

# Heraldic Sound

## *A. Vocabulary and Basic Concepts*

This article is about sound, how we make it and how it travels. You are looking at the first of two parts. Part 1 talks mostly about how we make sound. Before we go further, we need a common vocabulary about our subject. This is easier said than done. Everyone uses a different jargon when discussing the voice. No two vocal coaches agree. Speech therapists do not speak the same language as stage professionals. Vocal cords are sometimes called vocal folds. The upper register is somewhat equivalent to the head voice. The "voice box" is confused with the "vocal organ" and larynx is confused with pharynx. We could add more to this list. It's a jargon-rich world out there and this confusion of terms is a problem.

Obviously, we need to define our terms.

The word "voice" itself is rather confused. It isn't the same as the anatomical mechanism that makes sound, nor is it precisely the sound itself of speech or singing. Timbre certainly is a significant portion what we mean by "voice" but it's not the whole enchilada. To quote a researcher in vocal physiology: "it seems that we know exactly what we mean by the word voice as long as we don't try to define it."

Let us define some terms. For our purposes, it's safe to say that sound is nothing more than extremely fast microscopic variations of air pressure. The human voice makes sounds which vary the air pressure from about 100 times a second to 2000 times a second. In other words, the frequency range of the human voice is from approximately 100 hertz ("Hz") to 2000 Hz.

The tube that carries air in and out of your lungs is your trachea. At the top of your trachea, there's a set of muscles shaped like flat folds of cloth, covered with a mucous membrane, and supported by a box-like cage of cartilage. These are the vocal cords. The cartilage-supported cage that supports the vocal cords is the larynx. The slit made by the gap between the vocal cords is called the glottis. The vocal cord muscles, along with the other laryngeal muscles, control the length and shape of the glottis. When air travels through the glottis, the length and shape of the glottis slit determines the vibration rate of the vocal cords.

The vibrational frequency of the vocal cords creates sound of the same. The frequency of sound is the same as musical pitch. Pitch is merely how high or low we hear a sound. A low pitch has a low frequency, and high pitch a high frequency. For example, on the equal-tempered scale of a piano, middle C (C4) has a frequency of 261.63 Hz and a wavelength of 132 cm. Some operatic double basses can sing notes below C2 (65.41 Hz) 100 Hz, two octaves below middle C; and some operatic high sopranos can sing notes above C2, two octaves above middle C (1046.50 Hz). Most human speech, however, is pitched between ~130 and ~530 Hz.

When air travels through the glottis, the length and shape of the glottal opening determines how fast the cords vibrate. The noise that comes out is phonation, with a pitch controlled by how fast the vocal cords vibrate. Without any other "shaping" of this sound, we would be no better off than barking dogs or noisy apes. The noises we can make, however, are much more complex than that of other animals. The versatility of the human voice is the thing that separates us from the beasts of the earth: there are other creatures with functionally opposable thumbs and tool-using ability, like raccoons and certain chimps, but none of them talk. The anatomical complexity of the human vocal apparatus is unique.

The vocal cords make rather simple sounds compared to the variety and complexity of human speech and song. Obviously, more than the action of the vocal cords shapes human sound. The vocal cords are very much like a double reed in an oboe, i.e., two membranes vibrating in unison to produce a pitched sound. Played by itself, a double reed from an oboe sounds like an anorexic duck. But when that duck quack of sound travels down the bore of an oboe, it is changed in frequency and timbre by the holes in the side of the instrument, and by resonances in the bore itself. What started out as a quack comes out of the oboe as music.

A similar scenario holds for the human voice. A phonation produced by the vocal cords travels upward as a vibrating column of air through your pharynx, better known as your throat. The muscles and mucous membranes of the throat envelope the cage of the larynx; acting together, they can change the physical dimensions of the air passage through the throat, and thereby "shape" the sound that started at the vocal cords. Once that sound has passed the throat, its journey

can be further influenced by the position of the tongue and soft palette, the gap of the teeth, the shape of the lips, the opening of the nasal passages and the resonance of the sinuses and skull. In comparison, the sound of an oboe is simple.

We have just described briefly and very simply how we make human sounds. It is insufficient to talk about vocal production as a function of just the vocal cords. The sound that exits our mouths is the result of the entire "vocal tract," from the vocal cords to the lips, and everything in-between.

Now we have almost a complete vocabulary to discuss the human voice; and while defining our terms, we have also described the production of human sound in a very sketchy way. Our choice of jargon is neither better nor worse than those of stage professionals, singers, or medical doctors - it is merely the set of words we shall use here.

## ***B. The Problem of Clarity***

The vocal cords are an oscillator, and the phonation they produce is also called a "voiced sound." We must make this distinction because the human voice can also make "unvoiced sounds." Whispering is a good example of an unvoiced sound. In whispering, the vocal cords are held so tightly by the laryngeal muscles that they can not vibrate. Instead, they make the vocal tract so narrow that turbulence is created, making the breathy noise characteristic of whispering. An unvoiced sound is created in the vocal tract every time a noise is made without discernible pitch, tone or resonance. In acoustical engineering, such a noise is often called a transient. The air turbulence created by teeth against lips, like the consonant "f," is also unvoiced sound - as are many of the other consonants. Academic linguists actually have several different categories of sounds to sort the consonants into; we, however, do not require that level of refinement. We really only need to differentiate between phonation and the "unvoiced" sound of consonants.

Here we run into conflicting vocabularies again. In the singing or stage fields, an articulation is one of the unvoiced or partially voiced consonants. In vocal physiology, articulation often refers to the total shaping of phonation in the vocal tract. For our purposes, we shall use the former, and will call the production of unvoiced consonant sounds "articulation" in the sense commonly used by stage professionals. We will not use the term phonation for the voiced sounds of the glottis as modified by their passage through the throat and mouth; instead, we will use the much more common layman's term for these sounds, "vowels."

To briefly review, the human voice makes two kinds of sound: voiced and unvoiced, or with phonation and without phonation. At the risk of oversimplifying, phonation is the essential property of vowel sounds and articulation is an essential property of consonants. In general, phonation is heard better than articulation, regardless of relative intensity. Part of this is due to duration: phonation lasts longer than consonants and will last as long as a speaker or singer delivers air through the glottis to make it vibrate. .

The unvoiced sounds of consonants can never be louder than that of phonation sounds of vowels. Consonants are acoustical transients: they don't last very long and they can not be sustained like vowels. Consonants lack the air support of vowel sounds. This leads us to the first basic rule of voice heraldry: go slow and over-enunciate your consonants. Put room around them. If you don't do this, your words at a distance will sound like a bunch of indistinct vowels strung together. Don't believe me? Go listen to your local example of a bad voice herald, and you'll find that this is true.

*Rule 1: Vowels rule so if you want to be understood, over-enunciate your consonants!*

## ***C. Loudness***

Let's be clear about one thing: volume is the amount of space that a 3-dimensional object takes up. On the other hand, producing high intensity sound is what we call being loud. Loudness, is a function of subglottal pressure. In plain English, the pressure you deliver to the underside of the vocal cords makes "loudness." The volume of air in your lungs controls the duration of the sound you produce. The loudness of the sound you produce depends on the ability of the your larynx to sustain air pressure under the glottis and through the glottal slit. The higher that pressure is, the greater the amplitude of vibration, and the louder the sound produced.

Loudness is not a function of lung capacity, as many people mistakenly believe. Loudness comes from how well you can push the exhalation of air against the underside of your vocal cords. This is easier to demonstrate than to explain.

Take a deep breath. Now hold it. While you're holding it, deliberately try to push it out. Did you feel an uncomfortable tingle in your throat, like you wanted to cough? If you did, then you have just consciously felt subglottal pressure. Loudness is dependent on how well you can provide a high subglottal pressure while releasing enough air through your glottis to make the vocal cords resonate. The volume of air which passes through the glottis is NOT what makes loudness - it's the pressure applied to the underside of the vocal cords.

Here's another demonstration of subglottal pressure: Light a candle and place the flame a finger length from your mouth. Now talk. If you're like most people, the air you exhale will make the flame flicker or maybe even go out. So far so good. Relight the candle, if necessary, and we'll proceed to step two of the demonstration. With the candle in the same position as before, sing. "Row row row your boat" will suffice if you can't think of anything else. The candle might flicker, but less than when you were talking. Now increase your volume as you sing. The candle should not flicker. The louder you sing, the less the candle flame will be disturbed.

What's happening is this: in order to sing louder, you unconsciously increase the subglottal pressure and simultaneously decrease the amount of air passing through the glottal opening. It's a weird concept if you've never thought about it before, but this is actually what's happening. But stop to think for a moment: how else do you think opera singers can sing all those loud notes without taking a breath every two seconds? Here's another weird concept: trained voices use more air to sing soft, especially at higher pitches, than to sing loud.

Singing is more efficient at producing loudness than speaking for the simple reason that a sung sound lasts longer than more-transient speech and has opportunity to achieve resonance. But what is singing really? Well, singing is different than speech in two ways: 1) conscious control of pitch, and 2) sustained phonation. At the simplest level, sustained phonation is a vowel sound which lasts longer than usual. Sustained phonation also resonates in your skull and sinuses and this can further increase loudness. For most of us, this resonance is slight and mostly unnoticed. For trained vocalists like opera singers, the increase in loudness from resonance can be non-trivial. So what does this mean to you as an SCA voice herald? It means that if you deliberately draw out your vowel sounds, then you will be louder than your normal speaking voice.

Now singing your announcements is silly. Singing is sustained phonation plus pitch. But you can get all the loudness that comes from the high subglottal pressure of singing without singing. How? By sustaining phonation without controlling pitch. What does this mean in practical terms? It means you should slow down enough to sustain your vowel sounds just a bit

You can demonstrate this to yourself. Get some air into your lungs and do a loud "oyez" for at least 5 seconds. (If this is uncomfortable, then lower your volume until it feels better.) In drawing out that "oyez" for several seconds, you have just sustained phonation without singing.

*Rule 2: Slow down to sustain your vowel sounds whenever possible.*

Here's something that's somewhat odd: absolute loudness (sound intensity) and what the human perceives as loudness are actually two entirely different things. If you sing a scale at a loudness level which sounds constant to both you and your listeners, in terms of physics you are actually increasing in absolute loudness as measured in decibels. That's kind of amazing if you think about it. All these years our ears have been lying to us.

The consequence of perceived vs. absolute loudness is that producing adequate perceived loudness is more work at higher pitches than at lower ones. This has further implications discussed in the section on pitch.

## **D. Lung Capacity**

Why discuss lung capacity when subglottal pressure controls loudness? The answer is simple: without exhaled air, there can be no subglottal pressure. You need air to push at the underside of your vocal cords while letting some air through the glottis. The functional word here is push. The lungs do not have their own pushing mechanism; they rely on the muscles of your chest and abdomen. The muscles of the chest are wimps compared to the muscles of the abdomen, so most of the pushing is done by the latter. But in order to push, the abdominal muscles need something to push against. In order to produce a high subglottal pressure, you have to push hard; but you can't do that without inflated lower lungs to push

against. The more you can inflate your lungs, the harder you can push. Why? Because full lungs have already moved a bit into the abdomen neighborhood, and your abdomen wants its space back - and this situation exists even before you start to exhale. Pushy things, inflated lungs...

The greater the inflation of your lower lungs, the more the abdomen is pushed on from above. The greater the displacement of the abdomen muscles, the more they can push back. Well-inflated lungs allows you sustain a high subglottal pressure, which in turn enables you to be loud.

So the trick here is to put as much air as possible into the lower lungs especially. This is the basis of that old adage about breathing "diaphragmatically." The diaphragm is the vernacular for the flat cap of muscles on the top of the abdominal cavity. In order to fill your lungs completely, the diaphragm must be displaced downward. The place just vacated by the diaphragm is now available for the lungs to expand into, thus letting a lot of air into the lower lungs.

The demonstration for breathing "diaphragmatically" is as follows. Exhale, really exhale; get every little bit of air out of your lungs. Really work at it. Now don't breath, for as long as you can stand it and then some. When you finally do breath, you will probably inflate your lungs, including your lower lungs, in one great whoosh. You've just displaced your diaphragm, forcing the rest of the abdominal muscle to bulge out. You should notice that your ribs and abdomen expand outwards. If you didn't see this happening, then you haven't gotten the knack yet or you need to loosen your belt, or both.

The important thing is to expand as much air into your lungs as you can. The actual volume of your lungs is not important - it's using as much as that volume as you can that's important. If you have small lungs, all this means is that you have to breath more often to sustain your subglottal pressure in comparison to someone with larger lungs. Breathing diaphragmatically helps you maximize the use of your lung capacity.

*Rule 3: To fill your lung capacity more efficiently, use your abdominal muscles when you breath.*

## ***E. Pitch***

The speaking voice has it's own range of frequencies. The variation of pitch while you speak is what makes you a dull, "monotone" speaker or an animated, possibly melodramatic speaker. Most of us fall in-between these two extremes. But when we speak loudly, most of us tend to increase the pitch of our voices. This is a natural consequence of increasing the subglottal pressure: the vocal cords tighten and vibrate a bit faster than usual. There is nothing wrong with this, except that you increase absolute loudness (though not perceived loudness) thus doing a lot more work and wearing out your voice faster. Tense vocal cords will wear out faster than relaxed ones, as will any other body part with muscles in it. In fact, when most people "raise their voice," not only do the laryngeal muscles tighten, but so do the muscles of the neck and upper back.

You don't need the muscles of your neck and upper back in order to speak loudly. It won't hurt you to herald with tight neck and back muscles, but you'll feel better and will be less tired at the end of day if you remember to relax. There's a simple trick to get your neck and back muscles to relax while singing or speaking loudly. It's easy: start an heraldic announcement. Now without lowering the volume, touch one ear to one shoulder. Now do it with the other ear and shoulder. Don't stop heralding while you do this. Now windmill your arms, and stretch them if you feel like it. If you can make an heraldic announcement while moving your head, shoulders and arms, then you've managed to relax the upper body muscles which are normally tense when people shout. There's a simple rule of thumb I learned years ago from a stage professional: if you can't touch your chin to your chest while speaking or singing on stage, you're not relaxed enough.

In general, you should herald at a pitch which is comfortable for you. Many people find that a whole step or two down is a comfortable, relaxed pitch for them, but this isn't true for everyone. Julius Caesar and Winston Churchill both deliberately went up in pitch when speaking in public, because they carried better. You will get better loudness with less work and more effective subglottal pressure if you go lower instead of higher. This is especially true for women who don't have clear piping soprano-pitched speaking voices. There are several physical principles involved, but the most important is attenuation. Acoustical waves with lower frequencies are attenuated less than those of higher frequencies. Basically, lower pitches travel better. Also, lower pitches are less work, again because of the weirdness of perceived loudness of higher pitches. Speaking at one to two musical steps lower than your everyday voice should carry further than your everyday voice for the same amount of effort.

The flip side to this is comfort. If a lower pitch is not comfortable or sustainable for you, then don't do it. Or if you discover you carry better by going up in pitch, then do that if it doesn't hurt your voice. Going up or down a whole step or two isn't going to make or break anyone's heraldic career, and it's always better to do that which is comfortable vocally, than to fulfill someone else's expectations for so-called vocal technique. The only people I would dissuade from going up in pitch while heralding are women whose voices are already high in pitch. Loud "piping" voices can be painful to listen to if overdone and since they are a lot more work due to the perceived loudness paradox, the piping voice works harder and wears out the quickest.

There are some advantages to heralding at a pitch that's just a little different than your normal speaking voice. If you discover that you carry better at a different pitch, then you should herald at that pitch, all other things being the same. (You can find this out simply by heralding at different pitches, and having a friend tell you which carried best.) Changing the pitch you herald at does one other thing for you: it makes you stop and think before you open your mouth, and that's never a bad idea. (I always pause before I herald, to: assess my audience, assess my space, lower my pitch, relax my neck, and suck in a lot of air. It is always a conscious and deliberate act.)

*Rule 4: in general, lower pitches carry better so use a lower pitch if it carries well and is comfortable for you.*

## ***F. Injury***

You can bruise the muscles of your larynx. If you're heralding and you feel like you want to cough or if you feel pain in your throat, stop. The irritation comes from a subglottal pressure that's too high for the current condition of your larynx. The only way to get rid of that nasty feeling is to lower the subglottal pressure. You can do this by pushing less hard with your abdominal muscles. If you can't get rid of the irritation, then stop. If you continue, you'll bruise something in your larynx. Pain, on the other hand, means you've already bruised or abraded something. If it hurts, stop.

You can pull and tear the glottis; and you can detach the various pieces of cartilage of your larynx. Both of these can permanently injure your voice. Injuries like these are most often seen in cases where someone was shouting or screaming. They happen when someone expels everything in the lungs while using a high subglottal pressure. The combination of high air velocity and high subglottal pressure can cause serious injury to the larynx. Not all of those stories about people screaming themselves mute are apocryphal: some of them are true.

There are other things that can screw up your voice. One of them is to disturb the mucous that lines the airway. That icky stuff is always present. It's a lubricant. It protects the tissues of your airway from desiccation, which is a fancy way of saying "drying out." If the mucous layer is disturbed, thinned out or temporarily removed, the tissues it protects can dry out. Dry tissues crack and bleed - think of it metaphorically as a temporary psoriasis of the throat. It should be a no-brainer as to why this is bad for you.

Heralding puts a lot of air through your throat, much more than usual (unless you work as an acting or singing professional). All that air can disturb the mucous lining your throat and larynx, by drying it up, thinning it and/or removing it in places. You can help prevent this by keeping your throat moist, principally by drinking a lot of water. Water helps in two ways: it wets your throat, which helps to preserve the mucous lining, and it keeps you hydrated, which helps the mucous membranes stay in the mucous production business. It's worth remembering at this point that the vocal cords are in part a pair of mucous membranes. Dry vocal cords are a desiccation abrasion waiting to happen.

Unfortunately, too much stuff lining your throat is also bad for your voice. For example, if you have a cold, you have more stuff lining your airway than usual, and it's thicker than normal too. A nice wad of phlegm in your larynx forces you to use a higher subglottal pressure just to talk normally. For your vocal cords, it's the equivalent of jogging around the block while carrying a heavy box. It's more work. This isn't a big deal, unless you're going to do something dumb, like herald at Pennsic. In that case, the combination of excessive subglottal pressure and irritated, phlegm-inhabited throat are going to bruise and possibly abrade your airway. Ouch.

You can get rid of too much muck in your throat by dissolving or diluting it away. Alcohol is a great solvent for this, as are the acidic fruit juices like orange juice and grapefruit juice. Black coffee is also a decent solvent. If you're just waking up and have a wad of muck to clean out of your throat, one of these probably won't hurt you. Overall, water is always a better choice than a solvent-like beverage because under normal conditions, you want to keep and maintain your

throat mucous in a hydrated state, and not thin it or wash it away with a solvent.

It may seem like a good idea, at this point, to coat your throat with something, to preserve your throat mucous and to prevent your throat from drying out. This isn't a bad idea if you've got a sore throat or a cold. It's a lousy idea, however, if you're going to herald. Adding something thick to line your throat is much the same as having a lot of thick phlegm in our throat. When your throat and glottis have a heavy coating of phlegm (or phlegm substitute like cough syrup) you now have to use a greater subglottal pressure to achieve even your normal speaking volume. At heraldic volumes, the excess subglottal pressure will wear your voice out faster, and may potentially bruise your larynx if you don't stop soon enough.

*Rule 5: drink a lot of water. Avoid substitutes.*

*Rule 6: if it hurts, stop!*

Much of the physiological discussion was highly derivative of a book by Dr. Johan Sundberg entitled *The Science of the Singing Voice*, published in English by Northern Illinois University Press, 1987. This is possibly the best book I've ever found on the subject.

You may have noticed that I like to use underlying principles in explaining things, and I'm a big fan of common sense (though probably not its best practitioner). There are really only two things you should remember above all else: there is no one true way, so do what's best for you; and also, if it hurts, stop doing it. Life hurts enough all by itself without any help from us; in light of this, self-inflicted injury is just plain stupid.

## ***G. Good Heraldic Practice for Announcements***

You can have the best heraldic voice in the known world but bad delivery will always trump even a great voice. But a mediocre or moderate-to-wimpy voice can deliver good to great announcements through the employment of some simple practices. There are:

- (a) assess your audience,
- (b) assess your space
- (c) get peoples' attention
- (d) deliver concise but adequate information (what, when, where, who)
- (e) clearly end the announcement

### **(a) Audience assessment**

It's simple: larger groups usually require louder voices, especially when clumped in a large single room. An audience strung out at a camping event require sequential stops for making announcements. People in a hall waiting for court will be easier to manage than people watching a tourney. Always assess who you are trying to make an announcement at.

### **(b) Space assessment**

Space exerts a huge control on how you make announcements. A big square room with no wood or fabric surfaces to cut down on acoustic dispersion and echoes means you need to really grandstand the attention getting at the beginning of your announcement and it means you have to be careful to aim your voice up, not down to the floor. Ground depressions and bowls are better than hills. Making town-crier style announcements on a set route means knowing how far your voice carries so you can space your stops (hint: ask people if they could hear what you announced and stop to make a new one when they say they could hear you but not distinctly). Cold air is better than warm air. Dry air is better than humid.

When working in an auditorium, gym, church, other big room, do a test to see if you can judge echoes or dead space. If you can't do this with no one around, do it with your initial oyez.

Inside echoes are bad. Outside echoes are good.

### **(c) Get peoples' attention [The salutation phase]**

The beginning of an announcement is where you will be the loudest. You need to be. Also, you need to take your time. Do your oyez loudly and make them last. Do not hurry this. It takes time for people to realize an heraldic announcement is happening. Give them that time. If you don't, they will miss the first part of your announcement. The salutation phase at the start of the announcement is the most important part of any announcement because it's where you establish the herald-to-audience connection. Watch people while you do your oyez (or equivalent salutation) and make that salutation last until you have most of the audience looking at you. (In a large hall or the barn at Pennsic, this takes me 10 to 15 seconds – I'm serious about not rushing the salutation phase of an announcement.

(d) Concise complete information [The information phase]

Informational announcements need to tell people the basics: who the announcement affects, when things will happen, where they will happen, and what will happen. If someone gives you an announcement to make, make sure they give all four of these things or you'll be delivery incomplete info (and guess who will get the blame...). If you're doing the town crier thing, trim as many words as possible in order to spare your voice. Do not try to be funny or do schtick unless you know beyond a doubt that you can pull it off. No one will hate you for straight delivery but everyone will loath you if you try to be funny and aren't.

(e) End the announcement [The end phase]

Ever listen to an announcement and end up waiting five or more seconds before you realize the herald is already finished? That's bad form. People like to know that you're done so they can go about their business. They were polite enough to listen to you – return the favor and let them know you're finished. A simple thank you at the end of your announcement is all it takes. If you're making an announcement with includes a time in it, end your announcement with telling them the time and then thanking them.

## ***H. Odd and Ends***

Don't do court or announcements in uncomfortable shoes. Get rid of shoes that give you blisters.

Never out dress the royalty or baronage you're doing court for – this goes for any coronets you own. It's tacky for the herald to wear a fancier brass hat than the king or queen. You're there to make the royalty look good and you can't do that if your regalia upstages theirs. You might be the herald but court is not about you.

Consider having someone (e.g., a herald you're training on how to do court, a willing friend who's a herald, your “back-up” herald in kingdoms that use court back-ups) help you when doing long courts, to hand you your drink, pass you scrolls, fill-in for you if/when you voices starts giving up. Put a simple herald's tabard on him or her so the retainers don't get confused or put-out.

Get an unbreakable mug and hang it on your belt so you always have it. Don't herald without it. If you're not taking a drink every 5 minutes, you're not hydrating enough to keep the glottis moist.

Don't sweat mistakes. Every herald makes mistakes. Apologize (do not grovel publicly), correct your mistake, and get back to business. Making a big deal out of a mistake with loud protestations and apologies is the mark of an amateur. Dealing with it and moving on with minimal fuss is the mark of a professional.

In court, recap at “heraldic volume” any soft-spoken doings in court at the end of those doings for the edification of the audience who gets bored to tears over business they can't hear and can't figure out visually.

Practice reading out loud in your stage/heraldic voice if you don't have a lot of voice heraldry experience. Good practice texts are the Book of Common Prayer (Bishop Cranmer's Elizabethan English! Very formal but elegant phrasing), anything by Shakespeare, St. Paul out of the King James Bible (just-post-Elizabethan English). If you can read St. Paul's letter to the Romans out of the King James Bible without glitches, you can read anything!

Learn to read and write calligraphy, including period ligatures.

Don't mangle names when announcing fights. Ask the marshals or the fighters themselves how names get pronounced beforehand. Use a pencil and write the name phonetically for yourself on the list cards (assuming your list people are using a card system).

Never forget that there is theater in all “voice heraldry.” Do not forget that long drawn out performances are death to an audience and short, well-managed ones will sustain interest instead. With this in mind, use the dead time when people are entering or leaving the royal presence in court to slip in announcements: this shortens court and gives the audience something to focus on during a period that is otherwise a source of diversion away from the business of the court. Dead time is the enemy in court. Do everything in your power to minimize it and/or eliminate it – like using process/recess time in and out of the royal presence for announcements; talk autocrats, contest runners, officers with announcements out of doing their own, especially if they have itty bitty voices that don't carry; trim presentations and schtick time to nothingness if a court is going to be over an hour; consider reserving the first row of chair in court for the use of peers who can't kneel so everyone else can see peerage ceremonies; etc. Practices for court vary across kingdoms, so don't try a time-saving practice that might upset the traditions of your area without the strong backing of your royalty.

If you're hungry/angry/tired/bummer/drunk/weary/upset/unhappy, it's okay to say no, you don't want to go out and herald. It's a myth that pelicans can't say no...