

From Jenni Lou Russi, MFA Dialect Coach

Signature Sounds – Pronunciation modifications that influence the Newfoundland Sound

This is an example of a Newfoundlander speaking: [Clip from LAND AND SEA NEWFOUNDLAND](#)

We want this flavor – but not the complete sound of this beautifully rich dialect.

Midwestern audiences aren't used to hearing/understanding these sounds, so modifying our pronunciations with Newfoundland flavors will deepen characters and inform audiences in ways that enable people to immerse themselves in the story you tell.

The following information is meant to support your preparation for the initial auditions. Just as many of the regional dialects in the United States are influenced by sounds around the world, you'll hear sounds from northeastern states here in the United States and strong Celtic influences from Ireland in our "Newfinese" work.

Before we begin, please understand that for the auditions we are supporting a very specific sound in Gander, Newfoundland. *Come From Away* features characters from around the world, but for this initial step in the casting process we're focusing on one dialect. This Newfinese sound is distinctively different from the sounds we are used to hearing in Western Canada. For instance, in the Northern part of our state we are used to hearing the Canadian influence when people pronounce "about" as "aboot", but this is not true of Canadians in Gander.

As we support your audition with information about the primary dialect used in this musical, please understand that this process provides an introduction to the Dialect Coaching Process. I ask that actors mark the libretto and script with pronunciation modifications so that your sound remains consistent for each character's spoken and sung messages. By using these modifications from the beginning, actors memorize their lines and create their characters with the dialect, rather than adding dialect as an afterthought, which often produces inauthentic and inconsistent sounds. Dialect should be consistent from beginning to end.

I am providing suggestions for three specific vowel sounds and two specific sounds with consonants. Please mark your texts with pronunciation modifications.

## VOWELS

Most vowel modifications involve mouth position.

### 1/3

AW – as in sought, lot, caught, haunt . . .

AW words will become AH sounds:

SAW becomes SAH

AWful becomes AHful

lOt becomes lAHt – with a slightly brighter sound.

NOTE: The “AW” sound in “AW” words can be spelled different ways.

Check your script and libretto for words with spellings for this sound: aw (caw), au (haunt), augh (caught), and ought (thought).

A few words have the AW sound with a single “O”, so check for the AW sound in words with a single “O”. GOT can be an AW word, but GONE is NOT, but NOT **can be!**

### 2/3

OW – as in cow and loud

OW words will become EH-OW sounds with a slight diphthong:

NOW becomes NEH-OW

fLOWers becomes fLEH-OWers

NOTE: A diphthong is a gliding vowel sound, unlike a monophthong, or pure, singular vowel. Your mouth adjust slightly to make two sounds with one vowel. Diphthongs are common in American pronunciation – you do it everyday! “Sky” is an example of a word Americans say with a diphthong – and we don’t notice the very little extra effort! In your work with this new dialect we shouldn’t notice any extra effort – but the slight change in the sound will give the flavor of someone who learned to speak in Gander.)

Check your script and libretto for words with spellings for this sound: ow (cowboy) and ou (about).

### 3/3

EYE – as in island, dial, cry, aisle, bright . . .

EYE words will become OY, ending with EYE – again, with a slight diphthong:

I becomes OY or OY-EYE

This sound is an example of the British Isles in this dialect. Some, but not all, signature sounds in the British Isles include this sound that requires modification from the way we speak in most of the United States. NOTE: This sound has five spellings: “I” find, “ie” fie, “i-” kite, “y” try, and “igh” sight, with “ai” as in aisle being an exception.

## CONSONANTS

Most modifications with consonants involve omitting the sounds.

### 1/2

“H”

The “H” is silent in words that begin with “H”. Cross out the “H” in words where the first consonant is “H”. When you say the word you go straight to the vowel.

HAND becomes AND

*NOTE: This is a simple modification, not a change in your approach to the vowel sound following this consonant. This is not like a Cockney accent, in which one might emphasize the vowel as the first sound. This dialect has a distinct subtlety with this pronunciation, simply omitting the “H”. Some dialect coaches suggest moving from the last consonant in the previous word, directly into the first vowel of the word with a removed “H”. While this practice smooths out the sounds and is supported by the accelerated rate of speech used by many people in Newfoundland, combining these words makes it more difficult for American Ears in Midwestern Audiences to discern what is being spoken/sung. Therefore, I would encourage you to speak the vowel in the very same way as if you voiced the “H” – just without the “H”.*

### 2/2

“ING”

In general, you’ll cross out the “G” in multi-syllabic words that end in “ing”, closing with a simple “N”.

Single-syllabic words that end in “ing” (ring, sing, thing . . .) are excepted from this practice – the “G” is voiced.

ALARMING becomes ALARMIN

BUT

SING remains SING

The following three videos provide examples of real life Gander sounds. Listen to the people being featured in these stories, rather than the broadcasters whose voices have been influenced by specific training.

[CBC News: Gander Air Ambulance Service](#) – Note how the mayor pronounces “office” (ehfice) and the placement of his voice.

[Rogers TV Community News Hockey](#) – In this fun story you’ll hear the guest announcer using typical Newfie phrases, like “What a go!”

[Rogers TV Community News Inflation](#) - Note the pronunciations for the words “about” and “out”. Brenda Anderson demonstrates an example of the lilt and cadence that’s disappearing from this dialect but is evident in older people who live in Gander.