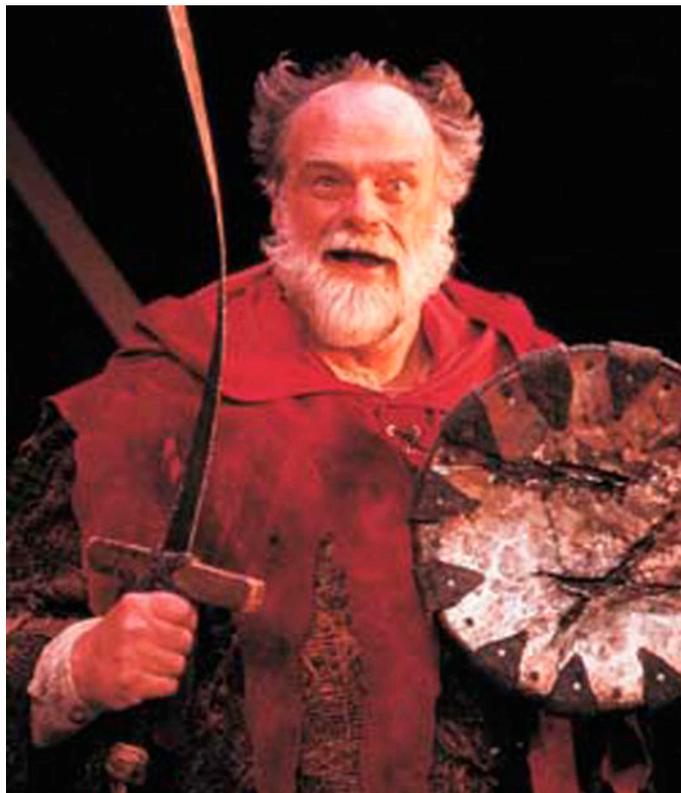
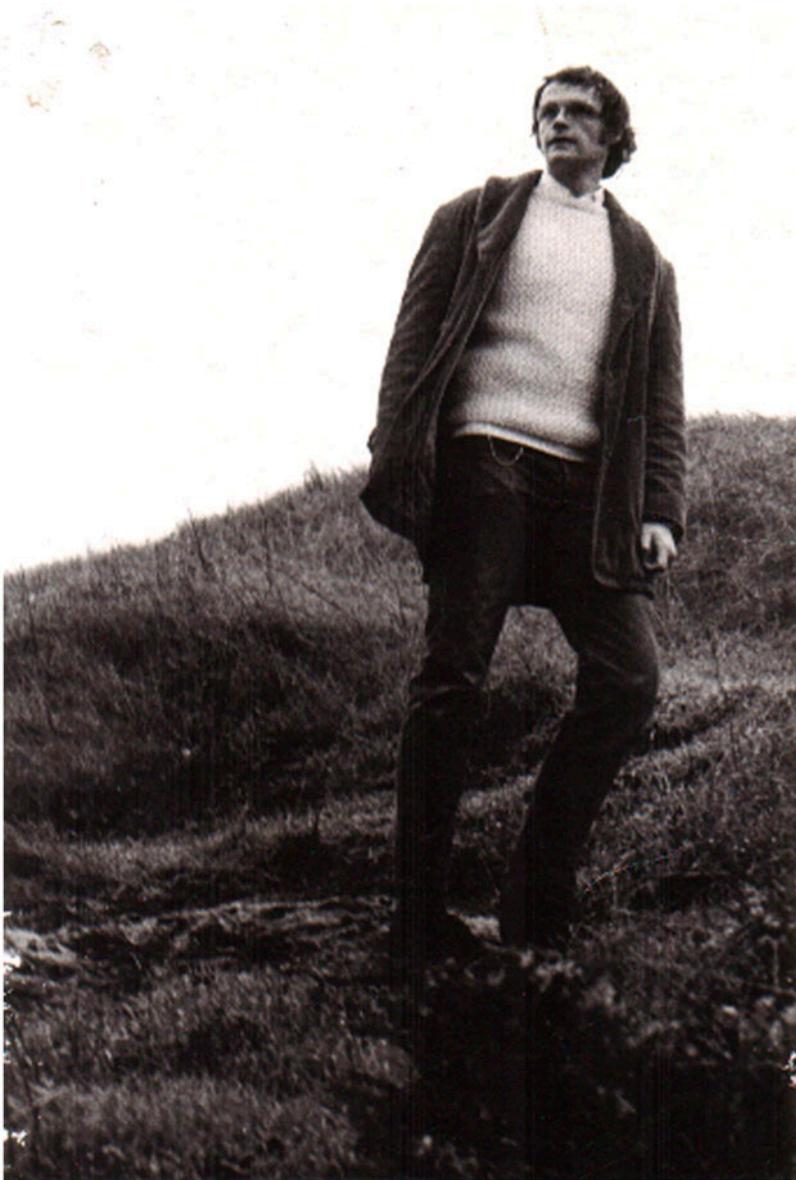


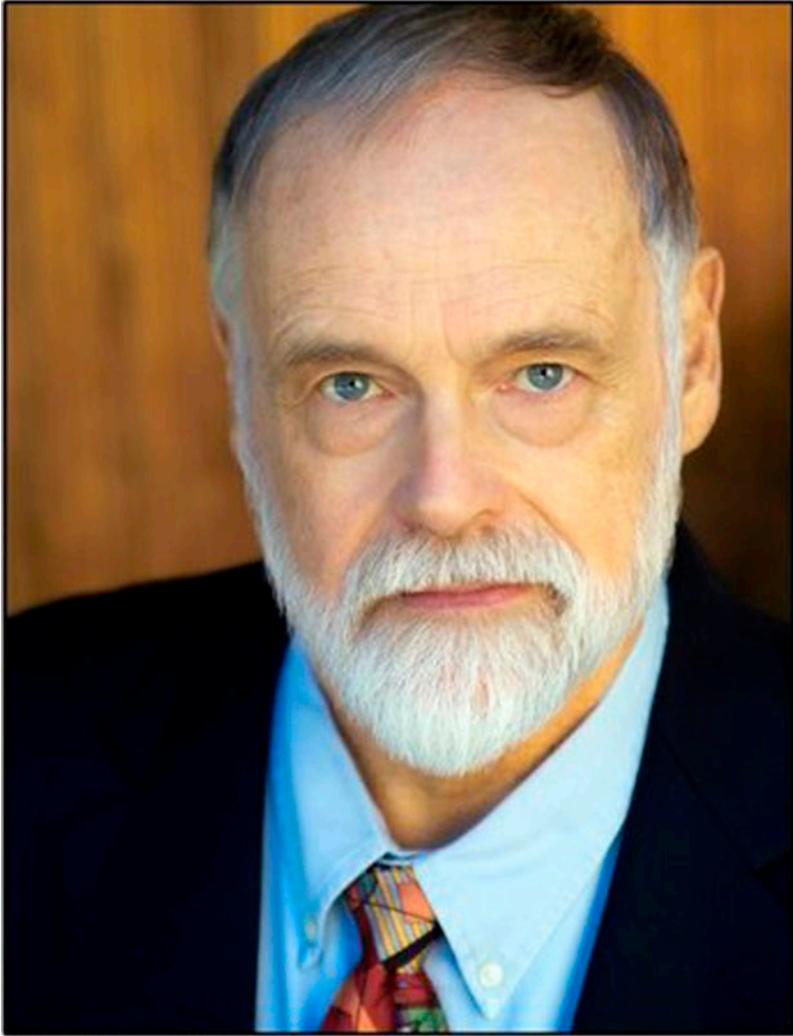
The Wit and Wisdom of Dudley Knight: In His Own Words ... Mostly
by Lynn Watson



Dudley Knight as Falstaff, *Henry IV part I*, Utah Shakespeare Festival 1996
Credit: Karl Hugh © Utah Shakespeare Festival



Credit: Barbara Clairchilde
Permission from the Estate of Dudley Knight



Credit: Stephen Ivey
Permission kindly given from the Estate of Dudley Knight.

It is difficult to overstate how important Dudley Knight was to VASTA, and beyond that to the world of voice and speech for performance. And on a personal level, how important he was to me. Dudley was involved with VASTA almost from the inception of the organization. He was a member of the Board of Directors and in recent years was honored with a lifetime “Distinguished” membership, joining the ranks of the foremost voice and speech teachers and specialists in the world. In 1996, he created the Internet discussion list, VASTAVOX, originally located on the server of the University of California-Irvine. VASTAVOX has become a hugely successful and important forum in the voice and speech world, and is frequently cited not only as an invaluable resource, but also as a forum that has helped to launch careers.

Dudley Knight taught at UC-Irvine for more than 20 years, and I was fortunate to be one of those he auditioned and selected for the MFA Acting program at Irvine. I’ll

never forget his voice on the telephone when he called to give me the good news. No one who ever heard him speak will ever forget his voice, though he himself was objective in his assessment of it. In an *LA Times* article about him, he commented on his own accent by stating that it was “always suspect because I’ve been a speech teacher for so long. It’s probably something fake-o.”

As Editor-in-Chief of the 2011 issue of the *Voice and Speech Review*, Dudley came up with the volume title—*A World of Voice*. It was the final volume to be released in the biennial, hardcopy model of publication. In fact, one of his last acts as Editor was to make a persuasive case for changing *VSR* to an electronic publication, which the VASTA Board subsequently implemented and which his recommendation certainly hastened. A portion of that recommendation is excerpted below.

Professor Knight’s brilliance extended to a remarkable number of areas. He received his BA in English Literature at Haverford, and his MFA was from the Yale School of Drama. I recall him telling me that in addition to his Drama studies, he enjoyed taking courses in the English department at Yale. His knowledge of Shakespeare and English literature, Greek and Latin, linguistics, phonetics, anatomy, and voice science was remarkable in its breadth and depth. He was a rigorous critical thinker, but that did not impinge upon his appreciation for the intangibles of the actor’s art and craft—breath, imagery, creative impulse, feeling, spontaneity, energy, spirit, will—all of which he put to use in his own magnificent performances in roles such as Falstaff and Lear.

But I think it is time to let the great man speak for himself. I have gathered a few selections from his various musings in print. Many, but not all, are emails from the time we worked on *A World of Voice*. They are but a very small representation of a very large wit; other examples abound in his public and private writings, and in the fond memories of his colleagues, students, and friends. Where needed, I have included clarifications in italics. I hope you enjoy these remarks as much as I did, and continue to ...

Notes on editing VSR 2011. Dudley requested that I comment on a draft of his editorial, and the first quote is in response to my feedback.

My essay. Your notes are great. I will try to untangle that one paragraph. It reads aloud OK but since our readers may opt for the silent approach they may be confused by its euphuistic polysyllabic prolixity. Not that I ever write that way.

... because my eyes are getting feeble from having reviewed the massive tome several times (which amounts to several tomes), I wonder if you could do a review sometime today or tomorrow ... I hope we’ll be able to visit you and Dan soon—in our new car!! We bought it yesterday. After ten happy years with our Honda CR-V, we decided to move on, as the CR-V kept deciding to move less.

On an impending East Coast storm.

We have bought extra water and have accumulated ice in our freezer. We have checked our flashlight batteries. We have purchased an emergency radio and I have cranked it. We have accumulated candles. Oh shit ... matches.

Stay safe,
Dudley and Marta

Just waiting for the Delaware to crest again ...
Dudley

Excerpts from Dudley's final report as Editor-in-Chief of VSR to the VASTA Board.

It has been a delectable experience to be able to serve as Editor-in-Chief of “A World of Voice,” the current issue of the *Voice & Speech Review*. Over the past two years, I have learned so much, worked with such brilliant collaborators; and experienced the excitement and the *angst* of helping to develop the contributions of so many astute and inspired authors. Over the past two years I have also aged five years; but that’s my problem ...

You will notice that I am not listed as “Editor” but as “Editor-in-Chief.” Lest you imagine that I have been viewing my DVD of “The Front Page” too many times, I made this change because I consider that a journal of this type needs to have two persons of nearly equal authority guiding the activities of the associate editors.

The very best reason to publish VSR more frequently, aside from dividing the writing bolus into more easily swallowed chunks for the reader, is to give writers the opportunity for more speedy publication of their work ...

We absolutely must proceed to make VSR a completely searchable online journal ... I strongly recommend that the Board of Directors appoint a committee of techno-savvy VASTAnS—which lets me out—to come up with a preliminary action plan by the next board meeting. I will await the advent of the VSR app.

Announcements about the release of his book.

I’ve just received word from the US marketing department ... that *Speaking with Skill* has made its three-month voyage across the Atlantic—by canoe, presumably—and is finally in stock in the USA!

I’m very happy to announce that *Speaking with Skill* is coming out in e-book form on February 1. Because many e-reader technologies do not yet allow for audio files, my publisher ... tells me that it is putting all the files on separate YouTube videos. Unfortunately, the only actual video will be the book cover; no live action shots of my uvula. But the audio should work fine.

From a discussion thread on VASTAVOX.

I have little to add to the upspeak discussion, except to point out that for actors, habituation equals limitation, so it’s always useful to learn new possibilities without ever stigmatizing patterns that the speaker brings to the training.

In many ways, great and small, Dudley Knight remains with us in the contributions he made to the voice and speech world, in the actors and voice teachers he trained, and most of all, as evident in the final quote, in how we think about speech and its power to divide or unite us in our common humanity. *A World of Voice* seems a fitting encomium for the man and his life’s work.

More about Dudley's life and work may be found in his LA Times obituary: <http://www.latimes.com/obituaries/la-me-dudley-knight-20130706,0,100058.story#axzz2xeiJYuRW>.

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