

# Current Methods in Transgender Voice Pedagogy

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# Road Map

1. Introduction
2. Methods
3. Results
4. Discussion
5. Conclusion



Image courtesy of Reddit, 2019

# Introduction

About 1.6% of all adults identify as transgender or gender non-conforming.

About 5% of adults under the age of 30 identify as transgender or gender non-conforming.

Sources:  
Brown, 2022

## ...so why should we care?

*“In a study of transgender youth, “researchers Arnold H. Grossman and Anthony R. D’Augelli reported that 75% of respondents disclosed their gender identity to their teachers – a larger percentage than disclosed to their parents (66%) or grandparents (50%).”*

**How can we best serve our trans students?**

Sources:  
Dorsey Gurss, 2018

# Methods

1. How to foster a welcoming environment
2. Effects of hormone therapy on the voice
3. Survey of surgical methods and efficacy

# Vocabulary

<b>Gender</b>	A socially constructed concept that influences roles and behaviors of human bodies	<b>Nonbinary or Gender Non-Conforming (GNC)</b>	A person whose gender identity does not line up with the male-female binary construct
<b>Sex</b>	The biological makeup of a person's anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes	<b>Cisgender</b>	A person whose gender matches their gender assigned at birth
<b>Gender Identity</b>	A person's internal sense of being male, female, trans, genderqueer, or any other gender identification	<b>AFAB/AMAB</b>	Acronym for "Assigned Female/Male At Birth"
<b>Transgender, Trans, or Trans*+</b>	An umbrella term regarding a population of people who don't identify as cisgender	<b>Queer</b>	An umbrella term for anyone who doesn't identify as straight or cisgender.

Sources:

Sauerland, 2022; Cayari, 2019

# Some Potential Traps to Avoid

Assigning Fach

“Biological  
Male/Female”

“Preferred”  
Pronouns

Gendered  
Terminology

Getting Stuck  
on “Rules”

Drag Roles

Sources:

Cayari, 2019

Flynn, 2022

Graham, 2018

# Alternate Language

**Instead Of:**

**Consider:**

“Soprano” / “Boy Soprano”



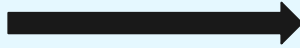
“CT Dominant” / “Estrogen Influenced” / “Higher Voice”

“Bass” / “Baritone”



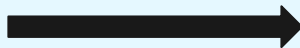
“TA Dominant” / “Testosterone Influenced” / “Lower Voice”

“AFAB” / “FTM” /  
“Biological Female”



“Transgender Man” or just  
“Man”

“AMAB” / “MTF” /  
“Biological Male”

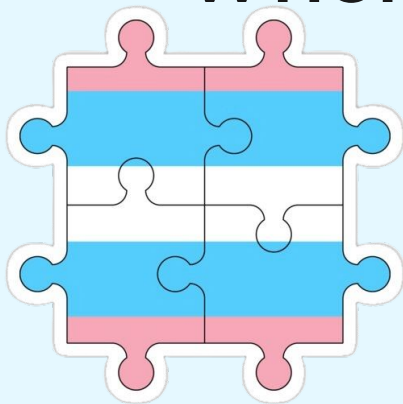


“Transgender Woman” or  
just “Woman”

Sources:

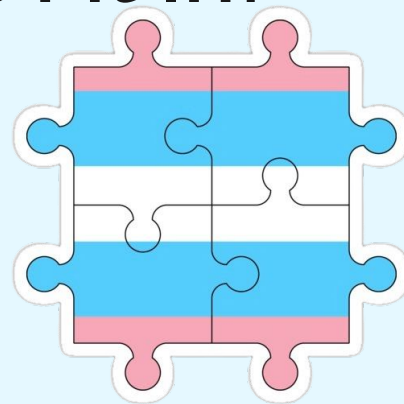
Davies, 2016; Graham, 2018; Dorsey Gurss 2018

# Where Can Trans Singers Fit In?



## Choral

Mixing Parts



## Opera

Trouser Roles  
Drag/Gender Bending

## Musical Theatre

Very few exclusively trans  
characters

Sources:

Flynn, 2022; Dorsey Gurss, 2018; Manternach, Chipman, Raiero, & Stave, 2016

# Tricks for Training a Voice to be Perceived as Feminine

\*\*\*Keep in mind this is a LONG process - have patience and don't rush to make results faster than necessary!\*\*\*

1. Find your *Habitual Speaking Pitch*. Keep track of where this pitch lives over time.
2. Steadily move pitch up. Avoid tension along the way!
3. Add sentences, move on to paragraphs.
4. Inflection - *Glide and Slide*
5. Forward, head dominant resonances.
6. Lateral, aspirated articulation.

Sources:

Jackson Hearn, 2018

# Tricks for Training a Voice to be Perceived as Masculine

**\*\*\*Keep in mind this is a LONG process - have patience and don't rush to make results faster than necessary!\*\*\***

1. Find your *Habitual Speaking Pitch*. Keep track of where this pitch lives over time.
2. Move pitch down. Avoid tension along the way!
  - a. More difficult than moving pitch up!
3. Add sentences, move on to paragraphs.
4. Inflection - Less pitch changes, more articulation and volume.
5. More closure/less breathiness - chest dominant.
6. Words should live in an "uh" vowel.

Sources:

Jackson Hearn, 2018

# **Hormone Therapy and Voice**

# What is Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy?

- Hormone Replacement Therapy
- **2 Types of Hormone Therapy:**
  - Masculinizing Hormone Therapy
  - Feminizing Hormone Therapy



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# Masculinizing Hormone Therapy

## Testosterone

### Effects include:

- Growth of facial hair
- Jawline changes (more defined)
- Dissolution and relocation of fat; giving a leaner appearance
- Male pattern baldness begins to appear

### Negative effects include:

- Water retention
- Mood swings
- Fatigue
- General aches and pains

### Several types of testosterone therapy:

- Injectable testosterone
- Testosterone patch
- Testosterone gel
- Oral testosterone

Changes typically occur as early as 6 - 8 weeks and continue for up to 2 years

Hearns, Kremer 2018  
Hancock, Siegfriedt 2020  
Romano 2018

# Testosterone and the Voice

- Irreversible; Permanently changes the voice
- Similar but not identical to testosterone changes in adolescent puberty
- Voice Type Changes

## Vocal Changes in Testosterone from outside source:

- **Vocal fold mass increase**
- **Possible Cartilage Ossification (Titze as cited in Hearn, Kremer 2018)**
- **Lower Fundamental Frequency**

Cler, Mckenna, Dahl, Stepp 2020  
Hearn, Kremer 2018  
Hancock, Siegfriedt 2020  
Romano 2022

## Working with Singers Through this Transition

- Slow and Steady
  - Unpredictable
  - Smaller Singing Range
  - Changes to voice quality and range
  - Vocal health maintenance
  - Upper Register Work to maintain elasticity
  - Continued and empathetic communication
- 
- Constansis, 2012 (as cited in Adler, Hirsch, Pickering 2019)



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# Feminizing Hormone Therapy

## Common feminizing hormone therapy regimes:

- Estrogen only
- Estrogen with testosterone blockers
- Estrogen with testosterone blockers and progesterone
- Testosterone blockers only / Antiandrogens

**Changes typically occur in the first 6 months and continue for up to 2 years**

## Effects include:

- Skin softens
- Breast development
- Fat redistribution to hips & buttocks
- Muscle mass decrease
- Facial & body hair decrease
- Some feel change in emotional state
- Skin tone changes
- More prone to bruising & cuts
- Change of bodily smells (sweat, etc.)

# Feminizing Hormone Therapy and the Voice

- Changes in voice are not evident  
(Moore, Wishniewski, & Dobs 2003 as cited in Hancock, Siegfriedt 2020)
- Vocal Function Exercises
- Intensive vs Traditional Training
- More Researched Needed (Adler, Hirsch, Pickering 2020)

## Vocal Changes in Feminizing Hormone Therapy:

- Increase production of thick, viscous mucus
- Decrease vocal stamina
- Vocal fold swelling

Gelfer, Van Dong 2013  
Hearns, Kremer 2018  
Quinn, Oates, Dacakis 2022

# Why Should We Care?

- Role of Voice Teacher
- Informed teaching
- Physical changes
- Increased confidence
- Improved quality of life



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# **Surgical Intervention**

# Why surgery?

Patient satisfaction

Pitch, resonance, and  
timbre

Maximum pitch  
change

Procedure  
personalization

Sources:

Nolan et al, 2019

Yılmaz, Özer, & Aydınli, 2021

Thomas & MacMillan, 2013

# What makes someone a good surgical candidate?

Hormone & therapy  
results

Age & health

Financial status

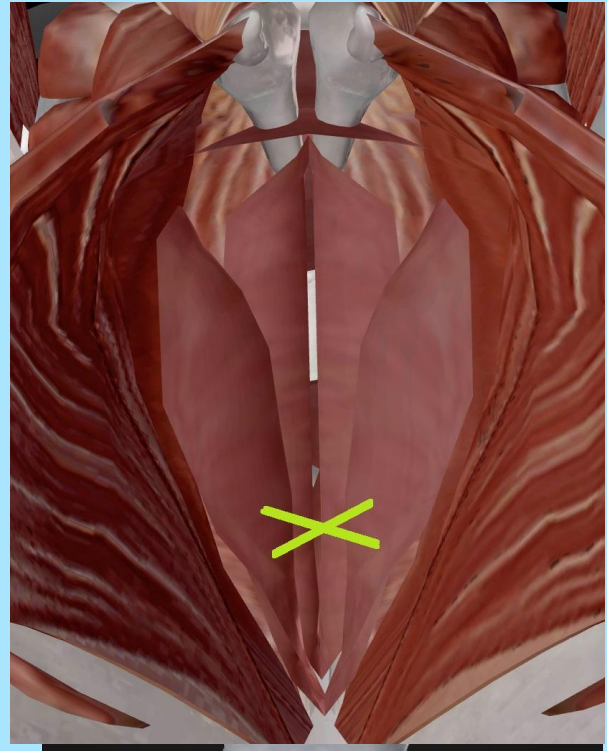
Desired results

Sources:

Matai, Cheesman, & Clarke, 2003

# Common procedures...

- Vocal feminization...
  - Cricothyroid approximation
  - Anterior glottal web formation
  - Laser reduction glottoplasty

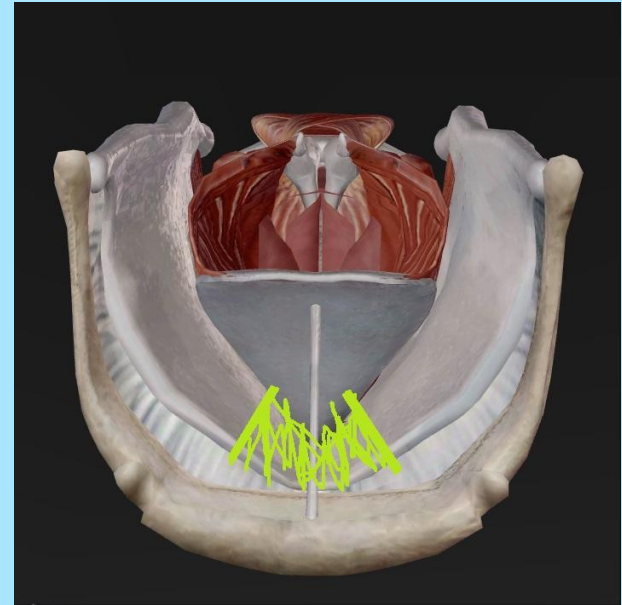


Sources: Kim, 2020

Images courtesy of Human  
Anatomy Atlas app.

# Common procedures...

- Vocal masculinization...
  - Type III thyroplasty



Images courtesy of Human Anatomy Atlas app.

Sources: Bultynck, Cosyns, T'Sjoen, Borsel, & K, 2020

# Risks of trans voice surgery...

- Dysphonia
- Edema
- Hoarseness
- Scarring
- VF paralysis
- VF lesions

# Misconceptions about trans voice surgery...

- Effect on range & comfortable fundamental frequency
- Rate of complications

Sources:

Thomas & MacMillan, 2013

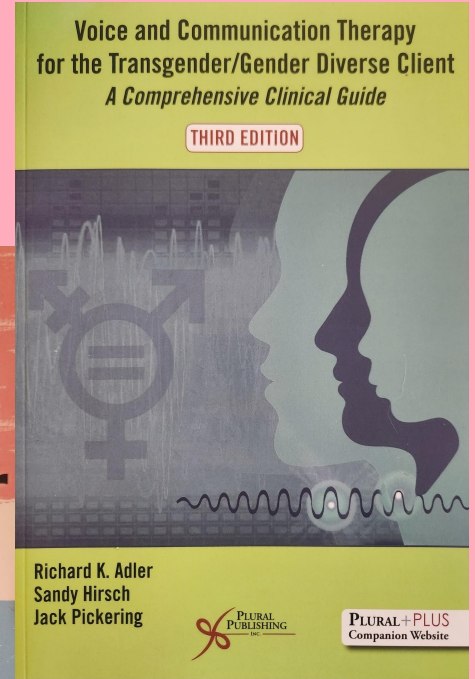
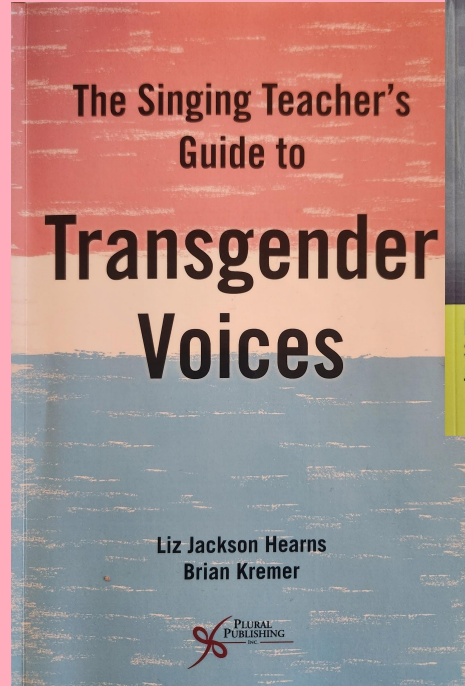
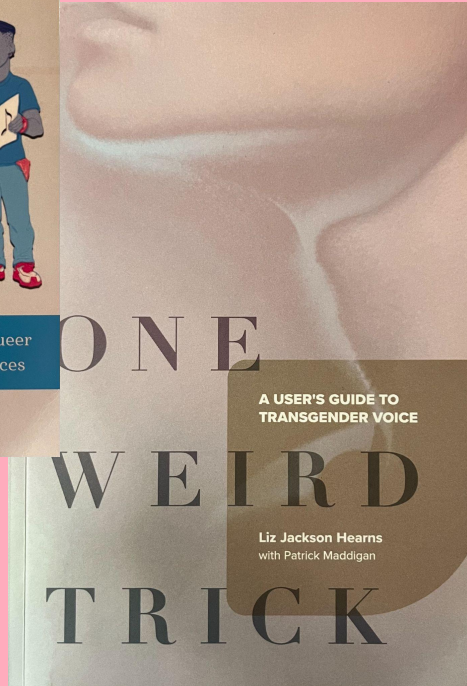
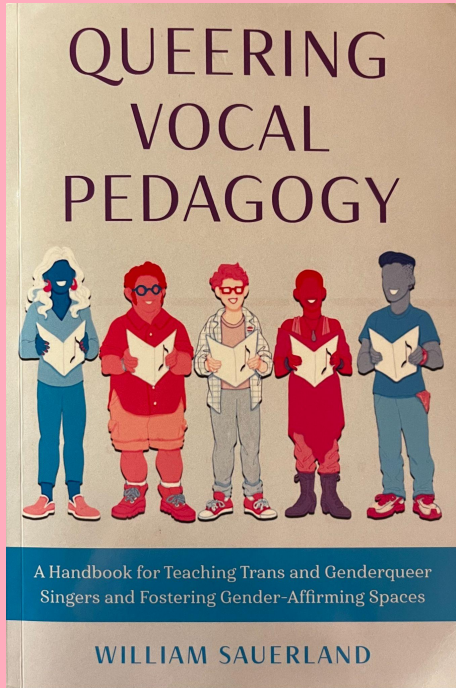
Nuyen, Qian, Campbell, Erickson-DiRenzo, Thomas, & Sung, 2022

# Conclusion

1. Individuality
2. Effects of hormone therapy
3. Methodology & effects of surgery
4. Continued research – face and voice type, hormone therapy risks, surgical masculinization methods



# Recommended Texts



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