

A Few Minutes With... Allyson Vox



As Team Voicetrax scours the globe, replete with the obligatory capes, to bring you the most relevant training in the voice-over industry, we discovered a gem of a woman in the Northwest plying her trade and doing it well. Allyson Vox has been a professional of Performance Capture (PCap), sometimes referred to as Motion Capture (MoCap), the intricate technology of actors on a stage wearing a specialized suit and being recorded by numerous ultra-sensitive cameras, that video game and animation producers use to bring their animated projects to three-dimensional life. You've already seen it in action if you watched the movie Avatar or played the video game

Uncharted. This lucrative corner of the voice-over industry grows every year as technology makes more things possible. We are so excited to bring Allyson into the Voicetrax family as she readies to share all her knowledge with our student body in the Fall 2022 semester. We caught up with Allyson recently to have a chat and give you a peek behind the PCap curtain...

Voicetrax: When you were a little girl, what did you dream about being when you grew up?

Allyson Vox: It was a tie between being a ballerina or a veterinarian.

VT: So is it safe to assume that dancing won out over veterinary medicine?

AV: *(laughs)* Yes! When I was 8 years old I walked down the stairs one morning and announced, "Mother, I am going to be a dancer". And to her credit, she and my father, somehow, someway, got me into this sleep-away dance camp even though I was a good 2-3 years younger than everyone else. When I arrived I was surrounded by girls who had been training for a while and were at a point of training multiple hours a day, when I wasn't even close to that. It was full immersion, from ballet to Spanish dancing to modern dancing, and I loved it. Being around girls that were better than me was so inspiring and motivating, but also a little intimidating. But I loved dancing and I knew being around these girls would make me better. And that, as they say, was that. At that point, any dance style I could gain access to, I started training in.

VT: So how did dancing launch you into acting?

AV: Dance introduced me to being on the stage and that segued into performing scripts, and I realized I really liked words and I loved the storytelling.

VT: So was it a battle to the death between dancing and acting?

AV: Ha! Not so much. In my particular town, theatre was a bit more accessible. Additionally, I had some health issues as a kid which meant I got sick a lot. That made it difficult for me to stay consistent with the dance training. So even though I was still dancing in high school, theatre had become the main focus. Once I got to college, I loved theatre so much I threw myself into it and double majored in Theatre and Cultural Anthropology with a minor in Education.

VT: Wow, theatre, cultural anthropology and education. You seem unequivocally qualified to teach actors.

AV: Yeah my dad used to joke: *"I just opened the New York Times this morning and there are sooooo many job listings for a Cultural Anthropologist"*. Shut up, Dad.

VT: How did cultural anthropology inform your acting?

AV: I was so fascinated and still am by the human experience and what is universal between us. That's what I found so intriguing about cultural anthropology as I was starting to see the connection between it and acting. All these various cultures around the world that have distinct and identifiable traits. But when you dig deep down and get to the mythologies of all these cultures you find the same stories. You find the same yearnings, the same questions about life.

VT: Did you consider teaching as your main occupation while in school?

AV: I considered academia, but theatre just kept calling to me. As I moved forward in my theatre career, I got an audition for a video game from my agent. I went in for the audition and realized there was movement required. Long story short, I was thrilled to land the lead role for the video game Destiny produced by video game developer Bungie. We filmed so many scenes in the performance capture suits as well as recording the voice-over for it. About a month before the release, I found out that the suits in Los Angeles decided that all the leads in the game should be voiced by known celebrities. So they dubbed over my entire acting performance, but kept my performance capture.

Normally that would have been devastating, but here's where the blessing comes in. Because they were no longer using my voice, they kept me on to do the PCap for every single female character in the game and some of the male roles, too. Luckily, because I had played male characters on stage, I had completed an extensive exploration about the movement of males. So I already had it in my repertoire.

VT: Guess when one door closes...

AV: That's exactly right. It turned out to be one of the best things that's ever happened in my career.

VT: As it pertains to the name of this technology, we've heard both "motion capture" and "performance capture". Are these terms interchangeable?

AV: In general, yes, they are terms that are both used in this industry. However, there is a reason that the term has evolved right along with the technology. At the beginning, this art was strictly capturing the motion of the actor. The last time I went in to work just recently, they had these cool gloves, so we could capture the intricacies of finger articulations. They also have the ability to portray different and nuanced facial expressions, so they are truly *capturing the emotional performance* as opposed to just rudimentary movement.

VT: Ok, that sounds super cool...

AV: I'm always amazed at how they move this art form forward.

VT: You talked about having an extensive dance background. Do you think that's necessary to be successful in PCap?

AV: Well, it certainly didn't hurt my chances, but there are plenty of people in this community that don't have a "movement background". But getting into anything like yoga, martial arts, dance, anything that gets you in your body, gets you to pay attention to your body and have dominion over your movement will be a great advantage.

VT: What are you hoping the students take away from your class?

AV: I want them to fill their toolbox as it pertains to how do I physically build a character including walking, talking, standing, center of gravity, how do you fill a space, status, etc. I want them to give themselves permission to play and leave with the

confidence that's necessary to be successful in this corner of the voice-over world. In a word, I want to demystify the world of Performance Capture.

Don't miss out on Allyson's World Premiere class, *How To Walk, Talk And Chew Gum*. Refer to the Fall 2022 registration form for dates and times.