a milestone in the history of the transgender community and I was correct. I'm pleased to bring you the revised second edition at last.

Appendix A: References

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Appendix B: Castrati and Male Sopranos

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.

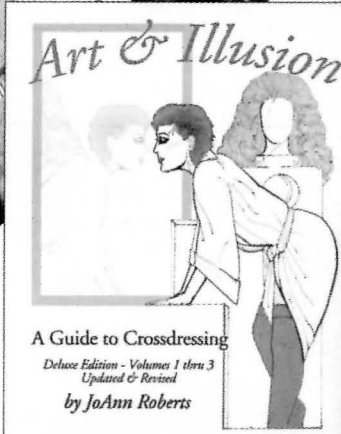
We have all heard, perhaps with envy, the beautiful bell-like soprano voices of boy's choirs and laughed at the young teenager whose voice cracks in the middle of a nervous recitation. By the age of fifteen, most young men have completed their vocal transition and are clearly tenors or basses. However, nature (and man, as we will see later can contrive to prevent this normal development of the mature male voice. There are phenomenon that can interfere with this natural course of development such as 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 Female Impersonator 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 had been performed as punishment and for the creation of eunuchs since ancient times. By the 1600's it was definitely being done primarily to produce sopranos for the Church choirs. Pope Clement VIII (1592 - 1605) preferred a eunuch voice

to the falsettos. By the 1700's it is estimated that four thousand boys were being castrated in Italy each year and 70 percent of all male opera singers were castrated. The last known Italian Castrati died in 1922.

The male falsetto was and is still used as a alternative to "castrati" in religious music. More recently, male falsetto made a comeback in some of the rock'n roll musical groups.

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About The Author

Alison 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 "studied" under Dr. "Bud" Heuer of Temple University, Moya Andrews and Ann Fennell of Indian University, while attending Fantasia Fair. This book is now widely used by speech therapists when working with MtF transsexual clients.

Alison is one of the co-founders of the Renaissance Education Association, Inc., and has served as the chair of the board of the Outreach Institute for Gender Studies and as the Executive Director of the International Foundation for Gender Education.

While some of the terms and usage presented by Alison in this book are drawn from Drs. Heuer, Andrews and Fennel, the overall approach is uniquely her own.

There is also a video of Alison's now famous *Speaking As A Woman* workshop available from Creative Design Services.



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