

# The Speechwriter

Newsletter of the  UK Speechwriters' Guild incorporating 



## Welcome

Welcome to the sixteenth edition of The Speechwriter newsletter. The purpose of this publication is to circulate examples of excellent speeches to members of the UK Speechwriters' Guild. We do this by picking out openings, closings, one-liners and quotations and other topical extracts from newspapers and the internet to identify techniques, stimulate your imagination and provide models which you can emulate.

This newsletter appears quarterly and is available to anyone who is a Standard Member of the UK Speechwriters' Guild or the European Speechwriter Network.

## Contribute

We welcome book reviews, speeches and articles for the magazine. Every contribution published gets a £10 Amazon token. Please send your submissions to:

 [info@ukspeechwritersguild.co.uk](mailto:info@ukspeechwritersguild.co.uk)

## MASTERCLASS by Erasmus

The Dutch philosopher, Desiderius Erasmus, wrote a very popular C16th school textbook on how to enhance speechwriting skills. He encouraged students to cultivate rich, poetic and colourful language. But he advised this was often the fruit of laborious exercises - like rewriting the sentence, 'Your letter has delighted me very much', in over 150 different ways. Here is a selection of soundbites from his textbook, *De Copia*.

...that person to whom laconic brevity in speech is pleasing...will not make use of every argument, but only the chief ones.

Everywhere tedium should be lightened by variety, cheerfulness and humour.

We keep our audience in a receptive mood most effectively by suitable transitions.

The first way to embellish thought is to relate at length and treat in detail something that could be expressed summarily and in general. And this, in fact, is the same as if one should displace merchandise...rolled up in carpets, then should unroll the carpets and disclose the merchandise, exposing it completely to sight.

Speech is enriched by descriptions of places.



It will serve to suggest that whoever wishes to be more fluent in speech should observe and collect from the best authors a great number of striking metaphors.

Collect as many topics as possible. Take them partly from classes of virtues and vices, partly from those things that are important in human affairs,

and that are accustomed to come up often in persuasion; and it will be best to arrange these according to affinity and opposition. Then whatever you come across in any author, especially if it is very noteworthy, you will immediately mark down in its proper place. This method will have the effect of imprinting what you read more deeply on your mind, as well as accustoming you to utilising the riches of your reading.

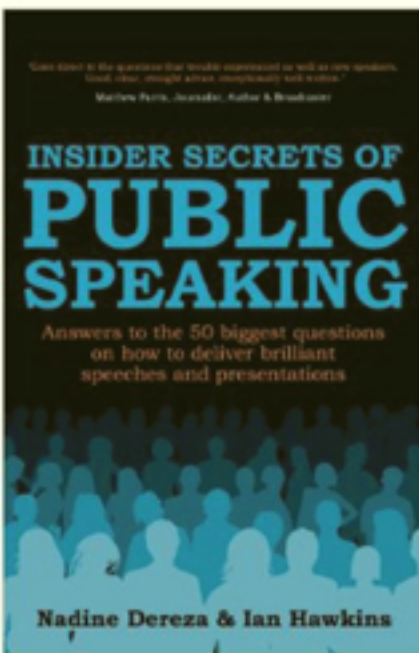
## Insider Secrets of Public Speaking: Answers to the 50 biggest questions on how to deliver brilliant speeches and presentations

Nadine Dereza and Ian Hawkins  
Rethink Press £14.99

'The Q&A format is a very strong one,' claim Nadine Dereza and Ian Hawkins; 'there is no coincidence that we chose it for the format of this book.' 'Real-world problems,' they say, 'demand practical solutions,' and a Q&A structure allows you to 'quickly find an answer to the question that most closely fits your own dilemma.'

The format also neatly solves the perennial challenge of how to maintain the reader's attention in a book like this. Keep the chapters brief (none here, by my reckoning, longer than about 2500 words, and many much shorter); change the subject unexpectedly (from 'How do you handle obnoxious audience members?' we turn swiftly to 'How can I remember my words?'); employ the bon mot (there's hardly a page in my review copy where I haven't marked something useful).

It all makes for a lively read, especially when the text has such flair. The book feels bang up to date: the authors even reference Mary Beard's LRB lecture in February 2014. Alongside the stuff you'd expect - breathing, moving, the perils of jokes - they discuss the logistics of presenting: dress, hosting arrangements, technology. They include, unusually, material on developing a career as a public speaker: getting bookings, participating in panel discussions, chairing debates. There's even a rather long piece on playing the Edinburgh Festival. I enjoyed the advice on cultivating conference etiquette and professionalism



('being flexible, easy to reach and straightforward to work with, will stand you in good stead').

The inevitable trade-off for all this variety is a risk of superficiality. You'll find ideas in abundance, but you'll need to join quite a lot of dots. (More cross-referencing between chapters would help, and would increase the fun.) The chapter on storytelling stands out because the authors give themselves space to develop their material.

Interestingly, they devote their longest chapter to the art of memory. 'Put the needs of the audience first,' we're told, 'and make your performance all about serving their needs.' Scripts, it seems, get in the way. The speaker should aim to become a 'good conversationalist.' Maybe; sometimes. But then the authors also say, quite rightly: 'speak as if what you say makes a difference.' They even include a collection of great speeches in their reading list. How many of those were unscripted? How many were conversational?

The audience, for their part, 'doesn't want to watch a speaker who doesn't want to be watched.' Dereza and Hawkins raise the burning issue of authenticity and tackle it wisely, if

a bit obliquely. How to become the best possible version of yourself? 'It isn't you,' they say insightfully, 'so much as what you are doing.' Practical tips on how to deliver 'an authentic, heartfelt message' do appear, in the all-too-brief chapter on weddings and funerals. Focus on the task; do the research; take charge; and say something personal.

A speaker should be 'passionate, knowledgeable and confident,' and 'only you can be responsible for your knowledge and passion.' Will aspiring speakers gain the necessary confidence from this book? Its racy style and nuanced advice will undoubtedly help. But, as Dereza and Hawkins point out, nothing beats practice, guidance and feedback. (Details of their training consultancy are on the final page.) 'The best way of learning how to speak in public,' they say, 'is to go out and just do it.'

## IN PRAISE OF COURIER

It's important to lay out your scripts immaculately, to intimidate speakers from meddling with them. What font should we use for our speech manuscripts? Courier is apparently the most profitable typeface for direct mail. 20% more profitable in tests! Why should that be? Probably because it's easiest to read. Screenplays are written in 12-point Courier. This is because Courier is a fixed-pitch font, meaning each character or space is exactly the same width. Standard screenplay format is designed so that one page approximately equals one minute of screen time.

This is a useful insight for speechwriters, who also have to be sensitive to time. Since some of us see ourselves as screenwriters manqués, we can get in the habit of using the font in preparation for the day we finally get round to penning that Hollywood script.